

A Brief Historical Sketch of Camp McMullen

Compiled by the late Mrs. Christa V. Adair

“To lift as we climb” is the basic underlying philosophy of the Texas Association of Women’s Clubs. The fact is evidenced by the projects that the Association has sponsored across the years.

In the late 1930’s when the late Mrs. Ethel Wilson Ransom was president of the Texas Federation of Colored Women’s Clubs (the name that is listed in the charter), the membership began the purchasing of ten acres of land in San Antonio, Texas, which was to be used as a home for delinquent girls. During the administration of Mrs. H.E. Williams, who succeeded Mrs. Ransom, the debt on the property was paid in full.

Feeling that the State of Texas, rather than a group of women, should foster the rehabilitation program for Negro girls as it was doing for other girls, Mesdames F.G. Bracheen, U.V.Christian, and the late Ada Belle Dement and A.E. Johnson sought to persuade the state legislators to make appropriations for the project. As a result of lobbying, a home or school for girls was established in Brady, with Mrs. Iola W.Rowan as the superintendent. This training school for girls was later moved to Crockett, Texas.

A Dream

In 1941, when Mrs. F. G. Bracken became president, she recommended a project that was related to the one that the women had initiated and labored assiduously to place it under the sponsorship of the proper agents. The project was one which proposed to aid in keeping girls from becoming delinquent. Mrs. Brackeen suggested the establishing of a camp for girls. However, the dream did not become a reality during her administration.

The property at San Antonio which had been purchased for the no longer needed home for delinquent girls was unsuitable for the camp project: therefore, it was sold in 1951 for \$9,000.00.

A Dream Becoming A Reality

The dream for a camp was allowed to lie dormant until 1946. It was then that Mrs. M.L. T. Bennett, President of the Isabel Smith District, revived the idea and began a camp fund in her district. Realizing the magnitude and scope of the project, Mrs. Bennett and the Isabel Smith District were instrumental in getting the women of the state to re-verify their interest in the state camp idea which had been adopted six or seven years previously. As a result of the renewed interest, a tract of land (28 acres) on Highway 183 near Hurst, Texas was purchased for \$14,000.00. To make room for industrial expansion, it became expedient to sell the property. It was sold in 1953 for \$26,000.00

In the meanwhile, Mr. Clyde McMullen, an employee of the Ft. Worth National Bank for many years and one in whom the bank officials repose the highest confidence, was given the opportunity to invest \$5,000.00 of the Etta Newby Foundation in a project which he deemed worthy. Mr. McMullen’s responsibility of making the investment was made known to women by Mrs. J.E. Banks, Jr. Mr. McMullen was invited and accepted the privilege of investing the money in the project for youth that was in the making by the Texas Association of Women’s Clubs.

Together Mrs. M.L.T. Bennett and Mr. McMullen sought diligently for a suitable camp site. A spot (36.8 acres) was leased on the lake in Grapevine, Texas, in 1953.

During the state meeting that year in Amarillo, the Association voted to name the camp, “Camp McMullen” in recognition of the invaluable counsel and financial assistance of Mr. Clyde McMullen, as associate member of the Ethel Ransom Cultural Club of Ft. Worth and a member of the Advisory Committee of the Texas Association of Women’s Clubs.

Subsequent to the Amarillo meeting it became known that permanent buildings could not be placed on the government-controlled property at Grapevine. Therefore, the quest for a camp site had to begin again.

In April, 1959, the 125 acre Christian Fellowship Camp, located in Johnson County between Alvarado and Keene, off Highway 67, came to the attention of Mrs. M.S. Waters and a few other members of the Association.

A Dream Becomes A Reality

In the 1958 Annual meeting in Austin, the closing year of the administration of Mrs. J.O.A. Conner, the Association authorized the purchase of the camp from Mrs. T.J. Updack at a cost of \$20,000.00.

The camp has a six room frame caretaker’s house with bath, running water, electricity and gas.

There are two 18’ x 50’ dormitories of the same construction as the headquarters building. Each has one bath with two toilets, one lavatory, and a shower. Each has seven casement steel windows as well as electric lights.

The combination assembly-dining room kitchen building is of the same construction as the other buildings. The 24’ x 50’ assembly-dining area is joined by a 12’ x 20’ kitchen. The building has gas, water, and lights.

Three frame buildings that may be used as cabins are also on the camp grounds.

A beautiful, fish-stocked lake fed by natural springs, a 774 ft. drilled well with an adequately housed pump system and a 5000 gal. storage tank, as well as lighted and equipped picnic areas are also a part of the camp.