

HISTORY OF THE WESTMINSTER WOODS CAMP AND CONFERENCE CENTER

EARLY HISTORY (BEFORE 1992)

In a deed dated June 12, 1940, Rose and Wesley Harrah (mother and father of Beryl Grilley, and grandparents of Wesley Grilley) deeded the SW¹/₄ of SW¹/₂ of Section 28, in Township 1 N, R 35 E, Willamette Meridian, approximately 26 acres, to the First Presbyterian Church of Pendleton (PPC) – the present property known as Westminster Woods (WW).

In August of 1950, the interest of Mrs. E.F. Terney (Martha E. Terney) in Westminster Woods was expressed in a gift of \$5,000, which established a fund to be known as the Lillian Terney Memorial Fund for future development of Westminster Woods.

According to the Church's pastor in 1950, Dr. Earle Cochran, Mrs. Terney had a very deep love and concern for her handicapped daughter, and had resolved that the Terney ranch would be used to provide for her in her older years after her parent's death.

When Lillian predeceased Mrs. Terney, Mrs. Terney decided to give her ranch to Westminster Woods as a memorial to Lillian, so that through her gift many other young people using the property would be blessed. This decision was included in Martha Terney's will in 1959.

The WW site was first developed as a picnic site for the congregation, and it was used mostly for picnicking and as a "camping out" spot until the late 1950s.

Between 1940 and 1956, the pump house and water system were installed, along with the lower summer kitchen and their associated restrooms, and a drainage system for all of these improvements. Dr. Earle Cochran, senior pastor, and a lot of volunteer help were instrumental in developing the lower kitchen area and its improvements.

On January 15, 1951, an engineering study was submitted to the church officers, establishing the location and the specifications for construction of the present well. [Previously, a shallow well had been used, which the engineer ordered plugged.]

In the middle 1950s, the slab and outer shell of the upper building that now houses the kitchen was constructed.

In 1957, when Dr. Myron Nichols came to the Church as its Senior Pastor, one of his priorities was further development of Westminster Woods.

HISTORY OF THE GROUNDS DEVELOPMENT

In order that Westminster Woods could be used for summer camping programs, Dr. Myron Nichols, working with church officers and willing members of the congregation, completed wiring, plumbing, and interior work on the upper kitchen. The architect for this facility was Wes Korman.

Architect Wes Korman envisioned this upper kitchen building as the core unit of an eventual lodge building. It was to eventually house as many as 100 persons in a combination dining and meeting configuration.

Mrs. Terney's original gift of \$5,000 (given in 1950), plus an additional gift from her, was used for the construction of the upper kitchen.

Before the upper kitchen was complete, the Presbytery of Eastern Oregon held both high school and junior high conferences at Westminster Woods. The large oblong, slightly excavated area in back of the lower kitchen is where a 40-person "hospital tent" was pitched by Harold Barnett and others of his family for elk hunting in earlier days.

The upper kitchen brought better meal facilities; the Church then proceeded to design and build five shelters to sleep eight to ten campers on "wooden shelves" above ground level. The design, which allows an open-air feeling, protects the campers from rainy weather. The "V" design allows campers to sit on the edge facing a leader who sits in the center opening.

The bathhouse was developed after the upper kitchen. It was financed using \$10,666 from the Vert Student Loan Income account (complying with the provisions of that bequest) and from other donations as they were given. Much volunteer labor went into the construction and finishing.

By 1972, the bathhouse was finished; it required another septic and drain field. The bath house was designed as a temporary housing unit, but eventually it was seen as the bathhouse for a swimming pool to be constructed adjacent to it.

In the 1960s, Presbyterian camping programs all across the country began to be discontinued; Eastern Oregon Presbytery no longer offered either junior or senior high camping.

Under the leadership of Evelyn Hanks, PPC church school leaders late in the 1970s began a summer day camping program that has been extremely successful, with over one hundred persons often participating in a summer day camp. This emphasis on using Westminster Woods to provide youth summer programs continues to this day.

Prior to his death in 1985, Forest Harrah made provisions for a gift of \$100,000.00 to Westminster Woods. The funds were to be split in half: one half was to be put aside as an endowment (only the interest was to be used), and the other half was designated for current (ongoing) maintenance and development purposes.

Westminster Woods actually received the Harrah gift in November of 1988.

MEMORIALS HONORING EARLY CONTRIBUTIONS

When the Terney money comes available, one important expense item will be to obtain a bronze plate bearing the inscriptions:

These Buildings Given In Loving Memory

of

LILLIAN TERNEY

By Mrs. E.R. Terney, her Mother

In 1981, the Westminster Woods Commission ordered a bronze plate commemorating the gift of the Westminster Woods Property by Rose Harrah. Several suggestions have been made for locations for this:

1. Mounted on a large rough stone near the entrance of Westminster Woods (possibly a portion of some gate structure, although there is some fear this might be vandalized due to the absence of any "on-site" camp residents for so much of the year);
2. The plate might be mounted inside the upper kitchen until later camp development might permit its exterior location;
3. The plate might be mounted in the Pendleton Presbyterian Church until such time as church officers deem it safe to mount it on the Westminster Woods property.

Despain playing field: Joe Despain was one of PPC's most avid workers on the Westminster Woods project. Some years ago the church officers took action to name the playing field in his honor. We need a plate or a wooden carved sign placed at the entrance to the field.

A small bronze plate attached to the drinking fountain at the lower campsite has honored Guy Huginun, who was instrumental in early development of Westminster Woods.

