

LAS POSADAS STATE FOREST

AND 4-H CLUB CAMP

BRIEF HISTORY OF CAMP DEVELOPMENT

NOTES ON EARLY HISTORY
OF LAS POSADAS STATE FOREST

During the early part of 1927 I was informed by Mr. Anson S. Blake of Contra Costa County that Mrs. Blake had a piece of property in Napa County that she wished to give to the University or to the State of California. In this and subsequent conversations with Mr. Blake I gathered that the protection of the property and plans for its use had become quite a burden to Mrs. Blake and that he was anxious to have her relieved of it because of her health.

The property of some 800 acres in the upper watershed of Moore Creek lay adjacent to the Pacific Union College property at Angwin and contained a considerable area of second growth redwood, Douglas fir, ponderosa pine, tanbark and other oaks, madrone and associated species. All of the timber portion of the property had been cut over in the early days by John M. Morris who bought a squatters right to it in 1878 and in 1880 used his homestead and preemption rights to prove up on it. The more level parts of the area had been farmed for years and a small house and large barn were still in usable condition.

The Blakes had built two small summer cottages on the south bank of Moore Creek where they occasionally spent a few days, but leased the "farm" portion of the property to a caretaker named Grayson who lived part time at the old farm house. He was employed in the heating plant at Mare Island Navy Yard.

After discussing the matter with Director B. H. Crocheron it was evident that the University would not be interested in taking title to the property and I therefore suggested to State Forester M. B. Pratt that we meet Mr. & Mrs. Blake at Las Posadas and discuss the possibility of its acquisition by the state as a State Forest.

He agreed and we met the Blakes at their cabin on the property in the summer of 1927 and discussed the transfer of the property as a State Forest and the possible development of a 4-H Club summer camp site for use by five or six Bay area counties. Mrs. Blake had no objection to starting the development of such a camp site during the time negotiations were under way for transfer of the property and Mr. Pratt said he would push the matter with the State Board of Forestry under a law signed by the Governor April 5, 1927.

Mr. Glenn Waterhouse and I visited the property shortly after and arranged for a meeting of Extension Service agents and 4-H Club leaders from Napa, Solano, Sonoma, Marin, Contra Costa and Alameda counties to see if they were interested in going ahead with such development. A group of about 70 people responded to this suggestion and they selected the flat on the south side of Moore Creek for development of the camp. They agreed to raise \$100.00 per county and to start development in the spring of 1928.

Farm Advisor Eade and State Ranger Dean were most enthusiastic and helpful all through the early stages of the development, most of which was by volunteer labor.

In 1928 pending the acceptance of the gift by the State, Mrs. Blake executed a 10 year lease of the property to Grayson in which a clause was inserted safeguarding the use of the camp site by the University for 4-H Club camps during the life of the lease.

The following brief excerpts from Annual Reports of the Extension Forester give an insight into the development of the camp and its use. The camp committee was set up early in the game and has continued with slight modifications down to the present. In recent years Mr. Orville Burnside of Sonoma County has been a most effective and diligent chairman of this committee.

Woodbridge Metcalf
Extension Forester

(Excerpts from Annual Reports of Extension Forester)

NOTES ON THE EARLY HISTORY OF LAS POSADAS
STATE FOREST AND THE 4-H CLUB CAMPS

1928

Early in February a group of 70 people from the Bay area counties met at Las Posadas Forest in Napa County to discuss development of permanent facilities for a 4-H Club Camp. They were very favorably impressed with the beautiful timbered canyon and within a few weeks the six county club councils had each agreed to raise \$100 towards the expense of such a camp and had appointed a committee to proceed with its development. The Extension Forester worked with this committee in laying out the camp site, clearing underbrush, staking out the site for commissary and running the pipe line for the water system. In all this the wish of Mr. & Mrs. Blake that the natural growth be disturbed as little as possible was carried out.

Actual construction work started on the first of April and continued each week end until the first group went into camp in June. Several people from Napa and Sonoma Counties gave liberally of their time and effort during this period and county agents of several of the counties were on the job practically every Sunday.

A log and sand bag dam in creek.

Screened cook house 16 x 24 built.

Water piped 1400 ft. from spring to cook house and two wash racks with pipe received from East Bay Municipal Utility District.

Four latrines built.

All work done at a cost of \$850 plus the contributed labor and each of the counties voted an additional \$35 to make up this amount.

All important tree species near the camp were labelled and the Extension Forester conducted each encampment on a hike for tree identification and simple forestry.

1927

Shower bath houses, a water heating system and a hospital and general utility cabin were erected at Las Posadas.

1930

A small amount of improvement work was done at Las Posadas site this year and several successful camps were held. The swimming pool dam in the creek was repaired and the pool deepened. Some grading work was done on the play ground. Ranger Dean has been very cooperative and intended to construct a series of fire breaks and trails this fall. He died suddenly from acute appendicitis.

1931

Three sleeping platforms were constructed at Las Posadas State Forest 4-H Club Camp.

