

# WOOLER SCOUTS

## 1968-79

### SCHOOL PURCHASE

In May 1967 the Committee voted to buy the School for a dollar from the School Board. The Wooler School was well known to the 1st Wooler community. The Scouts met in the School for several years after 1955, as had the Group Committee. It was decided that the two second floor classrooms would be painted by parents in September 1968 and used as the primary spaces for the Cubs (East) and Scouts (West), with the ability to close large pocket doors to separate the two rooms. The third story would be used for storage of dozens of the School's old press-back style classroom chairs that could be retrieved when needed for meetings and public events. The Rover Crew immediately proposed the creation of a "Rover Den" in the western side of the school basement, and by early April were cutting and milling their own lumber for the project from Wilbur McColl's property.

### FUNDRAISING EFFORTS

#### THEY WERE SOAKED BUT HAPPY

Mayor James MacDonald was on hand to welcome members and leaders of the Wooler Boy Scout Troop who braved the rain to carry out a 50-mile bike-a-thon as planned on Saturday. The trip took them through Frankford, Trenton, Carrying Place, Brighton and back to Wooler.

Photo by Eldon Kemp



While the School was certainly a bargain for one dollar, it was soon clear that it needed a new furnace, new water heater, and funds for building insurance and other operating costs. This required the Group Committee to increase the number and creativity of fundraising activities in the late 1960s.

Thankfully, the Wooler community responded generously. Corn was donated for corn roasts, and apples for Apple Day. The Wooler Women's Institute donated about \$100 a year for several years. Bike-a-thons were tried, and the 1970 Walk-a-thon raised \$800, or about half the cost of the new furnace. An adult dance to support the furnace purchase in 1970 included a live band from Toronto, attended by over 100 folks. The Scouts made good money parking cars at the Brighton Speedway.



Left: 1st Wooler Bike -a -Thon, 1971

Above: Everett Dalmas makes the local news.

## THE NEW SCOUT HALL

The new Scout Hall provided the Group Committee with its own space for fund-raising and seemed to fill a need for space for other community activities. The Wooler Senior Citizens Group asked to use the Hall in 1968. Teen dances were held, supported by a canteen that made a modest income from pop, potato chip, and chocolate bar sales. The canteen was also used for banquets, dances, and pancake breakfasts.

In short, the Wooler School was ideally suited to be re-purposed as a Scout Hall. Its large halls provided spaces for active games that would otherwise be held in a gym, such as ball hockey or 'murder ball.' Large open spaces upstairs were ideal for drying and repairing tents and tarps and were used for extra-curricular activities that ranged from skateboarding to Frisbee games. The old school ball diamond on the north-east corner of the property was frequently used by 1st Wooler and others in the community.

## INTRODUCING THE "VENTURERS"

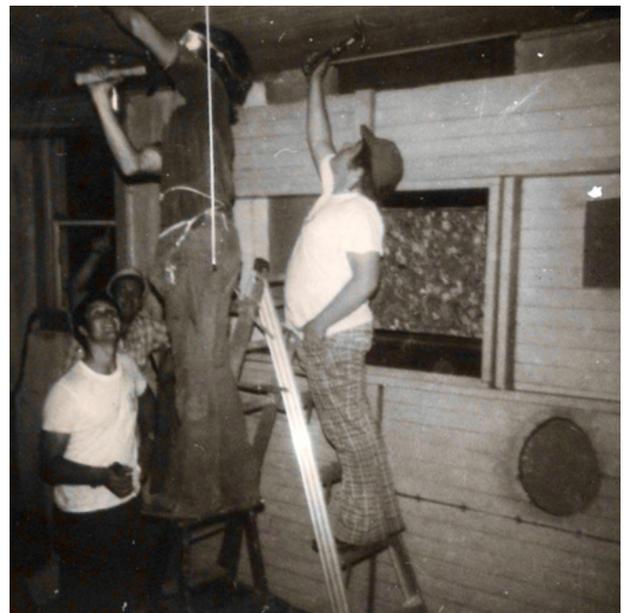
In 1967, the introduction of the Venturer program by Scouts Canada for boys aged 14-17 led to the creation of the 1st Wooler Venturer Company that included Paul Poland, Tony Hoard, Dave Fox, and Everett Dalmas, with Wilbur McColl acting as the new Venturer 'Advisor.' Registration was \$1.50, dues for each meeting was 25 cents, and the fine for cursing was also 25 cents. By 1974 the Scout Hall included a "Venturer Den" on the East side of the basement, similar to the Rover Den.



First hike, Venturer Company, November 17, 1972  
Left to Right: Henry Poland, Dan Radcliffe, Fred Powell, Ray Pineo, Harold Dalmas, unidentified scouts.

