

HISTORY OF STONY LAKE LUTHERAN BIBLE CAMP

NEW ERA, MICHIGAN.

(Property of the MICHIGAN CIRCUIT of the EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH (E.L.C.))

.

For several years prior to 1945, the Pastors and Laymen of the Michigan Circuit of the then Norwegian Lutheran Church of America (now the Evangelical Lutheran Church - E.L.C.) had the vision of one day owning a piece of property for a Bible Camp. A Bible Camp Committee was appointed, the original members of which comprised: Messrs. Carsten Hansen, Peter Ramberg, George Olsen, Harry Johnson, William Olsen, Melvin Williard, J.B. Vandarest, Orville Souser, Carl Lundgren, and Pastors Carl J. Groettnum, Walter A. Olsen and Arthur Knudsen - all of Muskegon and Muskegon Heights.

A Bible Camp Fund was started for which voluntary contributions were received. When this reached a total of approximately \$5,000.00 they felt the time had arrived to take action and they went out to seek desirable property in earnest. On February 24, 1945 the following announcement was made to all the churches in the Michigan Circuit of the E. L. C.:

"The Bible Camp Committee, authorized to purchase a site by action of the Lower Michigan Circuit, has found a very fine piece of property on Stony Lake. Stony Lake is situated about 30 miles north of Muskegon and about three miles west of Trinity Lutheran Church near New Era.

This site consists of a tract of about 18 acres with more than 700 feet of shore line. Though the lake is known as Stony Lake there are no stones to be found either in it or near it. Both the beach and the lake bottom are fine sand. There is a large area which cleared would be well suited for recreation.

Overlooking the lake from an elevation is a large ten-room house with a screened porch extending around three sides. It was constructed some years ago at the cost of \$30,000., and is at present in fairly good condition. This will be very usable in our Bible Camp work.

The cost of the whole property, including the house, is \$4,500. A member of the committee who is in the real estate business has assured us that this is a reasonable price. The committee, many of whom have been up to inspect the

property, concur in this, and have decided to purchase this site."

~~When property was purchased~~ On July 12, 1945 a meeting was held for the purpose of incorporating, the members of the committee aforementioned forming the Board of Directors for the corporation to be known as the Stony Lake Bible Camp Corporation. Papers were duly signed and executed, the property as described above was purchased. By-laws were prepared, a Planning Committee was appointed for future work at the camp - a loan was arranged for at the bank to take care of improvements - and thus the Stony Lake Lutheran Bible Camp came into being.

Subsequent meetings took care of the necessary work to be done on the 10-room dwelling, such as roof repairs, electrification (which was done gratis by a contractor who was a member of one of the Muskegon churches), fire escapes were built to comply with state laws, toilet ~~sanitation~~ facilities had to be furnished, etc.

The 1945 Michigan Circuit Bible Camp was held at in the CCC Buildings at the State Park. One day's program consisting of driving all the young people over to Stony Lake to show how the work was progressing and have them all see where their Bible Camps would be held in the future. Needless to say, the young people were thrilled.

The first major work to be done in preparation for the 1946 Bible Camp, was the moving and erecting of two wood frame buildings (purchased from the R.F.D.) which would serve as a boy's dormitory, and one and reserved for classes and chapel - (the girls to be occupying the house on the premises). Army cots were purchased, as well as mattresses, dishes, silverware, wash bowls, cooking utensils, etc. - and by July 1946 everything was in readiness for the first Luther League Bible Camp. Meals were cooked in the coal and wood ranges in the kitchen of the 10-room house, served cafeteria style thru the large window opening on to the screened-in porch from the dining room. Dishes were washed outdoors - the hot and cold water having to be carried from the kitchen stove thru the back porch to the dish washing tables especially erected on the lawn outside. Then the clean dishes all were carried back inside and stacked in the cupboards again. Luther Leaguers took turns on K-P duty, counsellors really having quite a time keeping them in line. This was a lark for the young people. The net

up was crude and unique, but we of the Michigan Circuit were having our very first Bible Camp on our very own property.