1932

Very little improvement work at any camp site. Camp in Lassen County cancelled because too few members could afford to attend. Additions to sleeping facilities in girls camp at Las Posadas and inexpensive repairs to swimming hole in the creek.

A severe fire swept into Las Posadas Forest from the north and destroyed all of the fine young stand of timber down to Moore Creek. It was only kept out of the camp site and the surrounding timber by strenuous efforts of Ranger Erickson and the fire crew.

1933

Very hard times. Orange County cancelled its 4-H camp. Very little improvement work done at any camp. The burned timber was given to the Pacific Union College for fuel and the trees were cut by crew of students.

1934

Plans have been drawn for improvement of the water supply and swimming pool facilities at Las Posadas 4-H camp during the winter under the E.C.W. program by the Las Posadas CCC camp. They are also doing a great deal of fire prevention, trail construction and other work in the State Forest which will be of value in conducting 4-H Club camps in future years. The plantation was set out in the 1932 burn by the boys of the CCC camp using trees of several conifer species from the State Nursery.

1935

Through the interest and support of State Forester M. B. Pratt a fine concrete swimming pool and 1300 ft. of intake water pipe were installed at Las Posadas. An access road to the pool site was also built by the CCC to get materials to the site. No improvement work was done during this year by the counties.

1936

Las Posadas State Forest in Napa County is essentially not a recreation site but is maintained as a natural area for the study of forestry and botany and for experiments in tree propagation. However, development of 4-H Club camp grounds for use during a short period in the summer was permitted by the donors and has yielded a large measure of out-door knowledge and enjoyment to club members from Napa, Solano, Marin, Sonoma and Contra Costa counties. The Merritt B. Pratt concrete swimming pool built under the CCC program in the spring of 1935 was brought further towards completion this year. Back filling with earth was completed and repairs to the pipe line were made by a small spike camp crew of CCC workers from Camp Northwestern under the direction of State Ranger Erickson. A small amount of tree planting in the burn was done to extend the plantation set out in 1935. The CCC camp on this property has been standing idle since May 1935 owing to reduction in numbers of the corps which is regrettable as there is a vast amount of fire prevention and improvement work needed in this vicinity.

1937

Las Posadas State Forest is the site of the 4-H Club camp site for the counties of the San Francisco Bay area. No further improvements were added during the year, but some cleanup work at the site and maintenance work on the road was done by some men from the E.R.A. camp which was occupying the CCC camp on the area under the direction of State Ranger Erickson.

1938

Las Posadas 4-H Club camp site at Las Posadas State Forest in Napa County had some clean-up and painting work done on the buildings in advance of the camping season. This was made possible by the caretaker, Bob Wallace, who induced a couple of WPA men to do the work. The paint was some not needed at Whitaker's Forest. After the 4-H Club encampments the University Medical School conducted a very successful camp for diabetic children for two weeks. Acting on an opinion from the Attorney General, the State Board of Forestry confirmed the use of the area by the 4-H Clubs as essentially educational work in conservation.

1939

No comment.

1940

State Forest Ranger Erickson had a small crew of men working at Las Posadas State Forest during the fall and was able to have them build a 4-foot cement sidewalk around the swimming pool at the 4-H Club camp site. This contribution will make it possible to keep the pool in much cleaner condition and will be greatly appreciated.

1941

Very little improvement. The State Forester transferred to the Extension Service two large restaurant-type cooking stoves. One was set up at Las Posadas 4-H Camp and the other at Yuba 4-H Camp.

1942

At our suggestion Ranger Erickson of Napa County planted 125 trees of cork oak at Las Posadas State Forest. Twenty-two additional cork oaks were set out by the writer to test adaptability for interplanting. None of these trees survived.

1943

No comment.

1944

Because of war conditions very little active use or even minimum maintenance work was possible at Las Posadas or other camps.

1945

A minimum amount of upkeep was done at the 4-H Club camp site at Las Posadas Forest in Napa County with the assistance of Ranger Erickson. Each of the six counties contributed \$25 to the maintenance fund and the camp was put in reasonably satisfactory shape for the brief period in which it was in use. Army training groups made some use of the facilities during July and may have done a small amount of improvement work.

1946

Two meetings were held for planning improvements at Las Posadas 4-H Camp. The situation at Las Posadas Forest camp in Napa County which has been used by Bay area counties for the past 18 years, is very uncertain because of the restrictive provisions in the deed of gift of this property. These are so rigid as regards recreational use that the State Division of Forestry may return the property to the donors unless they will agree to constructive multiple use in the future. Discussion of the problem is proceeding at the present time and it is planned that a committee of senior 4-H Club members call upon Mr. & Mrs. Blake in the near future to impress them with the need for such relaxation of the requirements so that the clubs can continue to enjoy this attractive camp site.

1947

The development program of Las Posadas 4-H camp has been interfered with by uncertainty about the ~~permanence~~ of lease privileges, but it now appears that the S.F. Bay counties will be permitted to develop and use the site as has been contemplated (and carried on) for nearly twenty years.