



MASSACHUSETTS CULTURAL COUNCIL
FOLK & TRADITIONAL ARTS PROGRAM

FIELDNOTES

Fieldworker(s) [(Initials) Name]: (K) Kathleen, (C) Condon

Accession Numbers:

KC-01-6-FN

Fieldnotes

- - -C

Audio recordings

KC-01-6-CS

Photographic documentation

- - -M

Additional materials

Initial Contact: 6/01 Contact Date: 6/22/2001

Related Accession Numbers: - - - - -

Individual/Group/Event: Douglas Camp Meeting/Camp Meeting Architecture

Address: [REDACTED]

City: [REDACTED] Zip: [REDACTED] County: [REDACTED]

Phone: Daytime: [REDACTED] Evening: [REDACTED]

E-mail: [REDACTED] Website: [REDACTED]

Contact person: John and Deborah Clossen (see below)

Title: long-time active participant

Location of Interview: Phone interview with Deborah Clossen at her home

Street Address: [REDACTED]

City: [REDACTED] Zip: [REDACTED] County: [REDACTED]

Special Needs (including translation): None.

Traditions documented on visit (traditional art/skills, occupational experience, ethnic or religious community): Cursory investigation into camp meeting architecture and overview of the camp meeting event.

Traditions noted for follow-up:

Other Possible Contacts: Michael Clossen (son of John and Deborah) on [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] as the current camp association president. Other active participants who were cited in a newspaper article as doing work on the physical site, are Bill Wrona, Uxbridge, MA. Ken and Patsy

Frasier of Douglas (plumbers), Bill Joseph of Uxbridge and Keven Parlow of Milford. The Douglas Historical Society, Main St., Douglas MA 01516 508 476-3856, may also be able to provide more information on this subject.

Summary Description: Several photos (KC-01-6-CS) begin documentation of the Camp Meeting architecture, and phone interview with longtime participant Deborah Cnossen begins to document history of and continuing musical traditions at this camp meeting.

THE DOUGLAS CAMP MEETING--BACKGROUND:

The 127th Douglas Camp Meeting (or Bible Holiness Camp Meeting) took place in July of 2002. [While 127 annual events would place the first Meeting in 1875, the web description of a rare book on the Meeting cited below would seem to indicate that it began in 1879.] This event begins each year on the 3rd Friday in July and lasts for ten days. It takes place on a 30-acre site off South Street in Douglas that is owned by the Camp Meeting Association. According to Deborah Cnossen, who has been attending to the Camp since childhood and plays piano and organ at services, the Camp was established as an ecumenical worship event in the late 1800s by "Dr. Morse," a Baptist serving a Methodist congregation. Morse bought the land for the Camp and left it to the Association with a stipulation in his will that it be used only for the purpose of worship. [I was unable to find reference to Dr. Morse, but according to genealogical studies posted on the web, Morse is the name of at least one large family in Douglas during this period.] Cnossen noted that at the turn of the century, up to 2000 people attended annually. During this period regional trains, no longer functioning today, made travel through this region without a car much easier; in fact, a trunk train terminated right at the Douglas Camp Meeting. Speaking of her childhood days, Cnossen remembers, "Back in those days, everybody went to camp. Now there's so much going on, people are just all over the place." Nowadays several hundred attend each year. There is always a minister who acts as featured speaker and there is also a minister of music. The grounds are also used for the Blackstone Valley Crusade the second week in August. Volunteers who work maintaining the grounds throughout the year come from many different protestant congregations.

Cnossen mentioned that Mr. and Mrs. Wally Hagstrom, longtime camp participants who are currently living on the property, "found an old book" related to the Camp and have researched the its early history. [This was probably the following rare book, which I found on the internet for sale for \$75.00: Davies, Edward [Rev.]. ILLUSTRATED HISTORY OF DOUGLAS CAMP MEETING. Boston, McDonald, [1890]. [18],97,[5],errata pp. Illus., 8 ports and plates. Original gold stamped 12 mo cloth. First edition.

Contains material on camp meetings from 1879 - 1890, with biographical sketches of the ministers. Samuel Ginsberg Books, P.O. Box 402, Sharon, MA 02067, Phone: (781) 784-8181/(781) 784-6929; fax: (781) 784-1826. email: ginsbook@bellatlantic.net. <http://www.ginsbook.com/Cat138/f.htm>.]

