

A HISTORY OF CAMP AUGUSTANA
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There is a time for everything. Now is the time, we feel, for someone to record the history of Camp Augustana, if for no other reason than to preserve the record for future generations. It is assumed and taken for granted that Camp Augustana will continue to serve the Lutheran Church for many generations to come.

We have been closely associated with and personal friends of all the leaders who had anything to do with the origin and growth of the Camp to this present day and era. We have also had the privilege that no other LCA pastor had had of living next door to the Camp for more than thirty years. We are eye-witnesses to the growth and development of this fine institution of the Church.

With this background in mind, we venture to write the History of Camp Augustana; and hope it will be a trustworthy record of the facts and figures, as well as dates and events in chronological sequence.

It all began as a fantastic dream. Dr. John Jespersen, then Executive Director of the Chicago Inner Mission of the Illinois Conference of the Augustana Synod, felt a need to get some of his constituents out of Chicago during the hot summer months, where they could recuperate and enjoy the wholesome sunshine and fresh air somewhere in the countryside. It was at the time when the Pharmalee Baggage Transfer Company of Chicago brought many of their horses out to farms to be cared for until they could return healed and refreshed to the relentless clapping of their hoofs on the rough pavements of Chicago. If this was feasible for horses, why not apply the same technique for humans. It was this urgent need to help the sick and down-trodden, especially babes and small children, that prompted the venerable Pastor to do something. The Vision was born.

The next step would be to find a suitable location and proceed to buy and finance it. This was no small undertaking. When any man has a vision of a better world, he can either ignore it or else he can do something about it. He spent a good deal of time studying various possible sites for such a project. He was especially intrigued with Lake Geneva. He liked what he saw - this beautiful spring-fed lake; the 26 miles of shore dotted by luxurious mansions and other expensive homes and dwellings.

It was in the summer of 1926 that he located the present site. He took option on the property, making a down payment of \$1,000 from borrowed funds as earnest money. Being a practical business man as well as a minister of the Gospel, he sought the help and backing of some influential Chicago Pastors and Laymen of our Churches. He has taken groups of men from a couple of Churches to show them the property and to interest them in the Camp project, but none thought favorably of his plan. The time of the Option was running out. He was quite discouraged and about ready to call it quits, when one day he phoned E. R. Jacobson, a congecreated layman of some means and told him his story briefly. He asked him if he thought there might be some men in the Bethlehem Lutheran Church, who might be interested in helping to establish a camp for the Inner Mission.

The dream unfolds. Dr. H. E. Sandstedt was the well-loved Pastor at the Bethlehem Church. Bethlehem and its Pastor had always taken a kindly interest in the work of the Chicago Inner Mission Society. The following description of the "purchase transaction" is taken from a memo to Mrs. Wittenstrom, dated September 27, 1955, and written by Dr. Sandstedt and after some small additions and corrections by Mr. Jacobson is recorded here as authentic.

"It was a beautiful day for E. R. Jacobson, N. A. Nelson, C. G. Brunell, Dr. Jespersen and myself as we rode through the countryside to the inviting shores of Lake Geneva in Southern Wisconsin. Jespersen first showed us a subdivision on the South Shore of the Lake that had been developed recently and told about the favorable results. He demonstrated real salesmanship that day. He did not talk much, he showed us around and told the story simply. It was effective. Then took us to the North Shore and showed this property he had selected for the Inner Mission Camp, the men were pretty well sold on the project. It was a tract about 50 acres with a road running thru the property from the highway to the Lake. On the East Side of the road was a tract of about 16 acres with an old residence and barn on it. That was the part of the property he wanted for the Camp. The remaining part of the land should be divided into lots and sold. The understanding was that, when the investors got their investment back with a good profit, the camp site should be given the Inner Mission as a gift.

Shortly after our return home, the Bethlehem men called a meeting of interested people from our various churches on September 28, 1925 and presented the whole matter. Much interest was manifested and it was decided the best way to raise the necessary funds would be to sell 75 shares at \$1,000 per share. I was a patient at Augustana Hospital at the time and could not be at the meeting. The Bethlehem men visited ~~at~~ the hospital after the meeting, and told me the shares were all sold in about 15 minutes. Mr. Jacobson had made a down payment for me in case I wanted it, which I accepted.

Land was acquired in August 1926 and soon thereafter was subdivided and offered for sale. In December 1927 Deed was made to the Chicago Inner Mission by the Lake Geneva Syndicate for the 16 acres of camp ground, including the residence and barn, in accordance with the spirit of the arrangement originally proposed by Dr. John Jespersen.

