

McLean County Museum of History

East Bay Camp Collection

Processed by
Ashley Harris, August 2025
Revised & Updated Fall 2025

Collection Information

VOLUME OF COLLECTION:	2 boxes (both B)
COLLECTION DATES:	1930-2009; mostly 1934-1960
RESTRICTIONS:	None
PROVENANCE:	Some items were donated by Brian, Ruth, and Susan Tower; others by Nancy Breen Gordon in 2025.
REPRODUCTION RIGHTS:	Permission to reproduce or publish material in this collection must be obtained in writing from the McLean County Museum of History
ALTERNATIVE FORMATS:	None
OTHER FINDING AIDS:	None
LOCATION:	Archives
NOTES:	Pages of brown scrapbook quite brittle, use caution when perusing

Brief History

The story of East Bay Camp goes back to the early 1900's and the damming of Money Creek to provide an improved source of water to the City of Bloomington, IL. To help sell this idea, the city council suggested that the lake formed behind the dam could also be open to recreation for area citizens.

Some felt that part of the land and shoreline around the lake should be reserved for the public. Rev. Frank Breen, a prominent Protestant minister in Bloomington, felt a call to develop the camp, so in the fall of 1929, Rev. Breen and an attorney representing the Bloomington Water Company, Lester Martin, sealed the deal next to Money Creek. With a simple handshake, 40 acres became East Bay Community Camp with Rev. Breen directing. The very next summer the camp opened to various community and church groups

East Bay Camp was formally established in 1933 when the first permanent buildings were erected and funded by volunteers from various not-for-profit groups, such as Girl Scouts, Camp Fire Girls, and YWCA members all contributed labor and funding for the buildings. When denominational groups began developing church youth camps in the 1930s, their search for adequate facilities brought them to East Bay. Every major church in the state had part of its regular camping program at East Bay each summer.

Breen was director of Western Avenue Community Center until 1956, when he retired to devote all his time to East Bay Camp.

The mission of East Bay Camp was, from its inception, to provide a place where children and youth could enjoy Lake Bloomington without their parents having to own a cabin. Times were hard in 1929 because of the Great Depression, and East Bay suffered, as did people, businesses, and organizations dedicated to the public good. The only things the camp had were 40 acres of land, a few willing workers, and Miss Vera Snow's signature on a \$1,500 loan.

By 1934 the timber around Lake Bloomington gave way to a summer village with a score of buildings and a thriving camp program. Rev. Breen saw a crisis on the horizon, however, as larger groups were eager for use of the camp. He said, "The pull now is more uphill than it has ever been, and I ask that you all stand by to make East Bay all that we dream for it."

With the Depression over, camping increased in popularity, and East Bay Camp was virtually bursting at the seams since it was the only camp in the whole state. The Evangelical Reformed Church launched a program at East Bay Camp under the leadership of a clergy from Minonk. Their first camps consisted of around 20 to 25 campers and rapidly grew to 1,000 campers in the course of a summer." The growing interest in retreat ministries by very diverse Christian groups over time resulted in break-off camps that could exercise more control over values and regulations. Twelve camps in all had their beginnings at East Bay.

Rev. Breen turned to various places trying to get someone to take over. He first tried the Presbyterians and then the Illinois Church Council. As the years passed, more Methodist groups were using the camp than any other groups. Ultimately, The Methodist Church entered an agreement with the Community Camp Associates to back the camp financially putting \$30,000 toward the camp facilities. With this level of investment, the bishop felt that they should have weight in the associates.

At that time, the camp was governed by a local group called the Community Camp Associates which consisted of 10 community leaders who composed a board responsible for the camp. Their focus was to ensure a fair share of use for the investment that camping groups would make. While the bishop's proposal made sense, many were concerned that the Methodist Church would take over and limit use of the camp. To meet this concern the associates reformed into a board of trustees with the camp being run by an administrative board. On the administrative were representatives from participating groups, people who were involved in camping in the same way as the Methodists were. These groups included the Evangelical Reformed, United Brethren, American Lutherans, Presbyterians, the GAA, the Kiwanis Club.

