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Tourist Camps
Michigan State University Agricultural Experiment Station
Special Bulletin
C.P. Halligan, Landscape Architecture
Issued January 1925
18 pages

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TOURIST CAMPS

RURAL LANDSCAPE SERIES NO. 2

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Tourist Camps

BY C. P. HALLIGAN.

The rapid increase in popularity of touring and camping as the best means of seeing and enjoying the beauty of the open landscape has led to a general demand for tourist camps. Every progressive community located along an important highway needs a well planned and developed camp ground to capitalize properly upon the opportunities presented by this newer phase of vacationing.

Advantages of Tourist Camps.

A well developed tourist camp is a good means of expressing community welcome and hospitality to visitors. Every transient stopping in our midst who is made to feel this spirit of community welcome and of consideration for his comfort and welfare while sojourning with us, by a properly located and developed tourist camp, proceeds on his way with a feeling of pleasure and satisfaction, thus unconsciously becoming a perpetual "booster" for the community.

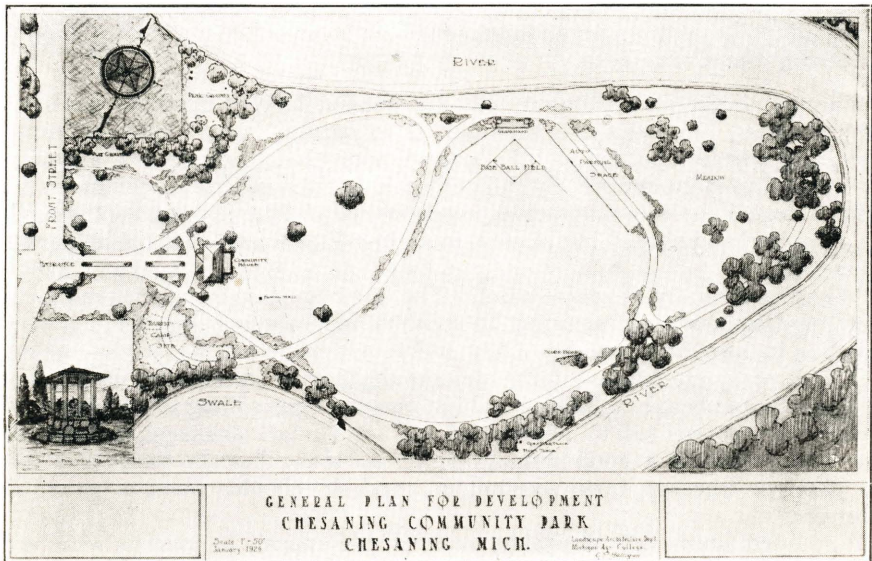


Fig. 1.—Plan of a combination park, playground and tourists' camp at Chesaning, Michigan.

Besides the advertising value of a well laid out tourist camp, and the general satisfaction of the community in offering service to visitors, there is a considerable economic value to be gained from tourists who thus stop even temporarily in our communities. Tourists are generally good spenders, purchasing their necessities, as well as more or less of the luxuries of life, where they stop over in the towns. The tendency of tourists as time goes on will undoubtedly be to travel in a more leisurely manner, especially if the proper facilities are provided for their comforts. Frequently they remain for several days where real hospitality and good service prevail and where the scenic features are most enjoyable.

The local purchases of the average motor-camping party under normal conditions are greater than is ordinarily appreciated. Such expenditures are always cash purchases, and have been variously estimated at from one dollar a day per person to as high as five dollars a day. A wide range of commodities and of service is represented by these purchases, including such essentials as gas, oil, general automobile repairs, food, and clothing; as well as amusements, confectionery, and various other non-essential things. There are few lines of business in the rural towns that do not profit directly or indirectly from the temporary presence of automobile tourists.

The development of tourist camps also prevents the necessity of indiscriminate camping along the roadsides. This is undesirable in many ways. Such campers often leave the camping sites in a very untidy and unsanitary condition; such parties have polluted streams and have caused serious fires in our forests and farm fields. These conditions, along with the thieving and vandalism that sometimes occur with unsupervised camping, will prove of increasing seriousness as the traffic grows in volume. The most reasonable remedy for such unfavorable conditions consists in the development of sanitary, pleasing, desirable camping parks, properly supervised and maintained.

Selecting the Camp Site.

The popularity of a camping site will depend largely upon its landscape attractiveness. Tourists are very partial to natural beauty spots as campsites, and where the most slightly beauty spots exist, campers are unconsciously persuaded to remain for longer periods than otherwise might be the case. Hence, the most attractive available natural beauty spot existing in the neighborhood should be selected, providing it possesses the other essential requisites.

Water is always a desirable asset. The borders of streams or lakes prove most inviting landscape elements to tourists and campers, especially if suitable for bathing and boating.

The sanitary conditions of the site should also be considered, in addition to its landscape beauty. Relatively high or somewhat rolling or sloping land, possessing a porous soil to insure good soil and surface drainage, is desirable. The site should be a good distance from marsh or bottom lands to insure comparative freedom from mosquitoes, and it should possess good air drainage.