My investment proved to be one of the best I have ever made, both from a financial point of view and especially from the satisfaction of being along to acquire and establish a summer camp for our Augustana people, and one of the finest camps in the Augustana Lutheran Church.

The foregoing letter from Dr. Sandstedt shows how earnest he was in preserving the record of the Camp. With this in mind we list here some dates and facts to help preserve the record.

A Quit Claim Deed dated August 17, 1926 and recorded on November 28, 1926 was given by George J. Cooke and Mary Cooke, husband and wife to John Jespersen et al.. No where is it stated what he paid for the land. The cost may be reflected in the following transaction. On September 1, 1926 a trust agreement was entered into. It certified that E. R. Jacobson, N. A. Nelson and Carl Christenson were the authorized Trustees to take title to the property, and to the shares that had been sold. They consisted of 75 Beneficial Interest Units. Each Unit represented one seventy-fifth interest in the net income proceeds. These Beneficial Units were to be recognized as personal property, and would not have any claim to the Real Estate. We herewith list the names of these original purchasers and the number of Units each owned.

Name	Number of Units	Beneficial Interest	Units
John A. Christianson	Five	Beneficial	Interest Units
N. A. Nelson	"	"	"
John Jespersen	"	"	"
E. R. Jacobson	"	"	"
J. F. Jacobson	"	"	"
C. A. Gustafson	"	"	"
Carl H. Burgeson	"	"	"
Carl Christenson	Seven	"	"
W. A. Jacobson	Five	"	"
C. H. J. Thorby	"	"	"
Oscar Lindstrand	Three	"	"
Ernest G. Lindstrand	"	"	"
Victor R. Pearson	"	"	"
Joshua Oden	"	"	"
Oscar E. Liden	Two	"	"
A. T. Schuldes	"	"	"
Charles G. Brunell	One	"	"
Herbert W. Linden	"	"	"
H. E. Sandstedt	"	"	"
J. A. Parkander	"	"	"
Carl A. Bostrom	"	"	"
C. A. Lindvall	"	"	"
Arthur Gilbert	"	"	"

A great deal of activity followed. On September 7, 1926 Dr. Jespersen deeded his claim to the property to the Trustees of the Trust Agreement. Shortly, thereafter the Trustees hired George W. Posey, a surveyor, to plot the land not to be used for the camp site. By October 4th he had completed his work and lots were staked and ready to be sold and deeds granted the purchasers. It was not, however, until December 1927 that

the Trustees deeded to the Chicago Inner Mission Society the 16 acres that had been designated as camp site.

No time was wasted in remodeling the barn into a chapel, the building of a dining hall to accomodate 100 persons, a few dormitories and cottages; and the purchase of the camp lane from the highway to the Lake plus 100 feet of lake frontage.

The Camp was now ready for business. It was known as Cisco Beach, the Ciscos were plentiful in that area of the Lake at the time and is why it received the name which it kept until 1946.

Dr. Jespersen was truly a pioneer with courage and vision. He had his own ideas of what the Camp mission should be and he held the reigns for the next two decades. He stressed worship and Bible study with a reasonable amount of outdoor activity to be held on the high camp ground surrounding the camp buildings. The dining hall and the sumptuous dinners became the attraction of a large number of our church people. A trip to Lake Geneva and Cisco Beach was a great outing in those days. Lots of people took advantage of it. Although the Camp was used in the summers of 1927-28, the Camp was not formally dedicated until 1929. The dream became a dedicated reality.

It would be an interesting chapter to relate how the lots sold and how the subdivision got its name "Knollwood". Legally it still uses the name The Cisco Beach Association."

Among the first to purchase property from the Trustees who handled the sales was the Immanuel Womens Home Association, located on North La Salle Street, Chicago, which is now Sandburg Village. The Home was operated for girls who came to the City to work. It was felt a summer home for the residents of this home would be a beneficial thing. The women of the Immanuel Home Association purchased the Lake Mansion (Villa) together with some lots and 100 feet of lake frontage.

The Villa became a popular vacation place for members of various Augustana Churches. Villa Immanuel prospered, and was known for its fine atmosphere and wholesome food. The Annex was built to accomodate those who wanted to stay awhile. We mention the Villa purchase and we will have more to say about it later as the History of the Camp unfolds.

What happened to Dr. Jespersen's original idea of bringing the sick and underprivileged children under the Inner Mission's care to Lake Geneva? He tried it for some time, but had to give it up for practical or impractical reasons. He used staff members and nurses from the Mission to help carry out his plans, but the plan was unworkable. Transportation, lack of proper facilities, and other difficulties forced him to abandon the plan. He never said much about it after that.

