

Memories of Camp Meenahga

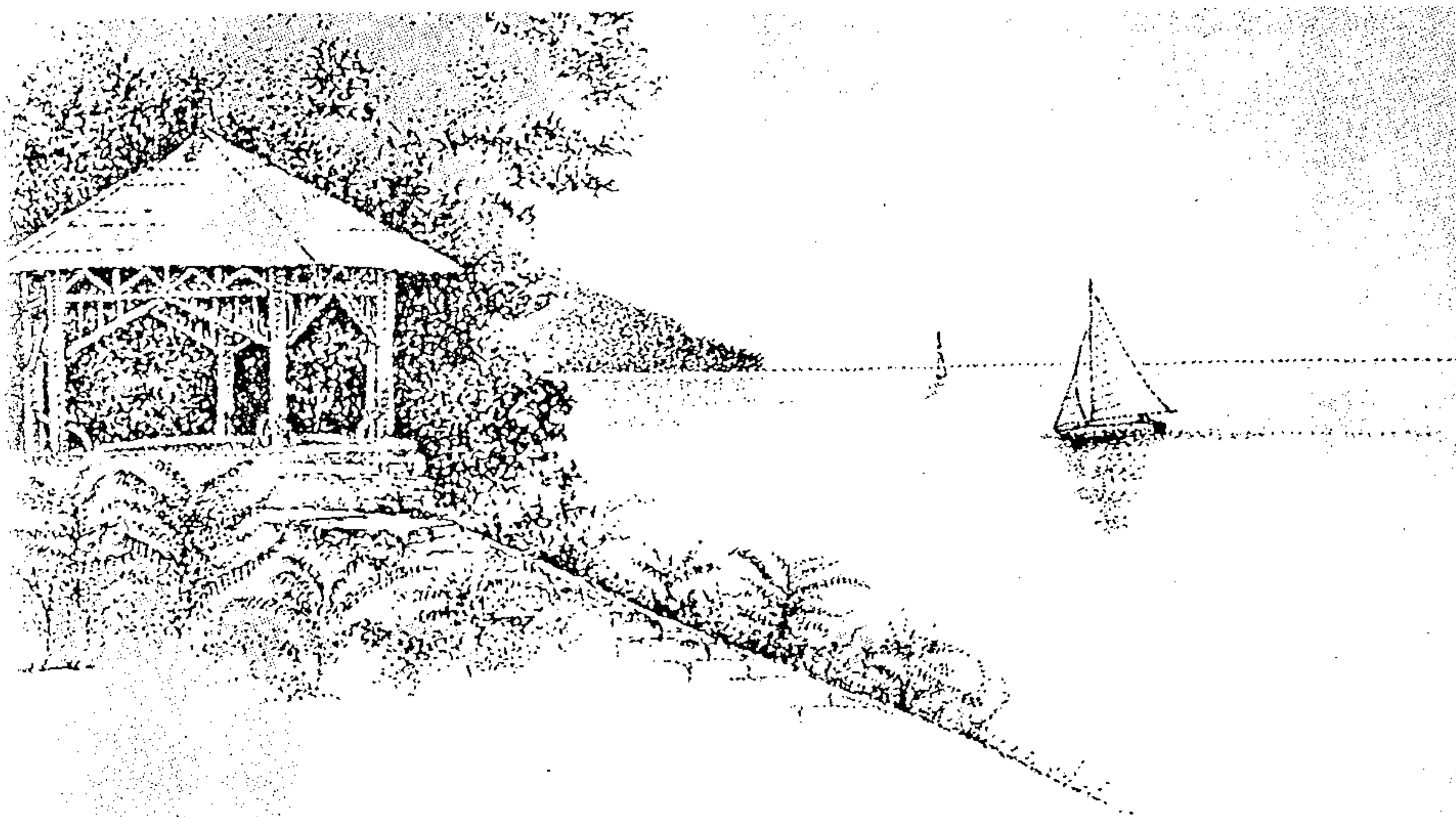
by
Adeline Edmunds

Door County with all its esthetic charm is a haven of rest for the weary soul to enjoy. Be it winter, spring, summer or fall, each season can offer the vacationer a fun-filled of boating, fishing, swimming, golf. Door County has something for everyone to enjoy.

