

Dublin Historical Society

DUBLIN, NEW HAMPSHIRE 03444 • FOUNDED 1920

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RESIDENTIAL SUMMER CAMPS IN DUBLIN

By 1900 the majority of the US population lived in cities with no ties to the land. The rise of residential summer camps offered urban children an escape from the heat and disease omnipresent in cities, addressed a nostalgia for learning outdoor skills lost to urban dwellers, and strove for personal improvement. To wit, in 1926 the president of the American Camping Association said “the purpose of summer camp was to aid families... by returning the child to his parents in better shape, physically and morally, than when he arrives, and to iron out his habits of petulance, snobbishness, and bad temper and to inculcate in their place habits of decency, honesty, self-reliance, cleanliness, and sportsmanship.”¹

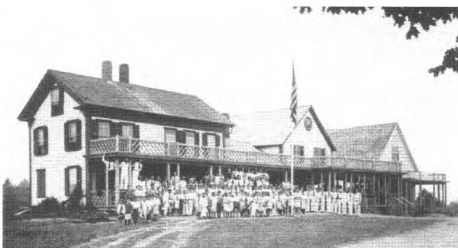
In 2017 the American Camp Association reported 8400 residential camps in the US. However, in the early 20th century that number was probably in the hundreds: a mixture of small, private entities and others operated by large regional or national organizations like the YMCA, the Boy Scouts and the Camp Fire Girls. Dublin has been home to both types of summer camps for both boys and girls.

CAMPS ON FROST POND

There have been three private camps on the northern shore of Frost Pond.

Camp Iroquois, which opened in 1921, served Jewish boys. Due to rampant discrimination at the time, Jews were not welcome at many private camps. As a result the Federation of Jewish Charities started camps for “lower class, newly arrived Jews (typically, but not always of Russian descent)”.² It is unknown whether Camp Iroquois was one of those camps.

DHS has only photographs on which to rely for Camp Iroquois, so information has been gleaned from other



Campers and staff of Camp Iroquois standing in front of the former Orison Moore farm buildings

sources. Tax records show a large campus of 100 acres in Dublin as early as 1921 (an additional 20 acres lay over the town line in Jaffrey). The owners had purchased the Orison Moore farm near the Jaffrey line on Route 137 in 1919 and refitted the house and two attached barns for camp activities. (See photo).

An educational expert named Porter Sargent started publishing *A Handbook of Summer Camps* in 1924. The 1935 Handbook lists Camp Iroquois as a boy's camp for ages 5 to 18 with an enrollment of 70 campers, a staff of



Boys returning from the waterfront on Frost Pond walk past Camp Iroquois cabins.

18 and a fee of \$225.³ There is no mention of its religious affiliation.

Both the 1931 and 1935 Handbook editions list Nathan Dickler as Director. Dickler himself emigrated from “Poland/ Russia” to Brooklyn, NY with his family of five in 1891. By 1900 the Dicklers lived on a street with exclusively Russian immigrants whose primary language is listed as “Jewish”. Nathan Dickler would become a teacher and subsequently a superintendent in the Brooklyn school system. He is still noted as Director of the camp in the paragraph about Camp Iroquois in the July 26, 1950 issue of *The Dublin Opinion*. The activities mentioned there include athletics, nature study, and crafts and that summer's special subject, Indian lore. The article also mentions that a girls' camp was added during the WWII years. It is unclear whether the girls' camp continued into the 1950s.

By 1954 the camp had changed owners and the tax valuation had nearly tripled to \$16,000 which might

indicate the addition of more buildings. By 1982 a State Environmental Impact Statement states "at present camp is not used." Of all the infrastructure only one cabin remains today.

Camp Greatlock was a boys camp located on only two acres just west of Camp Iroquois. What is known about the camp comes from a 1931 brochure. Also founded in 1921 Ernest and Lillian Tuttle's stated goal of the camp was lofty - for boys "to spend their vacations in an unconventional,



Building which served for many years as the main lodge for Camp Greatlock and briefly for Camp O-Wa-Sa-Ka.

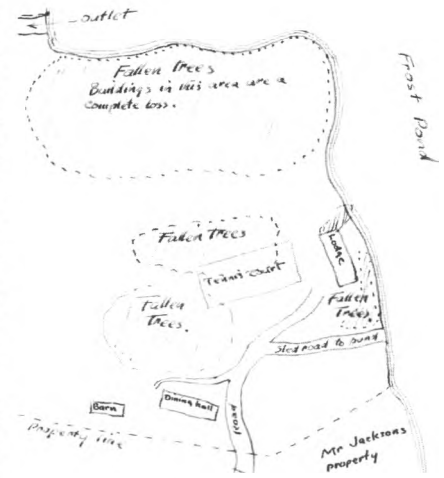
democratic environment, learning from nature the simpler things and yet gaining a broader view of life. "Unhampered by scholastic traditions... He learns to do rather than to theorize. He meets real situations. This gives him a mastery of self which he can acquire in no other way." This hands-on focus must reflect Ernest's profession as an industrial arts teacher in East Orange, NJ.

