



## TRINITY'S CHURCH AND SCHOOL PICNICS

--- Fellowship Among Believers ---

**C**hurch Picnics!! How many do you remember? Does not the recollection bring a sense of nostalgia for years gone by? Is there a Trinitarian, especially a graduate of our school, who does not enjoy recalling the special fellowship, the hot weather, hot dogs, games, and programs that have become part of Trinity's legacy? Picnics enhance fellowship among the Communion of Saints, the fellowship that provides a strong cohesive force and helps keep us close to our spiritual roots.

The first Trinity picnic we have documented proof of was held in 1866, shortly after the Civil War. The first picnics were held at "Enos Grove." Pascal P. Enos, a co-founder of Springfield, had donated land for Illinois State University; and it is believed that "Enos Grove" was at this location. Later, Concordia Seminary would fill the site, and it was called "College Park." During the 1870's and 1880's the sites for the picnics alternated between College Park and Ackerman's Park (possible location thought to be on the hill, across Wal-

nut Street, east of Douglas Park). Krous Beer Park, in the vicinity of the 1500 block of West Washington, was used in 1893.

As regular as clockwork, our voters' minutes contain yearly references to the picnics. Never less than twelve men were assigned to the committee to take care of details. Among the names on the committees in the earliest days, we find *Sturm, Kruegar, Bettinghaus, and Volle* (and this was before we needed electric lights). Later we find *Neu, Tonjes, Paul, and Goering*. The minutes refer to the picnics as "school festivals," but they were true church picnics. *Professor Craemer* was often petitioned to give the students a "free day," and the college band would add to the festivities.

Held on the Fourth of July, fireworks seem to have been a problem. The 1885 minutes contain the admonition that there "is to be no kind of shooting when we celebrate the festival, and that the committee be instructed to put every offender over the fence."

*"Tell of all his wonderful acts!"*

Beer at the picnics was a concern to our German membership. In 1873 it was resolved to have no beer at the festival, but several years later the picnic committee asked the Voters "whether the congregation intended as heretofore to offer free beer without license: Resolved: that the committee take steps to purchase a beer license for one day." Twice the congregation sent thanks to Reisch Brothers (a large local brewery) for "the \$5.00 gift which was subtracted from the expenses for beverages." In fact, in 1898 and 1899 the picnic was held at a park owned by the brewery, Reisch Park. (Now the center of Washington Park, it was at the end of a trolley line owned by the Reisch family.) For these picnics the committee hired "a six man orchestra for \$25.

For the first thirty years the financial reports on the picnics invariably reflected overall expenses of around \$200 and a profit of close to \$100. Tickets for the picnic were fifteen cents apiece; but we don't know if they were for admission only, or perhaps for games, or food and beverages. During the 1890's the profits dropped off sharply each year until the 1900 picnic, held at Garms Park (location unknown), showed "only a small balance." The next year it was "resolved that no children's picnic be held because so few people take part and that this could perhaps cause a deficit."

"Excursions" for the school children with their teachers replaced the picnics. By 1912 committees were again being formed, but the picnics seem to be only for children. They used the Fairgrounds in 1908 and 1909 and then Camp Lincoln for five

years before going to Lincoln Park (also called Oak Ridge Park and North Park) for eleven years. Interest in the picnics grew, and by the late twenties two separate picnics - one for the congregation and one for children - were being held.

**B**eginning in 1929 and lasting for six years, during the depression, Trinity enjoyed huge successful picnics at the Fairgrounds. They used Sponsler's Grove in the southwest corner and also the 4-H Camp Grounds. Sister churches were invited; and in 1932 and 33 over a thousand people attended. Held on the Fourth of July, they lasted from 9:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. During the day all kinds of games would be engaged in; and an evening program of solos, skits, and plays would begin at 7:30. Among other features, the Ladies Aid had the Meal Stand, the Junior Walther League the Refreshment Stand, the Senior Walther League the Amusement Booths, and the Choir ran the Candy and Checking Stand.

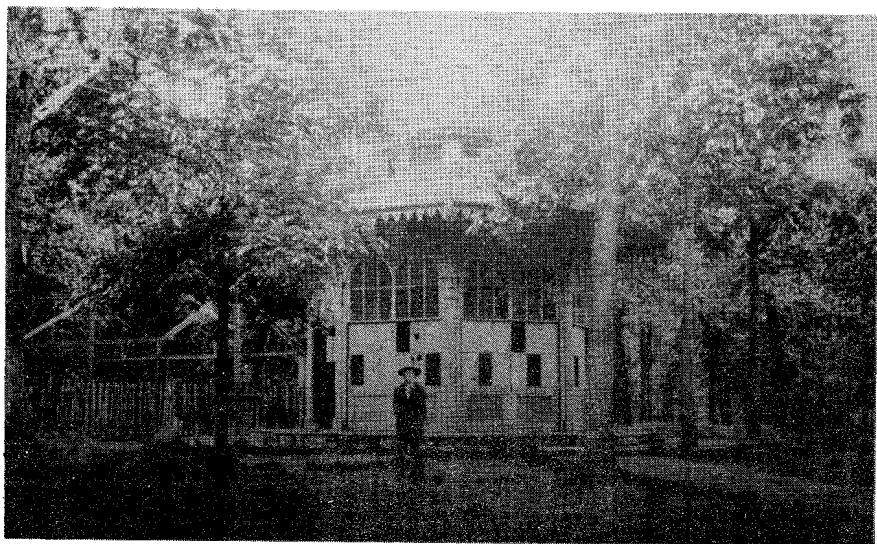
The Trinity member who was not involved in one way or the other was the exception. One year over thirty six people were on the main committee, and there was even a committee to coordinate the other committees. *W.J. Volle* was the general chairman and was assisted by *A.B. Vanselow* and *W.C. Bierbaum*. Listed on the committees are family names that we might recognize today: *Knecht, Kubish, Osterneir, Bierbaum, Zimmerman, Brockschmidt, Vanselow, Kanke, Pillischafske, Beatty, and Baker*. Also active were *Krueger, Martins, Volle, Klekamp, Neitzel, Lazaar,*

*Koopman, Heineman, Dudda, Wolf, Fliege, Wallner*, and many others. *Pastor Schulz* was in charge of transportation, while *Teachers Runge, Schoknecht, and Diesing* had numerous responsibilities. Despite the apparent success of these picnics, they were discontinued in 1936.

The school picnics continued at Lincoln Park until 1946 until they were moved to Douglas Park. Held on the first Saturday after school was out, they were very popular and well attended by students and congregation members. They would begin at noon and close with a vesper service in the evening. After dark, *Mr. Runge* would show films, usually including a Laurel and Hardy feature; and concerned parents kept a watchful eye on cases of "puppy love" among the young scholars.

The last Douglas Park picnic was in 1959, and the picnics underwent a twelve year hiatus. In 1972 the picnics were put under the purview of the Board of Parish Activities, and over 400 people attended their first attempt at Camp Cilca. With one exception, all of our church picnics since then have been at Cilca. The exception was in 1985 when it was held at the school to celebrate the 30th Anniversary of the school building. The family names associated with most of the picnics of the seventies and eighties have been *Fliege, Firth, and Koopman*.

As we look at the history of our church's picnics, it seems they undergo cycles of popularity. As we look to the future, let us hope that church picnics will continue to play an important role in the fellowship of the Communion of Saints.



The center of Lincoln Park at the turn of the century.

