



Detroit Free Press Fresh Air Camp

The Detroit Free Press Fresh Air Camp operated during the 1920's to 1950's. The Merrill Mills family gave the Free Press a restricted deed to the property formerly occupied by Mills' summer Sylvan Lake Inn. The newspaper developed the property as a summer campground for underprivileged children brought out from the city for two weeks of recreation. The project was supported in part by city schoolchildren who sent in nickels to build the camp. Camp activities included baseball games on the front lawn, swimming, boating, and singing. At flag ceremonies each morning and evening the camp children recited the Pledge of Allegiance. During the weeknights the children would take turns entertaining the villagers with songs and skits.

Mr. Howard Wideman stated in 1993 that city officials purchased the Detroit Free Press Fresh Air Camp for \$1, with the agreement to operate it for three years as a summer camp for underprivileged children at Mr. Wideman's urging. Detroit Free Press deeded the Fresh Air Camp property to Sylvan Lake in 1962.



Sylvan Lake Inn

In 1893 Merrill B. Mills, Mansfield Shelly, George Barbour, and J. Blair Simpson decided to establish a resort at Sylvan Lake. Merrill B. Mills built a summer hotel on a hilly point separating the two parts of the lake. He did his best to encourage land sales by offering a free weekend at his hotel for those who brought a lot in the subdivision. There was a golf course, a riding stable, furnished with saddle horses, a bathing beach, a bowling alley and even a billiard parlor. The center of the resort, a hotel, was erected on the present site of the Community Center for \$25,000. The grounds were lighted by electricity in connection with the interurban railway.

In Addition to the hotel, owners planned a community containing 1300 building lots, six public parks, a school house, a depot and church sites. In 1903 the Sylvan Lake Inn burned down.

For many years, the family of Merrill Mills gave the Detroit Free Press a restricted deed to the property formerly occupied by Mills' summer hotel. Around 1906, Mills donated this property to The Detroit Free Press for use as the Fresh Air Camp.