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CAMPING NUMBER

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**MASSACHUSETTS
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH**

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Director, National Camp

Aside from the historical facts of the growth of the modern camping movement in this country there have been many pressures and influences which have caused the movement to follow along certain trends and patterns. To mention briefly a few of these will be sufficient to indicate the course that the camping movement has followed and to indicate the direction it will probably take in order that its fullest benefits may be realized.

From the philosophical point of view camping is a *way of life*. It has implications which lie deep in the history of our country and the struggle of our people and the part that nature has played. The word camping means to each individual what he puts into it. The connotation in this brief article refers to the broader conception of life or to a way of living and therefore relates to the way people lived and live close to nature in the open.

First Campers

The first campers in this country were the Indians. They were wholly dependent upon nature for their food and shelter. They knew the plants and roots and knew their many uses. They built houses and shelters best adapted to the surrounding country, to material at hand and to the climate. They were agriculturalists—developed drought corn, practiced soil fertilization, made irrigation ditches and have made many other valuable contributions of benefit to us. From the standpoint of appreciation of his surroundings, care of self, resourcefulness, utilization of natural resources and the practice of simplicity of living, the Indian was a good camper. In quest of better understanding and love of the out-of-doors as an essential part of our camping movement, we owe much to our first American campers.

The era of explorers, traders, and trappers marks the second period of camping. These rugged individuals had to know the way of the woods in order to make their expeditions successful. With the help of friendly Indians it was possible for them to accomplish their goals. The stories of the traders and trappers add a significant part to the larger concept of adventurous camping.

With the landing of the Pilgrims began a period of *settlement* in this land. The people were actually camping. The first thing a party from the Mayflower did when it went ashore was to select a camp site. For many years people came from other shores to this country, built homes, worked together, and gradually extended themselves farther and farther west. The pioneers in their sturdy homes on wheels camped their way across the country seeking prosperity and security. They lived a life of daring and adventure. They were on their own as individuals and families—camping in the fullest degree. Out of their pattern of living was created our concept and form of democracy. It might be said that camping and democracy started together in this country. A careful study of their progress will show that *shelter, food, self-occupation, spiritual influence, group living, and community effort* were basic elements in the development of our country.

At the time of the signing of our American Constitution approximately ninety-eight per cent of the people lived in a strictly rural area.

Today over sixty per cent of the people live in large cities and are necessarily subjected to much regimentation, coercion and regulation along with all their modern conveniences. It is not contended here that we should abandon our social and economic progress and go back to the days of the Pilgrims and early settlers. Not at all. It is maintained, however, that these principles to which reference has been made are as fundamental and necessary in our present day living as they ever were. Also, there is a better opportunity to experience them in a favorable camp situation.

Organized Camps

The earliest reports of what can be called an organized camp do not give us a very clear picture of the motives or purposes. It was not until the 1870's that an organized movement may be said to have started though a few camps existed before that time. Some of the earliest camps were influenced by the original appeal of adventure in the out-of-doors but, alas, they soon yielded to the march of modern events, and organized activities from the cities gradually worked their way into the camps. Their purposes and practices changed accordingly.

As early as 1872 the movement of "Fresh Air Work" was started and has continued to the present time, though it is rapidly dying out. The purpose of this movement was to get the children out of squalid conditions in the city to the country fresh air and sunshine. Its benefits were judged largely by gain in weight. Later this developed into a more positive health program and has made favorable progress. Organized games and sports movement, a product of the city and school life again influenced camping to become strongly athletic and bodybuilding. This has brought the playfields, basket ball, hand ball, and tennis courts, the track and field events, and nearly all other city sports to the woods, gradually crowding out the opportunities best offered in the camping environment.

Influences and Goals

With the increase of leisure time in our cities there was a surge throughout the country for recreational facilities and programs. This also had its influence upon the camping movement, and much of the program, methods and leadership found its way into camps, bringing with it the fully equipped playground, slides, swings, teeter-totters, giant strides, and all.

Health has always been an important part of the camping program. Depending somewhat upon individual and organized points of view it has very often been regarded as the chief value of camping experience. The concept of health has changed from a state of body condition to the practice of healthful living. This latter view has not as yet fully found expression in our modern programs but in the future will play more and more a greater part.

The building of character as a chief goal in camping has been stressed by various agencies and as a result character building has become an integral part of the camping movement. There is not less emphasis upon character building as an aim today but it—meaning character building—is being interpreted more specifically in terms of better ways of thinking and acting. As a process it tends to merge into a larger purpose.

