Summer Camps: **The Jewish Experience**



The B'nai B'rith Summer Camp

PORTLAND, OREGON

B'NAI B'RITH SUMMER CAMP

BENNES & HERZOG ARCHITECTS

Purpose

Give a normal energetic, vigorous child the beauties of nature, the breath of pure air, the taste of good food, and his cheeks will flush with the glow of good health and his eyes will shine with the light that indicates a perfect physical machine. But the B'nai B'rith Summer Camp dedicates its activities to the mind as well as to the muscle, to the cultural aspects as well as to the physical side. Our entertainments, our assemblies, our talks, our songs, our camp-fires, all are directed primarily to the development of the mind. The child is a creature of habit and the B'nai B'rith Summer Camp realizes that its particular task is to help cultivate the worth-while habits of thought and action. When we see that our children are a bit finer, a bit brighter, a bit more cultural, as well as a bit healthier, then and only then do we realize that our task has been well done.

History

This marks the sixth year of the B'nai B'rith Summer Camp. The first camp to be organized was located at Bass Lake, Stevenson, Washington, for two years. The location for the next three years was at Neskowin, Oregon. The success and popularity of the camp drew with it insistent demands from Portlanders that it be taken off its temporary basis and a permanent camp, providing safety, comfort and convenience, be established. The present picturesque camp, located at Devil's Lake, Oregon, overlooks the lake which is four miles in length, and is acknowledged to be the outstanding Jewish camp in the West. It is the direct result of the philanthropic efforts of Portland's Jewry.

Personnel

There is nothing more important for the well being of a camp than the kind of men and women on the job. The members of the B'nai B'rith camp faculty have been chosen, first, for their ability to wisely care for and direct the children, and secondly, for their proficiency in some activity. The happy spirit of comradeship and cooperation between the camper and counselor develops character and helps make useful members of any community. The B'nai B'rith Summer Camp is under the personal direction of Harry M. Kenin. Mrs. Kenin is camp mother. An athletic director, assisted by seven counselors, a swimming instructor, a dietitian and assistant, and a physician compose the staff.

Medical Attention

Safety is stressed. Mrs. Harry Kenin, of the University of Oregon Medical School is medical advisor and is constantly on hand to look after the health of the campers. There has not been a serious case of illness or accident at the camp during the five years of its history. This can be attributed to the health rules which the staff enforce, the quality of food, the purity of the water, and the care and attention given every camper.

Buildings and Equipment

The camp consists of a recreation and dining hall, a kitchen, ten cabins, an infirmary, a store and office, a canteen, a cement tennis court, a cement handball court, piers, canoes, motorboat and rowboats.

The recreation hall is large and spacious, capable of taking care of one hundred campers. It contains an artistic fireplace and stage. There is a thoroughly equipped and fly-proof kitchen. There are ten rustic cabins, each large enough to care for eight boys. They fit in completely with the natural surroundings.

Food

The matter of food is one of the most important in the camp. Nothing but the best is served. Fresh milk, butter, eggs, vegetables, meat and fish are on the menu. Liberal portions, which satisfy growing boys and girls, are served in family style. An expert dietitian prepares the meals.

Sports

Baseball, track meets, swimming, boating, tennis and handball develop the health and athletic prowess of the campers. Prizes and awards are given to the winners in all sports. Expert swimmers supervise the swimming and surf bathing. Experienced counselors guide the campers in their camp life. The camp is absolutely safe, every precaution being taken to make it so.

Dramatics

One act plays, pageants and theatricals are weekly affairs. All programs are arranged by the campers themselves for their own entertainment, supervised of course, by a counselor.

Hikes and Trips

This is always a popular recreation, especially when there are so many beautiful spots as surround Devil's Lake. Hiking along the wooded trails and up mountain slopes is an invigorating exercise.

Nature Study

Much time is spent in hunting chipmunks, classifying and mounting flowers, and identifying the many birds of the locality.

The boys' encampment will last from July 1 to August 5.

The girls' encampment will last from August 5 to August 26.

Children between the ages of eight and sixteen will be accepted.

The camp fee is $10.00 a week.

All children must stay for three weeks.

Members of the camp committee are: Alex E. Miller, chairman; N. Weinstein, A. Rosenstein, Harold Wendel, Alex Weinstein, Dr. Leon Goldsmith, Sidney Teiser, Mrs. N. Weinstein, Simon Cohn, Mrs. S. Blumauer, Julius Meier, Mrs. J. Lowey, Milton Markewitz, Rabbi Henry Berkowitz, Harry Herzog, Rabbi Herbert Parzen, Mrs. M. Lloyd Frank and Mrs. I. Swett.