How well I recall good ole Camp Meenahga which was located in Peninsula Fish Creek, Wisconsin. It was a place for girls to spend a fun-filled summer. Our parents spent time at a cottage, and I went abroad.

It was a joy to see the girls' faces

wreathed in smiles as they alighted from the buses, shouting with glee as they hurried to their tents. After they finished unpacking, they would rush to the dining hall to savor a delectable home-cooked dinner. Camp Meenahga was primitive in every respect. The main dining room, kitchen and shed at one time housed horses and cattle. Deft hands had remodeled only enough to make it serviceable, yet retain its original charm. There were no modern conveniences. Bereft of electricity, kerosene lanterns had to suffice as the girls wended their way to their tents at night. However, we did have Coleman gasoline lanterns in the kitchen,



"Lookout"
Meenahga Fish Creek, Wisc.

dining room and lounge. The lounge off of the dining room was spacious with a huge natural fieldstone fireplace. Each day the camp masters brought in huge piles of firewood to keep the building warm. Then, too, the shed was filled with split firewood to keep both kitchen ranges supplied. It meant having to rise early each morning to get the fire going, so as to serve a hearty breakfast at 7:30. Needless to say, there was always plenty of food for appetites made ravenous by all the outdoor activity.



The years I spent at Camp Meenahga as cook were memorable. It was hard work, but I enjoyed the happy atmosphere of camp life. The girls were appreciative of the good food and especially loved cherry pie. After eating dessert, they would sing, "Can she bake a cherry pie, Billy Boy, Billy Boy" and would continue singing until I came out and took a bow. Likewise, Sunday mornings were special as the girls would eagerly rush to the dining room to partake of the usual sour cream donuts and home-made applesauce. I vividly remember the morning we did not have them due to a mouse venturing into the container of sour cream the night before. You'd have thought the world had come to an end seeing the look of dismay on their faces when they had to settle for an alternate breakfast.

Each week the girls went on a two or three day canoe trip to Pebble Beach. All the cooks were kept busy preparing lunches for these treks, but the girls looked forward to these outings. The highlight of the summer season was "Banquet Night." The girls dressed in formal attire as they were presented awards for numerous sporting events held throughout the summer. It was enjoyable seeing the girls all dressed up instead of the usual attire which was olive green shorts and white blouses. It was a sad time too, as at summer's end we'd bid them adieu, knowing that we would not see some of the girls again. Tears flowed freely as they boarded

board the train for their homeward journey. We knew though that they took with them wonderful memories and many would be