Education

The present trend is for the education of the whole child, desiring to bring about in each individual the greatest amount of and the most

wholesome total personality growth and development. With all kinds of groups and agencies conducting camps—private, religious, institutional, and welfare, it was inevitable that the next major emphasis in the camping movement was a combination of these goals coming to the focal point of total education of the child as the present need. This does not mean the relegation of the physical, spiritual, health, character building and other values to less important places but indicates more the *oneness* of the purpose and process. This trend seems to be well started. In these days of uncertainty special stress is being placed upon the need for effective citizenship and the practice of the democratic way of life.

Public Responsibility

The camping movement has been fostered generally by private and organizational effort. It is only in recent years that camping has been projected as a public function. This recognition and support is sure to become increasingly a larger part of public responsibility. Schools are beginning to recognize the educational significance of camping and to make it an integral part of their programs. To make education really functional, much of the school program in the future will have to be carried on outdoors. Since the camping program is largely one of learning through experience, it will undoubtedly play an important role in the future development of the schools.

The Future

If we are to think in terms of the future direction of the camping movement, we can perhaps best go back to a rugged simpler life and recapture some of the more basic elements of living as our guide, not losing sight, however, of total education for life in a democratic state as our goal. No matter how much advancement we make in modern improvements, man's nature does not change. His soul and emotions are the same and respond to the same things that have always touched them. Material things do not actually play the most important role in his life. He is still, in a spiritual sense, a part of nature and needs to get back to it for a large part of his life.

The pattern of organization in our camps will necessarily change to make possible the outcomes implied in the newer goals. These outcomes are not sufficiently possible in a centralized or regimented plan of organization. Already a movement of decentralization in camps is started and should continue. In this plan of organization the campers are divided into smaller groups of six, seven, or eight, with adequate leadership, and are on a semi-independent basis. In this small group life they provide for their own food, they plan and cook most of their own meals, have much to do with planning and building their various types of shelters, plan their own program, and in general provide for their own comfort, welfare, and happiness.

Camping in the midst of nature and of the more vigorous and realistic type can make a vital contribution to the building of better citizens and to the implementation of our ideals of democracy—certainly, these should be our chief goals.

A NATIONAL CAMP COMMITTEE FOR THE PROMOTION OF BETTER HEALTH CONDITIONS

WARREN R. SISSON, M.D., *Chairman*

The Committee on Camps of the American Academy of Pediatrics

Three years ago the medical profession under the aegis of the American Academy of Pediatrics organized a committee to act as an advisory group in health matters for summer camps. In this way there was initiated the first organized effort of a national group of physicians to promote summer camps for children. The American Academy of Pediatrics is not attempting to direct the camping movement except as it is concerned with questions directly relating to the health of children. It is not only sponsoring the summer camp movement, but its function is to assist a very able group of educators in giving children a healthful, enjoyable, and profitable vacation during the summer months.

One of the fundamental principles which experienced camp leaders have emphasized is that a camp assumes full responsibility for the child for every twenty-four hours that he is in camp. This is in contrast to the responsibility of the average schoolteacher, who may supervise his pupil but a few hours each day. Because of this continuous responsibility, the summer camp must provide every possible safeguard for the camper. This should be supervised by competently trained physicians interested in problems of public health. It involves the proper selection of camp sites, proper water supply, physical examination of staff and campers, careful regulation of diets, and constant supervision by physicians and nurses. It is most difficult in many instances, where camps are situated in isolated places, to carry out satisfactory health regulations. The use of pasteurized milk, the proper disposal of excreta and suchlike, afford many real problems for the camp director, but all such obstacles should be overcome.

One of the first functions of the Committee was to formulate a set of standards for the medical supervision of camps. It was fully realized that such standards could not be applied to all camps, but represented goals toward which they might reasonably be expected to progress. These standards are discussed by Dr. Dorothy Whipple in another article in this issue of *The Commonwealth*.

Other activities of the Committee should be briefly mentioned. Perhaps one of the most important of these has been the formation of state committees to promote most effectively the health programs of local camps. In Massachusetts the Camp Committee is composed of the following members from different parts of the state: Dr. Lendon Snedeker, Chairman, Boston; Drs. Edward P. Bagg, Jr., Holyoke; Rachel L. Hardwick, Boston; George Kahn, Boston; Merritt B. Low, Deerfield; Harold E. Perry, New Bedford; Norman A. Pokorny, Springfield; Warren R. Sisson, Boston.

The members of this Committee welcome any opportunity to take an active interest in the health problems of our Massachusetts camps. Last year they were instrumental in acquainting a great many camps with the Health Standards drawn up by the National Committee. The present issue of *The Commonwealth* was made possible by their cooperation.

The National Committee on Camps is also seeking the enactment of statutes throughout the United States which will provide better health protection for summer camps. In many states, such as New Hampshire, this has been very effectively accomplished, but in many other states sum-