

Forestry 150

Maurice Brooks

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FORESTRY 150

A PLAN FOR THE RECREATIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF A TRACT NEAR

SILVER LAKE, DEXTER TOWNSHIP, WASHTENAW CO.

Maurice Brooks

1939.

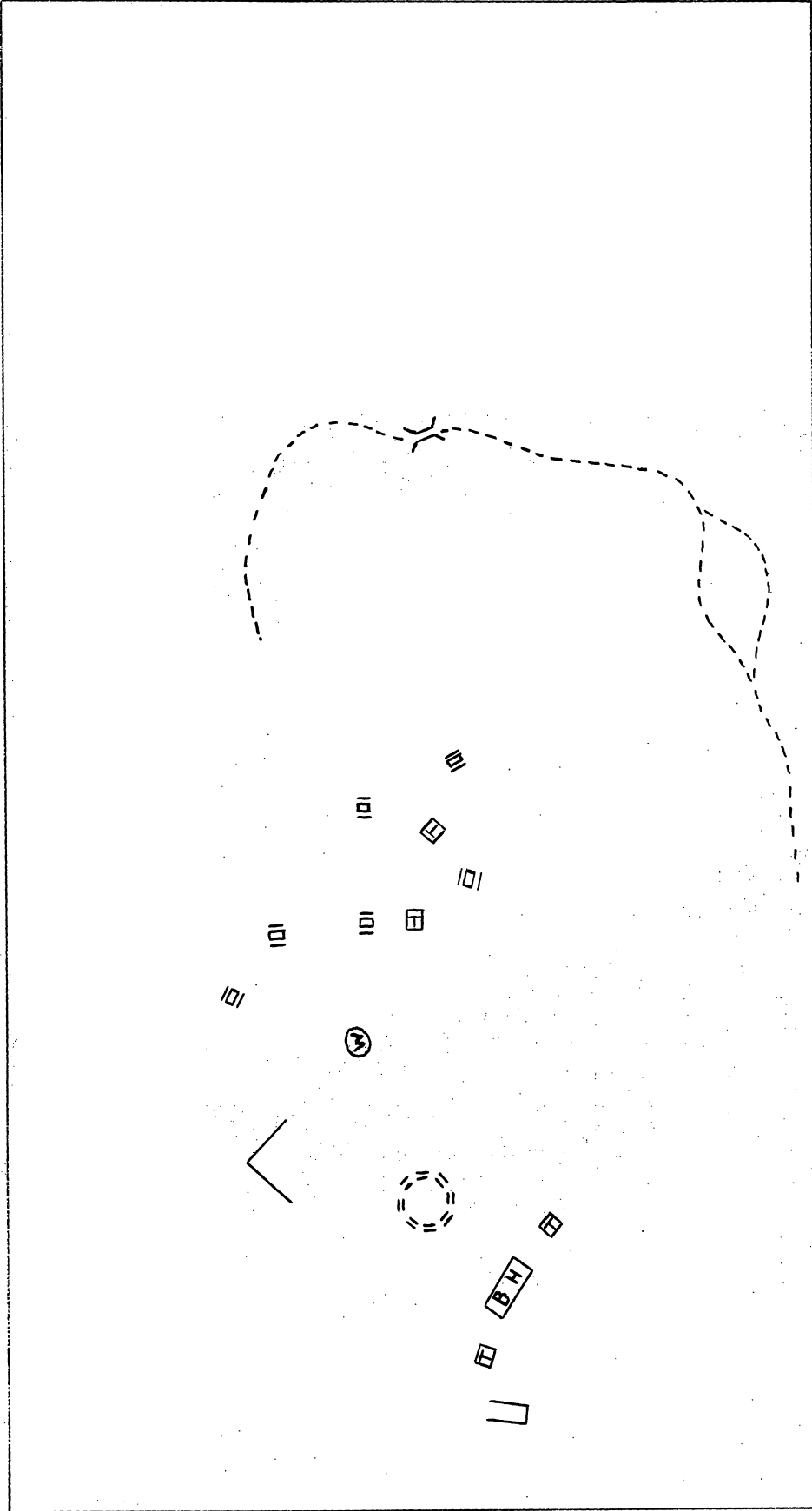
AERIAL MAP OF
THE SILVER LAKE AREA

