

The New Promised Land: Maine's Summer Camps for Jewish Youth in the Mid-Twentieth Century

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## **Introduction**

*"Then the LORD appeared to Abram, and said, 'To your offspring [Hebrew: seed], I will give this land'"*<sup>1</sup>

Through all the hardships they have endured, the Jewish people have remembered the special promise that God made to Abraham: the promise of the land of Israel, "from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates."<sup>2</sup> In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, this phrase spoke to Jews across the diaspora, particularly those engaged in cultural and religious Zionist activities. For American Jews, who were safe from the violent acts of anti-Semitism that plagued their European counterparts, the idea of a return to the land promised to their ancestors was not necessarily immediate agenda. However, in the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s, American Jews found promise in a new land, far from what their ancestors could have imagined or their foreign counterparts were busy creating. For Jewish children and parents, summer camps in Maine were the opportune place to combine their ambitions to participate in broader American trends, to build their own institutions, and to stay within their own networks.

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<sup>1</sup> Genesis 12:7 (New Oxford Annotated Bible).

<sup>2</sup> Genesis 15:18 (New Oxford Annotated Bible).

## **The Inspiration for the First American Summer Camps**

### **The Transcendentalist Movement**

In discussing the evolution of the American summer camp, we must consider the origins of the institution. One of the earliest roots of the summer camp came from the Transcendentalist movement of the 1830s and 1840s. Though the Transcendentalist movement preceded the first summer camp by over twenty years, the Transcendentalists' ideas of spending time in the natural world changed American attitudes toward the great outdoors. Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau, two of the most famous transcendentalists, preached the importance of learning self-reliance from spending time in direct contact with nature. Emerson's and Thoreau's literature "fired the imaginations of city dwellers and conventional folk who seemed hungry for something beyond conservative idealism."<sup>3</sup> Thoreau desired a simple life and ventured to live in a small cabin in the woods and cut off most communication with the outside world. In his book, *Walden, or Life in the Woods*, Thoreau wrote,

I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front not only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived.<sup>4</sup>

Those who were inspired by Thoreau's work, and the work of his contemporaries, were determined to find similar escapes.

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<sup>3</sup> Eleanor Eells, *Eleanor Eell's History of Organized Camping: The First 100 Years* (Martinsville: The American Camping Association, 1986), 2.

<sup>4</sup> Henry David Thoreau, *Walden a Fully Annotated Edition*, edited by Jeffrey S. Cramer, Inc ebrary (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 88.

Frederick Law Olmstead, who later became the landscape architect of New York City's Central Park (and many of the nation's other city parks), was attracted to Thoreau's idea. One of the reasons Olmstead believed city parks to be so important was so that city dwellers, who made up the majority of Americans in his lifetime, could have quick access to "green space," a staple of the natural world.<sup>5</sup> This is one of the many reasons why Central Park has so much open land, such as Sheep's Meadow, and is home to over 21,500 trees and wildlife species.<sup>6</sup>

Some urban folk, who had the resources to do so, escaped city life for brief periods of time in order to experience real nature and try outdoor activities. As Eleanor Eell's wrote in *Eleanor Eell's History of Organized Camping: The First 100 Years*, "The mystique of nature and the appeal of simple life influenced men and boys to explore the wilderness of the Northeast on foot and in canoes."<sup>7</sup> Even some women ventured on such excursions, as Eell's wrote: "From the late 1870s...lady hikers and botanists had explored wilderness trails and climbed with men."<sup>8</sup> According to Mike Vorenberg, in the 1890s, Americans would see "a stronger reason than ever to travel deep into the woods in search of new frontiers."<sup>9</sup> This stronger desire developed shortly after Frederick Jackson Turner presented his Frontier Thesis at the 1893 Chicago World Fair, in which he argued that a unique American identity was created on the frontier. The combination of literature and what Eell's

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<sup>5</sup> Mike Vorenberg, *Faithful and True: 100 Years at Keewaydin on Dunmore: 1910-2009* (Salisbury, VT: The Keewaydin Foundation, 2009), 6.

<sup>6</sup> Trees and Blooms, The Official Website of Central Park, <http://www.centralparknyc.org/visit/trees-blooms/> (Accessed May 13, 2013).

<sup>7</sup> Eells, *Eleanor Eell's History of Organized Camping*, 2.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid*, 2.

<sup>9</sup> Vorenberg, *Faithful and True*, 13.

coins “the excitement over nature” propelled Americans to take advantage of the natural world and “to experience the discipline of roughing it for at least a few days.”<sup>10</sup>

### **Country Houses and Resorts**

The nineteenth century also saw the increasing tendency of urban families to go out into the country for summer vacation. This was possible due to the emergence of the railroad system. According to Vorenberg, by 1851, the thriving summer populations in Newport, Rhode Island and Saratoga Springs, New York encouraged Vermont entrepreneurs to establish the Lake Dunmore Hotel Company, which consisted of a few guest cottages. In the mid-1850s, the owners established the Lake Dunmore House, a massive hotel, which eventually accommodated two hundred guests. In 1881, Charles Eliot, the president of Harvard University and descendent of a wealthy New England family, “built a summer home in Northeast Harbor, Maine, beginning the trend of the upper crust spending summers in cooler climates.”<sup>11</sup> Summer communities in the northeast became hotspots for families on the weekends. Some wealthy families stayed in the resort communities for weeks at a time; because of the railroad system, the fathers could commute back and forth from the city to the country so that they could work during the week and spend their leisure time with their families.

Americans who caught the vacation bug tried to give those less fortunate the opportunity to experience life outdoors. In 1853, one of Olmstead’s friends, Charles

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<sup>10</sup> Eells, *Eleanor Eells’ History of Organized Camping*, 2.

<sup>11</sup> Leonard Dinnerstein, *Antisemitism in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 43.

Loring Brace, founded the Children's Aid Society, which "took homeless orphans from the streets of New York and sent them by train to farms to the west."<sup>12</sup>

According to Peter Vorenberg, "by laboring and living in a natural setting, thought Brace, the children would become more healthy, more human."<sup>13</sup> In 1870, Brace took his program a step further and established the first "Fresh Air Homes," by reaching out to families in rural areas and persuading them to take in a deprived New York City child for the summer. Though the Fresh Air Homes were not formal camps, they would serve as the inspiration for the eventual "Fresh Air Fund" summer camps.

### **The Ills of City Life**

The founders of the first summer camps were also aware of the problems that came with an increasingly urban society. The Progressive activists of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries brought attention to issues such as alcoholism, crime, racial tensions, women's rights, child labor, and a poor education system. Josiah Strong was one of the precursors to the Progressive Era. Strong was a Christian evangelist and became affiliated with a movement called the "Social Gospel" because he believed societal ills could be remedied through religiosity. His book, *Our Country: Its Possible Future and Our Present Crisis*, specifically documented the problems in American cities. In this work, Strong denounced the city as "the storm center of our civilization."<sup>14</sup> The large number of people living in cities disturbed Strong, as he calculated that in the first eighty years of the nineteenth

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<sup>12</sup> Vorenberg, *Faithful and True*, 6.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid*, 6.

<sup>14</sup> Josiah Strong, *Our Country: Its Possible Future and Our Present Crisis* (New York: The American Home Missionary Society, 1885), 128.

century, the population of cities “increased eighty-six fold,” compared to the whole population of the country, which increased only “twelve fold.” Although the cities had little space, the nature of tall buildings allowed apartment buildings to house multiple families because “the elevator makes it possible to build, as it were, one city above another.”<sup>15</sup> Strong described cities as a popular place for immigrants, and calculated that the majority of the city populations were either foreign-born themselves or had foreign-born parents. He noted that less than one third of the United States population was foreign born, but immigrants made up sixty-two percent of Cincinnati, eighty-three percent of Cleveland, sixty-three percent of Boston, eighty percent of New York City, and ninety-one percent of Chicago.<sup>16</sup> Strong believed that these large numbers of immigrants (specifically Catholics) infested the city populations. Further, he also believed that the gap between the rich and the poor in the cities was problematic, as he wrote, “the rich are richer and the poor are poorer, in the city than elsewhere; and, as a rule, the greater the city, the greater are the riches of the rich and the poverty of the poor.”<sup>17</sup> Strong warned that American cities such as Chicago and New York City were headed in the direction of the grim portrait of London in Andrew Mearns’ *The Bitter Cry of Outcast London*. Strong wrote that like London, Chicago and New York City housed all of the evils of society, such as “gamblers, thieves, robbers, [and] lawless and desperate men of all sorts.”<sup>18</sup> Though Strong’s goal was to get the Church to play more of an active role in urban life, perhaps his biggest accomplishment was that he brought attention to the idea

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid, 138.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid, 129.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid, 130.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid, 133.

that cities were crowded, unpleasant, and dirty. Other Progressives echoed similar sentiments as Strong, such as the well-known muckraker Jacob Riis. Riis' How The Other Half Lives exposed life in the slums of New York City, which housed nearly three quarters of the city's population. Through photographs and vivid descriptions, Riis portrayed various realities of life in the cities: congestion, filth, and disease.



## **The Evolution of the Institution**

### **An Overview**

In 1861, Frederick William Gunn, the founder of The Gunnery School for Boys in Connecticut started an experiment. Gunn was inspired by the nineteenth century ideals of the natural world and took the entire student body on a two-week long camping trip to Welch's Point, off the coast of Washington, Connecticut. The boys enjoyed exploring, hunting, fishing, swimming, and singing by the campfire. The trip proved so successful that Gunn continued to lead it (though he moved it to a different site) until 1879, when he was no longer physically able (he died in 1881). Meanwhile, as early as 1876, other American thinkers and educators independently started their own camps. In 1876, Joseph Trimble Rothrock started the School of Physical Culture, also known as Rothrock's North Mountain Camp, in Luzerne County, Pennsylvania because he believed that outdoor life could provide health benefits for children. As he wrote, "I had the happy idea of taking weakly boys in summer out into camp life in the woods..."<sup>19</sup> Though Rothrock's camp did not turn a profit, others were determined to give organized camping a try. In 1881, Ernest B. Balch, a student at Dartmouth College, founded Camp Chocoura in Squam Lake, New Hampshire and George W. Hinkley found his own camp on Gardiners Island, near Wakefield Rhode Island. The next year, Reverend Mr. Nichols founded Camp Harvard, and two years later, in 1884, sold it to Dr. Winthrop Talbot, who took over and renamed it Camp Asquam, for its location on New Hampshire's Lake Asquam. In

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<sup>19</sup> Porter Sargent, *A Handbook of Summer Camps: An Annual Survey*, Eighth Edition (Boston: Wright & Potter Printing Company, 1931), 34.

1885, Samuel Dudley, under the auspices of the Young Men's Christian Association, founded Camp Dudley in Westport, New York. In 1886, Edward DeMeritte founded Camp Alogonquin in New Hampshire, just a few miles from Asquam. In 1890, Professor Albert L. Arey founded Camp Arey. In 1892, John M. Dick founded another camp in New Hampshire, Camp Idlewood, and Gregg Clarke founded the first Keewaydin Camp in 1893. Porter Sargent, a leading social critic and esteemed expert on the education system noticed that there were so many camps and started publishing annual handbooks of summer camps starting in 1924. As he wrote in a later edition, "by the end of the [nineteenth] century there were about a score of camps for boys."<sup>20</sup> Though few of these camps survived into the twentieth century, by the time Sargent published his 1931 *Handbook*, Sargent counted 3234 camps in the United States, which suggests that the number of camps grew rapidly in the first thirty years of the twentieth century.

Interestingly, Americans saw the need to give disadvantaged populations a summer camp opportunity right away. In 1875, Eliza Turner of Philadelphia founded "Country Week." That spring, she invited twelve underprivileged girls to spend two weeks at her farm in Chadd's Ford, Pennsylvania. According to Eells, Turner "and a friend assembled the children, cared for them, and introduced them to the wonders of farm and country life."<sup>21</sup> The next summer, Turner arranged for her friends and neighbors to do the same thing, and by 1877, they formed an association and called it Country Week. They turned it into an organization with an operating board, and by 1910, they were able to serve 3,000 children. In 1877,

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid, 40.

<sup>21</sup> Eells, *Eleanor Eells' History of Organized Camping*, 44.

Reverend William Parsons, the pastor of a Presbyterian church in rural Pennsylvania encouraged members of his church to open their homes to underprivileged New York City children “as a Christ-like act of charity.”<sup>22</sup> The members of the church were enthusiastic and immediately began raising funds, obtaining methods of transportation, and sending invitations to sixty children for a visit. Clearly, enough people realized that sending underprivileged children out into the wilderness was a good way to give them a retreat from ordinary life. In 1886, the first formal camp for underprivileged children was established: the incarnation camp in Connecticut. The next year came the children’s Holiday Home in Lake Geneva, Wisconsin, and Trail Blazers in Connecticut and New Jersey.

### **The Fuel for the First Camps**

Ernest Balch, the founder of one of the first private American summer camps, was troubled by the idea of children spending so much time at summer resorts. He was particularly concerned that “wealthy adolescent boys...must accompany their parents to fashionable resorts and fall prey to the evils of life in high society.”<sup>23</sup> Determined to give these children an alternative to spending the summers at the resorts, Balch founded Camp Chocorua. The purpose of the camp was to give boys a “sense of responsibility...both for himself and for others...and appreciation of the worthiness of work.”<sup>24</sup> According to Leslie Paris, the author of *Children’s Nature: The Rise of the American Summer Camp*, Chocorua had five campers who came from

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid, 44.

<sup>23</sup> Eells, *Eleanor Eell’s History of Organized Camping*, 7.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid, 8.

“well-to-do Boston and Washington D.C. families” in its first session in 1881.<sup>25</sup> Most of the boys attended Episcopal schools during the school year, so the camp had a woodland chapel area. The camp grew in size due to the original boys’ positive experiences and the camp’s advertisements in *The Churchman*, a theological journal of the time. Paris writes that Balch ran into debt by 1888 and shut down the camp. However, Eells writes that Balch shut down Chocorua because he was confident that he had “proved his point” and shown that the camp experience was beneficial for the boys and for their families.

At the same time, organizations such as the Young Men’s Christian Association started promoting summer camping opportunities. In 1885, Samuel Dudley, an active member of the YMCA, started Camp Dudley. In its first summer, there were only seven campers, but by 1891, there were eighty-three campers.<sup>26</sup> Camp Dudley was so successful that the YMCA opened more camps, and by 1901, “there were 167 YMCA camps nationwide, most clustered near northeastern cities.”<sup>27</sup> These camps were designed to provide “the religious awakening of boys and their ‘conversion’ to Christ.”<sup>28</sup>

Other organizations established camps similar to the YMCA camps, such as Ernest Thomas Seton’s “Woodcraft Indians” and Daniel Beard’s “Sons of Daniel Boone.” These organizations sought to teach Indian folklore and the joys of camping out. Both Seton and Beard believed that learning Indian stories and living a “so-

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<sup>25</sup> Leslie Paris, *Children’s Nature: The Rise of the American Summer Camp* (New York and London: New York University Press, 2008), 33.

