



## Summer Camps

### Camp Tee-La-Daw

Years of discussion and negotiation, which started in 1950,<sup>1</sup> came to fruition in the early summer of 1954 when a license of occupation was signed for a girls' camp at Waterton that would become known as Camp Tee-La-Daw.<sup>2</sup> It was the only all-girls camp built in the park.

Owned and operated, under the auspices of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Taylor Stake of Raymond,<sup>3</sup> the camp was located on the south shore of Lower Waterton Lake previously occupied by the Cedar Cabin.<sup>4</sup>



*The sod turning for the camp drew a group of enthusiastic supporters eager to see their dream come true for a girls' camp in the park. (Photo: Raymond Historical Society)*

The \$13,000 facility was large enough to accommodate 50 girls who slept in beds that folded up so the dormitory could double as a daytime recreation area. Connected to the dormitory by a breezeway were a dining room and kitchen. A special feature of the building was a double fireplace which had both an indoor and outdoor hearth for versatility in all weather.<sup>5</sup> Funds to build the camp were raised by donations and

events such as pantry sales, bazaars, catering and peanut sales which raised a total of \$7,500. Adult work parties were formed to save on construction costs and the potential young campers pitched in to paint and make simple improvements.<sup>6</sup>

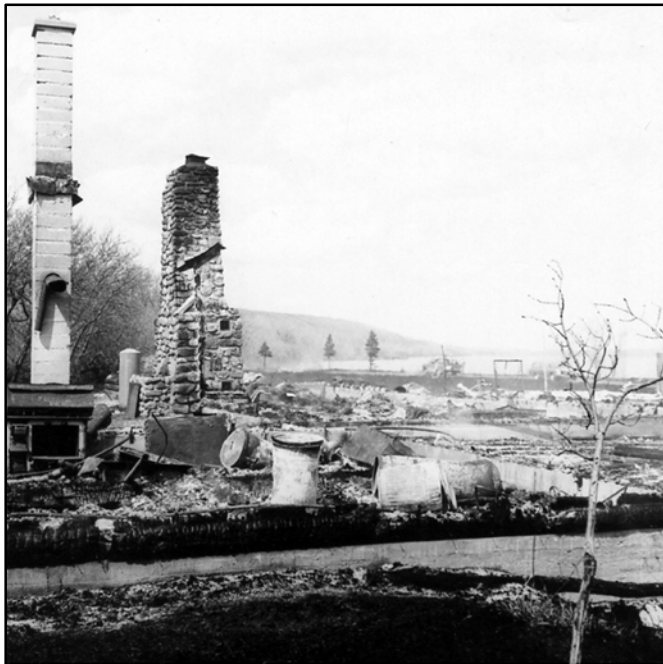
Two months and two days after the sod was turned, the camp opened and was toured by 400 visitors who were shown around and entertained. Some 64 young campers were enrolled for the first camp session.<sup>7</sup> By summer's end six groups of 44 girls each spent three days at Tee-La-Daw.

One anonymous camper who, years later, recalled her annual Waterton adventures noted the emphasis was on fun and ensuring fellow campers had fun as well. "The big thing was to make sure that we had enough shaving cream, toothpaste and cellophane and things to play tricks on people and see who could plan the best tricks," she wrote. The indoor/outdoor fireplace allowed the girls to stay close to the camp for evening events and mornings always started with a flag raising ceremony.<sup>8</sup>



*Work on the new camp went quickly with volunteers and professional contractors working side by side. (Photo: Raymond Historical Society)*

During the day the girls went swimming, hiked, and did handicrafts.<sup>9</sup> The camp was equipped with a donated piano and furniture, and a locker room as well as an outdoor amphitheatre with a stage and floodlights for evening activities. In subsequent years the camp operated for two full months for girls 12 years of age and over.



*The double fireplace, second from left, stands among the rubble following the fire that destroyed the camp. (Photo: WLNP Archives)*

Girls of all denominations were welcome. By 1960, two sessions were added for married women.<sup>10</sup> The camp was so well situated below Knight's Hill that it was virtually hidden from the view of motorists travelling on the entrance road. Many visitors were unaware of the camp's presence.<sup>11</sup>

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The end of the camp came unexpectedly on May 19, 1970. After checking on the camp May 18 and moving in replacement furniture, the six-member board of directors locked up, confident the camp had wintered well. Unfortunately, after they left a fire broke out at the site. Townsite

volunteer fire fighters, park wardens and park maintenance staff responded. It took two hours to extinguish the fire which burned the camp to the ground. Mop up activities

carried on through early evening. About two acres of nearby mixed forest were consumed as well.<sup>12</sup> The cause of the fire was not disclosed and the building was only partially insured. The fire's devastation ended plans for that summer's camp.

The Taylor Stake decided not to rebuild the camp given the federal government's plans to disallow private camp ownership as announced in its new master plan a year later.<sup>13</sup> The site was later restored to a natural state.



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<sup>1</sup> Chris Morrison, *Waterton Chronicles: People and Their National Park*, (Lethbridge, Goathaunt Publishing, 2008), 129.

<sup>2</sup> The name Tee-La-Daw was said to be Swedish for “sweet little lady. “Tee-La-Daw Camp Burns,” *Lethbridge Herald* May 20, 1970, 2. WLNP Archives, Box 130, Item 18.

<sup>3</sup> A stake is an administrative unit composed of multiple congregations in the LDS movement.

<sup>4</sup> The Cedar Cabin was home of the Chief Park Warden until 1951 at which time the CPW moved into a new residence in the townsite at 206 Cameron Falls Drive.

<sup>5</sup> It is believed this fireplace was built by local stone mason Walter Foster, a long time park resident.

<sup>6</sup> “MIA Girls Home In Waterton Started,” *Raymond Recorder*, June 25, 1954, 1. WLNP Archives, Box 130, Item 18

<sup>7</sup> This was 14 girls more than allowed. “Stake Girls Home in Waterton Officially Opened,” *Raymond Recorder*, Aug. 13, 1954, front page. WLNP Archives, Box 130, Item 18.

<sup>8</sup> *A Planting of the Lord: A Century of the Latter-day Saint in Raymond: 1901-2001* (Salt Lake City: Bryan Crockett and Carrie Long of Publishers Press 2001), 482.

<sup>9</sup> “Wonderful Waterton,” *Lethbridge Herald*, Aug. 12, 1955, 12. WLNP Archives, Box 130, Item 18.

<sup>10</sup> Chris Morrison, *Waterton Chronicles*, 130.

<sup>11</sup> Chris Morrison, *Waterton Chronicles*, 129.

<sup>12</sup> Resource Conservation Report for 1970, 14. WLNP Archives, Box 114, Item 1.

<sup>13</sup> “Federal parks policy to ban private leasing,” *Lethbridge Herald*, April 27, 1971, 12. WLNP Archives, Box 130, Item 17.