

The Founding of the ADK Schenectady Chapter, 1943

By Norm Kuchar

In 2013, the Schenectady Chapter of the Adirondack Mountain Club celebrates the 70th anniversary of the founding of an ADK chapter in Schenectady, at the time called the Bouquet River Lodge Chapter. It's also the 55th anniversary of the name change from the Bouquet River Lodge Chapter to the Schenectady Chapter in 1958, and the 50th anniversary of the incorporation of the Schenectady Chapter in 1963.

In this and subsequent issues of *The Lookout*, we will explore the roots of our chapter. How did it get started, and by whom? Why was it started, and what were its first goals? Why was it called the Bouquet River Lodge Chapter? What were the first outings like, and what conservation issues occupied the early members? What has been the legacy of the past 70 years of the chapter in Schenectady?

At the Beginning

Let's go back to Schenectady in the late 1930's and early 1940's. At that time, Schenectady, with a population of more than 87,000 in 1940, was a key industrial center, home of the corporate headquarters and major production facilities of General Electric and the American Locomotive Company. Two other important institutions in the city were the YMCA on lower State Street and the YWCA, located around the corner on Washington Street. At the time, GE's Test Course brought many young, newly graduated engineers to Schenectady, some of whom lived at the YMCA. Besides providing living quarters for young people, the two Y's had active programs to serve the needs of enthusiastic young men and women.

P.F. "Fay" Loope

The founding of an ADK chapter in Schenectady in 1943 was closely linked to the activities of the YMCA and YWCA, and, in particular, to the influence of one man, P. F. "Fay" Loope. In the 1930s and early 1940s, Loope was the program secretary of the Schenectady YMCA. He loved the out-of-doors and was devoted to the ideals of conservation and to the protection of the New York State Forest Preserve. An active Adirondack hiker, mountain climber and skier, in 1933, Fay became 46er No. 4, the first person to climb all 46 Adirondack High Peaks since the original trio of Herbert Clark and the Marshall Brothers, George and Robert, finished in 1925.

Loope was also a natural and popular leader of young people. In particular, he was the YMCA advisor and sponsor of a joint YMCA-YWCA coed group called Ot-Yo-Kwa, or OYK. Ot-Yo-Kwa was started in Schenectady about 1930, the first group of its kind in the country. Its name derived from an Algonquin word described as meaning either "pleasure" or "fellowship." Although the group had a varied program with Loope as sponsor, hiking, climbing, and camping were prominent activities.

After retiring from the YMCA, Loope became the ADK's first full-time executive secretary (forerunner of the executive director) in 1956 and served until 1970. When ADK purchased the Heart Lake property in 1959, Loope also became the first chair of the Adirondack Loj operating committee.

Bouquet River Lodge



In late 1939, Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Venn offered to donate to the Schenectady YMCA about 35 acres of Adirondack land located on U.S. 9, in the valley of the Boquet River near New Russia, about 3½ miles north of the junction of U.S. 9 and N.Y. 73 and about 110 miles from Schenectady. The property was in a great location for outdoor activities, being located at the base of the ridge leading up to Deer Mountain, Bald Mountain, Rocky Peak Ridge and Giant Mountain. Sunrise Mountain, now known as Mt. Gilligan, was just across the river, and the Dix Range was nearby. The property included one building, a two-story house about 25 by 40 feet in size. Largely through Loope's efforts, the YMCA board accepted title, with the understanding that maintenance and financial responsibility would rest with Fay and his outings groups.

The property was turned over to Loope's young peoples' groups to be developed as a base camp for outing activities in the Adirondacks. Named "Bouquet River Lodge," the house began to be remodeled by the OYK and other Y outings groups into a lodge to be used as a year-round base camp for week-end outing activities. (Although the stream flowing past the lodge is called the Boquet River and pronounced Bo-KET, in the past it was called the Bouquet River. This spelling was adopted by the lodge, and the lodge name has generally been pronounced Bo-KAY).

Progress was slow, though constant, because all improvements had to be financed by the young people themselves and much of the work was done by them on weekends. By early 1942, the lodge could accommodate about 20, but plans were in place to continue improvements and increase the capacity to about 30.

The onset of World War II brought further difficulties to work on Bouquet River Lodge. The work week at GE, heavily involved with war production, went to six days, so two-day week-ends were out. Gasoline was rationed, so reaching the lodge by car became nearly impossible. For a time it seemed that the remodeling would have to be abandoned until after the war.