<sup>26</sup> Timeline- 100 Year Anniversary of the American Camp Association, Accessed December 19, 2012, <http://www.acacamp.org/anniversary/timeline/>

<sup>27</sup> Paris, *Children’s Nature*, 42.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid*, 42.

called primitive life was not a savage precursor to civilization, but a worthwhile end in and of itself.”<sup>29</sup> According to Paris, Seton and Beard’s ideas contributed to the development of the Boy Scouts camps in 1910, which promoted “patriotism, woodcraft skills, and obedience to authority.”<sup>30</sup>

Organizational camps such as the YMCA camps, Seton’s Woodcraft Indians, and Beard’s Sons of Daniel Boone, and eventually the Boy Scouts, made summer camp more of a common activity for children in the summer. Although private camps were established first, private camping was accessible to such a small segment of the population that it never would have become part of a movement if it were not for the organizational camps. Organizational “represented a middle class and occasionally working-class alternative to elite private camps.”<sup>31</sup> At the turn of the century, YMCA camps cost between \$3.50 and \$5.25 per week, a price still hefty for working-class families, but affordable for middle-class families.<sup>32</sup> In contrast, private camps cost about \$150 for a ten-week session or about \$15 per week.<sup>33</sup> As Paris wrote, “organizational camps made the camp movement far more affordable, mainstream, and national.”<sup>34</sup> Parents sent their children to camp because they were “drawn to the idea of supervised rural activities and to the promise of useful learning, patriotism, and daily Bible study.”<sup>35</sup> Children were eager to find outdoor

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid, 43.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid, 44.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid, 40.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid, 40.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid, 40.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid, 46.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid, 46.

experiences, and “actively sought out organizations that offered outdoor adventure.”<sup>36</sup>

### **Girls, too**

Girls’ camps proved to be successful endeavors as well. In 1888, Luther and Charlotte Gullick started taking their daughters and a few of their friends on an annual camping trip. Though the Gullicks trip was not technically a formal, organized camp, it can be thought of as one of the first girls camp because they ran the trip like a business endeavor: they advertised their program to local families and they charged a set fee for each “camper.” Years later, in 1907, the Gullicks did indeed establish an organized camp for girls: Camp WoHeLo in Casco, Maine. Additionally, the couple was influential in establishing a nationwide organizational girls’ camp, Camp Fire Girls, which operated similarly to Boys Scout Camps. Like the Boys Scouts, Camp Fire Girls had chapter camps across the country. According to Paris, by 1913, 60,000 girls were Camp Fire Girls members and attended the camps.<sup>37</sup>

In 1892, Camp Arey, originally a boys’ camp, divided its season into two four week sessions: one session for boys and one session for girls. By 1902, Camp Arey served girls exclusively. In fact, 1902 proved to be a pivotal year for girls’ camps, with the founding of Camp Kehonka, Camp Pinelands, and Camp Wyonegonic. In 1903 came Camp Barnard and two years later, in 1905, came Camp Quanset Camp Aloha (whose owner was, coincidentally, Luther Gullick’s sister in law). Camp Alford Lake, Camp Moy-Mo-Da-Yo, and the Oneka Camps were all founded in 1907, and the Hanoum Camps were founded in 1909. Paris writes, “by one estimate, about one

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid, 46.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid, 50.

hundred [girls camps] were in operation by 1915. By another estimate, new camps for girls were actually established at a higher rate than those for boys in the 1914 to 1916 period.”<sup>38</sup> These estimates suggest that it took some time for girls’ camps to be accepted, but eventually parents became more comfortable with the idea of sending their daughters into the wilderness.

According to Eells, numbers at girls’ camps were small at first because parents were afraid of the “unknown, the tedious journey, and the long summer away from home” for their precious daughters.<sup>39</sup> However, the girls’ camps were careful to ensure nervous parents that summer camp would actually make their daughters into better women and mothers. For example, the founders of Camp Idlewood, in Peekskill, New York, argued that they “aim to develop superb womanhood, to give girls a perfect body, complete symmetrical physical development, a strong physical organism, to make their bodies fitting temples for their souls.”<sup>40</sup> Similarly, the Gullicks claimed that Camp WoHeLo’s name stood for the maternal values it would teach its campers: work, health, and love.<sup>41</sup> Additionally, camp directors made sure to portray themselves as high-class women. As Eells wrote, “these directors were cultured, feminine...women who cared about and shared their love [with the campers] for literature, music, dance, and arts.”<sup>42</sup> Laura Mattoon, the founder of Camp Kehonka in New Hampshire, was educated at the prestigious Wellesley College and was the head of the science department at the

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid, 49.

<sup>39</sup> Eells, *Eleanor Eells’ History of Organized Camping*, 40.

<sup>40</sup> Paris, *Children’s Nature*, 48.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid, 50.

<sup>42</sup> Eells, *Eleanor Eells’ History of Organized Camping*, 40.

Veltin School for Girls in New York City. She proved that even high-class, reputable New York girls enjoyed running around in the woods in bloomers.

However, it would be wrong not to consider America's changing attitude towards women in discussing the rise of the girls' camps. As Eells quotes from Sargent's 1935 *Annual Survey*,

The Victorian attitude of safeguarding the girl from the contamination of the world is gone. Gone is the day when Victorian parents shockingly chide a daughter for crossing her legs. Let her play baseball for she will never get a chance at home.<sup>43</sup>

Indeed, the eighteenth century Victorian ideal of what a woman should do disappeared in the twentieth century. Sara Evans, author of *Born for Liberty: A History of Women in America*, writes, "As the twentieth century dawned, women and men alike began to appear in the public places...out of their homes and into communal activities."<sup>44</sup> Additionally, even the image of what a woman should look like and wear changed: as Evans writes, "Women's appearance changed as well from the hourglass figure of the Gibson girl to a slender, smaller silhouette no longer weighted down with petticoats or restricted by corsets."<sup>45</sup> These new outfits allowed women to move around more freely. At Camp Kehonka, Mattoon gave each girl bifurcated skirts (a skirt with shorts underneath, similar to today's skort) so that girls would be able to run around freely, but still appear somewhat traditional.

Additionally, at the time that girls' camps were taking off, the women's suffrage movement was just gaining momentum. In 1890, Elizabeth Cady Stanton founded the National American Woman Suffrage Association, which focused not just

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid, 41.

<sup>44</sup> Sara Evans, *Born For Liberty: A History of Women in America* (New York: Free Press Paperbacks, 1997), 160.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid, 161.



on the idea that women should be equal citizens, but that “women needed the vote to protect their own special interests” and that with the vote, women would be better mothers and wives.<sup>46</sup> According to Eells, Mattoon knew that women would achieve suffrage within the next one hundred years and urged her colleagues and clients that sending girls to summer camp would give them a space for character and personality development beyond what they could get from a traditional school environment, and that this growth was necessary so that future women could fulfill their capacities as mothers and citizens.<sup>47</sup>

However, facilities at girls’ camps were slightly different than facilities at boys’ camps. While boys often slept in tents at their camps, girls got to sleep in wooden cabins. At Camp Wyonegonic, in Denmark, Maine, girls were given the option of whether to sleep in the tents or to sleep in “a wooden lodge with a fireplace.”<sup>48</sup> Despite its different living quarters, like boys camps, Wyonegonic still stressed “freedom from enervating luxuries.”<sup>49</sup> In this way, girls’ camps were an evolved version of boys’ camps: the cabins at girls’ camps were slightly more advanced facilities than tents at boys’ camps. It is no wonder that Allen Samuel Williams, the founding father of the American Camping Association, connected the creation of girls’ camps to the biblical creation of Adam and Eve. As Williams said, “Just as Eve was created out of Adam, [girls’ camps are] a highly developed rib from the masculine parent.”<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid, 154.

<sup>47</sup> Eells, *Eleanor Eells’ History of Organized Camping*, 42.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid, 42.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid, 42.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid, 42.

### **What was the essence of camps' popularity?**

When the first camps were founded, few people knew about summer camp. According to Paris, organizations like the YMCA turned the institution into a national, mainstream phenomenon. As Paris wrote of these organizational camps, "By the turn of the twentieth century, hundreds of organizational camps served many thousands of boys."<sup>51</sup> Specifically, the YMCA had 167 camps in 1901 and 300 camps in 1905.<sup>52</sup> With so many summer camps to choose from, and more families being able to afford to send their children to these institutions (YMCA camps charged between \$3.50 and \$5.25 per week, still a considerable sum for an unskilled worker, but affordable for the middle class), it is no wonder that these camps became increasingly popular.<sup>53</sup>

Just as the founders of summer camps were attracted to the idea of getting out of congested cities and into the natural world, so were the parents who sent their children to summer camps. As Eells wrote, by the dawn of the twentieth century, families no longer held Victorian ideals to such strict standards. According to Paris, the primitive lifestyle "represented an appealing respite from modernity's skill and tradition."<sup>54</sup> Sargent expressed a similar sentiment, and wrote,

Formerly, we looked upon primitive people as savages.... Though they [primitive people] know nothing of clothing, shelter or agriculture, they have the most elaborate customs, traditions, and rituals, and no lack of virtues. They are mutually helpful, resourceful, capable of initiative, with a high and rigorous code of morality.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Paris, *Children's Nature*, 40.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid*, 42.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid*, 40.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid*, 43.

<sup>55</sup> Sargent, *An Handbook of Summer Camps*, 26.

Organizational camps, such as the Sons of Daniel Boone (a competitor to the Boy Scouts), promised to teach boys primitive skills and values, such as “patriotism, woodcraft skills, and obedience to authority.”<sup>56</sup> These kinds of lessons appealed to parents who adopted the belief that something was to be gained by going back to a simpler existence. As Sargent wrote, parents appreciated that summer camp offered “an unexampled opportunity to take children back to the primitive life of their ancestors.”<sup>57</sup>

While children enjoyed the opportunity to live primitively, Abigail Van Slyck suggests that they most enjoyed the activities at camps. One of the activities they enjoyed, which went along with the theme of living like their ancestors, was woodcraft. Van Slyck believes that woodcraft “enabled boys to reconnect with preindustrial skills associated with masculinity.”<sup>58</sup> She wrote that the boys at Camp Algonquin, outside of Boston, “The boys like it...It is outdoor life, which has been advocated as coming nearest to farm life.”<sup>59</sup>

Another reason why parents liked the idea of sending their children to camp was because of the athletic opportunities available at camps. As Van Slyck wrote, “A case in point is baseball, a game that was ubiquitous at early boys’ camps and featured prominently in every description of camp program.”<sup>60</sup> It makes sense that campers’ families would be enthusiastic about their children being able to play baseball, as according to Jules Tygiel, baseball was referred to as the national

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<sup>56</sup> Eells, *History of Organized Camping*, 43.

<sup>57</sup> Sargent, *An Handbook of Summer Camps*, 29.

<sup>58</sup> Abigail Van Slyck, *A Manufactured Wilderness* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), 60.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid*, 60.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid*, 61.

pastime as early as 1856.<sup>61</sup> According to Van Slyck, children too enjoyed playing baseball at camp, because camp directors were careful to make sure that every camper got to participate; one way they did this was by forming “midget leagues,” so that the younger campers, often the underdogs, would get the chance to practice their skills in a safe environment. Additionally, camp directors made fun out of baseball competitions, by naming the teams according to a new theme each year. For example, at Camp Wawayanda, “the four teams were named for colleges one year, for Indian tribes another, and for nations of the world in yet another.”<sup>62</sup> Van Slyck refers to Henry W. Gibson, the author of *Camping for Boys*, who said that these kinds of names kept the tone of the competition amusing and fun for the boys.<sup>63</sup>

Early summer camps also had a religious component to the program. Though some camps offered Bible study as part of the daily program, the religious programming was most evident on Sundays. To distinguish Sundays from the other days of the week, camp directors let the campers sleep late and spend the day doing quiet activities. The children would dress up in formal attire and attend services in the camp chapel. Even Ernest Balch’s Camp Chocorua in New Hampshire, a private camp (where most of the boys were protestant), had a woodland chapel area on the campground. Van Slyck wrote that the Chocorua chapel “accommodated worshippers on rustic pews that faced an altar stone, a stone lectern, and-by 1888-a large birch cross.”<sup>64</sup> According to Eells, the camp had an acolyte program and a

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<sup>61</sup> Jules Tygiel, *Past Time: Baseball as History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 8.

<sup>62</sup> Van Slyck, *A Manufactured Wilderness*, 63.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid*, 63.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid*, 54.

vested choir for the Sunday program by 1882.<sup>65</sup> Additionally, some of the townspeople would come to the campground and join the program. After the services, the campers had the option to go for a free swim because Balch realized that they needed some physical activity.

Interestingly, the YMCA camps did not have outdoor chapel areas until the 1910s and 1920s. Of course, these camps always had explicitly religious programming: Bible study and religious activity were part of the daily program. Van Slyck uses the YMCA Camp Wawayanda as an example: at this camp, campers “marked the beginning and end of each day with prayer; a fifteen-minute ‘morning watch’ was set aside for ‘private devotions,’ while individual tent groups participated in ‘family prayers’ just before campers went to sleep.”<sup>66</sup> On Sundays, similar to the private camps, campers were expected to dress in their most formal attire, attend a morning service, and have a rest period. At YMCA camps, however, the camper spent Sunday afternoons in Sunday school. Still, this was not traditional Sunday school; as Van Slyck wrote, “Sunday school classes could be held on the lake itself, with each class occupying a boat.”<sup>67</sup> The fact that the YMCA camps had such an intense structure when it came to Sundays illuminates their Christian mission; as Paris wrote, “their [the founders and directors of YMCA camps] ultimate goal was the religious awakening of boys and their ‘conversion’ to Christ.”<sup>68</sup> As the YMCA camps found permanent bases, they began to incorporate the woodland chapel areas more like the private camps.

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<sup>65</sup> Eells, 8.

<sup>66</sup> Van Slyck, *Manufactured Wilderness*, 54.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid*, 55.

<sup>68</sup> Paris, 42.

While parents and campers certainly liked that summer camps gave children the chance to live more simply, hone their athletic skills, and be more religious, we must consider the most practical reason that camps became a more popular ground for American children: summer camp gave children *something to do* during the summer months. As Sargent commented, when the public school calendar was created in the nineteenth century, the population was primarily agrarian. Therefore, the calendar left the summer months open so that children could help their families on the farms. However, as Sargent writes, “with increased urbanization the children, no longer needed on the farm, were left with nothing to do.”<sup>69</sup> Paris also mentions the nation’s public school system, and notes, “middle- and upper-class adolescents attended [public schools] in growing numbers.”<sup>70</sup> Sargent comments, “twenty-five million children turned out of school, the buildings closed and locked against them for three months in the brightest time of the year.”<sup>71</sup>

In an effort to fill this void, some children, especially children from less fortunate families, worked during the summers. This was entirely possible because Congress did not pass the Child Labor Amendment until 1924, meaning that workplaces had no federal obligation to restrict child labor. However, according to Paris, changing conceptions of childhood led “smaller middle- and upper-class families...to adhere to increasingly less authoritarian and more affectionate child-rearing practices in which the ability to keep one’s child out of the labor market

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<sup>69</sup> Sargent, *A Handbook of Summer Camps*, 20.