A wooded site is very desirable, as the shade appeals to tourists who have traveled throughout the day in the hot sun. However, a more or less open grove effect, permitting some of the sunlight to filter through the foliage and

offering good air circulation, is to be desired rather than a more dense piece of woodland.

The tourist camp should be within a convenient distance of an important highway. This does not mean that it must necessarily be located adjacent to a main highway. Such a location might have rather serious disadvantages, as it might prove to be too exposed, to be dusty, and to lack the seclusion and privacy most desired by campers. However, the camping site should not be at such a distance from the main highway as to cause inconvenience and difficulty in directing visitors to its location.



Fig. 2.—A suggestive plan of a tourists' camp grounds.

The site should also be within a convenient distance of the business district of the town, to permit the greatest facilities for trading in the local stores and of patronizing the local amusements.

If the site is located within the city limits, it usually affords an opportunity of providing such facilities as may be available through the use of city water and sewerage connections, which tend to maintain the sanitary condition of the camp. City water, electric lights, gas, sewers, and telephones are conveniences much desired when accessible in the development of a most ideal tourist camp; hence, the difficulties of equipping a camp satisfactorily and of maintaining it economically without these advantages make more remote locations less desirable.

CAMP ACCESSORIES.

Water Supply.

A bountiful supply of pure water is one of the first requisities in the development of a camp site. If the site is within the city limits, this supply may be furnished by connecting with the city water supply, in which case it may be readily piped to convenient points about the camp grounds. This provides a suitable and economical source of supply. Otherwise, it is usually necessary to sink a well or to tap a nearby spring and pipe the water to convenient points on the camp grounds. Great care must be exercised, if wells are driven or if the source of supply is from a spring, to see that this water is not contaminated and that it is always maintained in a pure and healthful condition. Therefore, water from such sources should be frequently tested by sending samples to the State Board of Health Laboratories for a sanitary analysis. While pure water is needed primarily for drinking and cooking purposes, water is also needed for filling automobile radiators, for washing cars, for operating shower baths, and for other such requirements of a camp.

Suitable wells may be used satisfactorily to supply even fairly large camps if one of the various pumping systems is installed and the water is distributed in pipes about the grounds. Such a system may be simply a gravity system, the water being pumped to an elevated tank from which it is distributed under gravity pressure to the various parts of the grounds. Under such conditions, the tank should ordinarily be elevated to at least twenty feet above the elevation of the faucets to insure a fair rate of flow. The pressure tank system, where the water is pumped into an air-tight steel tank against the pressure of the air, may be most desirable where the construction of an elevated tank might not prove feasible. Such pressure tanks may be sunk in the ground or placed in any convenient, inconspicuous location.

The feasibility of using a spring as a source of water supply will depend largely upon the relative capacity of the spring, its general accessibility, and the possibility of protecting it from contamination. Usually, spring water tastes so much fresher than water which has been pumped through underground pipes that it constitutes a desirable source for drinking purposes. However, a spring is a difficult source to protect from surface contamination. Frequently such springs may be entirely covered or enclosed with stone work or concrete, the outlet being arranged at a convenient height from the ground to permit water buckets or containers being placed under it to be filled. Under no circumstances should water be dipped from a spring, barrel, or other receptacle as a source of supply for drinking purposes. Ponds and streams are seldom safe sources of supply for drinking water in public camps.

The water supply should be piped, when possible, to convenient points about the camping grounds in such a manner that no camping site is more than one hundred feet from a hydrant. Drainage must be provided at each hydrant to carry off waste water and thus prevent a muddy condition about it. Water must also be piped to the central shelter houses or central kitchens.

Sewage Disposal.

Some satisfactory method of sewage disposal is one of the fundamental requirements in equipping a tourist camp. Where it is convenient to connect with the city sewage system, the most satisfactory means are at hand. Where such a convenience is not accessible, but a bountiful water supply is available, septic tanks may be constructed and should be located in remote parts of the grounds. Under other conditions, chemical closets are the most sanitary means of providing for these conveniences. Fly-proof buildings should be provided to house all toilets, and daily care should be taken to maintain them in a clean, sanitary condition.

Lighting.

Electric lights are a convenient accessory of a camp grounds. The lights should be of such a nature as to be inconspicuous during the daytime. Many small lights, well distributed about the grounds, are generally more satisfactory than a few large ones. Some provision should be made for turning them off at an allotted time in the night. Arrangements to permit campers themselves to turn off the lights, separately near their tents, will prove a convenience, as many people find trouble in sleeping when strong lights are shining through their tents.

Fire Places.

Most camping parties are equipped with outfits of a portable nature for cooking their food. However, the camps are often more convenient if they have good facilities for cooking. Where gas is available, a small shelter house may be constructed, or the gas may be piped to the large shelter house, where gas burners are installed for the use of the campers. If such gas stoves are connected with "nickel" gas meters, there is little trouble in looking after this convenience of the camp.

