

History of Mowogo Lodge

On June 2, 1934 the National Council approved the Order of the Arrow. Mowogo Lodge, 243 of the Northeast Georgia Council received its name from a good friend of the council's camping and scouting program, Mr. Moses W. Gordon.

The date that the Order of the Arrow first came to the council is unknown, but it is known that it was not properly organized at first and had turned into a secret fraternity with members selecting candidates. It was also working against the council camping program instead of strengthening it.

The first written account of Mowogo Lodge begins in April of 1949 at which time the lodge was in a defunct status. At that time J. M. Molder, then the Scout executive, assigned Charlie Bethea, the new Field Executive of the Chattahoochee, Mountain, and Cherokee Districts to reorganize the Order of the Arrow in the Northeast Georgia Council.

In 1949, when Mr. Bethea began to work on the project, he could find only three boy members: Charlie Brice and Johnnie James from Troop 26 and Hugh Skelton of Troop 15, both troops from Gainesville. There were only two adult members and they were Al Willis and Harold Brooks, both from Chicopee. These two adults and Mr. Bethea set out to develop plans according to the Order of the Arrow Handbook to recognize and properly charter the lodge. The three boy members aided with candidate elections. The first unit elections were started in the fall of 1949.

The first national chartering of Mowogo Lodge was applied for January 1, 1950 through December 31, 1950 with minimum membership.

Mowogo Lodge's first Ordeal was held in conjunction with the Spring Camporee of the Chattahoochee District in April of 1950. At the Friday night campfire the district's candidates were tapped out with all districts participating except Broad River, which was unable to attend. However, Cherokee and Piedmont districts provided a large number of candidates. For the lodge's first Ordeal ceremony, Hugh Skelton was Allowat Sakima, Charlie Brice was Meteu, Johnnie James performed Nutiket's duties, and Bill Barnes, a candidate from Post 9 of Chicopee, performed the duties of Kichkinet.

Due to the lack of current members, Mr. Al Willis and Mr. Harold Brooks served as yeomen and Paul Tweedell and Roy Cromartie, both elected candidates, served as "Ordeal Masters" to supervise work projects. One of the major projects completed was a chapel area at the Chicopee campgrounds, which was then used Sunday morning for the chapel services.

The Skyuka Lodge of Spartanburg, South Carolina Council inducted Mr. Bethea into the Brotherhood at its Area 6C Fellowship, and then agreed to conduct the first Brotherhood ceremony for Mowogo Lodge. This momentous occasion occurred at the first Mowogo Lodge encampment at Rainey Mountain Scout Reservation in 1952.

Mowogo Lodge hosted its first Area 6C Fellowship at a very primitive Camp Rainey Mountain in April of 1956. A practicing Cherokee Medicine Man, Ammoneto Sequoy attended as a guest and added much to the gathering. Also in attendance was Dr. E. Urner Goodman, the founder of the Order of the Arrow. It was at this fellowship that Mr. Charlie Bethea received the Vigil Honor, making him the first Vigil recipient from Mowogo Lodge.

By 1985 Mowogo Lodge was a thriving part of the council camping program. The lodge maintained a total of 708 members on its roster and averaged over a hundred new member inductions per year, as well as over 40 Brotherhood inductions. In 1988 Mowogo Lodge hosted the Section IV OA Conclave at Camp Rainey Mt. There were 675 participants from ten councils in Georgia. The lodge also won the E. Urner Goodman Award.

Every year since 1950 Mowogo Lodge has performed immeasurable, cheerful service for the council, especially at Camp Rainey Mountain. An example of this is in 1992, when over 4,000 service hours were performed at Camp Rainey Mountain and 2,400 at Scoutland.

In 1992 under Chief Kevin Jones and Adviser Dale Anderson the Mowogo Lodge conducted Spring Fellowship at Scoutland. This was a departure from the normal tradition of having it at Camp Rainey Mt. It was determined that there was a real need for services at Scoutland. All told, there were 27 major projects, including 27 new patrol tables, 5 campfire rings, an addition of an activity building, and the removal of diseased trees. Over 400 members and candidates labored until darkness to show a graphic example of what the Order of the Arrow is all about...SERVICE.

