

FROM SPIRIT TO STRUCTURE: A STUDY OF GEORGIA'S  
HISTORIC CAMP MEETING GROUNDS

by

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(Under the Direction of John C. Waters)

ABSTRACT

Georgia has a wealth of extant camp meeting grounds dotting the countryside that are “active” today. These historic sites are the products of the Second Awakening or Great Revival, which began around the turn of the nineteenth century. The architecture established by 1820 that was produced by this important “socioreligious [*sic*] American phenomenon,” is the focal point of this study. The study looks closely at the movement’s history and the architecture it created both in the north and the south, especially in Georgia. The author surveyed the extant vernacular architecture at thirty-five camp meeting grounds across the state of Georgia. Through careful examination the thesis reveals why the architecture is important and why it should be recognized, preserved and protected. A survey of historic camp meeting grounds identified and listed on the National Register of Historic Places across the United States was also conducted. This was done to highlight the disparity in the number of active, extant sites identified to the few sites that have been listed on the National Register in Georgia. This thesis calls for a plan of action to make the public aware of these sites and the vernacular architecture at each of them, in order to insure their rightful place among Georgia’s vernacular architecture and their future protection.

INDEX WORDS: Camp Meeting, Georgia, Great Revival

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## DEDICATION

To my paternal grandparents Charles Edward and Mary Catherine Johnson Head

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

### Purpose of Study

There are a number extant camp meeting sites across the state of Georgia that have been overlooked by the preservation community as a whole. These historic sites developed as a result of the Second Awakening or Great Revival, a series of revivals that occurred in the early part of the nineteenth century that planted the values of Protestantism deep in the American character, especially in the South. At least thirty-three of these sites, reflecting that movement, remain active in the state today as we enter the twenty-first century. Unfortunately, many of those who participate in this socioreligious phenomenon are unaware of the importance of these sites beyond that of their religious and cultural history. They are unaware that these sites and the crude architecture present are an important part of Georgia's built history. Perhaps this is due to the fact that there is little or no documentation of these sites in a preservation context. To date, there are only two "active" sites in Georgia listed in the National Register of Historic Places. The purpose of this thesis is to emphasize the important role religion, especially revivalism, has played in America's history, and to emphasize the role the camp meeting movement had in spreading Protestantism across the nation. This study will show that the vernacular architecture produced by this movement is worthy of recognition, preservation, and protection by describing the history of the camp meeting movement and its influence on religion, popular culture, women, African-Americans, town planning. Also, by assessing the sites and architecture of thirty-five active sites in Georgia the will indicate that preservationists and the general public should take a closer look at these important sites. What is the future outlook for these extant sites? What can be done to advocate the preservation of these sites? How might these sites be used to promote heritage tourism? These questions present the context for the final chapter of this thesis, a thesis

that examines the unique nineteenth century phenomenon known as the camp meeting “from spirit to structure.” Lastly, this thesis will provide a source of information for additional research on Georgia’s historic camp meeting sites, and will provide the basic data necessary for a thematic nomination of them to the National Register of Historic Places. (In reading this thesis one may find words needing further explanation or definition. Consult the glossary found in Appendix: 4 for a short list of terms.)



Figure 1. Side view Salem Camp Ground, Newton County, Georgia. Historic American Building Survey, June 6, 1936. HABS no. GA 128.



## CHAPTER 2: THE IMPORTANCE OF RELIGION IN AMERICA

### The Promised Land

Religion may be defined as the ultimate passion that determines men's attitudes, and so defined, religion becomes the fundamental history-making force.

W. W. Sweet, *Religion in the Development of American Culture, 1765-1840*

Religion is a fundamental part of human life and human history. Derived from the Latin *re ligare*, the word religion means, "to bind together", thus describing the manner in which humans must be able to see the world as a whole and share in that wholeness. Religion embodies those things humans think, do, and believe. By nature, human beings transcend or rise above their existence to consciously find meaning in the universe; humans aspire to understand the world and their place within that world. Therefore, religion is the foundation that unites or binds the people of every culture and society. This theory is reaffirmed when certain images, ideas, practices and beliefs identify a nation and its people.

