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Chapter 7: Sixth Conference, Ocean Lake Park 1923

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Sixth Conference

Ocean Lake Park

1923

^{was} This the Conference held for the first time ever on the present grounds—a significant milestone. It was a "working Conference." At the annual meeting held June 16, 1923, the following notation was made; "Chester Hadley gave a report of the situation of the property at Ocean Lake. The land fronting the C.E. property has been secured on condition that \$5,000.00 worth of improvements shall be made on it within the next three years or, if improvements are being made, the contract will still be valid." This gift with its condition gave great impetus to the plans for building a permanent home, but the work involved was of gigantic proportion. The clearing of the grounds must first be accomplished before plans for building could even be considered. Six to eight feet ^(+all?) of salal brush covered every space not previously claimed by a gigantic fir tree. When Chester Hadley and Homer Cox tried to locate the corner-stones of the new property, they had to crawl on hands and knees six feet above ground and chop their way down through the tightly interlaced salal bushes to find the markers. Clearing such a piece of land could not be accomplished in a day, so it was decided that the Conference of 1923 should be ^{mainly} largely a work program.

A promotion brochure explained the situation and appealed to loyal Conference attenders to come and do their share of the work; "Daily schedule subject to 'time and tide, which wait for no man,' in other words we will arrange the work of clearing the property so that it will not interfere with bathing and clamming. Every e evening, except Saturday, there will be gospel meetings held in a large tent. These meetings will be a great source of blessing to all who attend and especially the beach tourists, who very seldom get in touch with the gospel. Shall we not pray that God will own this evening service and bless it?"

The usual suggestions for travel and items to bring were printed, with the addition that "boys should bring a stout grubbing hoe or mattock." It was every fellow for himself regarding sleeping and eating arrangements. Cottages or rooms were available. It was suggested that groups of four go together to rent a cottage, suit-able for light housekeeping. It was forecast that ten or fifteen dollars would cover the costs. There was free camping ground available with a small water fee of 25¢ per week. In fact, some of the boys camped on the beach in tents and washed their dishes once a day when they bathed in the surf.

Walter P. Lee was made president of the Christian Endeavor Union in 1923, serving in that capacity until 1934. He recalls this work Conference, "We worked on

the Conference grounds during the daytimes. We had to fight salal year after year. It tended to grow back, but we made progress on it. It was slow! That first year we had to start in from the road as if nothing had been cleared. It was the only way. There was a marsh between the road and the grounds, but it was eventually covered over. We did have a roadway to get in. The large tent was put up on the property of Lydia C. Gardner, at the same location of the first Conference in 1918. There were no lights so we turned our car lights on, facing the tent so there would be light enough for the evening services."

There was considerable fun and enthusiasm during the week. Snapshots of activities show surf bathing, hiking, swimming and boating on Spring Lake, and deep-sea fishing. There was a boating excursion from Garibaldi, Oregon, to Bay Ocean, a resort across Tillamook Bay, which has since disappeared. In a special edition of "A Friendly Endeavor" published in 1924, there is a column which reads, "Do You Remember?...in 1923 the famous ball game on the beach? The big bonfire made from the brush and old stumps from our own land? The song the Coulson family sang about 'Tenting on the NEW Campground?', the huckleberry pies? Chester Hadley's little white dog that tried to break up the meeting? The 1923 Chorus scale?

C-O-N-F-E-R-E-N-C-E

That's the place everybody ought to be--at Twin Rocks in 1923.

C-O-N-F-E-R-E-N-C-E

In addition to the good work accomplished during Conference week, men were hired later in the year to go in with proper equipment to clear off all the salal and grub out stumps. Determination and persistence brings ^{their} own reward. For the 1924 Conference there was a cleared area large enough to accomodate the big tent.

A chart of Conference attenders prepared by Walter C. Cook in 1942 shows that there were 225 registered for the 1923 working effort. The challenge of a permanent location seems to have been enough to inspire young Friends to attend and pitch in to help. The far vision kept the short-term goals relevant and hopeful. The vision did not change!