

**Historical
Highlights**

of the

**DETROIT FINNISH CO-OPERATIVE
SUMMER CAMP ASSOCIATION**

Wixom, Michigan



Detroit Finnish Co-operative Summer Camp
Association

HISTORICAL

highlights for 1925 to 1965.

PREAMBLE

During the recent years many new members have joined the Detroit Finnish Co-operative Summer Camp Association, who being of the younger generation are interested in coming to know more of the origin of the D.F.C.S.C.A., who were the original founders, when and where these people met, and how they decided to pick this particular place.

The material for this reading was derived from the original minutes of the general membership meetings, which included the annual, semi-annual and special meetings, and also from the minutes of the Board of Directors.

The purpose of this reading is to bring forth the reasons and purposes that the originators had in mind, also who comprised the original committee of officers and the first group of members.

This history is also intended to memorialize the pioneer spirit and "sisu" of the small group of Finnish people who came to this virgin country and in five short years built for themselves and their children a haven for rest, sport and fun, and which in the main still retains its original characteristics, except for recent remodeling.

During the past half century a number of Finnish establishments of various types were formed, most of these since having fallen by the wayside. The D.F.C.S.C.A. is one of the few remaining, and judging from the present outlook it appears to be on a solid foundation.

Of the original founding group there is but a very small number remaining. Their children are today among the leaders. The grandchildren are also a great help in many ways. They also show great promise for the future.

It is the ardent wish of all of us that the D.F.C.S.C.A. continue to grow and carry on all of the aspirations of our founders, to say the least, for another forty years.

40th Anniversary Committee,
June 23, 1965



BEGINNING

On or about the year 1907 or 1908 a group of Finnish people organized the Detroit Finnish Educational Association, which over the course of a number of years, during summer times rented and used different beaches and parks for camping, swimming and other activities, the last of these, in the year 1920 to 1924, being at Wing Lake and Walnut Lake in the present Birmingham area.

In April of 1925 the D.F.E.A. during one of their meetings decided to elect a committee to go out and seek a suitable site for permanent use for this purpose. The names of the members of this committee are not available for this reading with the exception of the chairman who was Pekka Juvonen, and the secretary Elmer Makela.

The first available site was an eighty-acre farm on the shore of Pleasant Lake for a price of \$40,000. A deposit of \$50.00 was made on this property. The reasons for the cancelling of this site have not been found in any of the minutes.

In June of 1925 another site was found at Sears Lake near Milford, a forty-acre farm for \$16,750.00. A \$500.00 deposit was placed on this property.

On the 21st of June a caravan of between twenty and thirty autos left Detroit to hold a picnic at Sears Lake. All persons in this group were to find this site absolutely unsatisfactory, among other things the lake being a shallow mudhole, and it was decided not to purchase it.

On the same day the same group left Sears Lake to drive to Loon Lake—the present location—which was the third available site. After looking over the Loon Lake site they became very enthusiastic about its possibilities—approximately one-hundred acres for a price of \$32,000.00 Also included within the boundaries of this property was a small but deep lake known as Sun Lake.

Up to this point this committee had held nine meetings. On the following Monday evening at the Finnish Educational Association Hall, at 5969 14th Street, the committee held another meeting at which it was decided to organize the Detroit Finnish Co-operative Summer-Camp Association. This association was to be a separate organization from the D.F.E.A., as this (the D.F.C.S.C.A.) would be too large to be affiliated with another organization, and the membership did not want it to become a one-sided organization that would not follow the aims and goals that were originally desired:

To maintain and promote social, physical, cultural and recreational activities and to take care of the spiritual and physical well-being of its membership by arranging lectures, picnics, programs and meetings; also to secure for its members facilities for ball games, athletics, swimming

and bathing; for the purpose of maintaining and developing physical education, and to provide its members a peaceful site for summer homes.

The only requirements for membership were: to be of Finnish descent, Finnish speaking, of good character, and to live in the Detroit area.

On the following Sunday the ladies' kitchen committee of the Educational Ass'n (D.F.E.A.) provided the first "mojakka" dinner at Loon Lake beach. For the first few years the D.F.C.S.C.A. used the utensils and registers of D.F.E.A. until such time as the D.F.S.C.A. purchased their own. These were returned to the hall for its wintertime activities.

At a meeting held on July 21, 1925 the first Board of Directors was elected, consisting of seven members, of which four were elected every other year and three on every alternating year, each member to serve two years at a time. This procedure is in force yet today. Until this time a three member Board of Trustees had served as Directors.

