THE CAMP MEETING ON THE FRONTIER
AND THE METHODIST RELIGIOUS RESORT IN
THE EAST — BEFORE 1900
by Charles A. Parker

The Early Days

Historians are uncertain about the exact origins of the camp meeting. They ascribe its initial appearance to the late 1790’s or to the early 1800's, but they disagree on the founder and the location of the first such gathering. Outdoor religious gatherings were, of course, commonplace throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries when congregations met in clearings to worship and to construct church houses. Strictly speaking, however, these were not camp meetings, for they were not characterized by mass attendance and by provisions for camping upon the spot where the services were held.

Charles A. Johnson, who wrote the one comprehensive book about the frontier camp meeting, says that:

Among the numerous American claimants, the earliest to receive recognition was the Methodist, Reverend Daniel Asbury of North Carolina. While his Rehoboth Church in Lincoln County was under construction in 1794, the congregation worshiped in the forest, their services continuing through the day and night. Some have called this event the first camp meeting. At these sessions the sponsoring preacher was assisted in the pulpit by William McKendree, later a bishop, and others. Perhaps the astounding success of this woodland revival with its three hundred converts encouraged McKendree to champion such a departure from established religious practice, for he later used the technique extensively. The year following Daniel Asbury’s success, two more encampments were staged by him and his Presbyterian co-worker, James Hall, at Bethel, near “Rock Spring,” and “Shepherd’s Cross Roads” in Iredell County. The latter gathering was known as the great “Union Camp-Meeting.” Both encampments produced a wealth of conversions. Similar services were repeated frequently thereafter by both the Presbyterians and the Methodists of the South Carolina Conference. One historian listed the Carolinas as the first home of the camp meeting but conceded that it was in Tennessee and Kentucky that it was firmly established.

Other writers have credited John McGee, a Methodist preacher of western Tennessee, and his brother William, a Presbyterian preacher with whom he worked closely, as having conducted a camp meeting in

2Johnson, p. 30.
1799. John McGee had previously ministered in Guilford County, North Carolina, and appears to have been greatly impressed by Daniel Asbury's nearby camp meetings. He later transferred the technique to the Red River area in Kentucky and to the Cumberland River region.

But the most credible claimant as the originator of the camp meeting is probably James McGready, the fiery Presbyterian minister who almost single-handedly touched off the westward phase of the Second Great Awakening of American revivalism, a resurgence of religious spirit that swept America from 1800 to 1805. Of Scotch-Irish parentage, and a product of the Pennsylvania and the North Carolina frontiers, he had previously ministered in Orange County, North Carolina, where he held a great revival and converted at least twelve men who were later to become preachers. In the course of his evangelistic activities among three congregations in Logan County, Kentucky, McGready sponsored what was in all probability the first large scale camp meeting anywhere.

As the result of an inspiring sacramental service at his church at Red River, in June, 1800, McGready decided to hold another at Gasper River, one of his other churches, during the last week of July. Notices were distributed, and great numbers responded. Some came as far as one hundred miles to attend, bringing their own tents and provisions. When the planned practice of camping out at the continuous religious service appeared, the camp meeting was truly established. 3

The Gasper River gathering was a sensational success and led instantaneously to the holding of other camp meetings along the frontier. Presbyterian and Methodist ministers alike, impressed with McGready's success, held similar services that spontaneously captured the fancy of the pioneers, who were willing to travel great distances to attend. During the summer of 1800, Presbyterians, Baptists, and Methodists united to hold one revival after another. 4

The idea spread rapidly to other areas, and by 1803 the outdoor religious excitement had caught on in the Western Reserve District of Ohio, in Western Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Virginia as well as northward through Maryland, Delaware, Pennsylvania, New York, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Vermont, New Hampshire and into Canada. 5

The most famous of the early camp meetings was the Cane Ridge Revival, planned and staged by Barton Warren Stone, a Presbyterian, in Bourbon County, Kentucky, in August, 1801. Stone, influenced by McGready, also looked upon the outdoor revival as "an effective way of

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3Johnson, p. 31.
4Johnson, pp. 34-36.
5Johnson, p. 68.
reaching the rough pioneer....”

