

Case for Climbing Center

Executive Summary

Phantom Ranch planned to build a canteen with an indoor climbing wall. The climbing wall is a memorial for a former camper and staff member who was killed in action while serving in Afghanistan. We cannot build in what we consider the best locations for a canteen due to regulations regarding the proximity of buildings to wetlands and the environmental corridor.

We decided to build the climbing center instead. Con – there will not be a new canteen, yet. Pros – The climbing center will provide a better climbing experience than the one in the canteen would have provided. It will be located on ‘the Hill’ close to many other sports areas. We can build right away, and have a great new activity.

Project Background

Original Plan - New Canteen

In 2011 we were in the initial stages of designing and determining the feasibility of building a new Canteen building. We would like to build a new canteen to replace the small, inadequate building by the beach, used in the summer, and the small inadequate closet canteen in the Dining Hall that is used in the fall, winter and spring.

The new canteen was being designed as a gathering place for campers and guests to sit inside or outside, to play games, have conversations, and to have rooms for small group break outs. We moved forward throughout 2011 – 2013 to refine the design, working with a volunteer architect. We also began some of the initial stages of fund-raising. It would have been a very nice building in a great location and would have made a great addition to the camp.

This building would have been located across the main parking lot from the Chapel in the Oaks. It would have been set into the hill along-side the lower grass field.

Daniel James Johnson Memorial

On October 5th of 2010 Senior Airman Daniel James Johnson was killed in action. He received several commendations for his heroic actions. Since Dan was an avid rock climber the family desired to build a Rock Climbing Wall to stand as a memorial and provide a valuable activity for Phantom Ranch.

Knowing that Phantom Ranch was beginning to work on the new Canteen Project, the Johnson family approached us with a desire to provide funds for a climbing wall which could be included in to the design of the new canteen. In many ways it would have been a nice fit. So we reworked our plans to include a climbing wall into the new canteen. This way people in the canteen could take a turn on the walls, enjoy snacks, and watch their friends.

Fundraising

The Wall

The Johnson family had pledged to raise \$100,000 to pay for the wall itself. Ultimately, they surpassed the \$100,000 goal through five annual golf outings. To date, they have raised over \$115,000, and have re-evaluated the pledge and will raise up to \$125,000. These funds are specifically for the wall and memorial related expenses. Phantom Ranch worked with the family to choose the type of wall and the manufacturer. We will continue to work with the family to ensure the memorial aspects of the wall and building are appropriate.

The New Canteen

As we approached 2013 we were well underway with a good design for the new canteen and we had received the go-ahead from the board. We were interested in featuring the new canteen project at our 60th Anniversary Celebration Banquet in the fall of 2014.

With the extra room and height for the climbing wall we were estimating that the total cost for the new canteen would be \$450,000.

At that time we had \$100,000 set aside from previous estates gifts, plus the \$100,000 from the Johnson family, we needed to raise \$250,000 in the next two years. This is a lot of money, but we felt that God was directing us in this manner.

Issues

The canteen design and fund-raising preparation was going along as planned until a couple of unexpected things happened.

Panhandle Cabin

We had to hold-off on fund-raising for the new canteen because we needed to replace the Panhandle Cabin. This cost about \$75,000, and was not in our fund-raising budget until we determined that we had to tear down the old cabin and replace it as soon as possible. The cabin was becoming un-usable, and re-modeling was going to prove to be un-tenable, so the only option was to rebuild in place.

Permit application and Environmental Study

When we inquired with the Town of Mukwonago planner about modifying our Site Plan to accommodate our proposed site for the New Canteen we found out that we would not be able to just modify the Site Plan. The Wisconsin State laws and regulations regarding Conditions of Use Permits and Site Plan of Operations had been significantly changed. The Town Plan Commission required us to apply for a new Conditions of Use Plan and to submit a new Site Plan of Operation.

The application for the site plan and the conditions of use permit took much longer than we thought it would. In fact, in March 2016, we are just completing the last stages of paperwork to complete this entire project.

As part of the conditional use permit and the site plan we were required to have a group from the Department of Natural Resources do an environmental study. This study delineated the 'Environmental

Corridor', 'Average High Water Mark', the 'Flood Plain', and the 'Wetland' areas. Each of these demarcations has building regulations attached. Just waiting for the Environmental Study to be completed took a year.

