

Historical Background



Sleeping Lady and the land it occupies enjoy a rich and storied past. From the area's Native American roots, to the 1930s when it was home to the Civilian Conservation Corps, to its role today as a leading Northwest destination – Sleeping Lady continues embody the natural beauty and history of Leavenworth and the Wenatchee Valley.

1800s to 1900s: Na-sik-elt

Known as “Na-sik-elt”, or Narrow Bottom Canyon, families of the Yakama and P'squosa Native American tribes were the first human inhabitants of the land that eventually became Sleeping Lady. The P'squosa tribe is now recognized by the Yakama name for them – Wenatchi. For generations, the tribes enjoyed some of the richest fishing grounds in the mid-Columbia River basin. Over time, circumstance forced them to leave the canyon, however there are many Native Americans who continue to have deep historical ties to the area.

Sleeping Lady is nestled at the foot of the spectacular Stuart Range in the Cascade foothills. Upstream, Icicle Creek has carved a deep, rugged canyon through this mountainous terrain where native peoples once fished for salmon. Upon reaching Sleeping Lady, the creek opens into a broader valley before joining the Wenatchee River, just north of the resort.

White settlers came to the valley in the late 1800s. These included George and William Brisky, Mr. & Mrs. F. D. Estes, Nicholas Kincherf, David C. Wilson, Miss Mary Ralston and Franklin A. Losekamp, who built the Icicle Post Office and store on the south side of the Wenatchee/Icicle River confluence.

1930s to 1940s: Civilian Conservation Corps “Camp Icicle”

From 1934 to 1942, the site was known as Camp Icicle and was home to the 983rd Company of the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC). Camp Icicle was constructed with help from local residents and carpenters. The barracks and buildings housed 200 young men and many of these structures remain today. During their time, the 983rd Company constructed the ski lodge at Leavenworth and the original lodge at Stevens Pass, as well as 22 local buildings, 20 bridges along with the placement of over 1,000 signs and markers.

1940s to 1950s: Icicle River Ranch

In 1946, the CCC cabins were redeveloped into a private, family-oriented ranch named Icicle River Ranch. Its owners, Wilfred and Geraldine Davy, remodeled some of the barracks by removing ends or middle sections to create smaller cabins. A stay for the “summer ranchers” at the Icicle River Ranch included organized pack team trips on horseback to the high country with cooks, guides and even musicians. Horses were kept in the large meadow during the summer and moved down to the Columbia Basin in winter.

1950s to 1990s: Camp Field

The property was sold in 1957 to the Yakima Diocese of the Roman Catholic Church and renamed Camp Field. The site operated as a camp for young people ages eight and up from 1957 to 1982. The chapel and seven new dormitories were constructed between 1964 and 1965 and the Camp Icicle cabins were again renovated. These renovations allowed the camp to begin dual operations as both a summer camp and an off-season retreat for adults.

About the time Camp Field began operations, Father Joseph O'Grady from Boston, a young Irish priest, was banished to the upper Leavenworth Valley for permitting students to question their theology in the Spokane high school where he taught.

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Far from wasting away, Father O'Grady thrived and breathed new life into Camp Field. Before long the camp was alive with children. There were horses in the pastures, a swimming pool, a ball field, an archery range and a camp fire circle for outdoor services. Every child who brought a musical instrument to camp was encouraged to bring it to the chapel to accompany Sunday Mass.

Father O'Grady, referred to by some as the "hippie priest," was widely loved. He welcomed everybody to communion, regardless of denomination and performed marriages for anyone, as long as he was sure they were committed to each other. He held barbecues for the children and joined in their outdoor activities. For all who knew him, he inspired spiritual reverence along with compassion, wisdom, fun and humor. When he died in 1983, the valley mourned.

The Diocese discontinued operation of the summer camp in 1982 and began operating the site year-round as the Camp Field Retreat and Conference Center. Camp Field was the site of many family reunions, non-profit retreats and religious gatherings.

1990s to Present: Sleeping Lady

The Diocese put the property up for sale in 1991 and Harriet Bullitt, longtime owner of neighboring property, purchased the 67 acres to preserve the land. She then made plans to redevelop the older buildings into an environmentally friendly conference facility and mountain retreat. She engaged Jones & Jones Architects and landscape architects to design the retreat.

Bullitt named Sleeping Lady after the mountain profile above the narrow valley. Eighteen original Camp Field buildings were kept in the new site plan for historical and environmental considerations. Five of these buildings, including the Eyrie, Rookery, Grotto, Chapel and Flicker, remain in their original locations. The remaining 13 buildings were moved to new locations on site. All of the buildings were remodeled to meet or exceed current building and energy codes. New buildings were constructed to blend in with the original architectural style and the site was landscaped with native vegetation.

In January 1993, the business was incorporated as Sleeping Lady, Inc. and in April 1994, restoration and construction began. The 18 buildings that were original to the site remain today with new construction bringing the total to 44 finished buildings.