Also at this meeting the D.F.C.S.C.A. approved the sale of five shares of stock to the D.F.E.A. and at a later date this was increased to six shares. Money was hard to come by so this was welcome at this time.

Also agreed upon was the rental of the grounds and the dance hall to the D.F.E.A. during summer weekends for picnics and programs, and in exchange the D.F.C.S.C.A. rented the D.F.E.A. hall for membership meetings. (This practice was discontinued when the D.F.E.A. Hall was sold.) At this meeting it was decided to build a steambath house at Sun Lake.

BEACH

The construction of the Sun Lake steambath was completed and the first steambaths were welcomed (although the first "vihtas" were probably made of poison sumac). However as of this date we have not heard any complaints. So, as it is with Finns, after a good sauna a good swim is most welcome. The beach and shoreline was an inaccessible swamp full of sumac.

The first efforts to scrape out the muck and swampy terrain met with failure as the tractor and scraper frequently bogged down. After many efforts this was given up. But again Finnish "sisu" and ingenuity prevailed and the members decided to haul sand into this muddy swamp. It was noticed that after a few loads of sand were dumped into the muck, a passable path was established to the lake, making the lake accessible for swimming. As soon as this was finished it was decided to enlarge the pathway into the beach. This so-called pathway was enlarged to the extent that it is now—the entire area between the two docks.

This accomplishment was made possible by three very good factors:

1. There was an ample sand hill a little way back from the beach.
2. A small narrow gauge railroad with two dump cars was acquired.
3. A good healthy and willing crew of men and possibly some women gave their best effort to this project.

A few thousand yards of sand was carted into this swamp, and thus a fine beach was constructed, one of the finest swimming places in the Detroit area.

DANCE HALL

The present dance hall was constructed in 1927. The first dance was held in September of 1927. The building was first built on wooden posts. These were later replaced with substantial beams, steel posts and concrete block walls.

Previous to this the basement was used for storing ice which was taken from Loon Lake during the winter for use during the summer.

SUMMER SCHOOL

In the year of 1927 a summer school was established. This has carried through the years to the present time. Many changes have been made but the school idea still remains. In 1929 a school building with out-houses was constructed. Teachers were hired to teach athletics, culture, drama, etc. In the beginning of this year this was financed by the association. Later during the summer the children and their supervising committee put on a "Childrens' Weekend". This consisted of competitive sports, programs, and play. Soon the "Childrens' Weekend" became self-supporting. The names of the original committee members are not known.

COTTAGE AND CAMP AREA

The present cottage area was laid out in 1926. This included the roads and lots. This area has been nicknamed "Siberia". A plow was used to make ditches along the roads and finally the roads were graded. Each member was allowed to select a lot for himself and to build on this lot a wooden summer cottage—not a tent-type structure. These buildings were to include inside toilet facilities. The first of these cottages was built by Margaret and Vaino Tapio, and is presently owned by their daughter and her husband Mr. and Mrs. John Arthur. The wooded area next to the Loon Lake shoreline and extending toward Sun Lake was allotted for the camp area. The first of the camps were tent-type affairs, but the acid sap dripping from the trees soon ruined the canvas and more substantial camps were designed and built. The same camp design is still in force today.

ATHLETICS AND SPORTS

Sports and athletics have always played an important part in the lives of the Finnish people. Many of the finer athletes from Finland and different parts of the United States, among them track athletes, swimmers, wrestlers, etc., congregated here. One of the first requirements was a diving tower on Sun Lake, and an athletic field for track events. Construction was begun immediately on both projects. Much of the labor was donated. Some was hired. A horse and scraper were used and later a tractor. The horse and scraper were used to move dirt to fill a large ravine upon which the athletic field was built. The youngsters were making good use of the field even before it was completed.

The first organized track meet was held on September 10, 1927, but it was not until June of 1929 that things got into full swing. By this time the athletic field was complete, and along with the race course—track—was measured to standard or official measurements. In addition to the track events, swimming and diving were very popular, and among our members were some very talented swimmers and divers. On one occasion, at one of the large swimming meets the diving tower toppled into the water, but fortunately nobody was hurt or drowned.

Enthusiasm for competitive sports was kept up by the "Labor Sports Union" and a local athletic group "Voima". During one year a six week training course was held prior to the main meet. A lot of fun was had by all. Many different types of races were held—egg races, sack races, three-legged races, to name a few.

The participation in competitive sports died down during the depression years—1931 - 1934—and has never returned to its former peak. Today's sports activities are mostly limited to "Childrens' Weekends" and the Sunday baseball games.