<sup>70</sup> Leslie Paris, “The Adventures of Peanut and Bo: Summer Camps and Early-Twentieth-Century Girlhood,” *Journal of Women’s History* 12 no.5 (2001), 52.

<sup>71</sup> Sargent, *A Handbook of Summer Camps*, 20.

became a sign of class status.”<sup>72</sup> Because children had nothing to do, parents were determined to find something for their children to do during these bright months and educators saw an opportunity to give children and teens a chance to learn outside of the traditional classroom. As Paris put it, “the rise of summer camps reflected a growing determination to protect, amuse, and educate children within supervised, age-appropriate environments.”<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Paris, “The Adventures of Peanut and Bo,” 52.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

## **And Here Come The Jews**

### **Jewish Organizational Camps**

As early as 1885, Jewish organizations offered camp experiences to working class Jews, mostly new immigrants, who were in need of a vacation from life in the factories. In that year, The Young Women's Hebrew Association of Pittsburgh offered week-long retreats for Jewish mothers and their children. In 1893, the Jewish Working Girls' Vacation Society of New York City opened Camp Lehman to give working women, particularly young immigrant women who worked long hours in the New York garment industry an escape for city life. The camp was free of cost and even reimbursed the campers for the wages they would miss the week they were away. Other Jewish charities, such as the Federation for Child Study, the Jewish Community Center, the Aaron and Lilie Straus Foundation, the Jewish Board of Guardians, the Jewish Welfare Board, and the Federation of Jewish Charities started their own summer camps for the lower class, newly arrived Jews (typically, but not always of Russian descent), who made up the majority of the nation's Jewish population. These groups continued to operate camps well into the twentieth century, and according to press releases, the Jewish Welfare Board alone was able to send "20,000 Jewish boys and girls living in New York state to go to summer camp in 1939 alone."<sup>74</sup>

### **Camps for Upper-Class Jews**

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<sup>74</sup> Nancy Mykoff, "A Jewish Season: Ethnic-American Culture at Children's Summer Camp (1918-1941)" PhD diss., New York University, 2002, 63.



Although the upper-middle class and upper-class Jewish families (typically, but not always of German descent) were often the ones who made the Jewish organizational camps financially viable, few actually wanted to send their children to camp with lower-class children. Even in the twentieth century, with plenty of accomplishments to boast about, such as fancy apartments on Fifth Avenue and friendships with the nation's wealthiest tycoons, some of the wealthier Jews feared that they would be associated with the new immigrants, who appeared backwards, spoke little English, and led religious lifestyles. The Council of Jewish Women, an organization funded by wealthy Jewish women, offered classes to the new immigrants to teach them how to be more "American." However, the wealthy Jews' insecurities could not be ameliorated through Americanization classes. Jacob Schiff, the prominent Jewish banker, wanted to keep the lower-class Jews out of New York City. Noticing the ever-growing Jewish population in New York City, which grew from 400,000 to 900,000 in the first decade of the twentieth century, Schiff was eager to curb the Jewish population growth so that they would be less noticeable.<sup>75</sup> As a result, he flew to London in order to devise the Galveston Plan, which would divert incoming ships full of Jewish immigrants to the port of Galveston, Texas (rather than coming through Ellis Island) so that there would not be such an influx of Jews in New York City.<sup>76</sup>

However, wealthy Jews were attracted to the idea of organized camping for many of the same reasons that non-Jews were. Actually, the fact that non-Jews were

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<sup>75</sup> American Jewish Yearbook Statistics 1900-1901, 623 and 1909-1910, 190

<sup>76</sup> Galveston Plan," Jewish Virtual Library. Accessed December 22, 2012.

[http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/judaica/ejud\\_0002\\_0007\\_0\\_07030.html](http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/judaica/ejud_0002_0007_0_07030.html)

caught up in the back-to-nature movement, an appreciation for Native Americans, the decline of Victorianism, and interest in athletics may well have been enough for the Jews to jump on the bandwagon; as a group that was already self-conscious about their identity, Jews were constantly determined to prove that they were more “American” and less foreign. For example, when Jews noticed that successful Americans spent vacations at resorts, Jews tried to do the same. When Jews noticed that successful Americans belonged to country clubs, they tried to do the same. Just as the founders of the first camps for Christians were outdoor enthusiasts, the founders of the first camps for Jews were well versed in transcendentalist literature and comfortable in nature. For example, the founders of Camp Kennebec, one of the first camps for Jewish boys, had enjoyed camping together in Maine and in the Adirondacks. As Frances Fox Sandmel wrote of the three founding directors,

Mr. Fleisher had been a camper in one of the first boys’ camps in the country. Mr. Fox had led boys’ groups and had done Y work. Mr. Katzenberg had been active in scouting. A camp of their own must have been in the backs of their minds long before the now legendary events that led to Kennebec’s beginning.<sup>77</sup>

Similarly, eleven years later, Dr. and Mrs. Julius Bluhm founded Camp Fernwood for Girls, “in an effort to create a growth experience for girls in the out of doors, and away from the bustle and stress of everyday life in the outside world.”<sup>78</sup> Although Kennebec and Fernwood were established years after each other and served different clienteles, both camps’ founders were passionate about the outdoors and sending children into the natural world.

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<sup>77</sup> Frances Fox Sandmel, *The History of Camp Kennebec: Seventieth Anniversary Edition* (American Jewish Archives), 4.

<sup>78</sup> Camp Fernwood: Traditional, sleepaway summer camp for girls in Poland, Maine. Accessed April 30, 2013. <http://www.campfernwood.com/about-camp-fernwood/history/>

Additionally, Jews appreciated Native American ways. Jews sometimes gave their camps Native American sounding names, such as Kennebec, Tapawingo, Wayziatah, Wigwam, or Winnebago. While these camps served more secular Jews, even the Central Jewish Institute's camp chose a name with a Native American ring to it: Cejwin (for CENtralJeWishINstitute). One former Maine camper recalls a common joke from her time, which shows that Jews acknowledged, with a degree of humor, their habit of giving their camps Native American sounding names. As the joke goes,

A Jewish family went out to Arizona to tour an Indian reservation. The Indian Chief led the family around the reservation, pointing out various structures. The Chief pointed to one of the pueblos and said, 'This is the Abraham Joshua Cohen pueblo.' The Jewish family asked the Chief why, to which he responded, 'you named all those camps in Maine after our people, so we thought we should do the same for you.'<sup>79</sup>

Camps for Jews celebrated American Indian life in other ways, too; "Indianness' was performed in multiple settings and through a variety of media, including pageantry, dance, ceremonies, woodcraft, games, and crafts."<sup>80</sup> Further, as Jonathan Krasner wrote, "The architectural landscape of camps was likewise Indianized: Children slept in Indian villages, grew vegetables in Indian gardens, and held campfires and performed rights in the Indian council ring."<sup>81</sup> Jews also valued how Native Americans thought of every member of their community as their family. To enforce a sort of a camp family, staff members were referred to as "Aunt" or "Uncle." For example, at Camp Walden for girls in Denmark, Maine, campers

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<sup>79</sup> Mags Weinstock, interview with author, January 9, 2013.

<sup>80</sup> Jonathan Krasner, *The Benderly Boys & American Jewish Education* (Waltham: Brandeis University Press, 2011), 313.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid*, 313.

referred to the head counselor as “Uncle Brenda.” Krasner believes that playing Indian was appealing to Jews because they were used to being the other. As he wrote, “For Jews...struggling for social acceptance, racial cross-dressing reinforced a sense of identification with the ‘Caucasian’ majority culture by elevating the racial binary above all other markers of difference in the United States.”<sup>82</sup>

As previously mentioned, American Jews were overwhelmingly populated in the nation’s cities. According to Hasia Diner, “the bigger the city, the more likely Jews lived and worked there.”<sup>83</sup> Jews formed sizeable enclaves in Boston, New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Atlanta, Chicago, New Orleans, Los Angeles, and Cleveland. While there were some Jews who lived in rural areas, the city-dwelling Jews knew little to nothing about life in rural areas, as even in “the old country,” Jews rarely involved themselves in occupations in rural sectors. The idea of spending time in a new environment, unlike anything they ever knew, seemed exciting to Jews who were desperate for something more.

In terms of athletic interests, Jews were equally interested in sports as non-Jews. In fact, the establishment of country clubs for Jews, such as the Century Club in Purchase, New York, and resorts for Jews such as the Summit Springs Hotel in Maine, shows that Jews were interested in participating in recreational and leisure activities, such as golf, tennis, and vacationing. However, there is also evidence that Jews were interested in athletics out of determination to counter anti-Semitic stereotypes. In the early twentieth century, nativist Edward Alsworth Ross claimed

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<sup>82</sup> Ibid, 313.

<sup>83</sup> Hasia Diner, *The Jews of the United States* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2004), 105.

that American fitness levels had declined because of the “unfit Jewish body type.”<sup>84</sup> According to Jonathan Sarna, Jews at Camp Kennebec, in Maine, believed that their athletic program would turn the boys into “stalwart, healthy American adults” and counter the anti-Semitic stereotype that Jews were weak and lacked athletic prowess.<sup>85</sup> Additionally, Sarna says, because Jews were so overwhelmingly concentrated in cities, sports were an activity that Jews could not always find the space to play at home. Surely, some Jewish parents saw attending summer camp as a way to give their children the space to practice sports and get physically stronger.

Jews were also attracted to the opportunities that camps provided for girls. According to Paris, a survey from 1928-1929 revealed that Jewish girls were more likely than girls of other religions and American ethnic groups to attend camp.<sup>86</sup> As Paris writes, “Many Jewish parents and organizations saw in camping for both sexes an extension of their urban ethnic networks, a manifestation of economic and social status, and a sign of their integration into American practices.”<sup>87</sup> Mags Weinstock, who attended Camp Walden in the 1930s, recalls that she and her sister attended camp for years, but her brother never attended one. While Weinstock did not know the exact reason why her brother did not attend camp, the fact that her parents chose to send their daughters to camp (over a son) illuminates Jews’ attitudes toward girls and summer camping.

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<sup>84</sup> Nancy Mykoff, “A Jewish Season: Ethnic-American Culture at Children’s Summer Camp (1918-1941)” PhD diss., New York University, 2002, 78.

<sup>85</sup> Jonathan Sarna, “The Crucial Decade in Jewish Camping” in *A Place of Our Own: The Rise of Reform Jewish Camping* ed. Michael M. Lorge and Gary P. Zola (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2006), 30.

<sup>86</sup> Paris, “The Adventures of Peanut and Bo,” 57.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

Lastly, Jews could relate to other American campers in that they were affected by the public school calendars. One of the staples of Jewish American culture was that this group, more than any other ethnic minority, truly believed that education was the best way to advance in society. As a result, many Jews tried to keep their children in school as long as possible. While working-class Americans rarely attended college in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, so many working-class Jews attended City College of New York that the university earned the nickname “Harvard of the Proletariat” among the Jewish community.<sup>88</sup> Additionally, Samuel Benderly, long considered the father of American Jewish Education, encouraged Jews to send their children to public schools rather than Jewish educational schools (of which only a few existed). Benderly wrote in 1908,

What we want in this country is not Jews who can successfully keep up their Jewishness in a few large ghettos, but men and women who can assert themselves wherever they are. A parochial system of education among the Jews would be fatal to such hopes.<sup>89</sup>

Benderly’s message to send Jewish children to school left more Jewish children unoccupied in the summer months, a reason in itself to attend a summer camp.

### **The Uniquely Jewish Reason**

However, there was one reason that Jewish parents were attracted to the idea of summer camp that other ethnic groups might not always have related to. According to Nancy Mykoff, “Overindulgence by Jewish mothers was commonly cited by camp activists as a reason for sending children...to summer camp.”<sup>90</sup> The stereotype of the typical Jewish mother has long been a mother who is over-

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<sup>88</sup> City College of New York, “Our History,” *The College*, <http://www.ccny.cuny.edu/about/history.cfm> (Accessed May 1, 2013).

<sup>89</sup> Diner, *History of Jews in the United States*, 146.

<sup>90</sup> Mykoff, “A Jewish Season,” 72.

involved in her children's lives, constantly coddling them, and begging them to get married. This stereotype could be applied to Jewish mothers regardless of their socio-economic status. As the Young Women's Hebrew Association of Philadelphia's camp said in 1923, "boys need a challenging experience away from the sheltering (hence softening) influence of mom."<sup>91</sup> Camp activists, both Jews and non-Jews, believed that time at summer camp would teach children to be self-reliant, independent, and an overall better person. In fact, in 1926, the president of the American Camping Association said,

The purpose of summer camp was to aid families...by 'returning the child to his parents in better shape, physically and morally, than when he arrives, and to iron out his habits of petulance, snobbishness, and bad temper and to inculcate in their place habits of decency, honesty, self-reliance, cleanliness, and sportsmanship.'<sup>92</sup>

This message resonated with Jews, who were determined to grow their children into healthier and more secure adults.

As Jews rose to affluence, they too desired to spend their summers outside of the cities. However, due to the rampant anti-Semitism at the time, they were not welcome in the Episcopalian dominated areas like Northeast Harbor and Bar Harbor. As Mykoff wrote of Jews' attempt to vacation in these areas, "Money could not buy their way in."<sup>93</sup> Though Jews developed their own resorts and summer communities in areas of the Adirondack and Catskill Mountains in New York, they were still hungry for opportunities to summer in Maine. Joshua Weiss, a camper at Camp Wigwam, said, "Maine was the new frontier for the wealthy to summer

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<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid, 74.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid, 166.

vacation.”<sup>94</sup> For some Jews summer camp in Maine provided a way to give their children the opportunity to spend the summer in Maine even if they could not themselves. As Paris wrote, “camps provided American Jewish parents with a tangible means to demonstrate their parental affection and to celebrate their children’s potential and their own improving place in American life.”<sup>95</sup>

Sargent’s list of summer camps listed specific details about featured summer camps so that parents could make the best decisions for their children. As Sargent wrote, “Choosing the summer camp...is an annual spring problem in many well-to-do families. With more than a thousand private camps to select from, the matter of choice calls for study and discrimination.”<sup>96</sup> In order to help parents, the list was organized by region, and each featured camp had a brief description of the camp’s program, clientele, and tuition. For example, the entry for Camp Walden read,

Walden, for Jewish girls, is conducted by the principal of the Alcuin Preparatory School for girls, New York City, and Miss Altschul. The camp is well organized, and the program includes water sports and camping trips.<sup>97</sup>

The entry also stated that Walden’s enrollment was seventy-seven campers the previous summer and that the 1931 season cost \$450.<sup>98</sup> According to the 1931 handbook, New York had the highest number of camps at 418, followed by Pennsylvania at 244. Out of these camps, New York boasted thirty-two camps which mentioned of some aspect of Judaism, such as “Wakitan is under the management of

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<sup>94</sup> Joshua Weiss, Interview with author, February 8, 2013.