Outdoor picnic stoves are often a most enjoyable and practical accessory. These are usually constructed of brick, stone, or concrete. In the past most of the picnic stoves that have been constructed have been too large in size for the purpose, consuming much larger quantities of wood than is necessary. The camp stove should be of a minimum size for the purpose intended. It should be of native or natural material to make it harmonious with the site, and it should be designed in such a way as most efficiently to serve its purpose.

A design that has proved most desirable for the individual camp lot is illustrated in Fig. 4. Where large numbers of tourists are using the camp



Fig. 3.—Outdoor fireplaces of this size and type are desirable on picnic grounds and should be harmonized in design with their naturalistic environment, as suggested by plan in Fig. 6.

and the problem of wood supply becomes difficult, charcoal will prove most suitable with a fire-place of this design. A supply of charcoal may be maintained by the caretaker and sold at cost to the campers.

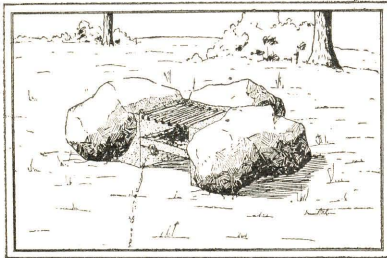


Fig. 4.—A simple outdoor cooking stove for a tourists' camp suggesting method of harmonizing the same in a naturalistic manner to its environment by the use of rocks.

should be provided at convenient spots and of such a nature as to be perfectly tight and fly-proof and of a permanent and inconspicuous character. Arrangements should be made for the daily collection of this garbage or for burning it in an incinerator constructed in some remote corner of the park. Waste paper receptacles should also be conveniently placed at points that are not conspicuous in the landscape. Wire containers for this purpose which permit the burning of the waste paper in the receptacles, are available in the market, but this practice is not always most desirable. It causes many burnt areas about the camp, which are not only unsightly but also sources of dust. It is the aim in maintaining a camp to minimize the number of spots where fires may be lighted; hence, an incinerator is a most convenient accessory to rural camps for the handling of waste paper and garbage. It is well to paint receptacles for these purposes in dull green, if it is necessary to place them in conspicuous points above ground. The most desirable form of garbage containers are those that are sunk below the surface of the ground.

Frequently a sloping site at some remote point of the camp makes a convenient spot for the construction of an incinerator, and if it is properly designed and handled, the burning of this waste material will not prove objectionable to the campers.

The larger type of fire-place, as shown in Fig. 3, is more suitable for a picnic ground intended to accommodate large groups of people. One or two of these located on those sections of the park intended for community picnics are generally sufficient in a tourist camp.

Waste Receptacles.

To maintain a neat, tidy, and sanitary condition about the camp grounds, it is essential to provide convenient receptacles for garbage, waste paper, and such other waste materials as may accumulate about the grounds under camping conditions. Garbage cans



Fig. 5.—Sample receptacles for paper, garbage, and general waste in maintaining the sanitary condition of the camping grounds.

