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The story of Thump-Drag is as old as the camp itself. It may have its origins from camps that older counselors had worked at before coming to Waupaca. However it got to Waupaca, it became a standard that was changed and embellished at each telling by every counselor whose campers insisted on hearing about "Thump- Drag." When it was first told the names of the workers who helped build the buildings or original counselors were used.

The Story of Thump-Drag 1

The time was 1950 and there had been hard times on the Rasmussen farm. For the past two years the family had been living off from a loan from the bank that they could not pay back. The collateral for the loan was the farm. It was a farm that had been handed from father to son since the land had been purchased from the Potawatomi Indians. Family ties to the land were deep, but the sandy soil and poor farming practices were a combination that kept the people in perpetual poverty. The end for their ownership of the land had come.

Fred Rasmussen made a last plea to the bank for more money and one more year to turn things around. It could not be, the farm would be lost.

Because the farm adjoined Stratton Lake it attracted the attention of Skipper Kuklin and Joe Rosen. They were looking for a place to build a boy's camp. A spot on the Wisconsin River held promise until they learned that the river was too polluted for swimming. The water in Stratton Lake was clear and clean enough to drink. There was sufficient land for baseball diamonds and soccer fields. It seemed a perfect spot. They struck a deal with the Farmer's State Bank of Waupaca and they became the new owners of the land.

The sheriff had moved the Rasmussens off the land. They tried to rally the support of their neighbors to help them get the farm back. There was no one who seemed to care. Fred became depressed. Depression lead to a obsession and insanity. He would get his farm back. The bank had no right to sell his farm to any one. The idea that a boy's camp would be on his farm was too much for him to take. A farm was to raise fruits, vegetables, cattle and grain. He vowed to drive away the people who had taken his land. He would force the bank to give it back to him.

Cliff and Clem Caldwell had been hired to clear some of the forest trees for cabin sites. They also dug out the "Old Beach" swimming hole and filled it with sand when ice was on the Stratton Lake so that it would make a sandy beach.

It was when they were cutting some of the trees that Fred Rasmussen came in to drive them off. He was carrying an old double barreled shot gun as he approached the workmen. "Git your selves off of this here property he screamed." Clem had an ax in his hand and tried to reason with the deranged

man. "Fred you don't own this land anymore." Clem said. "You sure don't," added Cliff. "What do you two traders know about it?" Fred asked. "The bank stole it from me and I intend to have it back. It ain't right that a bank can throw a man off his own land." Cliff and Clem still tried to reason with him but Fred kept ordering them to leave. "I'd as soon shoot you in the back as in the front," Fred said.

Sensing that they were about to be murdered, Cliff distracted Fred while Clem threw his ax as hard as he could. Fred was hit in the knee and fell backward shooting both barrels of the shot gun into the air. The ax had cut Fred's leg off at the knee. Cliff tied a rope around the stump of a leg and held him down while Clem went to town for the sheriff. At the trial Rasmussen was declared insane and locked away for life.

While at the hospital they fitted Rasmussen with a wooden leg. After a time he learned to walk with his wooden peg, but he could not bend it at the knee and so he would step with his good leg and then drag the peg-leg. So it was that when he walked he would step down hard (thump) and pull the peg leg forward (drag). Nurses and attendants at the home for the insane nick-named him thump drag.

As with all hospitals, the best of security sometimes fails. One night Thump Drag used some of his clothes and belongings to make it look like he was sleeping and escaped through a window. Once out he got into a car that was owned by the institution and drove off to Waupaca.

The car had been used to transport some workers who were trimming brush and cutting trees on the institution grounds. A saw and ax had been left in the trunk.

With his head covered with a dark blanket so that he could make his way through the trees unnoticed, Thump Drag entered the camp. Slowly he made his way to Cabin Number 3 where the campers were sound asleep. He carried a large ax as he moved ever closer and closer. The only sound that he made was; **Thump drag! Thump drag! Thump drag! Thump drag!**

He reached the first step of the porch and pulled himself up. He reached the second step of the porch and pulled himself up. He reached the top step of the porch. Thump drag was undetected. The occupants of the cabin were silent.

Thump Drag pulled on the screen door and it made a high pitched squeaking noise. This woke the counselor and he turned on the lights. Just inside of the door was Thump Drag draped in his blanket with a raised ax ready to strike. The sudden light temporarily blinded him and he sat down the ax to rub his eyes. In that instant all of the cabin jumped him and held him down.

The sheriff was called and Thump Drag was returned to the hospital. A squeaking screen door had saved the day. That is why to this day the screen doors at Camp Waupaca are not oiled. Who knows when Thump Drag might strike again.

But with Thump Drag locked tightly away you need not worry about him.... Unless in the dark of the night you should hear a thump followed by a dragging sound out side of the cabin.

The Story of Thump-Drag 2

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At the campsite parts of the forest were being cleared. Buildings were being erected. Sports fields were being laid out. The land sang with the excitement of construction and life. New people and new uses were coming to the land. Soon the buildings would be filled with boys who would learn skills and make lifelong friends.

However ever watching from the edge of the forest was Fred Rasmussen. Now and then one of the camp builders would catch a glimpse of movement in the shadows at the forest edge. Watching, waiting, burning with hate; the former owner plotted his revenge.

He waited until the camp opened and the boys were getting set for some great summer fun. Then at night when all was quiet, Fred made his move. He had made several torches and soaked them in kerosene. With the torches in one hand and matches in the other he crept forward. He would burn the camp out and all the campers with it.

An alert counselor who was on duty saw the dark figure of Rasmussen emerge from the woods. The bank president had warned the new owners that Fred was unstable. Thus a shot gun was hidden in the mess hall, just in case the O.D. would need it. Quickly the counselor found the gun and returned to confront the intruder. Fred was just lighting the first torch when he yelled for him to stop.

Instead of stopping Rasmussen turned to attack the O.D. The O.D. fired the gun in self defense. Fred had been hit in the right leg and fell to the ground. The sheriff was called and soon hauled him off.

Fred was declared criminally insane and put in the mental institution at near-by Weyewaga. He escaped once and headed back to Waupaca. The wound had left him with a stiff leg. He cannot bend his knee so he drags his right leg. When he walks he thumps down hard with his left foot and then there is a dragging sound as he pulls his right leg forward. Fred has vowed to return to Camp Waupaca and finish what he started long ago. But don't worry he is locked up.....of course unless he escapes. If he does you will know he is outside your cabin if you hear a distinct thump as he puts down his left foot, then there is a dragging sound as he pulls his right foot forward. Until then Sleep well!