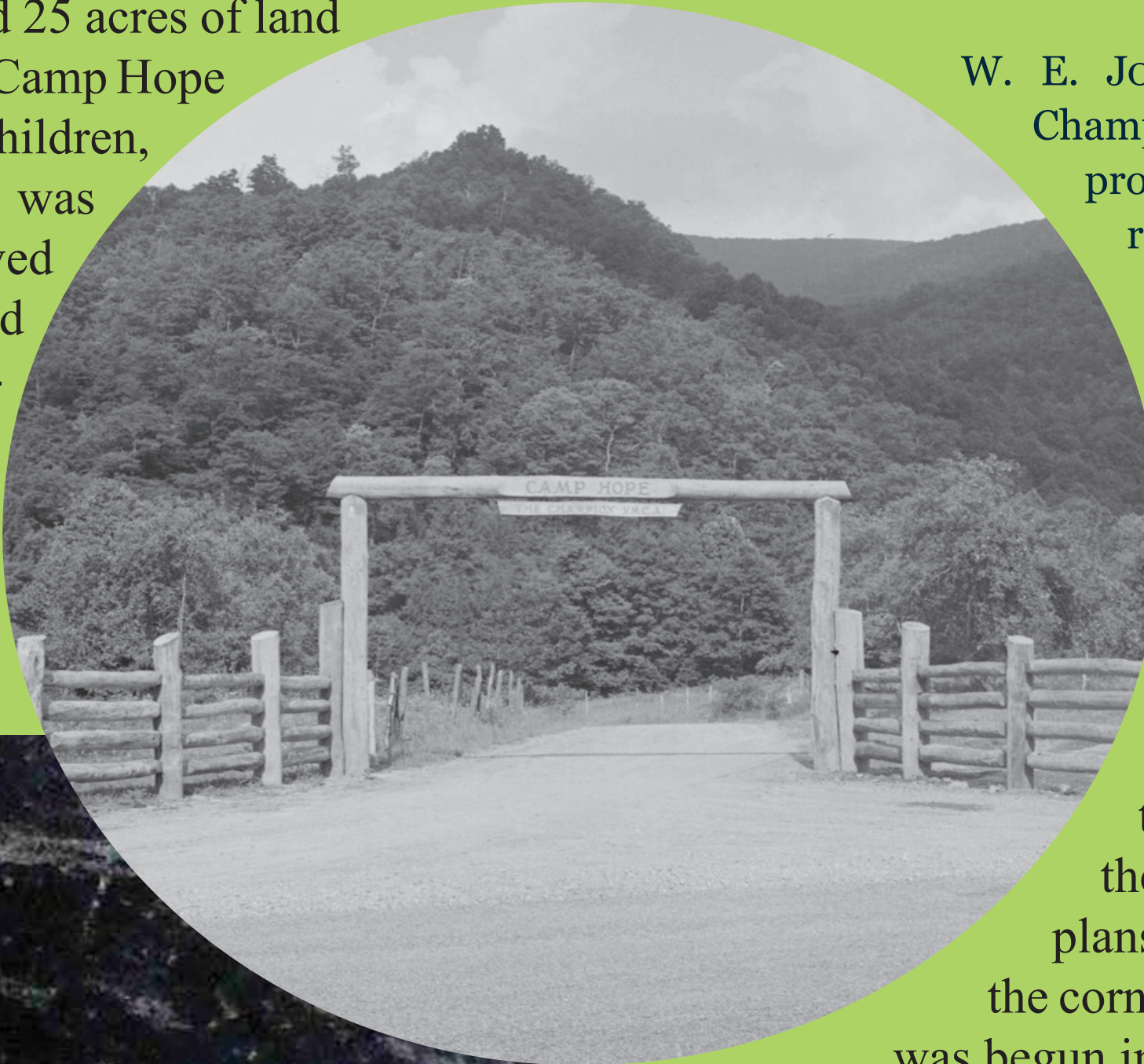


# CAMP HOPE

**“Camp Hope is a wonderful influence in the lives of the boys and girls of Canton, and it must continue to be an influence in the future.”**

**Champion YMCA Annual Report for 1926**

PETER G. THOMSON AND REUBEN B. ROBERTSON purchased 25 acres of land along the East Fork of Pigeon River in 1926 and opened Camp Hope for employees of the Champion Fibre Company, their children, and members of the Champion YMCA. The property was acquired from the Burress family, whose farmhouse served as the center of camp activities until a clubhouse could be built. The Canton Civitan Club sponsored the construction of six rustic cabins at a cost of \$150 apiece. The cost to attend camp was \$5 per week. The original four-week camp session was divided into two weeks for boys and two weeks for girls, but the camp season was later extended to six weeks.



