

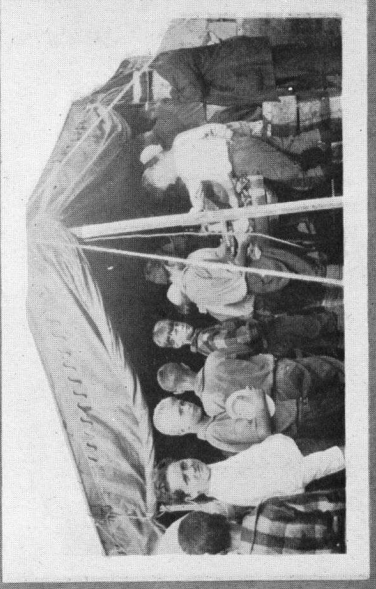
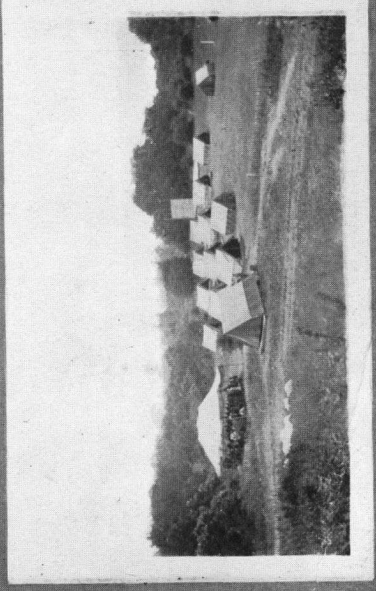
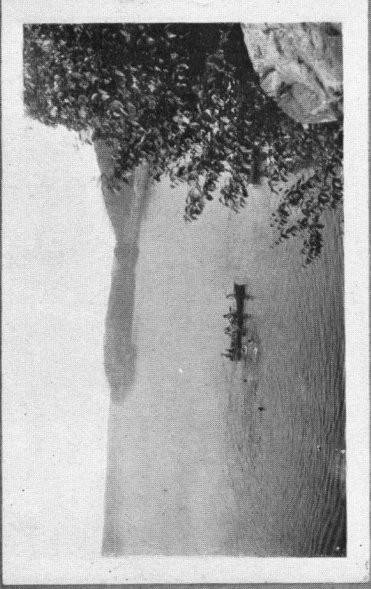
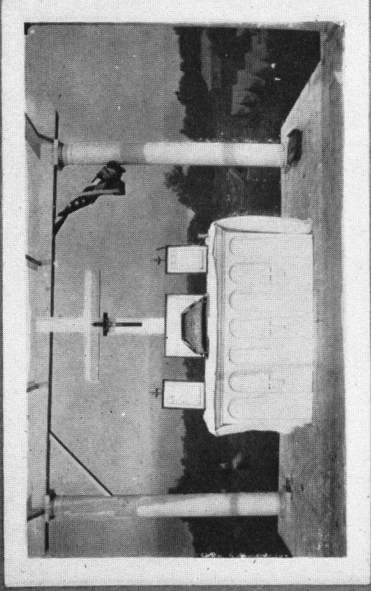
DOMINICAN BOYS' CAMP

BRO. RALPH McCAFFREY, O. P.



It has been only in the last few years that we have seen the rise of the summer camp movement to any great extent. The mammoth building programs of our larger cities have curbed and limited the activities of the youth of the present day to such a narrow sphere that the pent-up energies of boyhood must now be expended within the confines of the family backyard or at best within the precincts of the local playground. The wide open spaces of yesteryear are no more; the sky line is now brushed with mighty structures of steel and mortar; the vacant lot where once the crowd of happy youngsters gathered for their play is now marked off with the sturdy lines of a dwelling or factory; the one-time meeting place of the neighborhood youth is now perhaps the site of a mighty business corporation. Such, then, is the reason why summer camps have come into being; they are a necessity and are here to stay. Their necessity is apparent; their usefulness not to be denied. Wherever they have sprung up their success has been assured, if they have been founded under proper auspices. Far from the din and crowded city we find them, perhaps along the whitened sands of the seashore or deep in the beautiful recesses of the country. But no matter where they may be situated, their location is always chosen because of the healthfulness of climate and the facilities afforded for the diverse forms of recreation which play such a vital part in the activity of camp life. The plan of such enterprises always has the individual well-being of the campers in mind, and the whole program is sketched so as to provide for the maximum of comfort and enjoyment of those who take part. Every activity that is arranged, every schedule that is drawn up, is carefully considered with a view to the many different dispositions of those enrolled on the camp register.

