

# Sloper Historical Facts

## THE SLOPER FAMILY IN SOUTHINGTON

Robert Sloper of Branford received a state land grant of property in Southington and moved his family to Southington in 1730.

Robert Sloper's son, Captain Ambrose Sloper built the present Sloper house in 1760. Captain Ambrose lived to be 89 years of age, born in 1734 and died in 1822. He outlived his son Ambrose Sloper, born in 1774 and died in 1810. Thus, the Sloper property was left to Captain Ambrose's grandson, David R. Sloper, born in 1801 and died in 1887. David was both a cement manufacturer and farmer and the father of Cornelia Sloper Neal. Cornelia was born in 1851 and died in 1949.

The last member of the Sloper family to run this farm was William Orr, husband of Julia Sloper Orr. From about 1905, and for the next 55 years, three generations of the Pocock family who owned a farm further north on East Street, maintained the farm by growing their corn and cutting the hay. They pastured their heifers on the land to the north of the pond bordering Kensington Road. Mr. Edward Pocock, Sr. was of great help to David Dellert, YMCA General Secretary, who created and ran the first day camp in 1950.

Cornelia Sloper Neal left her family's 143-acre Sloper Farm to the Southington Community YMCA in 1949. She gave it in loving memory of her mother and father, Mr. and Mrs. David Root Sloper, her brother Ambrose, and her two sisters, Mary and Julia. In 2009, the YMCA celebrated the 60th anniversary of her magnificent gift which has provided thousands of children with fun, adventure and tradition.

## SLOPER CEMENT MILL – 1834 UNTIL THE 1850'S

The YMCA Camp Sloper of today contains the foundation and water powered grinding wheels of one of the first cement mills in the United States.

In 1823 on the Luman Andrews Farm, about one mile north of YMCA Camp Sloper on Andrews Street, a special kind of limestone was found that would harden under water. This was made into cement for such projects as the Farmington Canal, bridges, dams and buildings constructed near water. The limestone first had to be burned in a wood fired kiln, a process that took several days and several cords of wood. The hot limestone was cooled and transported by horse and oxen drawn wagons to David Sloper's grinding mill, where it was ground to the proper fineness and mixed with sand and water for use as cement.

The water used to power the mill, on the property that became YMCA Camp Sloper, was supplied by a pond on the north side of Kensington Road. The outline of the spillway which brought water to the mill can be seen on the hill above the Sloper Pond inlet stream and the remnants of the water wheel pit can be seen at the edge of the pond.

The cement business flourished for years but eventually could not compete with the large quarries in New York State that could transport their cement cheaper by water. By 1860, the last of the Andrews Street limestone quarries and cement manufacturers went out of business.

Walk up the green trail to see the remains of the foundations of one of the buildings used to manufacture cement.

## COOPERATIVE CREAMERY – 1880-1890

On this site, a number of farmers joined together to construct and operate a cooperative creamery. The creamery processed, preserved and sold butter and a variety of other milk products. This particular location was chosen due to the large spring which kept the product cooled. This in turn made the business successful. Evidence of the storage area for the creamery can still be seen in the spring behind the foundation, located on the red trail.

The farmers leased the property from the Sloper family. During the early years of operation, the creamery prospered under the management of an expert Swiss buttermaker. The butter made here was in high demand at hotels in New York City. After the Swiss buttermaker left, the quality of the products deteriorated. The creamery became less and less profitable and finally went out of business around 1890.

## ICE HARVESTING ON SLOPER POND – ABOUT 1900-1930

Before refrigerators were common, the cutting and storing of ice was a major business on the Sloper Farm. About 20 to 25 men worked during the winter and four to five men worked throughout the spring, summer and fall seasons to sell and preserve the ice for the winter. Ice blocks were preserved within the insulation of sawdust and hay in the Sloper ice houses.

William Orr, brother-in-law of Cornelia Sloper Neal, was the manager of Sloper Farm. He started the ice harvesting and sales business that supplied Southington with natural ice for many years.