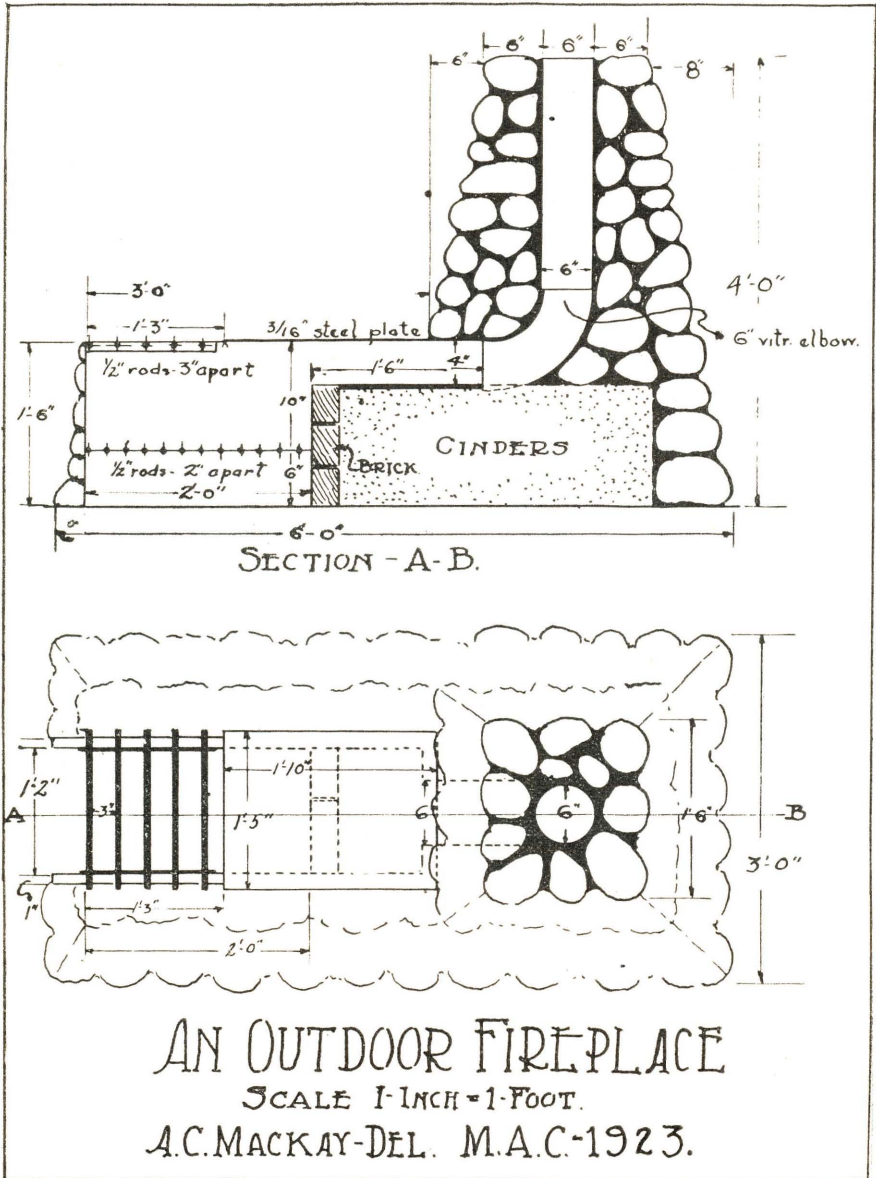


Fig. 6.—Working plan of fireplace for picnic grounds built of native stone.

Picnic Tables.

Few campers plan to carry tables for eating and serving food. It is, therefore, desirable to provide some sort of picnic table for their convenience. Various types have been designed and tested, but from these experiences it has been found that a movable table with seats attached, and of such a design as to stand firmly even upon rather uneven ground, is the most practical. Picnic parties want to move these tables about the grounds, depending upon their own whims and fancies; hence, they are not so well accommodated by tables permanently located. If separate seats are pro-

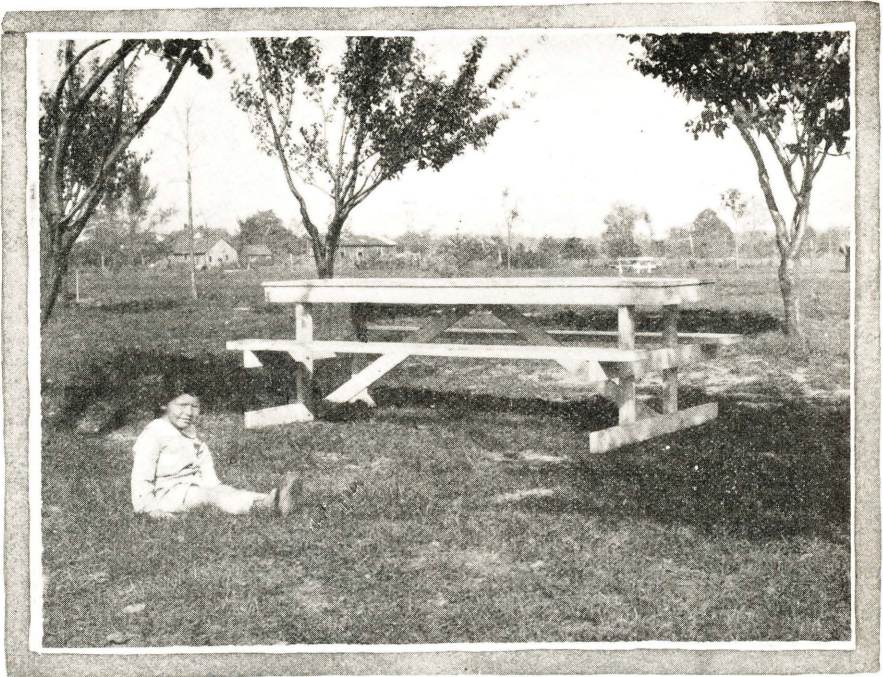


Fig. 7.—An ideal type of a picnic table.

vided, they become scattered about the grounds and frequently are not available when needed. The accompanying picture shows an ideal type for this purpose, with the plans and specifications as shown by the working drawings.

Shelter House.

In the equipment of a tourist camp, a shelter house is of value. The fact that campers may be using the grounds during rainy and unfavorable weather, as well as when it is pleasant, must be considered. Provision should be made to accommodate the travelers even when outdoor conditions are not most enjoyable. A shelter house where meals may be cooked or where the campers may rest and enjoy themselves during rainy, cold, or otherwise inclement weather is a most appreciated accessory of the camp at such times.

