

Appendix 70 to
THE HISTORY OF CHEHAW COUNCIL
Expeditions to the Okefenokee Swamp

1943 Region 6 Camporee



At Christmas of 1943, Chehaw Council, Suwannee River Area Council, and Northeast Georgia Council all attended a Region 6 sponsored campout in the Okefenokee Swamp. Chehaw Council continued with a long history of Okefenokee Swamp camping extending into the 1970s when the State Park Service prohibited even the scouts from camping on Billy's Island.

The neckerchief slide was given to Mike Greene by Ralph Ellis who also gave Mike Greene the photo on the next page and provided the history of the Chehaw Council scouts who attended the camporee. The slide might have been given to the scouts attending the Region 6 camporee since no evidence of a Chehaw Council camporee was found. Mr. Ellis was not sure.

The neckerchief slide and its Indianhead design was a stock national BSA design as other councils produced slides with the same design around this time. The neckerchief slide is made of thin leather and has two rivets holding it together on the back.



At Christmas of 1943, Chehaw Council, Suwannee River Area Council, and Northeast Georgia Council all attended a Region 6 sponsored campout in the Okefenokee Swamp. The photo is of some of the boys at the only house left standing on Billy's Island. The Chehaw Council contingent consisted of one scout from Troop 21 in Americus and the rest of the scouts were from Ashburn.

(Photo from Ralph Ellis. Used by permission).

Searching for Ashburn are scouts from a 1943 trip to the Okefenokee

by J. Michael Greene

Going to the Okefenokee Swamp and camping on Billy's Island has been a tremendously exciting event for scouts from southwest Georgia since the 1920s. These expeditions ended in the 1970s when the Georgia state park service decided not to allow even the Boy Scouts from camping on Billy's Island.

The scouts launched at Stephen C. Foster State Park on the southwest side of the swamp rather than the tourist entrance near Waycross. A single road built on a raised roadbed ran the 20 miles through the swamp from Fargo, Georgia, to Stephen C. Foster State Park. A one-third mile canal ran from the park to the Suwannee River. Billy's Island was about 10 miles up the Suwannee River from its

headwaters. The island was covered with raccoons, bears, and other wild animals. At night, the swamp was dotted with pairs of orange eyes belonging to the many alligators. There was an ongoing competition between the scouts and the raccoons, with the scouts trying to store their food so that the raccoons could not get it at night. The scouts tried hanging their coolers from trees and between trees, as well as placing heavy items on the top of the coolers. The raccoons were the clear winners no matter what the scouts tried. The raccoons were fussy eaters as well. They would take only the meat.

At Christmas of 1943 (or possibly 1944), Boy Scouts from Chehaw Council, Suwannee River Area Council, and Northeast Georgia Council all

attended a special Region 6 sponsored campout on Billy's Island in the Okefenokee Swamp. The Chehaw Council contingent consisted of eight scouts from Ashburn and one scout from Americus. The photo shows part of the contingent sitting on the porch of the only house remaining on Billy's Island from the logging town. Very few other details of the trip are known. If any of those eight scouts read this article, please contact Mike Greene at JMICHAEL-GREENE@BELLSOUTH.NET or 229 924-8412.

Many additional photos and information on these expeditions can be found in the book *The History of Chehaw Council*, which is available free at CHEHAWCOUNCIL-BOOK.COM.



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Hay production seminar in Tifton

Whether you are new to hay production or an old hand

unique in the Southeast. It is essentially the only opportu-

person from the same farm) by Feb. 17. Registration includes

(Article from January 25, 2012, *The Wiregrass Farmer* of Ashburn, Ben Baker, Editor. Used here by permission.)

Enlargement of Article for Better Reading

by J. Michael Greene

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**Four variations of the patch given to scouts from Chehaw Council
in the 1960s and 1970s.**



CP 102 (58mm x 82 mm, Dark Sky)



CP 102 (58mm x 82 mm, Regular Sky)



CP 103 (80mm x 97 mm) Regular Letters



CP 103 (80mm x 97 mm) Thick Letters

**OKEFENOKEE EXPEDITION PATCHES
FROM OTHER COUNCILS**



Atlanta Area Council 1950 Expedition



Atlanta Area Council 1951 Expedition



Troop 96 most likely from Central Georgia Council.

STEPHEN C. FOSTER STATE PARK

Photos from the entrance to the swamp from Fargo, Georgia
was through the Stephen C. Foster State Park.



Park Headquarters

(Photos from J. Hubert Greene. Used with permission)