At this gathering, where Presbyterians, Baptists, and Methodists freely mixed, “bodily exercises” such as “the jerks,” “barking,” leaping, fainting, and various other outward manifestations of religious hysteria broke out on a wide scale. These antics were probably not characteristic of all early camp meetings, but they were seized upon by critics who then painted lurid pictures of these gatherings in general. The Cane Ridge Revival was, however, probably “the most disorderly, the most hysterical and the largest revival ever held in early-day America.”

Cane Ridge is important in the history of the camp meeting for two reasons: first, it gave a tremendous impetus to the Second Great Awakening in American revivalism; and second, its disorder, its confusion, and its religious excesses divided western Presbyterians into two feuding groups. After the division, the main body of Presbyterianism abandoned the outdoor revival.

The Methodists Adopt the Camp Meeting

By 1805 the Baptists had also generally abandoned the camp meeting, which then became “more and more a Methodist technique of getting at sinners.” Smaller religious groups, such as the “Stonites,” the “Shakers,” and the Cumberland Presbyterians, held camp meetings throughout the nineteenth century, but the activities of these groups “were relatively insignificant when measured against the Methodist utilization of the forest revival.”

The Methodists saw in the camp meeting a parallel with the great open air preaching services held in England by the Wesleys and by George Whitefield in the early days of their church. They felt that the Arminian doctrine of salvation through personal effort, rather than the Calvinistic theory of redemption through election by God, integrated well with the democratic spirit of the outdoor service where all comers met on a basis of spiritual and social equality. To them it seemed as if they had found an excellent means for the spread of their doctrine and for the expansion of their denomination.

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7Johnson, pp. 62-63.

8Johnson, pp. 67-70. The schism resulted in the withdrawal of Barton Warren Stone and his followers from the Presbyterian Church, and was responsible for his founding of the Church of God, which has since become the Church of Christ. See Ulrey, especially Chapters Three and Four.

9Johnson, p. 6.


11Johnson, pp. 72-80.
In the early days, Bishop Francis Asbury was probably the staunchest advocate of the camp meeting. Having attended one as early as October, 1800, in Tennessee, he urged the Methodists to adopt the idea and to carry it into other sections of the country. Heeding Asbury's plea, his followers enthusiastically held more and more gatherings each year. By 1818 more than six hundred of these were held throughout the country, and by 1820 the number had increased to nearly one thousand.

The Methodists actively tried to erase the stigma that had been attached to the camp meeting because of the wild excesses in Kentucky and Tennessee, by bringing order through thorough planning and close supervision. Leaving nothing to chance, they were meticulous in the layout of grounds, in the scheduling of the meetings, in the assignment of duties to the attending preachers, and in the supervision of the conduct of those who attended.

Despite its zealous adoption by the Methodists, the camp meeting was never an official part of that organization. Intended to supplement the regular functions of the church, but never authorized by the official body, it was from start to finish a locally-controlled institution. Annual conferences sanctioned the idea, but they did not actively sponsor outdoor revivals. The ministers who conducted such services were responsible to the church because of their ordination, but they did not act as agents of their annual conferences. The itinerant minister, commonly known as the "circuit-rider," was instrumental in the spread of the popularity of the institution, often single-handedly arranging for local camps and also combining his labors with other itinerants to hold union-circuit meetings.

So popular was the idea with the Methodist clergy that often quarterly and even annual conferences were held in conjunction with outdoor revivals. The annual conference camp meeting became a great social event for preachers and for laymen. In addition, the presiding elder of the district attended, accompanied by whatever visiting church officials.

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12Johnson, p. 83.
14Methodist camp meetings were not especially quiet and subdued gatherings, despite the attempts to preserve order. Religious enthusiasm was consciously stimulated, and the "shouting Methodist" was always present. Rigid policing was not always maintained, but the elders were fairly strict in their attitude toward social conduct. The cliche which was popular was not entirely incorrect: it read "more souls were made than were saved at the camp meeting."
16Johnson, p. 86.
17But the camp meetings themselves were conducted by individuals, and not as official acts of the conferences.
who were in the area. Charles A. Johnson maintains that:

The juxtaposition of revival time and conference time was a logical arrangement offering tangible advantages. An army of preachers was on hand, including the very best speaking talent available — famous personalities who could attract hundreds from miles around. Various church leaders could compare notes as to service routines and could pick up new ideas.\(^{18}\)

Little is known about the early eastern camp meeting, except that it was probably more orderly and more subdued than that of the West,\(^ {19}\) but the East differed from the West:

...in size as well as in the number of tents. The encampments in the East, although similar in design to those on the frontier, were established on a grander scale. While some eastern shelters housed but a single group, a great number were large enough for many families. Perhaps twenty to fifty and even a hundred individuals found shelter under a single canvas. Mammoth tents were typical here. Likewise the eastern camper’s furnishings included many of the comforts of home.\(^ {20}\)

City and rural dwellers seem to have met together on occasion in the East, where whole city congregations moved as a unit into the country. They pitched their tents, prepared a preaching ground, and welcomed the farmers in the area.\(^ {21}\)

Permanent camp meeting grounds, characterized by large wooden pavilions and by simple frame cottages, began to appear in the 1830’s. Rough and rustic at first, the facilities at these places became more elaborate, and even pretentious after the Civil War. The first such establishment was probably at Martha’s Vineyard, Massachusetts, which was founded in 1835.\(^ {22}\)

The Vacation Camp Meeting at the Methodist Resort

A sharp renewal of interest in camp meetings seems to have followed a period of relative dormancy which lasted from the latter 1850’s through the Civil War. After the mid-1860’s, scores of Camp Meeting Associations, each composed of about a dozen to about twenty-five Methodist ministers and laymen, were incorporated in the East and in the Midwest for the purpose of establishing and developing permanent outdoor meeting grounds. These organizations were incorporated as stock companies, some of which operated admittedly for profit, while others invested their revenues in further development of their facilities, and dedicated surpluses to charity. Chartered by state legislatures, these religious corporations divided their lands into lots which were leased for terms up to ninety-nine years. The authority

\(^{18}\)Johnson, p. 87.

\(^{19}\)Johnson, p. 97.

\(^{20}\)Johnson, pp. 44-45.

\(^{21}\)The Methodist (New York), August 17, 1875.

\(^{22}\)The Methodist (New York), September 10, 1870.
given to the founders by their charters was comparable, in some instances, to that of corporate municipal bodies. Special laws also entitled the managers to regulate public conduct and commerce, usually within a radius of one mile around their holdings, and they imposed strict regulation upon residents and visitors alike. Property rights could be transferred only if the members of the association approved of the new lease holder.23

The renaissance of enthusiasm for camp meetings came as part of the tremendous popular interest in summer vacationing which was felt in America during the last third of the nineteenth century, when vacation resorts were established along the entire Atlantic coast, from Maine to Florida.24 Prior to this period, summer vacationing had been largely the privilege of the rich, but the extension of the railroad and the steamship line, combined with the availability of moderately priced facilities, brought great waves of visitors to the newly established gathering places.

Religious resorts, featuring camp meeting services, sprang up, often close by secular grounds,25 at the seashore, in the mountains, by the riverside, at the lakeside, and at woodland groves. The camp meeting associations provided a Christian substitute for fashionable "watering places" such as those at Saratoga and Niagara, New York; Newport, Rhode Island; the White Mountains, New Hampshire; and Cape May and Long Branch, New Jersey.26 They also provided an alternative to Atlantic City, New Jersey, which had become popular as a middle class secular resort.27

Camp Meeting Calendars, regular features of the religious newspapers during most of the 1870's and the 1880's, indicate that vacation camp meetings were spread across the country, and that they were especially numerous in the East and in the Midwest. According to The Christian Advocate (New York), between July 23 and September 10, 1873, sixty meetings were operating from upper New York to Illinois, and south to Virginia, North Carolina and Tennessee.28 From

23Property situated upon leased lots was saleable. Lease rights, which entitled the owner to remain on the land, were transferred at the time of the "sale."
25Often the religious resort preceded the establishment of nearby semi-religious or secular facilities. Most notable of these was the fact that Ocean Grove, New Jersey, was founded before adjacent, and perhaps more famous, Asbury Park.
27Wilson, p. 287.
28July 24, 1873. This was not a complete list of all the meetings held that summer, but it covered the last six weeks of the summer. A few meetings had occurred during the first weeks of July and had appeared on earlier calendars.
year to year the list grew longer: seventy-three were held in 1877, ninety-three in 1879, and 143 in 1889.29

The middle Atlantic states contained a heavy concentration of Methodist vacation camps. By 1879, the report from New York was: “During the next three weeks, twenty-nine of these great out-of-doors conventions will be in progress in this state, Pennsylvania, and in New Jersey.”30 From Philadelphia came the word that:

