

## TMR'S Changing Origin Story

### By David M. Malatzky

With TMR's 100th anniversary coming up in 2027, let's examine how the NYC Boy Scouts acquired the property in 1927. The TMR origin story has changed considerably over the years.

The first TMR history was written by Sullivan County Historian James W. Burbank in 1952. The occasion was a dinner held by the Narrowsburg Chamber of Commerce, commemorating the 25th anniversary of the Ten Mile River Scout Camps. The dinner program included Burbank's six-page TMR history covering the first 25 years. All subsequent TMR histories are updated versions of Burbank's 1952 history.

According to Burbank, from 1924-26 members of the Boy Scout Foundation of Greater New York searched for a campground within fifty miles of NYC satisfying the various requirements, but were not successful. After another year of investigation it was found that options could be placed on thirty-two small parcels of adjoining land and farms in the region of the Ten Mile River, forming a whole area of approximately 11,000 acres. *"Trained and trustworthy Scout Officials charged with the investigations"* were bound to the policy of a *"tight mouth,"* and therefore, no one except the purchasers knew where the new camp would be located. In the fall of 1927 the thirty-two land owners were invited to Monticello *"for the purpose of signing deeds and receiving payment for their lands."*

We now know that Burbank's 1952 TMR origin story was incorrect in certain details and was definitely incomplete. Burbank did not mention that the Yonkers, NY real estate firm of Gaul & Kampfer was hired by the NYC Scouts to help them search beyond fifty miles of NYC. It was Gaul & Kampfer, not unnamed *"Scout Officials,"* that after a nine-month search obtained options on twenty-two distinct parcels containing 10,044 acres, the largest being 2,610 acres. Gaul & Kampfer proposed that the NYC Boy Scouts purchase the property at a total cost of \$430,000, an average of \$41.29 per acre.

What is the true story of TMR's origin? It can be found in the Sullivan County Governmental Center in Monticello. Here are the twenty-three deeds giving Gaul & Kampfer ownership of the original TMR property on Oct. 8, 1927. The next deed transferred ownership of the 9,776 acres to the Boy Scout Foundation of Greater New York. The deeds tell us much about the 55 original landowners, plus two real estate firms. This included thirteen married couples, seven persons under age 21, and the estate of a deceased person.

The biggest surprise is where the original landowners lived. Only eight lived in Tusten, which was part of the land purchase. Four lived elsewhere in Sullivan County, four in Orange County, three in NYC, one on Long Island, one in Connecticut, and four in Pennsylvania, including Philadelphia. Furthest of all were landowners from Chicago and River Forest, both in Illinois. Why individuals living as far away as Philadelphia and Chicago owned part of what we now know as TMR is a mystery worth solving.