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Title: According to Leslie Paris, '*summer camps were the staging grounds for the development and expansion of American childhood*'¹. To what extent does this statement support the importance of the summer camp experience on youth development over the course of its history in America?

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¹ Howard Chudacoff, 'Review of Leslie Paris, Children's Nature: *The rise of the American Summer Camp*' < http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/anthropological_quarterly/v081/81.3.chudacoff.html > [accessed 15/01/2010]

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Introduction

This dissertation is going to address the importance of the summer camp experience on youth development in America with particular focus on the post war era. Summer camps have existed in America since the end of the nineteenth century, and according to statistics published by the American Camp Association, there are now over 12,000 day and resident camps in America, serving over 11 million children every year². The starting grounds for the summer camp as a ‘recreation movement’³ occurred in the early 1900s. Prior to this only a few thousand children had attended camp, but by 1902 there were more than 100 YMCA camps and as many privately owned camps.⁴

The American Camp Association defines youth development in terms of ten different elements, each of which are key factors in the individual growth of a child. These ten elements are, ‘self esteem, independence, leadership, friendship skills, social comfort, peer relationships, adventure and exploration, environmental awareness, values and decisions and spirituality.’⁵ Throughout the history of summer camp, camp directors worked to ensure that every individual child would have the opportunity to develop in each of these ways. In this dissertation I am going to examine all of these elements in addition to the educational value that has been placed on the summer camp experience since its origins.

This dissertation focuses primarily on three private residential camps, Camp Chickawah in Maine, Camp Lincoln and Camp Lake Hubert in Minnesota. Camp Chickawah was founded in 1920 by Joseph Saltman as a full season residential camp for boys and closed for the last time sixty five years later in 1985. Camp Lincoln is a traditional camp for boys, founded in 1909 by Chuck Everett, Fred Rogers and Brownie

² Media Center: Camp Trends – American Camp Association
<http://www.acacamps.org/media_center/camp_trends/fact.php> [accessed 03/01/2010]

³ Peg. Smith ‘From the Past to the Future’ *Camping Magazine 2010 January/February*
<<http://digital.ibj.com/olive/ode/cpcamp/>> [accessed 01/02/2010]

⁴ Peter Surgenor, ‘The legend of YMCA camping’ *American Camp Association*
<http://www.acacamps.org/media_center/about_aca/camping_in_america.pdf> [accessed 03/02/2010]

⁵ Directions – ‘Youth Development Outcomes of the Camp Experience’ *American Camp Association*
<<http://www.acacamps.org/research/enhance/directions.pdf>> [accessed 05/02/2010]

Cote. This was joined in 1927 by its sister camp, Camp Lake Hubert. The camps are still in existence under the directorship of the Cote family.⁶

The research of Camp Chickawah includes a camp promotional brochure circa 1960, a camp enrolment form from the same period, a magazine that was published to commemorate its fifty year anniversary and issues from 1964 to 1985 of an in-camp publication entitled Chickawah Chirps, which was written and collaborated by the campers under staff guidance. In addition to these materials, a camp-life survey of twenty six alumni of Camp Chickawah who attended between 1938 and 1985 as campers, counsellors in training and counsellors was carried out. This survey consisted of nine questions about the different aspects of the camp experience, allowing for open-ended responses. A copy of my questionnaire appears in the appendix, however the survey completed by the Camp Chickawah alumni base was made available online⁷ thanks to the alumni coordinator of Camp Chickawah, Jeff Grant. The research for Camp Lincoln and Camp Lake Hubert was primarily in the form of two camp brochures circa 1955.

In addition to these primary source materials, I have also consulted articles published in 'Camping Magazine'⁸ an official publication of the American Camp Association, from the end of the 1970s and beginning of the 1980s, alongside promotional material found on the websites of various summer camps. Whilst the primary source material is largely from the post war era, a considerable number of the secondary source materials were written in the 1920s, highlighting the dramatic growth of the camping industry in this period.⁹ The assistant editor of the 'Camping Magazine', Teresa Nicodemus, suggested that 'camp has always been touted as educational but no anecdotal evidence was available in the 1950s through to the 1990s, Only until the late 1990s, when

⁶ Camp Lincoln – Lake Hubert History

<<http://www.lincoln-lakehubert.com/history.php>> [accessed 09/02/2010]

⁷ Camp Life Survey - <<https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/Q2ZVCF8>> [accessed 10/01/2010]

⁸ 'Camping Magazine' *American Camp Association*

<http://www.acacamps.org/anniversary/collection/eleanors_vignettes/> [accessed 09/0/2010]

⁹ Hallie Bond, 'Children's Camps in the Adirondacks' *American Camp Association*

<<http://www.acacamps.org/members/knowledge/strategic/cm/037adirondacks.php>> [accessed 02/02/2010]

the American Camping Association (ACA) began focusing research into the area of outcomes, has camp begun to be understood as a valued educational experience'¹⁰

This dissertation is divided thematically into three chapters, each addressing several ideas that contributed not only to the success of the summer camp movement, but also their impact on youth development.

The first chapter of this dissertation focuses on the initial reasons why children attended camps and why parents were motivated to send their children to camp, focusing on the health benefits of the experience and also the ways in which camp directors ensured a nurturing and safe environment. Whilst concepts will predominantly focus on private residential camps, in particular the three cases studies, analysis of various camps funded by charity organisations will also be undertaken. By looking at the two brochures from Camp Lincoln and Camp Lake Hubert, an attempt to draw comparisons and similarities with regards to the camp experience and the way in which it is sold through promotional material has been made. Discussion will also occur on the differing age and gender appropriate experiences that were created at summer camp and the manner in which camp directors and counsellors promoted development in terms of socialization, acquisition of new skills, independence, leadership and competition.

In the second chapter, the importance of the camp setting will be discussed, in particular the way in which a rural setting such as this granted campers the opportunity to become more aware of the natural environment. Exposure to this sort of environment provided campers with the opportunity to learn new skills in particular water based activities which many campers did not have access to outside of camp. The architecture and design of the summer camps will also be considered and the way in which this changed and developed over time. In addition, discussion will take place on the importance of spirituality and traditions within camp and the creation of camp mission statements and philosophies which provided the starting point for camp activities, generally giving campers positive guidance to allow them to be the best they could be.

¹⁰ Teresa Nicodemus 'Camp Through the Decades,' *American Camp Association* <<http://www.acacamps.org/campmag/cm037decades.php>> [accessed 02/02/02]

In the final chapter, there will be discussion of the ways in which the camp experience was also considered to be an educational one. The educational benefits of the camp experience was a topic that was discussed in great depth in particular in the 1920s following the growth of the Progressive movement. In the camp environment campers were encouraged to grow, not only in terms of their social skills, but also life skills, learning subjects that did not appear on the school curriculum.

Chapter 1

The organizers and promoters of summer camps enthusiastically proclaimed the value of the summer camp experience. For many children the opportunity to spend between one week and a whole summer in close contact with nature was a new experience. The natural setting of most summer camps was one that most inner city youths had never experienced, camp organizers and parents believed that there were great benefits to the environment, not only with regards to health. Celeste Wehl suggested in 1925 that camps were a ‘haven to the boys and girls who yearn for the outdoors in the summer and who would otherwise be compelled to spend their vacations in the tenements where they live throughout the year.’¹¹ Camp provided the opportunity for children to venture away from the familiar surroundings of their home life and supporters of camps believed that this nurtured the personal development of each and every child.

This dissertation examines three private full season residential camps¹², Camp Chickawah in Maine and Camp Lincoln and Camp Lake Hubert in Minnesota. Many more existed, building on the success of the first camps to open at the end of the 19th century. Some were funded largely by charity organisations such as the YMCA, offering the benefits of the camp experience to children coming from the lower social classes. One such example of this sort of camp was Camp Algonquin which opened in the late 1800s, and was ‘fuelled by the belief that spending time in a rural environment would alleviate the problems of inner city poverty’¹³. While a former Camp Chickawah camper described his fellow campers as being from a ‘more homogenous/ privileged background’¹⁴, Camp Algonquin worked to ‘break down the needless barriers between those who have and those who have not’¹⁵. Algonquin’s programme for economically disadvantaged youths was ‘designed to encourage respect for others, to increase understanding and appreciation

¹¹ Celeste Wehl, ‘An Historical Account of the Summer Camp Movement’, *Religious Education*, 20:3, (1925), p182

¹² Both Camp Lincoln and Camp Lake Hubert offered the opportunity for a full season of camping, although children could opt for a shorter camping session

¹³ Camp Algonquin Website <<http://www.campalgonquin.org/History.html>> – [accessed 27/01/2010]

¹⁴ Camp life survey <<https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/Q2ZVCF8>> - accessed on 20/01/2010

¹⁵ Camp Algonquin Website

of cultural diversity, to develop personal strengths and self worth and to promote environmental stewardship'¹⁶.

