



SOMETHING ABOUT A CAMP FIRE!

There is something enchanting and fascinating as we sit in the dark around a camp fire and watch the flames lick at the wood piled onto the already-burning embers. Smoke lazily rises. Everyone present seems to drift off into a land of imagination. Maybe it's to some Indian camp fire, maybe it's to the settlers as they made a camp at night with the wagon trains. What is it? The smoke rises slowly and as it drifts among the trees overhead you can make out faces, prancing horses, brave knights and sometimes a ghostly face, then it's gone, and another takes its place. The smell that comes from the various types of wood that is placed on it to keep the flames red, the shadows you make on the ground behind you seem different by night than day. I wonder if it brings back the thoughts of how man years ago depended so much on a fire to keep him

alive, both for preparing his food while on the trail, or to keep intruding animals away while he slept. Even an outdoor fire in our own backyards today has become popular, for all types of grills are sold and many built out of stone, just so the family can have an outdoor cooked meal. And it seems everyone has a better appetite when the smell of the wood smoke gets mixed with the food. This, of course, is all in a modern way. What about the days when matches were scarce, and if they got wet, there was no fire lighted. That's what takes us back to the crude ways they had of making sure they could light a fire. It was almost a part of the equipment to see that a piece of steel and a stone called flint, or agate or a good hard quartz made a spark, when the two were held in hand and struck a glancing blow against each other. Take some old white cloth, and light it until it all becomes ignited, and charred, then stamp it out and scoop up the remains. Carry this in a glass jar.

Inside bark from cedar trees, dry grass, mice nests or any good tinder will serve to carry the flame.

- 1- Make a small pile of the charred rag in a dry place on the bare ground.
- 2- Hold the piece of steel so that when you strike it with the stone the spark will fall on the charred rag. As soon as the spark lands, blow your breath on it and soon the curl of smoke will come forth as it starts to ignite the charred rag. This is just like a charcoal.

- 3- Place this charred rag onto the pile of tinder, still blowing your breath to it, soon it will flame and the tinder will catch fire.
- 4- Make sure to have some dry small twigs and branches ready to put on when it starts, add wood gradually.

Today, of course, with cigarette lighters and safety matches, the chance of being stranded without a fire is less than that of years ago, but there is still a thrill in lighting a fire the old way. Make sure the ground around the fire area is cleared of old grass and leaves. Always leave someone in charge of the fire when the group leaves, and make sure it's out when you are all ready to go home.