OUTDOOR STAGE

An outdoor stage was built somewhere between the schoolhouse and sauna. Prior to this, plays were staged in nature's surroundings. One of these plays was "Rautatierakennuksella", which was either a four or five-act play. The first part of this play was shown on Hollywood Blvd., and the remaining acts in that part of the summer camp area that best suited the needs of the action. Another play "Hardangerin Harjulla" was shown in the picnic area, as were numerous smaller plays. Some of the larger plays performed on the stage were "Punasotilaat Manoovereilla" and "Kun Ruusut Kukkiivat", along with some smaller plays.

After a number of years of walking from the picnic grounds to the stage location it was decided to move the stage adjacent to the picnic

area. Later a couple of dressing rooms were erected on either side of this stage. This setup was in use for many years, until it was replaced by the stage built into the dance hall where it is at the present time. All of our plays and programs are now held there.

JUHANNUS

During the year 1927 the D.F.E.A. rented the dance hall and picnic grounds and decided to hold a mid-summer festival. This included a large bonfire or "kokko". Dancing lasted until daybreak and a good time was had by all. It was noted that a larger than usual crowd attended this picnic. The following year more than 4,000 people were present. In 1939 attendance reached a peak of 6,045 persons. In the following years the D.F.C.S.C.A. and D.F.E.A. agreed that the D.F.S.C.A. would hold the "Juhannus" picnics. They were operated in a similar manner.

In recent years, after D.F.S.C.A. was incorporated into the City of Wixom, and the city requiring more control and policing, it became necessary to close the mid-summer picnic to the public. Since that time the festivities have been for members and their invited guests only.

BEVERAGES

When prohibition was repealed in 1932-1933, and public beergardens came into being, it was noted that attendance at picnics and programs was declining. The question was raised as to the possibility of the association securing a permit to sell beer. On June 6, 1934 the association voted in favor of procuring a permit to sell beer, and this has proven to be a wise decision. Finances at this time were hard to come by, and this added revenue was very welcome.

After twenty years of hard work and debts the mortgage was finally paid. This happy occasion was marked by very large festivities celebrating the final payment to Mr. Anton from whom this land was purchased. The D.F.C.S.C.A. had finally reached financial soundness.

INCORPORATION

The first six years of its existence the association operated on a yearly permit issued by the state of Michigan. In 1931 the Board of Directors was notified by the association's attorney, Nelson, that arrangements had been made under new state laws to extend our permit to cover thirty years. It was later found that this permit was not valid, so in 1934 the D.F.C.S.C.A. was incorporated for a 30-year period, which incorporation was renewed for another 30 years in 1964. A large celebration was held in honor of the re-incorporation.

COURT PROCEEDINGS

During the early years of its existence the association decided to dig a canal between Sun Lake and Loon Lake. The purpose of this canal was to lower the water level of Sun Lake so as to provide a larger and better beach on Sun Lake. This act had repercussions, because the level of Wolverine Lake (which runs into Sun Lake) was also lowered. The residents of Wolverine Lake brought the issue into court. The decision of the court was that a dam should be constructed below Wolverine Lake, and another below Sun Lake. To stabilize the water level of both lakes the level of dams were set by the court. The court also directed that a canal be dug from Sun Lake to the dam. This was done at a later date. These decisions were appealed to higher courts, but the higher court upheld the lower courts' decision. The case was concluded in 1936 at a cost of \$3,000.00.

NEW BUILDINGS

An old farmhouse and barn were located on the association property at the time of its purchase. The original farmhouse is still standing, and served as the caretaker's residence for 17 years. Then the old barn was torn down, and a new caretaker's residence was built in the same spot, including a three-car garage in the basement. In 1957 a new kitchen was built, also a new larger steambath with inside toilet facilities, and new toilets for the beach area. New toilet facilities were also built for the East and West side camp areas. The West side built a new incinerator, and between 1963 and 1965 the dance hall basement was remodelled to include a bar, toilet facilities, central heating and offices for the Board of Directors. This newly built portion has been used during winter months for meetings and parties, as it is equipped with a large fireplace. A new restaurant is to be constructed in the future.

All of these large building projects have cost a lot of time, work and money. They have resulted in an enormous drain on our finances. However the same old enthusiasm survives, and we expect to weather this problem as we have weathered all previous ones—and along with good old Finnish "sisu" we hope to see you at the next reincorporation celebration.