Long before it was discovered, America was viewed as a holy place in the minds of European people. America was a land created from myths and legends such as the Legend of St. Brendan. This ancient Irish legend tells the story of a monk who wanders for seven years in search of a land to the West, a land promised to the saints. This legend, and other versions with the same theme (such as the Genesis stories) created the notion of a land westward across the waters. Wandering and searching for land, wealth, freedom, and a place of salvation were not new concepts to the restless people of Europe. The individuals who discovered and peopled America were seeking a place of new beginnings—a New World, a Promised Land.

The Christians of Europe also embraced the idea of a return to paradise and a renewal of the Christian faith. This was expressed in the literature of the day and asserted by Christopher

Columbus when he said, “God made me the messenger of the new heaven and the new earth...and He showed me the spot where to find it.” Later, Puritan John Winthrop of the Massachusetts Bay Colony echoed Columbus' sentiments. “Now if the Lord shall please to hear us,” wrote Winthrop, “and bring us in peace to the place we desire, than hath he ratified this Covenant and sealed our Commission (and) will expect a strict performance of the articles contained in it.”<sup>1</sup>

Spain was the dominant exploring and colonizing power in the area destined to become the Americas during the 1500s. Spanish explorers marveled at the sights of the New World: vast uninhabited areas of land, primeval forests, sparkling waters, and strange plants and animals. Native plants such as corn, tobacco, tomatoes, and potatoes became vital commodities in the European economy. Conquering the American continents yielded rich rewards for the Spaniards, especially the precious metals found in South America.

While the love of gold lured the Spanish conquerors (conquistadors), the love of God lured the zealous priests, eager to convert the native pagans to Catholicism. By 1574, the Spanish had established some two hundred towns and cities in North and South America with a total of 160,000 inhabitants, and they had constructed majestic cathedrals throughout the land in which the five million newly converted Indians could worship. They had built a second Spanish Empire in the New World. Their influence on culture and architecture can still be seen in places such as San Antonio and the oldest city in America, St. Augustine, Florida, where the Spanish government still retains legal ownership of at least one building. Consequently, the wealth they accumulated and the power they commanded excited the envy of the English people. There was also a new sense of rivalry with Catholic Spain once Queen Elizabeth I, (1533-1603) a Protestant, came to the throne in 1558.

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<sup>1</sup> Richard E. Wentz, *Religion in the New World: The Shaping of Religious Traditions in the United States* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990), 6-7, 19-21, 191.

During Elizabeth's reign (1558-1603), there were two failed attempts at colonization. The first was in Newfoundland, promoted by Sir Humphrey Gilbert, and second one was on Virginia's coast, promoted by Gilbert's half-brother, Sir Walter Raleigh. These two futile English efforts contrasted sharply with the phenomenal success of the Spanish Empire under Phillip II, foe of the Protestant Reformation. However, the rivalry ended with the defeat of the powerful Spanish Armada in 1588, ensuring England's naval dominance in the North Atlantic and ultimately its colonization of America.

Social and economic changes in England at the onset of the seventeenth century added incentive for a settlement in the uncharted American wilderness. Foremost was a dramatic increase in the population of England from approximately three million to four million people between 1550 and 1600. At the same time, the landed gentry began the practice of fencing larger sections of cropland for sheep grazing, thus forcing thousands of peasant farmers off the land or into precarious positions. An economic depression in the late 1500s crippled the woolen trade, resulting in the loss of thousands of jobs in the woolen districts, which were heavily populated by Puritans. Lastly, the younger sons of wealthy landholders often left to seek their fortunes elsewhere because of the laws of primogeniture, which decreed that only the eldest sons were eligible to inherit family estates.