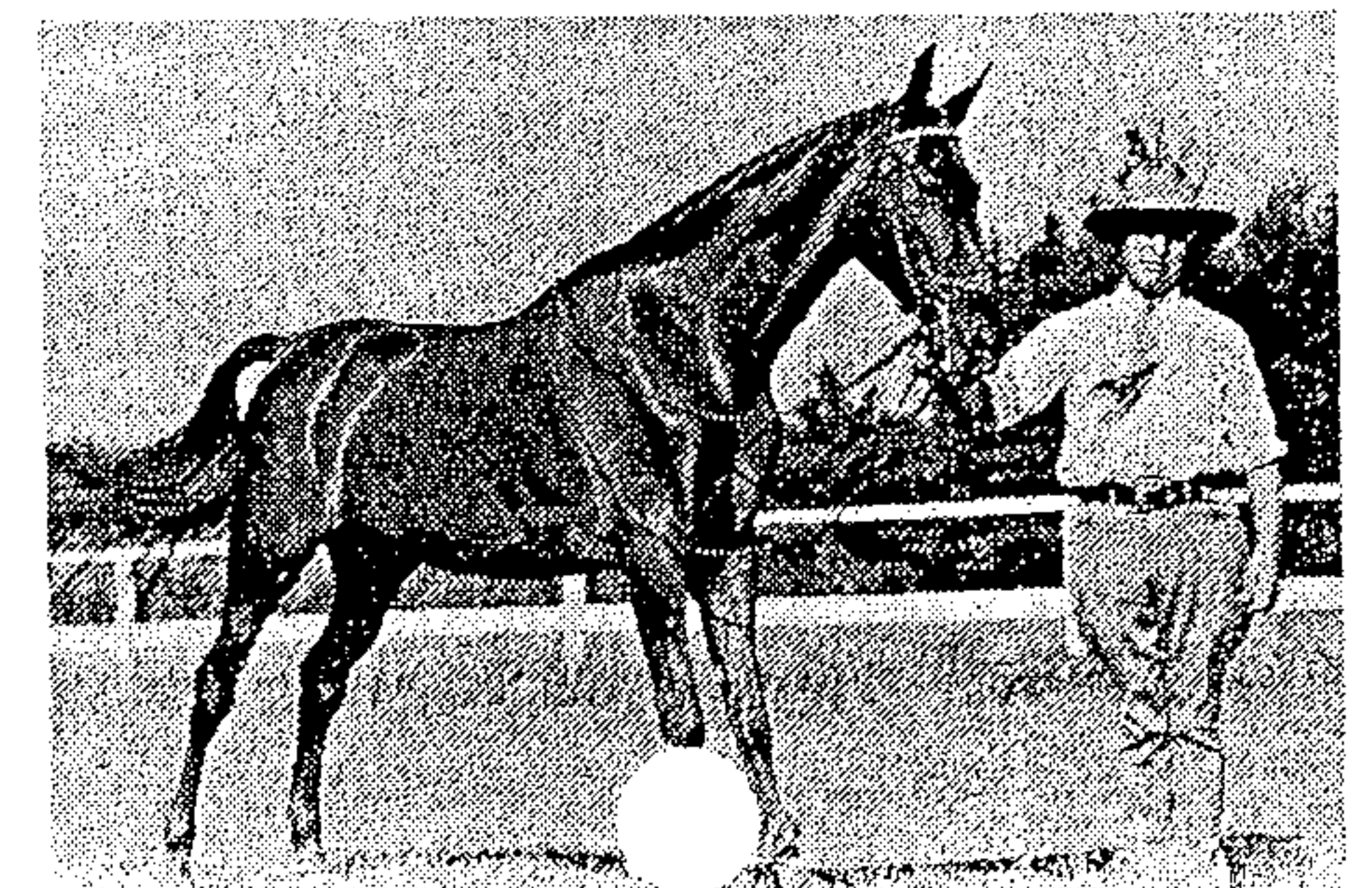
looking forward to coming back the next year.

Post season was a bee hive of activity. Tents had to be dismantled, canoes retrieved and stored in their respective places, and the ice box and cooler cleaned and disinfected. The ice shed also had to

be readied for the winter's harvest of ice which would be used for the following season. Last, but not least, I would purify all the used doughnut grease that had accumulated throughout the summer and make it into laundry soap. It came in handy to wash the kitchen towels each day. Lye, in those days, could be bought for 10¢ a can and an enormous amount of soap was made at a large saving to the camp.

Little did I dream that I'd become enamored of Camp Meenahga when I began working there. My sister-in-law, Julia Peil, had been working the previous season and enticed me to accept the job as head cook which had become available. My first encounter as I entered the kitchen for an interview with Mrs. Clark, the director of the camp, was to see bats flying to and fro from the high ceiled structure. As frightened as I was of bats, I really had to think twice about accepting the position. My sister-in-law assured me I would get used to them in time, and I did.