Then in the 1980's the Illinois Great Rivers Conference of the United Methodist Church took ownership of the camp and continues as the owner today.

-- Adapted from East Bay Camp history online at <https://www.eastbaycamp.org/history>, Sep 2025.

Scope

The collection includes correspondence involving camp founders, newspaper clippings, camp newsletters/flyers, camp booklets/programs, a scrapbook, a disbound journal, reports on the camp from the University of Illinois Extension Service, board & annual meeting minutes, etc.

Box and Folder Inventory

Folder 1: Correspondence

- 1.1 Copy of letter to School of Engineering Purdue University West Lafayette, Indiana, from Frank L. Breen, February 24, 1947. Letter is asking about innovations in construction.
- 1.2 Two letters between Vaughn & Vaughn Attorneys at Law Flatiron Building Melbourne, Florida and Reverend Frank Breen, Bloomington, Illinois regarding the sale/purchase of land in Florida, February 26, 1947-March 1, 1947.
- 1.3 Letter from Frank L. Breen to R. E. Jessen 1529 Grand Central Avenue Tampa 6, Florida, October 6, 1950. Asking for guidance on construction of nature camp in Florida.
- 1.4 Copies of letters from Frank L. Breen to Lucy Schuck Melbourne Village, Melbourne, Florida, March 6, 1951, and Alice Carr Rural Route No. 1, Box 321, Melbourne, Florida,

March 6, 1951. Breen asks Lucy Schuck to become dietitian at the camp, thanks Alice Carr for her hospitality and asks how to address Winston Churchill.

- 1.5 Postcard from Stanley Hamilton of The Rural Life Association, Quaker Hill, Route 18, Richmond, Indiana to F. L. Breen, Easy Bay Camp Lake Bloomington, Bloomington, Illinois, June 2, 1951. Concerning recommendations for leaders of camp.
- 1.6 Letter from Edith S. Day 312 Norwood Blv'd. Norwood Peoria, Illinois, to The Rev. and Mrs. Frank L. Breen P.O. Box 832 Bloomington, Illinois, October 24, 1962. Responding to request for information on Union Chapel painting "The Last Supper," Envelope included.
- 1.7 Letter from Carman J. Gresham, 19419 Cheney's Grove Road, Bloomington, IL, June, July, August 2002. Response to "Mystery History Quiz."
- 1.8 East Bay Camp greeting card, Easy Bay Camp, Church-Conference Center Bloomington, Illinois, undated.
- 1.9 Letter from Elizabeth Weir, Lake Bloomington, 24807 Cherokee Lane, Hudson, Illinois, to David, undated. History of East Bay Camp, photograph in *On the Square*.

Folder 2: University of Illinois & East Bay

- 2.1 Two letters between D. E. Lindstrom, University of Illinois, College of Agriculture, Agricultural Extension Service, Urbana, Illinois and Reverend F. H. Breen, Bloomington, Illinois concerning plans for a program at East Bay Camp, March 19, 1936. Includes Summer Short Course for Community Leaders, East Bay Camp, Lake Bloomington, Illinois.
- 2.2 The Community Leader, booklet, Department of Agricultural Economics, Extension Service in Agriculture and Home Economics, University of Illinois, College of Agriculture, Urbana, Illinois, January-February 1939.
- 2.3 Three letters between Reverend F. L. Breen, Director of East Bay Camp, 1302 W. Locust Street, Bloomington, Illinois and Karl B. Lohmann, Professor of Landscape Architecture, University of Illinois, College of Fine and Applied Arts, Urbana, Illinois and Edwin I. Pilchard, Assistant Professor, Agricultural Extension In Charge, Boys' 4-H Club Work, Cooperative Extension Work in Agriculture and Home Economics, State of Illinois, October 2-4, 1939. Regarding sending students to visit the camp to prepare suggestions for landscape.
- 2.4 Unsigned letter to K. B. Lohmann, Professor of Landscape Architecture, University of Illinois, Urbana, Illinois, October 5, 1939. Response about Lohmann's students visiting camp.
- 2.5 Two letters between Karl B. Lohmann, Professor of Landscape Architecture, University of Illinois, College of Fine and Applied Arts, Urbana, Illinois and Rev. Frank L. Breen, Director of East Bay Camp, 1302 W. Locust Street, Bloomington, Illinois, November 20-22, 1939. Follows up from class visit.

