The Beginnings of the Summer Camp Movement

Every time a social trend occurred, someone, unhappy with the situation, suggested the solution might lie in a summer camp (Eells, 1986, p. 138).

Fresh Air movement “the most beautiful and most effective form of modern philanthropy.” (Ingram, 1907, p. 294)

... and the difference was due to two weeks in the country. There they had sunshine to play in, green grass and flowers to see and enjoy, pure milk to drink and enough food to eat. Yes, enough food to eat. (Theiss, 1909, p. 538)

To appreciate how social workers became affiliated with summer camping, it is important to understand the development of organized camps. Summer camping is an American institution that grew out of its social, political, economic, and cultural times: the mid-19th century. The history of the American summer camp cannot be divorced from the changes happening in the United States beginning in the mid-1800s. Summer camping was influenced by the changing economy and industrialization, immigration, health issues, the growth of a transportation network, school vacations, and the rise of a middle socioeconomic class with increased prosperity and leisure time.

In this chapter, we focus on the social forces that led to summer programs for children and describe specific programs that were developed from 1849 through the early years of the last century. Two movements, the Fresh Air Movement and the beginnings of private and nonprofit summer camps, developed in response to these forces and led to the current organized camping field. Both movements will be discussed in this chapter beginning with the Fresh Air program, which appears to have predated the first appearance of a camp.

PREDISPOSING FACTORS

During the 19th century, the United States evolved from an agrarian to an industrial economy. The first phase began with the shift from home-produced to factory-produced goods. This outwork system increased production. New technology aided in the development of the factory system. To support it, changes in the transportation infrastructure and increased concentration of workers in centralized areas rather than in rural areas was necessary. Frequent economic collapses and depressions characterized the period. Following the Civil War, the pace of the Industrial Revolution and urbanization accelerated.
Migration and Immigration

Most of the population of the United States and Canada are descendants of immigrants coming in several waves, pushing aside the indigenous populations. After the early immigrants of the 1600s, English–Scotch and enslaved Africans arrived. The next wave of immigrants, coming in the 1840s, included Germans seeking economic opportunities and Irish fleeing the potato famine. By the late 19th century, large numbers of Italians, Russian Jews, Greeks, and others from southeastern Europe and China left their countries because of political persecution or economic devastation. The growing industries in the United States needed these immigrants. In addition, migration within the United States became possible due to new purchases and seizures of land west of the Mississippi River. The end of the Civil War saw a large northern migration of former slaves to cities providing industrial jobs. As agriculture as a form of employment decreased, the need for factory workers increased, and people made their way from rural communities to cities. Most settled in the cities of the East, Midwest, and West.

Health Issues

The health of those living in the newly expanded cities became problematic. Small pox, typhoid, malaria, yellow fever, cholera, and tuberculosis were common and particularly devastating to small children and newborns. Initially, little was known about transmission of diseases. With cities acting as transportation hubs, diseases were brought in and easily spread (Brackemyre, 2015). People often lived in crowded tenement apartments with poor ventilation and light, and lack of indoor plumbing. Inadequate city sanitation and sewage systems exacerbated the situation (Carpenter, 1994).

Importance of “Country”

The growth of industrialization and urbanization was met by strong reactions. As discussed in Chapter 1, Schmitt (1969) describes a back-to-nature movement that developed at the end of the 19th century. People who had immigrated to cities from rural areas for work and the cultural life discovered a range of problems generated by living in an urban environment. A romantic view of what was left behind developed. This perspective permeated media such as popular adult and children’s literature, educational pedagogy, art, and photography. For these urbanites, a visit to the country did not mean a return to farming, but to visiting the woods and streams for leisure and recreation.