On June 23rd 1913, in Cleveland, a study was carried out of the activities being undertaken by the children in the town. Out of the 14,683 who were studied, 5,961 were described as doing nothing, whilst of the 7,358 children who it was suggested were playing, 3,171 were 'playing in other ways, mostly just fooling'¹⁷. In his article 'The discovery of Children's Play'¹⁸ Bernard Mergen considered the idea that 'Doing Nothing' and 'Just fooling'¹⁹ are clearly subjective categories. The Cleveland list recorded breaking windows, destroying houses, touching girls, stealing, gambling and drinking'²⁰, alongside other troublesome activities. Statistics such as this clearly support the idea of the summer camp as a way of taking children away from the harsh realities of urban surroundings, and saving them from 'corruption by city life'²¹. Advocators of the summer camp experience highlighted the health benefits as being of particular importance. Dr Winthrop Tilsdale wrote in 1905 that 'in cultivating general morality and kindly behaviour the camps are helped chiefly through their usefulness in making boys strong vitally, in improving their power of digestion, in increasing their lung capacity, in letting the sunshine pour upon every part of their bared bodies'²².

Although most summer camps were opened as well planned out long term ventures, often camps were founded due to an immediate necessity, whether to alleviate social troubles or to provide a solution for them. Camp Concern was founded in Baltimore, following city riots in April of 1968. Whilst this camp did not offer an overnight camping experience, it offered a chance to 'direct the energies of the city's

¹⁶ 'Camp Algonquin' [accessed 27/01/2010]

¹⁷ Bernard Mergen, 'The Discovery of Children's Play', *American Quarterly*, Vol. 27, No.4 (1975) pp 413-414

¹⁸ Bernard Mergen, The Discovery of Children's Play pp 413-414

¹⁹ Bernard Mergen, The Discovery of Children's Play pp 413-414

²⁰ Bernard Mergen, The Discovery of Children's Play pp 413-414

²¹ Washington Gladden, quoted in Barksdale Maynard 'An Ideal life in the Woods for Boys. Architecture and Culture in the Earliest Summer Camps', *Winterthur Portfolio*, 34:1(1999) p17

²² 'The summer camp handbook' <http://www.summertimehandbook.com/161-a-history-of-summer-camp.html> [accessed 25/01/2010]

disadvantaged youth into constructive channels.’²³ One of the main objectives of this camp experience was to improve the health of the children, not only by offering nutritious meals but also by educating them about various health issues including, ‘sex education, venereal diseases, personal hygiene and mental health.’²⁴ Another key initiative at Camp Concern was the use of naval personnel and procedures which was said to be ‘highly beneficial from a disciplinary and exemplary point of view’²⁵. In confronting race and social problems in late 20th century American cities, the camps developed over a century earlier appeared to offer the chance to improve urban life.

Camp Concern used naval personnel to teach campers discipline, in most summer camps this level of control was not necessary. However one of major factors in the success of each individual summer camp was its counsellors and directors, who helped to meet the individual needs of each camper. Camp Chickawah advertised itself as ‘a place to grow.... a place to learn.... a place to be a friend’²⁶. Camp was seen as a time for a child to be a child, ‘to reinforce their sense of worth through the developing of new skills, the blossoming of new talents and the appreciation of their importance to the group’²⁷. Camp counsellors were therefore chosen in accordance with their abilities to tend to the camper’s needs, as their fundamental role was to ‘implement and aid with camp goals’, and through their ‘creative leadership, dynamic supervision and dedication to purpose’ they would therefore ‘provide the atmosphere for a happy experience in group living... a memorable learning opportunity’²⁸.

Different camps placed emphasis on different activities and on the acquisition of different skills. However, one common element was the desire to create an experience that, through exposure to the natural environment and a more simple form of living, could

²³ Joseph Gordon, ‘Camp Concern’ *Public Health Reports (1896 – 1970) Vol. 84, No. 6.) Association of Schools of Public Health* (1969) pp508 -512

²⁴ Joseph Gordon, ‘Camp Concern’ p512

²⁵ Joseph Gordon, ‘Camp Concern’ p512

²⁶ ‘Camp Chickawah Brochure’ *Camp Chickawah*

<<http://www.campchickawah.com/pdfs/Chickawah%20Brochure.pdf>> [accessed 27/01/2010]

²⁷ Camp Chickawah Brochure – [accessed 27/01/2010]

²⁸ Camp Chickawah Brochure – [accessed 27/01/2010]

counter the emphasis imposed on material values²⁹. Through this, a positive atmosphere which would promote individual and group development was created. The directors of Camp Fernwood, an all girl's camp established in Maine in 1921, considered community spirit to be one of the most important factors of the camp experience. Camp Fernwood is described by its directors as 'a place where kind acts mean more than the score in a game.' Camp Fernwood's philosophy was based on four main principles, to 'live simply, enjoy the beauty and wonder of natural surroundings, nurture tolerance and unselfishness and develop loving, life long friendships'³⁰. Camp is described by the directors of Camp Fernwood as 'the single most powerful force in life that promotes health, joy and morality, it is feeling that you belong to something positive that is larger than you, in connecting to camp, kids find a stronger connection to themselves and life.'³¹

A large majority of camps, in particular private camps remained single sex. This is due to the fact that the emotional and physical needs of girls and boys were recognised to be very different. One of the main objectives in the creation of an all boys' camp was to offer 'a potent antidote to the feminized homes that threatened to undermine American manliness'³², and they were also considered both by parents and camp directors to be 'a place where boys would experience the toughening effects of outdoor life albeit amidst the safety of select peers and adult supervision'³³. According to the 1935 'Handbook for Leaders of Camp Fire Girls', parents were encouraged to 'embrace camp as an opportunity to get your girls away from over worked and over organised games like basketball and baseball', suggesting that camp leaders should promote 'activities aimed at fostering in campers an appreciation of the real things about them, without which camping is but a poor substitute for the hectic dashing life of the town or city.'³⁴

²⁹ 'Camp Fernwood' <<http://www.campfernwood.com/about-camp-fernwood/>> – [accessed 20/01/2010]

³⁰ 'Camp Fernwood' <<http://www.campfernwood.com/about-camp-fernwood/special/>> – [accessed 20/01/2010]

³¹ Camp Fernwood – [accessed 20/01/2010]

³² Abigail Van Slyck, *A Manufactured Wilderness – Summer Camps and the Shaping of American Youth, 1890 – 1960*, (University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis and London, 2006) p.xxiv

³³ Leslie Paris, 'Summer Camp' *St James's Encyclopaedia of Popular Culture* (2002) <http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_g1epc/is_tov/ai_2419101174/> accessed 27/01/2010

³⁴ Van Slyck, *A Manufactured Wilderness*, p 91

Camp Lake Hubert and Camp Lincoln were owned and run by the same organisation yet offered very different, gender specific camping experiences. Whilst many of the activities were similar, as were the way in which the camp was divided into different divisions³⁵, the activities that were offered varied and when the same activities were offered to both camps, the manner in which they were taught was quite different reflecting the different needs of the two genders. The brochures for these two camps are similar in many aspects, but there are evident distinctions in the way that the experiences are sold, with each camp choosing to highlight and emphasise what they deemed to be the most important attributes of camp life. In doing so they demonstrated the recognition that in looking for a summer camp, not only the parents, but the boys and girls themselves would be looking for different things, dependent on their gender. Even the descriptions given of the camp surroundings, despite describing the same area, were advertised in different ways. More romantic imagery was used in the Lake Hubert Brochure, where the location was described as ‘in Northern Minnesota, beneath towering pines and beside the blue, sparkling water of Lake Hubert’³⁶. In contrast Camp Lincoln described the location as being ‘ideally located for out-of-doors living and adventure for boys’³⁷.

The horse back riding program at the two camps is a clear example of an activity which was tailored to suit both girls and boys. Whilst essentially learning the same basic skills, not only the actual riding of a horse, but also care of the horses at the stable, the manner in which both the activity was taught and advertised was designed to appeal to both girls and boys. In Camp Lincoln it was suggested that ‘the atmosphere at the saddle house, corral and barn is OLD WEST, Campers are imaginative and readily “become” cowhands’³⁸. However the horse riding program at Camp Lake Hubert was advertised with more focus on the skills that the girls would learn through ‘dependable instruction,

³⁵ The two camps were each divided into 3 sub camps, in Camp Lincoln the divisions were Camp Lincoln Prep – ages 8 to 12, Camp Lincoln, ages 11 – 14 and Senior Camp ages 14 – 18, in Camp Lake Hubert the camp was divided into Prep Camp, ages 8 to 12, Junior Camp ages 11 to 14, and Senior Camp, ages 14 to 17. In Camp Lake Hubert as an addition to the camp experience a counselor training camp was also offered to girls aged from 17 to 19.

³⁶ Camp Lake Hubert Brochure c.1955

³⁷ Camp Lincoln Brochure c.1955

³⁸ Camp Lincoln Brochure

excellent equipment, fine horses and experienced instructors' who were described as being 'capable, patient and dependable'³⁹.

The idea of a summer camp as a safe and homely environment was an important factor in its success and popularity. For many children summer camp was the first time that they spent an extended period away from their families, a potentially worrying and difficult time for both parents and children. To eliminate these anxieties, camp directors and camp staff went out of their way to ensure positive leadership, with the directors at Camp Lincoln suggesting that 'one of the unique opportunities in camping is the wholesome adult-boy companionship that develops in the camp environment'⁴⁰. Former campers of Camp Chickawah have described camp as being a place of comfort or as their second home, suggesting in one case that 'the close friendships have enhanced everything'⁴¹. Whilst this positive leadership helped new campers in particular to feel at ease while away from home, one former camper is quoted as saying 'the most important thing about camp for me was the knowledge that I could learn to survive on my own. I was not totally reliant upon my parents to survive every day'⁴². The camp experience taught children to be independent but within a nurturing and safe environment.