<sup>95</sup> “A Home Though Away From Home’: Brooklyn Jews and Interwar Children’s Summer Camps” in *Jews of Brooklyn*, eds. Ilana Abramovitch and Sean Galvin (Boston: University Press of New England/Brandeis University Press, 2001), 243

<sup>96</sup> Sargent, *A Handbook of Summer Camps*, 13.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid*, 260.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid*.



the Hebrew Orphan Asylum of New York City,”<sup>99</sup> “...The camp rabbi conducts weekly services”<sup>100</sup> at Kirk Lake Camp, “Seneca has a Jewish clientele and observes the dietary laws,”<sup>101</sup> or “The patronage is Jewish” at Stissing Lake Camp.<sup>102</sup> Similarly, out of the camps in Pennsylvania, eight mentioned some aspect of Judaism. Due to the American Jews’ memories of anti-Semitism, it makes sense that Jewish parents would want to know what types of children attended the camps they were choosing.

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<sup>99</sup> Ibid, 397.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid, 398.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid, 399.

## **Anti-Semitism in the United States**

### **An Overview**

Before the Civil War, there were few Jews in the United States. Because the Jewish population was barely noticeable, Jews did not meet much anti-Semitism. As Nathan Belth writes, "it took a hundred years for the population of the thirteen colonies to reach 2,000,000 and the Jewish component to reach 2,000."<sup>103</sup> Some states in New England, such as Massachusetts, accommodated its Jewish inhabitants. In its early years, Massachusetts maintained colonial ties to churches, allocating churches a portion of its citizens' taxes. However, the Jewish Moses Michael Hayes of Massachusetts arranged to have his religious tax given to his synagogue rather than the state's Congregationalist Church.<sup>104</sup> Some states were tougher on Jews; in 1777, Jews in Maryland petitioned to have a law lifted which required politicians to take an oath of Christianity and were rejected. Aside from this one instance, there were not noteworthy incidents of anti-Semitism until the nineteenth century, when the Jewish population multiplied.

Historians attribute the growth of the American Jewish population to two waves of migration: the first, between 1820 and 1880, and the second, between 1880 and 1924 (the year the National Origins Act was passed). In 1920, the American Jewish Yearbook estimated that there were 3,600,800 Jews in the United States.<sup>105</sup> According to the Yearbook, roughly 2,269,289 of these Jews immigrated to

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<sup>103</sup> Nathan C. Belth, *A Promise To Keep* (New York: Times Books, 1979), 8.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid*, 11.

<sup>105</sup> American Jewish Yearbook, 1924-1925 Statistics of Jews, 564.

the United States between 1880 and 1923.<sup>106</sup> During this time period, Jews were only one of many ethnic groups who immigrated to the United States. Other groups who came in noticeable numbers in this time included the Irish, the Italians, the Greeks, and the Chinese. The increase in the number of immigrants led to an increasingly popular nativist sentiment among white, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant men. This sentiment was expressed beyond the political arena and into the realm of social life, most notably in the case of Country Clubs.

According to Jennifer Jolly-Ryan, wealthy, white Anglo-Saxon Protestants (WASPs) established the first Country Clubs in the period between 1880 and 1930.<sup>107</sup> These clubs chose their members “based upon the desire to socialize with people of like background, education, and stature within a community.”<sup>108</sup> Therefore, clubs denied access to people who did not share the same background as the other club members. Country Club goers were so concerned with ethnic background that some even excluded a group of Americans who “had families as wealthy and educated as those of the WASPs,” the Jews.<sup>109</sup> Ironically, some of the first clubs had Jewish founders, such as the prestigious Union League Club in Manhattan, established in 1863. Jesse Seligman, one of the Union League’s founders, resigned from the club when his son was “blackballed because Jews were no longer

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<sup>106</sup> Ibid, 592.

<sup>107</sup> Jennifer Jolly-Ryan, “Chipping Away Discrimination at the Country Club,” *Pepperdine Law Review* 25 (2012), 495.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid, 495.

<sup>109</sup> John Steele Gordon, “The Country Club. (Cover story),” *American Heritage* 41, no. 6 (September 1990): 75.

admitted.”<sup>110</sup> Apparently, the Union Club was “happy to have those [Jews] who were already members,” but did not want to accept any new Jews.<sup>111</sup> Members of Country Clubs were even prohibited from inviting Jewish guests to club events. As Benjamin Epstein and Arnold Forster wrote,

“The American Jew finds himself in a unique position. He has been most decisively singled out for social exclusion in many places...He fitted into the economy quick and well- but in the opinion of those who arrived here ahead of him, he did so before he had sufficiently (for them) rid himself of his European ‘mannerisms’ or moved far away from his ghetto beginnings.”<sup>112</sup>

This quote illuminates the situation of Jewish exclusion from Country Clubs, as those who wished to join could most likely afford to do so, but were rejected from Gentile social establishments.

Jews faced a similar predicament when it came to hotels and resorts. In 1877, the prominent Jewish banker, Joseph Seligman, a friend of both Abraham Lincoln and Ulysses S. Grant, was denied admission to the Grand Union Hotel in Saratoga Springs, New York.<sup>113</sup> Similarly, the luxurious Poland Springs Resort did not serve a Jewish clientele. As Leonard Dinnerstein wrote, this phenomenon existed in resorts “throughout much of New England, the Lake George region in New York State, the Poconos in Pennsylvania, and even at the Camelback Inn in Phoenix, Arizona.”<sup>114</sup> However, Jews were determined to vacation and refused to let restrictions stop them. As a result, Jews established their own resorts and “The most popular ones

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<sup>110</sup> Leonard Dinnerstein, *Antisemitism in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 92.

<sup>111</sup> Steele, “The Country Club,” 75.

<sup>112</sup> Epstein and Foster, *Some of My Best Friends...* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Cudahy, 1962), 44.

<sup>113</sup> Dinnerstein, *Antisemitism in America*, 39.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid*, 92.

appeared in New York's Sullivan County, about 90 miles northwest of New York City."<sup>115</sup> In fact, so many Jews vacationed in this area that it was later nicknamed the "Borscht Belt."<sup>116</sup>

Jews also experienced exclusion in the educational arena. In the early twentieth centuries, many university administrations established quotas for Jewish admission out of fear that the university was becoming too Jewish. As Dinnerstein wrote, the President of Harvard, Abbot Lawrence Lowell "thought that Harvard had a 'Jewish problem' because the percentage of Jewish undergraduates had tripled from 6 percent in 1908 to 22 percent in 1922."<sup>117</sup> As a result, Lowell implemented a Jewish admission quota, restricting the number of Jews admitted to the university to only 15 percent of the student body.<sup>118</sup> Administrators at Columbia, Princeton, Williams, Yale, and the University of Pennsylvania echoed the same concern and established Jewish admission quotas and vowed not to exceed the quota. According to Dinnerstein, the Jewish quotas often ranged from 3 percent to 16 percent (by university) of an incoming freshman class.<sup>119</sup> At Columbia, where 40 percent of undergraduates were Jewish in 1920, administrators vowed to cut Jewish enrollment to 22 percent in the span of two years.<sup>120</sup> Before the 1920s, most universities admitted students based solely on academic performance.<sup>121</sup> In response to mounting concerns from students, faculties, and the administrations

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<sup>115</sup> Ibid, 92.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid, 92.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid, 84.

<sup>118</sup> "Harvard's Jewish Problem," Jewish Virtual Library, accessed January 9, 2013, <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/anti-semitism/harvard.html>

<sup>119</sup> Dinnerstein, *Antisemitism in America*, 86.

<sup>120</sup> Bethel, *A Promise To Keep*, 98.

<sup>121</sup> Jewish-American History and Culture: An Encyclopedia, 37 sv. Anti-semitism.

about the “Jewish problem,” many colleges asked applicants to specify their religion on the application. Admissions committees also devised methods of “psychological testing to weed out the Jews, looking for characteristics such as ‘public spirit,’ ‘fair play,’ ‘interest in fellows,’ and ‘leadership,’ which were supposed markers of Christian identity.”<sup>122</sup> Colleges justified psychological testing and religious screening for various reasons. New York University’s Chancellor Elmor Brown cited the “separateness” of the Jewish student body from the rest of the students.<sup>123</sup> Harvard justified the quota system out of fear that the university would become a “New Jerusalem.”<sup>124</sup> The President of Dartmouth, [need name], expressed the same concern, as, “Any college which is going to base its admission wholly on scholastic standing will find itself with an infinitesimal proportion of anything else than Jews eventually.”<sup>125</sup> Even once they were accepted to colleges and universities, Jews faced discrimination.

Several student organizations, clubs, and societies excluded Jewish students from becoming members. Dinnerstein cites the case of Laura Hobson, a Jewish student at Cornell University was rejected from Phi Beta Kappa, a national academic honor society, because “there was a feeling among the trustees and some of the faculty that ‘too many greasy little grinds from New York [and] not enough people from other parts of the country’ were qualifying on merit for the honor societies.”<sup>126</sup> According to Belth, at some schools, Jews were also barred from “the eating clubs

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<sup>122</sup> Ibid, 37.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid, 37.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid, 37.

<sup>125</sup> Dinnerstein, *Antisemitism in America*, 86.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid, 86.

and fraternity houses. Even at the publicly operated City College of New York in 1913, a fraternity dropped its affiliate because too many Jews had been ‘pledged.’”<sup>127</sup> At some colleges, Jewish students started their own fraternities because they were not accepted into existing fraternities; Tau Delta Phi at Colby College was a prime example of a Jewish fraternity. However, when Jewish students at Brown tried to establish their own fraternity, the president of the university refused to let them because “he was afraid it [having a Jewish fraternity] would ruin the school’s reputation and stir up anger on campus.”<sup>128</sup>

After college, Jews could hardly escape discrimination in the workplace. Politics was an especially difficult sphere for Jews to break through. Henry Cabot Lodge, a Massachusetts politician, vocally pressured President Woodrow Wilson not to appoint Louis Brandeis, an esteemed Jewish lawyer, to the Supreme Court. Fortunately for Brandeis, Wilson still nominated him; as Wilson wrote to Senator Charles Allan Culberson of Texas, “I need hardly tell you that I named Mr. Brandeis as a member of the great tribunal only because I knew him to be singularly qualified by learning, by gifts, and by character for the position.”<sup>129</sup> However, most Jews were not so lucky, as their credentials could not guarantee their security in the professional world. As Dinnerstein wrote, “At the end of the 1920s, when Jews constituted about 26% of New York City’s population, and were also the best educated group in the community, one study found that 90% of white collar

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<sup>127</sup> Belth, *A Promise To Keep*, 98.

<sup>128</sup> Dinnerstein, *Antisemitism in America*, 86.

<sup>129</sup> Albert Bushnell Hart, ed., *Selected Addresses and Public Papers of President Woodrow Wilson* (New York: Boni & Liveright, Inc., 1918), 117

occupations went to non-Jews.”<sup>130</sup> According to Bethel, Jews were not “readily admitted to such basic sectors of the economy as commercial banking, insurance, and public utilities.”<sup>131</sup> Further, newspaper advertisements for these types of jobs “indicated a preference for Christians to apply.”<sup>132</sup> Finding employment through agencies was also difficult; in June 1929, the Bureau of Jewish Social Research found that one out of 23 employment agencies they surveyed “refused to register Jews and another said it could place no Jews.”<sup>133</sup> The Vocational Service for Juniors in New York eventually reported placing 12,000 of 27,000 applicants, with 38 percent of all applicants being Jews.<sup>134</sup> The agency admitted, “only 20 percent of the Jewish applicants found employment, even though they were educationally better qualified,” attesting to the nation’s desire for to keep Jews out of high society.<sup>135</sup> Because Jews were excluded from traditional white-collar jobs, they tended to occupy in professions that kept more doors open for them, such as social work, pharmaceuticals, medicine, law, and teaching.<sup>136</sup> Belth mentions that Jews also found acceptance in “retail trade, the amusement industry, [and] communications.”<sup>137</sup> However, as Belth wrote, “The conventional wisdom of the time was that nine out of ten jobs in the white-collar occupation in the major cities were closed to Jewish applicants.”<sup>138</sup>

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<sup>130</sup> Dinnerstein, *Antisemitism in America*, 89.

<sup>131</sup> Belth, *A Promise To Keep*, 111.

<sup>132</sup> Dinnerstein, *Antisemitism in America*, 88.

<sup>133</sup> Belth, *A Promise To Keep*, 112.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid*, 112.

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid*, 112.

<sup>136</sup> Dinnerstein, *Antisemitism in America*, 90.

<sup>137</sup> Belth, *A Promise to Keep*, 111.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid*, 112-113.



Jews were also excluded from various neighborhoods and communities. Most evidence of Jewish exclusion in this sphere of life is from the east coast, but there is some evidence that Jews faced this issue all over the country. For example, the Sumner neighborhood in Washington, D.C. required landlords to sign a contract that “the community will not accept anyone of the Semite race or origin.”<sup>139</sup> Similarly, the Birch Groves community in Connecticut “said premises should not be used or occupied in any manner by any person of Negro, Hebrew, or Jewish descent or extraction.”<sup>140</sup> Bronxville, New York, in Westchester County, is also famous for restrictions against Jews purchasing homes. Even an apartment building in Omaha, Nebraska turned down Jewish tenants.<sup>141</sup> These restrictions exemplify the levels upon which Jews experienced social exclusion.

As unfortunate as social exclusion was for Jews in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, worse still were violent attacks on Jews. In 1902, Irish factory workers threw debris and metal objects at the bier and carriages of a Jewish funeral procession in New York City.<sup>142</sup> In 1911, a group of Irish teenagers and young men “used iron bars, wagon spokes, stones, jagged bottles, and sticks to smash store windows, break glass, and beat up whichever Jews they found” in Malden, Massachusetts.<sup>143</sup> In 1915, Leo Frank, a Jewish American factory owner was lynched in potentially the worst physical attack on an individual American Jew. Frank was an American-born Jew, who was raised in New York and attended Cornell

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<sup>139</sup> Epstein and Forster, *Some of My Best Friends...*, 44.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid, 129.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid, 100.