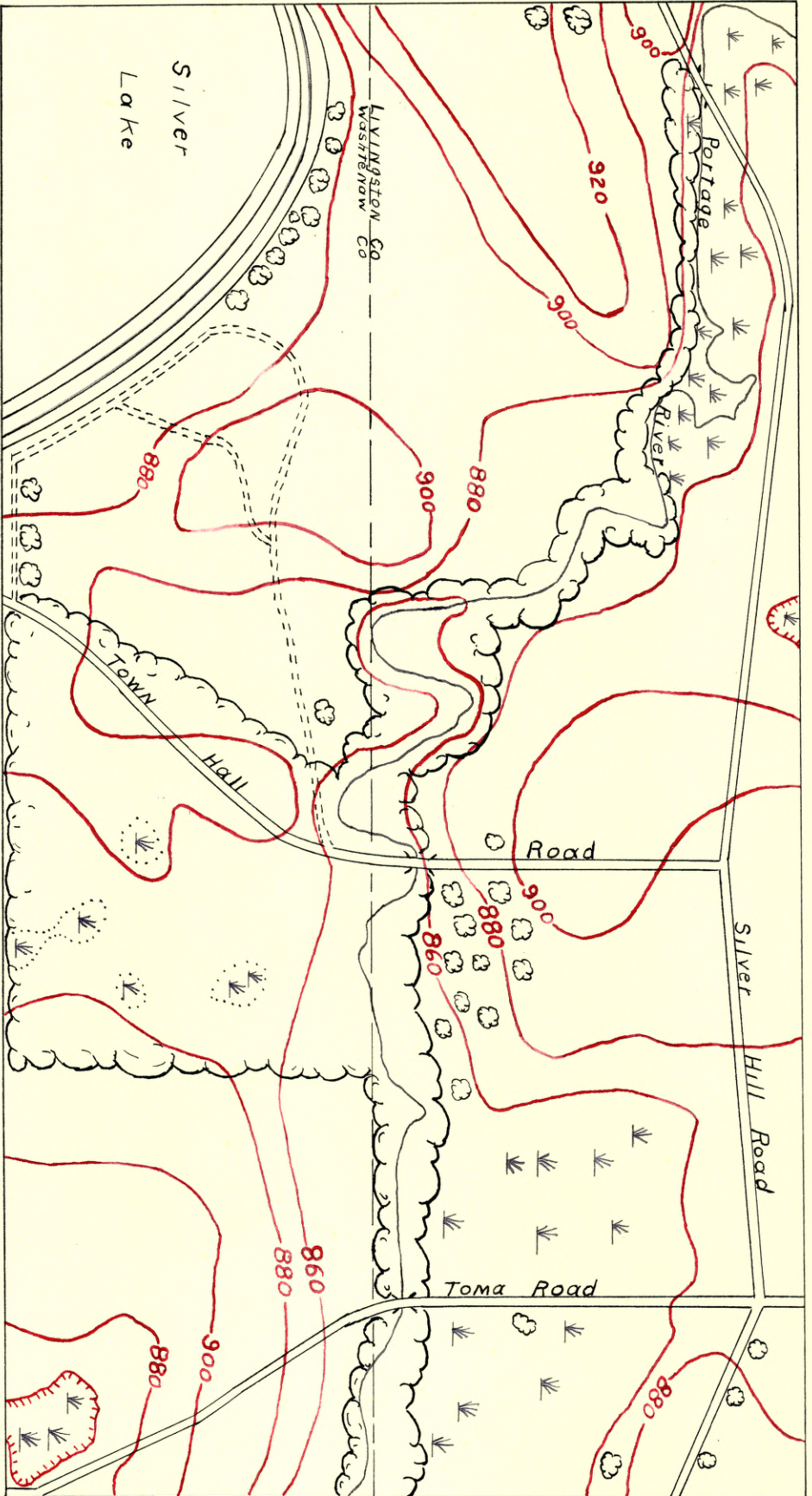


The Tract Selected for Recreational Development
Is Shown Outlined in Red Ink Above.

7 22

PROPOSED RECREATIONAL PLAN





SILVER LAKE AREA

SEC. 3, T. 1 S., R. 4 E., M. P. M.

Contour Interval 20 feet

Scale — 1/0" = 1 mile

THE SILVER LAKE RECREATION AREA

DESCRIPTION OF THE AREA .