One other deeply involved person in the development of Westminster Woods was Charles Rector. It would be appropriate to honor him with an appropriate remembrance.

Over the period of 1966, 1967, 1971 and 1972, funds from the John Vert and Jessie SS Vert Memorial Fund, in the amount of \$10,666, were expended for the bathhouse construction.

The Vert will stipulates that any donations from the fund are to be acknowledged as being from the fund (as named above) and a "suitable and appropriate tablet be placed in said building..."

While no tablet is needed, Westminster Woods received the sum of \$2,000 from the Ada Brown estate, by vote of the church Session.

The estate of Estelle Scott also provided a gift of \$600.00 for Westminster Woods.

RECENT HISTORY (SINCE 1992)

Martha Terney had given a life estate in the Terney ranch to her nephew Roy Terney and his wife Ida, with their interest terminating upon death. On April 4, 1992, when Ida Terney passed away, Martha Terney's will was implemented, and title to the Terney Ranch was transferred to the church.

Then, there ensued a period of time before all legal matters associated with the title transfer were resolved; mostly these revolved around the disposition of proceeds from existing crops on the Terney ranch as they were harvested.

In March of 1993, the Session formed a new commission to be called the Westminster Woods Commission. The session appointed Ernie Cristler as the initial moderator of the Westminster Woods Commission (WWC). Ernie was assisted by Don Kuizenga, and these two were charged with forming the new commission and developing a long-range action plan to guide further developments at the Woods.

Ernie and Don took the following steps: The first step was to find out the condition of the water supply: both the volume and quality. A new pump was installed (the old one was not sealed properly and leaked ground water into the well) and the water tested. Testing found that the quality and the quantity of water would support a much greater use of WW by a much larger group of users.

Next, the WWC was expanded to four key people, who then developed an advisory group called the Friends of Westminster Woods that first met in July of 1993. Over three dozen interested and invested folks donated time and effort to help set priorities for WW that were then confirmed by the congregation and from which future goals for WW were developed by the WWC.

A first implementation step was to bring in a national consultant from the Presbyterian National Office. The Rev. Don Hostetter, chair of the Presbyterian Camp and Conference Association, came in April 1993. He met with WWC, Friends of WW, local agencies, and did several site visits.

Hostetter published a final report in June of 1993; it recommended that we change the focus from a summer youth camp by developing facilities and programming on a year-around basis for adults and families, and that we refer to Westminster Woods as a Camp and Conference Center.

Hostetter's report also recommended that the site be enlarged. He stressed that we should keep focused on developing quality facilities that can be rented as a way to produce income. And finally, he recommended that an architect be secured to develop a Master Plan for Westminster Woods.

Before an architect was hired, we did acquire additional land. First, in March 1994, 8.7 acres was purchased from Inland Fiber Company (the land was known as the Hayes property); this area is the "clearcut" located north of the original Harrah property.

Subsequent to this purchase, in August of 1994, Betty Brunette donated 31.2 acres to the Church, lying to the west of the other property, for addition to Westminster Woods.

After advertising and interviewing potential architects, we selected, in the summer of 1994, Allied Works of Portland as the architect of choice, probably because more than the other candidates, they seemed to care about the environment and how new developments would fit in at Westminster Woods. We eventually spent about \$40,000 for their services to develop a master plan for Westminster Woods.

At the same time a master plan was being developed by Allied Works, a forestry management plan was being prepared by a forestry consultant (John Herbst Forestry). This management plan describes the natural environment of the 66-acre property, including its soils, water, vegetation, and wildlife, and it discusses fire risk and forest health issues associated with the area.

The forested resource management plan is available from the Westminster Woods website.

In November of 2001, a Terney Ranch Study Committee was appointed by the Westminster Woods Commission to examine issues connected with a possible sale of the Terney Ranch, a wheat farm comprising 1,598 acres and located about 10 miles west of Pendleton.

The study committee was formed to meet a requirement of Martha Terney's will, which stated that within 10 years of the Church acquiring the property, "the said church, from time to time, sell the real property or some portion thereof, as in the judgment of the church shall best accomplish the purposes of this devise."

After almost three years of study, meetings, analysis, and prayerful consideration, the study committee recommended to the Westminster Woods Commission that the Terney Ranch property be sold, and that the proceeds be placed in an investment fund to produce an appropriate annual cash return for the Lilian Terney Memorial Fund (which is used exclusively for continued development of Westminster Woods).

The Westminster Woods Commission, the Church's Session, and Eastern Oregon Presbytery approved this recommendation, and it was placed before a vote of the Church's congregation on May 16, 2004. After presentations and a comment period, the motion passed with a wide majority at the Congregational Meeting on May 16th.

After the Terney Ranch property was placed on the real estate market, four bids were received. In February of 2005, the Church's attorney accepted the high bid of \$1,210,000 from Eric Anderson.

Of the sale amount, \$1,000,000 was identified as an indelible principal that would not be used directly for development, but interest income generated from it would be deposited into the Lilian Terney Memorial Fund, and it would then be available for continued development of Westminster Woods.

The balance of the Terney Ranch sale amount (\$210,000) was identified for development of the next facility envisioned in the Westminster Woods Master Plan – a chapel facility. Planning for a chapel facility had been initiated before the Terney Ranch sale, but it continued in earnest after the Terney Ranch sale was finalized.

Leadership of the Westminster Woods Commission

Time Period	Commission Moderator
March 1993 March 1993–	Westminster Woods Commission created Ernie Cristler
July 1998–June 2001	Rollin Reynolds
July 2001–June 2004	Dave Powell
July 2004–June 2007	Bob Patterson