<sup>142</sup> Belth, *A Promise To Keep*, 71.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid, 70

University. In 1908, Frank moved to Atlanta, Georgia to manage the National Pencil Company, in which his uncle, Moses Frank, had invested. In 1913, Frank was arrested and charged with the rape and “brutal murder in his factory of a fourteen year-old girl named Mary Phagan.”<sup>144</sup> Although there was little evidence to prove his guilt, Frank was sentenced to life in prison. At his sentencing, mobs chanted, “Hang the Jew!”<sup>145</sup> Two months after his sentence, a mob of men kidnapped Frank from his prison cell, dragged him near Phagan’s hometown, and lynched him.<sup>146</sup> This case drew massive attention to the presence of anti-Semitism in the United States.<sup>147</sup>

Other instances of anti-Semitism were less violent, but still emotionally taxing for the Jewish community. These attacks included accusations that the Jews conspired against America and the world through their finances. After World War I ended, American media blamed “with coercing America into war and unconscionably prolonging it.”<sup>148</sup> Further, “Frequently, Americans linked German-Jewish bankers with Russian-Jewish Bolsheviks into a huge conspiracy against America.”<sup>149</sup> Henry Ford, the prominent American industrialist, founder of Ford automobiles, and inventor of the assembly line, became known for his attacks on the American Jewish community. In 1924, Ford’s newspaper, *The Dearborn Independent*, attacked a Chicago lawyer “and a group of Jewish bankers and merchants of seeking

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<sup>144</sup> Ibid, 64.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid, 64.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid, 67.

<sup>147</sup> “20<sup>th</sup> Century Jewish Immigration, Teachinghistory.org, Accessed December 15, 2012, <http://www.teachinghistory.org/history-content/beyond-the-textbook/25059>

<sup>148</sup> Belth, *A Promise To Keep*, 73.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid.

to control the nation's wheat farming."<sup>150</sup> Ford himself believed that Jews were up to no good, as he published and distributed in the first chapter of *The International Jew: The World's Foremost Problem*, "The Jew is the world's enigma. Poor in his masses, he controls the world's finances."<sup>151</sup> American agrarians held similar views to Ford, despite their difference in socio-economic status. As Dinnerstein wrote, "Farmers especially disliked Jews, the 'detested middlemen' who did not work with their hands or till the soil, and whom they commonly associated with wealthy bankers who had allegedly forced the demonetization of silver."<sup>152</sup>

The view of Jews as dishonest, greedy citizens prevailed in children's literature as well. A popular rhyme about Jack and the Beanstalk, which appeared in multiple pre-World War II versions of *Mother Goose* read,

Jack sold his egg  
To the rogue of a Jew,  
Who cheated him out  
Of half of his due.

The Jew got his goose  
Which he vowed he would kill,  
Resolving at once,  
His pockets to fill.<sup>153</sup>

This rhyme portrays the Jew as not only greedy, but also immoral. This supports famed American author, H.L. Mencken's "Treatise on the Gods" essay, which is featured in Michael Selzer's *Kike! A Documentary History of Anti-Semitism in America*. As Mencken wrote, "As commonly encountered [the Jews] lack many of the

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<sup>150</sup> Ibid, 80.

<sup>151</sup> Michael Selzer, *Kike! A Documentary History of Anti-Semitism in America* (Straight Arrow Books: 1972), 131.

<sup>152</sup> Dinnerstein, *Antisemitism in America*, 49.

<sup>153</sup> Selzer, *Kike!*, [need page number]

qualities that mark the civilized man: courage, dignity, incorruptibility, ease, confidence.”<sup>154</sup> These views of Jews as horrific members of society contributed to the general feeling of anti-Semitism in America.

### **Anti-Semitism and Summer Camps**

Due to the anti-Semitism Jews faced in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, it is no surprise that they met the same kind of discrimination in the realm of summer camps. Paris notes that the first camps served mostly Protestant boys. As she wrote, “in the late nineteenth century, camps were the province of a few ‘muscular Christians,’ who...aimed to introduce elite Protestant boys to the physical and moral reinvigoration of ‘natural’ spaces.”<sup>155</sup> Though not all camps discriminated against Jews (one of the directors of Camp Kennebec, Louis Fleisher, had attended Camp Marienfeld as a child), there were some camps, especially in Maine, that did not accept Jewish campers.

The YMCA’s Camp Durrell in Friendship, founded in 1896, was the first camp in Maine. Camp Merryweather for boys, founded in 1900, in North Belgrade, probably did not accept Jewish children. As Sargent wrote, “A discriminating standard of admission has always been maintained.”<sup>156</sup> A similar situation might have existed at Pine Island Camp, founded in 1902, in Belgrade, because Sargent wrote, “Dr. Swan [the director] is discriminating in his selection of boys and holds them to standards of manners and actions rather higher than are demanded by most

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<sup>154</sup> Ibid, 164.

<sup>155</sup> “Please Let Me Come Home: Homesickness and Family Ties at Early-Twentieth-Century Summer Camps” in Caroline F. Levander and Carol Singley, eds. *The American Child: A Cultural Studies Reader* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2003), 248.

<sup>156</sup> Sargent, *An Annual Survey*, 267.

camp directors.”<sup>157</sup> Of Alford Lake Camp for girls, founded in 1907 in Union, Sargent wrote “For many years the camp has been patronized by a discriminating clientele from Boston, New York, the south and the west.”<sup>158</sup> Although Sargent never explicitly writes that these camps did not accept Jewish campers, he did mention when camps *did* accept Jewish campers. For example, he wrote of Camp Yukon for boys, founded in 1914 in Winthrop, “the camp is non-sectarian, and no discrimination is made against boys of Jewish parentage.”<sup>159</sup> Further, he wrote of Camp Songo for girls, founded in Casco in 1912, “Songo is non-sectarian, and its clientele is both Christian and Jewish.”<sup>160</sup> The only camps that Sargent explicitly listed as discriminating of other religions were Camp Newfound for girls (1916) and Camp Ropioa for boys (1922), both in Harrison, which accepted only children of Christian Scientists.

Sargent’s survey also includes camps that were associated with a given religion, such as Christianity or Catholicism, but accepted children of other religions at a higher rate. For example, as he wrote of Camp O-At-Ka in East Sebago, founded in 1906, “O-At-Ka is the official camp of The Order of Sir Galahad, an organization for Episcopal Church boys. Any boy belonging to the order is taken at a moderate fee and a few other boys are accepted at a higher rate.”<sup>161</sup> There is no proof that O-At-Ka accepted Jewish boys, but given that Sargent said “a few other boys are accepted at a higher rate,” there were probably a few Jewish boys. However, we should note that

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<sup>157</sup> Ibid, 266.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid, 278.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid, 271.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid, 247.

<sup>161</sup> Ibid, 248.

in regard to Jewish camps, Sargent indicated in some circumstances that Christians were welcome. The description of Camp Euna Kaya, founded in Readfield in 1920, reads “Jewish dietary laws are not observed. There are always some Gentiles enrolled.”<sup>162</sup> Still, because Sargent wrote that O-At-Ka accepted “a few other boys,” it would not be fair to label a camp like O-At-Ka “anti-Semitic” or “discriminating against Jews.”

However, if there were Jewish campers at O-At-Ka, it is likely that they met some degree of anti-Semitism because there are accounts of Jewish children experiencing anti-Semitism at mixed camps. For example, one camper at a mixed camp, Herb Grosswirth, said, “it was at camp...that I ran into anti-Semitism for the first time. We were called ‘Baroff’s Bagel Boys’ [for our counselor, Jacob Baroff]. We took the two black kids into our bunk because no one else wanted them. They were called the ‘Burnt Bagels.’”<sup>163</sup> Additionally, Jewish campers at mixed camps were likely to meet anti-Semitism on the field; as Mykoff wrote, one prevailing stereotype was “the unfit Jewish body type” and the notion that Jews lacked athletic prowess.<sup>164</sup>

However, it is important to note that some Jews at mixed camps had positive experiences and did not encounter anti-Semitism. As Paris wrote, during the 1920s, the Boy Scouts of America camps were “the single most popular camping option among Brooklynites. Even well-to-do families, who could afford private camps, often chose this less costly option because of their boys’ prior involvement with the

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<sup>162</sup> Ibid, 270.

<sup>163</sup> “‘A Home Though Away From Home’: Brooklyn Jews and Interwar Children’s Summer Camps” in *Jews of Brooklyn*, 246.

<sup>164</sup> Mykoff, *A Jewish Season*, 78.

organization.”<sup>165</sup> Further, Paris notes that the *Brooklyn Jewish Chronicle* “observed Jews and gentiles played and lived happily together; a sign the paper proposed, not only of Jewish assimilation into American life but of the potential for camping to abet the emergence of a new and unprejudiced generation.”<sup>166</sup>

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<sup>166</sup> “A Home Though Away From Home’: Brooklyn Jews and Interwar Children’s Summer Camps” in *Jews of Brooklyn*, 245.

## **Maine's Jewish Camps: The Appeal to Jewish Parents**

### **Why Maine?**

In the geographic sense, Maine had it all. According to one director of a camp for Jewish children in 1931, "Maine affords everything a camper's heart can desire."<sup>167</sup> By this statement, this director was referring to Maine's landscape: its open land, "its twenty-four hundred miles of coast line with its countless islands; its eighteen hundred lakes and five thousand streams."<sup>168</sup> These lakes provided campers with a number of water sports opportunities, such as swimming, canoeing, kayaking, sailing, and even water skiing. The lakes also allowed camps to offer extensive canoe trip programs. Maine also offered many hiking opportunities, such as Baxter State Park, Baldface, Pleasant Mountain, and more. Additionally, Maine was close enough to New Hampshire that Maine camps could use the White Mountains for trips, as well. In the 1930s, these tripping opportunities were attractive to Jewish parents because it gave them a mechanism to get their children into the outdoors, an area where they had little experience.

Another factor for Jewish parents in the 1930s had to do with Maine's location. Maine was so far from the nation's urban centers that it was nearly impossible to get to unless one had a car. Much of the camp-going population, in general, came from urban centers such as New York City, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Cleveland, etc. From these cities, it was not easy to make the trip to Maine. Going up to Maine involved either owning a car or taking a train from Grand Central Station to Waterville, Maine, and then taking a bus to the actual camp (which was an extra

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<sup>167</sup> Sargent, *An Annual Survey*, 47.

<sup>168</sup> *Ibid.*



fee).<sup>169</sup> Many times, this ended up being a twelve-hour trip from New York City. In contrast, camps in New York and Pennsylvania were only a couple of hours outside New York City, and trains took the campers directly to the camps.<sup>170</sup> Even if campers took the train or the bus to Waterville, they had to find a way to get to the towns where the camps were. Because trains took campers directly to the camps in New York and Pennsylvania, these two locales were home to many organizational camps, which tended to serve inner-city populations. In Maine, there were few organizational or social welfare camps.<sup>171</sup> Sending a child to camp in Maine was a sign of socio-economic status for Jews, proving that they were wealthy enough to afford the taxing journey and were far from the camps for the less privileged. Additionally, the camps in Maine were generally more expensive than the camps in New York and Pennsylvania. The Maine camps listed in Sargent's 1931 Survey with Jewish patronage ranged from \$300 to \$500 for a two-month session. Of the thirty-four camps listed as having a Jewish patronage, one cost \$300, three cost \$325, four cost \$350, one cost \$375, six cost \$400, fifteen cost \$450, and four cost \$500. In New York, out of the thirty-two Jewish camps, two were free, one cost \$190, twelve cost \$300, five cost \$325, five cost \$350, four cost \$400, and only one reached \$450 (making it the most expensive Jewish camp in New York that Sargent listed).

One of the most well-known Jewish organizational camps was Surprise Lake, located in Cold Spring, New York. Surprise Lake was founded in 1902 in order "to provide a summer vacation for Jewish boys from the tenements of Manhattan's

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<sup>169</sup> Jonathan Krasner, *The Benderly Boys & American Jewish Education* (United States of America: Brandeis University Press, 2011), 299.

<sup>170</sup> *Ibid*, 300.

<sup>171</sup> *Ibid*, 47.

Lower East Side.”<sup>172</sup> The camp was originally under the auspices of the Educational Alliance, then the 92<sup>nd</sup> street Y, then the Federation of Jewish Philanthropies, until it became its own organization in 1920. Still, it continued its initial mission, to serving New York’s poorest Jewish children. Similarly, Camp Wehaha in Arden, New York, was associated with the Hebrew Orphan Asylum of New York City. Arden was just an hour north of New York City. According to Sargent, “all the girls are residents of the home.”<sup>173</sup> Because the camp was for orphans, campers did not have to pay to attend and the cost for each camper was covered through private donations. Still, there were a number of private camps in New York. Some of these camps, such as Schroon Lake in Schroon Lake and Camp Greylock in Raquette Lake, were similar to the camps in Maine, which lacked formal religious activity but boasted a Jewish clientele. Others were focused on religious activity, such as the Central Jewish Institute’s Camp Cejwin or Camp Utopia for Boys and Girls. According to Sargent, at Camp Utopia for Girls, “the food is prepared according to Jewish dietary laws, and the religious education of the campers is stressed.”<sup>174</sup> At Camp Diana, in Glen Spey New York, “girls may study Hebrew.”<sup>175</sup> Marion Walldorf, née Bernstein, a camper at Camp Diana in 1936 and 1937, recalls that she had the option to study Hebrew at Diana, but chose to spend that time playing sports instead. Because she did not come from a religious background, her parents supported this decision.

However, Walldorf had an interesting experience at Camp Diana, which reveals that the camps in Maine had a reputation for being more elite. In the fall of

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<sup>172</sup> History, Surprise Lake Camp, <http://www.surpriselake.org/camphistory/>

<sup>173</sup> Sargent, 397.

<sup>174</sup> *Ibid*, 407.

<sup>175</sup> *Ibid*, 405.

1937, Walldorf, who lived on New York's Upper West Side, arranged to meet up with a camp friend who lived in the Bronx. "My mother found it unsettling that I was friends with a girl from the Bronx," Walldorf said.<sup>176</sup> The next summer, Walldorf's parents sent her to Camp Pinecliffe in Harrison, Maine, "because it was more sophisticated."<sup>177</sup> Walldorf enjoyed Pinecliffe, though she remained sour that she could not go back to Diana. "I liked my friends at Diana and I liked the program there, I didn't see any reason to leave," she said. Walldorf's experience exemplifies the notion at the time that Maine camps were supposedly more elite.

Though these feelings changed by the 1940s, the best, most well-established camps were already in Maine. Additionally, the fact that most of the Maine camps that Jews attended survived the Great Depression proved that these camps were the best of the best. As Sargent wrote, "the Jews know a good thing and usually secure the best for their children. They were early to arrive in the promised land of the summer camp and they settled first in the choice spots of Maine."<sup>178</sup>

### **The Maine Advantage During World War II**

After the United States entered World War II in 1941, a number of Maine summer camps saw an increase in camper applications. According to a 1945 brochure, "About Camp Walden," the directors limited enrollment to eighty campers because they believed that the small, tight knit community was one of the camp's greatest assets. The current directors of Camps Fernwood, Kennebec, Tapawingo, Tripp Lake, Wigwam, and Winnebago said that their predecessors also turned down

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<sup>176</sup> Marion Walldorf, Interview with author, December 20, 2012.