Silver Lake lies in the extreme north-central portion of Dexter Township, Washtenaw County, Michigan, with one small arm which extends into Livingston County. The lake has an area of approximately 300 acres, and is surrounded by low hills which extend westward from the Stinchfield ridge. There is an elevation range of approximately one hundred feet in the region, this range being responsible for a more rugged appearance than is common near lakes in this general region.

As one approaches the lake by way of Town Hall Road, from the North Territorial Road, he first reaches a small, but very beautiful detached pond, appearing to be a part of the main lake, but actually separated from it. Low hills surround this pond, and from some of these excellent views of the region may be secured. There are no buildings at present about this pond, and were it more heavily wooded it would make an excellent area for recreational development.

The highway reaches Silver Lake at a point where a number of cottages have been erected. The lake is then skirted for a few hundred yards, notable features of this drive being fine views of the lake, a good shingle beach, and a lovely little detached pond, surrounded by fine woods, on the right hand side of the roadway.

Just beyond this pond the road leaves the lake, ascends a low ridge, and enters dense deciduous woods at a point which marks one boundary of the area which has actually been selected for development. After winding through this woodland, it crosses the Portage River, almost on the Livingston County line, and proceeds to the Silver Hill Road, from which there are again excellent views of the lake and the

river.

Silver Lake is remarkably clear, with both sand and shingle beaches. So far there has been relatively little building of cottages around it, despite its accessibility. A number of its arms are surrounded by woods, and there are a few areas of well-developed floating bog. The cottages which have been built are of a rather better grade than is common to many of the lakes in the neighborhood, and would detract very little from the attractions of the area which we have chosen to develop.

DESCRIPTION OF THE DEVELOPMENT TRACT

For the purposes of this development we have selected an area, almost rectangular in shape, on the northeast side of Silver Lake. The area contains approximately 265 acres, and its boundaries, part natural and part artificial, are rather closely oriented north-south and east-west.

Starting at a point where the Town Hill road enters the area from the south, our boundary line extends eastward for approximately a quarter of a mile, following the margin of a well-developed piece of deciduous woods. Where this wooded land corners at a cultivated field we turn due north, proceeding for .475 mi. to an intersection with the Silver Hill Road. We follow this road nearly due west to a point where it crosses the Portage River. At this point we turn south, following a ravine which separates the grassland portions of our tract from cultivated land to the west. The projection of this line south for .46 mi. carries us into Silver Lake, and here we turn east again to close our rectangle at the point of departure on the Town Hill Road. (See the above-described tract, outlined in red ink, on the aerial photograph which accompanies this paper.)

The heavily wooded area which we first enter is especially well adapted to some types of recreational use, and will be described more

fully in later sections of this paper. It contains a number of ridges and ravines, with two or three sizeable potholes, and is well screened from the roadway. Flowing through the north side of the tract is the attractive Portage River.

This stream deserves special discussion, since it lends character to the entire area. Typically, it is a rather deep, swift-flowing bit of water, widely meandering, and occupying a ravine which occasionally widens to form marshy areas. In color the water is deep brown, showing a high organic content. Along the banks and in the marshes is to be found an interesting and varied vegetation. Within the tract selected for this study is one cottage, highly attractive, but representing a vested private interest. All of the area along the Portage River is susceptible to recreational development of a rather high order.

Between the river, the road and the lake is a rolling grassy area with a few dotted red cedar trees, and some fine deciduous trees near the lake. An earth road wind through this grassland at present, and could be used to reach the bathhouse, boating, and beach development hereinafter to be described. Back from the lake is abundant space for a play field, and in this area is located the natural bowl which it is proposed to develop into a council circle and natural ampitheater.

The lake shore, where our area touches it, is fringed with willow and aspen in places, but near the proposed bathing beach is a fine natural screening of red cedar. At this point a sand blow from the ridge above has deposited clean sand along the shore, making a splendid beach of considerable extent.

North and east of the Portage River is a rolling grassy field, beautifully dotted with groves or single trees of good sized cedar. Throughout the area are numerous potholes, possibly becoming stagnant

in summer, but interesting for vegetation and animal life throughout a part of the year.

As may be seen from this description, all of the land included in the tract will lend itself well to development, although there are no facilities of any kind provided at present. That a great deal of recreational use is carried on informally is a tribute to the character of the area.

ACCESSIBILITY

The Silver Lake region is traversed by a number of gravel roads, good for all year driving, but is not reached by any hard-surfaced highway. The nearest road of this character is the North Territorial Road, about two miles distant. From this the Town Hill Road leads to Silver Lake, and there are also roads to Stinchfield, Pinckney, and other points. Without being too close to more populous communities, the area is readily accessible.