How To Get To Camp From Portland.

The B'nai B'rith Summer Camp is 114 miles from Portland. When the cut-off now under construction is completed, the distance will be but 86 miles. Automobiles should take the highway through Newberg, McMinnville, Sheridan, Willemina, Dolph Hebo, Cloverdale, Neskowin, and on to Devil's Lake. About four and one-half hours are necessary for the trip. The bus leaves at 8:30 a. m. from the auto bus lines at 352 Yamhill Street.

For further information write to Harry M. Kenin, care of B'nai B'rith Center, 10th and Mill St., Portland, Ore.

EMPLOYMENT DEPT.

500 Bigelow Bldg. Eliot 8573

This is the time that employes are taking their vacations. Members of the Lodge, who are employers of labor should bear in mind that the B'nai B'rith office is constantly in touch with competent and efficient office help. Just give us a ring, Elliott 8573, or Main 2842—tell us what you need and give us an opportunity of serving you. The following is a partial list of men and women seeking employment:

POSITIONS WANTED

Male

Any kind of work by member 22 years in lodge.

Can drive truck. Somebody, help this brother!

Shoe Salesman, highly recommended. Experienced Grocery Clerk.

High School Boy—work during vacation. Can drive car.

Female

Stenographer, or office work. 2 years lawyer's office.

Switchboard Operator or billing;experienced.

Stenographer, graduate of high school, very fast, wants to get located.

Graduate University of Washington School of Journalism wants position.

Experienced Sales girl.

Experienced Stenographer, 6 years last position.

Jewish Calendar

5688–1928

Rosh Chodesh Ab - - - Wed., July 18
Fast of Ab - - - - - Thur., July 26
Rosh Chodesh Ellul - - Fri., Aug. 17

5689–1928

Jewish Transcript, 27 July 1928

The early 20th century saw a boom in Jewish summer camps, due in part to camping trends at the time but also as a reaction to the antisemitism Jews across America faced. In the wake of World War II, when European Jewry had been decimated and American Jews were moving from all-Jewish enclaves to more integrated suburbs, American Jewish leaders worried that their culture might not have a future. So they turned to summer camps. Jewish overnight camps fostered community, allowed freedom to openly observe Jewish customs and religious rites, and acted as a counter to the pressures of assimilation faced by many American Jews at the time. For some summer camp organizers, resident camps offered an opportunity to convey and instill ideas about political principles or what it meant to be an American Jew.



Surprise Lake Camp, New York, Late 1920s-early 1930s. From Museum of Jewish Heritage.

> *"Despite their geographic removal and unique traditions and routines, camps are incubators of culture, religious practice, and political attitudes. As such, they necessarily respond to the goings-on outside their boundaries, serving as mirrors of their historical moments. Everyday life in the postwar Jewish summer camp not only reflected the changing concerns of the organized American Jewish community, but transformations in American education, childhood, youth culture, and global Jewish affairs."*
>
> *The Jews of Summer*

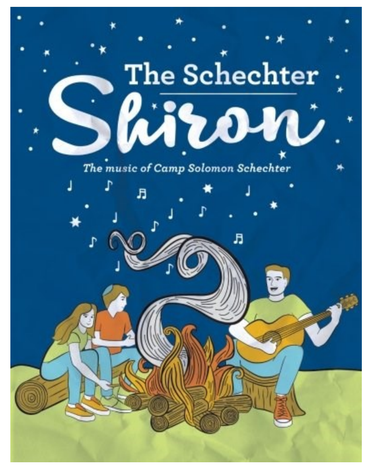


Camp Massad, Pennsylvania, 1941. From Wikimedia Commons.



Goldman Union Camp Institute, Indiana

> *"The twentieth-century dream of a Jewish place that offered children the opportunity to play, learn, become physically fit, enjoy intellectual challenges, challenge themselves, and forge friendships during the process, became a reality…Changing with and over time, the ability to reimagine the summer camp throughout the decades has turned a Jewish endeavor into an American institution."*
>
> *Summer Camping in the United States*





Learn more about Jewish summer camps:

- *An American Jewish Tradition: Sleepaway Camp*. Museum of Jewish History Blog. https://mjhnyc.org/
- Fox, Sandra. *The Jews of Summer: Summer Camp and Jewish Culture in Postwar America*. Stanford University Press, 2023.
- Mykoff, Nancy. *Summer Camping in the United States*. Jewish Women's Archive, June 23, 2021.
- Prichep, Dina. *To Save Jewish Culture, American Jews Turned to Summer Camp.* NPR, June 27, 2023.



Sephardic Adventure Camp, Washington



Camp Solomon Schechter, Washington , 2002. From MyJewishLearning.com.