

Terrace Park and Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal

By Carol C. Cole

In 1933 the United States was “in the midst of the worst economic crises in its one hundred and fifty-seven year history. Millions of people were out of work. Millions more were barely surviving on meager wages. Many had lost their savings in the collapse of the country’s banking system. The Dust Bowl was ravaging croplands in the heartland of the nation. The future looked bleak. Indeed, the Great Depression was the worst of times.

But hope lay on the horizon. Franklin Delano Roosevelt had recently been elected president and he promised the struggling nation he would restore its financial structure and help bring economic prosperity back to its citizens. He pledged to restore confidence in the nation’s banking system and put people back to work. He assured the American people that “the only thing to fear is fear itself.’ In short he was offering them ‘a new deal’.”

Recently I’ve been sent information (from which I’ve quoted above) concerning the celebration of the 75th Anniversary of the New Deal. The kickoff of the commemoration will be March 4th, the date on which FDR was inaugurated in 1933. What part did Terrace Park have in the New Deal? One of the programs established was the WPA or Works Progress Administration. Our Log Cabin was a WPA project.

An article by Robert Gundlach, appeared in the August 1977 issue of Village Views concerning the History of Boy Scouting in Terrace Park. Evidently our Troop # 286 was started by a group of interested Terrace Park citizens on May 16, 1933. Somewhat later Albert W. Allison had an idea. I’d like to quote from his letter of August 23, 1977.

“At the time, I was on Council, as was Walter Splain (300 Amherst) who was also regional engineer for the eastern half of Hamilton County, in charge of all WPA projects.

Council, working with Walt Splain, obtained a project for Terrace Park to clean up the gravel pit, where all our garbage was dumped, and to remove diseased and damaged trees along our streets. ...

I had been a Boy Scout and also was interested in log cabins so it was natural that the idea of building the cabin as a meeting place for the Scouts, and using the ‘free’ labor available to us, occurred to me.

However, it could not be built for the exclusive use of the Scouts, so in our application it was designated as a Village recreation facility. At the time there was no recreation program in the Village so really the cabin was intended for the Scouts and it was known as the ‘Scout Cabin’.

Walt Splain was able to get a good axman assigned to our project so all we needed was logs for the walls, lumber for the roof, door and window frames and stone for the fireplace and chimney. At that time John ‘Hans’ Gehrig worked for Cincinnati Gas and Electric Co. so I asked him if he could get us some old power line poles. Hans said, ‘How many and how long?’ C. G. & E. had taken over and was dismantling a traction line in Clermont County, which had poles to support the trolley wire. Hans had the poles we needed delivered to the site.

We then had the WPA workers, who were removing trees, save a few of the best ones as logs. These were hauled to a sawmill, then being operated in Mainville, by a Mr.

Greeley, to be sawed into boards and timbers. These were used for rafters, roof boards, the ceiling, door, etc. The beams supporting the ceiling were, I believe, hewed from some of the poles like those used for the walls.

The axman was very good but had never built a log cabin and did not know how to notch the logs at the corners. You can see where the first course or two of logs are poorly notched but after I showed him what it should look like the upper courses are much neater. For the chimney and fireplace we located a supply of good creek rock and Walt Splain found a really fine stone mason among his men.”

Those of you who remember the log cabin behind the Startzman’s 223 Rugby home may be interested to know that the early Scout Committee met there for some time in the early years. Although the Log Cabin at 718 Elm Avenue has been used mainly by the Boy Scouts, it has had other uses as well. According to Pat Fehl the Terrace Park Junior Garden Club met there for 2-3 years in the late 1930s and early 1940s. Certainly the area outside the cabin continues to be used for recreational purposes. Recently it’s been the venue for the annual pre-Labor Day Garage Sale. It’s also been the site of several Terrace Park Players’ outdoor productions including 200 By George.

The WPA’s log cabin was built in 1936. 50 years after the founding of Troup 286 an addition was made to the original cabin more than doubling its size. When an addition was badly needed 50 years after the founding of our Boy Scout Troop 286, it was largely paid for by Robert Haines.

Our picture shows the 1933 cabin on the right and the addition on the left.



The log cabin on Elm was due in part to FDR’s New Deal