Leisure and Recreation

In the early 1800s, only the wealthy could take time from work for recreation or health. Even for the wealthy, limited infrastructure including poor roads, lack of
maps and hotels, and the need for river access impeded travel. Travel occurred primarily for health issues. For most, work occupied all their time, even when they were not well. Those with some free time were attracted to religious revival encampment meetings (Aron, 1999). Early religious beliefs dictated that time not working ought to be used for prayer and contemplation, not for play and personal pleasure. Slowly, recreational activities came to be viewed as important for spiritual and moral growth and to enhance the family (Reid, 1981).

Before 1850, the term “vacation” only meant the break in a school year. After 1850, new roads and railroads made travel somewhat easier. Railroad companies produced new revenue by building hotels in the countryside, then constructing rail lines to make them accessible. By the mid- to late-19th century, an increasing number of people were able to take time from their work for vacations. Teachers and other white-collar workers took advantage of increased income, time off, and the development of vacation resources within their means. Children of the middle- and upper-income classes accompanied their parents on health trips during the summer. Media began to publicize the benefits of taking time off from work, and inexpensive facilities were developed in areas known to benefit health. Camping, that is, a recreational trip into the wilderness with primitive equipment, became a very popular form of vacation. The development of state/provincial and federal parks provided sites for this endeavor. As knowledge about causes of illness, prevention, and recuperation increased, people with means went to the countryside, seashore, or mountains for their health. Resorts for these visitors sprang up (Aron, 1999). By the time the Fresh Air programs began, many locations had been established as venues for health and recuperation.

School Vacation

The advent of the summer camp grew out of the establishment of the school vacation. Prior to 1900, vacations from school were variable, rarely more than a few weeks long. In the 1800s, private schools designated their own individual vacation times. Once public schools established compulsory attendance guidelines, they ran year-round. Time off was based on the needs of the community and differed in rural and urban areas. The eight-week summer vacation from school was developed in the late 19th century for a variety of reasons. As public education increased there were attempts at standardization, which included the vacation schedule. The summer heat in non-air-conditioned urban schools led to minimal attendance. In addition, schools attempted to align their vacation time with the needs of teachers who studied at universities during the summer (Pederson, 2012; Weiss & Brown, 2003).

FRESH AIR MOVEMENT

The term “Fresh Air” is used generally to refer to relatively unstructured, health-oriented efforts to bring children and families from the inner city to more rural
settings. Impoverished and working class urban children lived on the streets, which is where the Boys’ Clubs and Fresh Air societies found them. What we now call Fresh Air programs initially had a variety of names. Expeditions, day trips, country vacations, and country weeks all fit this category. These programs were developed by religious, social, and formal charity organizations for children from low-income families living in what were considered unhealthy cities. Although they were responses to wide-ranging poverty and health problems, they were not intended to provide solutions. These responses were consistent with the sporadic charity work carried out at that time. A difference, however, was the emphasis on making use of the natural environment for healing.

Initial Efforts

Many people are familiar with the term “Fresh Air” because of long-standing media attention, but the Fresh Air Movement has not been studied as extensively as other early philanthropic practices. Walter Ufford (1897), an early social work researcher of the Fresh Air Movement, described three variations: general non-sectarian societies, parochial agencies, and working girls’ vacation societies. These programs may also be classified by the type of service provided: day excursions, country weeks, or country vacations. This movement is important in our context because many of these programs evolved from short-term, informal events into organized summer camps, some of which continue today.

The first documentation of a program to take children out of the city dates to 1849 and describes a program begun by Reverend William Augustus Muhlenberg of the Church of the Holy Communion in New York City, who also served as headmaster of a boys’ academy in Queens. During Reverend Muhlenberg’s visits to hospitals and families during the cholera epidemic of 1849, he observed children in the streets. He believed that fresh air and country life were necessary to meet the physical and spiritual needs of people in poverty, and he began giving money to families to make day trips to rural areas. This practice developed into a church ministry, which set aside a budget called the Fresh Air Fund with the goal of sending children on day excursions (Ufford, 1897; Carpenter, 1994). These efforts led to the 1870 creation of the St. Johnland Colony, a 545-acre country refuge of cottages on Long Island, which ultimately evolved into residential schools, nurseries, and health clinics for inner city children and older adults (The St. Johnland Colony, 1884).

