



West Texas Scouting History

All pages with the header shown above on the Scouting Memories Project are taken from Frank T. Hilton's remarkable website, www.westtexasscoutinghistory.net, with his permission. The website is a comprehensive history of four modern west Texas councils, the Buffalo Trails Council, the South Plains Council, the Texas Southwest Council and the Texas Trails Council. Web links in these pages are to Frank's original website.

Buffalo Trail Scout Ranch

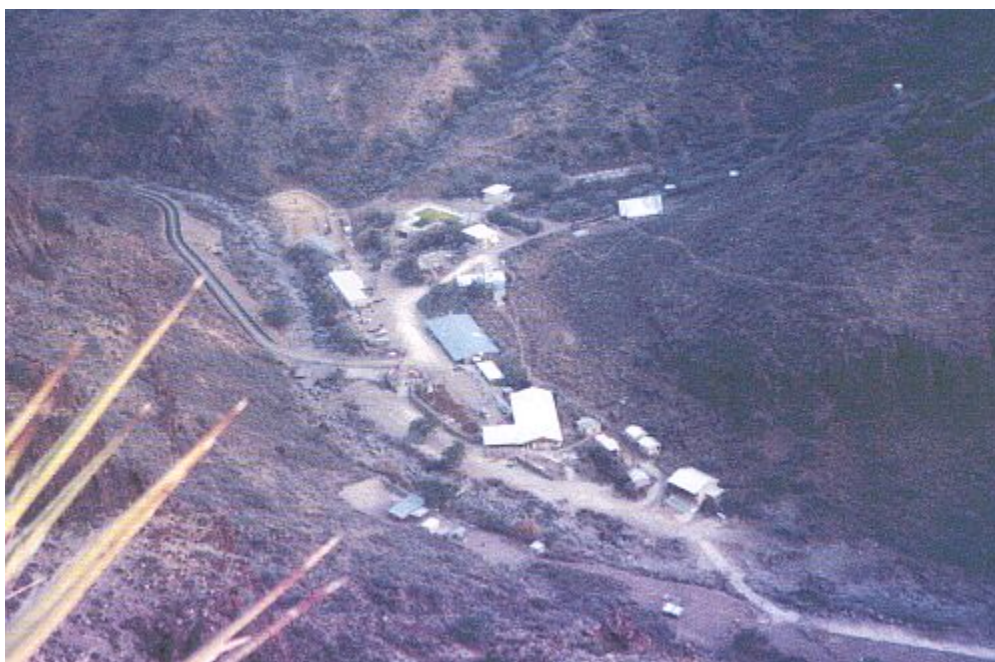
Buffalo Trail Council

The Buffalo Trail Scout Ranch is owned by the **Buffalo Trail Council, BSA**, with headquarters in Midland, TX. The council had used many other camps prior and during World War II but had not owned one they could call their own. As soon as the war was over the Council started looking for a site. They looked around Sterling City, Indian Lodge and Fern Canyon near Ft. Davis.

They finally found a ranch owned by J. H. Hunter Strain of San Angelo for sale. On January 16, 1947 Carl Blomshield recommended the purchase of the 6,000 acres in the Davis Mountains. By January 28th, Bloomshield said we should take the full 6,000 acres and raise the \$75,000. for its purchase. After looking at the property and talking with Mr. Strain they put up a \$500.00 deposit on the \$75,000.00 property.

On August 15, 1947, the Executive Board approved the Council to employ the Wells organization of Texas to direct a finance campaign for the purchase and development of the Davis Mountain Camp site. Motion made by Atkin Cook and 2nd by W. M. Howard, that a special Committee to proceed with the negotiations for the purchase of the Davis Mountain Camp site. A Capital funds campaign was then conducted that raised over \$200,000 by the end of 1948. So in 1948 the Council secured the site of the 6,640 acre Buffalo Trail Scout Ranch in the Davis Mountain.

By March 18, 1948, the Executive Board approved the funds for for purchase of a truck and the remodeling of the ranch house into a Mess Hall and kitchen.



The ranch is located about twenty-five miles north of Fort Davis, in the Davis Mountains. The ranch is located in some of the most rugged country in the State of Texas, with legends of Indians and badmen surrounding the area. The main camp is located in Wa-hoo Canyon with massive mountains towering on all sides. The camp is completely walled-in from the outside world that scarcely knows of its existence; overbearing cliffs raise as much 2,000 feet above the floor of the canyon, where deer, bear, squirrel and scores of other wildlife feed and play.