<sup>177</sup> Ibid.

<sup>178</sup> Sargent, *A Handbook of Summer Camps*, 42.

campers after the slots were full, in order to ensure that they could give each camper the attention he/she deserved.

According to Krasner, there were two main reasons for the increase in the number of applications. For one, the Maine camps were located a considerable distance from the major cities on the East Coast. During the war, when one of the nation's major concerns was the possibility of a German air attack, Maine's remote location relieved parents who feared for their children's safety. Additionally, finding childcare during the summer months, when children were not in school became a common issue, as "six million women who had never worked outside the home joined the labor force during the war years."<sup>179</sup> As Evans wrote, "more than 4,400 [cities] had established childcare and welfare committees by the summer of 1943, but their efforts paled in comparison to the need."<sup>180</sup> Therefore, it makes sense that families who could afford to send their children away for the summer would choose to do so in order to give the children the best experience possible at such a turbulent time.

### **The 1950s: A Negotiation of Judaism and American Life**

By the 1950s, there were four thriving Jewish educational camps in Maine: Camp Modin, Camp Lown, Camp Naomi, and Camp Joseph. The most well-known (and only surviving) of these camps, Camp Modin, advertised itself as "the summer camp with the Jewish idea."<sup>181</sup> In this respect, these camps negotiated the level of

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<sup>179</sup> Evans, *Born for Liberty*, 224.

<sup>180</sup> *Ibid*, 224.

<sup>181</sup> Camp Modin, "In Pursuit of an Ideal," *History & Heritage- Oldest Jewish Summer Camp in New England*, <http://www.modin.com/heritage/index.php> (accessed April 30, 2013).

Jewish education that parents wanted their children to experience, as well as to participate in the activities and trips they desired.

### **The Jewish Educational Camp**

According to Krasner's *The Benderly Boys & American Jewish Education*, Albert Schoolman of the Central Jewish Institute founded the first Jewish educational camp in 1921. The camp accommodated the children of working-class families, whose parents could not otherwise afford to give their children time out of doors. It was so successful that the CJI purchased a permanent seventeen hundred-acre site in Port Jervis, New York in 1923.<sup>182</sup> The site contained dining halls, cabins, infirmaries, playing fields, and social halls. By 1926, the camp hosted "750 to 800 children and staff at one time."<sup>183</sup> The camp eventually took the name Cejwin, a name that insinuated a Native American tone and paid tribute to its founding organization (Central JeWish INstitute).

Meanwhile, Schoolman took a leave of absence from the CJI in the fall of 1921. That year, he approached his friends, Issac Berkson and Alexander Dushkin about opening a camp in Maine based on the same model as Cejwin but to serve a wealthier clientele. Schoolman came up with this idea because he noticed the success of the "Jewish" camps in Maine such as Camp Kennebec (1907), Camp Kohut (1907), Camp Wigwam (1910), and Camp Walden (1916).

These camps were owned by Jews and served mainly a Jewish clientele. For example, Camp Kohut was founded by Dr. George Alexander Kohut, who was the

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<sup>182</sup> Krasner, *The Benderly Boys & American Jewish Education*, 272.

<sup>183</sup> *Ibid.*

superintendent of New York's Temple Emanu-El. Clara Altschul, who was the directress of Emanu El's Temple Sisterhood, founded Camp Walden as a camp for Jewish girls with her dear friend, Blanche Hirsch. An overwhelming number of the first Walden campers were from the New York area and may well have been the children of Temple Emanu El members. According to a list of Waldenites from the early years, many of the campers had typical Jewish last names such as Cohen, Eisman, Hirschman, Kaufman, Levy, Loeb, Rosenberg, Roth, and Strauss.<sup>184</sup> Though the majority of campers on the list have New York listed as their hometown, there were campers from states as far as Indiana, Texas, and Alabama: Caroline Bamberger of Indianapolis, Irma Gugenheim of San Antonio, and Lillian Loeb of Montgomery.

However, other than the fact that the campers were Jewish, the camps had little to do with Judaism. As Rosen said of Wigwam (and this statement can be applied to the other camps), "it was a Jewish camp, but totally un-Jewish in terms of anything religious."<sup>185</sup> By this, Rosen meant that these camps made no mention of Judaism in the brochures, in the daily programs, or even on the Sabbath. As Schoolman observed, "the Sabbath day [at these camps] was generally no different from week-days."<sup>186</sup> According to Walden campers Lynn Weiner and Judy Emil Tenney, "we had no idea that we were at a 'Jewish' camp."<sup>187</sup> The two women also

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<sup>184</sup> "Lost Waldenites" from Nellie May Straus' album, *Camp Walden: Denmark, Maine, Box 1*, The Arthur and Elizabeth Schlesinger Library on the History of Women in America, Cambridge.

<sup>185</sup> Ed Rosen, Interview with author, January 9, 2013.

<sup>186</sup> Krasner, *The Benderly Boys & American Jewish Education*, 273.

<sup>187</sup> Judy Tenney and Lynn Weiner, Interview with author, January 20, 2013.

said that they knew their bunkmates were Jewish, but it did not come up in conversation

Schoolman believed that there was a population of wealthy Jews who would want to send their children to a camp in Maine with more of a focus on Judaism. He imagined a camp similar to the other Jewish camps in the physical sense, with playing fields, a lake, and cabins, where the campers said prayers regularly, ate kosher meals, and observed the Sabbath with a service on Friday evenings and a day of relaxation on Saturdays. In this spirit, he, Dushkin, and Berkson established Camp Modin in Canaan, Maine, and marketed it as “The Summer Camp With a Jewish Idea.”<sup>188</sup> Schoolman believed that the camp would be a good business decision, as he knew that more and more Jews desired to send their children to summer camps.

However, Modin did not see the same level of success that the ethnically Jewish camps saw. According to Krasner, “Modin did not begin turning a profit until 1928, and then, soon after, the camp fell on hard times during the Depression.”<sup>189</sup> Not only was it difficult to recruit new campers, it was also difficult to maintain and expand the facilities. Additionally, the camp could not employ as many staff members as other camps could. However, it must be noted that despite these struggles, Modin never reached a point where the owners would have to shut the camp down. By the time America entered World War II, Modin’s enrollment increased, and by the 1950s, the camp had more campers than its founders had ever imagined.

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<sup>188</sup> Krasner, *The Benderly Boys & American Jewish Education*, 274.

<sup>189</sup> *Ibid*, 275.

As previously mentioned, World War II caused summer camp enrollment to increase. In a way, the War saved Modin from running into debt. Jews were amongst the American families who were affected by the war. Like other parents, Jewish parents worried about a German air attack on the homefront. For such parents, Modin's location in the remote land of Maine was a major "selling point ."<sup>190</sup>

Additionally,

Jewish education camps, like residential camps, more generally, experienced enrollment growth during the war, as gas rationing, absent fathers, and the increase of women in the workforce discouraged family vacations and resulted in increased summertime child-care dilemmas.<sup>191</sup>

These factors increased the demand for the Jewish educational camp, which can explain why another Jewish educational camp was founded in Maine just as the War was ending.

### **The Lost Jewish Educational Camps**

Camp Lown, in Oakland, was founded in 1945. Sandra Mazer Frisch, who attended Camp Lown that first summer, recalls that the camp enrolled one hundred and five campers.<sup>192</sup> She also recalls that the camp commemorated the Sabbath with the traditional Friday night service. However, what is most interesting about Camp Lown is that most, if not all of the campers were from Maine. Camp Lown was affiliated with the Jewish Community Council, one of the two Jewish organizations in the state. Due to the lack of Jewish education in Maine, the Jewish Community

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<sup>190</sup> Ibid, 310.

<sup>191</sup> Ibid, 311.

<sup>192</sup> Nancy Silverman Levinsky, "Summer Camps with a Jewish Twist," *Summer Camps*, <http://web.colby.edu/jewsinmaine/maine/summer-camps/> (accessed May 13,2013).



Council and Phillip Lown, a successful Jewish business man, had founded Camp Lown in order to provide Maine's Jewish children with religious education. Specifically, the camp prepared boys for their Bar Mitzvah ceremonies (a coming of age ceremony, where Jewish boys read from the Torah), which was appealing to Maine families because there were few preparation services despite the fact that Jews believed the ceremony was important, and "instilled pride in their heritage."<sup>193</sup> Lown, the camp's main benefactor, wanted to open the camp to Jewish children from other states. However, the Jewish Community Council was adamant about keeping the camp for Jewish Mainers and rejected Lown's proposal, a decision which led the camp into ruin and forced it to close in 1969.

From 1954 to 1987, there were two other Jewish educational camps in Maine: Camp Naomi for Girls in East Raymond and Camp Joseph for Boys in Harrison. At both camps, campers ate kosher meals, and chanted traditional blessings before meals and a shortened blessing after meals. They commemorated Shabbat by celebrating with challah, wine, and candle lighting on Friday night and a havdallah service on Saturday evenings.<sup>194</sup> Additionally, the campers were allowed to sleep in on Saturday mornings, which signified that the Sabbath was a day of rest for them.<sup>195</sup> Furthermore, the camps occasionally taught Israeli dancing.

Camp Naomi and Camp Joseph merged into just Camp Naomi in the mid 1970s. According to Nancy Silverman Levinsky, a Camp Naomi alumna herself, the families who sent their children to Naomi and Joseph (even in its earliest years)

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<sup>193</sup> Celia Risen, *Some jewels of Maine: Jewish Maine Pioneers* (Pittsburgh: Dorrance Publishing Co., 1997), 121.

<sup>194</sup> Levinsky, "Summer Camps with a Jewish Twist."

<sup>195</sup> *Ibid.*

were mostly from the Boston area because the camps were run under the auspices of the Jewish Community Center of New England, which was based in Boston. “The campers were ninety-nine percent Jewish and came from families who wanted to give their children a Maine summer camp experience with a Jewish educational component,” she said.<sup>196</sup> However, the camp ran into decline in the 1980s and the Jewish Community Center was forced to sell the camp in 1987.

Camp Lown, Camp Modin, and Camps Naomi and Joseph were the only Jewish educational summer camps in Maine. Out of these three camps, only one survived and is still running today. However, as previously noted, Porter Sargent listed thirty-four camps for Jewish children in Maine the 1931 *Annual Survey*.

#### **Why send your child to an ethnically Jewish camp?**

Before Camp Modin was established in 1922, there was no such thing as a “Jewish summer camp” in Maine. However, Jews had been sending their children to camp in Maine as early as 1902, when Camp Cobbossee in Monmouth was established. Still in existence today, Cobbossee was the first camp to serve a predominantly Jewish clientele. Between 1906 and 1920, thirteen camps for Jewish children were established in Maine: Camp Kennebec (1906), Camp Kohut (1907), Camp Wigwam (1910), Camp Accomac (1911), Tripp Lake Camp (1911), Camp Songo (1912), Camp Arcadia (1913), Highland Nature Club (1913), Camp Walden (1916), Camp Wildwood (1916), Camp Chickawah (1919), Camp Pinecliffe (1919), and Camp Hiawatha (1920).

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<sup>196</sup> Nancy Silverman Levinsky, Interview with author, January 10, 2013.

Traditionally, Jewish Americans have been very supportive of each other. One way that they did this was through the mid-nineteenth century *landsmanschaftn*, or “hometown associations that thrived in every large Jewish community, functioned as benevolent societies.”<sup>197</sup> A group of Jews who came to America from the same place, most often in Central and Eastern Europe, would form these associations in order to help each other and to help the newcomers who had just arrived. For example, a new immigrant from Bialystok could turn to his *landsmanschaft* when he first arrived to find help looking for a job, to find housing, and to meet other people in his situation. The *landsmanschaft* was also a place for the new immigrants to turn during difficult times, when they needed a doctor or when they needed a loan. Another way that Jews supported each other was through employment. For example, in New York City, “Jews dominated the [garment] industry from the top to the bottom.”<sup>198</sup> In other words, Jews owned the factories and made a point to employ other Jews. While this often created divisions within the Jewish community, most clearly seen in the garment worker strikes that erupted in New York, Cleveland, Philadelphia, and Baltimore in 1909, the fact that Jews at the top of the industry tended to hire Jews nevertheless illustrates the phenomenon that Jews felt a need to support their own.

Given the Jews’ mutual support, it makes sense that Jews would want to do business with each other when they could. Therefore, it is no surprise that Jews supported each other in the realm of summer camps. The directors of Camp Kennebec, Charles Edwin Fox, Louis Fleisher, and Milton Katzenberg, grew up

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<sup>197</sup> Diner, *The Jews of the United States*, 138.

<sup>198</sup> *Ibid*, 109.

together in Philadelphia. When they started their camp, they derived much of their clientele through their friends and acquaintances in Philadelphia, and the major Jewish centers Baltimore, New York, Chicago, Cleveland, and Boston. The parents who sent their children to Kennebec in the early years were most likely drawn to the idea of sending their children to camp for the summer and considered that by sending their children to Kennebec, rather than other camps, they would be supporting members of the greater Jewish American community. Weinstock, who attended Camp Walden from 1934-1939, recalls that her parents sent her to Walden because her mother had attended the Alcuin Preparatory School in New York City, where Blanche Hirsch, one of the founders and directors of Camp Walden, was her teacher. Weinstock says that her parents wanted to send her to a camp for the summer and knowing Miss Hirsch and her reputation made Walden the clear choice.

Growing up, Weinstock's family was not religious. Though she always knew she was Jewish, she says she has always been "non-observant." Weinstock and her two siblings always attended secular schools, and her family rarely commemorated the Sabbath. She recalls that despite their lack of religiosity, her family often surrounded themselves with Jews; they lived in Jewish neighborhoods, worked with other Jews, and were friends with other Jews. While Weinstock believes this was comfortable for her parents, she says "it's just the kind of circle we ran in. We knew that everyone was Jewish, but we didn't talk about it."

Similarly, Tenney recalls that her parents were quite secular. Growing up, Tenney did not commemorate the Sabbath or observe any of the Jewish dietary laws. However, they did recognize the high holidays and they held a Passover seder.

Further, Tenney's brother, Arthur, became Bar Mitzvah. As Tenney says, "we weren't religious, so my brother's Bar Mitzvah was more symbolic than religious. It symbolized to us that we were Jewish and that we were part of this greater community."<sup>199</sup> Tenney recalls that her parents chose to surround themselves with other Jews; most, if not all, of her neighborhood friends were Jewish. Tenney grew up in Brooklyn's Flatbush neighborhood, which by the 1920s, had a reputation as a Jewish, "upper-middle class enclave."<sup>200</sup> As Deborah Dash Moore wrote in *At Home in America: Second Generation New York Jews*, "Flatbush attracted Jewish businessmen and professionals."<sup>201</sup> Tenney's father, Mr. Allan Emil, fit this mold: he was a successful lawyer, sent his children to private school, and lived in a picturesque townhouse.

