

Five-year Farm Recreation Plan

By C. H. Camidge

FARM folk in the Old York Road district, just outside Guelph, Ontario, deplored the tendency of young people to move cityward, decided one big reason was the lack of recreation facilities, and set out to do something about it. Formed just a year ago, the Old York Road Recreation Association to date has raised nearly \$2,000; purchased a four-acre playground which has been levelled, filled and divided off for a variety of purposes. The Association has a five-year plan, prepared by an expert, and plans include two ball diamonds, skating rinks, tennis court, bowling greens, horse-shoe courts, as well as swings, slides and similar devices for the youngsters. A community hall is to be erected.

Sydney Durose, who operates a small welding business, started the project, rolling in February of 1947, when one Sunday he invited about 30 neighbors to his home to discuss a playground for children of pre-school age. It was decided promptly that recreation should be provided for residents of all ages. The school section (SS1 Guelph), it was set down, would be the area.

Approximately 90 per cent of the 175 members are bona-fide farmers, Mr. Durose said. The others work in the city or operate small businesses, but live within the area. The minority of non-agriculturists have proven of great value to the Association.

"When we bought the four acres for \$500, it was mostly swamp," he said. "Cliff Bates, a director, operates a bulldozer for a living, and without charging us a cent

levelled the land in the evenings. "Bill" Hamilton (M.L.A. for Wellington North), got baseball equipment for the children's teams—and our juveniles won the township championship.

"Ivan Glover, the Ontario Reformatory landscaping expert, drew up our five-year plan, which includes ball diamonds, playgrounds, tennis court and many other features. Director Herman Zettle, the garageman, rigged motors to flood the rink and pump away water. Lights were easy—Jack Reinhart, another director, is an electrician. Bill Laing, the trucker, attended to that work. Jack Gill, Terry Mills and Bob Clark are carpenters.

Desire for Entertainment

"In fact," Mr. Durose laughed, "you can hardly name a trade or set out a job one or another of us cannot direct. My own job was to do the metalwork for awnings and slides. Of course, we all give a hand with every job, but the expert in that line is in charge."

Never yet in the time the Association has been operating has any member failed to respond cheerfully when asked to help, Mr. Durose said proudly. "We have the best neighbors in the world!"

Guelph township council gave a helping hand too, once it realized that the men were serious.

Graders were sent to follow the bulldozer, and one of the township trucks was supplied to aid in the work.

Little time was lost. The Asso-

ciation was formed in February; the land purchased in March, bulldozing started as soon as the land was dry enough in May, and by the end of June grass was being planted on the first baseball diamond. The 1948 part of the 5-year plan includes finishing touches to at least two ball diamonds and fitting the young tots' playground with plenty of swings, slides and similar equipment. A bid has been put in on a building to be used as club house and community centre. Extra accommodation is necessary; so great an attendance is drawn to meetings and to the weekly euchre and dances that the schoolhouse no longer can hold all the people.

Our "recreation district" includes about 25 square miles,—five each way—and we find that about right," Mr. Durose said.

Don't forget to give the ladies credit, too!

"When we were scratching our heads and wondering where we could get the money to pay for the things we planned, Mrs. Gus Adams and Mrs. H. Doll started the euchre and dance sessions. They put on a very successful garden party, too—best in the country. Our dances are kept clean and free from drunks and rowdies, and as the result, the problem is not to get a good attendance, but what to do with all the people we have to turn away. We hope the new hall will take care of that."

The euchre and dance parties are not restricted to members, but strangers must pass the scrutiny of directors, and must behave or out they go, Mr. Durose said. "These are family parties, and we

don't fool around with roughnecks or troublemakers!"

"We hope other rural folk will try our scheme, it has worked so well here and seems the answer to the country dwellers' rural desire for entertainment," Mr. Durose said.

"We have proven you don't have to wait for the township or government to do the job. Any group of neighbors could do the same as we did, if they are sincere and willing to do a little work."

William Laing is president of the Old York Road Recreation Association. Charles Morrison is vice-president; Mr. Durose, secretary, and Percy Gill, treasurer. (Veteran of World War I, Mr. Gill is undergoing treatment at Westminster Military Hospital, London, at the present time, but continues his duties by mail from his sick bed.) Directors are: Cliff Bates, Gus Adams, Herman Zettle, Richard Hannam, Jack Rinehart, Mark Hodgson and Bud McKeon.

What a united community can do.