In April of 1997 Mowogo Lodge was moved into a new section: SR-6B (South). As one of the leaders in this new section Mowogo had the privilege of hosting the first ever SR-6 South Conclave at Camp Rainey Mountain. In April of 1998 under the leadership of Lodge Chief Jeff Bricker and Section Vice Chief for Conclave Patrick May.

In the year 2000 Mowogo Lodge emerged as one of the premier lodges in the Southern Region. Early in the year Patrick May became Section Chief and at Conclave the lodge retired both the Quest's Golden Arrow and the Section

Recognition Award. At the National Conference in Knoxville, Mowogo was named a Founder's Lodge (one of 23 lodges honored), and was one of only 16 lodges in the country to receive the NOAC Lodge Spirit Award.

In 2002, Mowogo broke the 1000 members mark and set records for attendance at Lodge functions. The Lodge inducted 312 new members, a record, and converted 107 new Brotherhood members, also a record. Then, in 2003 the Lodge converted 152 Brotherhood members. Meaningful growth continued in 2004 as more than 100 were converted to Brotherhood membership and attendance exceeded the 1000 member mark for the third year in a row. A large contingent was sent to the 2004 National Order of the Arrow Conference and Mowogo took second place nationally in the Ultimate Frisbee competition.

In the winter of 2006, severe weather decimated Camp Rainey Mountain as Mowogo prepared to host the Section SR-6 South's Conclave in April and in addition to preparing the camp for Summer Camp in June. Many Lodge members spent countless hours rehabilitating the camp and Mowogo was able to host a most successful Conclave. Mowogo sent a record contingent of 46 Lodge members to the 2006 National Order of the Arrow Conference where again the Lodge took second place nationally in the Ultimate Frisbee competition.

Legend of Mowogo Lodge

Many years ago a wise man came to these hills looking for a place to rest. He came to this valley after a long and toilsome life of many hardships. His family had been killed by the white man, leaving him the lone survivor of a dying race.

He came to this place we now call Rainey Mountain. He found a faint trail to Big Rock and began the wearisome journey to the top. With each step the climb became more difficult. When he finally reached the top he looked around, gathered many pieces of wood, and found a place to build a fire. It was his time to die. He built a roaring blaze, then raised his hands towards the heavens, and a great ball of fire shot into the sky! The medicine man disappeared, but the shape of a bear appeared in the heavens. Just as the man had come, there was nothing left: no trace of fire, no trace of footsteps, and no trace of man. He had disappeared.

Many years later a man named Rainey came to these hills, seeking a place to pan gold. He found She Creek which was not yet turned into Lake Toccoa. He saved up enough money to buy the land that is now Camp Rainey Mountain. Rainey started a little farm, built the cabin you see across the lake, acquired a wife, and had several children who worked in the fields during the day. One night as he drifted off to sleep there was a loud crash at the door! He went outside to see what was wrong, but saw nothing until he turned around. There were three huge claw marks on the door. Several nights later there was again a crash at the door. He saw no one, however, this time there were two claw marks on the door. He was extremely puzzled and was becoming frightened, but he did nothing. One night later there was again a crash at the door. This time one claw mark showed, but still Rainey did nothing.

A few days later Rainey went out on a hunting trip. When he returned he found a bear had slaughtered his family. He stayed on his land for several years as he sought someone to buy his property. Along came a man called Gordon, Moses W. Gordon. Mowogo Lodge is named after him. When Mr. Gordon purchased the land, he thought this would be a great place for a Boy Scout Camp. He would call it Camp Rainey Mt., and the name lasts to this day.

Shortly afterward Mowogo Lodge had its first encampment. The Order of the Arrow members gathered around a fire after a long, hard day of work. They sat and talked about the day's events and everyone was pleased that the work had been well done.

Suddenly there were sounds of heavy footsteps. The boys turned to see a great bear. The boys were frozen with fear. The bear rose up off the ground onto its hind legs, and just as the bear had risen, he came down again and walked away.

Those boys were more than lucky. They were true Scouts. For it is said that a true Scout, one who is not only a Scout on the outside, but also in his heart will not be harmed by the she-bear. And so, the legend lives on...