HISTORY OF THE CLOVER ROD & GUN CLUB

1948- The Clover Rod and Gun Club was formally organized. Meetings were held in the kitchen of the Rainiero home on Wayne Avenue..

1949 We bought a building from McGuire Air Force Base, The building was torn down board by board and brick by brick and moved to Trenton in a trailer. The materials so garnered were stored on the lot next to and owned by Romeo and Juliet Cafe until the following spring. As a way of making money, Christmas trees were sold from the same lot. More money was probably spent on liquid body warmers than was made on the sale of trees.

1950 Building materials were moved from the parking lot to the new location of the club home on Dover and Dryden Aves. The home was begun in the early spring and progress was much faster than originally hoped for. A few minor setbacks occurred, such as, having laid four courses of block only to discover that one corner of the building was about six inches lower than the other three corners which themselves were in no ways level.

We lost a few members due to the high standards we set for ourselves in required work time for each member, however before the end of the year the new home was completed and our first meeting was held in the new clubhouse. I must mention here that without the encouragement and bottles of beer and other liquid nourishment brought down by Mr. Palazzo of Palazzo's Bar that the meetings might never have taken place.

1951 Purchased the CLOVER 1. Not much of a boat but it provided the club with a needed bond to hold ourselves together and to dispel the doubts which were beginning to assert themselves. During the move by trailer from the North Jersey dock where we purchased the boat, we were fortunate in meeting a very good natured State Policeman. A convoy of three cars and some twelve members were in the entourage. It was decided to place one car ahead of the car pulling the trailer upon which rested the object of our fondest dreams. The third car was to follow closely and should it look as though anything drastic were to occur he was

instructed to signal by blowing the horn. Some fifteen to twenty miles and hundreds of horn blows later, we were overtaken by the aforementioned policeman. He halted the convoy and walking up to the lead car and asked rather sharply, "Are you the leader of this caravan" When we said we were he invited us to look down the road in the direction from which we came. With red faces, we watched from the side of the road where the policeman parked us, as many hundreds of cars passed; some angry, some curious, some snickering at our plight, and some just plain disgusted. After carefully Instructing us to watch the road behind and pulling over to allow the free flow of traffic which we were informed was his main objective at the present; we were allowed to continue on our way by the now smiling policeman. The boat was eventually docked and many happy hours of fishing, swimming, and just driving the boat were enjoyed by the members the rest of the year.

1952 The time had arrived when the club was ready to tackle its first big money transaction. During the past five years a modest sum was deposited monthly in a savings account for a someday dream home. Unfortunately inflation was beginning to make the savings account look smaller each year instead of larger.

A motion was made and seconded that we use the building fund and try to secure a loan from a lending institution to purchase a bigger and better boat. As I recall it now, there were a lot of pros and cons and much, much discussion on this motion. It finally passed and a committee was appointed to look for a boat and also a means of financing it. Many boats were looked at and finally a choice was made. A beautiful, stout oak boat, twenty nine feet long, nine and a half foot beam, powered by one hundred horsepower Gray Marine engine was selected. The cost of this beauty was $3,250.00 or about $2000.00 more than our funds amounted to, including the building fund. The committee promptly negotiated a personal note signed by about eight of our members. The terms of the note to be twenty four months and payments so high it prompted some of our more recent members to question the wisdom of such an awesome purchase.

Since I Had the day off, I was delegated to withdraw our money from the bank, cash the

check from the loan and purchase the boat. For some reason, of which I am not now aware, the deal had to be consummated in cash. When I presented the check for cashing and withdrew our savings the teller nonchalantly informed me that the largest denomination bill on hand then was a twenty and that they didn't have many of those. Without batting an eye I cheerfully answered, OK Make the hills as large as you can. You have no idea of just how large a stack of bills $3,250.00 can be when most of them are tens and lower. I didn't have enough pockets to hold all the loot. Then the gravity of the situation struck me. even though it was broad daylight I wondered just how the holdup man or men would approach me. There were many curious eyes watching the proceedings inside the bank at that instant. The teller moving to other tellers windows trying to get more twenties and tens. The counting and stacking of the bills in front of me. What, I thought , would I tell the members should I really be held up? Would they believe me?

Luck, I guess, was on our side. If there were any would be criminals around the circumstances were not right, because about thirty minutes later and in another part of town I stood by clutching the deed to the CLOVER II, while the former owners were busily engaged counting $3,250.00 in twenties, tens, fives, and Oh yes, a goodly number of ones. Many happy hours were spent by the members on the CLOVER II during the next five years.

In the same year the club first started to lease hunting land in Kingwood Township. The first lease was with a Martha Kettler who owned 135 acres of beautiful hunting land which we leased for the enormous sum of $.35 per acre.

Because of our obligation in the form of a bank loan it was decided to purchase and operate a food concession stand at the Trenton Fair. We did purchase a kind of dilapidated building which boasted of a three sided counter and a very antique cash register and a coffee pot. Much time and effort made it look presentable enough to open for business at the

Trenton Fair September, 1953. The stand was operated that year and the following year and was such a dismal failure that we finally sold it to a former member and this concluded our dealings with the general public at the Trenton Fair.

1954

1955-1956

1957 We were enjoying our boat so much! Painting it, scraping it, painting it again, repairing it, trying to make ends meet and keeping the payments up, remodeling it, sanding it, painting it, and in general becoming very much convinced that it was really just to much expense and work to keep.