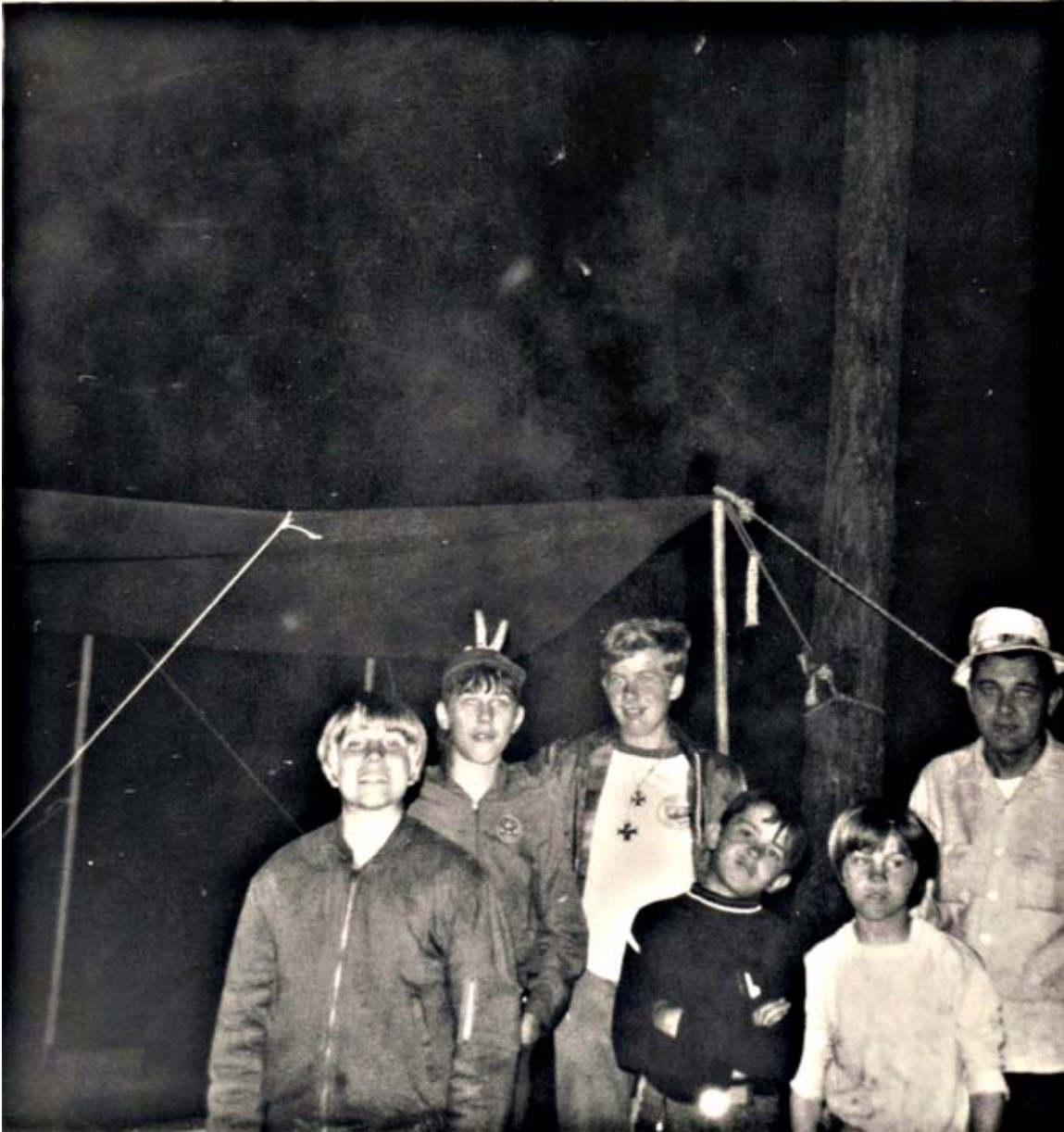
Chehaw Council launching into the Canal at Park Headquarters that lead to the Suwannee River. Photo is most likely from the 1971 trip.



The Canal to the Suwannee River. Photo is most likely from the 1971 trip.

BILLY'S ISLAND IN 1973

Photos from Billy's Island in 1973 which was the last year that the State Park allowed camping on Billy's Island. These are photos of Troop 20 which camped from March 22 to March 24, 1973.



Most likely a “Coon Patrol”

(Left to Right: Billy Shattles, Ben Andrews, Lee Sheppard, Unknown, Unknown, Bill Wages)



Above is the reason why “Coon Patrols” at night were needed. After years of scavenging scouts camping on Billy’s Island, hundreds of raccoons were very, very good at stealing food even from metal coolers strung between trees. Several years after the State Park stopped all camping on Billy’s Island (mid-1070s) a disease killed all of the raccoons.





One of the thousands of gators

At night hundreds of gators could be seen in the swamp surrounding Billy's Island. Their eyes glowed orange and they grunted. The sight was one that no scout ever forgot. As there was no edge to the island - only an ever watery soil until it was nothing but water, scouts did not have to be told not to venture near the swamp edge at night. In all the writers' years of going to the swamp only a scoutmaster got lost at night.



Another Gator

(Photo from Gerald Findley. Used with permission)

THE TOWN ON BILLY'S ISLAND

A town of over 700 persons was located on Billy's Island in the 1930s for the purpose of cutting the timber in the swamp. The village included a railroad, which came in from Fargo to the west and featured a turn around for the trains. The town was large enough to have its own theater. Souvenir hunting was a favorite of the young scouts who thought they were finding the items for the first time. They did not realize that the items had been found by scouts for years. The key was that there was no way to get the items off the island as the island was deep in the swamp. We had to canoe or boat in and out and space was limited to just their packs which were already full.



**The whistle was to blow if you got lost. We all wore them.
Ben Andrews is the scout.**



Billy Shattles is the scout.



Martin Peacock is the scout.



Lee Sheppard is the scout.



Scout is unknown.