- 2.6 Three letters between A. S. Daniels, Assistant Professor, University of Illinois, School of Physical Education, Urbana and Reverend Frank Breen, Bloomington, Illinois, February 10-20, 1940. Discussing possibility of visit from University of Illinois Outing Club.
- 2.7 Letter from F. L. Breen, Director of East Bay Camp to J. E. Davis, Forestry Department, University of Illinois, Urbana, Illinois, March 5, 1940. Concerning layout of trees at the camp.
- 2.8 Two letters between J. E. Davis, Extension Forest, Cooperative Extension Work in Agriculture and Home Economics, State of Illinois, and Reverend F. L. Breen, Director of East Bay Camp, Bloomington, Illinois, March 15-21, 1940. Concerning planting trees at East Bay Camp.
- 2.9 Three letters between J. E. Davis, Extension Forester, Cooperative Extension Work in Agriculture and Home Economics, State of Illinois and Reverend F. L. Breen, Director of East Bay Camp, Bloomington, Illinois, May 3-8, 1940. Discusses Davis's visit to the camp.
- 2.10 Letter from J. E. Davis, Extension Forester, Cooperative Extension Work in Agriculture and Home Economics, State of Illinois to Reverend F. L. Breen East Bay Camp, Bloomington, Illinois, May 9, 1940. Confirming date and time of meeting.
- 2.11 Two letters between J. E. Davis, Extension Forester for the State of Illinois, Extension Service, Forestry Extension Work, Urbana, Illinois and Reverend Breen, East Bay Camp, Bloomington, Illinois, and Breen and Mr. A. J. Cook 5475 Park, Springfield, Illinois, giving list of companies that produce portable forest fire pumps and contacting a company recommended by J. E. Davis, June 17-19, 1940. Includes Educational and Work Program for Proposed Fall Camp for Rural Young Men at East Bay, Lake Bloomington, JED: VC.
- 2.12 Two letters between Lucille Denby, Secretary Protem for Leisurecrafters, Rural Sociology Extension, University of Illinois, College of Agriculture, Agricultural Experiment Station, Urbana, Illinois and Vera Snow, East Bay Camp, Bloomington, Illinois, September 14-18, 1944. Discussing a meeting between East Bay Camp and the Leisurecraft continuation committee.
- 2.13 Copy of letter from Frank L. Breen to Mr. Crandall School of Engineering at the University of Illinois Urbana, Champaign, concerning new experiments in construction, February 24, 1947.

Folder 3: Reports

- 3.1 Report of Some Factors Affecting Social Welfare in Rural Areas of Alexander County, Illinois, 1934, by D. E. Lindstrom in connection with the University of Illinois extension.
- 3.2 Report of notes and Outlines of Lectures, Summer Short Course for Community Leaders East Bay Camp, Bloomington, Illinois, August 3 to 9, 1936. Arranged by D. E. Lindstrom for the Extension Service in Agriculture and Home Economics at the University of Illinois.

