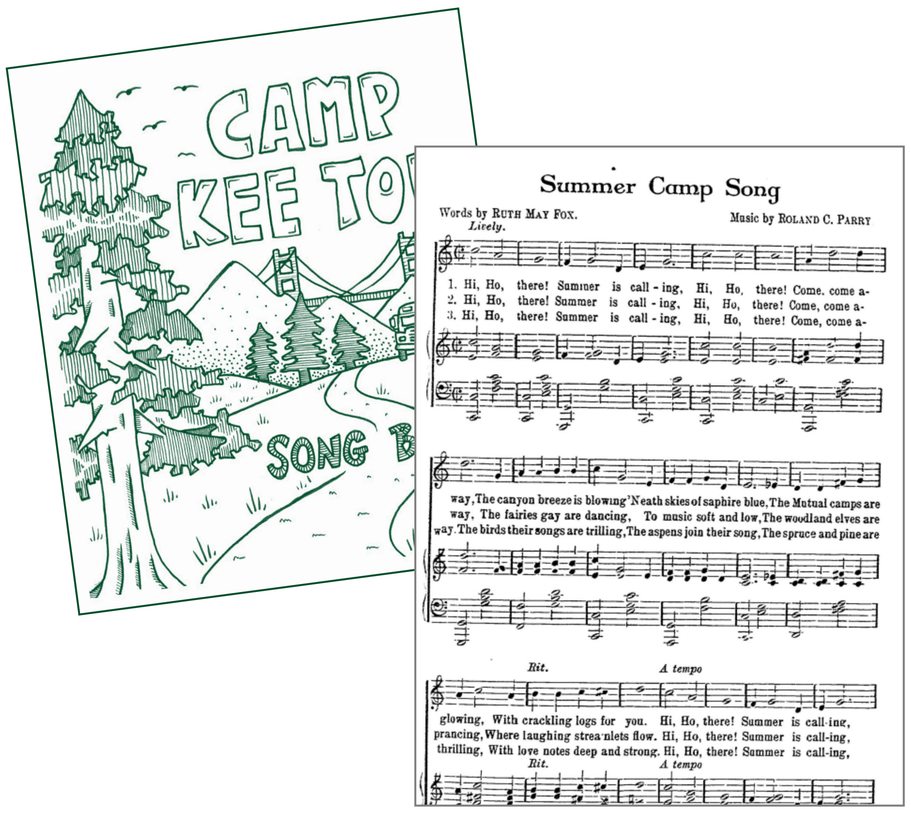
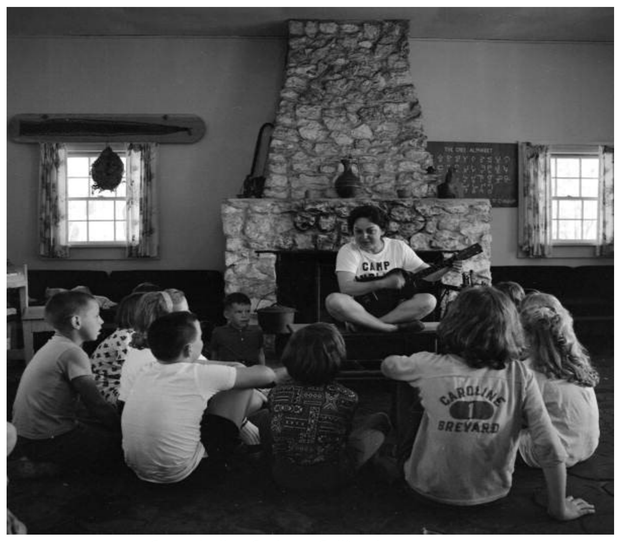
Summer Camps: **Camp Songs**