The surplus population, a longing to own property, unemployment, and hope for religious freedom all provided motivation for would-be colonists. There were merchants and entrepreneurs primed to develop new markets of commerce, and there were investors eager to form joint-stock companies to fund these settlements. These circumstances, combined with promise of gold and desire to promote Protestant Christianity, encouraged migration to the New World. In 1606, the Virginia Company received a charter from King James I of England for a colony in the New World. Finally, in 1607, the first permanent English colony was established on the banks of the James River. It was named Jamestown in honor of the king.

Holland followed England with an ambitious program of exploration and colonization in the New World under the administration of the Dutch East India Company and the Dutch West India Company. In 1609, the enterprising Dutch East India Company began its exploration of North America under the leadership of English explorer Henry Hudson. Hudson ventured into the Delaware Bay and the New York Bay. Hoping to find the coveted passage to the continent, he laid claim to what would become the first Dutch colony in North America. By 1613, there were Dutch settlers living in the Hudson River area. Under the Dutch West India Company, Dutch citizens continued to emigrate until New Netherland was planted in 1623-1624.<sup>2</sup>

The third group to be lured to the New World was the Separatist Pilgrims—the purest of the Puritans. Puritanism was a religious movement, composed of reformers who sought the total purification of English Christianity. During the 1530s, while King Henry VIII was severing his ties with the Roman Catholic Church, the doctrines of John Calvin swept across the countryside. The Puritans aspired to the ideal of Christendom expressed in Calvinism to have civil and ecclesiastical orders as partners, a holy commonwealth mandated by the scriptures. Calvinism became the dominant credo for the Puritans and others who would settle in America. Once the church in England became the Church of England, with Henry VIII at the head of both church and state, it appeared to the Puritans that the Church of England aspired to nothing more than being an independent national continuation of medieval Catholic tradition. Increasingly unhappy with the lack of progress of the Protestant Reformation in England, a group of extreme Puritans, known as Separatists, vowed to break away from the Church of England.<sup>3</sup>

In 1608, during the reign of King James I, a congregation of Separatists fled England for Holland. After twelve years, it became apparent that their children had grown more familiar with the ways of the Dutch than those of the English. Therefore they decided to find a haven where

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<sup>2</sup> Thomas A. Bailey, *The American Pageant*, 8<sup>th</sup> ed., ed. David M. Kennedy (Lexington, Mass.: D.C. Heath and Company, 1987), 7-17, 30-31.

<sup>3</sup> Wentz, 63-65, 77.

they could live and die as English men and women, and as purified Protestants. America was the logical choice, and under jurisdiction of the Virginia Company, they set sail for their Promised Land. These Separatist Puritans settled on the rocky coast of New England in 1620.

Next a group of non-Separatists sought refuge in America as a reaction to King Charles I's dismissal of Parliament and the sanctioning of the anti-Puritan persecution endorsed by Archbishop William Laud. Unlike the Separatist Puritans, this more modest group had sought to reform the Church of England rather than break away from the church. However, fearing catastrophe they secured a royal charter in 1629 to form the Massachusetts Bay Company. Once settled in America, the Massachusetts Bay enterprise became the largest and most successful of the New England outposts. Convinced they had a covenant with God; they set about building a holy society that would be a model for mankind, away from the political Anglican clergy.

Lord Baltimore founded the fourth English colony, Maryland. Chartered in 1632 and settled in 1634, it was the first of three proprietary colonies established in America. Although a Roman Catholic, Baltimore sought the support of Protestants to avoid religious conflict, to ensure the financial success of the colony, and to make his proprietary colony a place of religious tolerance where people—Catholic and Protestant—could live in peace.