However, the young people were unwilling to give up. The location of Bouquet River Lodge on U.S. 9, directly on the route from New York to Montreal, proved to be a major advantage, since the lodge continued to be accessible by bus service. Passengers could board a Greyhound bus in downtown Schenectady after work on Saturday and be dropped off directly in front of the lodge after a trip of about 3½ hours. They could then flag down a southbound bus in the late afternoon or early evening on Sunday. A round-trip ticket cost about \$5.30. As a result, small groups continued to travel to Bouquet River Lodge and continue the remodeling work, but raising funds for the effort continued to be a major problem.

The ADK Comes to Schenectady

In the early 1940's, the Adirondack Mountain Club, founded in 1922, had about 700 members. Most were members-at-large, but four chapters were in existence: Albany (1922), New York (1923), Adirondack Loj (1932) and Johns Brook Lodge (1942). Although ADK was regarded as the premier outing society in New York, with a growing influence in conservation, only about seven members lived in Schenectady. Perhaps the outings needs in Schenectady were already met by the well-established Mohawk Valley Hiking Club and through Loope's YMCA/YWCA activities.

But, by 1942, the acquisition of the Bouquet River Lodge property by the YMCA had stimulated a core group of young YMCA/YWCA people to become actively involved in that area of the Adirondacks and in the broader area of conservation and wilderness preservation. Furthermore, there was a strong desire to complete the remodeling effort at the lodge and expand the use of the property. This would require a wider base of support.

One day in 1942, William H. Teare, a GE engineer and member of both OYK and ADK, had lunch at the YWCA with Loope and Rudy Dehn, another young GE engineer and OYK member, and proposed the establishment of an ADK chapter based in Schenectady and with Schenectady members, but centered on use of the Bouquet River Lodge property. The OYK membership could form a nucleus. Both ADK and the local YMCA/YWCA outings groups might profit by the proposed chapter. It would strengthen and expand the influence of ADK and could help in the further development of the Bouquet River Lodge.

An application to form a new chapter, to be called the Bouquet River Lodge Chapter, was sent to the ADK. In April, 1943, ADK's Board of Governors granted permission to organize the fifth chapter, and a charter was issued on May 8 of that year.

Despite the new chapter's name, ownership and administration of the Bouquet River Lodge and property remained with the Schenectady YMCA. Any group wanting to use the facility, including the ADK, had to be approved by the YMCA's Lodge committee, headed by Loope.

The new ADK chapter in Schenectady was successful from the start, largely because Loope's OYK and other YMCA/YWCA groups provided a built-in membership. Furthermore, his long promotion of the ideals of conservation and the proper use and enjoyment of the environment were things ADK stood for.

First Meetings of the BRL Chapter

The first meeting of the new chapter was held at the YMCA on May 31, 1943, with 14 of its approximately 19 members present and Katherine (Kay) Flickinger serving as temporary chair. A constitution was adopted and a nominating committee was appointed to prepare a candidate slate of chapter officers.

By the time of the next meeting, on July 21, the chapter had grown to about 36, with 30 new to ADK and 6 transferring from other chapters. The first officers of the new chapter were elected, with Rudy Dehn as chair, P. Schuyler Miller as vice-chair, and Kay Flickinger as secretary-treasurer. The elected board of directors included Fay Loope, Clarence Gregg, Hal Chestnut, and Ruth Tallmadge.

Conservation and Outings

The new chapter also published its key objectives:

1. To identify our group with others of like interests in the protection of hiking and mountain climbing, and in the conservation of the natural resources of the Adirondacks.
2. To encourage the use of the Forest Preserve in a way consistent with conservation and to oppose any action contrary thereto.
3. To encourage the development of the Bouquet River area for hiking, mountain climbing, etc.
4. To continue the development of the Bouquet River Lodge of the Schenectady YMCA as a base for outing activities for the use of Schenectady young people.