As a child, Tenney attended New York's School of Ethical Culture. The school was associated with the Ethical Culture movement, which emerged out of Reform Judaism. Most members of New York's Ethical Culture Society (and the Ethical Culture Societies that sprung up in other cities) were Jews. The School of Ethical Culture, like the movement, was focused less on religion and focused more on morality. According to Howard Radest's *Toward Common Ground: The Story of the Ethical Societies in the United States*, the school tried to instill an "ethical personality" in its students, teaching them to be "humane, free, efficient, culture, and

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<sup>199</sup> Judy Tenney, Interview with author, January 20, 2013.

<sup>200</sup> Deborah Dash Moore, *At Home in America: Second Generation New York Jews* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981), 78.

<sup>201</sup> *Ibid*, 78.

forward looking.”<sup>202</sup> Tenney believes that these types of values were most common to secular Jews of her time. By subscribing to the Ethical Culture movement, Tenney’s family surrounded itself with other Jews “without getting into too religious territory.”<sup>203</sup> And that is precisely what her parents wanted, she said. “Each camper’s parents wanted their children to have different levels of Jewish education- some of us went to religious school during the year, some of us had siblings who became Bar Mitzvah, some of us were confirmed- but all of our parents wanted us to attend a summer camp where we learned general, ethical values and life skills.”<sup>204</sup>

Lastly, parents sent their children to ethnically Jewish camps because the other options were limited if they did not want their children to receive religious instruction. It is true that the Boy Scouts of America camps permitted Jewish children, as did some of the Young Men’s Christian Association (YMCA) camps. According to Paris, these camps were more “affordable, mainstream, and national” compared to private camps.<sup>205</sup> Paris writes that some parents who could afford the private camps chose to send their children to Boy Scouts’ camps because they believed it would prove their “successful integration into American life because the Boy Scouts were non-denominational.”<sup>206</sup> Additionally, only a decade earlier, the Boy Scouts of America camps were “the single most popular camping option among Brooklynites. Even well-to-do families, who could afford private camps, often chose this less costly option because of their boys’ prior involvement with the

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<sup>202</sup> Howard Radest, *Toward Common Ground: The Story of Ethical Societies in the United States* (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1969), 220.

<sup>203</sup> Tenney, Interview with author, January 20, 2013.

<sup>204</sup> Ibid.

<sup>205</sup> Paris, *Children’s Nature*, 46.

<sup>206</sup> Ibid, 90.

organization.”<sup>207</sup> However, at these camps, Jewish children were more likely to run into anti-Semitism because they were a minority. As Paris wrote of the YMCA camps, “anti-Semitism was tolerated and sometimes a source of entertainment.”<sup>208</sup> This makes sense, given that as previously mentioned, for as long as they lived in the United States, and well into the twentieth century, Jews experienced anti-Semitism. Although anti-Semitism in America was far less violent than it was in Europe, and most American anti-Semitism was manifested through social exclusion, some Jews’ memories of and encounters with anti-Semitism were so painful that they did not feel comfortable sending their children to live with children of other groups.

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<sup>207</sup> “A Home Though Away From Home’: Brooklyn Jews and Interwar Children’s Summer Camps” in *Jews of Brooklyn*, 245.

<sup>208</sup> Paris, *Children’s Nature*, 89.

### **Jewish Children Loved Maine's Camps**

Ed Rosen, from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, first attended Camp Wigwam in Harrison, Maine, in 1937. At only ten years old, he looked forward to camp because “the prospect of living in a tent was to be a high adventure.”<sup>209</sup> However, he had no idea how much he would love Camp Wigwam, “a love affair that has lasted to this day,”<sup>210</sup> as he wrote in a memoir. He spent fourteen summers there, and looked forward to each summer with excitement. Similarly, Toby Boyer Freeman, from Newton, Massachusetts, who attended the all-girls Camp Mataponi in Naples in the 1960s, could not wait for camp to start. As she later said, “on every level, I was so much happier at camp; all winter I lived for it. If someone asked me, ‘what are you doing this summer?’ I’d look at them as though they were from Mars.”<sup>211</sup> Both Rosen’s and Freeman’s sentiments about how they looked forward to camp each year capture the essence of my research: that Jewish children simply loved summer camps attending summer camp in Maine.

### **A Rite of Passage**

For some, attending summer camp was a natural phase. According to Leslie Paris’ essay in *The American Child: A Cultural Studies Reader*, “for children... camp life represented an important rite of passage.”<sup>212</sup> Indeed, for many children, camp

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<sup>209</sup> Ed Rosen, *A Sentimental Journey*, (Bala Cynwyd: Valley Press, 2007), 23

<sup>210</sup> *Ibid*, 24.

<sup>211</sup> Laurie Kahn, *Sleepaway: The Girls of Summer and the Camps They Love* (New York: Workmen Pub., 2003), 209.

<sup>212</sup> “‘Please Let Me Come Home:’ Homesickness and Family Ties at Early-Twentieth-Century Summer Camps” in Caroline F. Levander and Carol Singley, eds., *The*



was the first time they left home for an extended period of time. As Paris wrote, attending camp was “often a first experience of community and self-reliance beyond the physical boundaries of family and home neighborhoods.”<sup>213</sup> Tenney, a summer camper in the 1930s and early 1940s, expected to attend sleepaway camp because her older brother attended them. “My mother said I wanted to be with my brother, so I went,” she said. Tenney first attended a small camp called Crosby Farms, then Camp Wayziatah in Waterford, and eventually “settled” at Camp Walden in Denmark, which she loved so much that she stayed for five summers.

### **Activities and Traditions**

Jewish campers loved the activities that the secular Jewish cluster of camps offered. Perhaps the reason why they loved these activities so much was because they did not have the opportunity to participate in the activities at home. Both Tenney and Mickey Friedman, who attended Walden from 1939 to 1941, recall that they enjoyed horseback riding, an activity they could not do in their respective homes of Brooklyn, New York and Hartford, Connecticut. As Tenney said, “I don’t remember where we went, but when we were good enough, we got to go on trail riding trips and that was exciting.”<sup>214</sup>

The lakes at the Maine camps offered a number of activities. According to the Camp Walden brochure from 1937, waterfront activities included swimming, life-

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*American Child: A Cultural Studies Reader* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2003), 247.

<sup>213</sup> Ibid, 247.

<sup>214</sup> Tenney, interview with author, January 20, 2013.

saving, canoeing, and rowing.<sup>215</sup> Friedman remembers that canoeing was her favorite activity. As she said, “I liked swimming, too, but I only swam until I reached a high enough level for canoeing.”<sup>216</sup> Rosen also enjoyed canoeing, enough that he decided to teach canoeing when he went back to Wigwam as a counselor.

Waterfront activities remained popular choices at the Maine camps in the 1950s and 1960s. Helen Schary Motro, a camper at Camp Vega in Fayette from 1957 to 1963 fondly remembers participating in the two-mile swim from the junior camp to the senior camp with her friends. She believes that the swim was such a fun experience because, “there was no hint of competition in the swim. Each girl swam alone, but it was the joint effort of old pals and it linked us forever.”<sup>217</sup> Whether in a canoe with a friend or swimming with a group of friends, campers enjoyed spending time with each other in the lake.

Campers also enjoyed bunk plays, which were performed for the entire camp. Some of the most famous modern playwrights, such as Charles Strouse, Frank Loesser, and Richard Rogers got their starts at Camp Wigwam in the 1930s and 1940s. Steven Sondheim, the famous composer, attended Camp Androscoggin in Wayne, Maine. At Wigwam and Androscoggin, these men had the opportunity to take part in various aspects of the theatre, such as acting, directing, and painting scenery. We can infer that these men valued their theatre experiences at these camps given their eventual careers. For some campers, just being in the play was

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<sup>215</sup> Brochure, 1937, Camp Walden: Denmark, Maine, Carton 1, The Arthur and Elizabeth Schlesinger Library on the History of Women in America, Cambridge.

<sup>216</sup> Mickey Friedman, interview with author, January 21, 2013.

<sup>217</sup> Kahn, *Sleepaway*, 80.

enough. Former Mataponi camper Andrea Brown (1960-1968) recalls that one of her fondest memories of camp was when she was a younger camper and got to play Winthrop in *The Music Man*. Brown was the one of two girls in her cabin who got to participate in the older girls' show, and said "this made me a bit of a camp celebrity."<sup>218</sup> It is worth noting that girls like Brown had opportunities at camp that they would be unlikely to have found otherwise. Because Mataponi was an all-girls' camp, it was a given that a girl would have to play a male role in theatrical productions, just as Brown played Winthrop. In the so-called "real world," girls might not have the opportunity to play male roles, nor would it have been as widely accepted. In this way, theatre at camp was a unique opportunity for campers.

Many of the Maine camps had a number of athletic traditions, which the campers were quite fond of. One of these traditions was Color War, where each camper was assigned to one of two teams and participated in a variety of athletic competitions against the other team throughout the summer. For example, at Camp Wigwam, the campers were divided into the Red and Gray teams. At Camp Walden, the campers were either on the Brown team or the Tan team. Tripp Lake Camp, in Poland, divided campers into four teams along the same principles. Color War gave campers the chance to be part of a team, to express team spirit, and to engage in friendly competitions. Additionally, Color War gave some campers the opportunity to be leaders. Tenney switched to Camp Walden explicitly because Walden offered team sports. Later in her career, Tenney became a team captain. When she was on her way to camp for her second to last year, she mentioned to one of her friends that

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<sup>218</sup> Ibid, 103.

she had a friend at home who had the German measles. The counselor chaperone overheard her say the words “German measles” and immediately pulled her into a separate cart of the train. When Tenney arrived at camp, she was told she would have to be quarantined for two weeks. Devastated at the thought of being kept in the infirmary, Tenney decided to go home for the two- week quarantine. She ran for team captain in absentia and while she was home, received a telegram from her bunkmates informing her that the camp had elected her captain of the Tan team. She believes that her position as Tan team captain was one of her most treasured experiences at camp. “I loved team sports and being team captain because I loved the non-competitive nature of the competitions,” she said. Though rivalry between the Brown and Tan teams was fierce, Tenney recalls that the most important part of the team sports was for each camper to play her best, to have good sportsmanship, and to have fun. “When we were on the field, we were two teams. But as soon as the game was over, we were all friends,” Tenney said. Tenney cannot imagine having this type of a competition anywhere but camp because “camp was a non-competitive atmosphere,” as opposed to school. “It was certainly my favorite part of each summer,” she said.

Songwriting was another common camp tradition. Campers at many of the Maine Jewish camps enjoyed writing songs about camp life, activities, traditions, trips, and more. As previously stated, notorious composers such as Loesser and Rogers attended Camp Wigwam. According to the Public Broadcasting Documentary, *Broadway Musicals: A Jewish Legacy*, “summer camp offered invaluable experience” in the field of songwriting. Former campers like Loesser

realized how much he loved songwriting (and that he was quite good at it) from his summers at Wigwam. Rosen loved the Wigwam songs so much that he wrote he still sings Wigwam songs with his friends and family. Similarly, Walden campers enjoyed songwriting so much that the director incorporated a songwriting contest into the reunion weeks for former Waldenites. At the 90<sup>th</sup> reunion, Friedman and her former bunkmates rewrote lyrics to “Freckled and Brown,” a song they had written when they were campers, which current campers still sing today. While “Freckled and Brown” is about the typical Walden camper, “Rusty and Old” (the 90<sup>th</sup> reunion version of the song) is about the former Walden camper who longs for her days at camp.

In addition to Color War and songwriting, campers loved playing friendly pranks on their friends and counselors. Jill Grayson Finkelstein, a camper at Tripp Lake Camp from 1957-1960 remembers the best prank she ever played: she and a friend snuck out of their cabin after bedtime to go see their friends in another cabin. When they heard their counselors coming back, they ran back to the bunk. Finkelstein made it back to the bunk, but realized her friend was no longer with her. She heard someone laughing from outside and realized it was her friend; her friend had run into a clothesline and fallen to the ground, tangled in the clothesline and the pile of clothes. As Finkelstein recalls, “we were reprimanded, but even the counselors couldn’t stop laughing.”<sup>219</sup>

Though pranks were not always considered a formal tradition, some camps adopted pranks into their list of traditions because the campers played pranks so

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<sup>219</sup> Kahn, *Sleepaway*, 182.

frequently. At Camp Walden, it has become a tradition that Bunk Five (one of the cabins of ten-year-olds) plays a trick on the whole camp. According to Walden's eighty-fifth reunion yearbook, "the bunk five trick" originated because in the early years, the girls who lived in bunk five could not get along.<sup>220</sup> The director suggested the girls play a friendly trick on the camp as a way to get them to work together. Since that summer, bunk five has played a trick on the camp every year. Tricks have ranged from bunk five ringing the breakfast bell at midnight to telling the campers that there was a gas leak from the boats in the lake and all water sports were cancelled on a hot afternoon. Through friendly pranks, campers have been able to strengthen their own friendships and have fun at the same time.

### **Trips and Inter-Camp Activities**

Campers looked forward to trips and inter-camp activities with great anticipation. Trips were an opportunity for campers to get out of the insulated camp environments and explore Maine and the surrounding region. As early as 1921, Camp Walden girls hiked up Mt. Washington, Carter Dome, Mt. Douglas, Kearsarge, and Baldface and canoed down the Songo River.<sup>221</sup> According to the trip log from 1942, Walden girls hiked Mt. Pleasant, Mt. Washington, and Carter Dome and canoed down Crooked River. Weiner, a former Walden camper from 1940-1944, recalls that the hiking trips were her favorites. Rosen believes that one reason his parents chose Camp Wigwam for his older brother was because Wigwam offered an

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<sup>220</sup> Camp Walden 85<sup>th</sup> Reunion Splash, The Arthur and Elizabeth Schlesinger Library on the History of Women in America, Cambridge.

<sup>221</sup> Camp Walden Splash, 1921, The Arthur and Elizabeth Schlesinger Library on the History of Women in America, Cambridge.

extensive trip program and Maine had “better mountains (or access to better mountains), better lakes, and better rivers.”<sup>222</sup> In his memoir, Rosen wrote about his grand adventures down the Saco River, through the Rangely Lakes, Little Circle Lakes, and Long Lake, and up Bear Mountain, Mt. Tumbledown, and Mt. Washington.

As a camper during World War II, Tenney recalled that Walden took the campers on trips to meet with convalescing soldiers who had recently returned from the front. Though she does not remember where they met, she remembers that she and her bunkmates brought games to play with the soldiers and that it was a special opportunity to interact with the local population.

