

# Omaha Parks Invite City Dwellers to Come Out-of-Doors



PICNIC OF THE WALNUT HILL, H.E. SUNDAY SCHOOL



FIRST BAPTIST SUNDAY SCHOOL PICNIC



FATHER MORAN ENTERTAINS ST. BRIDGET'S SUNDAY SCHOOL (SOUTH OMAHA)

**S**UMMER and vacation! In the mind of poet or peasant, lord or tailor, what visions does not that little phrase conjure? In these modern days of water and rail transportation that rivals the flight of the mallard in his migrations, the accompanying vision brings inspection of the railroad folders for he who has the time and the wherewithal to pursue rest assiduously.

Stiff armed, scantily clothed Venuses add their Circean lure to stationary, stiff-looking waves, which never dampened the central figure's garments—on the back of the folder. Sentimental girls ride in canoes with what the novelists call "clean limbed" young fellows on placid lakes. In the background the look of adoration in the male person's eyes is set off with a representation of the wide verandas and broad windows of a summer hotel, occupying a pleasing prospect on top of a hill—on the back of the folder. Or if your tastes differ yet—ye man with the time and the wherewithal that glitters—there is yet another chance. Pick up that folder lying there on your desk.

With a certain pert significance a buckskin frocked young woman smiles at you, while stately peaks rear their heads in a bluer sky than ever was blue, and she says, "Come on"—on the back of the folder.

Yes, there are many ways to pass a vacation. The folders say naught of mosquitoes and sand fleas and mountain solitude that bores. It all looks very nice—on the back of the folder—and if one is enthusiastic enough, it is nice.

But this is the experience of a man who could only gaze at the advertisements. It was not for him to be disillusioned. The desk demanded his time and the wife and kiddies needed his money.

This man—let's call him Mr. Stay Athome—saw no chance for a few days off at mountain, lake or seaside for himself. The wife went to the country for a few days, and the kiddies went along. That was the formal vacation for them.

But the head of the family—for him nothing. One Sunday morning he picked up a book called the "Forest of Arden." The Hero and Rosalind, modern ones, had tired of the resounding pavements and the bounding street cars. They took themselves away to the enchanted forests—and they lived happy ever after. For in the mystic companionship of the blue-fish-and-the-groebreak, the maple and the elm, winding paths and winking springs, there is the omnipresent sense of freedom where individuality is developed and such sordid cares as the butcher, the baker and the candle-stick maker are forgotten. They do not exist. And bankers and bills? They are nowhere.

"The Forest of Arden," mused Mr. Athome. "Pretty things for the writers of books, but they never had to dig all day in vouchers and accounts, and stay at home all summer."

"Wife," he continued, "this is a tough world. I wish I could get out in the country and remain there until Gabe toots the horn."

"Oh, you're nervous and hot, and developing a temper. Listen, I'll pack up a few things and we'll go to the park for a day."

"Park," he laughed. "What's a park but city which also has paved streets?"

"Come on," said she.

"Yes, that's what I'll be," said he, "a 'come on.'"

And he grumbled and he growled. But wife put up the bread and butter and jam, and pickles and sandwiches, and the cake and the cookies, and tea in a bottle.

The growl did not lessen as he toted the basket to the street car. The car stopped at Hanscom park entrance—or maybe it was Riverview, or Elmwood. Any park will do. Take your choice, for they have no folders to deceive you.

A day off in parkland began to have interest for Mr. Stay Athome. He still felt grouchy, however, and led the way without speaking. The mistress and kiddies stopped to commune with a squirrel, as the little animal scampered away for a few feet and then eyed them with dilated nostrils and a determination to flee at the first sign of an advance. Overhead a thrush piped his salute to the world and his mate. One of the little Stay Athomes wanted father to buy it. That grouch began to disappear.

"You don't buy things out here," observed the parent, sententiously. "This is God's country, although the park board thinks it owns it."

"What's the birdie doing, dad?" the youngster wanted to know.

"Oh, he is taking a day off with his lady love in the park, just as that young chap in the striped shirt over there is doing."

"Oh, look at the hopple skirt she's wearing," broke in the wife.

"Don't talk of skirts. This is a day off, and there are no butchers, or bakers or candle-stick makers around," admonished her spouse.

The little party stuck to the paved pathways for a short time. Suddenly the man left the trail which they were following and struck up through the woods on the left. It was only a little belt, for on your side a wide open field invited the sun's rays and distilled them into a refreshing bid for the feet of human beings to come and jump and romp. But the belt

was big enough to hide oneself and curious companions. Setting down the basket, Mr. Stay Athome stretched out on the soft turf.

