

This Day in History... March 17, 1912

The Camp Fire Girls

The Camp Fire Girls were formally established on March 17, 1912. Inspired by the Boy Scouts, it was one of the first such programs created for girls in the US.

The Camp Fire Girls owe a large part of their founding to Luther and Charlotte Gulick. In 1907, they opened a camp for girls, Camp WoHeLo, on Lake Sebago in Maine. "Wohelo" was a word Charlotte invented from the first two letters of the words "work," "health," and "love." They operated the camp for a few years and soon started getting requests to create an organization for girls around the country.



The Boy Scouts were a major inspiration for the Camp Fire Girls.

So, in March 1911, Dr. Gulick arranged a meeting "to consider ways and means of doing for the girls what the Boy Scout movement is designed to do for the boys." Then in April the Boy Scouts of America issued a statement that they would soon have a scouting group for girls as well. That year, Gulick's group, which had been named the Camp Fire Girls, began plans to merge with the Girl Scouts of America and the Girl Pioneers of America. However, they encountered a series of disagreements and the merger didn't materialize. The Camp Fire Girls of America was then officially incorporated as a national agency on March 17, 1912.

Later that year, Juliette Gordon Lowe proposed merging the Camp Fire Girls with her Girl Guides of America. But the Camp Fire Girls were a larger group by that time, and they declined. By the following December, membership was estimated at 60,000, with many of these girls attending associated summer camps. They also created the Bluebird program that year to offer programs to younger girls. The Camp Fire Girls published their first handbook in 1913.

During World War I, the Camp Fire Girls supported the war effort. They sold over one million dollars in Liberty Bonds and \$900,000 in Thrift Stamps. They also provided aid to French and Belgian orphans and earned honors for food conservation. After the war ended, the first local Camp Fire council was established in Kansas City, Missouri, where the national headquarters would later be located.



This stamp was issued as part of a block of four stamps for International Youth Year.



This stamp honored the 50th anniversary of the organization's informal creation in 1910.



The Camp Fire Girls and Girl Scouts nearly merged in 1912.

In 1960, the Camp Fire Girls launched their "She Cares... Do you?" program. During that year they planted over two million trees, built 13,000 bird houses, and performed a number of other conservation related projects.

By 1974, the Camp Fire Girls had 274,000 members in 1,300 towns across the country. In 1975 they opened the group up to boys as well, re-naming themselves Camp Fire Boys and Girls, or simply Camp Fire. Today Camp Fire services more than one million children and their families through their variety of programs. It continues to teach children outdoor activities and leadership skills.

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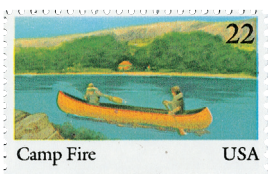


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