In 1872, an explosion of well-organized, large-scale Fresh Air charity programs took people with illnesses, children, and mothers on excursions to the country to help them “withstand the stress of the season” (Ufford, 1897, p. 16). At that time, The New York Times, working with established charities and businesses, developed a systematic procedure to fund Fresh Air trips to the country.

St John’s Guild, a relief society of St John’s Chapel, began visiting the sick children in its parish. In 1872, the Guild hired a barge to offer trips to the families they visited (Ufford, 1897). Jacob Riis (1923, p. 168) describes the purpose of these trips:
Even a ride on a river ferryboat is often enough to put life into the weary little body again. The salt breeze no sooner fans the sunken cheeks than the fretful wail is hushed and the baby slumbers, quietly restfully, to wake with a laugh and an appetite, on the way to recovery.

In 1874, the Guild created a Floating Hospital, the Helen C. Juilliard (Theiss, 1909), to take sick children to the sea air. It made six trips a week to New York’s Lower Bay. Physicians working at city hospitals or in low-income neighborhoods supplied patients with tickets admitting them to the barge. Any mother with a sick child could have a ticket. The barge, holding 1,500 for each excursion, made three landings along the riverfront to board families. Attempts were made, via physicians in attendance, to guard against admission of those with contagious diseases (Ufford, 1897). By the late 1880s, the barge was offered to other charity organizations serving those living in poverty (Fresh Air for the Poor, 1886).

Although the barge was available to children of all religions, the dietary restrictions of Orthodox Jewish children created a problem. Early on, Jewish mothers were offered the use of the St John’s Guild barge for several days a month. In 1877, the United Hebrew Charities and its Sanatorium for Hebrew Children developed their own excursion program (Riis, 1892/1923). During the summer, trains took clients to Rockaway Park, New York, for swimming and a boat trip that included physicians, music, milk, bread, and ice cream (Ufford, 1897).

A variety of established charity organizations in New York and other cities became involved with Fresh Air programs. The New York Children’s Aid Society (CAS) was established in 1853 by Charles Loring Brace, and is best known for creating the Orphan Train movement, relocating children out of New York to reside permanently with country families. It also created programs for children living in the city with their parents, and in 1866 launched trips on the Hudson River for its clients. It established the first Fresh Air home in 1872 (Carpenter, 1994) and is considered one of the first charity organizations to take up the Fresh Air approach as one of its purposes (Ufford, 1897). Its summer Fresh Air home—first in Staten Island, New York, and then in Bath Beach, New York—was organized as a cottage system, rather than as dormitories. The Health Home in West Coney Island, New York, served ailing young children and infants and their mothers.

Although it initially involved its clients in Fresh Air excursions through other organizations, the Association for Improving the Condition of the Poor (AICP) began its own outings to Coney Island in 1883 and “Ocean Parties” in 1890 (Ufford, 1897). The agency ran Seaside Home and Seabreeze, which became the destination for iron steamboats that made trips three times a week (Fresh Air for the Poor and Sick, 1892). The AICP went on to develop residential programs including Caroline Rest, a home for sick mothers, and Grey Mouse farm for girls. In 1916, it developed, together with the New York Globe newspaper, a nutrition camp for boys.

Charity workers observed that the principles of scientific charity were not being followed. In 1888, the first of several conferences to organize Fresh Air workers was held. Workers were concerned that duplication of services could be
an inducement to deceit on the part of the recipients, or that pauperization would occur if recipients began to expect an increasing amount of services as a right, thus creating dependency. To prevent duplication, there were initial attempts for the various organizations to share their recipient lists through a central registry (Ufford, 1897).