## A PLACE TO CALL HOME

The Rover and Venturer Dens in the Hall's large basement featured used couches and chairs, and sound systems made up of a mix of old car, stereo and homemade speakers. Often used by the Scouts for Patrol Meetings, the Dens offered a look at teenage projects, canoe building, and slot-car racing sets. The basement soon sported a ping-pong/pool table, as well as providing storage space for a growing inventory of camping equipment - canoes, patrol boxes, enough gear to build towers and rope bridges, and several tents and tarps.



Building the Venturer Den in 1973.  
Including Harold Dalmas, Fred Powell, Hank Poland, Dan Radcliffe.

"Many evenings, weekends and holidays we were there and not on the streets somewhere getting in trouble. It was our youth centre."

- Mike Smith, Former 1st Wooler Scout

## A HUB FOR YOUTH

In a small town with little to do, the Scout Hall provided a badly needed space for youth activities. Indeed, beyond the many adult dances, bingos, and banquets, the Hall became a bit of a drop-in center for the Venturers, Rovers and their friends. The Rover's new rock-band named "Tryton" held several 'jam sessions' and played for several teen dances at the Hall in the early 1970s. The band included Dennis Turner on lead guitar and vocals, Mike Smith on bass guitar, Kevin Hietala on drums, and Grant Gazley on keyboards.

They would also be joined by Scott Poupard and Rodney Graham for the odd jam. The late-night rock jams at the Hall were probably behind the Group Committee decision to establish a curfew for use of the hall in 1973 – 11 pm on weeknights and 1 am on weekends.

The many activities now associated with the Wooler Scout Hall seemed to help with the recruitment of members and volunteers. This growing community engagement was needed as the 1973 energy crisis made heating the large building even more expensive. As costly as it was, there were advantages to having a dedicated space while other Scouting groups often had to rely upon church basements and other temporary spaces.

The 1970s was a successful decade for 1st Wooler. District membership information shows an average annual 1st Wooler membership of about 50 leaders and boys for 1970-1979. Group Committee information shows an average of about 35 leaders and boys as members each year during the 1960s. Brownie and Guide membership remained steady over this time.



## 1ST WOOLER SCOUTS BUILDING SKILLS FOR LIFE

With well-trained and committed leaders, and lots of great equipment, the Cubs and Scouts were very active all-season campers. Locally, they mostly hiked and camped on the properties of local supporters at places known as Vinegar Hill, Crowe's (later Dorland's), and Pott's Island. On one trip they moved patrol boxes full of winter camping gear by toboggan up Vinegar hill and camped out in -20 degree nights.

Some camped without tents and navigated by map and compass for several days on survival camps. A longer summer training camp was often held behind the Dorland's farm, with more time to have fun building towers and bridges using ropes and local materials – something not likely supported by today's insurance requirements.

The Rovers often camped at the Turner family's hunting camp, or at the Gazley cottage, on an Island. During one camp at the Turners, the locals blew up a beaver dam, with the resulting flood washing out an eight-foot section of the access road. Putting their woodcraft skills to the test, the Rovers managed to build a bridge to get themselves and their vehicles safely home.

The 1st Wooler Venturer Company turned this thirst for adventure into a series of annual one-week canoe trips beginning in 1974, that some carried forward into their Rover years. Often in Algonquin Park, the canoe trips were mostly paid for by the proceeds from Teen Dances and 'Harold's Haunted House,' set up on the third story of the Scout Hall during annual Fun Fairs in the mid-70's.

1ST WOOLER SCOUTS LEAVE ON A 10 MILE, 24 HOUR HIKE: MAY 21, 1972. HENRY POLAND, LEFT TO RIGHT: HAROLD DALMAS, DAN RADECLIFFE, RAY PINEO, FRED POWELL.

## "OPERATION ALERT"

In 1975, the Quinte Region started an annual series of specialized camps known as "Operation Alert." It was described as an 'overnight outdoor wide-area game in which teams of four Scouts would spend about 20 hours completing a course designed to test their spirit of adventure and their presence of mind.' Each team was required to navigate their way between "projects," including during the night, to tackle a series of challenges such as: building a rope-less bridge; boiling water in a paper bag; applying emergency First Aid to a gory looking dummy; or tying a giant clove hitch around a tree in an area filled with rattle-snakes - or so they said. Operation Alert would continue for 40 years, with each year organized around a theme such as Viking Days, Knights of Old, Explorers, Super-Hero's, or Prospectors, and in the early years featured 'friendly and enemy posts,' which certainly added to the excitement, especially in the dark.