Several car loads of women of the Women's Missionary Federation of the Circuit enjoyed their First Retreat in August of 1946, occupying the 10-room house in its entirety, sleeping upstairs, cooking the meals and serving them on the side porch~~ed~~ in porch, holding their meetings in front of the fire place in the living room. The men of the Brotherhood came in August too, taking over the dwelling as did the women, having hymn sings down by the lake shore, holding their meetings on the front porch - planning and looking ahead as to what improvements should be in line first, for of course, something would have to be done each year to build up the camp.

Each year brought its improvements; 1947^{8/48}, for instance found an addition of a kitchen built on to the frame building erected the previous year. The boys dormitory was now a huge tent, for which a wooden floor had been built. The frame building was changed into a dining hall, with a room partitioned off for a Faculty Room and space reserved for Study Groups and a Chapel. The kitchen, too, had a room partitioned off for the cooks' sleeping quarters. Large gas stoves were installed in the kitchen, and how they were welcomed by the camp cooks!

The Spring of 1949 found the ladies of Muskegon Churches in a cavalcade of cars heading for the Stony Lake Lutheran Bible Camp, where armed with scrub brushes, pails, and vacuum cleaners, the floors and woodwork were cleaned, mattresses vacuumed, walls and woodwork in the 10-room house painted. Sewing bees were held where drapes were completed, another work day and all the windows were washed and drapes hung. The men, too, armed with carpenters' tools, repaired and fixed and added wherever needed, wherever funds reached.

In the fall of 1948 boys and girls assisted Pastor Walter Olsen in planting 1000 seedling trees on the camp property - a contribution from ~~xxxxxxx~~ the Walter Olsen family.

In 1949, too, the State Law required new Toilet Facilities, which were built according to specifications. The attendance of Bible Camp was growing from year to year, and in 1950 it was necessary to purchase additional tents to serve as a boys' dormitory until such time that sufficient capital was on hand to build a permanent boys building.

The ladies in Detroit, wishing to do something for the Camp, since they would not be present during the working bees, contributed a substantial sum of money which was used for the purchase of Knotty Pine Paneling to finish the interior of the living room. The William G. Olsen family spent a week-end "vacation" at Camp where Bill Olsen fitted all the Knotty Pine Paneling around the living room, Pastor Lovass of Trinity Lutheran Church of New Era coming in occasionally to lend a helping hand. A celotex ceiling was also installed at the same time. A Val Oil finish was given the Knotty Pine boards on the following week-end by John Trbusek, George Olsen and Bill Olsen, making quite a transformation from the bare studded room to an attractive, modern, finished living room. Intermittent expenditures were made for athletic equipment such as Bad Minton Court and Racquets, baseball and Ping Pong Equipment, etc.

In 1952 a cabin was purchased and moved to the camp site to be used as a faculty cabin - the walls of the Faculty room in the other building having to be removed because of required additional dining hall space. In 1953 another cabin was given to the camp by Peter Benberg, it is to be used by the camp custodian, and another purchased by the Camp Committee and moved to the camp site for the use of the camp cooks - the kitchen having been enlarged to use the space originally designed for cooks' quarters. In 1954 found workmen erecting a cement block chapel at a cost of \$1,985.10; when completed the altar from the old Bethlehem Lutheran Church of Muskegon Heights was brought in, also chairs from Bethlehem. Dedication ceremonies were held preceding the Lutheran League Bible Camp at which the young people took part.

In 1955 a check for \$500.00 Scholarship was received from a contributor in Cleveland, Ohio - who wishes to remain anonymous. This will permit worthy students to attend a week at camp free of charge, students to be elected by a Pastor's Committee.

Since 1955 a long term finance plan has been in effect where each church of the Circuit sends a proportionate gift each year for a period of seven years, with plans for expansion as follows: Boys Dormitory to be built to replace tents (foundation

already laid for this); new stairway to be built from Bluff to Beach; additional Cabin to be built; new Baseball Diamond to be laid out; new light and more adequate lighting on the Playground; Shuffle Board courts to be installed, etc. etc.