**Country Weeks and Fresh Air Societies**

The year 1875 saw the first country week program established in Philadelphia (Eells, 1986). In this informal program, the founder of the New Century Club for women invited 12 girls to spend a week at her farm. During the following summers, her friends and neighbors also welcomed Philadelphia girls. Thus, the Children’s Country Week Association of Philadelphia began. Ultimately, in 1913 it grew into the residential Paradise Farm Camp. Today, it is a summer day camp and natural site for year-round programs (http://www.paradisefarmcamps.org/).

In 1877 in Boston, Reverend William Gannett and his sister Kate G. Wells learned of a similar program in Copenhagen, Denmark and brought it to their community. A Country Week Association was created, which paid for the cost of transportation and fees for urban children to spend a week in a private family home. Ultimately, the area YMCA took over the program.

The best known of the organizations established to offer extended country visits began in 1877. Its founder was Willard Parsons, a former minister on the Lower East Side of New York City who had moved to Scott Presbyterian Church in rural Pennsylvania. He encouraged people in his country congregation to invite children from New York City’s neediest families to their homes for a two-week summer vacation. Most families in “Friendly Towns” hosted one to three children, but some communities developed dormitories to house larger groups (Herald Tribune Fresh Air Fund, 1957). The host family covered the cost of room and board (Carpenter, 1994). Initially, the New York Evening Post and later, in 1881, the New York Herald Tribune raised transportation money. The Tribune developed a fund that to this day is called the Fresh Air Fund. This organization became the model for programs throughout the country. Charity workers were utilized to identify children, match children and families, and prepare the children for the experience (Ufford, 1897). The Fresh Air Fund continues today as a private nonprofit group no longer affiliated with a newspaper. The professionally staffed agency, which includes social workers, offers vacation-week programs in private homes as well as summer camp programs.

In 1887, Life Magazine joined a number of other publications to help fund and administer Fresh Air programs. Until 1894, children were sent to homes and farms. In 1889, the program took over a deserted factory town with 17 cottages and kitchen facilities that had been destroyed by a fire. More than 900 children were accommodated. In 1925, after a move to a new facility, the program was reorganized. Under the direction of Lloyd Sharp, an educator, the program was
restructured as Trail Blazers Camp, a new program with an educational base utilizing nature and camp activities (Sharp, 1930).

Working Girls’ Vacation programs began in the 1870s. They were programs for adolescent and young adult females who were employed in minimum wage jobs in factories or shops, often living on their own or working to help support their families. Recognizing that these young women did not have enough income to pay for a vacation, the sponsoring organization would either subsidize the cost at a selected country boarding site or rent facilities for a minimal fee. Sea Rest was created in 1874 in Asbury Park, New Jersey by the Philadelphia YWCA as a vacation home (Eells, 1986). Girls could attend for a week or two. Destitute girls attended for free, while others were charged $2.00 per week for their entertainment. The Working Girls’ Vacation Society (1884), Jewish Working Girls’ Vacation Society (1892), and the Vacation Farm Society (1893) are examples of additional groups organized to provide these services (For Jewish Working Girls, 1893; Ufford, 1897). At the turn of the last century, other organizations such as Girls’ Vacation Funds, Federations of Jewish Philanthropies, and Vacamas turned some of their vacation homes into camp programs for working girls, although hotels and boarding homes continued to be available. The Committee on Amusements and Vacation Resources of Working Girls in New York maintained a list of facilities charging three to four dollars per week. Committee members visited these facilities to assure the appropriateness of the accommodations (Few Working Girls Can Afford a Rest, 1909). Additionally, businesses such as Bloomingdale’s organized cottages for their employees (Aron, 1999).