One of the things they had to do was drill a well. The local ranchers said it couldn't be done as they had tried and failed. They drilled at the present location of the well for days and days, sometime only going down a couple of inches. Money was running out, but the driller was told to try for 24 more hours. Just before they were prepared to stop, they broke through and before they could get the tools out of the hole, water had risen almost to the top of the well. The water problem at the ranch had been solved. The well was completed in November 1953



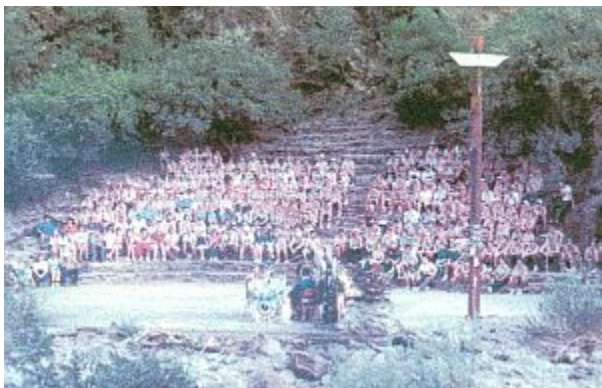
The dining hall was donated by the late Paul Moss and his wife in 1948. The camp has had many improvements over the years and now has a swimming pool, Buffalo Hall, riding stables, trading post, rifle range, archery range, staff cabins, an amphitheater seating over 750 people, and a home for the Camp Ranger.

The early road to camp from the highway was nothing more than eleven miles of unpaved gravel road that crossed the creek several times. Now there is a paved road all the way to camp.

Around 1950 Mr. Moss made another donation to the ranch that will never be forgotten. He had a buffalo bull and a cow that he thought would be appropriate property of the Council to possess. The buffaloes were loaded up and hauled to the Scout Ranch and unloaded in the corral, and it wasn't an easy job. Before they could get the ropes off the bull he decided he had business elsewhere. He walked over to the gate, hooked his horns through the rather heavy timber, threw the gate completely back over his rear and calmly ambled off up the canyon, followed by the cow. Within a few days the cow died, the rocks ate her feet up.



Before long the bull came back down the canyon, breaking through gates and fences as he reached them, until he was on a neighbor's ranch, and among his cattle. There the bull took up residence for a long time, which didn't make the rancher very happy. The old bull chased the rancher's cowboys, helped himself to the feed and salt, and got on real friendly terms with the rancher's cows.



The rancher asked that the bull be removed. The Executive Board took prompt action, they agreed with the rancher, but who and how to do the job was another matter, the next month and for several months after that, the bull was still there.

The old bull's favorite bedding down place was at a feed trough and salt block by a gate on the road to the Scout Ranch. One evening two men from Odessa drove through the gate headed to camp. They sat there a minute looking at the old bull. They said he did not seem to notice there were even there, although he was only 20 or 30 feet away. But suddenly he raised his tail and charged the car. He got his head and both front feet upon the hood of the car. The driver stomped on the gas and the bull slid off. They were pretty shook up. the buffalo

took off and tore down fences and gates for miles. Some of the old times insist that he tore down a good seven miles of fences and several gates, he was really on a tantrum.

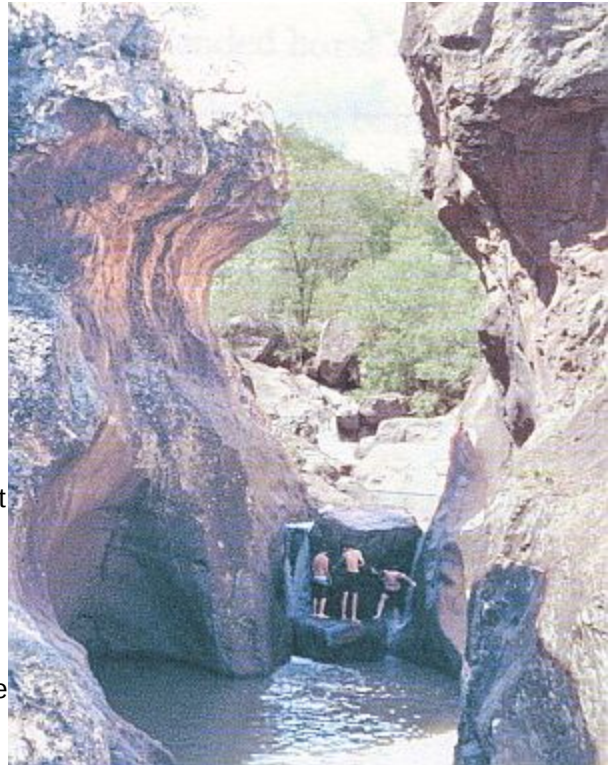
After this, the Camp Ranger was told to end "old bull's" career. The Ranger drove up beside the old bull and with this 30-30 opened fire. It took four shots to get him. His head was removed and packed in ice, and went off to be mounted. The hide and carcass was given to the Ranch Foreman. He used the meat to feed his bear and puma dogs.