Within the next six weeks, six camp meetings will be held within the bounds of our conference, and three so near as to justify a mention of them for our people.... These meetings are so located that every part of our conference territory will feel the influence of one or more of them.31

Several resorts were located in eastern Pennsylvania. Near Philadelphia were Brandywine Summit and Chester Heights (both Delaware County), Joanna Heights (Burke County), and Landisville (Lancaster County). In the Harrisburg area was Juniata Valley. In the Pocono mountains, Lake Poponoming (Monroe County) was the site of another Methodist ground. Further east, near Stroudsburg, was Delaware Water Gap camp ground and in the Wilkes Barre vicinity there was Wyoming.32

In New Jersey, nine Methodist resorts were chartered between 1868 and 1895. Although temporary and semi-permanent meeting places had been used in that state since 180633 it was not until after the Civil War that the vacation camp meeting movement began in earnest there, as well as in other areas of the east and midwest. Mt. Tabor (Denville), Ocean Grove, Seaville, Pitman Grove, West Jersey Grove (Malaga), Ocean City, Island Heights, and National-Park-on-the-Delaware were all established during this period.34

Maryland and Delaware also contained camp meeting resorts. Northeast of Washington, D. C., was Emory Grove, at Glyndon, while

29Compared with the number of early camp meetings reported by William Warren Sweet (Religion on the American Frontier, p. 69) these figures do not seem impressive. The fact is, however, that the vacation camp meetings consistently drew much larger crowds than did the early summer revivals. In addition, the former ran from ten to fourteen days, while the latter ran only four days.

32The existence of these and all the following Methodist resorts can be verified by consulting lists of camp meetings published annually in The Christian Advocate (New York) during July and August of 1870's through the 1890’s.
another auditorium stood at Annapolis Junction. Along the banks of the Susquehanna River was the ground at Woodlawn. In Delaware, the best known vacation camp meeting resort was at Rehoboth Beach, on the Delaware Bay across from the well known secular playground at Cape May, New Jersey.

New York State, too, was a hotbed for camp meetings both before and after the Civil War. The Victorian resort mania, both secular and religious, did not escape the Empire State. Close to New York City were the Methodist resorts at Merrick and Sea Cliff (both Nassau County). On eastern Long Island, Jamesport and Shelter Island contained camp meeting sites. “Up the river” at Ossining was the famous Sing Sing ground. In the Saratoga Springs area, in contrast to the high priced watering spas, were the more modest, but popular, camp meeting places at Round Lake and Riverside. At Niagara Falls there was Wesley Park. The Thousand Island district also felt the influence of the Methodists, for at the head of Well’s Island stood a pay-for-admission resort and meeting ground patterned in appearance after the famous Ocean Grove, New Jersey. Corning, Silver Lake, and Oswego also had meeting grounds. At Fair Point, Bishop John Heyl Vincent and Lewis Miller established the widely acclaimed Sunday School Assembly on Lake Chautauqua, which became perhaps the most important educational influence upon the laity of the 1880’s and 1890’s. This, of course, was the Chautauqua Literary and Scientific Circle (CLSC) that distributed hundreds of thousands of correspondence courses, both religious and cultural, to students throughout the country. Chautauqua graduation centers flourished at a large number of camp meeting resorts, where Bishop Vincent and other high ranking Methodists made countless graduation orations and lectures to enthusiastic students. Fair Point had been an old camp meeting facility before the Chautauqua Institution took over its grounds.

New England, too, fostered the Methodist resort movement of the Victorian age. In Connecticut, Pine Grove (Canaan) and Plainville (New Haven District) became well known, as did Willamantic. In Massachusetts stood the great pioneer of the Methodist resort movement, Oak Bluffs, on Martha’s Vineyard. This was probably the oldest resort of any kind on the east coast. Beulah, near Fall River, was the site of another camp ground. Concord, too, had one. In Maine, Old Orchard Beach was very famous. In the mountains of New Hampshire were resorts at Wilmot and Weirs.


36Leon H. Vincent, John Heyl Vincent, a Biographical Sketch (New York: The Mac-Millan Company, 1925), Chapters XI through XIII.