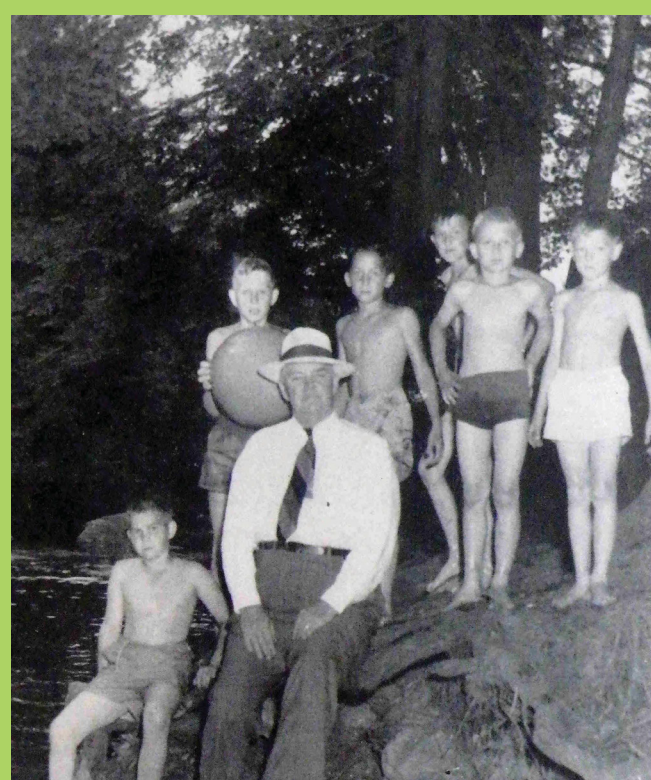
W. E. JONES, general secretary of the Champion YMCA, wrote in 1926 about progress at the camp in his year-end review and claimed that when completed, “it will be a beauty spot worth looking at.”



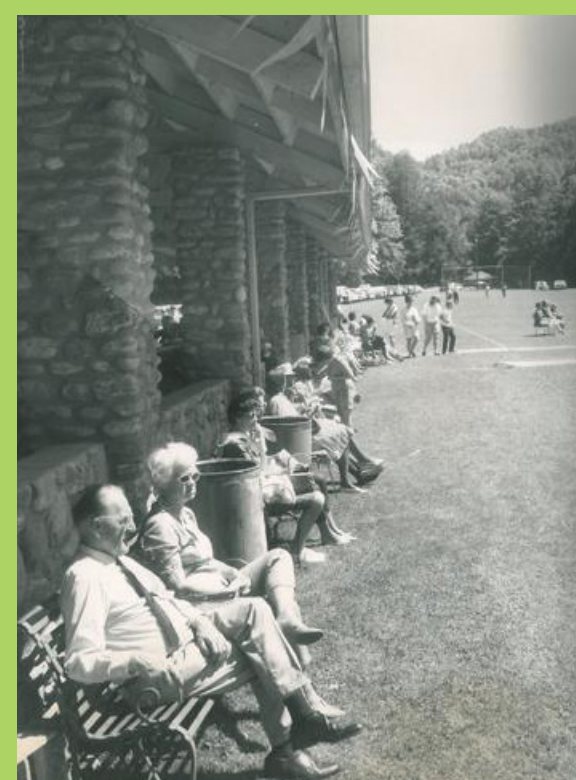
CAMP HOPE improvements continued through the late 1920s until the site was abandoned for several years during the Great Depression and rebuilt at Lake Logan on the West Fork of Pigeon River. Beginning in 1936, the Y’s Men’s Club announced their intention to reclaim the East Fork site and extensive improvements. The club’s plans included constructing the rustic Lodge, which became the cornerstone of the Camp Hope’s facilities. The pavilion wing was begun in 1947 and completed in 1951, around the same time the kitchen and dining room were added to the building. The Caretaker’s House was erected in 1953, and the stone cabins were built in 1960. Summer camp sessions filled to capacity for the first time in the 1950s and flourished through the 1960s. Camp Hope hosted numerous groups and events including Pisgah High School’s football camp, band camp, family reunions, class reunions, and church picnics. Champion opened its 5-, 10-, 15- and 20-year service parties to whole families, not just employees. The Champion Old Timers Club, founded by Rueben Robertson, held its annual dinner meeting at the camp.