PRESENT RECREATIONAL USES

Although no formal facilities are available, there is a fairly extensive use of the area at present. Silver Lake, with its sand and shingle beaches, offers good swimming and boating, is large enough for small sail craft, and has about its shores many attractive (and at present unused) summer cottage sites. There is fishing in both lake and river, and hunting in season. Winter sports are represented by skating, and some of the hills are steep enough for short ski runs and coasting areas. There are evidences of some picnicking, especially in the woods along the Portage River, but this recreational use, potentially very extensive, is at present little developed.

During the seasons of good weather many persons come to the region for the views, there being groups of people on most of the ridges on Sundays and holidays.

From data at hand, present recreational uses of the area might

be ranked as follows:

1. Swimming.
2. Summer cottage occupancy.
3. Boating.
4. Fishing.
5. Picnicking.
6. Hunting.
7. Skating.
8. Hiking.

This disregards the casual auto travel in the area, a part of which might classify as recreational use.

PLANT LIFE

As has been mentioned previously, the plant life of the region is attractive and highly varied. The extensive wooded area is of the oak-hickory type, with a beautiful undergrowth of juniper and deciduous shrubs. Wild flowers carpet the ridges here, especially in spring, when hepaticas, anemones, blood root, spring beauties, and others are profuse.

Along the river are many aspens and willows, with a number of fine groups of white birch. The blending of aspen and white birch is an especially attractive one. The many service bushes flash white in the springtime, and there are pussywillows about the potholes and along the streams. Among the cedars in places will be found fine grassy carpets. Along the lake shore is a zone of many wild flowers, and the floating bog areas are rich in the interesting aquatic plants characteristic of such habitats.

ANIMAL LIFE

The casual visitor to the area will perhaps find the bird life of most striking interest. Birds are present throughout the year, but in migration times the region has an abundance of waterfowl. The isolated arms of the lake protect, and offer feeding areas to ducks, geese, swans, loons, grebes, herons, bitterns, rails, and sandpipers.

Below,
One Arm
of Sil-
ver Lake



At Left,
Scene along
the Portage
River, taken
on the dev-
elopment a-
rea.



Occasional gulls and terns feed above the lake's surface. An area of special interest is the little detached pond on the right hand side of Town Hall Road as the motorist enters the region. In this small body of water ducks and grebes find abundant food, and the observer may watch them at his leisure from a car. So long as occupants do not leave the autos the birds show little fear. During the spring season of 1939 a group of bufflehead ducks put on a most interesting and attractive courtship show here.

Another item of special ornithological interest is the presence in the region of a number of nesting woodcock. Here on spring evenings may be heard and seen the fantastic mating flights, "Sky dances", of these extraordinary birds. Ordinarily, it is only necessary to visit any part of the area at an April dusk to see and hear the birds. At the same time the visitor may hear whip-poor-wills beginning their evening calls.

Hawks and owls fascinate many people, and these are well represented in the area. Red-tailed hawks nested in the region during this present spring, and ospreys were frequent visitors to the lake. A pileated woodpecker, a rare bird in southern Michigan, was noted here on one occasion recently. Grouse and bobwhites occur in some numbers.

Song birds swarm, and the high banks of the Portage River offer exceptionally good opportunities for observing them at tree-top level. Swallows feed above the lake, and the bank swallows build in the exposed sandy clay slopes hereabouts. Thrushes sing toward evening, and many other fine songsters join them.

Mammals are well represented also, with squirrels, rabbits, muskrats, skunks, and other small game species abundant. Doubtless a few of the larger mammals, foxes, and an occasional deer, are to be found. There is good cover and much food, with grape and other tangles available throughout the tract.

HAZARDS

Dangers to be encountered in the use of the area, either at present or as developed, are not conspicuously different from those which accompany recreation throughout the entire region. Wherever there is swimming there will be an occasional drowning, and the same is true for boating. With this fact in mind, any swimming developments which may be planned must be accompanied by full life guard protection.

As to boating, the lake is not sufficiently large to make canoeing a serious hazard, since even strong winds do not set up large waves on so limited an area. Boating and canoeing conditions are, for these and other reasons, almost ideal.

Insects will be present in some numbers in season, and must be taken into account, just as they must be in other similar areas. It may be urged that the potholes offer additional breeding places for mosquitoes, but these are not located where recreational use will be heaviest. Black flies have opportunities to breed in the swift waters of the river.