The exact number and location of all the Methodist camp meeting grounds and resorts may not soon be known, for there is much research left to be done. It can be assumed that few Methodists resided in areas unaffected by the movement, but the most famous places were found at Martha's Vinyard, Ocean Grove, Old Orchard Beach, Round Lake, and Sing Sing. If one considers the Chautauqua Institution to be in the same category as the traditional Methodist resorts, it, too, must be given a prominent place.

To reach most of the seaside resorts seldom took more than a few hours by rail from New York, Philadelphia, or the smaller cities. Excursion steamers cruised rivers, lakes and bays, frequently touching at religious vacation grounds. Using these modes of transportation, a trip to camp meeting, even on a one-day basis, was a pleasant, and not too difficult sojourn. The railroads encouraged the exodus to the resorts by offering reduced rates and special trains.38

The camp meeting resort was popular with four classes of persons: cottage owners, cottage and tent renters, hotel guests, and excursionists. Some cottage owners, largely preachers, lawyers, and businessmen spent the entire summer on the grounds. Many of them regarded the well-regulated and strongly protected religious resort as an ideal place to leave their families during the summer, while they attended matters elsewhere, spending only weekends at the cottages. Some even commuted to and from the city daily. Other vacationers rented cottages from the camp meeting associations at reasonable rates, thus gaining the same benefits as those who owned cottages.39 Shorter term visitors were usually accommodated at hotels and boarding houses which sprang up soon after the establishment of the camp meeting ground. They crowded these places to capacity throughout the summer season.40 Large numbers of excursionists also were drawn to the grounds, especially during the camp meeting services. Most of them wandered around the grounds, partaking of the religious or recreational amenities, but having no specific headquarters.

Publicity and Commercial Promotion

The great popularity of the religious resort, and of the camp meeting,

38Fares and schedules were advertised widely in both the religious and the secular press.
39Ocean Grove, New Jersey, was especially noted for its large tent-renting population. More than 500 canvas "cottage type" tents were occupied continually during the summer, some of them being taken by the same families summer after summer for more than thirty years. A system of moving up by seniority to better tent locations seems to have existed. Even today more than a hundred tents can be seen adjacent to the great auditorium, each rented for the season by the association.
40At those few grounds that did not feature resort activities, capacity was reached only during the services of the camp meeting itself, or perhaps on Sunday.
is reflected in the extensive newspaper coverage which they received. In the 1870's, *The Christian Advocate* (New York) reported that "one can scarcely take up a paper during the summer months without seeing an account of such meetings in progress, and announcements of others to take place."\(^4\)

During the month of August, 1874, *The New York Times* featured a daily column entitled "Open-Air Worship" which described extensively the activities of the various outdoor meetings in New York and in New Jersey. In later years, however, attention of *The Times* to this subject was sporadic.

*The New York Daily Tribune* editorialized frequently against the vacation camp meeting, but it carried extensive reports of the services and of the social life found at such places. In 1890, this newspaper admitted the popularity and the importance of the institution to its readers, and announced—that, in spite of its questioning of the real worth of the theological results to be attained at these places, it would continue to carry reports from the various camp meetings and religious assemblies scattered throughout its territory.\(^4\)

Newspapers of other cities also carried camp meeting and religious resort news. Not as generous to the institution as the religious press, much of which emanated from that city, the Philadelphia papers described the meetings, but not in great detail. They chose, rather, to report extensively the social happenings of the places to which many of their subscribers went during July and August. In some towns there were dedicated local editors (often clergymen) who reported camp meeting services in great depth. The telegraphic wire services often sent reporters to cover camp-meetings and other auditorium events at the larger resorts.

Although the religious motive seems to have been dominant in the formation of most camp meeting associations, commercialism came in varying degrees to their enterprises. Land values, especially at the seashore, skyrocketed under the surge of resort development which was taking place. Camp meeting grounds were no exception, and investors who originally bought leases on lots for fifty dollars quickly sold them for many times that amount.

At Ocean Grove, speculation was limited largely to the individual, since the association developed its lands slowly and continuously over a period of twenty years. Despite the fact that a few preachers might have profited to some extent through fortunate early purchases, the enterprise did not seem to have created personal fortunes for any of its members. In the camp meeting movement as a whole, however, it is likely that certain persons made substantial profits, while others invested, but lost.

\(^{41}\)July 27, 1876.

\(^{42}\)August 24, 1890.
In general, the camp meeting associations themselves did not operate commercial facilities within their grounds, but they leased the privilege to others. Restaurants, hotels, and retail outlets for the necessities of life were independently operated. The associations, however, regularly battled hucksters and liquor sellers who tried to invade their grounds.

