

Boys Who will be Men: A History of Camp Lanakila, Boy's Camps, and Character-Building Philosophies

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For 10 years, I have spent my summers in Fairlee, Vermont, attending and working at a boys' camp on a lake called Lanakila. The advent of the American Summer Camp, specifically the boys' camp, came in the early 1880s. Over the course of the 20th century, hundreds of outdoor summer camps have been founded, many upon similar ideological lines as their 19th century predecessors. Questions of character development, resourcefulness, independence, play, and manliness were addressed by the founders of the first camps in New England and have persisted and evolved over the last century. This paper explores the onset of boys' summer camps in America and then takes a closer look at the history of Camp Lanakila as a case study of a boys' camp which has existed for 95 years and has a detailed archival history of writing down and expounding upon the philosophies which have guided the camp for generations.

A main goal of this research is to study Lanakila as a camp and learn how the philosophies which the camp was founded on have changed or stayed the same over the past century and why. One example of these philosophies is the phrase: "There are many ways to be a man." This mantra is one of Camp Lanakila's many long-standing sayings which has come to define the camp's mission statement and encompasses many of the ideas and teachings from Lanakila's earliest times. Consequently, much of what one can learn from studying the boys' summer camp and Lanakila is a history of social and cultural issues regarding gender, education, and character development.

This paper will draw upon personal interviews with directors, alumni, parents, and board members; furthermore, it will draw from the Lanakila archives which have produced a wealth of primary source documents: from pictures to Lanalogs (newsletters), camper and parent letters, director notes, daily schedules, flyers, "vision" pieces (yearly renewal of the camp's mission statements in the form of an enumerated list of philosophical goals) and a plethora of other sources, this paper is heavily reliant on primary source documents and a historiography which gives background on the earliest camps in America.

After attending this presentation, I believe the audience will have a great knowledge of the importance of summer camps and their ability to be sources of educational and social development for communities and individuals.