Sleeping Lady opened in August 1995 by hosting Icicle Creek Music Center's first annual Icicle Creek Chamber Music Festival. Since that auspicious beginning, there have been 1,000's of events and happenings at Sleeping Lady including concerts, conferences, meetings, and theatrical performances.

A second phase of development began in 1998 with the addition of the Fountain Cluster which included ten additional housing rooms, along with an expansion of Kingfisher Dining Lodge to accommodate 40 additional dining spaces and the addition of the Quail and Tadpole meeting rooms, which created meeting space for up to 140 people. The Grasshopper Fitness Room was also added and O'Grady's Pantry opened to the public.

In 2001, the development of the Icicle Creek Music Center (ICMC) facility began. The development was completed in 2003 and involved a remodeled and expanded office for the ICMC and the Icicle Fund, including meeting rooms and practice spaces for staff and students. The development also included the Canyon Wren Recital Hall, three ensemble practice rooms, three solo practice rooms, eight housing units, and parking for the various functions and activities.

In 2003, O'Grady's was expanded to accommodate increased use and KOHO Broadcasting Studios, a local radio station housed on site and owned by Harriet Bullitt, added a news room and sales office. The organic garden was improved to create greater access for guests and to increase the supply of organic herbs, salad greens, vegetables and berries used in Sleeping Lady's kitchens. In 2004, a greenhouse was constructed to extend the growing season of the organic garden.

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In 2007, the fitness room was relocated to a more central location for Sleeping Lady's guests. The Mercantile, an extension of the gift shop, opened in the former fitness space behind O'Grady's Pantry.

Over time, all of the major facilities on the 67 acre campus of Sleeping Lady and the Icicle Creek Music Center have been connected with fiber optics for the efficient use of internet connections as well as communications and fire detections systems.

In October of 2008 Harriet met with Johnpaul Jones of Jones and Jones Architects to explore the idea of redefining the Kingfisher Dining Lodge and the Front Desk area along with the possibility of building a new recreational building. As those ideas took shape a plan was put in place to remodel the Kingfisher Dining Lodge with work to commence in the spring and summer of 2009, followed by the front desk remodel

The Kingfisher Dining Lodge remodel was completed in July of 2009. Some of the features include the addition of a bar, the replacement of the serving line with a serpentine copper and stainless steel servery, a LaCornue range and oven and a bread/pizza oven behind the line. A separate salad bar and dessert bar were added to enhance the dining experience as well.

It was decided to enter into a partnership with Solstice Spa to add additional spa services to our guests. The existing sauna was removed from the building and a new white cedar dry heat sauna was built on the deck of the existing building. The changes to the spa building and the new sauna were completed by the end of summer in 2009.

The front desk remodel was completed in mid September of 2009. The guest service area was opened up creating a more relaxed and efficient area for check in and check out. The gift shop has been recreated to offer the guests a boutique area for purchases and a business center was added.

Excavation and construction began on the recreation building in October of 2009. This building offers recreation opportunities for guests of all ages. The building features a small stage for children to act out puppet shows or plays or can be used to view movies and other activities. There is an area for arts and crafts as well as billiards and table tennis. The building is shaped like a traditional barn and will be named the "Play Barn" This building is scheduled to be finished by spring of 2010.

About the Owner, Harriet Bullitt

Harriet Bullitt, developer, owner and CEO of Sleeping Lady Mountain Retreat, is a multi-talented entrepreneur and supporter of the arts and environmental conservation. She is the daughter of Alexander Scott Bullitt and Dorothy Stimson, early Northwest community leaders.

With her sister Priscilla, she assumed leadership of the KING Broadcasting Company, founded by her pioneering mother, Dorothy Stimson, in the mid 1940s. King Broadcasting was the first television station in the West, and grew to a chain of radio, TV and cable stations throughout the Northwest. Ms. Bullitt also founded Pacific Northwest Magazine (now Seattle magazine) and Pacific Search Press, which she sold in 1990.

Bullitt purchased the land for Sleeping Lady, adjacent to family property owned since the 1930s, to protect the land from over development. In 1999, Ms. Bullitt returned to her interest in broadcasting by founding Leavenworth's own KOHO FM radio, purchasing Lake Chelan station KOZI, and creating the Icicle Broadcasting Company. She recently created the Icicle Fund, a charitable foundation to support the arts and environmental protection in the upper Wenatchee Valley.

Her varied interests have included seaplane and glider flying, competitive fencing (New England champion and US national finalist in the 1950s), scuba diving, Icelandic horses and flamenco dancing. She celebrated her 60th birthday by finishing an Iron Man race in the Lake to Leavenworth Quadrathlon.

Her civic activities have included board membership with the Seattle Pacific Science Center, Oregon Museum of Science & Industry, The Nature Conservancy, Reed College, Volunteers for Outdoor Washington, Icicle Creek Music Center, the Icicle Creek Watershed Council, the Bullitt Foundation and the National Audubon Society.