Denial of Permit and Lack of Suitable Site

When the environmental study was completed, we became aware that the site for the new canteen would not comply with the regulations for the environmental corridor and the wetlands. Therefore, a building permit would not be granted for that location, and a variance would not be allowed under any circumstances.

No other sites for the new canteen, which would be big enough to include the climbing wall and encompass our other needs for this building, would either comply with the regulations or be a valid site for the canteen. For example, it would not do to have the new canteen stuck way up on the hill or over in the hay field. We will continue to explore options for a new canteen.

New Canteen Fundraising Stalled

By the fall of 2015 we still had only raised about \$35,000 for the new canteen. We did not do very much advertising about this need, other than at the 60th Anniversary, because there were so many uncertainties.

Johnson Family Concerns

The Johnson Family was nearing the end of their fundraising efforts. They were concerned that we did not have a viable site for the new canteen which included the Memorial Climbing Wall, and that we were not even close to the amount of funds that we would need.

These were valid concerns which we wanted to address. The people who had contributed to the Memorial, the Johnson Family, and Phantom Ranch wanted to honor Dan with the wall as soon as possible.

Revised Plan – Climbing Center

What is the Climbing Center

The Daniel James Johnson Memorial Climbing Center, aka The Climbing Center, is a building 30 feet by 45 feet and 46 feet tall. The climbing center will have the main climbing room which is 30 feet by 30 feet and 36 feet high, a preparation room, storage room and a loft. The building features a Nikros, Inc. A.R.T. wall, it will look like real rock. This main wall will be 30 feet high and 32 linear feet. The climbing center will also feature high elements for personal and team challenges, the capacity to install an outdoor wall, and several smaller indoor walls. The floor of the climbing center will have 5.5 inch foam which is specifically designed for floors under climbing walls.

Location

The Climbing Center will be located on the hill along the road that runs from the Hill Chapel to the Winchester and Lone Star Hill cabins. It will be about 100 feet from the Winchester cabin, along-side our newly constructed Traverse Climbing Wall. This locates the building near other sports activities, like the basketball court, the dodgeball court and the ball field.

Need for Indoor Activities

Phantom Ranch is in the position that, as much as we need a new Canteen, we also need a good indoor activity area. Currently, our only indoor activity areas are in the meeting room spaces, which does not allow any sports or 'active' activities.

The Climbing Center will provide new indoor and outdoor activities. In addition to the \$120,000 climbing wall, which will be purchased from and installed by Nikros, Inc., we will have lower climbing walls on two of the walls and on the outdoor wall. We will also be installing a series of high elements, which will allow campers to harness up, and climb a ladder up to some elements which will test their strength, their faith, and their courage to try new things, pushing them beyond what they would dream.

The Climbing Center will be ideal for cabin groups, will make Phantom Ranch more attractive to retreat groups, will provide valuable indoor small group discussion space and other non-climbing indoor activities can take place in the building.

Climbing Center Cost

On March 5, 2106 the Phantom Ranch Board of Director decided that we would set a goal of \$250,000 total for the Climbing Center. This includes \$125,000 from the Daniel Johnson Memorial Fund, \$50,000 from our estate fund and \$40,000 that was given towards the new Canteen. This leaves a balance of \$35,000. To the extent that we raise more than our \$250,000 goal we will be able to immediately build additional elements for the high elements and the outdoor climbing wall.

Timeline

In March 2016 we completed all the steps for the conditional use permit and the site plan. We filed a Zoning Permit. By May 2016 we will have finalized the plans and will work with engineers so that we can submit the plans to the state. Upon approval from the state we will be able to obtain building permits. We hope to begin foundation work by Summer 2016.

We estimate that it will take 9-10 months to complete construction. This part is a work in progress. When we receive the final drawings, and bids from contractors we will be able to accurately predict when the project will be completed.

Other Issues

Many people donated specifically towards the new Canteen Building. We need to use that money for the Climbing Center, we will be asking those who gave to the new Canteen if we can use their money for the Climbing Center instead. If they choose not, we can keep it for an eventual canteen or return it.