This building may provide for various other essential functions. The basement of the building may prove a good storage place for implements used in maintaining the park and for the storage of tables and other equipment during the winter. Bath and toilet facilities may also be provided in this building, frequently in the basement. Cooking stoves may be provided in the kitchen. The principal room should be a large, spacious, open room, possibly with a large stone fireplace, well lighted by plenty of windows, and furnished with a writing desk, a few tables, a number of comfortable chairs, telephone service, road maps, and such other accessories as might prove of interest and value to the tourist. In this room should also be placed a registration book in which the names of all parties entering the park might be recorded—their home address, their point of destination, a report as to their conduct while residing in the camp, and a record of the condition in which they left the camp site. The keeping of this record tends to promote the cleanliness, and good behavior of the visitors, most of them being very

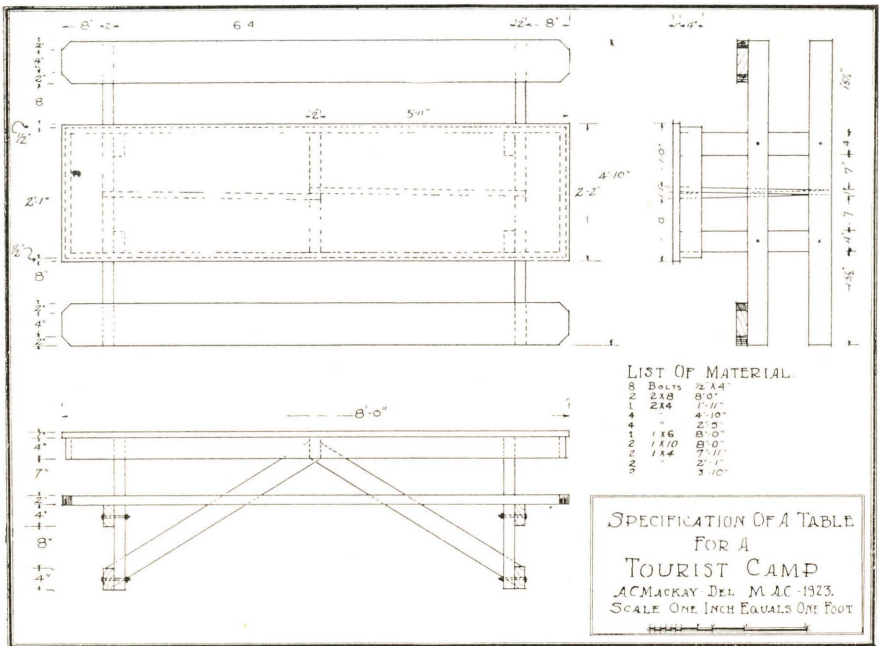


Fig. 8.—Working plan of picnic table shown in Fig. 7.

desirous of leaving a good report against their names. For the proper maintenance of such a registration book, an inspection of each camp site should be made as the party is about to leave and any untidiness noted. It thus becomes the practice of the caretaker to see that all campers leave their camp site in as neat and desirable a condition as they found it.

The design of such a building should be characterized by its simplicity, dignity, and permanence of effect. It should be harmonious in its proportions, lines, and type of beauty with the particular site it occupies and with its general landscape environment. In this way it becomes a beautifying

element, tending to be a harmonious part of the landscape and lending a humanizing touch to the scene.

Such a shelter house may be used by the local citizens during the fall, winter, and early spring for local social functions. In this way the building may prove of use throughout the year, and hence more fully warrant the erection of a pleasing and well built structure.

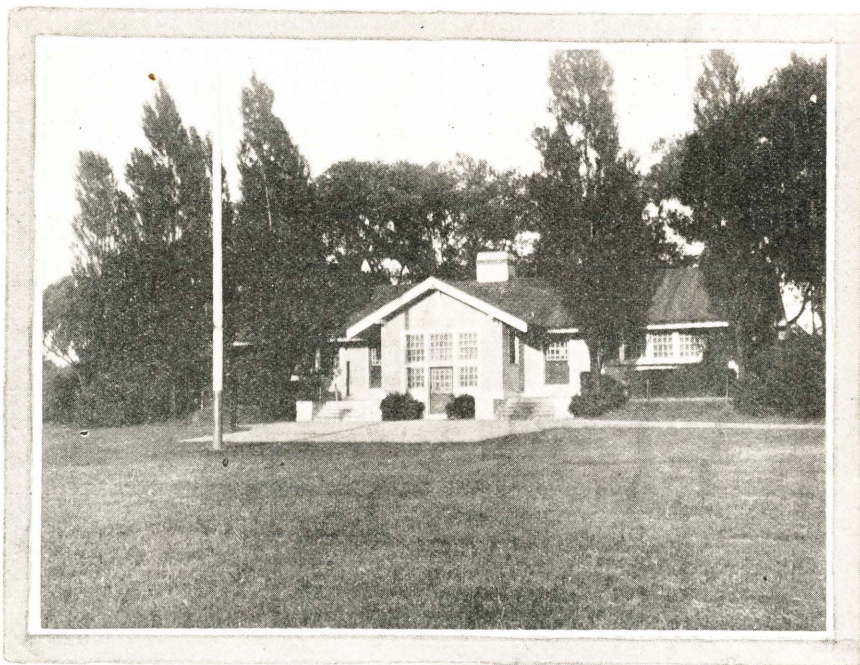


Fig. 9.—A well designed shelter house for rural tourists' camp, park, or playground.