JOHTOKUNNAT—BOARD OF DIRECTORS

6-1-1925 valittiin 3-henkinen luottamuskomitea eli trustiisit:

3-member Board of Trustees elected June 1925:

Matti Wick, Felix Pesonen & Peter Juvonen.

7- 5-1925	Väliaikainen johtok. P. Juvonen F. Pesonen Carl Pike Hevonkoski Tolonen Harju Hilda Liуска Mrs. Lehtinen Emil Kisko	1-27-1929	Knut Harju Emil Luoma Matti Keskinen Joe Finnilä Eli Santti vuodeksi
7-21-1925	Vakituisen johtok. Matti Wick P. Juvonen Matti Keskinen Eli Santti Carl Pike John Johnson Felix Pesonen	1-29-1930	Magno Sorvari Eli Santti Lauri Luoma
3- 3-1926	Erov. täydennys Matti Wick Matti Keskinen Lauri Luoma	1-25-1931	Oskar Mäkelä Chas. Jambac Emil Wirtanen Carl Ranta
1-30-1927	Isaak Santti Yrjö Salmi Carl Pike Peter Juvonen	1-31-1932	Eli Santti Magno Sorvari Ed Kilponen Andry Adamson vuodeksi
1-25-1928	Matti Keskinen Magno Sorvari Lauri Luoma Verner Huurto Yrjö Salmen tilalle	1-29-1933	Aatto Korhonen Ed Hackman Väinö Aaltonen A. Holmen
		1-28-1934	Toivo Aho Nestor Kangas Frank Johnson Tom Korkeamäki vuodeksi
		1-27-1935	Aatto Korhonen Vilho Vilen Väinö Mäki Saimi Mäki

1-26-1936	Oscar Berg vuodeksi Arvi Hill Matti Keskinen V. Hellonen	1-27-1946	Paul Salo Otto Wantin Matti Ketola Jacob Laitinen
1-24-1937	Lyyli Laine Armas Salo Oscar Berg Antti Jokinen	1-26-1947	Olavi Wahamäki Ardel Kisko Eli Santti Rich. Moxlig vuodeksi Gust Tuovila vuodeksi
1-23-1938	Arvi Hill Carl Pike Hugo Lind	1-25-1948	Eugene Hemming Arvo Harkonen John Ketola Jacob Laitinen
2- 5-1939	Axel Wasama Eino Laine Edwart Saari Lars Taavola Hilja Tuoriniemi vuodeksi	1-30-1949	Irja Matson Toivo Lakanen Isaak Santti
1-28-1940	Wm. Mattila Gust Tuovila John Määttä	1-29-1950	Eino Piilo Olavi Wahamäki Henry Bradel Arvo Harkonen Arvi Hill vuodeksi
1-12-1941	Olavi Wahamäki John Ketola Ardel Kisko Ed Hackman	1-28-1951	Elmer Mäkelä Arvi Hill Wm. Mattila
1-25-1942	Gust Tuovila Hj. Peltola Ade Kantalainen Aug. Mustonen	1-27-1952	Matti Ketola Marv. Klemola Ester Salo Toivo Lakanen
1-24-1943	Kauko Väinö Aaltonen Eli Santti Reino Mustonen Arne Santti	1-26-1953	Arvi Hill Matti Buhti Bruno Aro
1-30-1944	Arne Santti Otto Wantin Bertha Koti Ade Lähde	1-31-1954	Roy Wainio Joe Jogus Eino Nikonen Reino Mustonen
1- 6-1945	Gust Tuovila Beger Lehto Andry Adamson J. Laitinen	1-30-1955	Marv Klemola V. Wäisänen E. Salo H. Niemi

1-29-1956 Magno Sorvari
Roy Wainio
Henry Brandell
John Johnson

1-27-1957 Elmer Mäkelä
Wayne Cobb
Hans Kansman
Geo. Tuorin

1-26-1958 Henry Niemi
Roy Wiitala
V. Wäisänen

1-25-1959 Harry Kansman
Hans Kansman
Henry Brandell
Marv. Klemola

1-31-1960 Wald Niemi
Arvi Hill
Ray Tapani

1-29-1961 Toivo Rentola
R. Thompson
Geo. Eglund
Henry Wentela
Hans Kansman vuodeksi

1-27-1962 Bruno Aro
All. Nygord
Francis Mikko

1-27-1963 Eino Sorvari
Elmer Mäkelä
Hazel Santti
Irja Konnolly

1-28-1964 Walder Holm
Don Jacobson
Roy Wainio

1-28-1965 Eino Sorvari
Ray Mäki
Virve Soderblom
Archie Brown