I remember another hair-raising





lion wallpaper, the old Franklin woodstove in the parlor, the adjoining office which was filled with camp paraphernalia where Mrs. Clark and her assistant, Mrs. Williams, spent endless hours doing their bookkeeping and counseling the girls. The nurse's tent was adjacent and was situated beneath a huge maple tree. It was frequented quite often by the camp girls in need of medication to treat their cuts and bruises and the "prevalent" cases of poison ivy which were treated with a good dousing of kerosene, a remedy that worked but would certainly be scorned today. A short distance beyond the lodge stood the quaint old log cabin dubbed "the clubhouse". This cabin was used as a guest house for mothers and older siblings when



around the rockbound shoreline. Some of my fondest memories of the camp are of evenings spent taking a jaunt into Fish Creek for one of Pleck's delicious ice cream cones which at that time sold for a nickel. On our homeward trek as we neared the camp we could hear the whirring sound of Mike Orwig's bag-pipe, a ritual he performed almost every night, as dressed in his Scottish kilt, he would saunter through the woods playing his pipes. The stillness of the night and the moon beams filtering through the scented pines gave one a feeling of peace and tranquility and one could only say, "God is in his heaven and all is well with the world." So ended the days of Camp Meenahga and though the years shall pass those that worked and played there have not forgotten those long ago idyllic days.



they came to visit. The rates at that time were \$21.00 per week or \$4.00 per day. Nearby, down the slope, was the awe-inspiring amphitheater where dance, drama and plays were enacted in a natural setting. I remember too, the "lookout tower" where in our leisure time we would watch sailboats glide smoothly over the bright blue water and watch the girls paddling their canoes



that took place on a warm July. I was frying eggs for breakfast and tried to glance up to see a huge pine shimmering through a knothole in the room wall. Spatula in hand I ran out the kitchen door where I greeted Mrs. Clark. When I told her what happened, she remarked, "Why, they're harmless. To overcome this pick it up as you would a pet." All I could reply was, "Over my dead body." The doctor readily took charge of the matter, laughingly brought the snake out, needless to say, it was no laughing matter.

With the camp season at an end, I concentrated on finding a job for the months. With an encouraging reference from Mrs. Clark, I was certain that I could obtain work in Milwaukee. Much as I hated the thought of leaving Door County, no alternative as there was no work available once the tourist season was over. Luckily, I was informed that the Roy family, who owned a summer home in Wauwatosa, were looking for a housekeeper and I would be willing to return with them to their winter home in Wauwatosa. It seemed a deal situation for me as I could then

work at Camp Meenahga for the following season. Little did I dream that it would be the last season I would be working there after having worked there several seasons from 1937-1941, and due to other circumstances I could not return. During the next few years the buildings were razed and the only thing left of what once had been a bustling camp were the cement steps leading to the door.

Even now, many years later, I can remember so many details of the camp: the

1918 Show program

Camp Meenahga

Third Annual Out-Door Production

Friday, August 23, 3:30 P. M.
For Benefit of War Orphans

PART I STORY OF THE SEASONS

While Persephone, daughter of Ceres, is playing with her friends the flowers, Pluto the ruler of Hades, carries her off to his kingdom. Ceres and all nature mourn the lost Persephone. The winds whirl the dead leaves, and a gentle snow falls. Ceres, with her never failing torch, wanders over the earth in search of Persephone, and finally appeals to Jupiter. He sends Mercury after her. In the spring the sun and the rain make the flowers grow. Persephone returns, but for six months only, because, while in Pluto's kingdom she ate six pomegranite seeds. At her arrival there is great joy. Then comes the languor of summer. In the autumn the harvest is celebrated with dancing, and offerings of fruit and grain are made to Ceres.

CHARACTERS

IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE

PERSEPHONE	Eustis Hundley
MAIDEN FLOWERS	
Mary Orr	Elaine Mabley
Esther Dyer	Ida Mabey Webb
Madeline Block	Margaret Hermann
PLUTO	Helen Petring
CERES	Olivia Doane
DEAD LEAVES	
Joann Conway	Betty Moir
Flavia von Brecht	Ernestine Glassberg
Lydia Burge	Elizabeth Wymond
	Elinor Luedinghaus
EAST WIND	Virginia Price
NORTH WIND	Mary Speed Tuley
SNOW	
Alice Churchill	Alice Clark
Margaret McCarty	Latham Baskerville
Florence Manley	Lottie Merrell
	Lucille Runge