

- 1940 -

A History of Surprise Lake Camp

Forty Years of Steady Development Have Made The Camp
Into a Mecca for Thousands of Under-privileged
Boys From All Over The City

"The land and sky are like a symphony of great music, or the nobility of a stupendous mind laid bare"—John Galsworthy



IT nestles between the sun-drenched hills, Surprise Lake Camp does make "land and sky . . . like a symphony of great music." No doubt, it was the tranquil beauty of that paradise in Putnam County that ended the search, just forty years ago, for a country retreat for the young slum-dwelling troglodytes of the East Side.

The purchase, in 1900, of a small plot of ground at Surprise Lake in Cold Spring by Messrs. Ferdinand Kuhn, James Frank and Bernard M. L. Ernst was a stroke of good fortune for hundreds of thousands of boys. It was the natural outgrowth of the week-end excursions to Westchester County which several Alliance club leaders were in the habit of making with their boys. With the establishment of the camp these club leaders became the first councillors and directors. In 1909, Dr. Henry Fleischman was instrumental in having Dr. Krackoweiser, then director of Boys' Clubs at the Alliance, become the first superintendent of the summer camp. Prominently identified with this project in these early years were Dr. David Blaustein and Dr. Morris Berk.

It wasn't long before this country refuge became popular with the sun-starved and nature-hungry Alliance boys, and it was always filled to its capacity of thirty beds. Among the boys who were the first to saturate themselves with the beauty of this grassy oasis were Eddie Cantor, Georgie Jessel, Dan Lipsky, I. Goldberg, I. Cummings and many others who have since attained fame and whose names help swell the ever-increasing roster of Alliance Alumni.

The Camp continued to grow with the proverbial seven-league boots, and in 1911, at the suggestion of Judge Samuel Greenbaum of the Alliance and Felix M. Warburg of the Y.M.H.A., the Camp was again enlarged to accommodate young men over sixteen years of age. A large administration building was erected with funds donated by Mrs. Neustadt, and the management of the camp was guided by Messrs. Holman, Brodie, Mitchell and Katzenstein.

A far-reaching change in Camp policy occurred in 1914 when the presidents of the Alliance and Y.M.H.A. formed a new camp committee to administer its rapidly-expanding affairs. It was decided to include boys not only from these two institutions

but youngsters from organizations throughout the city. As a result of this radical change the community was given representation on the newly-formed camp committee.

From this point on Surprise Lake Camp threw aside its swaddling clothes and blossomed into the full vigor of manhood. More bungalows and equipment were constantly added to make room for the endless number of boys who sought the shade of its trees and the refreshing coolness of its summer evenings under the star-lit skies. The great cost of these many additions and changes was borne by the Eddie Cantor Camp Committee which was composed, mainly, of members of the Camp Club. It was through the generosity of this group of loyal camp alumni that it was possible to constantly replace the worn and obsolete tents, bungalows, rowboats, chairs, tables, etc.

Another milestone in camp history occurred in 1917 with the opening of the Winter Camp which catered to undernourished and anemic boys. These unfortunate youngsters who were selected by social service agencies, found the crisp country air a tonic for tired, rundown little bodies. The city of New York was generous enough to assign three teachers to give these boys the same education they would have received if they were living in the city.

Today the camp has a summer population of 540 boys from all parts of the city and who come from over fifty agencies, Jewish centers, settlement houses, etc. About 35% of these boys are paid for by the agency which sends them to camp. The others are paid for by their parents. These fees, however, are not sufficient to maintain the camp and Federation gives to the camp about 20% of the summer budget.

The Winter Camp activities are maintained by and through the efforts of the Eddie Cantor Camp Committee and about 140 boys are the recipients of its health and character-building work.

The camp Administrator now is Max Oppenheimer and the Director of Winter Work, living at camp, is Abraham Kastenbaum. Both terms of camp have earned the commendation of social workers, health authorities and camp experts. A cordial invitation is extended to all those who are interested in the camp's work to visit it at any time.