Elbert Fretwell suggested in an article published in a collective entitled 'The Essence of Camping' in 1928 that upon choosing a summer camp for a child it was important to evaluate the camp according to certain expectations and criteria which would effectively reduce parental worries. Among these he included firstly the idea of safety asking 'Is he safe? Will my son return to me? What are the provisions to prevent, or are for, possible illness or accident?'⁴³. He also looked at ideas related to citizenship, questioning 'does the camp furnish a favourable opportunity for developing through satisfying practice, the qualities of a good citizen'⁴⁴. All parents who sent their child to

³⁹ Camp Lake Hubert Brochure

⁴⁰ Camp Lincoln Brochure

⁴¹ Chickawah: Camp Life Survey.

⁴² Chickawah: Camp Life Survey

⁴³ Elbert K. Fretwell, 'Ten Tests for a Camp', *The Essence of Camping*

<<http://www.acacamps.org/anniversary/collection/historical/TheEssenceofCamping.pdf>> [accessed 03/02/2010]

⁴⁴ Fretwell, 'Ten tests for a camp'

camp did so in the hope that they would have a positive and enriching experience, and as Fretwell suggested, it was important for them to know that camp was a happy place.⁴⁵ Whilst parents were looking at the camp experience as one that would encourage independence in their child, it was important for them to know that their child was being properly cared for, as during this time a camp counsellor or director was effectively their replacement. For this reason Fretwell emphasised his concerns with a final question at the end of his article, asking ‘finally, is there some one specific person in the camp who is personally responsible for my boy day and night, asleep or awake? Who is he?’⁴⁶.

Results from the survey conducted of former campers of Camp Chickawah indicated, what the individual campers considered to be the most important aspects of the summer camp experience. One of the aspects that appeared in the majority of the responses was with regards to the value they placed on the development of team work, healthy competition, and the practical skills involved in living and working with each other.⁴⁷ The competitive nature of the summer camp was one that varied from camp to camp with many stressing participation as the most important factor. Other camps, whilst accepting that each child was different, encouraged children to compete and excel in their activities supporting them in reaching their full potential. Camp Lincoln, for example, ‘relegated competition to informal games and sports for those who wish to play’ stating that this provided a refuge from ‘the highly competitive communities in which we live during the rest of the year,’ and emphasised the camp authorities desire to ‘avoid regimentation and routine in camp’. In contrast Camp Chickawah organised all camp team activities such as Tribal Wars in which ‘everyone in camp, unless medically excused, participated and tried their best’⁴⁸. In addition the opportunity was given ‘on an elective basis, for varsity players to go out for teams in the sports they like most’⁴⁹, with regular fixtures played in a variety of sports against neighbouring camps.

⁴⁵ Fretwell ‘Ten tests for a camp’

⁴⁶ Fretwell, ‘Ten tests for a camp’

⁴⁷ Chickawah: Camp Life Survey

⁴⁸ Chickawah Chirps, Vol. LV NO.2 July 27, 1974 <<http://www.campchickawah.com/chirps.php>>] accessed 14/01/2010]

⁴⁹ Chickawah Chirps, Banquet 1983

As well as opportunities to join a team in sporting and other such activities, the whole camp experience promoted both working and living together and the opportunity for older campers to take more responsibility in the running of the camp through leadership positions. One of the most important aspects of camp life that was promoted by camp directors was learning to live and cohabit with other children and accepting and valuing the differences of others. The norm at most summer camps was to divide the camp community into sections or divisions determined by age or camp experience, with counsellors living in the same cabin as the children, therefore creating a kind of family atmosphere. By effectively dividing the camp community into different sections, the result was the advantages of a small camp but the opportunity to enjoy the many facilities only a large camp can provide⁵⁰. Bunk or cabin life was one of the most important aspects of camp life, as through this campers were taught the importance of tolerance, acceptance and respect for others in order to promote a happy and inclusive living environment.

The directors of Camp Chickawah suggested that the campers' living unit was not only a family but a team, two key elements of the camp experience. In stating that the cabin, (commonly referred to as a bunk) was like a family, the camp directors suggested the necessity to 'accept everybody's differences, understanding everybody's needs and facing problems in a helpful way,' stating that 'the bunk that can do all these three things will be a bunk in which all campers would like to live'⁵¹. In an editorial published in the 1982 edition of Chickawah Chirps, Moe and Betty, the camp directors discussed the idea of a bunk being like a team. They suggested formulas for a successful bunk considering that,

'a winning team means working together, having a team spirit means caring about team mates, helping them and above all, never putting a team-mate down. Once a team starts to shout at each other, blaming a few for making mistakes, the first thing they lose is spirit, and next the game! A bunk is like a team. Every single member is important, not one member can be put down without damaging the

⁵⁰ Camp Lincoln Brochure

⁵¹ Chickawah Chirps, Banquet 1983 issue

spirit of the group. But if you help each other and care about the happiness of every bunkmate, you will have team work that will win more than a game. You'll have a winning summer.'⁵²

The division of the summer camp into units organised by age and previous camp experience, allowed campers the opportunity to enjoy camp-life in a way that was appropriate to their individual needs. This meant that the campers were able to develop within the camp setting at their own rate, without being held back or forced out of their comfort zone. This sort of experience allowed the youngest children to 'develop in self reliance, receive individual attention and learn experience in sharing and getting along with others'⁵³, whilst members of the senior camp are given 'an opportunity for free expression in word and action, leadership opportunities' and at the same time recognising that 'with high expectations the boys will respond accordingly'⁵⁴. Great value was placed on individual and group achievements at camp, not only were awards given to campers who excelled in a particular activity, but also a great deal of attention was placed on improvement and the acquisition of different skills. Many camps offered badges in recognition of these achievements, therefore giving all campers goals to work towards and improve over the summer and in some cases over many summers. By keeping the experience a challenging one, with opportunity for growth not only in terms of knowledge but also in character and personality, the director at Camp Lincoln suggested that 'there is a new challenge to keep alive the camping interest throughout their camping years.'⁵⁵

In many camps, events such as Tribe Wars, Camp Olympics or Color Wars were a chance to introduce a friendly competitive element into the camp environment. Such events gave the older campers an opportunity to take up leadership role. The campers were awarded these positions in recognition of the positive example they had set to younger campers through their exemplary behaviour. When asked what their fondest

⁵² Chickawah Chirps – Vol. LXIII no.1 July 15, 1982

⁵³ Camp Lincoln Brochure

⁵⁴ Camp Lincoln Brochure

⁵⁵ Camp Lincoln Brochure

memory of camp was, 8 out of 26 former Chickawah campers cited the winning of the color war, with 4 of them highlighting the importance of being chosen as a captain. One former camper describes becoming a color war captain as ‘signifying the respect I earned by campers and counsellors and I look back at that as possibly the first moment I saw myself as a leader’⁵⁶.

There are no limits to the values that can be placed on the summer camp experience, as each child takes from camp their own experiences and will have grown and developed in their own unique way. Such a close knit community promotes a strong sense of inclusion and acceptance. A former Chickawah camper described camp as ‘an instrumental, if not the essential part of my youth and growing up, I felt like I was a “nobody”, with no great identity or self image. But at camp, with only 100 campers, I could be somebody, I was able to excel in athletics, make friends, and become a leader that I could never accomplish at home,’ he then states that ‘as I am successful in life I attribute much of my self image and self confidence to lessons learned at camp’⁵⁷.

The camp experience was sold in different ways to the parents and children as clearly both had differing motivations for camp attendance. In the majority of cases, it was the parents who desired this opportunity for their children, either because they themselves had attended summer camp and so therefore recognized the values that were placed on the experience, or because they felt that it would be a ‘great growing experience for their children to be ‘on their own’⁵⁸. The way in which camp was sold to the campers was as a fun experience and the opportunity to find good friends,⁵⁹ in contrast, the importance of the real values of the camping experience were stressed to the parents suggesting that ‘they could not be over emphasised in this troubled, over organised, materialistic, entertained society in which we live in’⁶⁰. Camp promotional material focused more on camp as an educational institute which would teach their children new skills whilst also encouraging their overall youth development.

