



ORGANIC ROOTS

THE NORTH COUNTRY SCHOOL & CAMP TREETOPS BULLETIN



REMEMBERING MILDRED ALICE BROOKS, DECEMBER 5, 1914 – JANUARY 20, 2009

Breaking Ground for the New Student-Staff Residence

Friends' Weekend Recap and Photo Galleries

The Sound (and Sights) of Music

By Karen Culpepper

An image from the summer lingers in my mind's eye. Children and staff from Junior Camp are lined up side-by-side next to the woodpile outside the sugar shack. On this bright community morning, the potentially tedious job of stacking firewood is anything but, as log after log floats along the human assembly line, seemingly buoyed by voices raised in song. The gentle cadence of the African round sets a rhythm easily followed, and the wood stack grows.



Drumming with Nell

The picture sticks with me, in part I know, because it is emblematic of our small, close community. As cliché as this may sound, we are in fact a group that whistles while we work. We also sing, clap, hum, and drum as we stroll, ponder, rest, and play.

Music is everywhere at Treetops, woven through the fabric of our Camp lives. We begin our days by singing at Council and end them with a song shared in the dark among tent groups at the quiet bell. Ten-year-olds barely as tall as the guitars they strum gain confidence when they join a counselor to play for the entire Camp. Children bond with each other and adults as together they write original songs or create their own lyrics for old favorites. In one such instance this summer, as a group of hikers encountered the false peaks of Noonmark, refrains of “Here comes the top, (no, it’s not!)” replaced the more familiar words to the Beatles’ *Here Comes the Sun*.

The musical standard in Camp is set by our adults. By my unofficial count, 15 of our counselors brought guitars with them for the summer. Music program leaders Andrea Canapary and Nell Sanders shared amazing amounts of enthusiasm and talent—in voice, drum, guitar, piano, harmonica, percussion, French horn, trombone, and



Trail around Dexter Field

more. Ethan, Sam, Alex, and Samuel provided live music for square dances on guitar, bass, banjo, and fiddle. Mogie and others delivered singing trip reports.

These musings make me realize that many of our defining Treetops qualities have a natural expression in music: our creativity and joy, innocence and simplicity, gentleness and generosity. All these I readily associate with the loveliness of melody. And all these are also present in a special kind of Treetops spirit, the harmony of children and adults united in shared work for the common good.

A frequent focus of this summer’s

community work, for instance, was making improvements to the on-campus trail network that loops around the edge of our property. During community mornings and regular work jobs, campers helped haul away brush, branches, and felled trees to clear new trails; they built a bridge (using our own logs and lumber) for a stream crossing on the new path around Dexter field; they spread wood chips (also made on campus) on trails to level the surface for horseback riding, hiking, running, and later skiing. They learned that these efforts to utilize our own resources and to “play local” have important energy-saving implications that benefit the environment—and thus us all. And they gained pride in the sweat equity they contributed to the betterment of this special place.

The expanded trail system also opened new opportunities for authentic trail riding on steep, challenging terrain within our own boundaries. By staying on campus, more children were able to participate in such activities. Regular riding periods were extended and combined with lunch or dinner picnics on the trails. For new, overnight Trailbreaker’s Trips, groups of Junior and Senior campers enjoyed full days of on-site trail riding (complete with jumps assembled on Dexter field), and with the herd pastured out on the ski hill, children delighted in camping out under the stars in the nearby lean-to, within earshot of their sleeping horses.

Experiences like these serve to deepen campers’ understanding of the wealth of possibility contained within our own stunning 200 acres—and help explain why so many of us at Treetops move through the days with a song in our heart. 🌿