About 1900, Mr. Orr constructed a dam to increase the size and depth of Sloper Pond. Two large ice houses were built adjacent to the dam, each of them larger than the Red Barn which now stands on East Street.

In 1905, the business was sold to John Jamieson who continued its operation through the late 1930's.

## McKENZIE'S POINT

On this scenic point stood McKenzie's cottage. This cottage was the summer home of Samuel and Eunice McKenzie, nephew of Cornelia Sloper Neal. The cottage remained on the property and was used by the Boy and Girls Scouts in the early years of camp. The cottage was also used as a warming hut for ice skaters and for winter recreation on the Sloper property. The cottage burned in 1974. Sam McKenzie and his family were influential in persuading Cornelia Sloper Neal to leave her property to the Southington Community YMCA. In 2009, the Pooler Pavilion was built on McKenzie's point in honor of Mark Pooler, long time YMCA Camp Sloper Camp Director. Funds for the pavilion were provided by an anonymous donor and friend of YMCA Camp Sloper.

# YMCA Camp Sloper Outdoor Center

## Rules and regulations:

- The Outdoor Center is an alcohol-, drug- and smoke-free facility.
- Please carry your membership card with you at all times.
- Please be caring and respectful to all other members.
- Please discard all trash in proper containers.
- Please keep off waterfronts when lifeguards are not on duty.
- Motorized vehicles are prohibited (ATVs, snowmobiles, motorcycles).
- Please park vehicles in the lots only. Keep all vehicles off the grass.
- Dogs must be kept on a leash and under control at all times.
- Dog owners are responsible for cleaning up after their dog.
- The Sloper fishing season runs from mid-April until October 31.
- Fishing is a catch and release program and is prohibited from boats, canoes, waterfronts/docks and on the ice.
- When hiking please stay on trails at all times.

## Sloper Facts

### Some interesting facts about YMCA Camp Sloper:

- The Camp Bird is the Killdeer.
- The Camp Tree is the White Pine.
- The Camp Mascot is a legendary snapping turtle named Mama Cass.
- The Camp Motto is "Fun • Adventure • Tradition".
- The Camp Colors are Orange and Navy Blue.
- The Staff Philosophy is "Be Fun, Have Fun, Give Fun Everyday!"
- The Camp Song is "From East to West, Camp Sloper is the Best".
- The Camp Values are: Red – Caring; Blue – Honesty; Yellow – Respect; Green – Responsibility; and Orange – Fun!
- The YMCA Mission is *To Put Christian Principles Into Practice Through Programs That Build Healthy Spirit, Mind and Body for All.*

## Sloper Scavenger Hunt

### Find one of each of the following:

- |               |                     |                    |
|---------------|---------------------|--------------------|
| Pine Cone     | Maple Leaf          | 3 Different Leaves |
| White Rock    | Flat Skipping Rock  | Oak Leaf           |
| Snail's Shell | Bird's Feather      | Crystal Rock       |
| Dandelion     | 5 Pieces of Garbage | Acorn              |
| Wild Flower   | Black Walnut        | Volcanic Rock      |

# YMCA Camp Sloper OUTDOOR CENTER

1000 East Street, Southington, CT

860-621-8194

## TRAIL MAP



[www.ymcacampsloper.org](http://www.ymcacampsloper.org)

# TRAIL MAP DETAILS

1. YMCA Memorial Forest
2. Sloper Sports Fields
3. Fish Family – Open Space Preservation
4. Teambuilding Course
5. Low Challenge Course
6. Crystal Mine
7. McLeod Family Pavilion/Camp Office
8. 50th Anniversary Amphitheater
9. McKenzie's Point/Pooler Pavilion
10. Sunset Point
11. Pirate's Point
12. Wetlands Boardwalk
13. Alligator Pond
14. Red Barn
15. Jacob Family Pavilion