While serving as minister in Salem, Massachusetts, Roger Williams, an extreme Separatist Puritan, spoke out against the leadership of the colony. He challenged the legality of the colony's charter, and urged a final break with the Church of England. He even questioned the basic Puritan idea that civil and ecclesiastical orders were under order from God to form an ideal society, bound by common commitments, values, and experiences. Thus, Williams was exiled from the Massachusetts Bay Colony in 1635. In 1636, he founded Providence and the squatter colony of Rhode Island. Williams established complete religion freedom in the state. Often called the “father” of the Baptist Church in America, he built the first Baptist Church in the country in 1639.

Englishman William Penn founded the Quaker colony of Pennsylvania. A member of the Quaker faith, Penn hoped to establish a haven for fellow Quakers. Quakerism began in England during the mid-seventeenth century as a consequence of the Puritan revolution. Known officially as the Religious Society of Friends, the derisive nickname "Quaker" mocked the unusual movements exhibited by its followers: when they worshipped, they trembled and quaked at the awesome power of the spirit. The followers of this gentle persuasion eschewed oaths, abhorred violence and refused to bear arms. Knowing that Quakers were already residing in several colonies, Penn secured a land grant in 1681. Penn's proprietary colony was successful due to squatters and the countless pamphlets he circulated to entice colonists to come to his colony. He had created a new commonwealth, a noble experiment in civil and religious freedom.

Five of the remaining seven original colonies were English Royal colonies. New Hampshire was chartered in 1623. Known originally as simply "Carolina," North Carolina was chartered in 1663 and settled by religious dissenters from Virginia. A few years later in 1670, South Carolina was formed when separated from its northern neighbor. Chartered in 1664, New Jersey was a proprietary colony, later sold to Quakers as East New Jersey and West New Jersey. James Edward Oglethorpe founded Georgia in 1732 as a haven for debtors and others needing a fresh start in life—though lawyers, whiskey, and slavery were banned in the colony's founding charter. Connecticut, founded by emigrants from Massachusetts in 1635, became a self-governing state. And Swedes founded Delaware in 1638, however it was closely aligned with Pennsylvania and home to many Quakers.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Bailey and Kennedy, 11-37.

### Late-Coming Georgia

Named in honor of King George II, Georgia was chartered in 1732 by a group of English philanthropists. The intention of the group was to establish an English colony in America as a haven for citizens who had been imprisoned for debt. Foremost in the group of founders or Trustees was James Oglethorpe, a soldier-statesman who had become interested in prison reform after one of his closest friends died while imprisoned in a debtor's jail. Determined to succeed Oglethorpe not only provided military leadership for the colony, he also invested his personal fortunes in the colony. He founded the thirteenth and last colony in February 1733, the year he landed on Yamacraw Bluff and was given approval for a settlement by Tomochichi, chief of the Yamacraws—a tribe of Creek Indians. Oglethorpe named the settlement Savannah.

Unlike the other original colonies, which had been explored by the English for financial benefit, Georgia was the only one to be founded and supported by the British government. The governing of the colony was given to the trustees back in England, subject to the king's assent, by virtue of its 1732 charter. While eventually coming under British control, the other colonies were founded by land speculators, religious groups, and trading companies. Because of its location Georgia was to serve as a buffer to protect the Carolinas from Spanish Florida and the west from the French in Louisiana. Because of its location, Georgia was supposed to serve as a buffer to protect the Carolinas from Spanish Florida to the south and from the French in the west, in Louisiana. In 1736, Oglethorpe was given the rank of colonel when he was given command of 600 British to defend the settlement, and finally the rank of general. Even though Oglethorpe ably defended the colony from Spanish attacks, Georgia was the least populated of all the colonies at the end of the colonial era. It was also the least prosperous colony. The production of silk, wine and profitable staple crops such as tobacco and rice that dominated the plantation economy of other southern colonies eluded Georgia. Unseasonably cold winters in its founding years killed all the silk worms and the unhealthy climate of the summer months proved detrimental to the fledging colony. These problems were accentuated by the fact that unlike the

other plantation colonies, Georgia did not permit slavery until after 1750. Another way the late-coming colony of Georgia differed is that all Christians, except Catholics, enjoyed religious tolerance in the reform-minded Georgia.<sup>5</sup>

With England playing the dominant role in the settlement of America, the colonies emerged fundamentally English, and as such, the English spirit of liberty shaped them. America was no ordinary place of refuge. It came to symbolize the religious hopes of all Europeans. It was the Promised Land, a New World with a new history, a sacred history.