Folder 4: Camp Literature

- 4.1 "East Bay – Lake Bloomington," flyer, Bloomington, Illinois, 2 copies, c. 1934.
- 4.2 Collection of 3 flyers, East Bay – Lake Bloomington, c. 1934.
- 4.3 "East Bay Camp Church Conference Center," poster, Lake Bloomington, Bloomington, Illinois, undated.
- 4.4 *The School of the Woods*, East Bay Camp newsletter, undated.
- 4.5 "Limberlost Health Camp," booklet, 1935. Includes statistics on children's health improvements.
- 4.6 "Young Peoples' Institute of the Illinois Conference Methodist Episcopal Church," Brochure, East Bay Institute, July 5-11, 1937.
- 4.7 *East Bay Camp Newsletter*, September 1944.
- 4.8 *The Timber Cruiser*, published by East Bay Camp, 2 copies, Summer 1959.
- 4.9 Program for Dedication of Presbyterian Woodscamp, Sep 19, 1959.
- 4.10 A Walk with Mr. Breen, by Tom Gumbrell, booklet, 2 copies, April 1963.
- 4.11 "Rededication Service Gregory Church as East Bay Camp Chapel," program, Lake Bloomington, Hudson, Illinois, 2 copies, May 17, 1964.
- 4.12 "The Congregation of the Good Neighbor Baumgart Chapel East Bay Camp," program, Lake Bloomington, Hudson, Illinois, June 21, 1964.
- 4.13 "The Congregation of the Good Neighbor Baumgart Chapel East Bay Camp," program, Lake Bloomington, Hudson, Illinois, June 28, 1964.
- 4.14 "The Congregation of the Good Neighbor Baumgart Chapel East Bay Camp," program, Lake Bloomington, Hudson, Illinois, August 23, 1964.
- 4.15 "The Congregation of the Good Neighbor Baumgart Chapel East Bay Camp," program, Lake Bloomington, Hudson, Illinois, June 11, 1966.
- 4.16 "A Summer Place," booklet, 2 copies, 1968. Dedicated to Liz.
- 4.17 "a modern Walden in the heart of Illinois," 12pp booklet, 2 copies, undated.
- 4.18 "Summer 2009 Camping East Bay Camp," brochure, Hudson, Illinois, 2009.

Folder 5: "Notes on East Bay" – Pt. 1 by Miss Vera M. Sake miller

- 3.1 "Notes on East Bay," disbound journal, April 12-July 21, 1934. Includes handwritten notes, newspaper clippings, drawings, programs, correspondence, both about East Bay camp and other camps in the area.

Folder 6: "Notes on East Bay" – Pt. 2 by Miss Vera M. Sake miller

- 6.1 "Notes on East Bay," disbound journal, July 21-November 10, 1934. Includes newspaper clippings, correspondence, and handwritten notes.
- 6.2 Small booklet with addresses, phone numbers, and genealogical information.
- 6.3 Christmas card to Vera Maude Sakemiller, Rockton, Illinois, December 18, 1934.
- 6.4 Blank greeting card.