Settlement Houses

Settlement houses in the United States began with the opening of Neighborhood Guild/University Settlement in 1886 on the Lower East Side of New York City. The College Settlement followed shortly afterward in 1889. The best-known settlement houses, Hull-House and Henry Street, were established in 1889 and 1893, respectively. The settlement concept was imported from Toynbee Hall (established 1884) in London, England, where there was a long history of groups organized to promote worker concerns (Woods & Kennedy, 1922/1970). As previously noted, settlement houses were located in urban, immigrant neighborhoods where low-income workers lived in crowded and often unsanitary conditions. Their residents, the “settlers,” were young men and women interested in both direct service to the community and reform. The settlement houses focused on community building, developing new services, and social, environmental, and economic reform. Club programs for children and adults in the community became a fundamental component of the settlement movement (Woods & Kennedy, 1922/1970).

Settlement houses soon became involved in both Fresh Air and camp programs. A summer vacation cottage is listed among the College Settlement’s 1890 programs and, in 1895, a farm was purchased for such programs in Mount Ivy, a rural
community in New York (Woods & Kennedy, 1922/1970). Early in the history of the settlement house movement, the workers encouraged their members to attend the outings sponsored by the area’s Fresh Air charities. Vacation cottages sponsored by many settlement houses, frequently with tent encampments on their front lawns, often began at the summer home of the family of a settlement worker or a sponsoring board member (Eells, 1986; Wald, 1915/1991). Frequently, a club from the settlement house would visit the summer cottage as a group, thus extending the settlement’s programs year-round. Because the settlements had such a wide range of members, a variety of summer programs were developed. Ultimately, after the turn of the last century, many settlements such as Kingsley House in Pittsburgh, Henry Street Settlement in New York, Hiram House in Cleveland, Hale House in Boston, and Hull-House in Chicago (Eells, 1986; Woods & Kennedy, 1922/1970) converted their vacation cottages into organized camp programs for children, often with separate camps or programs for mothers and babies. The term “organized camp” refers to programs with some structure, purpose, and planned activities, in contrast to the unstructured format of most Fresh Air programs.

Figure 4.1 Summer Camp: Four girls in front of tent, 1900. Jacob A. (Jacob August) Riis (1849–1949) / Museum of the City of New York. 90.13.2.265
THE ORGANIZED CAMPING MOVEMENT

Around the same time as the Fresh Air Programs were being created and developed, the organized camp also appeared on the scene. Camp historian Eleanor Eells (1986, p. 3) questions, “How does one date a beginning?” During the 19th century, some people spent leisure time living in the out-of-doors in primitive conditions, alone or with others. We distinguish that sort of experience from a program developed to provide an educational outdoor experience for a child.

A number of camps could be considered “firsts” in camp history. The first camps did not look like the camps we know today. Most began with a very small group of children going on a trip to the “country” for a few days to a few weeks accompanied by an adult leader, perhaps a religious leader, teacher, or physician. They may have said that they were camping, but initially they did not give themselves a name or a title. When such a trip continued for several years, the group often became more organized and began to identify as a camp. Eells (1986) dates the beginnings of the camping movement to around 1881–1910. During this time, camp pioneers experimented with outdoor trips for children, the development of private camps for boys and girls, the entry of youth-serving organizations, the advent of settlement house camps and camps sponsored by religious groups, and the very beginning of camps for special populations. These groups had various reasons for starting camps and, therefore, initially developed very different kinds of programs from one another. The remainder of this chapter will provide an overview of some of these early camps. The following chapters will focus specifically on camps sponsored by nonprofit social agencies, generally led by social workers.

Private Camps for Boys—Alternatives for Privileged Youth

Frederick William Gunn, founder and head of The Gunnery school in Washington, Connecticut, is considered the originator of organized camping and the first to run a school-sponsored camp. Although many groups and schools had taken their students on camping trips, Gunn was the first to do so and then make it a yearly event. This private boarding school was still in session in June of 1861 when he took his students outdoors on a 40-mile “gypsy” hike to Long Island Sound. The group spent two weeks tenting at the shore at what they called Camp Comfort. This camp continued until 1879. Many young men who were part of Camp Comfort/Camp Gunnery later created their own camps using tripping and wilderness programs (Gibson, 1936a).

