

# Clinic for Resort Operators

**Robert J. Furlong**

*Administrative Secretary, Michigan Tourist Council*

How can we help the individual resort operator to improve his accommodations? This question was posed by the Michigan Tourist Council at a meeting in 1946. It was an action-provoking question.

For years Michigan State College, oldest land-grant college in the Nation, had been assisting farmers through its extension program. This large-scale research program included personal contacts with farmers and provided agricultural specialists to counsel them.

It was only natural, therefore, that the Michigan Tourist Council should take its problem to officials of the college. And promptly formed was what is known today as the Tourist and Resort Extension Program for Michigan Resort Operators.

The program is patterned after the college's time-tested agricultural extension service. It is educational rather than a promotional or regulatory activity. It includes research, personal contacts, group meetings and the preparation of a variety of instructional pamphlets and folders.

Michigan State College has assigned four specialists to the program under L. R. Schoenmann, director of the college conservation institute. These specialists, all professionals in their fields, give full time to the job of helping the resort operator, regardless of whether experienced, a newcomer or a prospective operator.

Research is an important part of the work. Site development, landscaping, and resort lay-out are studied. New construction methods are being developed for builders of cabins, cottages, lodges, boat docks, even shuffleboard courts. Experiments are conducted on insulation, heating, ventilating, and weather-proofing. Quantity food preparation is a problem.

Findings become immediately available through pamphlets, direct mail and personal consultations.

The word "extension" in the program is literal. No matter how remote a resort operator may be from Michigan State College at East Lansing, he has complete service available. And whether he owns a single boat and a one-room cottage or a swank resort hotel he gets full help, at no cost.

The comprehensive services available through the program cover the location of buildings and recreational areas; plans for overnight cabins, courts and motels, cottages, lodges and resorts; quantity food service; kitchen and dining room planning; facilities and programs for guest entertainment, both indoor and outdoor; fire prevention; weed and pest control; waste disposal systems; rustic structures; landscaping; paints; insulation; quantity food buying, food storage, recipes, menus, rules for

meal preparation, costs and pricing; outdoor fireplaces, picnic tables, rustic bridges, retaining walls; traffic barriers.

The resort operator unfamiliar with bookkeeping finds the extension service of special value. A specialist will come right into the operator's office, sit down with him and show him how it should be done.

On the extension staff is a dietitian especially trained in quantity food buying, menu planning, and food preparation.

As the program continues to grow in popularity throughout the tourist service industry of Michigan, individual consultations must of necessity be limited. There will not be enough staff persons to answer the requests. But the service is already meeting that problem.

Workshops for resort operators are being arranged throughout the State. Operators bring in their problems to discuss them with the specialists and with other operators. Classes are held in the various phases of resort management and ample time is given to round-table practical discussions. The staff specialists who conduct these workshops are available for individual consultations.

As a part of the program a tourist-resort display room is maintained throughout the year on the campus of Michigan State College showing the newest developments in ground layout and building plans, construction materials and methods, furnishings, equipment, utilities, paints and preservatives. Over 17,000 persons have visited it since its opening in January 1948.

Resort operators who come to the campus can also consult staff members of the college in other departments. Perhaps the operator is interested in the hotel aspects of his business. The college has staff members trained in hotel administration who will give him advice.

The country agricultural agents and home demonstration agents in the State's 83 counties are available to the resort operators in their areas and provide a connecting link with the headquarters at East Lansing.

Also working hand-in-hand with Mr. Schoenmann and his staff are the Michigan Tourist Council and the four regional tourist and resort associations in Michigan: The Upper Peninsula Development Bureau, the East Michigan Tourist Association, the Southeastern Michigan Tourist and Publicity Association, and the West Michigan Tourist and Resort Association.

All these agencies provide Michigan's tourist and resort business with a service that is unique and, although young, already paying dividends—dividends reflected in improved man-made assets so vital to the natural attractions of a vacation land.