The list of supplies includes a various pieces of uniform bearing the camp insignia, 4 heavy army blankets, a pillow, and towels. All clothing needed to fit into a trunk 14 inches in height or less in order to fit under the boy's cot. A letter in the DHS archives reveals that the buildings along the shore, presumably the platform tents and bathhouse were destroyed by trees felled in the 1938 hurricane.



Campers gathered around the "Woodcraft council ring". Many images, including the cover of the 1931 view book, show an older camper wearing a Native American headdress as shown here.

For a camp with only 20 or so campers aged 10 to 16 years, it offered many activities including horseback riding. A photo in the viewbook shows a session of calisthenics being held on the tennis court. Optional equipment included a scout knife, fishing tackle, a musical instrument, baseball glove and bat, tennis racket, camera, and a .22 caliber rifle.



Map of 1938 hurricane damage showing layout of the Camp Greatlock campus.

Camp Greatlock

probably ceased operating in the early 1940s. Leon Van Heusen bought the property in September of 1945, so presumably the first season of his **Camp O-Wa-Sa-Ka** commenced in the summer of 1946. A 1947 brochure in the DHS collection describes the camp name as a word in the Sioux language meaning "to be strong for the accomplishment of anything good." The brochure goes on to claim that "each boy will find new thrills, fun and adventure" while among other things "learning creative and useful skills... and playing, working, and living with others." Like Camp Greatlock before it, the list of supplies suggests it would be desirable to bring a rifle, a camera, fishing tackle and a musical instrument, although tennis and horseback riding are no longer mentioned.

The camp seems to have been short lived as there is no mention of Camp O-Wa-Sa-Ka in an article on camps in Dublin in the *The Dublin Opinion* in 1950. Tax records in 1951 show that Van Heusen no longer owned the property.

CAMPS ON HOWE RESERVOIR

The Girl Scouts have owned 132 acres of land in Dublin on the western shore of Howe Reservoir since 1949. Transferred to the Swift Water Girl Scout Council in 1961, the site has been used as a primitive camping facility and never had more than several lean-tos.

Now owned by the Girl Scouts of the Green and White Mountains, its new appellation is Monadnock Wilderness, and it is currently used for periodic camping trips by older girl scouts. You may have passed through this property unknowingly on the way to the Eliza Adams Gorge, as the Monadnock-Sunapee Greenway Trail has an easement over the land.

A private, girls camp, **Camp Rockne** was also located on the west side of Howe Reservoir. Founded by 5 women in 1935, it operated in South Carver, MA until it relocated to a 4 acre parcel just south of the Girl Scouts' Monadnock

Wilderness in 1967. According to its charter its goals were to promote civic, educational, charitable, benevolent and religious activities. From a brochure from its last year of operation in 1987 we learn that it “offers simplicity of living in natural surroundings...through a well-rounded program that is inspirational, educational and healthful.”

The girls lived in tents and cooked meals over an open fire. Activities included campcraft, woodcraft, archery, volleyball and watersports. The last year two, two week sessions mid-summer cost \$225 per session. The property is now in private hands, and when the current owners purchased the lot, the only buildings were a counselors' cabin, a kitchen, a meeting hall and an outhouse – all without running water.

CAMPS ON THORNDIKE POND

Two summer camps have located on Dublin's shore of Thorndike Pond and a third, Camp Monadnock, operated on the eastern shore in Jaffrey from 1913 until 1974.

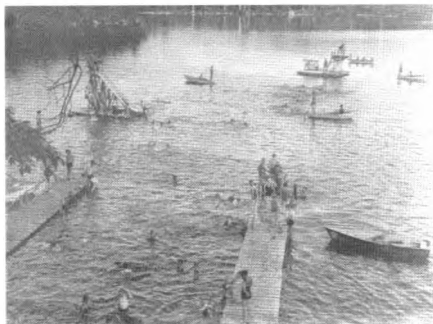


Ready for the Camp Fire

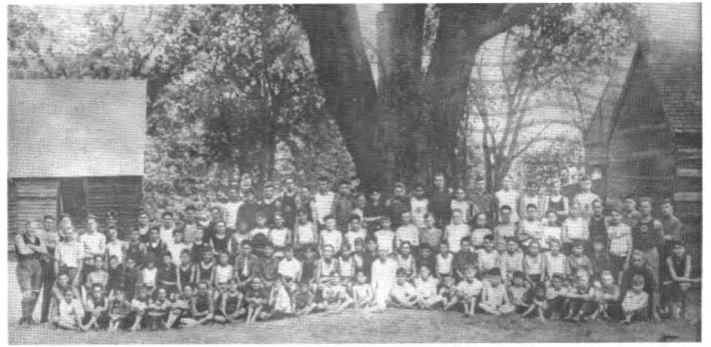
The 1933 trifold flyer for Camp Wanocksett Boy Scout Camp states “The Campfire is the heart of the Scout camp... around it the scouts sing songs, listen to thrilling tales, join in the Indian pow wow or stunt contests...”