Folder 7: Newspaper Clippings

- 7.1 "Rev. Frank Breen Honor Guest at Bay Camp Birthday Party," *Pantagraph*, July 24, 1934.
- 7.2 "Fine Limberlost," *Pantagraph*, September 18, 1934.
- 7.3 "Needs of East Bay Camp for '35 Year Talked at Meeting," *Pantagraph*, October 10, 1934.
- 7.4 "S.R.O. Sign Greets Late Ones at First Family Gathering," *Pantagraph*, November 10, 1934.
- 7.5 "Nominated for Community Service Award Rev. Frank L. Breen," *Daily Pantagraph*, December 12, 1934.
- 7.6 "Alex Jones Is Given Surprise Breakfast on Departure Eve," *Pantagraph*, January 3, 1935.
- 7.7 "Breen Receives Betterment Study Scroll," *Pantagraph*, January 24, 1935.
- 7.8 "Book Case Gift Adds to East Bay Camp Equipment," *Pantagraph*, June 1, 1935.
- 7.9 "Queen Esther Camp at East Bay to Be Held June 17-22," *Pantagraph*, June 11, 1935.
- 7.10 "Winnebago Indians Arrive for Pioneer Days of Benefit Fair," *Pantagraph*, June 11, 1935.
- 7.11 "Daily Dose of Cod Liver Oil is Followed by Cups of Cold Milk and Cookies," *Pantagraph*, August 4, 1935.
- 7.12 "Waders Have Fun in This Shallow Beach at Limberlost Camp," *Pantagraph*, August 4, 1935.
- 7.13 "Now This Littler Flower – Nature Study Class," *Pantagraph*, August 14, 1935.
- 7.14 "Pastors Help Get Lake Camp Ready for Summer," *Pantagraph*, April 28, 1946.
- 7.15 Obituary for Dr. Adam A. Hummel, *LA Times*, December 24, 1962.
- 7.16 "Breen's Works on Behalf of Community Extolled," *Pantagraph*, by Tom Gumbrell, May 29, 1963.
- 7.17 "A Walk With Mr. Breen—No. 1: East Bay Camp Born on Lake Basin 'Turtleback,'" *Pantagraph*, by Tom Gumbrell, May 29, 1963.
- 7.18 "A Walk With Mr. Breen—No. 2: Inspiration to Sunset: A Point-to-Point Tour," *Pantagraph*, by Tom Gumbrell, May 30, 1963.
- 7.19 "A Walk With Mr. Breen—No. 3: Our East Bay Guide Tells Some 'Pre-Lake' History," *Pantagraph*, by Tom Gumbrell, May 31, 1963.
- 7.20 "A Walk with Mr. Breen—No. 4, "First It Was Too Few, Then Too Many Campers," *Pantagraph*, by Tom Gumbrell, June 1, 1963.
- 7.21 "East Bay in 1931, after second year of camp. Looking South from Limberlost Side," *Pantagraph*, June 2, 1963
- 7.22 "A Walk With Mr. Breen—Conclusion: East Bay Aided by Army of 'Angels' Workers," *Pantagraph*, by Tom Gumbrell, June 2, 1963,
- 7.23 Obituary for Vera Snow Hummel, *Pantagraph*, November 9, 1964.

- 7.24 How Time Flies: 25 Years Ago: Rev. Frank Breen speaks to Kiwanis, August 1, 1949, *Pantagraph*, August 1, 1974.
- 7.25 How Time Flies: 50 Years Ago: July 23, 1925: 80 Young People Leaving For Tower Hill Camp in Michigan under Direction of Rev. Frank Breen, *Pantagraph* July 23, 1975.
- 7.26 "Sale of camp to Baptists approved," *Pantagraph*, by Dave Haake, September 19, 1976.
- 7.27 "Hall Fire Damage Estimated at \$200,000," by D. Wesley Smith, *The Daily Pantagraph*, October 9, 1976.
- 7.28 "Agape Fellowship To Use Hudson Hinthorn Chapel," by Paul Levin, *Pantagraph*, May 30, 1977.
- 7.29 How Time Flies: 25 Years Ago, Rev Frank Breen describes picnic area at Lake Bloomington, July 4, 1977.
- 7.30 Hudson Happenings: A Look at Hudson's Past: East Bay Camp – Part 1," by Judith Lampert, *The Quill*, September 15, 2016.
- 7.31 Hudson Happenings: A Look at Hudson's Past: East Bay Camp—Part II," by Judith Lampert, *The Quill*, October 16, 2016.
- 7.32 "East Bay Camp A Place to Enjoy Nature," by Bill Kemp, *Pantagraph*, June 21, 2020.
- 7.33 "Mrs. Bohrer, Moberly, Rev. Breen Honored," *The Daily Pantagraph*, undated.
- 7.34 Untitled on Idlers Club dedication of memorial bookcase, *Pantagraph*, undated.
- 7.35 Untitled on Breen Breen's impending visit to Haskell INstitute, *Pantagraph*, undated.