Camp meeting resorts were widely advertised, although most of the paid notices appeared in the religious, rather than in the secular press. By 1896, for instance, the published Annual Minutes of the New Jersey Conference contained full page layouts illustrating the attractions of these places. Most of the associations distributed illustrated pamphlets concerning their summer program, and some, such as the National Park (New Jersey) Camp Meeting Association, published annual almanacs which served as year around reminders.

The religious resorts seem to have drawn large crowds, especially during the services of the camp meeting. Even though they seemed to have attracted more people than they could comfortably handle, friendly business rivalry existed among them. The spirit of competition was described in 1875 in these terms:

This is unavoidable and it has some advantages. A large amount is invested in a grove; expenses are heavy; the season is short; and each place is therefore anxious from a financial standpoint — and religious motives also — to draw a crowd. Hence a tempting bill of fare advertised in the church papers and by wide-spread circulars. One place lures the public with its “fine ocean bathing and fishing” and another touchingly alludes to its “mountain air, charming landscapes and rural quiet.” One claims to be the “most central camp-ground in the country” and proves it by a map. One rallies the people to a temperance convention, another to a musical convention, another to a grand Sunday School Institute. Some wisely advertise the preachers who are secured — and invoke the ministerial talent to draw a paying crowd. Before us is a pictorial bulletin which announces that one place will have a chime of bells, a cornet to lead the singing, “an old mummy” and probably a pipe organ and good coffee! It also gives a long list of speakers who “have not all pledged themselves to come,” and another list of twelve Bishops and others who “have been invited” but who have as yet given “no assurance which justified a positive announcement.”

Influence of the Holiness Movement

The great interest in summer vacationing was not alone responsible for the renewal of interest in camp meetings following the Civil War. A strong influence was also exerted by the National Association for the Promotion of Holiness, which was popularly known as the National Camp Meeting Association. This group, largely Methodist, but interdenominational, was organized to conduct revivals exclusively for the “special promotion of entire sanctification or Christian perfection as a

43The Methodist (New York, August 7, 1875). Not all camp meetings advertised their speakers in advance, but some, like Ocean Grove, kept tightly controlled the release of the names of the preachers until the day before the service.
definite experience."

The National Association never established a meeting ground of its own, but it functioned as an itinerant agency, using the existing facilities of other camp meeting associations. In the seasons other than summer it went into the cities with tabernacle crusades for sanctification. Its members individually, however, were responsible for the founding of several vacation camp meeting resorts. Numbered among the charter members at Ocean Grove, for instance, were William B. Osborne, John S. Inskip, and Alfred Cookman, all of the National Association. Osborne has been credited with being the founder of Ocean Grove, although he moved to Florida soon after its beginning.

Other dedicated workers for holiness were Dr. and Mrs. W. C. Palmer, Lizzie Smith, and the zealous Black evangelist, Amanda Smith. No camp meeting resort seems to have been without a small, but dedicated, band of holiness seekers and defenders. In fact, they probably constituted the backbone of the camp meeting movement of the 1870's and 1880's — at least until the entrepreneurs and Christian promoters moved in.

The Camp Meeting Day

The camp meeting of the post Civil War period differed little in form from that of the 1830's, except that it was much more sedate and ritualistic than in former years. The excesses and bodily exercises of the earlier days were gone, and the social aspects were much more in evidence, but the general continuity of the ten days to two weeks campaign was quite similar. The daily series of meetings were still very much in evidence. Ten to fifteen services of various types occurred throughout the day, beginning at five or five-thirty in the morning and lasting until ten or ten-thirty at night. Prayer meetings, experience meetings, young people's meetings, mothers' meetings, holiness meetings, love-feasts, communion services all might be held, some consecutively, and some simultaneously. Almost always there were three main preaching services, occurring at ten in the morning, two-thirty in the afternoon, and seven-thirty in the evening. Occasionally, evangelistic services might interfere with the afternoon sermon, but almost nothing — not even the weather — interfered with those of the morning or evening. Following nearly every preaching service came an after-meeting, featuring exhortations from other ministers, from prominent evangelists, or from a bishop himself, if one were present.