For years the bull's head hung in the mess hall and when the new Buffalo Hall was completed, he had an honored place of his own.

The following story appeared in the *1971 Annual Report* of the council under the heading of Camp Development:

"Bernold M. Hanson, Camp Development Chairman - The Buffalo Lodge, a project of the Order of the Arrow, is near completion at the Buffalo Scout Ranch. This building is a fine addition to our camp providing trading post, Leader's Room, Visitors Center, Office and Rest Rooms. It also has a large activity area for activities during inclement weather.

"A project nearing completion is the rebuilding of the old mess hall into a beautiful dining lodge with seating capacity of over 400. It is enclosed and heated for winter meetings, with a new wing added to the kitchen for food storage.



"In 1971, a preliminary study of the Scout Ranch Development Program has been made with the help of the Engineering Service of the National Council, and plans are in progress to be completed in 1972."

The Night We Shot Allowat

Kyle Vernon, who served on the Buffalo Trail Scout Ranch summer camp staff from 1979 through 1986, wrote a true story titled "**The Night We Shot Allowat**," after changing the names and dates, as he said, "to protect the innocent and/or guilty." You can read this humorous story by clicking on [HERE](#). Enjoy! He has given us permission to move this story to our website. He now works as a school teacher, a Scoutmaster and the sponsor of two clubs.

He has just finished another funny story titled "The Night We Blew Up Allowat," again changing the names and dates. You can read this humorous story by clicking on [HERE](#).

Scouts from all over Texas and New Mexico come to this unique camp in the Davis Mountains for summer camp. Kids attending the camp always come home with a lot of memories, not to mention blistered feet, skinned arms and legs, and usually a good sunburn. But hey, isn't that part of going to summer camp?

A story in the *Big Spring (Texas) Herald*, dated February 8, 1985 told of the various programs being offered at the camp during the summer. The programs, assisted by a trained camp staff, included horsemanship, trail rides, Indian lore, conservation and ecology, nature, cooking, pioneering, camping, rifle and archery, hiking and wilderness survival.

Scouts could take overnight camping trips and day hikes to Needle Rock, Blue Hole, The Notch, Hidden Valley, Rustlers Flat, Bear Mountain, Million Dollar Canyon and Goat Cave.

In addition, the camp is used for training of volunteer leaders, boy leaders, special camps for just the boy and his mother, and father and son activities. Over 2,300 Scouts from all over the States of Texas and New Mexico attended summer camp at the Ranch in the summer of 2004. It took some 60 staff people to provide them with a quality program. David O'Neil served as Camp Director.



Camp Staff - 2005

More on Buffalo Trail Scout Ranch:

Go [HERE](#) for an oral history made on April 7, 1993, between volunteer Newell Hughes and former Scout Executive Steve Odom about the early days of Buffalo Scout Ranch.

Go [HERE](#) for more on early history of Buffalo Trail Scout Ranch.

Go [HERE](#) for story about Sea Scout Ship 111's 250 mile hike from Big Springs to Buffalo Trail Scout Ranch in 1963!

Go [HERE](#) for the story about "The Night We Shot Allowat" by Kyle Vernon.

Go [HERE](#) for the story about "The Night We Blew Up Allowat" by Kyle Vernon.

Other Camps of Buffalo Trail Council:

| [Earlier Camps of BTC](#) | [Camp Ed Murphy](#) | [Camp Lake Colorado City](#) | [Hughes Aquatic Base](#) |
| [Camp Lake Sweetwater](#) | [First High Adventure Camp - 1954](#) |
| [Old Photos of Buffalo Trail Scout Ranch](#) |

Information for this page was taken from the book *West-Texas Cubs, Scouts and Explorers* by Olan B. Draper, 1973 and other sources provided by the Buffalo Trail Council.