

Dams on the Stream

One of Louise's aims was to make sure that the Clearing could be used independently of Featherstone Farm in the years after she was gone. In the early years we met in her living room, slept on her floors and beds. Later it was meeting in the loft of the barn, sleeping on its floor and using the chemical toilet she had installed in the barn. After we built the Lodge we were independent of all these things, but one thing remained. One very hot day on the spring retreat she invited us to cool off in the pond on the farm. We had camped at the pond and naturally swam at the pond in the early days as well, but the agreement had been to wean ourselves from the pond after she had given us The Clearing land. This day, to everyone's relief we walked and rode over to the pond on her side of the road and had a grand time. The next year and the year after that requests were made to Louise to use her pond. She never failed us, but she let it be known to the committee that this concerned her. As a result the committee undertook, with her help to find a way to cool off on our side of the road. We decided to build a dam in the stream that would back up a small pond—enough to cool off in and perhaps wash in, but not big enough to swim in.

A site was selected with a large tree on one side and with space to dig a diversion channel on the same side. Sand was ordered. Bags were ordered. Logs were cut to span the stream between the bank and the tree. On a June day families assembled. Young ones filled sand bags, while older ones cut logs to build a wall across the stream. When all was ready everyone carried bags to the stream and piled them in layers against the log wall. In a day the dam was finished!

Sometime later that summer a summer downpour washed out the dam. The logs were only anchored by a tree at one end. And no diversion channel had been made. Two years later a more modest attempt was made 100 feet upstream. This dam was not to create a large pool upstream but was a "digger dam" to dig a small but adequate pool on the downstream side by the strength of its overflow. Though this dam was never completely finished, for a couple of years it worked successfully, digging a three foot deep bowl about eight feet in diameter—the size of a Jacuzzi. The children at a couple of "Children's Camps enjoyed it, but it was not big enough for Spring Retreats. Campers asked to use Louise's pond again, and the digger dam died of neglect.

Bill Walton