



Ghostly Secrets of Camp Francis' Past Mad Lib

In the heart of the East Kent Hamlet Nature Preserve stands an old, weathered Lodge. Its timeworn beams whisper secrets of summers long past, as the heart of Camp Francis - a retreat for Fairfield County Girl Scouts from the 1930s to the early 2000s - and its rafters echo with the laughter of young girls escaping their suburban neighborhoods for the remote woods. But before it was a lodge, it was a livestock barn belonging to a Naugatuck businessman, whose family similarly escaped the urban bustle to homestead on this wild, untamed land.

In Camp Francis' heyday, Girl Scouts learned to tie knots, build campfires, and [1 _____] the trails that still crisscross the preserve today. But there was one trail they rarely spoke of—the Red Eft Trail. It wound its way through dense forest, disappearing into the shadows beyond the meadow.

Legend had it that the Red Eft Trail was haunted. The spirits of the Naugatuck family and their visitors, as well as earlier [2 _____] who used Old Cunningham Road to travel between Warren and Kent, were said to walk its path. Spectral figures, clad in [3 _____] bonnets and worn aprons, would appear at twilight, their footsteps leaving no trace in the [4 _____] grass.

But Emily, a [5 _____] Girl Scout with a penchant for adventure, couldn't resist the allure of the Red Eft Trail. One moonlit night, she [6 _____] from her bunk, flashlight in hand. The forest enveloped her—the rustle of leaves, the distant hoot of an owl. She followed the trail deeper, guided by an otherworldly glow.

As Emily walked, the air grew [7 _____]. The trees leaned in, their branches forming a natural Cathedral. And then she saw them—the ghostly figures. They stood in a circle, their eyes fixed on her, whispering in hushed tones. "Child," one of them said, her voice like wind through ancient [8 _____], "why have you come?"

Emily's heart raced. "I seek answers," she replied. "Why do you haunt this trail?"

The homesteaders exchanged glances. "While we were hardly the first people to [9 _____] this land, we found a home here as the forest grew back over land former generations clearcut for [10 _____]," the spirit explained.

"Our dreams were woven into this soil—the crops we planted, the hearths we tended. Now we linger, frozen by our memories."

"But why here?" Emily pressed. "Why the [11 _____] camp?"

The homesteaders smiled. "Because the camp was built upon our legacy," they said. "Your counselors' house once held our [12 _____]. The gathering meadow our cows. The pond where you swim, and the connected waterfalls"—they gestured toward the distant cascade—"were a place of early commerce, including two [13 _____], a fish hatchery, and a boarding house."

Emily shivered. "Is there a way to set you free?" The homesteaders sighed. "Perhaps," they murmured. "Find the lost journal—the one hidden beneath the [14 _____] of the barn. It contains our stories, our regrets. Read it aloud at the Overlook, and we may find peace."

[15 _____], Emily returned to the camp. She pried up a loose floorboard in the barn, revealing a [16 _____] leather journal. Its pages smelled of earth and ink. With the journal clutched to her chest, she followed the Red Eft Trail once more, climbing the spur to the Overlook.

With Lake Waramaug glinting in the moonlit distance, Emily read aloud—the homesteaders' joys, their heartaches, their unfulfilled [17 _____]. As her voice [18 _____] through the treetops, the figures wavered, their forms [19 _____] like morning fog. And then, with a sigh, they vanished.

From that day on, the Red Eft Trail held no ghosts. Instead, it became a place of wonder—a portal to the past, where the whispers of homesteaders [20 _____] with the laughter of Girl Scouts. And Emily? She continued her adventures, knowing that sometimes, the most magical stories are hidden in the folds of time itself. 🌿 🌲 📖

Note: While this tale is clearly fictional, East Kent Hamlet Nature Preserve does have a storied past as Girl Scout Camp Francis. The Naugatuck family is also real, as is the past commercial "hub" of East Kent, with its two mills and roots (like countless places throughout Northwest Connecticut) in the Iron Industry. If you are interested in learning more about the Preserve's past, and helping us to preserve its cultural heritage and remaining buildings, please reach out to info@kentlandtrust.org.