1958 We sold the CLOVER II. It is curious indeed that such a furor erupted over the purchase of the CLOVER II. The furor over its selling was no less curious, and in no ways of lesser magnitude!

1959

1960

A new era dawned in the fortunes of the Clover Rod & Gun Club. Someone had perceived the eventual truth. Without land to hunt the club would no longer exist. Not only had this truth made itself evident, but also the realization that we could no longer depend on the bough leases or the generosity of the land owners. Not that both of these had not served the club in good stead throughout its former days, but for the first time it was obvious that the only way to hold land for our purposes was to buy it.

In this year we bought the 10 acres on Lockatong Road in Kingwood Township, and in thus

doing we have committed ourselves to the true path of the sportsman. That of preserving the land and its natural habitants so that ours sons and heirs may partake of the sport which we ourselves hold so dear.

Of all the motions made, seconded, argued about, and made eventually passed; I think this one had the most promise and the most pitfalls to overcome. In the passing of this motion our lot was chosen, our die was cast, our feet were firmly on the path to becoming the great hunting and fishing club we are today.

1961

1962 We organized ourselves and built what we lovingly called a shack on our ten acres. We were not too far from wrong. I will say that it was a wonderful place when the weather was bad or cold. the fire in the pot belly stove was hot, warm, pleasant, smoky or just about any other sensation you can imagine depending on who, how or when it was stoked.

In this year we also built our trap shoot. Many members pitched in and within a couple of short months we were happily shooting at clay pigeons from our very own trap. Many of us found that we needed much practice and for that matter still do.

I can' t remember whether we gave any thought to where our building would eventually be placed or not, but I don't think it could have been placed any better. Some of our members made sure that the trap and grounds were laid out to the exacting standards of the N.R.A.

1963

1964 As some sage a long time ago observed, "some of our most. trying times are precisely when we achieve our greatest accomplishments". I need say no more, of trying times we've had our share and I think quite possibly our most lasting achievement.

1965 For this was the year in which we built our lodge on the ten acres in Kingwood Township.

When it was completed we were very nearly broke and were very close to the parting of the ways. I think that since then, the bonds which bind us together have grown tighter and would venture to guess that without this building we may have fallen apart. It was again the close working together, the frustrations, the tiredness of long hours which bonded and at one and the same time nearly parted us. However as the spring passed and summer wore on the building took shape. Many changes were made in the original plans, some good, some not so good. Men tired, tempers flared, ruffled feathers were smoothed, arguments were reconciled and somewhere near the start of the hunting season the lodge was completed, or at least was at a point of being usable.

This building is the dream home! It is also a multi-purpose building. A nice hall about 40' X 50' with a large brick fire place in one corner is the hub of the building. It has been used for some of the club's affairs, square dances, roast beef dinners, and as a bunk house during the deer season. There is currently a plan under consideration to build a bunk room, which is generally needed. The building also has a nice kitchen which is a mite too small on occasion but so far has served our needs. A utility room houses the central heating and power panels. A ladies room and a men's room containing all the necessary fixtures and in addition a shower, which completes the inside of the building. At one end and outside the main building, but under the same roof is a giant cook-out, boasting two giant charcoal grilles. A serving counter around three sides make picnics something we could only dreamed of a few short years ago. The grounds are beautifully landscaped and in all, the building is or comes as close as possible to being our dream home.

1965 This was the year another great step forward was made. The Shuetz farm was purchased and once again the club was holding a coupon book, but for the enormous amount of $23,000.00. Somehow that note didn't look half as large as the one for $2,000.00 when we purchased the CLOVER II. I am happy to report that at this time all obligations in this

respect have been met and exceeded. The note has been reduced to the point where consideration of the purchase of more lands is not only feasible but also desirable. Again, our aim of perpetuating our sport and keeping it for our sons and heirs has been advanced a very large step.

1966 A tax lien was purchased on a 5acre parcel and at this writing steps are being taken to clear the property.

1967 The decision to raise pheasants for our stocking programs was one of a great magnitude. Not only because of the amount of work involved, but here was a way to become independent of the need to buy pheasants. We knew nothing of the art of raising birds and were it not for the efforts of some of our members to learn, the entire project would have been a dismal failure. It is not completely outside of the realm of possibility that had this project failed, it would have been many years before it was tackled again. Fortunately the dedication, the devotion to duty, and the pure stubborn persistence of the committee members made 1967 a banner year insofar as pheasant hunting was concerned. We now possess the know how to raise our own birds and also the means, since last year our pens and brooder houses were built. Plans this year are to raise 1200 birds to maturity for release during the season. Our last year total of 600 birds raised and released is to bedoubled.

1968 At the present time a committee is working on the purchase of an additional 14 acres of land. I am happy to report that the deal should be consummated very shortly. Again, the acquisition of land to protect and perpetuate our sport is being advanced.

THE FUTURE

The future I think holds great promise for the fortunes of the Clover Rod & Gun club. The goal of acquiring more land for our sport still shines. Although it is still distant. its light clearly illuminates the objective. I don't think it will be easy but nothing enduring is ever easy. I am sure there will be blind alleys traveled in this pursuit and I am sure many voices of dissent will be raised. In spite of some bad decisions in the past the right of dissent remains our greatest ally. I'm absolutely sure that each member in his own way is working toward the ultimate goal. I am equally certain that able leadership will direct these diverse views to the proper path. And so, I envision eventually the greatest and most progressive hunting and fishing club in the state of New Jersey. I am proud to have been a part of that struggle.