

SUMMER CAMPS

The modern summer camp movement has been contributed to by many, but the organized camp is essentially an educational institution. As such it was originated and has been developed by educators, those who were concerned with the lives of the young and their training for adulthood.

The first organized summer camp that presented practically all the best features of what summer camping is today was that of Ernest Balch, opened in 1881 and continued until 1889. But there were unknown to Balch others before his time who took boys into the open wilderness during the summer months.

Ernest Balch started his camp as a result of deliberate planning to meet a particular need. All the essential features of the organized camp were worked out by him at Camp Chocorua. Moreover, his camp was maintained continuously on the same site for nine years, and as a result of its influence, other camps were established that followed his practices and many of his old campers later established camps of their own. That is, Balch not only put into execution a carefully thought-out educational plan, but he established a school of imitators and disciples who followed his practices and out of which has come the organized summer camp as the lake knows it today.

Regarding Camp Chocorua, Balch wrote the following:

I first thought of the boys' camp as an institution in 1880. The miserable condition of boys belonging to well-to-do families in summer hotels, considered from the point of view of their right development, set me to looking for a substitute. That year and 1881, I had thought out the main lines of a boys' camp. That year, also, with two boys, I made a short camping trip to Big Squam. In 1881 I occupied and bought Chocorua Island.

It is hard now to distinguish invented ideas from those acquired by experience. Certainly we began with several important ones which persisted in the structure of the camp during the nine years of its active life.

The first theory was that there should be no servants in the camp; that the camp work must all be done by the boys and faculty. Another was that the boys must be trained to master the lake. So a systematic and complex plan was thought out to provide safety for the boys and teach them swimming, diving, boat work, canoeing and sailing.

Minor activities were singing, the choir, acolyte [*sic*] work, the library, carpentry, chiefly building, law court, contracting companies, baseball, "The Golden Rod," camp paper, correspondence with home, pillow fights, water fights, liberty day without rules, stories, charity, fishing, cooking, examinations, races, land sports, cruises. The division of work in a crew, the management of a crew by the boy "Stroke," was always amusing to watch.

The reception of the camp idea by educators and schoolmen was so negative at the beginning that it puzzled me and made me doubtful. Professor Wentworth, the great "Bull" Wentworth of Exeter, was an exception. He did not visit the camp but he did ponder the ideas I put before him and understood them. Moreover he thought them sound. All the other teachers I talked to were perfectly calm and not the least appreciative.

Then came Armstrong, welcome as good water in a dry land. He had made a distinguished place by original work at Hampton and elsewhere. He was not, I

gathered, regarded as a regular by Schoolmen. He did not stop at phrases. He lived at Camp Chocorua for weeks and studied both the theory and practice. He proclaimed his opinion and wrote it in generous words. Articles in magazines and books followed. Camps grew, the legend began, culminating in the interpretation of American Private Schools.

Balch in the foregoing reflected on the cool attitude of schoolmasters toward the small camp. With their slow response, conservative as always, they saw nothing of value in so radical an innovation. It remained for General Armstrong and Mr. Frissell of the Hampton School and a few other open-minded men to espouse the cause and preach the doctrine of the summer camp.

Through correspondence with Balch, the Reverend Nichols, inspired with the same idea, opened a camp for boys in 1882 at Stow, which he called Camp Harvard. This camp was later taken over by Dr. Winthrop T. Talbot, a son of Dr. J.T. Talbot, then dean of the Boston University Medical School, who, in 1884, moved it to Squam Lake, where it was known as Camp Asquam.

Louis D. Bement, editor of the *Camping Handbook, Summer Camps*, 1931, wrote the following of Camp Asquam:

The camp was situated on sloping ground well up from the shores of Squam Lake near Holderness, N.H., and commanded a beautiful view of that picturesque lake with its islands and the surrounding mountains.

There were four buildings; a combination dining hall and cook shack, the director's cabin and two dormitories. These latter held some twenty bunks lined up against the two side walls, while at one end there was a large fieldstone fireplace.

