

Vacation

by Lynne Belluscio

Can you remember that wonderful feeling that came on the Sunday night at the end of the school year - - you didn't have to get up the next morning and go to school. For over twenty years, through school, high school, college and then for five years that I taught school, I remember that elation. A whole summer lay in front of me.

For several years, it meant that I would have a "summer job" but before that, there was just eight weeks of no school. There might be two weeks of Girl Scout Day Camp, or later, two weeks of overnight camp. Maybe a week at my grandparents camp overlooking Honeoye Lake. And usually there was a two week camping vacation to the Adirondacks. I don't remember my parents talking about their summer vacations. They both grew up during the Depression and life was a lot different then.

The idea of summer vacation and the school schedule are intertwined. However, the notion that the long summer vacation was the result of an agrarian society that needed kids home during the summer to help on the farm, is wrong. The agrarian school year had two terms.

A winter term and a summer term. There was a recess in the spring during the planting season and there was a recess in the fall during harvest. The early LeRoy one room school records support this schedule. In fact it was noted that male teachers were hired for the winter terms and women were hired for the summer terms.

With urbanization, and standardized school schedules, school reformers such as Horace Mann suggested that it was better for children if they had a break from the rigors of school and the heat of the city. It was better for the health of the children to stay out of school during the summer. City families would move to the country or the lake. It was also during this time that church camps became popular. Families could participate in wholesome religious activities in rural settings, often in simple cabins or tents.

In nearby Silver Lake, the Methodists established a revival camp in the 1870s. Eventually it developed into a cultural institute, based on the Chautauqua Institute. Orator Woodward had the only double sized cabin on Silver

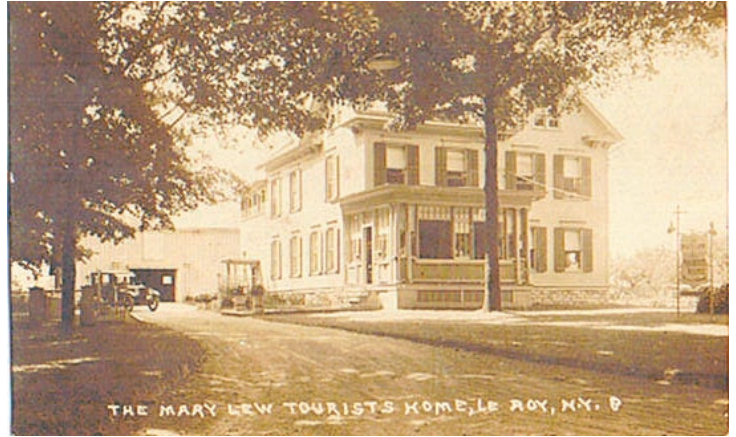
Lake in the Methodist camp which is now part of the National Landmark designation.

Certainly vacation wasn't part of my grandparent's lifestyle. But thinking about it, my grandparents saw the switch from horse and buggy to the automobile and that change had a major impact on taking a vacation. With the introduction of the automobile, people on vacation became tourists. I don't think either of my grandfathers ever became tourists. However, even though they were not affluent, they both had camps in the country that served as a respite from city living.

My father's father bought 4 ½ acres high on a hill overlooking Honeoye Lake and put up a huge tent platform with a very large green army tent and built an out house. That was really camping before there was a KOA! My mother's father built "the cottage" south of Cincinnatus, New York. It had plenty of bedrooms, a huge open dining room and living room with a stone fireplace, a sleeping porch and an outhouse. We would spend a couple of weekends there.

Today it seems that a lot of people on vacation are tourists, like the image in the Jell-O recipe book that shows a family in the 1920s camping in Yosemite, with a tent pitched off the side of their car, or the photograph from the 1940 book that shows Don Woodward's house car.

On the western outskirts of LeRoy was the Grove. The huge maple trees are still there. At first it was a picnic area and then they allowed campers to stay there. These motor camps were often



This is the Mary Lew Tourist Home.



This is the Grove Tourist Camping Ground.

attached to a gas station or a small restaurant. Soon the Grove became a motor hotel (eventually shortened to motel). Unlike hotels that were usually located near the railroad station in a town or city, (such as the old Hotel LeRoy which was located on Lake Street across from the BP&R station) the motor hotel was located near a highway and had an area for parked cars.

Motels were several attached units, with the doors facing the parking lot. People might stay several days at a motel, especially

if it was located in a resort area. For travelers there were also tourist cabins and tourist camps which often offered small kitchen accommodations. Tourist homes were much like bed and breakfasts of today.

Well, the people on vacation are already stopping by the Jell-O Gallery. They begin arriving when school lets out in the south, at the end of May. We already have tourists from 42 states and 14 foreign countries. We're hoping that this year's tourist season will be a good one.

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