

**S0184 Camp Solidarity Inc. (1937- )  
Records, 1937-1978  
4 Volumes On 2 Microfilm Rolls**

**MICROFILM**

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The St. Louis branches of the Workmen's Benefit Fund of America founded Camp Solidarity as a fraternal, beneficial, and educational association in 1937. With a one thousand dollar down payment, members purchased fifty acres of land alongside the Meramec River near Pacific, Missouri to build a recreational farm and retirement compound. They set aside fifty cottage sites to be leased to members for 100 dollars each. The leases, which expired at the death of the member and his wife, could be renewed by their children, or the land reverted back to the camp.

Many of the original members were skilled workers of Austrian descent. They belonged to labor unions, in particular the carpenters, machinists, beer-bottlers, and construction workers unions. Some belonged to the Socialist Party; some had joined the German Free Thinkers; and some knew each other through the Vorwaerts Workingmen's Singing Society. The Camp's philosophy of cooperation and teamwork reflected these ties and the economic realities of the time. As Robert Saunders, a charter member put it: "Our labor problems were solved by the simple expedient of doing the work ourselves." The first year, members cleared lots, built an access road, and constructed bridges. Landowners at nearby Opechee Beach initially disliked the establishment of the camp and asked the County Court in Union, Missouri for an injunction against Camp Solidarity members who used their road to reach the property. Fortunately for the Camp, the Court refused the injunction after the Camp's lawyer, George Duemler, produced evidence that the property deed included easement rights on that roadway.

A pavillion, clubhouse, outbuildings, sports field, docking facilities and eventually lake front access added to the Camp's appeal as a recreational center, for members as well as nonmembers. The camp raised funds through the sale of leases, raffles,, wurst marts, dances, turkey shoots, summer camps, picnics, fishing passes and by renting their facilities to outsiders--at first only to "friendly organizational and later to the general public.

The Camp's continued success is due to a number of factors: 1) the skills, hard work, community spirit and commitment of its members; 2) the support of organizations such as the Vorwaerts Singing Society and Carpenters Local 1596; 3) the frequent use of the recreational facilities by non-members; 4) the maintenance of friendly relations with neighbors in Franklin County especially through the public relations work of August Kahsnitz at the Pacific newspaper and favorable coverage in the *Post-Dispatch* and *St. Louis Labor Tribune*; and 5) although many of the original members were Socialists and politically active, the Camp itself took a non-partisan, non-political stand, which helped to ease relationships with neighboring areas.

The collection contains minutes of general and board meetings, financial records, membership lists, correspondence, the Camp's newsletter (*Solidarity Slants*), and flyers. Complementary collections which include information on Camp Solidarity and its members are: Socialist Party of Missouri (S0090); Frei Gemeinde von St. Louis (S0037); Vorwaerts Workingmen's Singing Society (S0237); Robert Saunders' autobiography (S0087); Harry Von Romer (S0171); and the photograph collection.

## **ROLL 1**

Vol. 1 General and Board Meeting Minutes, Financial Records, Membership Lists and Applications, Correspondence, Constitution and Bylaws, and Statement of Philosophy (1945), 1937-1959

Vol. 2 General and Board Meeting Minutes, Financial Records, Membership Lists and Applications, and Correspondence, 1960-1969

## **ROLL 2**

Vol. 3 General and Board Meeting Minutes, Financial Records, Membership Lists and Applications, and Correspondence, 1970-1978

Vol. 4 Newsletters, (*Solidarity Slants*), and flyers, 1959-1969

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