⁵⁶ Chickawah: Camp Life Survey

⁵⁷ Chickawah: Camp Life Survey

⁵⁸ Chickawah: Camp Life Survey

⁵⁹ Camp Lincoln Brochure

⁶⁰ Camp Lincoln Brochure

It is evident that all summer camps were different and would not necessarily cater to the needs of every individual; Celeste Wehl suggested in 1925 that ‘care must be taken in selecting a camp for a boy or girl, as all children do not respond to the same influences. It is during vacation that the child either gains by long strides or runs wild.’⁶¹ For this reason the directors of more modern summer camps spent a considerable amount of time organising the programming for the camp, in order to ensure its success and popularity. This change came from the recognition that the summer camp was not necessarily just an extended holiday with friends but also an opportunity to learn new skills and experience new adventures in an unfamiliar environment. Camp directors worked throughout the year to ensure that their camp program suited each child. In addition the directors of Camp Chickawah for example, personally interviewed campers from all over the country to contribute to the continuing camp community,⁶² while the directors of Camp Lincoln stated that ‘because of our many years of successful camping, we have enthusiastic campers and parents all across the land who will be glad to serve as a reference for us.’⁶³

⁶¹ Celeste Wehl *An historical account of the summer camp movement* p184

⁶² Chickawah Enrolment Application, *Camp Chickawah*
<<http://www.campchickawah.com/pdfs/Chickawah%20Enrollment%20Application.pdf>> - [accessed 20/01/2010]

⁶³ Camp Lincoln Brochure

Chapter 2

The location and setting of the camp environment can be seen as one of the greatest elements of its success and overwhelming popularity. As stated previously, camp directors endeavoured to provide respite to the harsh urban environment that the majority of camp attendees came from, giving them a chance to develop in unfamiliar surroundings whilst enjoying an opportunity to be close to nature. For this reason the majority of camps were located in areas away from the hustle and bustle of the outside world, therefore creating a strong sense of community, and also ensuring that activities undertaken at camp would not disturb others

The camp directors of the earliest summer camps favoured lakeside sites, primarily for their use in drinking, cooking and cleaning⁶⁴. However waterfront activities were one of the most important elements of the camp experience, and for safety reasons, lakes were favoured over rivers. This was because it was possible to create a waterfront that could be divided in order to meet the requirements of each individual camper, and ensure their safety. Camp directors recognised that water based activities were amongst the riskiest ventures that campers would undertake whilst at camp, so they worked to ensure that they were suitable for all of the children, in many cases implementing specific requirements for each water based activity. Swimming was seen as an important life skill, and for some campers coming from urban areas, this was the first real opportunity they had to learn to swim. According to Van Slyck, camp directors sought to make ‘every camper a swimmer and every swimmer a life saver’⁶⁵. Like all activities at camp, the waterfront program gave campers the opportunity to learn new skills or develop ones that they already had under the patient guidance of qualified instructors.

In earlier summer camps the waterfront was seen more as a place for the children to have fun, rather than to learn practical skills. However, in 1931, a resolution was passed by the Camp Directors’ Association ‘accepting the standards of the Red Cross as

⁶⁴Abigail Van Slyck, *A Manufactured Wilderness – Summer Camps and the Shaping of American Youth, 1890 – 1960*, (University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis and London, 2006) p 11

⁶⁵ Van Slyck, *A Manufactured Wilderness* p83

its official minimum standards in swimming, life saving, diving, swimming pool leadership, boating, canoeing, camp waterfront leadership and first aid'⁶⁶. Following this development, camp directors were required to implement more restrictive regulations to ensure camper safety. Official recognition was given to the achievements of campers through Red Cross award schemes and campers were able to build on this from one summer to the next. An increase in skills and proficiency was rewarded by the opportunity to learn new water sports and also badges and certificates were awarded. At Camp Lincoln the youngest campers, up to the age of 11 were offered swimming and canoeing in their programme, whereas the older campers were given more options including sailing⁶⁷. In a similar way to which the horse riding programme offered the opportunity for campers not only to ride the horses, but also to learn to look after them, the sailing programme 'taught boys to care for boats, how to rig them, how to land them, safety precautions when sailing alone or with passengers'⁶⁸. This essentially promoted skills that would enable them to continue with these activities out-with the camp environment and allow them to become more rounded individuals.

In addition to traditional water sports such as sailing and canoeing, at Camp Chickawah campers were also offered the opportunity to learn scuba and skin diving, water skiing and surf boating⁶⁹. Waterfront activities such as these required campers to prove their aptitudes through a compulsory swimming test. At some summer camp this took the form of a swimming assessment which according to Van Slyck, 'many former campers remembered as rites of passage'⁷⁰. However at Camp Chickawah in addition to this basic swim test, the Island swim was seen as 'a gateway to many favourite waterfront activities,' and was described as 'a real survival test of nearly 1/3 of a mile.'⁷¹ A camper wrote a description of his swim to the island in the 1964 edition of Chickawah Chirps, stating 'as I dived into the water a million leeches grabbed onto my legs.... and when I

⁶⁶ Van Slyck, *A Manufactured Wilderness* p85

⁶⁷ Camp Lincoln Brochure

⁶⁸ Camp Lincoln Brochure

⁶⁹ 'Camp Chickawah Brochure' *Camp Chickawah*

<<http://www.campchickawah.com/pdfs/Chickawah%20Brochure.pdf>> [accessed 27/01/2010]

⁷⁰ Van Slyck, *A Manufactured Wilderness* p84

⁷¹ Chickawah Chirps, Banquet 1969 <<http://www.campchickawah.com/chirps.php>>] accessed 14/01/2010]

got half way done, and I was getting very tired, a turtle pulled me all the way to the island', seemingly highlighting his pride in his achievement.

Water proficiency was not only a requirement for in-camp activities, but also campers relished the opportunity to use their new acquired skills in a more challenging environment. This allowed them to demonstrate their new accomplishments whether it was through competing in inter-camp competitions, or taking overnight river canoeing trips. Former campers of Chickawah included in what they considered to be the most important aspects of the camp experience, learning skills such as canoeing and sailing that they would never have had the opportunity to learn otherwise, and building practical life skills and an appreciation of the outdoors.⁷²

The architecture and design of the camp setting was one of the areas of the camp experience which developed most over time. Earlier camps were largely based at temporary locations which were used only during the summer, therefore permanent structures were neither necessary nor possible to construct. For this reason many earlier camps used military tents that could easily be stored and used again the next summer, however these tents were rarely considered to be a permanent solution, as they were affected more quickly by general wear and tear. According to Wilson, the founder of Camp Pasquaney, one of the first summer camps in America, 'the word 'camp' at once prejudices people against it, it suggests at once to their minds visions of canvas tents.'⁷³ Private residential camps therefore, despite offering an experience based on the principles of simple living in the outdoors, nonetheless favoured rustic cabins instead of tents.

Alongside the issues with regards to the conditions of the tents, there was also growing concern about campers' health. Parents who were spending considerable amounts of money to send their children to camp, (Camp Chickawah for example

⁷² Chickawah : Camp Life Survey

⁷³ Barksdale Maynard 'An Ideal life in the Woods for Boys. Architecture and Culture in the Earliest Summer Camps', *Winterthur Portfolio*, 34:1(1999) p21

charged \$4,450.00 for a whole summer at camp)⁷⁴, would have been unwilling to do so in the knowledge that the experience was to the detriment of their children's health. Charity funded camps such as Camp Concern and Camp Algonquin focused a lot of their attention on improving the health of their campers and aimed to provide medical attention to those who needed it and activities which would improve their general wellbeing and promote their physical and emotional development.

In contrast the directors at Camp Lincoln, Camp Lake Hubert and Camp Chickawah ensured that a good general health of all boys during the camping season was a main priority, for this reason 'campers needed a clean bill of health on entering camp, assuring freedom from contagion'⁷⁵. In addition to this the camps had well equipped infirmaries with nurses living in the camp residences, with the additional advantage of close access to a nearby hospital in the case of an emergency⁷⁶. In camp sanitation was considered to be highly important, the brochures at Camp Lincoln and Camp Lake Hubert boasted that their 'sanitation facilities are modern throughout camp and meet the high standards of the Minnesota Department of Health and the American Camping Association'⁷⁷, whilst the promotional material for Camp Chickawah advertised that 'for over four decades the 'AA' Board of Health rating has been a source of pride.'⁷⁸

All the campers were responsible for maintaining these high standards of cleanliness throughout camp, and being away from their parents meant leaving certain luxuries at home and learning to fend for themselves. One former Chickawah camper recalls that camp was the first time he had to make his own bed⁷⁹, clearly outlining as a benefit of the camp experience the fact that campers became more self reliant and independent. Camp cleanliness was in many respects a source of pride for the campers,

⁷⁴ Chickawah Enrolment Application, Camp Chickawah c.1970
<<http://www.campchickawah.com/pdfs/Chickawah%20Enrollment%20Application.pdf>> - [accessed 20/01/2010]

⁷⁵ Camp Chickawah Brochure

⁷⁶ Camp Lake Hubert Brochure

⁷⁷ Camp Lincoln and Camp Lake Hubert Brochures

⁷⁸ Camp Chickawah Brochure

⁷⁹ Chickawah: Camp Life Survey

the 1949 issue of Chickawah Chirps published this short article which was later reprinted in 1974, it stated

‘Let’s all be policemen, there are criminals hiding all over camp. These culprits are constantly at work trying to destroy the looks of our camps and ball fields. If we are on our guard the menace can be stopped. Only you working with the many waste receptacles all over camp can banish this threat, STRAY PAPER, from Chickawah.’⁸⁰

An article published in the ‘Camping Magazine’ in April 1980 supported the importance of campers taking responsibility for camp cleanliness, stating that ‘if for example a camper participates in a litter cleanup, he might eventually understand that littering behaviour is incompatible with a clean environment’⁸¹.

