

## **My Thoughts on The Tabernacle at Camp Byron by Margaret Blank**

To me, The Tabernacle IS Camp Byron (now called Byron Center). I can remember as a child that our first glimpse of Camp Byron was the Tabernacle, standing tall, with the sides propped open, like arms outstretched to welcome all worshipers to Camp Meeting. Hundreds answered that call faithfully, year after year.

My Grandfather was one of the founders of Camp Byron. My Mother was born and raised in South Byron. She moved 50 miles away when she married, however we never missed a year coming to Camp Byron Camp Meeting. In fact, I was just eight months old the first time I came.

Can you picture the field --- from the dormitory out to the road --- filled to capacity with cars? And every other available place filled also? Not only was it a time to worship, but it was also a time of reunion for families and friends!



There were two Sundays of Camp Meetings, and there were two services each Sunday --- one in the morning and another in the afternoon. The building would be packed. Perhaps 50 to 100 more people would be sitting around the open sides in chairs they brought from cars and cottages. The interior was much as it is today, except that the floor was dirt, covered with straw to cut down the dust. I can hear, as if it were



yesterday, the rustle of the straw as people took their places. I can hear the rustle of grass as latecomers came to sit outside. I can hear the singing as it resounded across the camp and shook the sparrows off the large beams overhead. There were no loud-speaker systems, but the booming voices of the many preachers could be heard by those outside too. What a service!

The Campground Creek was dammed up to form a large pool where we spent many happy hours swimming. There was a raft and a boat to use. When we were older, my two cousins, my sister and I stayed at our Grandparent's cottage. We joined in the activities of the Epworth League during the week. All programs and services were held in the Tabernacle. I remember one candle-light service so well. We were each given a lighted candle and then we marched around the outside of the Tabernacle and formed a lighted cross. It was the most solemn, worshipful happening in my young life. The years have brought many changes in people and activities. Some changes are good. Sadly, we lose many good things with change. The powerful, exciting Camp Meeting is gone, and all of the fun and closeness of families and friends who gathered there, with it.

Perhaps the Camp Byron Tabernacle has outlived its usefulness. Perhaps we need to move on. But let us never forget how the Spirit of God thrived there for so many, many years. And let it live on in our hearts whenever we worship our Lord.

(Margaret Blank was a long-time member of the South Byron Methodist Church and a member of the Oakfield United Methodist Church. She lived in Brownsville and Fond du Lac, WI)

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