What, then, should be the mission of the Camp? He spent long hours pondering this question. He waited patiently for God's guidance in this matter. The answer was not long in coming. Other groups and organizations were willing to make use of the Camp and its facilities. The Minneapolis Bible Institute met here for a while. Boys' work was started on a small scale. During the 20's the Illinois Conference Luther League met annually at Long Lake for Bible Conferences and Inspirational Services. These meetings, especially the Services and song-fests, left an indelible spiritual impression on many of our young people. It took a great deal of persuasion and even some pressuring from the clergy to get them to decide in the early 30's to meet at Cisco Beach. They have since met here for camping and Luther League Activities. For many years the three Chicago District Leagues concluded the camping season by making use of the Camp over the Labor Day Week-ends.

The Camping ministry was slow in being accepted by many of our churches. In the 40's and 50's it became very popular. Due to Dr. Jesperson's vision and foresight, camping was made available to hundreds and thousands of our children and youth.

Dr. Jesperson did not live to see that day. He was old even while he was Camp Director. We remember him as the "grand old man", with the white wavy hair, the plump body, and the big man with the little soft voice. His was a long and distinguished service to the Church.

In later years a marker was placed on an iron pedestal by the East side of the Office building which reads: "In memory of Dr. J. Jesperson - Founder and First Director of Camp Augustana which was founded in 1927".

Dr. Axel Nelson took over as Camp Director following Dr. Jesperson's death. During his tenure the Camp objectives remained much as in the past, except that the Camp became more and more a tool of the Church. Girls' Weeks and Luther League Weeks were added to Boys' Weeks. The Church Men assumed responsibility for the programs at Boys' Weeks; the Conference Women's Missionary Society for the girls. The Luther League had its own officers and counsellors who supervised its program activities.

In 1946 the Inner Mission relinquished its hold on the Camp and the Camp became an Illinois Conference owned and operated institution. The Inner Mission Society deeded the Camp property to the Illinois Conference of the Augustana Synod, with this one stipulation, that in return for this magnificent gift, the Illinois Conference would assume the obligation for a small debt the Inner Mission had incurred during the lean years in the amount of \$35,000.00. On January 1, 1946 the Cisco Beach Camp became incorporated under the laws of the State of Wisconsin; and title was conveyed to the Illinois Conference. A new Constitution was adopted with broad powers granted to a Camp Board to be elected by the Illinois Conference at its annual convention as the By-laws prescribed.

Thus Camp Cisco Beach becomes Camp Augustana, and a new chapter is begun in the history of this fine Camp on the Shores of Lake Geneva.

From 1946 you will find the Annual Reports of the Camp Board printed in the Minutes of the Illinois Conference. A great deal of valuable information can be gathered in these Reports and in the Minutes of the Camp Board. But they do not tell the whole story. We hope we can furnish some of that in what follows.

History is more than the recording of statistics as valuable as they might be. The writing of History is an attempt at interpreting the spirit of those who played the leading roles in the decision making and carrying forward of these plans and projects.

Our Church Men have always been interested in Camp Augustana. They have given freely of their time and talents in its growth and development. They have served on the Camp Board and Committees. They were among the first who saw a need for a new chapel on the Campus. The Chapel in Jespersen Hall was not too conducive for worship. It was a multi-purpose hall and never built solely for worship. People began to agitate for a new chapel. The matter was presented to the delegates at the Church Men's Annual Conventions. Permission was finally granted to the Church Men by the Illinois Conference to conduct a financial appeal in the churches and in the local Brotherhoods for a new Chapel at Camp Augustana.

God always provides the right man at the right time. Axel Nelson, a carpenter from Evanston, had sat in on many discussions that led to the decision to build. He attended the District and the Conference Church Men's conventions faithfully. Like so many other good carpenters, he dreamed that some day he might have the opportunity to build a church or a house of worship. He and his brother, Carl, were awarded the contract to build the Chapel. Axel put his heart and soul into this building project.

Ground-breaking ceremonies were conducted by Dr. C. O. Bengston, Pres. of the Illinois Conference, assisted by a few clergy and laymen on Sunday afternoon, Labor Day Week-end 1952. The work progressed so fast that the following summer services were held in the Chapel. The Rockford District Luther League donated an electric organ. Professor Roger Nyquist, Rockford Organist, played a recital on a Sunday afternoon midsummer 1953. The Illinois Conference Luther League gave the furnishings for the Chapel. The Chapel is a tribute to a great many people who had a genuine love for Camp Augustana.