Respect for the environment in which they were living during the summer months was a fundamental aspect of the camp experience. Campers were taught to appreciate the natural environment and statements such as the above support this notion that camp was a place where the boys or girls could learn to make a difference and to positively impact the natural world. Alongside excursions such as hikes and canoeing trips that brought the campers close to nature, often opportunities were given for campers to help with conservation projects and clean ups. Some of these projects took place within camp grounds, for example in 1969 at Camp Chickawah, campers helped with what was described in the Chickawah Chirps camp magazine as ‘the biggest camp-craft construction project that has ever been attempted and successfully completed’⁸². This project was the creation of a dam following the realization that ‘water was running around the original dam built at the outlet of the lake 25 years ago, faster than it was running in at the inlet’⁸³. The author of the article in the Chickawah Chirps declared that ‘at the sight of this eighth wonder of the world a permanent plaque will proclaim the names of those who worked to erect this 50th anniversary present to Chickawah and

⁸⁰ Chickawah Chirps, Vol LV no 2, July 27 1974

⁸¹ Camping Magazine April 1980, *American Camp Association*
<http://www.acacamps.org/anniversary/collection/eleanors_vignettes/April.pdf> [accessed 05/02/2010]

⁸² Chickawah Chirps - 1969 Banquet Issue

⁸³ Chickawah Chirps – 1969 Banquet Issue

Island Pond'⁸⁴. Projects such as this not only gave the campers a strong sense of achievement of having mastered new skills but also a sense of pride that they had successfully made a difference.

In 1970, senior campers at Camp Chickawah took part in a massive cleanup of the Saco River as part of a campaign to 'clean up that once beautiful waterway of tons of trash and debris; working along with forest rangers, national guardsman, private citizens and other camps'⁸⁵. This task used skills that the campers had learned at the camp waterfront as in some cases 'they had to wade in their long pants, and sometimes had to dive under the water to retrieve submerged bottles and cans'⁸⁶. The editor of the camp magazine explained that 'the Saco River is one that we have used for canoe tripping, and so our crew had a special reason for wanting to restore her beauty'⁸⁷. He then went on to declare 'let's hope that their efforts will encourage all Americans to cherish and maintain our environment'⁸⁸.

Most summer camps, upon opening created their camp philosophies or mission statements, which would be the starting point for all camp activities. Camp Beckett for boys, had eight camp mottos, which encouraged and nourished both individuality and teamwork,⁸⁹ these simple mottos gave the campers guidance not only with regards to camp life, but also ideas that they could take home with them. These included 'do your best', 'help the other fellow' and better faithful than famous,' a camp alumni from the early 1980s stated that 'the Camp Beckett mottos influence my life to this day'⁹⁰. Camp Chickawah based their camp philosophy on the nine letters of the word CHICKAWAH⁹¹. Each letter represented a quality which was expected of their campers.

C = Cooperation

⁸⁴ Chickawah Chirps – 1969 Banquet Issue

⁸⁵ Chickawah Chirps – July 1970

⁸⁶ Chickawah Chirps – July 1970

⁸⁷ Chickawah Chirps – July 1970

⁸⁸ Chickawah Chirps – July 1970

⁸⁹ Camp Beckett <<http://www.bccymca.org/page.php?id=542>> [accessed 02/02/2010]

⁹⁰ Camp Beckett

⁹¹ Chickawah Letters – *Camp Chickawah*

< <http://www.campchickawah.com/letters.php>> [accessed 01/02/2010]

H = Helpfulness

I = Initiative

C = Courage

K = Kindness

A = Ability

W = Wisdom

A = Awareness

H = Home

These letters formed a basis for life lessons that the boys learned at camp. One former camper recalls how ‘these values were ingrained in us from an early age; the director would give Sunday morning sermons based on the letters in the camp name. Memorable to this day’⁹². At a lot of summer camps the programme on Sundays was different to other days, with more emphasis placed on calmer and quieter activities. According to Van Slyck, ‘many camp organizers felt that most camp activities were simply too boisterous for the Sabbath and they worked to establish a different tone on this day of rest’⁹³. In addition many camps arranged ethical services which gave campers the opportunity to reflect on different things such as friendship and community living, and in the case of Camp Chickawah the lessons of the camp letters whilst camps with religious affiliations tended to organise denominational services.

Frederick Guggenheimer in 1928 discussed the worry felt by many that ‘the places of formal worship may be temporarily losing our modern boys and girls’⁹⁴. However he goes on to suggest that ‘through the summer camp and the intimate contact with the great universe around them which it makes possible, these girls and boys are finding God.’⁹⁵ The directors of Camp Lake Hubert and Camp Lincoln advertised their camp as a ‘setting that offered endless opportunities for spiritual discovery and growth.’

⁹² Chickawah: Camp Life Survey

⁹³ Van Slyck, *A Manufactured Wilderness* p52

⁹⁴ Frederick Guggenheimer, ‘Camp Education’ *The Essence of Camping*
<<http://www.acacamps.org/anniversary/collection/historical/TheEssenceofCamping.pdf>> [accessed 03/02/2010]

⁹⁵ Guggenheimer ‘Camp Education’

They suggested that ‘the natural beauty of the lakes and woods, the sounds of the out-of-doors, the warmth of companionship, the character of a counsellor or director, the dying embers of a campfire, the intimate contact with an adult, create a spiritual impact unique to camping’⁹⁶. The two camps were non sectarian but held Christian Sunday services which were attended by all campers and staff, although provision was made to allow Catholic campers the chance to attend nearby mass.⁹⁷ The camp directors described the camp’s philosophy as a ‘pretty good code for living, whether at home or at camp’⁹⁸. The directors of Camp Lincoln created a camp creed, which was the following 10 point guide for camp life.

1. I’m third (God is first; others are second; I’m third)
2. I will keep myself and speech clean
3. I will always look for the best in my fellow camper
4. I will learn and observe all camp regulations
5. I will treat others as I wish to be treated
6. I will play hard and fair
7. I will accept my counsellor as my camp dad
8. I will be courteous
9. I will be the kind of camper my mother wants me to be
10. I’m not dressed until I’ve put on a smile⁹⁹

These philosophies and camp missions formed an important part of the individual camp’s traditions. Michael Brandwein, a noted speaker and consultant to the camp profession suggested that ‘the traditions and customs of each different camp are like a secret code that allows those who know it to feel embraced by something unique and special’¹⁰⁰. Each camp had different traditions and customs creating a somewhat extraordinary experience in which all campers could feel like they were part of something very special,

⁹⁶ Camp Lincoln and Camp Lake Hubert brochures

⁹⁷ Camp Lincoln and Camp Lake Hubert Brochure

⁹⁸ Camp Lincoln Brochure

⁹⁹ Camp Lincoln Brochure

¹⁰⁰ ‘Psychological Aspects’ American Camp Association

<http://www.campparents.org/expert/psychological_aspects.php> [accessed 03/01/2010]

and that in many cases had existed for decades before. The current director of Camp Fernwood in Maine stated that ‘the girls sing the same songs that many of their mothers and grandmothers sang’¹⁰¹. Many summer camps were characterised by their individual songs, chants, camp fire rituals and all camp events which highlighted the importance of camp spirit and was one of the biggest appeals to campers. Camp psychologist Bruce Muchnick suggests that ‘the camp community seeks to satisfy children’s basic need for connectedness, affiliation, belonging, acceptance, safety and feelings of acceptance and appreciation’¹⁰². Campers felt connected to each other and to the camp setting by sharing these traditional elements of the experience.

One of the main components in the withholding of camp traditions was the staff, and in particular the directors. One of the greatest achievements of summer camps was their ability to retain their staff, and in many cases to convert campers into counsellors and potentially into directors. The camp directors of Camp Chickawah claimed they ‘devoted a lifetime to the ideals of creative summer camping,’ and like with many family businesses a fundamental element in the success of the camp was that ‘their daughter and son-in-law, associated with them for over twenty years, continue in this fine tradition’¹⁰³. In the same way in which the Chickawah directors dedicated their lives to camp, one of the camp directors of Camp Lincoln ‘decided that the fullest satisfaction of his interest in youth could be realized in camping, and chose to devote his full time to the work’¹⁰⁴. In the Camp Lake Hubert brochure, a dedication is made to the founders and directors of the camp, Dr. and Mrs. W.H. Rogers. The dedication highlights the massive impact the two of them had on camp stating that ‘their love and insight have been the guiding forces in the shaping and growth of the camp. Their selfless devotion to camping and youth has pervaded all that is Camp Lake Hubert’¹⁰⁵.