The Songs We Used to Sing at Camp

OH, MY DARLING CLEMENTINE

In a cavern, in a canyon, excavating for a mine,

Dwell a miner, a fortyniner, and his daughter Clementine,

(Chorus)

Oh, my darling, oh, my darling, oh, my darling Clementine,

You are lost and gone forever, dreadful sorry, Clementine.

Light she was and like a fairy, and her shoes were number nine,

Herring boxes, without topses, sandals were for Clementine.

(Chorus)

Oh, my darling, oh, my darling, oh, my darling Clementine,

You are lost and gone forever, dreadful sorry, Clementine.

THE SPANISH CAVALIER

A Spanish cavalier stood in his retreat, And on his guitar played a tune, dear;

The music so sweet, they'd oft times repeat

Sometimes you may think of me, dear Say, darling, say, when I'm far away.

The blessing of my country and you, dear,

(Chorus)

Bright sunny days will soon fade away Remember what I say, and be true, dear.

I am off to the war, to the war I must go,

To fight for my country and you dear; But if I should fall, in vain I would call,

The blessing of my country, and you, dear.

I COME FROM ROOBENVILLE

I come from Roobenville

That's down near Tottensville,

My name is Joshua, Ebenezer Fry,

I know a thing or two

You can bet your boots I do,

Can't fool me, cause I'm too darn sly.

(Chorus)

Well, I've sworn, I must be getting on Gidy-yap Napoleon, it looks like rain

I'll be darned, the butter ain't churned, Come around to see you, when the sun is out again.

CHINGA-LINGA-LINGA

We revel in song,

To Camp Surprise we belong;

Way up on high,

Under the free sky.

In glory we stand,

We return with the bank,

To our beautiful lake on high, on high.

Chinga-linga-ling, chinga-linga-ling

Ha, ha, ha, ha

Those were the words that we heard from afar,

Chinga-linga-ling, chinga-linga-ling

Ha, ha, ha, ha

To the tune of the light guitar, ha, ha.

WHEN GREEK MEETS GREEK

When Greek meets Greek, there is a tug of war

When Dutch meets Dutch, there is a lager-beer,

But the Dutch company is the best company

That ever, came over, from old Germany.

(Chorus)

There's the Amsterdam Dutch and the Rotterdam Dutch,

There's the Pottsdam Dutch and the other — Dutch

But the Dutch company is the best company,

That ever came over, from old Germany.

THE BULLDOG

Oh! the bulldog on the bank,

And the bullfrog in the pool;

Oh! the bulldog on the bank

And the bullfrog in the pool.

Oh! the bulldog on the bank,

And the bullfrog in the pool;

The bulldog called the bullfrog

A green old water-fool.

Singing trala la la la la, la la la la la

Singing trala la la la la, la la la la la

Singing trala la la la la, la la la la la

Trala la la, tra la la la, tra la la la la la.

Pharoah's daughter on the bank,

Little Moses in the pool;

Pharoah's daughter on the bank,

Little Moses in the water,

Pharoah's daughter on the bank,

Little Moses in the pool;

She fished him out with a telegraph

pole,

And sent him off to school.

THE SPANIARD WHO BLIGHTED MY LIFE

List' to me while I tella you,

Of the Spaniard who blighted my life,

Oom cha cha, oom cha cha, oom cha cha,

oom cha cha

List' to me while I tella you,

Of the guy who stole my beauty wife.

'Twas at the bull fight I met him,

Dressed in his spangled array,

And when he fan-dazzled,

And when he span-dangled,

He stole my beauty wife away.

Oh yes, oh no, I swore that I'd have my

revenge,

When I catch Antoni, Spagoni, that

toreador,

Why, I'll plant a bunion,

Oh his Spanish onion,

When I catch him bending tonight,

He must die, he must die, he must

die, die-die, die, die, die, die-die,

die,

He must die, he must die,

He-e-e-e must die - - -

When I catch him bending tonight, cha,

cha.

THAT CAMP OF MINE

(Tune: That Girl of Mine)

Bring back once more, camp days of

yore,

Outdoor 'neath the sunshine, in God's

land we adore,

Swim, fish and row, all on the go.