The first private health-oriented camp is attributed to Joseph Trimble Rothrock, a Pennsylvania physician who believed that children’s health would improve if they were outdoors. In 1876, he took boys for a five-month trip in the mountains (Meier & Henderson, 2012). Later, while a forestry commissioner, he established a camp in a state park for those with tuberculosis (Gibson, 1936a).
The first religiously oriented camp was created in 1880 by Reverend George Hinkley of West Hartford, Connecticut. He thought that an informal camp would offer a better way to get to know and influence the boys in his congregation. Initially, he brought seven members to Rhode Island, but later founded the Good Will Farm in Maine, which included religious, educational, and recreational programs (Meier & Henderson, 2012). According to Eells (1986), he appeared to have a significant influence on others who would take major roles in camping.

Well known as a pioneer in early organized camping history, Ernest Berkley Balch, in 1881, developed the first private camp to meet educational needs. He was concerned about boys from well-to-do families who were viewed as “idling away” their summer vacations in resort hotels. Initially, he brought 25 boys to an island in New Hampshire where he established Camp Chocorua. He utilized physical labor and activities to help develop an appreciation for work, responsibility, and independence. There were no servants, class distinctions, or snobbery in this democratic sharing community. Although the camp closed in 1889, Camp Harvard followed Ernest Balch’s objectives. Balch developed principles still found in camps today (Eells, 1986; Meier & Henderson, 2012; Gibson, 1936b).

**Private Camps for Girls—Alternatives in Nature for Girls**

Several founders populate the history of camps for girls: Richard Arey, Laura Matoon, and Luther and Charlotte Gulick. A few private girls’ camps began during the late-19th century. Around the turn of the last century, however, girls’ private camps grew exponentially.

In 1891, Camp Arey, a natural science camp, opened for boys and then allowed girls to attend during separate four-week sessions in 1892. It became an all-girls camp under different leadership in 1912 (Gibson, 1936d; Eells, 1986).

Laura Matoon opened Camp Kehonka exclusively for girls in 1902. As a teacher in Massachusetts and New York, Matoon attracted private-school girls to a wilderness program in New Hampshire (Eells, 1986). She played a leadership role in the development of multiple camping organizations.

The 1887 family camp in Gales Ferry, Connecticut started by Luther Halsey Gulick and Charlotte Vetter Gulick ultimately led to the development of the Camp Fire Girls of America and their 1910 Camp Wohelo (Work, Health, and Love) (Eells, 1986). Luther Gulick was professor at Springfield College (affiliated with the YMCA), and head of Child Hygiene at the Russell Sage Foundation. He was involved with many progressive causes including the playground movement. In 1907, the Gulicks moved their family camp to Maine but by 1910 established it as a girls’ camp, with Charlotte Gulick as the inspiration and director (Gibson, 1936c).

In 1910, in response to the development of the Boy Scouts, girls in Thetford, Vermont wanted their own program. A group of camp leaders worked with Luther and Charlotte Gulick to develop a girls’ outdoor program (Paris, 2008). Camp Wohelo served as a model for the development of the Camp Fire Girls program and
became its first camp. The Campfire Girls and its camps provided opportunities for middle socioeconomic class girls and offered them important new experiences (Eells, 1986).

The Boys Movement

The Boys Movement encompasses a large group of organizations. No history of summer camps could be complete without a discussion of the camping programs of the Boys Movement and the Boy Scouts. “To most boys, the mention of scouting suggests a camp” (Murray, 1937, p. 49). The scouting movement began at the end of the time frame under discussion here, with camping an integral activity from the start. The success of scout camping followed and was influenced by several earlier organizations, namely, the YMCA (Young Men’s Christian Association), the Boys’ Clubs with their extensive “Boys Work” programs for low- and middle-income boys in urban communities, the Woodcraft Indians, and the Sons of Daniel Boone (Macleod, 1983).