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45Ellwood H. Stokes, "Ocean Grove: An Historical Address Deliverd at its Sixth Anniversary, July 31st, 1875," printed in The Ocean Grove Record, August 14, 1875.
The daily program from the 1887 camp meeting at Ocean Grove is typical of those presented nearly everywhere after the Civil War:

Consecration meeting in Tabernacle... 5:45 to 6:45 a.m. daily
Family devotions, Auditorium, 6:45 to 7 a.m. daily
Holiness meeting, Tabernacle... 9 a.m. daily
Public services, Auditorium, 10:30 a.m., 3 and 7:30 p.m. daily
Mrs. Lizzie Smith's meeting [holiness], Tabernacle, 1-3 p.m. daily
Mother's meeting, Temple... 2 p.m. daily
Helping Hand Tent... 4:30 p.m. daily
Workers' Training Class, Temple... 4:30 p.m. daily
Twilight service, Temple... 6:30 p.m. daily
Infant Baptism, Wednesday, 31st at 9 a.m. sharp, followed by closing exercises.46

Summary

The origins of the camp meeting are uncertain, but the first gathering at which people camped out while attending continuous revival services was probably held by James McGready, at Gasper River, Logan County, Kentucky, in July, 1800. The idea spread like wild fire, and within the summer it moved all along the southwestern frontier. In two years it was in evidence throughout the West, along the eastern seaboard, and even in Canada.

The most famous of the early camp meetings was the Cane Ridge, Kentucky, revival, staged in 1801 by Barton Warren Stone, Presbyterian. It was known for its large crowds and for the wide-scale appearance of "bodily exercises." Because of its orgiastic excesses, Cane Ridge caused a split among the Presbyterians which eventually resulted in the establishment of The Church of God and in the abandonment of the camp meeting by the Presbyterians. This revival was also largely responsible for the stereotyped, but inaccurate, image of the early camp meeting as a wild, disorderly affair.

The Methodists, upon the insistence of Bishop Asbury, developed the camp meeting as a device for revival and for church expansion. They consciously tried to erase the stigma which had been brought to it by reports of the early wild excesses, relying on thorough planning and close supervision to accomplish this goal. Despite the wide usage of the institution by the Methodists, it never became an official part of their church, but remained locally controlled. The itinerant minister carried the idea to the frontier while in the more settled regions the camp meeting often became the scene of the annual conference. At the conference camp

meeting, the greatest preachers available were brought to the stand.

By the 1830's, permanent cottages and open-air wooden auditoriums began to appear. After the Civil War, a sharp revival of interest in camp meetings was fostered by camp meeting associations, which were stock companies formed for the purpose of establishing and developing permanent grounds. This period was also one of great interest in summer vacationing by the middle classes of the country, and therefore many camp grounds also became religious summer resorts.

By 1889, nearly 150 vacation camp grounds were operating in many sections of the country — coast to coast, and down to Texas — but the main concentration seems to have been in the area between Maryland and New England. Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and New York states held the largest number, as the Methodists offered a cheaper, respectable, and enormously popular alternative to the secular resorts that sprang up along the east coast. The development of the summer resort in America after 1865 was explosive. After a period of dormancy just prior to and during the Civil War, the old fashioned camp meeting became the vacation camp meeting — and exploded, too. Cottage owners and renters, tent dwellers, hotel guests, and excursionists flocked to these places, which were extremely well attended and publicized.

Some commercial aspects, mostly involved with land speculation, crept into the movement, but not all camp meeting associations took profits.

An important factor in the resurgence of interest in the camp meeting was the Christian holiness movement. Most influential of the holiness groups was the National Association for the Promotion of Holiness, which carried on extensive activity in behalf of its cause, including the sponsoring of many "National Camp Meetings." Members of this association individually were responsible for the founding of a number of religious resorts, but the association itself never officially established one.

The camp meeting proper was a concentrated series of religious services held for ten days to two weeks during the summer season. Ten to fifteen meetings of various kinds were held throughout the day, from sunrise until late in the evening, including three main preaching services. The latter consistently drew audiences numbering in the thousands.

Although a significant number of camp meeting grounds still stand today, even after more than a hundred years of existence, the period of the entire nineteenth century witnessed the establishment and growth of the movement from a rough frontier revival to the conservative, but sophisticated, form of the vacation camp meeting and the Methodist religious resort. Until World War One they flourished, but by the end of World War Two they were greatly diminished. Their Golden Age was Victorian, but they far outlasted their original founders.