There are two schools of thought about whether an ordained Pastor should hold a job as Camp Director, a position some feel could very well be held by a consecrated layman. Notice how the pendulum has swung in this regard. The first two Camp Directors were Pastors. The next two were laymen, followed by a Pastor and then a layman.

In 1946 under the new set-up, Mr. Arnold Serenius of Davenport, Iowa,

was hired to succeed the Reverend Dr. Axel Nelson. He served for one year. The Camp Board then turned to Augustana College and hired Leroy Brissman, a physical education teacher. It was during his tenure that the Camp Board felt a need for a Camp Pastor, and they offered the position to Dr. Arthur Arnold, Professor at the Augustana Seminary in Rock Island, Ill. This appears to have been a very satisfactory arrangement. Dr. Arnold's preaching was impressive. The Reverend John Melvin was called to succeed Mr. Brissman in 1969. After his resignation in 1969 the Board secured the services of Mr. Norman Mandehr as Camp Director of both Camp Augustana and Camp Alpine with headquarters at the latter place and residence in Antioch, Ill. He is Director of the Camping Ministry of the Synod.

In the winter of 1955 it was learned that the Villa Immanuel women were willing to sell their Lake Geneva property. Dr. O. V. Anderson, Pres., of the Illinois Conference, chaired a Committee for the purpose of examining the property and buying it, if it was so recommended. It was natural that this Villa property, if sold, should belong to Camp Augustana, and it was so recommended.

The Illinois Conference Women's Missionary Society was asked to conduct a campaign to raise \$55,000, the price asked by the Immanuel women. The WMS at its Convention voted to accept the challenge, and under the leadership of Mrs. C. F. Wittenstrom, the Churches of the Illinois Conference were solicited, and they responded with great enthusiasm. \$68,000 $\frac{1}{2}$ was raised and turned in to the Treasurer of the Illinois Conference; who in turn used the money for the purchase and remodeling of this valuable property for Camp Augustana. Extensive repairs were made, including the beach. The next page shows a part of the attractive publicity folder that was used in the campaign, and illustrates the valuable Lake usage to the Camp Property. The map shown was used to publicize the valuable Lake Frontage, which gave the Camp an additional 310 feet. Lake Frontage today is \$1,000 per foot. Totaling more than \$400,000, the Camp cannot afford not to make full use of the frontage.

Although it does not bear directly on Camp Augustana history, it might be of interest to our people to know that when the Immanuel Women's Home Association was dissolved, the proceeds of their Chicago and Lake Geneva properties were given to Augustana College to build and furnish the Immanuel Wing of Westerlin Hall, a Dormitory for girls. This was a fine tribute to their labors of love, extending from Chicago to Lake Geneva, and finally to Rock Island. For years our women made an annual visit to Camp Augustana known as WMS Day. They came in private cars, buses, in large numbers, to enjoy a Morning of addresses by missionaries or other guest speakers; luncheon in the dining hall; and afternoon coffee served by the Villa Immanuel women.

Up until a few years ago, all the Camp Directors and their families have lived at the Camp. The Camp Director was a part of the community. He developed a fine spirit of understanding between the Camp, with its changing population and the people who lived in Knollwood. They had much in common. The influx of a few hundred rowdy youngsters did not greatly

disturb the good-will that prevailed between the Camp and the community. Luckily, the youngsters who came to Camp were among the finest youth of our churches, and they have behaved very well with few exceptions.

All of the Camp Directors have given invaluable service to the Camp and the Church. Leroy and Jane Brissman spent thirteen summers in sacrificial labors at the Camp. Pastor John Melvin and his wife Pearl spent nine years in full-time service in the Camping program and youth work. Norman Mandehr has been given and Assistant Director in the ever-demanding services, in the person of the Reverend Jack Swanson. All have given of their time and talents in advancing the activities.

Through the years the water system has been shared between the Camp and Knollwood whenever the emergency would arise or some break-down would occur.

The Sunday Services have been well supported by Lutheran families living in the vicinity of Camp Augustana. They are greatly appreciated. For many years the Annual Meeting of Cisco Beach Association (Knollwood) has been held in Jespersen Hall. Former care-takers, Axel Tulane and Mr. and Mrs. A. Person were well-known and well liked in the neighborhood. They kept a watchful eye on the Camp in season and out of season.

Following the merger in 1963 the Illinois Synod was blessed with two Camps, Alpine near Richmond, Illinois, and Camp Augustana. Due to the increase in attendance and activities, one Camp could not have accommodated our present Camping program. We are convinced that there is a great future for both, not in a competitive spirit as much as in two distinct institutions, serving the needs of our Lutheran Church.