In Boy Scouting’s earliest days, “camp” was a piece of ground upon which you could place your bedroll, or pitch a tent. It could be anywhere, and it certainly was not a permanent place. It did not take long, though, for camp to become a place for Boy Scouts to spend a piece of each summer learning and sharing.

In 1918, the St. Paul Area Boy Scout Council developed its first summer camp property, Oak Point Camp on Square Lake in Washington County, seven miles north of Stillwater, Minnesota. Although it carried the Oak Point name until it was closed in 1937, it was nearly always referred to as “Square Lake Camp.” The camp was outfitted with platforms for tents, a dining hall, an infirmary, and a beautiful swimming and boating beach: (http://reflections.mndigital.org/cdm/ref/collection/nsm/id/12).


Much of the camp’s activity, however, centered on the beautiful lake, still considered to be one of the clearest lakes in eastern Minnesota, and an excellent place to catch fine trout. Boys spent a lot of their time on the lake, often in “war” canoes, capacious enough to hold

Like all Boy Scout summer camps, much of the staff was comprised of older teenagers and young adults, well-versed in Scouting ways. Staff like Don Hoffman and his tent-mate [http://reflections.mndigital.org/cdm/ref/collection/nsm/id/32] set up their tent as a home-away-from-home. Random singing apparently broke out from time to time [http://reflections.mndigital.org/cdm/ref/collection/nsm/id/33].

In the end, Square Lake Camp was a victim of its own success. By 1930, it was full with a waiting list of boys who wanted to attend. The St. Paul Area Council began looking for a larger camp property in earnest, and purchased land and an island on Balsam Lake, Wisconsin, which became Camp Neibel. Both camps ran for a couple of summers, but after a severe summer storm damaged Square Lake Camp beyond reasonable repair, the Council closed it and sold the property.