John Sprague suggested the importance of camp counsellors as positive role models to the campers and very influential in determining their behaviour. He discussed

¹⁰¹ Camp Fernwood < <http://www.campfernwood.com/about-camp-fernwood/> > [accessed 19/01/2010]

¹⁰² Psychological Benefits, American Camp Association

¹⁰³ Camp Chickawah Brochure

¹⁰⁴ Camp Lincoln Brochure

¹⁰⁵ Camp Lake Hubert Brochure

that 'Boys and girls of camp age are hero worshippers. They are quick to copy and adopt the standards of their campers, through intimate association with them they learn how their fellow campers should be treated', going on to suggest that 'camp staff have at their disposal ways and means of influencing boys and girls that it is impossible for parents to duplicate either at home or when on vacations with their children'¹⁰⁶. The 2nd edition of Chickawah Chirps published in 1984 contained an article entitled 'Hats off to staff'. In this article the writer suggested that 'bread is the staff of life,' stating that 'it nourishes the body and gives substance to the meal.' He goes on to make a comparison with camp staff, suggesting that 'staff is the bread of a satisfying summer, made of the skills we need to learn, and the leadership that we look to, it nourishes the spirit, and gives stability to the community,' ending the article by exclaiming 'hats off to our camp staff of 84' best bread of the year!'¹⁰⁷

In addition many camps created either 'Counsellor in Training – C.I.T.' or 'Leadership in Training – L.I.T.' programmes. These programmes were put into place for two main reasons, to allow older campers an extension to their camping experience, and to train campers to be counsellors teaching them lessons which would not only aid them in camp life but also in terms of their own individual personal development. C.I.T.s were considered to be campers in transition, it was recognised that they were neither campers nor counsellors, therefore privileges and responsibilities reflected this. Both Camp Chickawah and Camp Lake Hubert had Counsellor in Training Programmes. The promotional brochure for Camp Lake Hubert, advertised the programme as 'an opportunity for young women to extend their interest in the out-of-doors toward youth guidance and leadership.'¹⁰⁸ The programme took the form of participating and assisting with camp activities and in addition to this 'discussions on child psychology, sociology, guidance methods and all phases of camping.'¹⁰⁹ The directors of Camp Lake Hubert suggested that 'some take the program recognizing its value for motherhood and

¹⁰⁶ John Sprague, 'The Essence of Camping'

¹⁰⁷ Chickawah Chirps 1984 number 2

¹⁰⁸ Camp Lake Hubert Brochure

¹⁰⁹ Camp Lake Hubert Brochure

homemaking,¹¹⁰ therefore helping girls to prepare themselves for eventual submersion into family life.

¹¹⁰ Camp Lake Hubert Brochure

Chapter 3

One of the great advantages of summer camp was that it not only provided a fun experience for children, but also an educational one. This is evident not only in terms of new skills that children acquired but also in relation to life lessons they took from camp including most notably a development of their social skills. Michael Brandwein suggested that ‘in this less pressurized atmosphere, children learn more readily what positive things to say and do when they make mistakes and face challenges’¹¹¹. The camp setting created a nurturing environment where children were able to learn new things during the summer months, effectively creating an extension to the schooling they received throughout the year but in a generally more practical and less formal manner. Walton Johnson suggested that ‘camping at its best is education at its best’, later stating that ‘no other experience can equip youth so adequately for the real issues of life, nowhere else is so much skill, knowledge and inspiration to be gained in a few weeks’¹¹².

Parents did not send their children to camp expecting them to learn traditional subjects like maths or English, although at some camps tutoring was available. The directors at Camp Chickawah for example declared that ‘there is no formal tutorial program. Qualified staff members are assigned under the supervision of the directors to conduct simple tutoring. The rate is two dollars per hour.’¹¹³ Instead what parents hoped for was that their children would learn useful skills that were not taught within the compulsory system of education. In 1928 Frederick Guggenheimer suggested that ‘the school emphasized intellectual or mental training, while the camp stresses not only physically but perhaps even more emphatically moral, social, aesthetic and spiritual training.’¹¹⁴ Campers achieved this acquisition of new skills through exposure to different

¹¹¹Michael Brandwein ‘Psychological Aspects’ *American Camp Association*
<http://www.campparents.org/expert/psychological_aspects.php> [accessed 03/01/2010]

¹¹² C. Walton. Johnson, ‘The Unique Mission of the Summer Camp’
<http://www.acacamps.org/anniversary/collection/historical/Unique_Mission_Summer_Camp_1960.pdf>
[accessed 02/02/2010]

¹¹³ Chickawah Enrolment Application, *Camp Chickawah*
<<http://www.campchickawah.com/pdfs/Chickawah%20Enrollment%20Application.pdf>> - [accessed 20/01/2010]

¹¹⁴Frederick Guggenheimer ‘Camp Education’ *The Essence of Camping*

sporting activities, but more importantly through the opportunity for personal development in a natural environment. Camps were considered to be the ‘first institutions designed to educate the whole child, providing twenty four hour care that fostered physical health and social development in generations of children in America.’¹¹⁵

In addition to summer camps, some schools organised for their students to experience a couple of weeks in a camp setting during the year, clearly highlighting the value that was placed on the camp experience. One such camp was organised by the W.K.Kellogg Foundation in 1940, this was founded on the basis that educators were ‘concerned about growth and development of children,’ and the belief that ‘children should have contacts with nature that even the science laboratory with all its equipment does not provide.’¹¹⁶ Camp life was seen by the organizers of the community camp, as an important part of preparing youths for adulthood, they suggested that ‘taking the children away for a camping trip is a beginning of the weaning of child and parent from each other which prepares the young for the establishment of new homes of their own.’¹¹⁷ For children who did not have the opportunity to spend their summers at camp, this immersion into camp life had obvious benefits, in particular in terms of four main areas of living, ‘work experiences, healthful living, basic pursuits and social living.’¹¹⁸ A teacher from one of the participating schools was quoted as saying ‘I do not recognise this child as the same pupil I had in my classroom,’¹¹⁹ clearly demonstrating the changing personalities of children at camp in a less formal environment than the classroom.

Another initiative launched in 1954 was for teachers to go to camp, or a summer course in outdoor education with the objective of introducing ‘a new trend in education, a procedure of extending the classroom into the out-of-doors’¹²⁰. The relationship that

<<http://www.acacamps.org/anniversary/collection/historical/TheEssenceofCamping.pdf>> [accessed 03/02/2010]

¹¹⁵ ‘Abigail Van Slyck ‘Summer Camp’, *Encyclopedia of Children and Childhood in History and society* < <http://www.faqs.org/childhood/So-Th/Summer-Camps.html>> [accessed 14/12/2009]

¹¹⁶ Hugh B Masters ‘A Community School Camp’ *The Elementary School Journal, Vol. 41, (1941)* p736

¹¹⁷ Masters, A Community School Camp p.738

¹¹⁸ Masters, A Community School Camp p.737

¹¹⁹ Masters, A Community School Camp p.745

¹²⁰ Robert Bullington ‘When Teachers go to Camp’ *The American Biology Teacher, Vol. 17, No.3 (1955)* pp 99-100

camp counsellors had with their campers was usually incomparable to that of the teacher student relationship that existed in schools. Whilst a teacher would spend a few hours with their students each day, the relationship between a camp counsellor and their campers was much more intense, with the camp counsellor effectively assuming multiple roles dependent on each campers needs. In Robert Bullington's article about this teacher's camp, he suggested that 'living together, teacher and pupils really discover each other, they work and play together and develop a rapport that is seldom possible in the classroom.'¹²¹

Whilst a lot of the lessons learned at camp were under the guidance of the camp counsellors and directors, for many children, camp was a place of self discovery. It gave children an opportunity to learn more about themselves as in this safe environment they were able to take risks. Leslie Paris suggested that 'young campers learned about sex, how to cuss, how to play practical jokes, how to make friends and how to deal with emotions such as loneliness and failure, all independent from the supervision of counsellors and directors.'¹²² Camp gave children a unique sense of autonomy, they were able to make their own decisions about aspects of their lives which their parents or teachers would have controlled during the year but at the same time they knew that the camp counsellors would offer help and support whenever they needed it. The directors of Camp Fernwood considered that 'growing at Fernwood is so easy, everyone around is supporting you, everyone feels safe to try and do new things.'¹²³ Frank Hackett in 1928 discussed the importance of living with and learning from other campers to be a fundamental part of good camp training emphasising the importance of 'living with a group considerately, cheerfully, and successfully, through ease and through difficulty, at camp, and on trips where everyone shares the tasks that make for mutual happiness or failure.'¹²⁴

¹²¹ Robert Bullington, 'When Teachers Go To Camp p 99

¹²² Howard Chudacoff, 'Review of Leslie Paris, Children's Nature: The rise of the American Summer Camp' <http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/anthropological_quarterly/v081/81.3.chudacoff.html> [accessed 15/01/2010]

¹²³ Camp Fernwood Promotional Video - <<http://www.campfernwood.com/>> [accessed 22/12/2009]

¹²⁴ Frank Hackett, 'Partners in Education' *The Essence of Camping* <<http://www.acacamps.org/anniversary/collection/historical/TheEssenceofCamping.pdf>> [accessed 03/02/2010]

It has often been suggested that children can learn a lot from the camp experience and in some cases more than they learn throughout the year through compulsory education. The former president of Harvard University, Charles Eliot was quoted in 1922 as saying ‘I have the conviction that a few weeks in a well organised summer camp may be of more value educationally than a year in formal education.’¹²⁵ Many children, in particular those who were less successful in school found that within a less formal environment they could thrive. Camp provided a more hands on and practical learning experience, but with less emphasis on assessment and grades therefore eliminating the pressure to succeed and allowing it to be a natural occurrence whilst at the same time recognising that all children have different skills and traits. When former campers of Camp Chickawah were asked if they considered the idea that children could learn more from their time at summer camp than they did throughout the year through compulsory education to be a true statement, a great variety of answers were received. Out of the twenty six who responded only five former campers openly rejected this statement¹²⁶. Of these five, one camper was quoted as saying ‘no, I am a firm believer in education. There was no structured learning at camp, no quizzing, no homework, no tests,’ with another camper stating that ‘no, one does not learn formal English, Math, Science and Social Studies in camp.’¹²⁷