Poisonous snakes are few, and need to be taken into little account. On the other hand, there is considerable poison ivy, not so much however as is to be found in many regions nearby. There is poison sumac in the swamps, but most persons going into these will know to avoid this danger.

A use hazard may possibly develop in case the proposed play field is made. Since this is on the top of a sandy ridge disturbances of the surface vegetation may possibly start a blow-out. Danger from this may be reduced by screen plantings.

CONFLICTS

As the situation may be visualized at present, the outstanding use conflict inherent in the public use of this area is to be found

in the private ownership of lands for summer cottage sites. If the tract could come under public ownership now there would be a minimum of such conflict, for there are only a very few cottages on the area. Doubtless there have been lots sold however, and more, ^{summer homes} are apt to be built in such attractive surroundings.

An attempt has been made by planning to reduce to a minimum the conflicts between aesthetic uses of the tract and those that are more utilitarian. No picnic sites, or other such developments, will be placed on that part of the area east of the Town Hall Road. Thus the fine piece of woods, and the grassy cedar grove, will be used only by hikers along the nature trail, while picnickers, swimmers, etc. will find their needs met on the west side of the highway.

Since the roads are of gravel, and therefore rather dusty, no picnic sites will be developed too close to a travelled highway, yet sites will be easily available from parking spaces. The proposed council circle and natural amphitheater is rather too close to the play field, but it is expected that the two will not be in use at the same hours, since most council circle meetings will be held after dark.

Outside the woodlands included in the tract there are no nearby stands whose cutting would seriously mar the beauties of the area. Pollution of water by sewage, either in the lake or the river, will have to be carefully guarded against, but there is nothing in this situation inherently different from that met in other similar places. Chemical toilets, carefully placed and maintained, should take care of this danger.

There is ample space just off the tract for the sale of such supplies as picnickers are apt to demand, and no concession of this sort is contemplated on the tract proper. It may be objected that this removes a source of possible revenue, but that problem will be discussed under plans for administration.

From the discussion above it may be seen that an effort has been made to foresee problems which may arise, and to plan, in so far as seems feasible, for their avoidance. It is hoped that good planning may obviate many administrative headaches.

THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENTS

Thus far in this paper I have tried to present a fair picture of the Silver Lake region, and of a particular tract, as it exists. Since the region holds so many attractions it is easy to visualize the area as an extensive community recreation project. There is no doubt in my mind that the special requirements for such an ambitious development are met in the region under consideration, but I do not choose to embark on quite so elaborate a program. Some possible future expansion of plans may be mentioned in passing however.

It is proposed to add to the natural facilities of the tract a nature trail, a number of picnic sites, toilets, a well-constructed bath house, a bathing beach, a boat pier, a play field, and a council circle. These will be discussed under separate headings. These developments are not outside the range of a modest budget, will not crowd the available space, and will offer recreation of a variety of ranges. There is nothing in this plan which would prevent the development of a more elaborate program, should that seem desirable at some later time.

The Nature Trail

Of all possible developments on the tract, this seems one of the best suited to the region. As has been stated, the plant life and animal life are both highly attractive. The trail is planned so that it forms a circle, with only a short walk along the public highway. The hiker may leave his car along the road (there are available parking spaces) where Town Hall Road enters the area. The proposed trail leads directly into the woods, and follows up to the crest of a low ridge. Here the hiker is out of sight of the highway. At present there

are myriad wild flowers here, and just off the trail is an active bee tree. Beyond this point the trail forks, forming a circle around a small pothope. Just above this is the occupied nest of a red-tailed hawk. Under a cover of oaks and hickories there is a beautiful growth of common juniper. A glance at one of the accompanying photographs will show this feature, as well as the character of the over-story vegetation.

Winding along the ridges, well away from the road, we approach the ravine of the Portage River, and at this point we find the only bit of required construction on the whole area. Some grading will be necessary to take the trail to the river level, and a bridge of the rustic type will have to be thrown across the stream at this point. Logs are available for this bridge, and the character of the banks is such that flood danger is reduced to a minimum.

Across the river, the trail leads by a gentle slope up through groves of fine cedars, through a grassy pasture, and finally back to the Town Hall Road. Here a short walk across the attractive Portage River highway bridge takes the hiker back to his car. Most of the walk may be made in the wooded border on the west side of the highway, so that some dust and danger may be avoided.