Aesthetic Design of the Camp.

The most difficult problem in the development of the tourist camp is to provide these practical necessities and sanitary conveniences in such manner and in such forms as to harmonize with the general naturalness and beauty of the park. In fact, they should not only harmonize but should be actually beautifying elements in the development of the grounds. It is rather a simple problem to drive a well and attach a standard pump as a source of water supply, or to pipe a line from the city or town system with frequent connections of iron pipe placed at convenient spots with standard faucets; but such methods result in the introduction of cheap, inharmonious elements in the scene, tending to detract from the typically free, naturalistic effect that should dominate the property.

In addition to this, the introduction of lights, shelter houses, toilets, and other mechanical developments tends to produce the artificial, domesticated, and cultivated effects that the camper is trying to evade in his attempt to get away from the routine of life. No standard designs for these elements

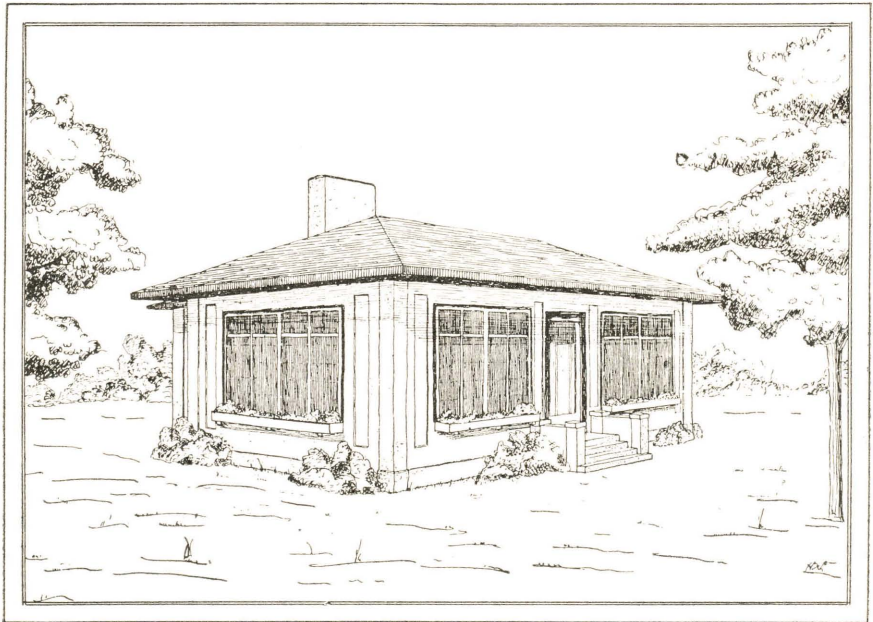


Fig. 10.—A suggestive design of a simple shelter house for a rural tourists' camp.

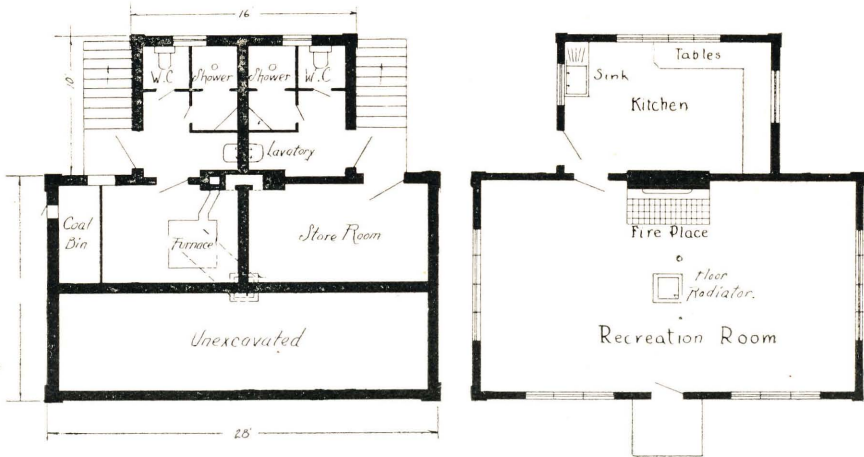


Fig. 11.—Basement and floor plan of shelter house shown in Fig. 10.

can be developed, as the design of each should be based upon the character of beauty that marks the particular site. The history of the section or

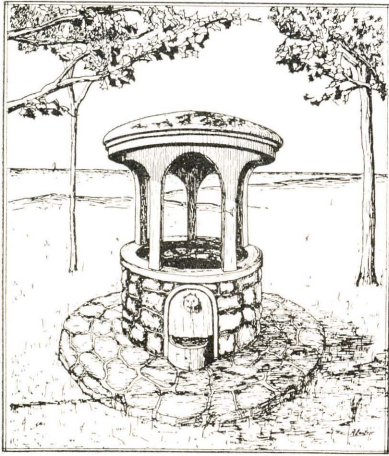


Fig. 12.—A suggestive development of the water supply into an artistic and beautifying element.

