

## A BIT OF CAMP GROUND HISTORY

The Illinois Conference was known as the "Illinois and Missouri District of the Pilgrim Holiness Church" when the first annual assembly was held July 28-31, 1923 at Charleston, Illinois. The District camp meeting was held at the city park also in Charleston. For some years the conference considered purchasing grounds for the camp meeting.

From the District Minutes of 1928: The District Assembly of that year was preceded with a ten-day camp meeting. As the minutes show, this was the first camp to be held on the new grounds. There had been talk of buying ground for several years and committees had been appointed to investigate the matter. During the assembly of 1927 the matter came up again and it was delegated to the District Council and the assembly gave them power to buy if they thought best. After careful consideration, a beautiful eight acre tract just outside the south city limits of Charleston, Illinois was purchased that year. A down payment was made and the balance was to be paid on an easy term contract in the future. The ground was fenced, wells were dug, and a kitchen built before camp began. A portion of the ground was plotted into plots and twenty-four of these were leased to people who intended to build cottages to live in during camp meeting.

The District Council at this time were Revs. D. C. Shearer, W. E. Catey, R. A. Beltz, Geo. A. Smith, W. M. Hall, H. M. Bassett, O. K. Shaffer.

It was further recorded from the 1928 District Minutes that: Inasmuch as the Lord has so graciously led the District Council in choosing and purchasing this beautiful camp ground and for the Christian spirit of fellowship that has prevailed during this camp, be it resolved that we show our appreciation of the same by rising and singing "Blest Be the Tie That Binds." A motion was then made that the following matters be delegated to the District Council to be settled by them: 1. date of the next assembly 2. location of the tabernacle. Carried. A recommendation was then approved that each pastor should by April 1, 1929 raise and send to the camp meeting treasurer an amount equal to one dollar per member to help build the new tabernacle. Further business of the Assembly brought a motion, which carried, that the district trustees be the committee on building the tabernacle. The trustees were Revs. W. E. Catey, W. M. Hall, and D. C. Shearer.

It was not until August, 1937 that the tabernacle was constructed. Just 14 days before camp meeting began the tabernacle was begun and was in sufficient readiness for the first service of camp.

The following excerpt is copied from the 1937 Assembly Minutes: For several years we have planned to build a tabernacle. At last our hopes are realized and we wish to offer our heartfelt thanks to God for His helping hand. Through Him we have the beautiful tabernacle. But the people had a mind to work under the leadership of our District Superintendent Bro. Catey and the contractor, Bro. Walter Hall. The District Council and several others laboring together with God made this tabernacle possible. Be it resolved that we all stand and say, "Thanks be to God for the tabernacle."

In the years that have come and gone since then other buildings were built as they were needed. Modernization of facilities were put in effect as the city facilities were available.

Inasmuch as much building has been done around the camp ground area due to the expansion of the University as well as the city itself, it was decided by a reconvened conference in 1964 to sell the property. At various times over the past 10 years or so an offer for the property or an interest was shown it by Eastern Illinois University or by realtors for housing construction.

As of January, 1967 negotiations were begun with the Bosch and Lambert Construction Co. of Champaign on a contract of sale for the camp grounds and lane with the stipulation to purchase at least an acre each year. The contract is to be completed within 8 years. As of this September 1, 1969 the company is to have possession of the entire grounds, however, no construction can be done until the deed of each section or acre has been paid for.

If these grounds that were set aside for sacred use could relay to us all the blessing of those days gone by, or if every participant both living and who



has passed on could speak, what memories there would be.

It would be a fitting climax to this brief memoir if we knew all the sermons preached, all the souls that were at the altar, all the giving for the work of the kingdom, but if rewards are not recognized here they certainly will be when all the saints gather in another world.

The Lord gave a gracious closing camp on the Charleston Camp ground with Rev. P. O. Carpenter, Rev. Franklin Moore, and Professor and Mrs. Byron Crouse as workers.

This does not end camp meeting preparation. For another year, as Jesus tarries, it is on the agenda to have camp meeting at the camp ground of the Free Methodist Church at Cowden, Illinois, with a tentative date of August 7-16, 1970.

May our Lord's direction be to each one of us in the best way He can be served and administer to those who do not (know Him).

Rev. W. E. Hall

Rev. S. J. Callaway

Rev. O. M. Awe