



Shown here is a building on Eagle Island. The island in its entirety is shown at right.

Livingstonites Recall Fond Memories of Eagle Island Camp

Several Livingstonites who spent time on Eagle Island Camp share here fond memories and reflections of their days as Girl Scout campers there. Located on Upper Saranac Lake in New York's Adirondack region, the island was home to a Girl Scout camp from 1938 to 2008, and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The camp property was purchased on November 6, 2015 by The Friends of Eagle Island, Inc. (now Eagle Island, Inc.), which continues to operate the property as a youth camp.

Although the island itself has changed hands, one thing remains the same: the strong feelings of love and nostalgia that so many former Girl Scouts retain of their time there.

"You Could Look Inward"

"I've been thinking about what made Eagle Island so special, other than the skills learned and friendships formed there," says Connie Marchese Baum, nee Oldham, who went to Eagle Island in the early-to-mid 1960s. "Eagle Island was a beautifully scenic place where one could really be themselves. Sitting on a large rock outcropping and listening to the lake lapping at water's edge, or floating along in a sailboat on a quiet day or sitting around an evening campfire, you could look inward, share philosophies of life (from a youthful point of view!) or just be quiet and think.

"Along with all of the many activities we tried and shared, the peacefulness of the island was unique and beneficial. I think that may be even more true in today's world. It offers a real opportunity to unplug."

She concludes, "I can sum up my experiences there as follows: learning to take and conquer a series of steps to reach a goal or skill level in a supportive atmosphere and gaining a lot of self-confidence and many new skills along the way. This was all in a beautiful and unique island setting with both new and old friends while also having a great deal of fun along the way! Those valuable lessons transferred to my adult life in both my career and personal ventures.

"I have also found great satisfaction in continuing those experiences at Women's Weekends and Family Camp and sharing them with my family and friends new to the island."

"Treasured Friends"

Former Livingston resident Candie Oldham, sister of Connie Oldham Marchese Baum, was also an Eagle Island camper in the 1960s. "I learned independence, self-reliance, canoeing, sailing, mountain hiking—a love of the Adirondacks and of nature," she notes. "As a Women's Weekend attendee for many years, I love the opportunity to reconnect with treasured friends and places that have become integral to me. As a Family Camp attendee, I've had the wonderful chance to introduce my husband to one of my favorite places—and see it become a favorite of his as well."

"A Special Place"

Debra Fruchman of Albany, New York, formerly of Livingston, attended camp on Eagle Island during the 1960s. "About three years ago, while visiting the Wild Center in Tupper Lake, New York, I saw a flier announcing a fundraiser for Eagle Island Camp. After some inquiries, I was happy to find out that the camp was on its way back. I went there as a child, when it was owned and operated by the Girl Scouts. I was fortunate to have attended last summer's Alumni and Friends Women's Retreat and experience the same spirit, supportive community, fun and love of the Adirondacks that I remember from childhood. The number of people dedicated to rebuilding and contributing to Eagle Island Camp speaks to how meaningful this special place has been over the decades."

"The Island Casts a Spell"

Dorna Richards attended camp at Eagle Island with her sister. She recalls, "My sister and I grew up in Livingston and were active in the Girl Scouts. As a Girl Scout I attended Eagle Island as a camper 1973 to 1975, participating in the "tripping unit," where we did multi-day backpacking trips among the Adirondack high peaks and overnight canoe trips through all three Saranac lakes. I also learned to sail and qualified for a "crew" rating.

"My sister took a different path to the Island, never going to camp there, but falling in love with it just the same in 2018 when she suggested we volunteer during the restoration/renovation of the camp. Most recently, my sister and I attended the 2021 Alumnae and Friends weekend where along with 28 other 'campers' ranging in age from 32 to 78 years young, we spent four days enjoying traditional camp activities, catching up with old friends, and making new ones. Various arts and crafts sessions were held on the lodge porch overlooking the lake; yoga sessions on the boathouse porch; a costume dance party in the Lodge; a campfire at the Waterfront singing our favorite camp songs.

"I feel nostalgic when I read this year's camp brochure and see the Trailblazers, Paddlers Adventure and Catch the Wind programs, a continuation of my beloved tripping and sailing programs updated to appeal to the youth today. I think back to my days as a camper at Eagle Island and my heart fills with joy knowing that a new generation of young campers will have the opportunity to experience Eagle Island. As my sister says, 'the island certainly casts a spell.'"

"Adventure and Camaraderie"

Yoga instructor and former Livingston resident Janne Roehm was



Former Eagle Island camper Candie Oldham is shown here in 1966, dressed for a skit near the camp's waterfront.



Shown here are Chris Hildebrand and another camper named Sandy in 1955.

a camper at Eagle Island beginning in 1966, and has returned as an adult several times, teaching yoga classes there. She remembers, "In 1967, I was in the first year of the Wilderness unit on Eagle Island, where we cooked all our meals over a campfire, climbed the second highest mountain in New York State—Mount Algon-

quin, at 5,114 feet high—and went on an and eight day canoe trip. In 1969, I was a CIT at Eagle Island.

"I loved the island itself, the tall pines and birch trees, sleeping in the tents with the sound of the lake lapping against the shore, the camaraderie and collaboration of my fellow campers, the adventure of the high peaks and lakes of the Adirondacks. I made life-long friends, learned to swim and canoe, and had a chance to just have fun and be strong and laugh loud."



Above, Ginny Hildebrand and other campers pose for a photo.

She adds, "I've gone back to Eagle Island again and again, for women's weekends, family camp, and work weekends. My daughters both went to Eagle Island as campers. One daughter, Nicky, loved it so much she returned as a camper, as a counselor, then as a sailing counselor. She now lives in the Adirondacks and she and my granddaughter, Lena, and I

were all together on Eagle Island last summer at family camp."

Roehm concludes, "The island has come back to life, in traditional and innovative new ways. Eagle Island has meant so much to me through the decades, and I am so grateful that our beloved Island is in good hands with so much hard work and vision, even in these difficult COVID times."



Former camper Janne Roehm, now a yoga instructor, returns to Eagle Island to teach yoga classes at alumni events.



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