"Say, this beats the railroad folders," he lazily observed. Through his half-closed eyes he saw a jay laughing at him from the branch of the sheltering tree. But it was a laugh of companionship. That jay seemed to say, "Come on old top, it's a fine day off." "Who said the owl was the wisest bird of plumage?" Mr. Stay Athome asked anybody in general and no one in particular.

"Don't talk plumes and hats to me. This is a day off," answered his wife, who had not quite understood the observation. He only laughed.

The sound of distant voices, merry with happiness, ringing with the care-free peals of joyous picknickers, came drifting lazily through the trees.

The kiddies chased gay-colored creatures of the air from tree to tree, and pretty soon the luncheon was spread. Nothing was left of it after the second onslaught. Every one in the party had an appetite.

Fauna and wood nymphs follow the lure of the Pipe O'Pan in crowds. The gregarious instincts of the party and its head asserted themselves. Among the trees and down the vales they wended their way in the direction of the voices. They came out upon the space where a pavilion, in the declining angles of the sun's rays, assumed the proportions of an enchanted palace in this enchanted forest. In this demesne reigns the king of all that is bucolic, and whose only wars are against the invasion of sordid thoughts of a workaday world; whose minions of conquest are the silver throated denizens of the sky, and whose bodyguard is the giant-limbed forest horde. These successfully resist the encroachments of the army of care.

A day in the park, yes, but the landscape gardener has not spoiled all the sylvan lure of the parks in Omaha. Every day King Merry, who rules over this demesne, holds court. Maidens in white, and small boys in knickers, bigger boys who face life in reality—on other days—and bigger girls who forget domestic cares all may be found there. These courtiers beguile the lord of the region by happy laughter and snatches of song, races over the meadow, of adventurous excursions along the bank of the brook that gurgles and laughs in tune with the spirit extant, as it rushes, all unknowingly, toward the river; which will swallow its pureness and its sweetness, and its breath of wide pastures and peaceful scenes.

It was in such a scene as this that Mr. Stay Athome and his retinue found themselves. The seat of the lord of the realm echoed with happy shouts and laughter, and the clatter of the utensils of the feast.

Mr. and Mrs. Stay Athome and the little seekers of a day off joined the crowds. The youngsters chased a ball across the grasses. Mrs. Stay Athome, whose principal thoughts on the ordinary day were of a new frock for this boy or that girl, was surprised to find herself discussing with interest, and perhaps not with the tongue of an artist, the various hues of the sunset.

"I saw a picture once; it was on a magazine supplement of one of the Sunday papers; where the

sunset looked just like that. And there was a big white cloud behind which the overgrown spectacle was going to hide and to sleep. It makes me sleepy to see the sun like that. Down on the farm when I was young that meant it was nearly milking time. And then supper—it was not dinner in those days—and then to bed. I wish I were back there."

"Let me see. What is your name?" asked the woman with whom she had been talking.

"Mrs. Stay Athome. My husband has an office downtown, where he sells lots. Not lots of lots, but just lots."

"I am Mrs. Jones. My husband is a gas man."

"Time to go home, dear," said Stay Athome, who came up just then. He was smiling and his cigar tasted mighty good.

One of the junior Stay Athomes came running up

just then. He was dragging a portly gentleman by the thumb, and declaring excitedly of the wonders of the frog they just had discovered down in the brook. The fat man with the red face was just as much interested as the youngster—or perhaps it was in the youngster he was interested.

"Who was that man you were talking to out there under that tree, and who walked with you over to the spring where you sat down and talked for a long time?" asked Mrs. Stay Athome of her spouse, after they had settled on a street car.

"That was Smith, the butcher. Fine chap, though he does sell meat," answered the man.

"And who was that who found the frog for the baby?" again she asked.

"That was Metz, the baker. Took enough interest in the kid to be human, too. Did not know he could

do it," he observed, and then continued:

"Who was that woman you were talking with?"

"That was Mrs. Jones, and the man with her was her husband. He is a gas man. Nice, quiet, sensible man, too, and seemed to be enjoying himself so much out there in the open park."

"The gas man?" the husband almost shouted.

"Listen, don't you see? The butcher, the baker and the candle-stick maker!"

They both laughed, carefree. And in chorus.

"The park makes people different."

It had been a fine day off, and in the days afterward when hubby felt that Sunday grouch coming on, and the thoughts of railroad vacation folders made him discontented with his lot, he would say:

"Come on, wife. Let's spend the day at Elmwood"—or whatever park chanced to occur to him.