The most popular inter-camp activity was, by far, socials, or dances. Because many of the camps were single-sex, a girls’ camp might have invited a boys’ camp to come for a dance, or visa-versa. Socials were a time for campers to interact with peers of the opposite sex and to gain interpersonal skills. Additionally, since many of the camps required that the campers wear a uniform, socials were a time to get dressed up and express one’s style. From campers’ positive memories of socials, we can infer that these events were an integral part of their camp experience. Davida Sherman Dinnerman, a former camper at Camp Matoaka in Smithfield, had her first kiss at a camp social. She and a boy from the other camp snuck behind the recreation hall when they saw his camp’s van driving away without him. Dinnerman had to explain herself to the director of her camp, who had to call the director of the boy’s camp and arrange to have him picked up.<sup>223</sup> Some campers had more luck interacting with members of the opposite sex at socials than outside of camp, thus

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<sup>222</sup> Ed Rosen, interview with author.

<sup>223</sup> Kahn, *Sleepaway*, 141.

giving them a huge boost in confidence. As Brown said in Laurie Kahn's *Sleepaway: The Girls of Summer and the Camps They Love*,

Boys were an alien species to me, so as I got older, and the pressure to be popular with them increased, I was thrilled to be going to a girls' camp. At home my attractiveness was offset by extreme shyness and did me little good in the boy department. But at camp dances success hinged largely on appearance; if you were cute, you got asked to dance....My first kiss and my first make-out session were at camp socials.<sup>224</sup>

Brown's sentiment reflects the air of excitement around socials. For campers like Andrea, these positive interactions with boys might not have been possible in another setting.

### **Empowerment and Leadership**

Brown spoke about how socials gave her a boost in self-esteem and confidence. As she said, "For the first time in my life, I was the belle of the ball and had an opportunity to feel attractive and socially successful."<sup>225</sup> For Brown, camp represented a world where she found opportunities and feelings she might not have found or anywhere else. In this way, camp gave Brown an opportunity to feel good about herself. However, Brown was not the only camper to feel this way about camp; other campers remember having similar feelings of self-worth and empowerment at their camps.

One way that camps catered to campers' desire to feel empowered was by giving campers leadership opportunities. One such opportunity was the role of Council President at Camp Walden. Weinstock, a former camper at Walden from 1934 to 1939, served as the Council President her final year. As president,

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<sup>224</sup> Ibid, 146.

<sup>225</sup> Ibid, 146.



Weinstock got to lead camp meetings each week. “I taught the camp about our community values and I was the one whom everyone looked to,” she said. Lynn Weiner, a camper at Walden from 1940 to 1944, also served as president. She expressed similar sentiments as Weinstock.

Another opportunity for empowerment was the role of songleader at Tripp Lake. Finkelstein remembers the day that she tried out to be the songleader for her Color War team. She knew she had the musical talent, but was afraid to audition. However, she later said, “I know that gathering up the courage to try out that day was a defining moment that impacted the rest of my life.”<sup>226</sup> Finkelstein was such a successful songleader that she was eventually voted a team captain her final year.

Both Tenney and Rosen were also Color War captains. Tenney recalls that being the leader of the team was the peak of her camp experience. For Tenney, being team captain was not about being the best athlete in camp; it was having the most spirit and leading the camp in an important tradition. Similarly, Rosen was not a star athlete either. However, it is evident from his memoir that he had enough spirit for the entire camp. He loved being part of a team as a young camper just as much as he loved being a captain as an older camper.

Rosen spent so much time at camp and showed such leadership potential that he and his friends became Wigwam legends. He and his best friends called themselves the ROOOTOW (Royal Order Of Old Timers Of Wigwam). Rosen served as the “president” of the ROOOTOW. Years later, Rosen’s son was eating dinner at a restaurant near Wigwam. He overheard another couple talking about Wigwam and

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<sup>226</sup> Ibid, 104.

asked them if they knew his father. Not surprisingly, the couple knew all about Rosen and his role in the ROOOTOW even though they had never met him. Through his everlasting reputation as the president of the ROOOTOW, Rosen gained a sense of pride and empowerment.

### **Camp Community Values**

The most common response I received when I asked former campers about their favorite aspect of camp was simple: the values.

The Jewish cluster of camps in Maine taught similar values. All of the camps I investigated stressed the importance of being a good citizen, a good friend, a good bunkmate, and a member of a greater community. There were two camps whose values profoundly struck me: Camp Winnebago for Boys in Fayette and Camp Walden.

Winnebago taught its campers to be “Winnebagan.” The Winnebago curriculum focused on accountability, as the boys lived in a close-knit community where one person’s actions affected the rest of the group. According to the camp’s current director, Andy Lilienthal, throughout the years Winnebago taught the following values:

- 1) Forgiveness. Because the campers lived together for an extended period of time, campers were taught to forgive each other for mistakes.
- 2) Honesty. Campers were taught to be open and honest with one another.
- 3) Integrity. Campers were taught to try their best at each activity and to go into each trip with a positive attitude.

- 4) Charity. Campers were taught to help each other, whether that be during cabin clean-up, at an activity, during Color War, on a trip, etc.
  - 5) Kindness. Campers were expected to treat each other with the utmost kindness.
  - 6) Human Dignity. Campers were taught to treat each other with the respect and ethical treatment they deserve.
  - 7) Loyalty. Campers were taught to be loyal friends and family members.
  - 8) Covenant. Campers had to remember that just as easily as they were welcomed into the Winnebago community, they could easily be taken out.
- Campers accepted these values and pledged to follow them.

When a camper truly exemplified these values, his bunkmates and counselors bestowed upon him the title of “Winnebagan.” Steve Gold, a former Winnebago camper, said the Winnebago values mirrored Jewish values without being overtly religious.<sup>227</sup> For example, the Winnebago values could easily be considered secular social justice and community values. Most likely, Gold is referring to Ethical Culture values, which many Reform Jews adopted. While the camp never formally acknowledged the resemblance between the Winnebago values and Jewish values, because “there was no specific religious component in daily life,”<sup>228</sup> it is no surprise that Jewish campers like Gold felt a special connection to the Winnebagan values.

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<sup>227</sup> “The Way Childhood Should Be: Maine Summer Camps,” The Maine Experience on Maine Public Broadcasting Network; 4:09-4:11, Youtube, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KXMtj-63nbk> (Accessed March 1, 2013)

<sup>228</sup> Ibid 4:20

Camp Walden's values have always been summed up in the camp's Honor System. Since 1916, the Council President has been responsible for teaching the Honor System to campers and counselors at weekly camp meetings. Tenney recalls, "Honor System meant a great deal to a large percentage of the campers."<sup>229</sup> The main tenants of Honor System were as follows:

- 1) Respect. Campers were taught to show each other the same level of respect they wanted to be treated with.
- 2) Consideration. Campers were taught to consider each other's thoughts, needs, and feelings while making decisions and participating in activities.
- 3) Cooperation. As members of a community and as residents of a cabin, campers were taught that even if they did not get along all the time, they needed to cooperate for the sake of the entire camp.
- 4) Trust. Campers were taught how to trust each other and how to be a true friend.

While the honor system was the main system of governance at Walden, Tenney remembers that the non-competitive attitude was also one of the campers' most cherished values. Even though the campers participated in competitions in activities and in Color War, the campers were taught that sportsmanship was the most important part of playing in a game and that winning was insignificant. As Tenney said, "Walden taught me not to be competitive."<sup>230</sup> She recalls a verse of Walden's unity songs, which the campers sang before each Color War event:

Side by side, we are working together, Waldenites,

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<sup>229</sup> Tenney, interview with author, January 20, 2013.

<sup>230</sup> Ibid.

Hand in hand.  
 We are playing for fun not for the score, Browns and Tans,  
 All together in harmony of theme.  
 Learn that sportsmanship means honor, whether Brown or Tan team banner,  
 And to win or to lose with a smile.  
 When a Waldenite learns these things, that's the fun that sportsmanship  
 brings,  
 Side by side, hand in hand, Browns and Tans.<sup>231</sup>

This verse illuminates the principle of sportsmanship that Tenney held so dear. “The non-competitive spirit allowed us to enjoy ourselves, to put all of our effort into each game, but truly ‘to win or to lose with a smile.’”<sup>232</sup>

### **Friendships**

As Rosen put it in his memoir, “The camp bonds are hard to break.”<sup>233</sup> At two month long overnight camps, the campers formed close relationships that can result only from living and working together every day. Weiner, who was an only child, said that she did not form such tight connections with others until she attended college.

Many of Rosen’s best friends are his Wigwam friends. When he was in college, he went to visit one of his camp friends in Havana, Cuba. He mentioned the names of several friends who attended both his first and second weddings. For his 70<sup>th</sup> birthday, he and his ROOOTOW friends had a magnificent reunion at Wigwam and at his summer home nearby. As Rosen said, “it was as if we had never left Wigwam. We filled each other in and picked up where we left off.”<sup>234</sup> In his memoir, he mentioned that he and his camp friend Sam Himmelreich “have had similar

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<sup>231</sup> Camp Walden Songbook, Carton 1, The Arthur and Elizabeth Schlesinger Library on the History of Women in America, Cambridge.

<sup>232</sup> Tenney, interview with author.

<sup>233</sup> Rosen, *A Sentimental Journey*, 14.

<sup>234</sup> Rosen, interview with author.

careers in Jewish community life and we've had reunions all over the world."<sup>235</sup>

Rosen said that he and friend Alan Slifka "meet at family events" while he and friend Jerry Rovner "convene with our wives and occasionally help the Philadelphia flyers achieve greatness."<sup>236</sup> Though they no longer have their summers at camp to keep them together, it is evident that Rosen found his Wigwam friendships worthwhile enough to keep them such a big part of his life.

Similarly, Tenney, Weiner, and Friedman became best friends at Walden and have stayed in touch throughout the years. "We had a group of five of us...Mickey, Lynn, Jeff, Barbara, and me," Tenney recalled. The five of them reunited quite frequently until Barbara died.

### **"Just Loved It"**

Whether it was the activities, the traditions, the trips, the community, or the friendships, many Jewish children loved the aspects of Maine camp life. Betsy Jonas, a former Walden camper, wrote in a letter to the Walden director after her final summer, "Of my sixteen years, my five summers at Walden were the most pleasant and inspirational days of my life."<sup>237</sup> "There will always be a special place in my heart for Walden, the Place, and its spirit," she continued.<sup>238</sup> Susan Rifkin Karon, a former Matoaka camper from 1969 to 1979, echoed similar sentiments to Jonas and said, "Miserable beds, small bathrooms, and wonderful friendships: I'd never trade

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<sup>235</sup> Rosen, *A Sentimental Journey*, 35.

<sup>236</sup> *Ibid*, 35.

<sup>237</sup> Letter from Betsy Jonas to Helen Herz Cohen entitled, "Walden- Its meaning to me" The Arthur and Elizabeth Schlesinger Library on the History of Women in America, Cambridge.

<sup>238</sup> *Ibid*.

those summers for anything in the world.”<sup>239</sup> Further, she said, “camp was my heaven and my escape, the place where I felt genuinely happy and free.”<sup>240</sup> Likewise, Ed Rosen considers Wigwam to be one of the most important parts of his life. As a banner in his summer home reads, “For God, For Country, For Yale, and For Camp Wigwam.”<sup>241</sup>

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<sup>239</sup> Kahn, *Sleepaway*, 122.

<sup>240</sup> Ibid.

<sup>241</sup> Rosen, *A Sentimental Journey*, 38.

## **Conclusion**

American Jews, both parents and children, in the mid-twentieth century enjoyed the presence of Jewish summer camps in Maine, even though few wanted their summer camp experiences to have anything to do with Judaism. The Jews who patronized the ethnically Jewish camps in the Long Lake and Belgrade regions of Maine did not see themselves as doing anything Jewish at all. Rather, they saw themselves participating in broader American youth trends such as athletics, wilderness education, and community building. Those who patronized explicitly Jewish summer camps, such as Modin, Lown, Naomi, and Joseph desired similar experiences, but with a degree of religious education. Regardless of whether American Jews chose to patronize ethnically Jewish camps or Jewish educational camps, there is something to be said for the fact that Jews chose to stay within their own ethnic networks when it came to summer camps: that even when they could patronize non-Jewish institutions, they often chose Jewish ones. This not only proves that American Jews were most comfortable with each other, but also that Jews saw some intrinsic value in staying together.

In many ways, summer camps in Maine offered a deliverance for Jewish children in the mid-twentieth century. The 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s were tumultuous times for Jews across the globe, as they experienced social exclusion in America and endured more massive hardships overseas in Europe and Israel (established in 1948). However, in this same time period, summer camps in Maine offered Jewish children a respite from their struggles and ended up being an



overwhelmingly positive experience. In this new environment, American Jewish children thrived: learning to rough it in the outdoors, honing their athletic skills, learning to be leaders, developing self-confidence, and creating life-long friendships. These experiences were so positive that many of them, including the majority of the former campers interviewed in this study, ended up sending their own children to the Jewish summer camps in Maine, reflecting the idea that this land would be given to the mid-twentieth century campers' offspring and seeds eventually.

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## Appendix of Jewish Summer Camps 1930-1959

Belgrade Region

Camp Androscoggin, Wayne  
Camp Arcadia, North Belgrade  
Camp Arden (later Caribou), Oakland  
Camp Cobbossee, Winthrop  
Camp Euna Kaya, Readfield  
Kennebec Camps, North Belgrade  
Camp Lown, Oakland  
Camp Manitou, Oakland  
Camp Menatoma, Kent's Hill  
Camp Modin, Canaan  
Camp Somerset, Oakland  
Camp Vega, Fayette  
Camp Weyou-Wega (later Wekeela), Hartford  
Camp Winnebago, Fayette  
Camp Yukon, Winthrop

Long Lake Region

Camp Accomac, Hillside  
Camp Cedar, Casco  
Fernwood Camp, Poland  
Camp Forest Acres, Fryeburg  
Camp Gansmere, Gray  
Camp Inawood, Alfred  
Camp Indian Acres, Fryeburg  
Camp Ironwood, Harrison  
Camp Joseph, Harrison  
Camp Kearsarge, Naples  
Camp Kinaani, Naples  
Camp Koda, Bridgeton  
Camp Kohut, Oxford  
Camp Mataponi, Naples  
Camp Naomi, Raymond  
Camp Pinecliffe, Harrison  
Camp Powhatan, Oxford  
Camp Skylemar, Naples  
Camp Takajo, Naples  
Camp Tapawingo, Sweden  
Tripp Lake Camp, Poland  
Camp Walden, Denmark  
Camp Wayziatah, Harrison  
Camp Wenonah, Naples  
Camp Wigwam, Waterford

Camp Wildwood, Bridgeton  
Camp Woodlands, Bridgeton

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