While Clossen did not situate the founding of this Camp in any national movements of the time, the establishment of this camp may have been related to the systematized urban revival movement spearheaded by Dwight Moody. Moody, born in Northfield, Massachusetts, first made his mark with urban revivals in Chicago, then lead a highly successful series of revivals in London. On return to the United States in 1875-76, he staged events in Brooklyn, Philadelphia, Chicago, and Boston, erecting tabernacles in those last two cities, as no suitable space was available. The source I consulted makes reference to his work after the Boston revival as “a period spent in the smaller New England cities.” [Winthrop Hudson, *Religion in America: An Historical Account of the Development of American Religious Life*, NY, Charles Scribner’s Sons, second edition 1973, p. 232.] A web source identifies this New England work as taking place in 1887-88. Moody had also relocated his home base back to Northfield after returning from England in 1876.

Of course camp meetings had first taken hold in New England (and elsewhere) with the Second Great Awakening, beginning in the first few decades of the 1800s; the later camp meeting movement of which this one was a part are distinguished from these earlier movements by more extensive organization and advertising as well as more institutionalization, in the form of settlements (see Camp Architecture below) and also in the form of associations (Moody, for instance, was closely affiliated with the YMCA). While Douglas, MA is hardly an urban setting, the presence of many Catholic immigrants working in factories in the area by the 1870s would have provided some of the same conditions which motivated revivals during this period in urban areas. I was unable to establish a direct connection between Moody and the Douglas Camp meeting; perhaps the rare book cited above would lend information on this subject.

THE CAMP ARCHITECTURE:

Those camp cottages that are visible from the road are what originally peaked my interest, for their architecture was so distinctive. My research on the web indicates that the style of these cottages is clearly linked to styles employed in other contemporaneous camp meeting sites, such as Oak Bluffs in Martha’s Vineyard, Ocean Grove in New Jersey, Thousand Island Park in Upstate New York, and Shelter Island Heights off Long Island in New York. The steep roofs of many of these structures are said to recall the tent-dwellings that preceded them. The Shelter Island Heights cottages, similar to those at

the Douglas Camp, are described in tourist information on the web as being styled "in the exuberant folk architecture found in camp meeting sites such as Oak Bluffs on Martha's Vineyard and Ocean Grove in New Jersey. The most striking feature of these steeply pitched gable roof structures is the elaborate and delicate wood trimming on verandas, gables, windows, and doors." Ellen Weiss, Professor of Architectural History in the School of Architecture at Tulane University, would probably be the best source for further information; a recent book (listed below) looks at the Camp Meeting settlement at Martha's Vineyard; this settlement was one of the earliest and influenced the architecture of many to follow.

A fire in the 1930s destroyed the original (?) tabernacle at the Douglas Camp meeting, and it was rebuilt soon after. A new building, begun over a decade ago to house a dormitory, showers, and restrooms, is now in the last stages of completion; it was designed to fit in with the older camp architecture. Cnossen believes that the cottages I photographed, as well as others, including the "preacher's cottage," are over 100 years old. Some of the cottages are owned by individuals who pay the Association rent for the land they stand on; these were either built or bought by the owners' families. Paul Gorham, for instance, owns a home there, as do the Cnossens. The Cnossen's home was built by I. T. Johnson, who was a professor at Brown University. Others currently living on the grounds are Douglas Crossman, who is originally from England, and Julia Clougher, a single woman in her 90s whose father was president of the amp in the late 20s and early 30s.

THE CAMP MUSIC

Cnossen says that the songbook used is called something like "Tabernacle Hymns." Singing is accompanied by piano and organ. Cnossen made a distinction between two types of songs: the older hymns and the newer "gospel choruses," the latter being single-verse "gospels" with strong sentiment and no repeating chorus.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

ON OAK BLUFFS CAMP MEETING ARCHITECTURE:

[Quoted from Publisher's Notes, *City in the Woods: The Life & Design of an American Camp Meeting on Martha's Vineyard*]

"During The Nineteenth century, Methodist camp meetings -- woodland revivals lasting several days -- flourished throughout the United States. These tented villages often evolved into permanent communities with unique campground cottages and distinctive spatial configurations. The Wesleyan

Grove camp meeting, founded on Martha's Vineyard, Massachusetts, in 1835, is the premier example of this distinctive American design. Anonymous planners and builders at the site innovated the richly decorated miniature cottages and maze-like layouts that were replicated at dozens of late Victorian campgrounds across the country. In 1867, Oak Bluffs, a planned resort that mimicked the eccentric architecture of Wesleyan Grove, was laid out next to the already famous camp meeting. Together, these two extraordinary communities generated a sense of other worldliness, a magical environment that remains virtually unchanged today. Now in paperback, *City in the Woods* chronicles the growth of Wesleyan Grove from a few tents in the wilderness to famed city of cottages, and of Oak Bluffs, the "fairyland" next door. Ellen Weiss probes the ways in which the social and religious ideals of nineteenth-century evangelism spawned this remarkable place, traces the history of its physical forms, and recalls how the site was observed by visitors in its own time. She suggests that the continuing American propensity to live in nature, in the suburbs, is rooted in the spiritual strength of the camp meeting and the astonishing community type it generated. Weiss's charming and absorbing account will appeal to architectural, cultural, and religious historians as well as to Vineyard tourists and residents enchanted with this unique city."