It should be mentioned in passing that one cottage is within this area, along the Portage. It is a highly attractive building, and, should it be acquired, would make an exceptionally fine lodge for overnight camping, a development which is not contemplated in the present plan.

The Picnic Sites

For the purposes of this paper a picnic site is defined as a unit containing a fireplace, one or more picnic tables, and a garbage container. It seems impossible to bring water to each such unit, but a centrally located well will be placed in the adjoining field.

All picnic sites have been placed on the lakeward side of Town Hall Road, and all are located along the ravine of Portage River where shade is available. Sites are away from the road, but there is abundant parking space near them. Some will require a certain amount of screen planting, and it is not expected that they will be free of insect pests in season.

Since there is not sufficient local stone, fireplace construction will be somewhat more expensive than it otherwise might. The plan calls for stone fireplaces, with an iron grill. There are many good types of construction. Wood is adequate, and the sites are easily serviced. Large covered galvanized garbage cans, painted green, will be provided at each unit. For picnic tables, I favor the open type rather than the covered. Most persons do not care to picnic in rainy weather, and in case of a shower cars will be nearby. No table will be placed where there is not shade, so that a covered table will not be needed for this purpose. There is always a strong chance that careless users will throw waste over the bank of the ravine, but this hazard has to be faced in any case, and garbage would be less offensive here perhaps than in more exposed situations.

Toilets

Two toilets for men, and two for women, are proposed for the area. They should be of the chemical type, since this will minimize dangers of pollution. Two will be set convenient to the picnic sites; the other two available to the bath house.

The Bath House

Located in a natural fringe of cedars on the sandy beach will be the bath house, constructed so as to blend into the landscape as well as possible. A relatively long, low building is contemplated, with ground dimensions of approximately 20x52 ft. Rooms 20x20 ft.

*Periodic
disposal of
waste?*

at either end will provide dressing compartments for men and women. In the center a space 20x12 will accommodate a caretaker and lockers of the basket type. The building will be ~~walled~~ with ship-lap siding, and will be painted dark brown. No refreshments will be sold, so that refuse on the beach may be eliminated in so far as is possible.

The Bathing Beach

Due to the nature of the area, no construction of an actual beach is necessary. The sandy bottom of the lake slopes off gently, making an ideal place for swimmers. Slight clearing of the tree fringe will be necessary, and it will be advisable to construct a life guard tower. No cars will be brought nearer than 150 yards, so that dust may be eliminated to a considerable extent.

The Boat Pier

To the right of the bathing beach, and shielded from it by a fringe of cedars, is a place suitable for a boat landing. It is near enough the bathing beach to be available, but the character of the bottom at this point is not suited to swimming. Since this is presumably a permanent development, a small concrete pier would seem advisable, since wooden piers are very apt to become shaky at frequent intervals. The pier need not be elaborate.

The Play Field

Since so much comparatively level land is available at the top of the ridge above the lake, it was thought advisable to provide for a play field, suitable at least to softball and volleyball, and which could be easily enlarged to provide for badminton, tennis, croquet, horseshoes, etc. For a softball diamond and a volleyball court no grading will be required, and the expense will be very small. Should this tract ever be developed into a more elaborate community center, some grading would be required to provide the additional games space.



Mats of Juniper in Open Woods Along the Nature
Trail



The Sandy, Cedar-Fringed Beach at Silver Lake

The Council Circle

A short distance from the beach is a magnificent natural bowl in the sand that offers every opportunity for development into a council circle, perhaps into an outdoor amphitheater. At the bottom is level space for a fire and for seating one hundred or more people. Should the slopes be utilized, a thousand or more people might be seated easily. It is screened by the depression from the lake and from the play field, and just beyond the lowest side is a good group of trees, cutting it off from some cottages down the lake.

Should the need arise, an outdoor stage could easily be constructed at this opening, leaving the slopes of the bowl in natural condition. At present a split log circle is all that is contemplated.

Plantings

The developments which have been proposed are such that very little artificial planting is required. Here and there a picnic site may need further shading or screening, and should sheet erosion of the sand become pronounced some protective planting would have to be undertaken. Where planting is done, the red cedar seems an ideal species, since it grows to perfection in the sandy soils of the area. Foundation plantings about the bath house could well be of juniper, since it too has shown that it is at home here.