Very Reverend Raymond Meagher, O. P., S. T. Lr., LL. D., Provincial of St. Joseph's Province, mindful of the necessity and usefulness of a camp for the boys attending schools conducted by the Dominican Sisters in and about New York, early last spring turned over to Rev. W. L. Whalen, O. P., sub-prior of St. Vincent Ferrer's Convent, New York City, a large tract of land, high in the Catskills, in the township of Staatsburg on the Hudson, to be fitted out and



Dominican Boys' Camp, Staatsburg-on-Hudson



equipped for a boys' camp. The site is rich in historical lore and ideally situated for all sports both aquatic and land. Such a move on Father Meagher's part is but another expression of his interest in the boys of the Dominican Sisters' schools and of his eagerness to contribute to the solution of the boy-life problem, which has so long claimed the attention of those who have the boys' interest at heart.

The camp contains two hundred and fifty-eight acres and is unexcelled in the advantages it affords for the equipment of a real boys' camp. The Hudson, with all its scenic beauty and facilities for boating, swimming and fishing, is close at hand, and every opportunity is given the youth under proper supervision to enjoy the many sports that it provides. The campus commands the center of activity. Forty large tents set upon wooden platforms are spread across its vast expanse, and overlooking all is the headquarters of the director, Father Whalen. A large recreation tent has been erected and here the boys spend their evenings enjoying the indoor sports. During inclement weather this tent is also used in the day time as a community center.

The kitchen, a vital part of every camp, is large and commodious and is under the supervision of experienced cooks. No efforts are spared to secure and serve wholesome and nutritious food in ample quantities. From neighboring farms are procured the vegetables, butter, milk and other farm products for the camp table, and it is the proud boast of those in charge that the cuisine of the Dominican Camp is unsurpassed.

During the meals the counselors keep close scrutiny to see that each boy is fairly treated and properly fed. The camp personnel, as with all institutions of this kind, must be made up of boys from a great variety of homes, yet with this merging into the individual, a standard of etiquette, such as is maintained in the best of homes, is set up and scrupulously carried out. The dining tent contains about fifteen tables, each large enough to accommodate twelve persons. Every convenience is provided for in this large and well-ventilated tent, and every device for sanitation has been utilized.

On the crest of a knoll overlooking the campus an out-door altar has been erected, and here each morning the boys assist at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. It is their first action of the morning—that of greeting the God of Hosts in the Sacrament of Love. Many of the boys take advantage of receiving Holy Communion at this Mass. It is, indeed, an inspiring spectacle to see these youngsters as they go to greet their God and partake of His Body and Blood, and truly a harbinger of the many happy events of which their day is replete.

The daily routine begins at seven each morning. With the blowing of a bugle all arise and, after a sufficient time has been given for dressing, a second signal is given for all to line up outside their tents. A procession is then formed and the campers march across the campus to the out-door altar for Mass. As soon as Mass is over the boys return to the drill ground for their morning setting-up exercises. At eight o'clock the call to breakfast is sounded and all array themselves about the tables for the morning repast. As soon as breakfast is finished a time is allotted for arranging the tents and all must have their equipment ready for inspection at nine.

When the inspection is over the activities of the day's program begin. There is a large athletic field and ground has been set aside for a baseball diamond, handball alley and a basketball court. Several teams have been formed among the campers and a keen rivalry has sprung up among the different nines as to their individual claims to supremacy. Teams from nearby towns are invited to the camp for games with the Dominican aggregation and spirit is rife among the boys in their rooting for the home team. The basketball and handball courts have both their devotees and have been very popular during the past summer.

Hiking through God's own open country has always been a feat to which our American boys aspire, and with this in mind the supervisor with his counselors have mapped out trips at various times to places of historical interest, of which there are many in the vicinity. Tramping along country roads, across new-mown fields or climbing steep hills, foster memories that will ever be recalled as the fondest of recollections. On these trips the boys gain practical experience in the dependence which they should have upon their own resources, in caring for themselves in the woodlands, in striking and breaking camp, in making fires on which their own meals are cooked, and many other interesting diversions which have made hiking popular with the younger element.