ON SHELTER ISLAND HEIGHTS CAMP MEETING ARCHITECTURE

quoted from <http://www.pagelinx.com/sinferry/sin8.htm>

"Today the Heights Historic District consists of 141 buildings, designed in several distinct styles. The original cottages built in the first decade are in the exuberant folk architecture found in camp meeting sites such as Oak Bluffs on Martha's Vineyard and Ocean Grove in New Jersey. The most striking feature of these steeply pitched gable roof structures is the elaborate and delicate wood trimming on verandas, gables, windows, and doors."

ON HOLINESS CHRISTIAN BELIEF:

Quoted from *Methodism and Fundamentalism: A Survey* (A Biblical Viewpoint Article by Mark Sidwell) Originally appeared in *Biblical Viewpoint* 29, no. 2 (November 1995): 89-102.

http://www2.bju.edu/resources/library/catalogs/biblical_vpoint/methodis.html

"Basically, adherents to the Holiness position claimed as their foundation the teachings of the Methodist founding fathers, notably John Wesley and the teaching of Christian holiness set forth in his *Plain Account of Christian Perfection* (1763).⁶ The distinctive doctrine of the Holiness movement was known variously as "eradication" or "the second blessing." By this was meant a special work of grace by the Holy Spirit following conversion in which all traces of the sinful nature inherited from Adam were

cleansed away and a believer was enabled to live free from conscious sin. To promote their views, adherents to the Holiness position published books, pamphlets, and periodicals, and they organized small cells of believers who met weekly to promote both Holiness teaching and their own personal growth in holiness. Many Holiness Methodists wrote gospel hymns and songs (e.g., “The Cleansing Wave” and “Beulah Land”). Above all, advocates used revival meetings and especially camp meetings to rally believers to their cause. Most Holiness Methodists hoped (and some in the Methodist hierarchy feared) that they could capture both the Methodist Episcopal Church, North, and the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, for the Holiness cause.

The Holiness movement made its most concerted effort to transform Methodism in the second half of the nineteenth century and the early part of the twentieth. The consequent growth of the movement and the opposition encountered from the bulk of the Methodist leadership created two schools of thought within the Holiness movement. On the one hand were those determined to stay in their respective church (either the northern or the southern branch of Methodism) and promote Holiness teaching from within. Holiness evangelist and educator Henry Clay Morrison (1857-1942) is a good example of this position.⁷ Despite opposition to his teachings by many leaders of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South (even to the point of temporarily expelling him), Morrison remained a loyal member of the denomination. As president of Asbury College in Kentucky and founder of Asbury Theological Seminary, he made those institutions centers of Holiness influence within the southern church.

On the other side were the “come-outers.” These were groups that believed that Holiness teaching would never be accepted by the mainline Methodist denominations and that the only logical course of action was to separate and form independent Holiness bodies. The Free Methodist Church, founded in 1860, pioneered the separatist course. Later in the nineteenth century it was followed by many others, notably the Church of the Nazarene (1895), the Pilgrim Holiness Church (1897), and the Church of God (Anderson, Indiana; 1880).

In short, like Fundamentalism, the Holiness movement arose as a protest against tendencies in the mainline denominations. It was doctrinally orthodox and placed great stress on revival and holy living. Its adherents contended earnestly for their beliefs against the apathy and outright hostility of much of their denominational hierarchy. As a result, some advocates of Holiness teaching formed separate churches while others preferred to stay within the major denominations as a sort of puritan movement.

BOOKS/ARTICLES OF INTEREST:

Bruce, Dickson D., Jr. *And They All Sang Hallelujah: Plain-Folk Camp-Meeting Religion, 1800-1845*. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1974.

Eslinger, Ellen. *Citizens Of Zion: The Social Origins Of Camp Meeting Revivalism*. Knoxville: U. of Tenn. Press, 1999 (328 pages).

Lorenz, Ellen J. *Glory, Hallelujah!: The Story of the Camp Meeting Spiritual* 1980.

Weiss, Ellen. *City in the Woods: The Life & Design of an American Camp Meeting on Martha's Vineyard*. Northeastern University Press, 1998. ISBN: 1555533450

Weiss, Ellen. "Methodist Camp Meeting Grounds: Regional Modes [Abstract]." Pp. 224-225. abstract only. *Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture, II*. Camille Wells, ed. Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press for the Vernacular Architecture Forum, 1986.