If the truth be told, events like Operation Alert and the intricate system of badges awarded by the Scouting and Guide movement were incentives to take on new challenges that many Wooler youth were already eager to tackle. Hiking, backpacking, winter camping, and canoeing promised adventure, and the heat, cold, bugs, poison ivy, sleeping on the ground, and cooking (sometimes burning) meals over open fires did not seem a deterrent. It was a win-win situation, with more adventure came more badges. After a particularly adventurous 3-4 years, 1st Wooler Scouts Bob Lawson, Victor Poland, and Dave Powell received Chief's Scout's Awards in June 1977 at Camp Sumac in Oshawa.

Another source of funds for the Venturers were Wintario Grants, which paid for half of the transportation costs to send 1st Wooler's largest ever group of eight boys to the 4th Canadian Jamboree held in Cabot Park on Prince-Edward Island in July 1977. Attended by Steve Fox, Dave Powell, Jerry Powell, Chris Rose, Don St. Denis, Tom Payne, Terry Ohl, and Glen Richards, with Harold Dalmas as the Venturer Advisor. The group travelled to P.E.I in three vehicles with Harold, Tom Payne, and Ron Smith at the wheel, visiting Quebec City along the way.



### SUMMER TRAVEL CAMP, 1975

**32 KM IN 72 HOURS**

Left to right: Jim McColl, Todd Scott, Al Hennessy.

## 1ST WOOLER VISITS P.E.I.

Attended by over 16,000 youth from across Canada, the 1977 gathering was notable for the appearance of singer Anne Murray as the star of a giant beach concert. It was also the first Canadian Jamboree where light-weight camping gear was used by most groups, as opposed to the heavy canvas tents that had been used by 1st Wooler since the 1950's.

However, the light-weight tent poles were no match for the epic ocean winds in P.E.I., and the Jamboree bought every piece of 2" by 2" wood in the province to allow the groups to replace their aluminium tent poles as they snapped in the wind.

As recalled by Harold Dalmas, "as Dave Powell tried to set up one of the tents, it filled up like a kite from the wind with Dave only holding on to one of ropes, I told him to not let go or we would never see it again!"



"Wild Man" featured in Venturers "Harold Haunted House", 1978



The Rovers singing around the campfire, 1970. Left to right: Mike Smith, Tony Hoard, Grant Gazley, Dennis Turner



"Dracula" featured in "Harold Haunted House", 1978



Scouts before Fall Hike, November 4, 1972  
Left to Right: Bob Lawson, Steve Fox, Jerry Powell, Fred Poland.

## **1ST WOOLER SCOUTS EXCEL**

At the District level, 1st Wooler performed well at the annual Cub and Scout camps held at Presqu'île and Crowe Bay, and Venturer gatherings at Camp Saganaska at the Vanderwater Conservation Area.

Addition of a Beaver "Colony" (boys 5-7) in 1978-79 brought 1st Wooler to an all-time high of 60 registered members. The leaders for the Beavers were Bob and Jane Reilly, 1978, and Penny Rose, 1978-79. The Wolf Cub Pack Leaders during the 1970s included: Vera Powell, 1969-75; Dorthy Payne, 1973-75; John Grummitt, 1975; and, Dale Mallory, 1975-80.

The Scout Leaders in this time were: Allen Fox 1969-72; Earl Ward, 1973; Mike Smith, 1972-80 and, Everett Dalmas, 1972-80. Venturer Advisors: Jim Radcliffe, 1973; Everett Dalmas, 1974; Ron Smith, 1975-77; and, Harold Dalmas, 1977. Rover Skippers were: Wilbur McColl, 1964-74, and Ron Smith 1975. The Brownie Leader was Jackie Turncliffe, 1970-75 and the Guide Leader Martha Lafleur, 1970. By the mid-1970s Brownies and Guides were no longer working with the 1st Wooler Group Committee. Group Committee Chairs during the 1970s were: Jim Lawson 1970-74; Jean Poland 1975; Vera Powell 1976-77; and, Barb Gunter 1978-79.

### **Right: Scout Christmas Party 1975**

Back Row Left to Right: Fred Powell, Glenn McColl, Bob Lawson, Terry Ohl, Tom Payne, Chris Rose, Vic Poland, Mike Smith (Scout Leader)

Middle Row: Al Hennessy, Dave Powell, Tracy Ohl, Terry Grummitt, Randy Ohl, Doug Payne, Don Pineo, Larry Payne.

Front Row: Peter Fox, Tim Tunstead, Jim McColl, Steve Terry, Steve Trower.



Above: Wooler Scout "All Stars" vs. Brighton in Ball Hockey, 1975