As discussed in the previous chapter, the YMCA was not originally created to serve children. The first YMCA was established in London, England in 1844 to serve young, middle socioeconomic class Christian men living alone in the city. The concept was transported to the United States in the 1850s to serve a similar population. Some boys’ programs were begun in 1867. In the 1890s, Sumner Dudley became one of the first Boys Work staff members. YMCA staff and administrators later took leadership roles in helping the Boy Scouts develop into the large organization it became (Macleod, 1983).

What became known as Camp Dudley, the first social agency camp, was established by Sumner Dudley of the YMCA in 1885. Initially, it was called Camp Bald Head because all the campers shaved their heads before going on this eight-day camping and fishing trip. These trips continued with an increasing number of campers until 1891 when the YMCA established a permanent site, thus becoming an organized camp (Gibson, 1936c). From this beginning, the YMCA camps grew rapidly into a worldwide movement. By 1902, there were one hundred YMCA camps (Eells, 1986).

The Boys’ Club was a concept designed to take impoverished boys off the streets and away from crime (Macleod, 1983). Clubs were sponsored by businessmen, the first being E. H. Harriman who started a club in New York City in 1876. As Chapter 3 describes, these sites served large numbers of boys and did not focus on character building, as did services for middle- and upper-income boys. Boys’ Clubs established residential camps at the turn of the 20th century and 60 were in operation by 1935. Day camp programs served many more children than the residential camps. The Boys’ Club of New York opened its first camp in 1903, and its residential camping program continues today. The organization brought the concept of club programs to the attention of the youth-serving community, a concept which became a mainstay of settlement houses (Macleod, 1983).
The Woodcraft Indians was started in 1902 by Ernest Thompson Seton, a naturalist and writer of animal stories. This group concentrated on woodcraft and “Indian-style” camping. The Woodcraft Indians were later viewed as an alternative to the Boy Scouts. Whereas Seton’s Woodcraft Indians glorified the Native Americans, Daniel Carter Beard’s group, the Sons of Daniel Boone, venerated the pioneer spirit. Both Seton and Beard were important consultants to the programs of the nascent Boy Scout organization and influenced the program that ultimately developed (Macleod, 1983).

The Boys Movement utilized the British Boy Scout program created by Lord Robert Baden-Powell as a model to reach a wide range of middle socioeconomic class boys. As a trainer of soldiers, Baden-Powell modified his training manuals and created a new organization for boys in 1908. The Boy Scouts USA was created in 1910. Membership in local troops and local and national administrative structures developed quickly. By August 1910, an experimental summer camp in Silver Bay, New York, was established. The purpose was to try out the wilderness concepts presented by Ernest Thompson Seton and Daniel Beard. Here, individual achievement rather than competition was explored and later expanded in the scouting movement. Organized camping was not new to many of the scout leaders, who had previous experiences at YMCA camps. Scouting popularized camping to a much larger extent than did the YMCA camps (Murray, 1937). Very quickly, large numbers of middle-income boys began to attend organized camps. By the next year, scouting councils throughout the country began looking for campsites. In 1911, the New York City Council of Boy Scouts organized a camp in the Bronx, while the Brooklyn Council explored land in Harriman State Park (see Chapter 5), where the NYC Council later developed more than 25 camps. At one point, the installation of camps in that park (Harriman) was considered “the largest camp for boys in the world” (Malatzky, 2002, p. 10).

The Girl Scouts

Begun two years after the Boy Scouts, in 1912, the Girl Scouts of the United States, originally called Girl Guides, borrowed its concepts from the English girls’ response to Robert Baden-Powell’s Boy Scouts. Established by Juliette Low in Savannah, Georgia, the organization quickly became popular with middle socioeconomic class urban girls. The girls in the first troop attended Camp Lowland (now called Camp Juliette Low) that year (Eells, 1986; Soto, 1987). In 1917 and 1918, permanent camps were developed in Massachusetts and New York (Eells, 1986; Girl Scouts USA, 1917). The early camps reflected the woodcraft and military orientations of the Boy Scout movement. This military orientation distinguished the Girl Scouts from the Camp Fire Girls. From the start, the Girl Scout organization instituted guidelines for camp development and standards, which were evaluated by centralized staff.
Early Canadian Camps