Camp Wanocksett, founded in 1924, initially operated on 12 acres on the northern shore of Thorndike Pond. The name Wanocksett combines the words Wachusett for the boy scout council founded in Leominster, MA and Monadnock.

Ted Boutelier, a Canadian native and leader of Troop #1 in Leominster from 1914, was the first director and stayed involved with the camp until his



Camp Wanocksett had an extensive waterfront facility on Thorndike Pond.



Campers and staff gathered under the massive elm tree thought to date back to the 1770s.

retirement in 1944. DHS recently purchased photographs from his personal scrapbook showing the early years. They show that the camp initially used the circa 1770 Simeon Bullard house and its 19th century barn for camp activities. A huge elm tree planted in Bullard's time stood between the house and the barn, which was converted into a dining hall.



Campers with bed rolls and regulation sized boxes for their gear.

In a 1933 trifold flyer the boys were required to bring their own “mattress or tick” and ten pounds or more of blankets. Items termed desirable included musical instruments and scout knife and hatchet. It was recommended that personal belongings be packed in a wooden box or chest with a lock and two sets of keys. Waterfront activities figure large in the descriptions and in 1937 the camp was taxed on 14 boats, probably mostly canoes.



Platform tents for the earliest campers would be replaced with wooden cabins.

Now under the auspices of the Heart of New England Council- BSA the campus has expanded to almost 230 acres and can accommodate up to 126 overnight campers. While the cost for one week in 1933 was \$5.00, the cost in 2019 was \$405.00 per week.

CAMP WA-KLO⁴

Serendipity played a large role in the siting of Camp Wa-Klo on Thorndike Pond. In 1938 colleagues Olive Watkinson and Ethel Kloberg were touring greater New England looking for a site for their new girls' camp, when a snowstorm necessitated an overnight in Peterborough. They spied a Bishop Real Estate sign and called to inquire about suitable properties. Bishop took them to a cottage with 57 acres on Thorndike Pond in a horse-drawn sleigh, and Camp Wa-Klo's location next to Camp Wanocksett was settled.

Watkinson and Kloberg were physical education teachers on Long Island. They co-owned and directed the camp until the early 1950s when Watkinson stepped down upon her husband's retirement. Kloberg would continue to be a director at the camp until her death in 1995, a 58 year tenure! During WWII and for a short time in the 1950s the camp operated as a co-ed camp with two camps side by side with 25 campers each.

By 1992 activities offered included "land and water sports, drama, dance, crafts and trips" and emphasized "gymnastics, water sports, tennis, riding and musical drama".⁵ It's current mission statement for the 130 campers reads "Camp Wa-Klo empowers a girl to be confident, independent, and have a voice." In 2020 the weekly cost for a 7 week session will be \$1325 per week.

There may have been more camps in Dublin whose history is lost. For instance, there is mention of a boys camp on the property of Alberta Manning Houghton on the shore of Stone Pond.⁶ Apparently, the building housing Houghton's brother-in-law's study was consecrated as an Episcopal chapel for camp use in 1916 and was used until St Francis Chapel was built nearby ten years later.

Dublin provided a good setting for summer camps and access to a waterfront was the largest common denominator. The missions and activities offered at the private camps reflected the owner/director's skills and

interests as educators. It is interesting that most of the camps co-opted Native American names and customs in an era when Native American individuals faced extensive discrimination, displacement, and disdain.

Camp Wanocksett and Camp Wa-klo still have extensive campuses for more than one hundred campers each summer, showing that attendance at an overnight camp is still a sought after experience for learning self-reliance and community building.

Written by Lisa Foote

¹ Mycoff, Nancy, "A Jewish Season: Ethnic-American Culture at Children's Summer Camp (1918-1941)", New York University, 2002, p. 74 as cited in Wiesenberg, Charlotte, "The New Promised Land: Maine's Summer Camps for Jewish Youth in Mid-Twentieth Century", Colby College, 2013, note 92.

² Mykoff, p.63 as cited in Wiesenberg, note 74.

³ Sargent, Porter, A Handbook of Summer Camps: An Annual Survey, 8th & 12th editions, Wright & Potter Printing Company, 1931, 1935.

⁴ Historic information from www.campwaklo.com

⁵ Press release in Keene Sentinel, April 30, 1992

⁶ An Inventory of Church Archives of NH published by UNH in 1942., page 342.

IN MEMORIAM

The society reports with great sorrow the recent loss of

Barbara C. Utley
Elsie Belloli
Joan Metcalf Lee
John S. Clarkeson

We extend our condolences to his family

LAST CALL FOR 2019 MEMBERSHIP DUES

Thank you to those of you who have already renewed their membership or have joined for the first time. Dues and contributions pay for the majority of the DHS operating costs, so we have included a dues envelope for those of you who have yet to send dues.

Dublin Historical Society

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