Folder 8: Miscellaneous

- 8.1 *Camp Fire Girls' Equipment*, catalog of Camp Fire Outfitting Co., 1926, 24pp.
- 8.2 Handwritten note about camp events and staff members, 1930.
- 8.3 Enrollment lists for East Bay Camp, July 1946.
- 8.4 Explanation Regarding Wages, Income Tax and Social Security of East Bay Camp Staff Members, June 1956.
- 8.5 Executive committee meeting notes and financial reports, June 25, 1958.
- 8.6 Summer Short Course for Community Leaders form, East Bay Camp, Lake Bloomington, Illinois, undated.
- 8.7 "East Bay Camp" summary of donation to the Museum by Nancy Breen Gordon, Summer 2025.

Folder 9: Hummel Woods

- 9.1 "The Big Woods" newsletter prepared for camper of the Presbyterian Jr-Hi Camp at East Bay Camp Jun 17-23 1956. Includes history of the Hummel Woods.
- 9.2 Layout for Proposed Cabin Unit at "Hummel Woods" Bloomington Presbytery Camp Site, 1956.
- 9.3 "Dedicate East Bay Camp Site Today," *Pantagraph*, Oct 28, 1956.
- 9.4 Brochure: "Hummel Woods" – A Dream Becoming Reality, c1956.

Folder 10: Breen Memorials

- 10.1 Frank L. Breen In Remembrance at Christmas Time, 1967. With handwritten note of thanks from Thelma Breen.
- 10.2 Invitation letter for dedication program for Breen Center on Aug 20, 1972, from President of Community Camp Associates, Jul 28, 1972. Part of letter cut out.
- 10.3 Resolution of Board of Director of Community Camp Associates to the memory of Frank Breen, Dec 12, 1967.
- 10.4 Card: Invitation to Breen Memorial Center Dedication on Aug 20, 1972.
- 10.5 Breen Plaque at East Bay- 1972. Quotes text of metal plaque on Dining Hall.
- 10.6 Print of two photos: one of Frank & Thelma superimposed on an aerial of East Bay Camp and the second a group of diners presumably at the camp in Aug 1962.
- 10.7 "Rev. Breen, East Bay Camp Founder, Dies" and "Frank Breen, Idealist" from *Pantagraph*, Nov 15, 1967.
- 10.8 "To dedicate Breen Center at East Bay Camp," *Pantagraph*, Aug 13, 1972.

Folder 11: Postcards

- 11.1 Approximately 41 unused postcards, most featuring photos of the Camp, undated.

Loose Books:

Brown Scrapbook, July 1932-October 1935.

East Bay Camp business records, navy 2-ring Binder, 1947-1956, including plans for Sep 1947 meeting of all organizations considering permanent use of East Bay Camp; Community Camp Associates Board meeting notices and agendas, minutes, treasurer's reports, 1949 memo to Illinois Conference to Methodist Church as basis for cooperation on further development of the Camp; April 1950 Constitution and By-Laws; Annual meeting minutes and member lists; selected newspaper clippings.

See folder 8 for unbound Jun 1958 Executive Committee materials.

East Bay Camp business records, black 3-ring binder, 1959-1961, including Community Camp Associates meeting notices, agendas, proxies, members lists; excerpts from 1959 Annual Meeting address by Harry O Willman, financial reports and statics on group usage of the camp; Community Camp Associates Executive Committee member lists, meeting notices, agendas & minutes; East Bay Administration Board notices and minutes; 1961 dedication of Vera Snow Hummel Guest House & Edward Schlingman Administration Center.

East Bay Camp business records, black 3-ring binder, 1961-1963, including Community Camp Associates' 1950 Constitution and By-laws; Executive Committee meeting notices and

minutes; Administrative Board meeting minutes and reports; Annual meeting notice, proxies, member lists; financial statements, statistical reports on use of facilities.