

Guiding in Burnaby

-from *Sixty Years and More* compiled by Girl Guides of Canada / Guides du Canada - British Columbia Council for the Sixty year celebration of Guiding in Canada.

Guiding came to Burnaby in 1913 when an eager and energetic teenager by the name of Amy Leigh arrived from England, where she had joined and became thoroughly enthused with the Guide Movement. Fully expecting to be able to join a company when she arrived, she was most disappointed to find there was none. Her enthusiasm was such, however, that she soon interested other teenage girls into wanting to form a company. They needed an adult leader, but as the Movement was so new, no adult was informed about it. Finally the girls prevailed upon Mrs. Hunter Brown to help them. She bravely said that she would if Amy Leigh would provide her with the knowledge of the requirements. Unfortunately Mrs. Brown moved from Burnaby a few months later. The company of 25 girls was left in the hands of young but very capable Amy Leigh, who continued to be their Captain for some time. In June, 1914, this company was officially registered and has met without closing at any time for over fifty years in the West Kingsway district.

The first World War was in progress and the girls of the 1st Burnaby Company took part in war work. A Red Cross class was started, bandages and socks were made and sent overseas, a bed was sponsored in the royal Columbian Hospital, and a paper "News from Home" was printed and sent to local boys at the Front. In November 1915, the company was reviewed at Hastings Park by the Duke of Connaught. This was also the year in which the Guides produced and printed a paper of their own called "The Burnaby Guides' Monthly".

In 1916 the 2nd Burnaby Company was registered. In this year ten Burnaby Guides attended their first Guide Camp, which was held on Bowen Island. After that, camping became an exciting part of the programme. At one point they even decided to make their own tents! Fortunately, just at this time the School Board was doing away with their temporary canvas-topped classrooms. Miss Leigh, learning of this and needing an inexpensive source of material for the tents, decided to see if she could buy some of this canvas. This she did, purchasing more than enough for the tents for the princely sum of two dollars. She and the girls measured, cut and sewed the very adequate "A" tents, while a generous shoemaker donated his time and machine to do the more intricate joining and stitching. The tents, when finished, proved themselves serviceable for many years.

This was also the first year the company attended the May Day festivities in New Westminster, and, according to press clippings..."being a well-trained body, they have been of great assistance to officials". Twenty Burnaby Guides attended the first Provincial Rally held in Victoria in 1919. It was at this event that Amy Leigh was presented with Silver Fish.

In April 1923 the Guides were invited to meet Sir Robert and Lady Baden-Powell at the home of Mrs. R. W. Brock in Vancouver. Lady Baden-Powell was presented with a sheaf of red roses by a Brownie. Mrs. Pat Commins, then Joyce Heaps recalls that day, being thrilled by a handshake from Lady Baden-Powell. She was there with the New Westminster Guides, and remembers being lined up around the tennis court, and the enormous tableful of sticky currant buns provided by Mrs. Brock for the girls, as the leaders were taken indoors for tea. During this visit Lady Baden-Powell gave an address which included the following:

If the Boy Scout Movement grew out of my husband's brain, the Girl Guide Movement had to come of itself. It really started when our girls began trying on their brothers' hats and equipment, and imitating them by running around the countryside making pests of themselves. It showed us there was a real need for the Movement: and so, far-seeing women took it up and organized companies. Sir Robert talked the idea over with the late King Edward, and the King suggested that he copyright the idea for the British Empire. Sir Robert laughed, saying that it was such a British thing no one else would take it up. And now it has spread so that when I look at the map everything marked pink look blue to me because of the Guide companies in those places.

The companies and packs raised their own funds in those days, and even had enough to donate to the V.O.N., Red Cross and Hamper Fund. The 1st Burnaby Guides took part in a Rally at Queen's Park where they gave a display of ambulance work that received much praise. The first Ranger Company was organized by Amy Leigh and a company paper "The Ranger Star" was produced.

By 1924 Burnaby had four Guide companies, four Brownie packs and a Ranger company. In this year Amy Leigh was chosen as official Guider Representative from British Columbia to the World Camp at Foxlease, England.

The real proof of Burnaby's growth came in 1957 when the large membership warranted the formation of an Area. Miss Eileen Periton, formerly active as a Captain, Sea Ranger Skipper, Camp Adviser, Division Trainer and District Commissioner, became the first Burnaby Area Commissioner. The same year saw the Burnaby campsite, developed at Wilson Creek by the united efforts of local associations, pack and companies, opened by Miss G. C. Peel, a most active and enthusiastic worker for the original development of the greater Vancouver campsite there. In 1963 there was an expansion in Burnaby's camping programme with the leasing of a large cabin on Hollyburn Mountain. The cabin proved so popular for day and weekend outings that the decision was made to purchase it for the future use of Burnaby Guides, Brownies and Rangers.

The Area membership in 1969 had grown from that small band of teenagers in 1913. The foundation had been well and truly laid in those early days!