Down on the shore of the lake was a boathouse which held some five or six rowboats of the Adirondack type, as canoes were considered too dangerous for boys in those days.

All the work of the camp with the exception of the cooking was done by the boys ... Mornings were given over to camp work and swimming. After dinner there were baseball, tennis, rowing, and short hikes. Occasionally there would be an all day hike planned. Some botany was studied and, in a very elementary way, zoology. As a final end-up for the summer there came the hike through the Presidential Range.

For more than ten years the camp was successfully continued until Dr. Talbot's failing health necessitated its closing and the site has since been used for private purposes. Some of the assistants, trained by Dr. Talbot, soon established camps of their own, which attained success. Dr. Shubmell, who had been an assistant of Dr. Talbot's in 1903, split off from Dr. Talbot, taking some of the boys with him and a short distance south, on Little Squam Lake, and established Sherwood Forest Camp, which he continued until 1910. On this same site, Dr. John B. May, who had been a camper and councilor under Dr. Shubmell, in 1914 established Winnetaska Canoeing Camps, which were continued by him until 1928.

In 1886, two years after Dr. Talbot's camp was established, Edwin DeMeritte opened Camp Algonquin, a few miles east which was operated as a private camp for boys. Camp Idlewild on Lake Winnepesaukee was opened in 1892 by John M. **Dick**, who had some training in a YMCA camp at Plymouth, Massachusetts.

So out of the influence of Balch's idea there had grown up, within a few miles from Chocorua in the succeeding 14 years, a whole brood of successful camps that followed the practices he had established. And, moreover, these camps have transmitted their influence far and wide.

While Ernest Balch had in the back of his mind the founding of a monastic order, it had to prove itself a success before anyone became bold enough to suggest that "what was good for the boys might be equally good for their sisters. As early as 1892, a girls' camp was established by Professor Fontaine at his natural science camp called Camp Arey, thus establishing just claim as the first organized camp for girls.

In 1900, Mrs. Oscar Holt took some girls as summer boarders in a small cottage, the "Redcroft," on the shore of Newfound Lake. After two years she decided to entertain only small boys and thus

originated Mowglis, the pioneer camp for young boys.

The year 1902 was significant in the history of girls camps. Laura I. Mattoon, a teacher in a private school of New York City, then established Camp Kehonka in Wolfeboro on the east side of Lake Winnepesaukee. At this period in time it was considered a startling thing to do, to take reputable New York girls in their teens and young women into the woods. It scandalized some of the good schoolmistresses to hear that she let girls run around in the broad daylight in bloomers. In the same year Miss Munoz established Pinelands at Center Harbor.

Family camps have become increasingly popular in the Lakes Region. In addition to the Appalachian Mountain Club's Three Mile Island, two more camps worth mentioning, which have been in continuous operation for more than 100 years, are Sandy Island Camp and the Geneva Point Center.

Sandy Island, possibly the only YMCA camp for young adults **and families in** the country which has been in continuous operation for over 100 years, is located near the middle of Lake Winnepesaukee. Walter Jones's *The Sands of Time*, published by the Boston YMCA, 1998, relates the following:

In March of 1899 a committee from the Boston Association visited Lake Winnepesaukee, situated in the foothills of the White Mountains. After crossing over the ice to inspect the 66-acre island, the Association leased it from the owners, Walter A. and Agnes E. Brown, at an annual rental of \$100. Sandy Island was a part of the estate of the Brown family who had settled on Long Island in 1821.

Due to its magnificent location and composition of the island, it was only appropriate that it be named Sandy Island. To the northeast lies the Ossipee Mountain Range; to the southwest, the Belknap Mountain Range; and to the north, a fantastic view of the Presidential Range in the White Mountains. The island is well endowed with pine groves, sandy beaches, and sheltered coves for fine boating, bathing, and total relaxation. Appropriately, the first prospectus was captioned "Spring and Summer Days: How and Where to Spend Them," and the camp was described by the Boston YMCA as "a summer resort for young men working on small salaries and receiving short vacations where they could enjoy healthfully and economically their summer outings."