The majority of those asked, did not reject formal schooling as a form of education, but suggested that camp life was a good supplement to the teaching they received in schools as they learned very different things to what they would and could learn in the classroom. One of the main aspects that they felt that they benefited from at camp was in terms of the development of their social and communicative skills. One former camper was quoted as saying that campers do not ‘learn more, but learn alternative things, sleep away camp is 24/7. The experiences are all encompassing, learning to be away from home, finding those kids where you get along, many

¹²⁵ ‘Research Matters,’ *American Camp Association*
<http://www.acacamps.org/media_center/camp_trends/research.php> [accessed 14/01/2010]

¹²⁶ Chickawah : Camp Life Survey

¹²⁷ Chickawah : Camp Life Survey

experiences are different from and maybe complementary to education.’¹²⁸ Many other former campers echoed these sentiments with the belief that whilst the experience was not necessarily more important than school it certainly taught a considerable amount of things that they were not exposed to within the school setting. Camp effectively taught children in a completely different manner, one camper recalled that ‘the camp experience may be a better forum for learning because the kids may not realize that they are learning’, continuing to state that ‘I think that the opportunities to develop social skills independent of day-to-day parental guidance is important.’¹²⁹

Each of these former campers valued their experiences at summer camp as very important in their educational development, learning skills that would help them to survive outside of camp. One of the main aspects that was highlighted as being important by these campers was the development of interpersonal skills, social and emotional intelligence. One camper was quoted as saying that ‘while book knowledge is critical, the confidence of being able to survive with life skills such as camping, hunting, gathering gives one a sense that if all else fails they can survive.’¹³⁰ The summer camp experience can be seen as effectively helping to create more well rounded children with new skills and knowledge that would help them in their future.

In addition to the social skills that children learned at camp they were also exposed to activities that they did not have access to at home, many helping to develop these ‘life skills’ but others teaching less traditional subjects that would not have appeared on the school curriculum. Camp Chickawah offered an abundance of different activities to its campers, these ranged from sports and water sports, activities designed to develop outdoor living skills as well as science and cultural workshops.¹³¹ The directors of Camp Chickawah recognised that not every camper was the same and so therefore a varied programme that catered to all needs was created. The programme of activities at Camp Chickawah was advertised in the brochure as being ‘a vital combination of

¹²⁸ Chickawah: Camp Life Survey

¹²⁹ Chickawah: Camp Life Survey

¹³⁰ Chickawah: Camp Life Survey

¹³¹ Camp Chickawah Brochure

traditional group game situations, assigned instructional clinics, special events, experiences in pioneering and trailblazing, educational trips and motivational cultural workshops.’¹³²

According to Celeste Wehl summer camps were opened to ‘supplement the work of the school or college by emphasising the things which the latter do not deem so important. It brings boys and girls back to the primitive conditions their forefathers eagerly faced in conquering a new country. It is essentially an educational innovation resulting from the work of men and women who are intensely interested in a bigger and happier life for children.’¹³³ For this reason a great deal of emphasis was placed on the exploration of the natural environment with Camp Chickawah organising trips to national parks alongside other educational excursions to art festivals, and college tours.¹³⁴ Campers also learned skills such as first aid which were not only useful in the camp environment, but clearly a skill that would be valuable in their day to day living. The participants of the first aid programme at Camp Chickawah, were described as ‘valuable helpers at home, in school or in the community in case of accident or injury.’¹³⁵

The cultural and scientific workshops at Camp Chickawah were highly regarded in terms of their educational value. Campers were given the opportunity to learn practical skills such as wood shop, elementary electronics, and photography amongst other things. One of the popular workshops that took place at camp was Ham Radio; this project allowed campers to contact other radio stations around the world. In the 1974 version of Chickawah Chirps it was reported that ‘the most exciting contact was with a ham stationed on the USS Chase a Coast Guard Cutter near the coast of Spain’. The same issue also reported that ‘some campers are learning the Morse code and basic theory and plan to take the Novice Radio Exams in the near future’.¹³⁶ These invaluable skills were not taught in the school curriculum and therefore clearly supplemented the campers’

¹³² Camp Chickawah Brochure

¹³³ Celeste Wehl, ‘An Historical Account of the Summer Camp Movement’, *Religious Education*, 20:3, (1925), p183

¹³⁴ Camp Chickawah Brochure

¹³⁵ Chickawah chirps – Banquet 1972 Issue

¹³⁶ Chickawah Chirps – Vol LV No.2 July 27 1974

education not only through acquiring new skills but also by connecting with different places in the world they learnt about cultural diversity. Camping enthusiast C.I. Hammett stated in 1951 that camp was not only a time for entertainment but a ‘time for doing and from the day to day practice will come skills that will serve naturally in times of emergency.’¹³⁷

Hammett also claimed that ‘camp should also be to develop future citizens and provide children the opportunity to get to know and understand other children of different racial, national, religious, geographical and economic groups.’¹³⁸ One of the main ways camp directors managed to ensure this opportunity for the children was through the hiring of its staff, counsellors were not brought in solely from America but also from other countries adding diversity to the community. The staff list published in the 1974 edition of the Chickawah Chirps of the 35 staff members, 26 came from different states in America and the other staff came from countries including Holland, Sweden, Germany and Denmark. One former Chickawah camper recalls that ‘we had visits from an American Indian at camp. I learned that these people have a unique culture that should be preserved, I have contributed to the American Indian College Fund as a result.’¹³⁹ In a study published in the June 1980 edition of the Camping Magazine it claimed that ‘in 1977, 44.7% of the responding camps had foreign campers, of these camps 60% were private camps, and the foreign camper population in the camps that responded came to 5%.’¹⁴⁰

One of the fundamental reasons for the acceptance of camps educational benefits developed from the growth of the Progressive movement in education between 1920 and 1929. Hallie Bond suggested that ‘The Progressives felt that children needed to learn to solve problems, rather than just memorize information. Creative learning by doing was better than rigid “book learning” childhood education should aim to provide miniature

¹³⁷ Summer Camp Handbook, ‘*A History of Summer Camp*’,
<<http://www.summertimehandbook.com/161-a-history-of-summer-camp.html>> [accessed 15/01/2010]

¹³⁸ Summer Camp Handbook

¹³⁹ Chickawah : Camp Life Survey

¹⁴⁰ Camping Magazine, March 1980 *American Camp Association*

<http://www.acacamps.org/anniversary/collection/eleanors_vignettes/March.pdf> [accessed 02/02/2010]

communities where children could learn to create and foster a just society.’ It was felt that ‘camps as isolated communities where the educators had twenty four hour control of the student were ideal for putting Progressive theory into practice.’¹⁴¹

The camp experience was held in high regard for the positive steps it took towards creating good citizens and teaching about the importance of democracy. Peter Surgenor suggested that ‘camps were a mirror for societal changes on many levels, playing an enormous role in socializing children and youth to embrace those changes that have kept America moving forward with positive momentum.’¹⁴² Dr Meylan in 1926 discussed that ‘the summer camp deserves a prominent place in education because of the large contribution that it is making towards the development of stalwart and upright and loyal citizens.’¹⁴³ The directors of Camp Lincoln highlighted within its promotional brochure that ‘there is an obligation to insure, for each boy, “built-in” by-products which help toward the development of good citizenship and successful living,’ further stating that ‘democratic living is better understood in the give and take of the camping environment.’¹⁴⁴ Peter Surgenor concluded his article stating ‘may the lasting legacy of camp continue to be a growing number of individuals who will use their camp experiences to change the tide of social reclusion in our country and as a catalyst for becoming our steadfast forward thinkers of today.’¹⁴⁵ Dr Meylan highlighted the value of the summer camp experience stating that ‘no effort should be spared to encourage the extension of camps until all boy and girls in the land shall enjoy the advantages of camping as part of their education.’¹⁴⁶

In the 1976 edition of Chickawah Chirps an article was published about the beginning of the Chickawah Tribal Games on July 4th 1976, America’s 200th birthday, it

¹⁴¹ Hallie Bond – ‘Children’s camps in the Adirondacks’ *American Camp Association*
<<http://www.acacamps.org/members/knowledge/strategic/cm/037adirondacks.php> [accessed 02/02/2010]

¹⁴² Peter Surgenor, ‘The legend of YMCA camping’ Perspective 15th August 2009,
<http://www.acacamps.org/media_center/about_aca/camping_in_america.pdf [accessed 03/02/2010]

¹⁴³ Marie Ready, ‘The organised summer camp’
<<http://www.acacamps.org/anniversary/collection/historical/TheOrganizedSummerCamp1926.pdf>>
[accessed 03/02/2010]

¹⁴⁴ Camp Lincoln Brochure

¹⁴⁵ Surgenor, ‘The legend of YMCA camping’

¹⁴⁶ Marie Ready, ‘The organised summer camp’

stated that ‘camp gathered in the social hall to begin the days celebration of American Independence with an example of the democratic process at work – voting for four tribe chiefs.’¹⁴⁷ Many elements of the camp experience taught campers about the importance of the outside world and society. For example Chickawah held an annual Camp Olympics which started each year with a traditional talk by the directors that according to an article published in the Chickawah Chirps ‘rejoins us in spirit once again, reminded us that the Olympics are an occasion for all nations to meet in peace and friendship through sportsmanship, and that it is in this spirit that we hold our annual games.’¹⁴⁸