From these, it is clear from that outdoor recreation was important, but a creed and pledge adopted by the chapter in 1943 show the great emphasis the group placed on conservation:

Creed: *I believe in the Out-of-Doors, the woods, streams and hills, the wildlife that lives therein; I believe that man's care for them in a state of nature consistent with conservation is his best investment for the future.*

Pledge: *As a member of the Bouquet River Lodge Chapter of the Adirondack Mountain Club, I pledge myself to do what I can to preserve the forests for the best use and enjoyment of all. To this end, I will be careful of trees, flowers, springs, fish and game, as well as of trails, shelters and signs; will give particular care and caution to the making and cleaning up of camps and fires; and in general will so use the woods that others who come after me may get from them the most that they can give. The program of this new organization should in no way conflict with outing programs of any other clubs in our city. We accordingly invite to join with us all in Schenectady who are interested in "the preservation of our forests for the best use of all."*

In fact, Adirondack conservation issues were discussed at the second meeting of the new chapter, in July 1943, and a chapter Conservation committee was in place early the next year. Some of the interesting issues addressed, and the key role the chapter played in defining a conservation policy for the entire ADK will be the subject of another Lookout article.

Opinions regarding a chapter outings program were mixed during the first year of the new chapter's existence. Some members felt that the new chapter should not have an active outings program because

Schenectady already had several active outings clubs (notably the Mohawk Valley Hiking Club and six YMCA/YWCA co-ed clubs) and the ADK chapter should not compete with them. Others thought that the new chapter could develop a more comprehensive outings program than those of the co-ed clubs and that it would operate much farther north than the area covered by the Mohawk Valley Hiking Club. In any event, an Outings committee was appointed in July 1943, and a rather active and interesting outings program was soon established. Some of the early outings will be the subject of a future article in *The Lookout*.

Charter Members

As 1943 neared its end, the membership of the Bouquet River Lodge Chapter had grown to 47 (see listing in sidebar). It was an interesting and illustrious group. It included both the war-time mayor of Schenectady, Mills Ten Eyck, and the president of Union College, Dr. Dixon Ryan Fox.

John Apperson, older than most of the chapter's charter members, had a 30-year reputation for his efforts in preserving Lake George and as an ardent defender of a "forever wild" forest preserve; he was a charter member of both the ADK (1922) and the Wilderness Society (1935). Two, Art Newkirk (1955-56) and Theron Johnson (1965-66), became presidents of ADK; Newkirk was also a central figure in establishing ADK's conservation policies in the 1950's.

Five (Werner Bachli, Kay Flickinger, Carrington Howard, Fay Loope and Ruth Tallmadge) became Forty-Sixers. In 1948, Werner Bachli, Kay Flickinger and Fay Loope were among the organizers of the Adirondack 46ers; Kay Flickinger was this organization's first secretary, and Werner Bachli served as its president from 1951-1953.

Many were outstanding engineers and scientists at GE. The chapter's first outings chair, Dr. Roman Smoluchowski, had a distinguished career as a physicist at the GE Research Lab and later as a professor at Carnegie Institute of Technology, Princeton and the University of Texas; in 1991, an asteroid was named after him. Hal Chestnut, was a founder of modern systems engineering and automatic control theory; in 1974, he was elected to the National Academy of Engineering. William C. White pioneered in the development of the vacuum tube and industrial electronics, while Philip Alger made major contributions to the development of motors and motor controls. Herbert Uhlig was a world-class metallurgist and a pioneer in corrosion research; the corrosion laboratory at MIT is named after him. And Rudy Dehn, the chapter's first chair, made many contributions to radio- and ultra-high frequency technology and helped develop the microwave oven (Rudy is still an active member of the Schenectady Chapter, and the next issue of *The Lookout* will feature an interview with him). Others distinguished themselves in creative writing. P. Schuyler Miller, the first co-chair (with Fay Loope) of the chapter's conservation committee and a technical writer at GE, had already established himself as one of the most popular science fiction writers of the time. And Ruth Tallmadge (Riford) wrote and published poetry, including a work, "I Belong to the Mountains," which received an Editor's Choice Award from the National Library of Poetry.

Beyond the First Years

The solid foundation laid by Fay Loope and the other early members of the Bouquet River Lodge Chapter enabled the chapter to flourish and to expand beyond the initial strong YMCA/YWCA influence. OYK faded, the original chapter name changed to the Schenectady Chapter in 1958, and the YMCA sold the

Bouquet River Lodge in the early 1980's, but the chapter continued to grow and make solid contributions to ADK and to the community. Today, the Schenectady Chapter, one of ADK's 27 chapters, has about 870 members. It remains as a legacy of our founders' efforts to promote wilderness recreation and the preservation of the forest preserve.