

The Great Fire

For three days in May, 1930, fire ravaged our beloved Camp Yawgoog. An unusually dry winter and spring, coupled with strong winds set the stage for what would be one of the worst disasters to hit Yawgoog.

On the afternoon of May 4, 1930, a fire broke out in the nearby woods of Connecticut. Driven by strong winds, the fire was soon approaching from the North and West. As luck would have it, J. Harold Williams and Gus Anthony were staying in camp with their families after conducting a leader training course. They spotted the tower of smoke, which soon enveloped the pond. They went to get help and prepared to fight the approaching fire as best they could. There were no fire departments nearby, nor were there any telephones in camp. Help came in the form of men and boys from Rockville.

The fire came first through Sandy Beach and continued along through Medicine Bow and onto Three Point. At times, the people fighting the fire had to wade into the pond to escape the fire and smoke. Other times they ran for their lives as the fire chased them through camp. During that first day of fire, the efforts of the firefighters paid off as they were able to save the lodges at Medicine Bow and Three Point. Two small cabins were lost to the flames over at Rock Point. Much of the "camp proper" was, by this time, completely burned.

The following day, May 5, 1930 revealed a

Although a group went over to try away and were forced to hemlocks go up like jumped onto Phillips to a black and Gone were the and giant pines. fact is that is one of the few camp where still grow. The back onto the Fort Hilton and down the lumber camp.

The Shannock Fire camp with a borrowed Rhode Island and soon set up Careful inspection of the photo will A makeshift platform of docks was used to

J. Harold Williams states that on the third day, May 6, fire broke out again along Wincheck Pond and burned for a short while until it was finally contained and the fires were all out. In *The Yawgoog Story*, written by Williams in 1965, he states "It was heart-breaking. Tent floors and docks were burned, our beautiful woods, except for about 50 acres, were black ruin. Our buildings were saved. We began at once to think of reforestation and how we could operate that summer."

Well, history tells us that the early pioneers of Yawgoog, did, in fact, figure out how they could operate that season some 75 years ago. Much evidence of their reforestation projects exists in camp today. Careful observation while hiking will still reveal the burned out hulks of old tree trunks, especially in the Southwest Corner of the property and along the Symbol Rock trail.

While it is unlikely a fire of the magnitude of 1930 will occur again, the Yawgoog Fire Department is well trained and equipped to fight wildland fires. Included in the firefighting arsenal is a floating portable pump that can be used anywhere there is a water supply. This, combined with the help and mutual aid of neighboring departments as well as the Rhode Island Division of Forestry, insures continued protection for our beloved Camp.

new fire across the pond at Hemlock Ledge.

to fight the fire, they were driven watch the giant pines and torches. The fire soon Island and reduced it barren landscape. beautiful birches An interesting Phillips Island spots in white birches fire jumped mainland near continued on road and back into

Department arrived in pumper from Auburn, on Three Point beach. reveal the massive size of the fire.

get the fire truck close to the pond. A fire

