



Children's Nature: The Rise of the American Summer Camp (American History and Culture)

Leslie Paris

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For over a century, summer camps have provided many American children's first experience of community beyond their immediate family and neighborhoods. Each summer, children experience the pain of homesickness, learn to swim, and sit around campfires at night.

Children's Nature chronicles the history of the American summer camp, from its invention in the late nineteenth century through its rise in the first four decades of the twentieth century. Leslie Paris investigates how camps came to matter so greatly to so many Americans, while providing a window onto the experiences of the children who attended them and the aspirations of the adults who created them.

Summer camps helped cement the notion of childhood as a time apart, at once protected and playful. Camp leaders promised that campers would be physically and morally invigorated by fresh mountain air, simple food, daily swimming, and group living, and thus better fit for the year to come. But camps were important as well because children delighted in them, helped to shape them, and felt transformed by them. Focusing primarily on the northeast, where camps were first founded and the industry grew most extensively, and drawing on a range of sources including camp films, amateur performances, brochures, oral histories, letters home, industry journals, camp newspapers, and scrapbooks, **Children's Nature** brings this special and emotionally resonant world to life.

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