Whilst educational benefits were stressed as highly valuable aspects of the camp experience, friendships were also vitally important, especially in such an intense environment where children spent up to eight week with the same people. The directors of Camp Chickawah described the best part of camping experience as ‘meeting and befriending many people and learning to share and enjoy activities together.’¹⁴⁹ When asked what they felt were the most important life lessons that they took and continue to take from their camp experience, former campers of Camp Chickawah stressed the value that they placed on their friendships formed at camp and the lessons they learned about tolerance and acceptance of differences. Amongst the responses received from former campers stated the importance of ‘balancing what is important to the team and what is important to me,’ ‘how to work together for common goals’ as well as learning and being taught about ‘the importance of very supportive adults and peer friendship’, ‘how to compromise’, ‘how to succeed’ and even simply ‘how to be a friend’.¹⁵⁰

By forming friendships campers created a strong sense of community that was built on every year by both returning campers and new campers. The mission of YMCA camp Onyahsa, founded in 1898 is to ‘foster the spiritual, mental, and physical well being of camp participants of diverse backgrounds and abilities within a nurturing outdoor

¹⁴⁷ Chickawah Chirps Vol LVII, No.1 July 16 1976

¹⁴⁸ Chickawah Chirps 1969 Banquet Issue

¹⁴⁹ Camp Chickawah Brochure

¹⁵⁰ Chickawah : Camp Life Survey

environment, while creating a meaningful sense of community among them.’¹⁵¹ Former campers of Chickawah described among the greatest benefits of the camp experience, ‘the brotherhood you develop with the campers and staff,’ ‘life long friends and fond memories to look back on’ and above all the creation of ‘a special bond that still exists today’ over 30 years later.

Parents put a lot of trust into the camp directors when sending their children away for the summer. They did so in the hope that their children would learn valuable skills and develop within this nurturing environment. Hedley Dimock suggested that the camp was ‘a sacred trust with an unparalleled opportunity for affecting physical, emotional and moral development.’¹⁵² Parents were happy as long as no harm was done to their children and they both enjoyed and positively gained from the experience. In 1926 Herman Bundsen, commissioner of health suggested that ‘it is essential for parents to investigate and find out for themselves what these camps will do for their children, in building better health and morals.’ His discussion focused on the idea of camp as a safe environment, considering that ‘sending a child to camp during the summer is like taking out an insurance policy on the child’s safety for that period.’¹⁵³

¹⁵¹ Camp Onyahsa – American Camp Association

< <http://www.acacamps.org/anniversary/storyboard/onyahsa.html> > { Accessed 02/02/2010 }

¹⁵² A Letter from Hugh Allan to Eleanor Eells, discussing Hedley Dimock - September 14th 1977

<http://www.acacamps.org/anniversary/collection/hedley_dimock/1977_Allen_Letter_to_Eells.pdf
[accessed 03/02/2010]

¹⁵³ Marie Ready ‘The organised summer camp’

Conclusion

Over the past one hundred and thirty years summer camp has been transformed into one of the most important national institutions in America. As stated in the introduction, over eleven million children now attend camp every year and this is the product of a steady growth, building on the recognition of the summer camp as a valuable aspect of youth development. The first chapter demonstrated that summer camps were introduced with the objective of countering the urban setting that most campers came from and on the realisation that exposure to a natural environment was fundamental both in terms of its health benefits but also through the promotion of a more simple form of living.

For many children the simple fact that they were spending an extended period of time away from their parents was one of the key elements of the camp experience which most notably impacted their own development. The role of the camp counsellors and directors both in providing twenty four hour care and guidance and their position as a positive role model for the campers was fundamental in campers' development while at camp. The way in which the camp setting itself was designed, with campers allocated to cabins in accordance with their age and level of camp experience, allowed them the opportunity to develop friendships within their peer group. Campers learnt about team work, whether it was through learning to cohabit with other campers or actively through sports or other activities, and in addition they learned the realities of success and failure, two fundamental lessons that all children were required to learn. The great variety of activities and opportunities offered at summer camp allowed all campers the chance to learn new skills and develop existing ones in a safe environment and appropriate to their individual needs.

The second chapter focused its arguments largely on the ideas of 'adventure and exploration and environmental awareness'¹⁵⁴, with particular emphasis on the acquisition of water proficiency and the opportunity for children to learn new activities that they did not have access to through the year at school. This effectively made them more rounded

¹⁵⁴ Directions – 'Youth Development Outcomes of the Camp Experience' American Camp Association <<http://www.acacamps.org/research/enhance/directions.pdf>> [accessed 05/02/2010]

individuals, taught them life lessons and created a greater appreciation of the outdoors. This appreciation of the outdoors was not only limited to within the camp grounds, but through trips and excursions and even at times environmental projects campers were given the opportunity to really learn to appreciate the natural world that they were a part of and in addition to learning about the effect of human actions.

The philosophies and mission statements of camps helped campers to define their own personal values and helped them with decisions that they made in their own lives. It gave a code of conduct to campers not only for use while at camp, but also taught them lessons that they could take with them into the outside world. Camp counsellors were one of the fundamental elements of the summer camp experience and its effect on youth development. Unlike school teachers who only had limited contact with their students each day, the experience for a camp counsellor was much more intense, giving them more of an opportunity to positively impact on the campers as a positive role model for their attitudes and actions.

The educational benefits of the camp experience have provoked considerable discussion throughout the history of summer camps, in particular during the Progressive movement in the 1920s. The final chapter focused on these educational benefits revealing the results of the survey conducted of former Chickawah campers which highlighted the educational value placed on the summer camp experience. The majority of these former campers confirmed the sentiment that camp was an important supplement to the compulsory system of education. The camp setting provided a unique educational forum as the lack of assessments and formal teaching created a more natural and less pressurized learning experience in which campers could excel not only in new activities but also in terms of a development of their social skills.

Summer camps educated children about diversity, whether it was by hiring international staff who could share their culture and customs, or through specifically designed projects. Camp directors strove to teach campers how to be good citizens,

highlighting the importance of democracy in the hope that they would take the positive lessons they learnt at camp into the outside world.

It is clear that the summer camp experience was very important in youth development. When twenty six former campers of Camp Chickawah were asked to rate the importance of the camp experience on youth development on a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being very important and 1 being not at all, seventeen gave it a rating of 5 (very important), eight gave it a rating of 4 and one camper gave it a rating of 2¹⁵⁵. These figures confirm the value that these former campers placed on their camp experience in terms of their own personal development. Whilst these twenty six campers only represent a very small fraction of the total camp attendees, the information shown throughout this dissertation clearly demonstrates the enormous value placed on the summer camp experience in terms of youth development throughout American History. As Leslie Paris suggested summer camps were fundamentally important in their position as ‘the staging grounds for the development and expansion of modern American childhood.’¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁵ Chickawah: Camp Life Survey

¹⁵⁶ Howard Chudacoff, ‘Review of Leslie Paris, Children’s Nature: *The rise of the American Summer Camp*’ <http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/anthropological_quarterly/v081/81.3.chudacoff.html> [accessed 15/01/2010]

Appendix 1. Questionnaire about personal experience at summer camp.

In order to supplement the primary source material that was obtained for this dissertation, a survey of former campers, counsellors in training and counsellors of Camp Chickawah was conducted. This survey was in the form of a questionnaire with nine questions which was made available to the Chickawah alumni base online thanks to Camp Chickawah Alumni Coordinator, Jeff Grant. A total of twenty six responses were recorded from Alumni who attended the camp between 1938 to 1985. In order to conduct this survey it was necessary to seek ethical approval, therefore all participants had to complete a declaration stating that they consented to the use of data according to the specifications outlined. The questionnaire and ethical consent form appears below.

CONSENT TO THE USE OF DATA

I understand that (name of researcher)

is collecting data in the form of a completed questionnaire for use in an academic research project at the University of Glasgow. This project is an undergraduate dissertation about the importance of camp life on youth development in 20th century America.

I give my consent to the use of data for this purpose on the understanding that:

- All names and other material likely to identify individuals will be anonymised.
- The material will be treated as confidential and kept in secure storage at all times.
- The material will be destroyed once the project is complete.

Signed by the contributor: _____ date:

Supervisor's name: Dr Moskowitz
Department address: 1 University Gardens, Room 406

For my undergraduate degree in history, I am required to write a 12000 – 15000 word dissertation. I have chosen to do mine on the history of summer camp and the importance of camp life on youth development in the 20th century. In accordance with the ethics commission at Glasgow University I am required to inform you that following the submission of my dissertation all data will be destroyed and that all participants will remain anonymous in my study.

Questionnaire about personal experience at summer camp

- **Name:**
- **Year of birth:**
- **What years did you attend camp, and in what capacity (camper, CIT, counsellor, director, other – please specify):**
- **Current job or occupation:**
- What was your original motivation for attending camp both as a camper and as a staff member (if applicable)?
- Can you remember your first impressions of camp? Did they change over time?
- What life lessons do you think you took/ continue to take from your camp experience?
- What do you think are the most important aspects of the summer camp experience?
- How important do you think the traditional values and elements of camp are in the whole experience?
- It is often suggested that children can learn more from their time at summer camp than they learn throughout the year through compulsory education. Would you consider this to be a true statement, and if so in what ways?

- What would you consider the greatest benefits of the camp experience for campers and for staff members?
- What is your fondest memory of your camp experience?
- How important do you think the camp experience is on youth development?

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