

Summer Camp 1916



One Friday evening, the first part of June in 1916, a mysterious group of young men gathered in the Union Depot, Chicago. It was not their appearance which was particularly mysterious, but the fact that each of them carried a polished wooden box. These boxes were not all the same size nor the same weight, judging from appearances. About seven-thirty, these twenty or more persons boarded a "Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul" train and quietly left the city.

The Saturday morning following this quiet exodus from Chicago, the same party alighted from the train at Minocqua, Wisconsin, and surrounded the post office; but to no avail for they had not yet been missed. After spending an hour or so in the town they boarded another train and noisily left the town.

About eleven o'clock the conductor announced "State House," and immediately they all arose, and each carrying a wooden box, left the train. The particular spot called "State House," along this railroad, was marked by a little platform, while the surrounding country seemed perfectly desolate. However, after walking for half a mile or so, a tile building was sighted, which was the destination of the party. This is the site of the Armour Summer Camp.

"Ah, Watson! The mystery is explained! Those boxes undoubtedly contain surveying instruments and this is a party of embryo surveyors."

"Duke" Smith, the colored cook who had accompanied us from Chicago, immediately started to get a meal together while the boys walked around picking out suitable sites for their tents. About two o'clock Duke blew the horn and we sat down to our first camp rations. The afternoon was spent in pitching tents, and arranging camp for the six-weeks stay. Sunday was a windy, chilly day with occasional showers, and was spent by some of the seniors in rigging up a sail on one of the row boats and "cruising" up and down the lake. The boat had not been in the water long enough to close the seams, and it leaked like a sieve, but by constant bailing they were able to keep afloat long enough to move a perceptible distance. That evening, a ball game was staged with the men from the State House, near by, and was lost by us because at the beginning of the game, the boys wished to encourage the State House fellows—but the encouragement was carried too far.

Professor Penn had been ill for some time because of an operation, and was not with us at this time, so Monday morning "Pa" Phillips started the work by sending out parties of two each to run a "level" circuit. Following this we used the transit in running "traverses" and "laying out" curves. Two weeks after work had started Professor Penn arrived, and was heartily welcomed by everyone. He then took charge of the surveying work, and we laid out a mile of "railroad," drew the profile, determined a "grade line," and then "cross-sectioned" our traverse to determine the "cut" and "fill". The true meridian was determined by observations on the sun. It was during these observations that sun-burned faces were in vogue.

The topographic surveying was done, near the State House, on the "Point," a piece of original pine forest which, as its name implies, extended out into the lake. That which was unfinished by "stadia" was done in outline with the "plane table". The last few days of camp were spent in putting up triangulation stations at various points around the lake shore; in measuring the angles between them; in establishing and accurately measuring a "base line;" and in making soundings along these triangulation lines of the lake depth.

One of the principal features of the camp was "Duke," the cook. He used to stay up and sit on the edge of his cot every time we had a thunder-storm at night. The next day it was dangerous to ask him for a second piece of pie because he would be cross from lack of sleep. His favorite sport was to go down to the pier, lie flat on his stomach and dangle a fish-hook in the water until some unsuspecting fish swam over it. Then he would deftly jerk his line so that the fish would be hooked. He really was remarkably successful with this method of fishing. Needless to say it was only a slow and awkward sort of a fish that could be caught in this manner. Duke was a celebrity in his home town (Evanston), being the leader of the band, and a member of the quartette.