other factors may form the basis of design and development in the endeavor to give the camp an individuality of character. The effect of simplicity, dignity, and permanence are always desirable in developing each of these details, since anything that tends to produce a cheap, temporary effect is displeasing. The general attitude, therefore, in the development of a tourist camp or park should be that whatever is done should be so well done as to be accomplished for all future time,—a monument and a memorial of the present generation to its descendants. It is better to do a little well than to try to do a great deal in a cheap, tawdry manner. We should think with Ruskin, that—

“Therefore when we build, let us think that we build forever. Let it not be for present delight nor for present use alone. Let it be such work

as our descendants will thank us for, and let us think as we lay stone on stone that a time is to come when those stones will be held sacred because our hands have touched them and that men will say as they look upon the labor and wrought substance on them, ‘See this our fathers did for us.’”

SIGNS.

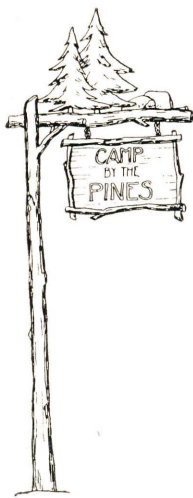


Fig. 13.—A tourists' camp sign suggesting original artistic designs.

Signs are a necessary evil in directing visitors to the tourist camp. However, signs are not necessarily as ugly and crude as we commonly make them. They should be artistic and characteristic of the park or of the community that they represent, as visitors' first impressions of the tourist camp may be obtained from the general character of the signs which lead them to it. Progressive communities will reach out in every direction from the town, informing the tourists for some distance away of the availability of and of the direction to the tourist camp. The time is rapidly passing when signs boldly informing the traveler that he is welcome to the town are posted along the public highways. He should be informed in an unobtrusive way through the presence of plain, artistic directing signs that he is most welcome to visit in our midst. It is by the general character of these signs rather than the words upon them that the welcome should be extended. In making up such signs some historic note or point of the town might be the basis of their design, or some natural character of the tourist camp itself. Since we are appealing to the unconscious desire of the tourist for

a beautiful landscape scene as a camping site, what is more appropriate to inform him of the presence and availability of such a spot than a simple, artistic, and dignified series of signs introducing him to it? By appealing to local artistic talent of the community, it is very certain that acceptable, artistic designs could be developed that would be far superior to the "Welcome To Our Town" type of signs now so frequently seen.

THE LANDSCAPE PLAN



Fig. 14.—Tourist camp signs should appeal to the visitor through their simple artistic character.

The landscape design of the camp is largely a problem of adapting the natural conditions that prevail upon the property to the purposes that the camp is to serve. So much depends upon the topography of the land and the character of beauty indigenous to the place, as well as upon the numerous local conditions that must be considered, that no standard design of tourist camp can be presented. However, no matter how well a tourist park may provide for all of the practical or utilitarian necessities of a camp, if the combined effect of all of these things with the landscape is not harmonious and pleasing to the eye, the grounds as a whole will never prove most satisfactory.

A property that possesses a high degree of landscape beauty is much to be desired as a basis for the development. One should not be induced to select a site simply because of its cheapness, since the initial cost of the land is but a small proportion of the amount that may be spent in the course of a few years for its development and maintenance, or that might otherwise be necessary to expend in developing an unsightly spot into a tourist park.

The drive entrance should be located at a convenient point along the highway, leading apparently in a direct manner to the interior of the grounds. If the entrance is visible for some distance down the highway, so that occupants of approaching machines may readily observe it from some distance away, it will prove helpful. The development of the entrance should be such as to make it easily accessible and to produce a simple, dignified, hospitable effect that will be readily recognizable as a tourist park without the use of large, striking signs.

The drives should lead the stranger in apparently direct, graceful lines to the administration building, to the camping sites, to the most pleasing vista points, and to such other places as might be desired. If these drives can be conveniently located near the boundaries, keeping the central portion of the property unbroken by them, it will help to develop the effect of extent to the grounds and to maintain the unity of effect to the grounds as a whole. Usually, the drives should be not more than sixteen feet in width. This provides ample space for the passing of two machines.

If the land adjacent to the drive in the camping section is marked off into lots, planted or otherwise developed to produce a more or less segregated effect, it will provide for a more efficient utilization of the camping area. The lights, water supplies, garbage receptacles, picnic tables, and fireplaces may then be more definitely located and arranged to serve the camp sites in the most convenient manner. Plantings may then also be arranged about the boundaries of the lots to produce a more seclusive effect. The

size of such individual camping areas varies from a minimum of about 20 x 20 feet to the lot 25 x 50 feet, a distance of 25 feet in width to 35 in depth being about the standard and generally most satisfactory size. These areas should possess excellent surface drainage, and the adjacent drives should be at an elevation but slightly below the lots.