It's all clean sport, of every sort,

That's why I love it so.

(Chorus)

Surprise Lake Camp, oh, how I love it;

Surprise Lake Camp, I'm dreaming of it;

On its mountains, hill and dale,

I love to hit the trail,

Dip in the lake, because it makes me

Hearty, strong and hale,

Surprise Lake Camp, oh, how I'll miss it,

When my vacation days are done,

Tho' I've been a good old rover,

Next year I'll come back over

To Surprise Lake Camp.

DEAR S. L. C.

(Tune: The Palisades)

O grim grey Breakneck Ridge thy

shadow

Upon our dear Surprise Lake falls,

And the mellow mingled tints of sunset,

Illumine now our rustic walls—

While fellows gather round the camp-

fire,

True and tried with love for thee

And mingle merry hearts and voices

In praise of S. L. C.

Here as the evening shades are falling,

And gone is every care of day,

We gather, and the hillsides echo

With laugh and song of campers gay,

Thy sons well guarded from all sorrow,

Linked firm in bonds of bliss and

glee,

Forget the cares that come tomorrow,

And praise old S. L. C.

No happier lot could e'er befall us—

No boon we crave of greater worth

Than here to gather in the gloaming

And blend our hearts with camping

mirth;

No scenes we've learned so much to

cherish,

No friends we've found so staunch to

be

As those who pledge with us devotion,

To dear old S. L. C.

STEIN SONG

Give a rouse, then, in the Maytime,

For a life that knows no fear;

Turn night-time into daytime,

With the sunlight of good cheer.

(refrain)

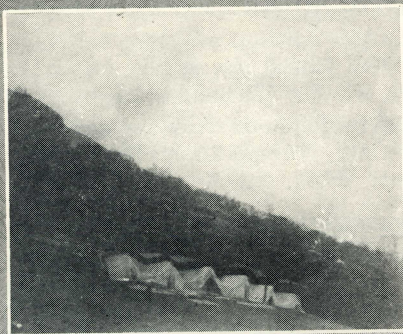
For it's always fair weather,

When good fellows get together,

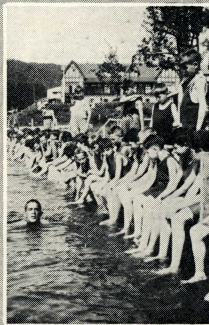
With a stein on the table,

And a good song ringing clear.

SURPRISE LAKE CAMP



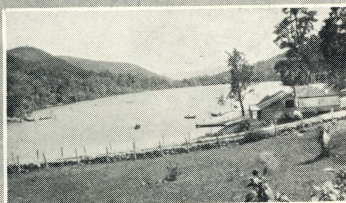
THE CAMP
≈ 1900 ≈



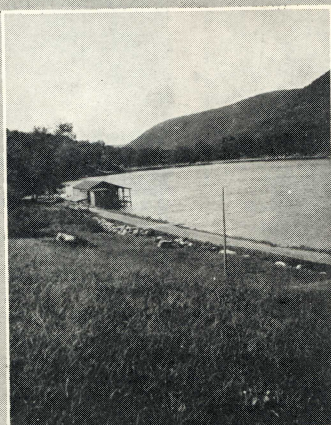
SWIMMING
≈ 1920 ≈



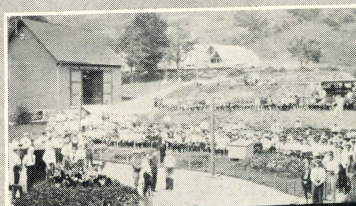
HIKERS in 1906
1. Eddie Cantor. 2. George Jessel



THE LAKE
≈ as it looks today ≈



ADMINISTRATION
BUILDING ≈ 1900



N.Y. GLOBE CONCERT
at the camp ≈ 1920



BIRD'S EYE VIEW
of camp today



DR. JOSEPH DALVEN
and EDDIE CANTOR



SUMMER CARNIVAL
≈ at camp ≈