● **EASY TRAILS**

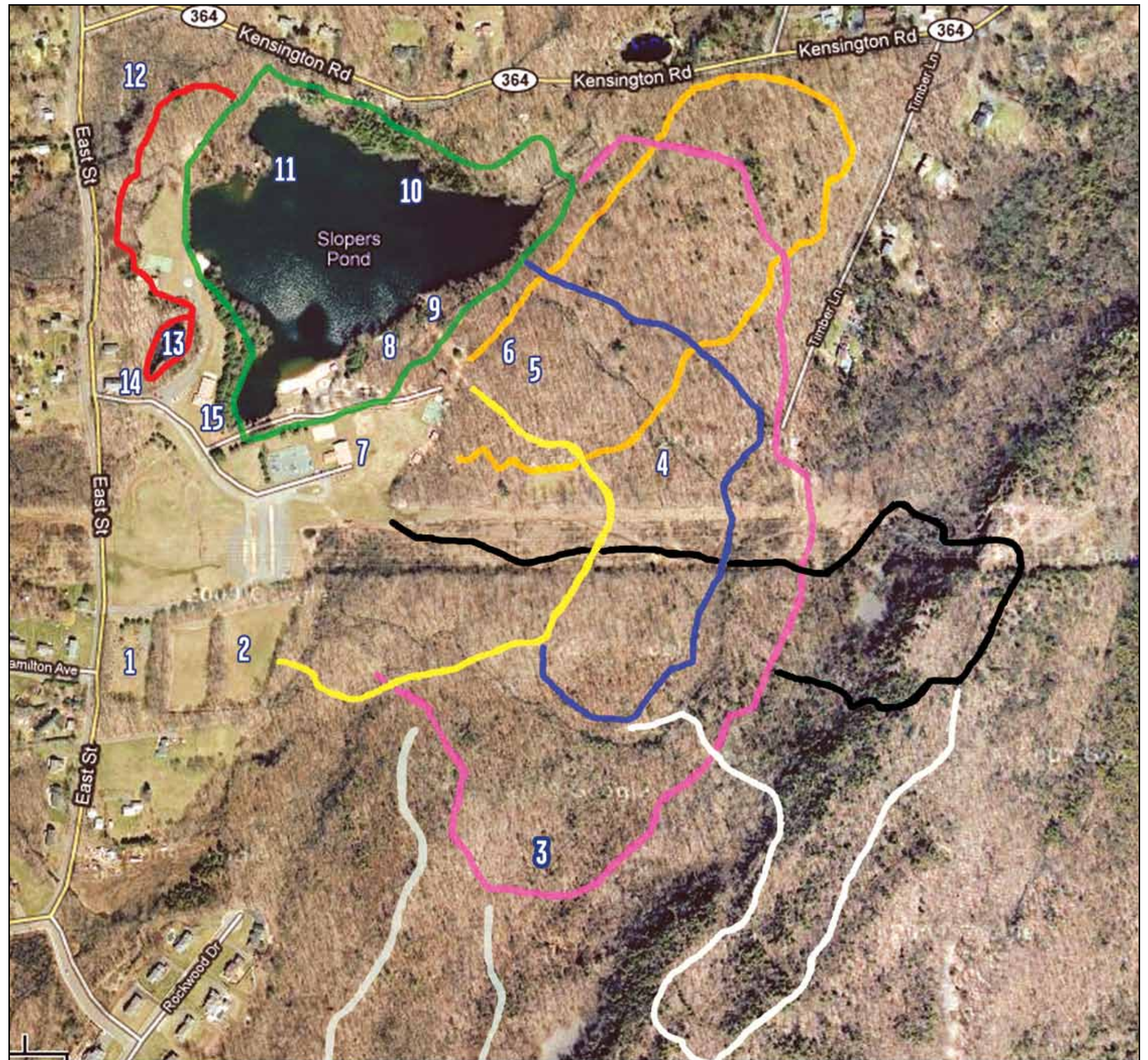
- Red: .4 mile ———
- Green: .9 mile ———

■ **INTERMEDIATE TRAILS**

- Orange: .8 mile ———
- Blue: .5 mile ———
- Yellow: .5 mile ———
- Purple: 1.0 mile ———
- Silver: .5 mile ———

◆ **DIFFICULT TRAILS**

- Black: .8 mile ———
- White: .7 mile ———



# YMCA CAMP SLOPER OUTDOOR CENTER