During the early years of the island's development, the camp was rather primitive and rugged. However, this enterprise became so successful that the Boston Association bought the island in 1900. The first buildings to be constructed were a combination dining room and social hall and two dormitories that could house 50 campers. By 1905, a boathouse was built on the north shore and further additions to the dormitories were constructed so as to accommodate more campers.

During the first 25 years, the camp continued to expand its facilities. First the dining hall, known as "Alhambra," was enlarged to include a second floor for sleeping quarters and a screened-in, open-air dining hall. A row of tents was established along the shore, which could accommodate from 8 to 12 campers. Later, after the acceptance of women campers, the larger tents were replaced by cabins suitable for family units, each commanding a vista of the lakes and mountains.

Today, Sandy Island is a family camp under the general supervision of the Camping and Outdoor Recreation Branch of the Boston YMCA. A Camp Committee, composed entirely of campers, acts as an advisory group which makes recommendations to the Camping Branch Board relative to policies and major projects for the island camp.

Walter Jones also mentions the following of the camp's purpose and natural advantages:

The camp is not, and never has been, a venture for profit. Any surplus is ploughed back into improvement of the island's facilities. Sandy Island is a truly cosmopolitan camp. It appeals alike to the young and the middle-aged; the business man, and the student; the housewife and the secretary; the athlete and the individual of sedentary habits. And there is seldom a season when distant countries are not represented and enlightening contacts afforded with visitors. **On** Sandy Island every man is a brother. It is the sole air of the sponsorship to minister to body, mind, and soul and in its modest sphere to promote the larger Brotherhood of Man.

Beautiful Isle of Sandy Set in a sea of blue Raising our hearts so grandly Moulding us into friends true Working, playing Life is just what you make it, boys Friends and good cheer Await you here Beautiful Isle of Sandy.

Since 1919, Geneva Point has attracted thousands of people from all over the country. Located on the southern extremity of Moultonboro Neck, it has become a place where its visitors may relax and communicate with their creator, and feel re-created in body, mind, and spirit, as a family in one.

This property extends into the northwestern area of Lake Winnepesaukee, called Moultonboro Neck, and it was here that Dr. Jared Alonzo Greene purchased several hundred acres for the purpose of raising cattle, horses, and poultry. Early maps designate the property as "Roxmont Poultry Farm."

In 1896, the Roxmont Poultry Farm ceased operations and the property was converted into an inn for the growing tourist industry in the Lakes Region. But World War I brought tourism to a halt, so the real estate was sold for \$30,000 to the International Sunday School Association in 1919. This was the beginning of a long and prosperous building program for the Geneva Point Center.

At this time, there were 236 acres, but because of some sales in intervening years, there are presently just under 200 acres. The central property, with all its buildings, has been maintained; however, some buildings have been moved and a few have been replaced with more modern structures to meet the changing needs of the times. The basic beauty of the center has been retained, and for thousands of people it has become a place of spiritual reflection.

The International Sunday School Association (ISSA) was primarily a grassroots lay movement that later formed the International Council of Religious Education. Many ordained clergy cooperated, but did so as individuals, not as representatives of their congregations. The association brought together Sunday school officers and teachers from many denominations and organized them into local, county, state, and national units.

From the years 1922 to 1950, the International Council of Religious Education had title to the property, and managed it through a Geneva Point Administrative Committee. As the camp grew, improvements -were gradually made to meet the needs of the growing community. Campers and staff stayed in the inn and some of the cottages that were on the original farm property. There were also tents with wood floors. Electricity did not reach the inn until 1926, and then only for the kitchen, dining rooms, and meeting rooms. Kerosene lamps were used in all of the sleeping quarters.