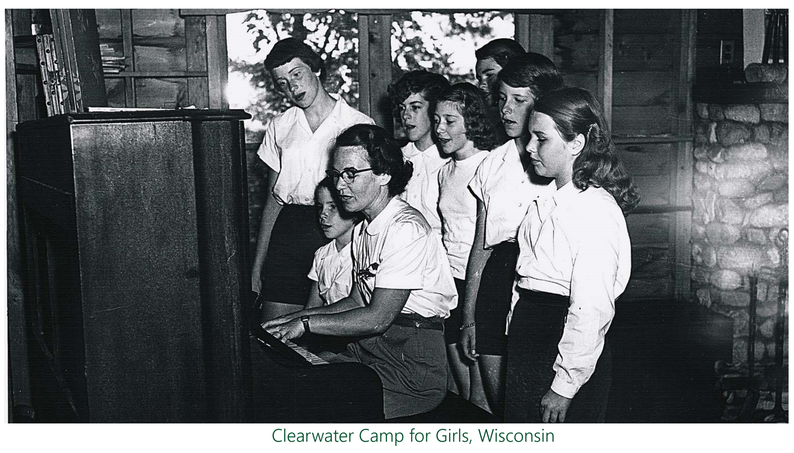


From the morning bugle, to evening taps, and then to the nighttime campfire program, music has always been an essential part of the summer camp experience. Traditional folk tunes, like *She'll be Comin' Round the Mountain* or *On Top of Old Smokey*, or silly songs like *Do Your Ears Hang Low?* or *John Jacob Jingleheimer Schmidt*, all contribute strongly to creating a camp's identity and culture. In sharing songs, campers form bonds and join in a tradition that becomes a distinctive part of the collective memory surrounding summer camp.



Camp Indian Springs, California


Camp Laurel, Maine


Clearwater Camp for Girls, Wisconsin

"Camp offered the perfect conditions for group singing and it is quite likely that whatever singing came to camps, the camps gave back more than they received, in repertoire, vocabulary, songleading techniques and providing singing experiences for youngsters."

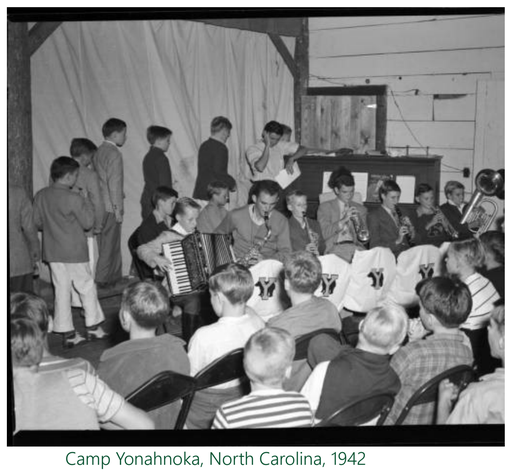
Shelley Posen, in Camp Songs: History and Traditions

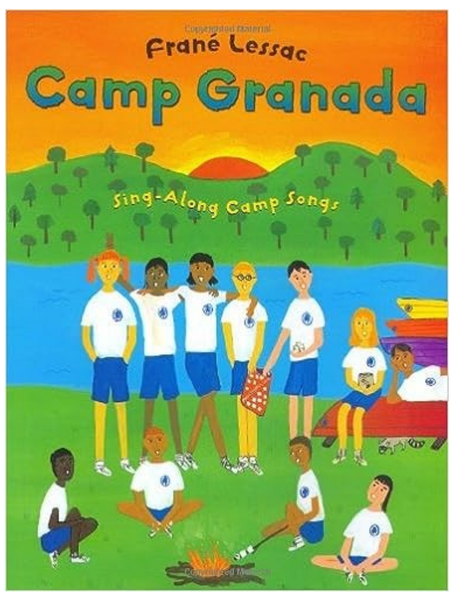

College Settlement Camp, Pennsylvania


Camp Butwin, Minnesota, 1962

"Parents who went to camp as children and later sent their own children to camp are still amazed when these return singing some of the same songs they themselves sang decades before- perhaps "Goodnight Irene," "This Land is Your Land, "Quartermaster's Store," or a song with gestures. Although the summer camp experience is relatively brief, its impact on the musical life of children can be significant and far-reaching."

Beyond the Embers of the Campfire...


Camp Yonahnoka, North Carolina, 1942



Learn more about camp songs:

- Pearse, Jack. "Camp Songs--History and Traditions." *The Camping Magazine*, vol. 83, no. 4, American Camping Association, 2010, p. 32–.
- Seeger, Anthony, and Kate Seeger. "Beyond the Embers of the Campfire: The Ways of Music at a Residential Summer Children's Camp." *World of Music,* vol. 48, no. 1, 2006, pp. 33–65.
- Posen, Shelley. "What Makes a Song a 'Camp Song'?." *Zócalo,* zocalopublicsquare.org .

Hello Muddah, Hello Fadduh (A Letter from Camp)

While summer camps introduced young campers to traditional songs, and created original songs as well, the most famous song *about* summer camp was recorded by musician and satirist Allan Sherman in 1963. The melody is taken from the ballet *Dance of the Hours*, and the lyrics are based on letters of complaint Mr. Sherman had received from his son Robert during his summer at Camp Champlain in New York.



As the song begins, the letter-writer complains about conditions at camp:

Hello Muddah, hello Fadduh.

Here I am at Camp Granada.

Camp is very entertaining.

And they say we'll have some fun if it stops raining.

But by the end, he notes that the rain has stopped and fun activities have begun (such as swimming, sailing, and baseball), he and asks his parents to "kindly disregard this letter".