Generally speaking, I believe that the existing vegetation is, in most cases, adequate. Of course there is no end to the planting that might be done along the nature trail, but it is excellent as it is, and the introduction of exotics or other native species would simply tend to disturb conditions as they are. I favor leaving it alone. Good

It seems desirable to emphasize again that this plan has been designed for a modest budget, and to be as practical as possible.

ADMINISTRATION

In the development and administration of the plan as outlined above, two assumptions have to be made, neither one of them, perhaps, unreasonable. The first is that some source of cheap labor, supported by public funds, is available. This source may be the Works Progress Administration, the National Youth Administration, or the Civilian Conservation Corps, but without this labor the program is not a feasible one.

The second assumption is that some local organization, in Ann Arbor, or other nearby point, is sufficiently interested in such a public enterprise that it will oversee maintenance, if necessary paying a part of the expenses, since it is not expected that such an enterprise will be self-sustaining. If the program does not recommend itself sufficiently that public and private funds, and certainly public interest, will support it, then it falls before it starts.

For the purposes of this paper, I am going to assume that a grant of funds from W. P. A. has been made for the construction of the recreation area, and that a local service organization has taken its maintenance as a long-time project. The budget which follows this will list informally an estimate of construction costs, and an estimate of annual maintenance costs.

It remains to consider sources of revenue. These are not many, since swimming and other such facilities are common in the region. The success of the development as a source of revenue will depend on keeping up high standards of excellence in the facilities offered. Perhaps the only facility for which a charge can justifiably be made is the use of the bath house. If it is kept clean and attractive, with a safe deposit place for clothes and belongings, it will yield some revenue. If we assume a caretaker living just off the grounds he may

legitimately add to his income by selling candy, soft drinks, and picnicker's supplies, but not on the recreation tract.

As an absolute essential to the development which has been outlined, I would place the services of a full-time caretaker during the season of use. He should be provided with a pickup truck for use in servicing the area quickly and effectively. If he has a family, they can be of assistance in the bath house, and in his store, if he cares to maintain one. In addition, the services of a life guard will be necessary during the swimming season, otherwise there will not be sufficient protection against drowning hazards.

INFORMAL BUDGET

Construction-- Cost of Materials

Tables, garbage containers, fireplace for six picnic sites, @ \$20 per site -----	\$120.00
Four chemical unit toilets at \$100 each -----	400.00
Construction materials for bath house -----	800.00
Construction materials for concrete boat pier -----	75.00
Split log benches for council circle, ten benches, at \$5.00 per bench -----	50.00
	<u>\$1445.00</u>

Construction-- Man-Days of Labor (W.P.A)

Construction and bridge for nature trail -----	20 M-D
Six picnic units, @ 10 M-D each -----	60 " "
Construction of bath house -----	200 " "
Four toilets, @ 15 M-D each -----	60 " "
Construction of boat pier -----	15 " "
Construction of benches for council circle -----	30 " "

Annual Budget-- Maintenance and Administration

Caretaker, 8 months, @ \$60 per month -----	\$480.00
Life guard, 3 months, @ \$75 per month -----	225.00
	<u>\$705.00</u>

Supplies, Current Expenses

Pickup truck -----	\$475.00
Gasoline, oil, tires, etc. -----	100.00
Electricity, @ \$4.00 per month, four months -----	16.00
	<u>\$591.00</u>

Note: The cost of the truck cannot be charged against any one year's budget, but will have to be staggered, along with depreciation, over several.

THE DUMMY FOLDER

The accompanying dummy folder is designed to advertise the proposed Silver Lake Recreation Area, and is to be given to prospective or actual visitors.

It is folded in the manner of a road map, and is small enough to be carried easily, yet large enough to contain the essential information, maps, etc.

Contents of each page is indicated on the dummy, the rectangles to be filled in with such informations as will be likely to promote use of the development.

Maurice Brooks.

M. Brooks

DESCRIPTION OF AREA

MICHIGAN

WASHTENAW COUNTY

DEXTER TOWNSHIP

RECREATION AREA

SILVER LAKE

ROAD MAP

HIGHWAYS TO

SILVER LAKE AREA

Large Scale Map

of Area

PHOTOGRAPH

Picnicking

Fishing

The Nature Trail

Council Circle

Swimming
and
Boating

Games

Plant and Animal
Life

Administration



3 9015 00328 5502

THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

TO RENEW PHONE 754-1497

DATE DUE

112011

07/27/79

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