Until 1930, the largest meeting place was the old chicken house of the Roxmont Poultry Farm, which could accommodate only 150 persons on a level floor.

According to a reminiscence of Dr. Erwin Shaver in 1947, he wrote, "The first chapel services were held in the Chicken-coop—a conglomerate structure with rain-stained and -whitewash walls; the floors were part board, part dirt, and the original exits for the poultry still preserved! If one wanted to support the argument that the spirit of reverent worship can be had under the most ugly and incongruous surrounding, here was irrefutable evidence."

Eventually, a new chapel was dedicated on August 5, 1930. It was a white, two-story structure with four white columns across the front porch. There was a stage and auditorium, plus six classrooms. Later the two on the second floor were opened to permit a balcony into the main auditorium, and two on the first floor were opened to enlarge the auditorium.

In 1950, the National Council of the Churches of Christ of America was formed and the International Council of Religious Education (ICRE) became the Division of Christian Education of the new council, and brought with it the property at Lake Winnepesaukee. This Division Unit Committee, comprised of representatives of all the denomination cooperating in the division, elected the Geneva Point Committee, which, in turn, administered the camp on behalf of the division.

Geneva Point has become a resource for many as a center for conferences and leadership training laboratories. In recognition of this increasing role, and to more accurately identify its function, the name was officially changed to Geneva Point Center in 1966. Because the center was continuing to grow, particularly for its youth, there was a need for more adult housing. In 1966, the Lake View Lodge was built, which provided ten double bedrooms. In 1981, another complete ten-bedroom facility was constructed and was dedicated to Dr. Emily V Gibbes in honor of her years of service as associate general secretary for the National Council of Churches.

From the very beginning, Geneva Point has emphasized the quality of family camping and has become a lasting pride of the center, thus alumni reunions are an annual affair that bond the center as a family camp for a total Christian community.

During the 1930s, there were as many as 72 established camps in the Lakes Region. This number has grown to include many specialized camps today. The Lakes Region may take just pride in the distinction that the first organized summer camp for young people was established here on the shore of its lakes. The following is a list of summer camps by location and year of establishment.

WEST ALTON

Mishe Mokwa (1913), Kabeyun (1924), Sherwood Forest (1930), and Birch Hill Camp (1930)

WOLFEBORO

Wolfeboro Camp (1910), Camp Wentworth (1923), Camp Kehonka (1902), Camp Owaissa (1919), Camp Wyanoke (1909), Camp Wildwood (1928), and Camp DeWitt (1924)

TUFTONBORO

Camp Boycroft (1922), Camp Idlewild (1891), Camp North Wood (1930), and Camp William Lawrence (1926)

MOULTONBORO

Camp Iroquois (1915), Camp Tecumseh (1903), Camp Winaukee (1920), and the Byron Lodge (1914)

CENTER HARBOR

Camp Bonheur (1925), Camp Winnicut (1927), Camp Pineland (1902), Camp Asquam (1915), Singing Eagle (1922), and Camp Wokondah (1909)

MEREDITH

Camp Anawan (1913), Camp Wotanda (1925), Camp Passaconaway (1909), Camp Waubanaki (1923), and Camp Kuwiyen (1910)

ASH LAND Little Squam Lodge
(1929)

HOLDERNESS Camp Wachusett (1903) and Camp Aloha Summer School (1904)

The following are camps still in existence today on Lake Winnepesaukee.

ALTON BAY

Camp Kabeyun, Camp Brookwoods (Chestnut Cove), Camp Deer Run (Chestnut Cove), and Camp Alton

TUFTONBORO Camp Belknap and Camp Northwood

MOULTONBORO

Camp Winaukee, Winaukee Island Camp (Black Island), Camp Robindel, Geneva Point Camp, Deepwood Lodges, Camp Tecumseh, KOA Campground, Acadia Campground, and Camp Iroquois

MEREDITH

Camp Nokomis (Bear Island), Camp Lawrence (Bear Island), and Camp Menotomy Girls