Plantings.

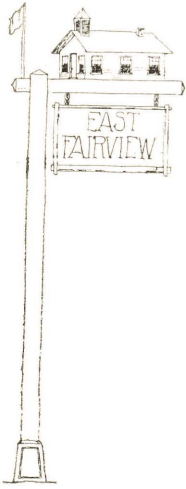


Fig. 15.—Roadside signs may typify some historical, predominating or inviting character of the community such as its general pride in the schools or other civic organization.

The planting of tourist parks in many cases is largely a matter of supplementing the native trees and shrubs already growing there by such a disposition and selection of plants as will tend to harmonize the drives, buildings, and other accessories necessary for camping into unified effect. The planting should also perform other desirable functions. They may be so arranged as to segregate the property from the general landscape of the environment, thus producing the effect of a unity. This effect of segregation, however, should not be obtained at the expense of breaking its unity with the general landscape. Plantings may screen or break undesirable vistas within or without the grounds, or they may be so arranged about the boundaries of the property and camping lots as to develop a more seclusive effect.

When the grounds are too much exposed to wind or sun, plantings may be disposed so as to produce that degree of shelter or shade desired. They may clothe the bare spots about the grounds or may be used to accentuate points that should appear dominant; and last but not least, they may be most acceptable in the scene for their own intrinsic beauty.

Japanese barberries, bridle-wreath, spireas, lilacs, and other kinds of exotic shrubs or trees most common about our homes are very inappropriate for rural tourist grounds. Here, the native kinds of shrubs and trees, such as the viburnum, dogwoods, and native junipers or other kinds suggested by the plant growth already upon the property or of the environment should be used. Otherwise, a domesticated, cultivated effect, such as would be very appropriate about the home, but very inharmonious and out of place about the tourist camp, might be produced.

The selection and arrangement of the plants should be such as to express a most naturalistic effect. They should be disposed in wayward groups and masses rather than as single specimens, as lines, or as other forms that might suggest man's dominance and control of nature. Here the arrangement of the plantings should be such as to show such a perfect interpretation of nature's character as to result in an intelligible expression of nature's self. In this way the plantings enhance and perfect the dominant type of beauty as expressed by the topography and native growth already there, rather than expressing an attempt of man to develop a type of beauty and of effect that is foreign to the scene.

Camp Regulations.

A short and well selected list of camp regulations should be composed for the mutual benefit and welfare of the tourists. These may be printed upon cards and handed to each visitor at the time of registration, or the rules may be posted upon the grounds. Since conspicuous sign-boards are distasteful in the landscape scene, they are not to be encouraged; hence, if printed cards are not feasible, the rules may be posted in the shelter house or at some other frequented place where their presence will not mar the landscape. These rules will naturally vary with the conditions existing in the different camps, but rules covering the following points have generally been found desirable.

1. Registration.
2. Selection of Camp Site.
3. Conduct During Stay.
4. Camp Fires.
5. Sanitation.
6. Length of Stay.
7. Control of Dogs or Other Animals.
8. Repair and Washing of Cars.
9. Advertising.
10. Protection of Trees and Other Property.

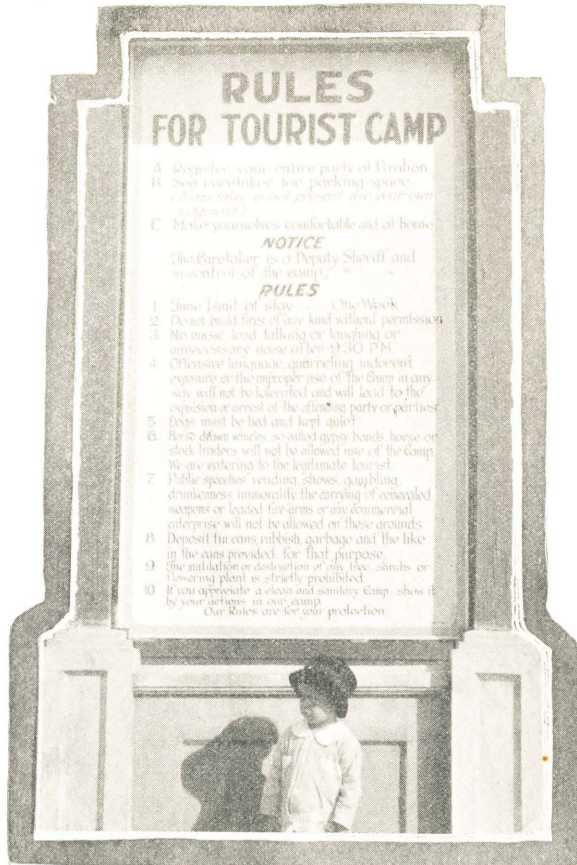


Fig. 16.—Rules posted on a neat, well designed sign board at the tourists' camp of Lansing, Michigan.