The development of organized camps in Canada closely paralleled that of the United States. As a rural, agricultural country, in the mid-1800s it, too, faced issues of urbanization, population relocation, industrialization, and increased leisure time. During this time, organizations such as the Children’s Aid Society sponsored park picnics and day excursions to the Toronto Islands. The Ys, community centers, and child and youth service organizations, which had developed in the United States, expanded into Canada. Nature-based recreation programs grew in response to concerns about city life (Wall, 2009).

The Truro YMCA established the first Canadian camp, Camp Big Love, in Nova Scotia in 1889. It was followed by camps sponsored by YMCAs from Ontario, British Columbia, Quebec, and Ottawa, most with an evangelical orientation. The first Fresh Air camp was created in 1894 by the Toronto City Mission. It was aided financially by the Toronto Star Fresh Air Fund. At the same time, a number of informal, religiously oriented camp programs were opened (Wall, 2009).

Like early private camps in the United States, those in Canada served boys from boarding schools and wealthy families. The first private camp was Camp Keewayden, which moved from Maine to Ontario in 1904, followed closely by Camp Temagami. Camp Ahmek, one of the best-known Canadian camps, began in 1921 (Wall, 2009).

In both the United States and Canada today, although many camps are private and for-profit; nonprofit, organizational camps continue to play a significant role in the children’s camping field, as they have for over one hundred years. These camps help make the experience affordable, mainstream, and national in scope. As this chapter has illustrated, such camps were often created to provide urban, working class children from diverse backgrounds with an affordable camp experience, with the goal of offering such opportunities for every child. Even in 1936, Gibson (1936e) contended that nonprofit organizations fine-tuned camps as laboratories where life situations were studied and research carried out. Because of the large numbers of campers and staff, organizational camps—particularly those affiliated with the Scouts and the Jewish Community Centers—identified the need for standards and training in health, safety, staff, physical site plans, and activities long before private camps (Murray, 1937; Eells, 1986). In fact, the YMCA created the first training course in camping in 1902 (Gibson, 1936f).

Camp Associations

The expansion of organized private and organizational camps was facilitated by the presence of several camping organizations. Beginning in 1902, the YMCA, through the General Alliance of Workers with Boys, organized a conference for camp directors. As a result, the General Camp Association (GCA 1903–1910), open to all forms of camp, was established. The Camp Directors Association of
America (CDAA), established in 1910, sought to promote social relations among camp directors and improve camping. Separate sections for private and organizational camps were created to meet the differing needs of each. At this point in time, boys’ camps multiplied, and girls’ camps were being created. The National Association of Directors of Girls’ Camps (NADGC) (1916–1924) formed to meet the needs of the newly expanding number of girls’ camps. The organization developed training conferences for camp counselors (Gibson, 1936f). The need for better cooperation among leaders working on behalf of camps was acknowledged in 1924. The organizations then merged to create the Camp Directors Association (CDA) in 1925. During this time, CDA attempted to develop a stronger organizational base to meet the needs of diverse forms of camps. It also ran conferences, created journals, organized standardized director and counselor training programs and handbooks, worked with universities to develop camping courses, and developed standards. Again, in 1935, this organization changed its name to the American Camping Association (ACA), and it is currently known as the American Camp Association (Eells, 1986; Gibson, 1936e).

In Canada, the private camp directors from Ontario created the first provincial camp association in 1933, the Ontario Camps Association. A national organization, the Canadian Camping Association (CCA), was established in 1936 (Canadian Camping Association, 2018). Its model is different from the ACA in that it is a federation of camping associations from all the Canadian provinces. The early provincial camp associations were active with the American Camping Association and remained so even after the creation of the Canadian Camping Association (Wall, 2009).