Since January 1956 a new double sink has been installed in the kitchen with gas

gas facilities for hot water; an additional sink installed near the stoves for the convenience of the cooks; 2 large electric refrigerators were installed; lavatories installed in the main house; telephones installed. As previously noted, foundation laid for the first unit of the new boys' Dormitory. A new permanent garbage pit built of cement blocks in accordance with State specifications; a new septic tank dug and built; screens were repaired and replaced on the porch of the main house.

The Camp is supported solely by offerings of individuals and churches of the Michigan Circuit located in Alpena, Leer, Spruce, East Jordan, Elk Rapids, Frankfort, Northport, Suttons Bay, New Era, Detroit, Muskegon and Muskegon Heights.

The camp now has facilities for about 110. It has been possible for the young people to spend a week at Bible Camp for the nominal sum of \$11.00! (?)

For the past several years it has been necessary to hold two Luther League Bible Camps - one week for the Junior Leaguers - one week for the Hi Leaguers.

Each year since 1946 the Women's Missionary Federation of the Circuit has held a week-end Retreat; as has the Brotherhood of the Circuit - and the L.D.R. (Lutheran Daughters of the Reformation - groups of business girls).

Organizations other than members of the Michigan Circuit, E.L.C. regularly rent the Camp for their groups. Reservations have to be made well in advance with the Secretary of the Bible Camp Board, who at present is Rev. Waldo Johnson, Pastor of Emmanuel Lutheran Church, 636 Creston Ave., Muskegon, Mich. Nominal rental fees are charged. Area pastors associated with Stony Lake Lutheran Bible Camp are besides Pastor Johnson, are Pastors Arthur Gronberg, Our Savior's Lutheran Church, Muskegon; E.O. Anderson, First Lutheran Church, Muskegon; Arnold Nelson, Trinity Lutheran Church, New Era; V.O. Aronsen, Bethlehem Lutheran Church, Muskegon Heights.

Present Officers of the Bible Camp Board are, President, William G. Olsen; Secretary, Waldo Johnson; Treasurer, George Deery. Other Board members are Messrs. Henry Henriksen, Peter Hamberg, Pastors Arthur Gronberg, all of Muskegon; Pastor Dale Larson, East Jordan, and Pastor Vordale, Detroit. Camp Custodian is Mr. Elmer Peterson, Muskegon.

Bible Camp for the young people means a week of a supervised Bible Study, individually and in classes; with excellent outside speakers such as college professors, pastors of specialized laymen; good food, good counselling, excellent recreation activities, supervised and individual, ~~xxxxxxx~~ including ~~xxxxxxx~~ outdoor sports, -swimming, boating, baseball, badminton, quoits, shuffleboard and the like, as well as indoor games, activities, stunt nights, ~~xxxxxxx~~ parent nights, picnics and ~~xxxxxxx~~ other interesting events and contests.

For the women, Camp means a week-end of recreation and relaxation and inspiration in studying the Bible under the leadership of a well-known speaker, usually, activities and events planned among themselves, and renewing of acquaintances, since the Circuit is scattered throughout the state of Michigan and the ladies do not get together very often.

For the men of the Brotherhood, it means a week-end of intensified sporting events, contests, also Bible study under an experienced Bible teacher or Pastor, good food (the same cook has prepared meals for them for ten years!), real camaraderie and fellowship with men of the Circuit they, too, see but a few times a year.

Stony Lake Lutheran Bible Camp is just what it's name implies - a Camp, ~~beautifully~~ ~~xxxxxxxxx~~ ~~Stony Lake~~ owned and operated and enjoyed by Lutheran pastors and laymen alike, for the further studying of God's Word, the Bible, and for the thorough enjoyment of God's creation of heaven and earth, as found in the eighteen acres along the shores of beautiful, tranquil Stony Lake, ~~xxxxxxx~~ from its wooded bluffs thick with hemlock, birch, poplar and pines, to the plateau above where year after year, improvements are made ~~xxxxxxxxx~~ to add to the comfort and convenience of the campers. The Michigan Circuit of the E.L.C. considers this one of its richest material assets.

Feb. 11, 1957
IGO