Hope Robertson, namesake of Camp Hope, enjoyed an active childhood and a love of athletic games and competition. A gifted tennis player and golfer, Robertson supported youth activities and used her influence to promote good health, good sportsmanship, and sound principles of life. She was actively involved in improving the schools of Buncombe, Haywood, and Henderson counties. Camp Hope was formally dedicated in August 1953 with the presentation of Hope Robertson’s portrait that still hangs over the fireplace.



CAMP HOPE’s close affiliation with Champion meant that the property served a greater variety of uses than most camps, although it offered traditional summer camp sessions for boys and girls. Camp Hope provided recreational opportunities to Champion employees and their families, YMCA members, school clubs and teams, churches, civic organizations, and community groups. This fundamental embrace of the Canton community at large has distinguished Camp Hope from its beginnings and sets it apart from the vast majority of summer camps and retreat centers in WNC.

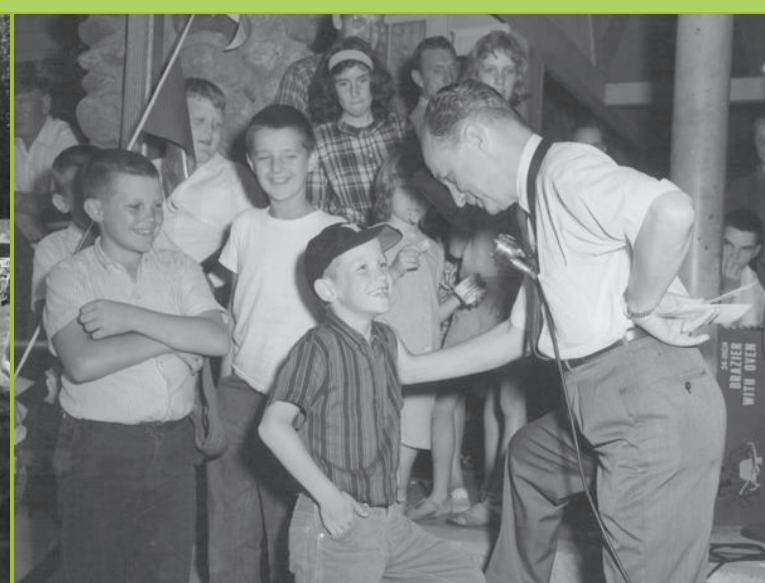


“The ruggedness still remains and the terrain is the same...except it has been slightly polished in places and cabins are now far more modern than in yesteryear.”



“Summer at Camp,” *The Log*, July 1960

**In 1975, the Haywood County Farm Festival opened at Camp Hope. County extension agents and volunteers organized the festival to celebrate the harvest of local farmers and growers, and the festival eventually evolved into the Haywood County Fair, an annual event that continues to the present.**



Photos from “Camp Hope Then and Now,” *The Mountaineer*, April 17, 2013

On August 17, 2021, flooding from the remnants of Tropical Storm Fred caused extensive damage along the Pigeon River and throughout the Town of Canton, including at Camp Hope. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) issued a Major Disaster declaration for the Town of Canton on September 8, 2021, making federal assistance for repair and replacement of the Town’s infrastructure, including Camp Hope, available through FEMA’s Public Assistance Program.

Photos from *The Mountaineer*, September 13, 2021