The educational advantages of these jaunts into the woodlands are numerous. The children studying nature from books are listless and perfunctory in their attention to such a course. The reason is obvious. Living in the city where brick and mortar have hidden the real beauties of nature, where everything is so artificial and man-made, where trees and shrubbery are set out in rigid lanes and at studied distances, the school boy loses interest and holds in disdain any course that to him is impractical or at best theoretical. But to the boy in camp, all is changed. He sees natural beauty with an unbiased look. He sees it as God made him to see it. The far-reaching

woodland, the sweet-singing bird, the splashing of fish in the shadowy stream, enthrall his young heart in an ecstasy of delight. Here his imagination senses the true beauty which everywhere surrounds him. That study which during his school days was so uninteresting and forbidding has now become entrancing in its attraction and mysterious in its allurements.

Swimming must always hold first place in the program of any summer camp. The Dominican Camp is singularly favored in having an inlet of the Hudson bordering on its limits, and here each day a time is set aside when all the boys are allowed a dip in its refreshing waters under proper supervision. Counselors, who have qualified as expert swimmers and who are able to cope with any emergency which might arise, are stationed along the bank, keeping close watch upon all the youngsters while they enjoy to their hearts' content the sport which for all is so popular. A swimming instructor has been appointed to instruct those not yet versed in this favorite pastime, and they are given every opportunity of acquiring it. Ample provision has also been made for boating for those who desire it.

In the evening after supper games are arranged, and at regular intervals movies, known for their cleanness and elevating in their portrayal, are shown. A radio has been procured and this enlivens the hours as the boys await the sounding of taps. As the evening wanes and the camp fire sparkles as its last dying ember rises to pierce the darkness, the call to Rosary brings the boys once more to converse with their God as they did in the early morning when the rays of the morning sun flooded the landscape upon their rising. After night prayers are over the happy crowd wends its way to its little haven of rest, tired yet happy in the recollection of the sports of the day and in anticipation of the merry doings that the morrow will bring.

The Dominican Camp has enrolled the services of several counselors well qualified for their work among boys. They have been accepted because of the integrity of their character, the interest they have displayed in the welfare of boys and for their versatility in things athletic. Parents have confided the boys to their care, and it is upon their shoulders that the burden lies of exerting a good influence, of bringing to the fore the true character of the boy, of curbing and destroying any unruly trait that may have taken hold of the individual, of fostering a deeper love in the heart of their proteges for God, for parents and for country, and at the same time of helping their charges to get the fullest enjoyment from their vacation. Not a small obligation on these men, but the love that they

bring to their work, the interest they have in the welfare of the boys, the consciousness of the good results that await their efforts, incites them to a high pitch of enthusiasm and their whole energy is bent on winning themselves into the hearts of the youngsters and at the same time accomplishing the results they set out to attain. In these men the boys find true friends, eager and willing to assist them in their every endeavor, and this mutual co-operation and attraction of camper for counselor and counselor for camper go far in making the summer camp a success.

The Camp nurse is ever at hand to care for any sickness or injury, and if any serious malady should befall one of the boys there is a hospital nearby in charge of the Sisters to whose attention the case shall be given.

The work which the Dominican Camp is accomplishing cannot be overestimated. The physical and educational benefits that are derived, together with the moral training and fraternal spirit which it inculcates, make it a worthy adjunct to the Church, the home and the school. It is during these summer months, when the child is free from the noble influences of the school and open to impressions that break down and destroy the principles received, that some medium must be found whereby the training of the school can be retained while the relaxation and pleasures of the vacation are enjoyed. The summer camp supplies this balance. Here amid wholesome surroundings, living with companions tried for uprightness and manliness, under the guidance of true Catholic gentlemen, the boy cannot but be benefitted by this vacation in camp. His every activity is mapped out for him by men who know every whim and liking of the average boy. They have carefully studied the problem of boy work and have so arranged their program that no matter what may be the desires of the camper, he has at his disposal the instrument of pleasure that will satisfy his craving.

In the camp the true character of the boys is brought to the fore. In the various activities, where the enthusiasm runs high, leaders move to the front to direct their fellows in their play. Thus even in his younger years the boy shows indications of his commanding powers, and oftentimes, but for the camp, these latent talents would remain obscured. In the camp responsibilities are placed upon the boy according to his years. These tend to engender confidence in his own ability, to help him to realize the significance of his acts, and to assist him in laying a solid foundation that will be of great aid to him in mastering the larger problems of after years.