### A Nation with the Soul of a Church

...of all the means of estimating American character...the pursuit of religious history is the most complete.

J. Franklin Jameson  
"The American Acta Sanctorum"  
*American Historical Review*

An address of the American Historical Association, 1907

In those early days, it was as though there were two forms of government—one ecclesiastical and the other civil; both ruled by God's Word and judged by God's law. The idea of God's sovereignty was referenced in the Declaration of Independence, which declared that the republic was "conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights." The ideal of a Promised Land, the Israel paradigm, was at the heart of the Puritan enterprise and other Calvinists who settled this country, therefore the people were to "render homage" to their Creator for this beloved community. It was God, not the government or the state, who had endowed them with "certain inalienable rights". Americans had a unique destiny rooted in the notion that they were chosen by God to establish the nation, and all human authority was relative before God. Human power was limited, as expressed by the checks and balances provided for in the Constitution.

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 18-19.



Saluting the flag and reciting the pledge of allegiance declares the heart of the land and its nationhood. Also, the celebration of events such as Independence Day, Thanksgiving Day, and Memorial Day, and the high holy days of America's sacred calendar confirm the public religious tradition that was established. With these traditions securely established in the nation and within its society during the early years of the republic, it is understandable that British journalist G.K. Chesterton called America "the nation with the soul of a Church."<sup>6</sup>

### Church Development during Colonial Times

The Church of England became the official faith in the colony of Georgia when the state was established in 1733. That year, Christ Church was founded in Savannah—the first royal or Anglican Church, as they were called in America, in the new colony. In February 1736, brothers John and Charles Wesley arrived from England at Oglethorpe's urging to minister to the colonists and the Indians. However, neither of them was to remain in the colony for long. Charles returned to England within months, and John, priest of the Church of England and minister to Savannah, left slightly more than a year later. He had "preached the gospel there—in Georgia (not as I ought, but as I was able) one year and nine months." Wesley later added, "I took my leave of America though, if it please God, not forever." Wesley sailed home to England, never to set foot in the colonies again. However, as the founder of Methodism, he was to have a profound effect on Georgian and American religion and culture.

Following Wesley was George Whitefield who had known the Wesley brothers at Oxford. While at Oxford, the three of them had belonged to a group referred to as "Methodists," "Bible bigots" and the "Reforming Club" due to their faithful adherence to religious principles and practices.<sup>7</sup> Whitefield was successful in Georgia and throughout the colonies, but not in ways

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<sup>6</sup> Wentz, 190-199.

<sup>7</sup> Alfred M. Pierce, *A History of Methodism in Georgia: 1736-1955* (Atlanta: North Georgia Conference Historical Society, 1956), 11-22.

of the Church of England. Like Jonathan Edwards in New England, Whitefield exhibited a style of evangelical preaching up and down the Atlantic seaboard popularized during the Great Awakening.<sup>8</sup> Beginning late in colonial times, the Church of England never became firmly entrenched in the sparsely populated colony of Georgia. There were only three established Anglican churches in 1750, and not more than 200 Anglicans in the entire colony at the end of the colonial period.

By 1750, the Lutherans had established a total of 25 churches in America, with two in Georgia. Dutch, German and Swedish Lutheran colonists had settled in New Netherland (New York), New Jersey, and Delaware during the early 1600s. During the early decades of the 1700s, these colonists began to migrate though the colonies into Pennsylvania, Maryland, Virginia and North Carolina. However the Lutherans who settled in South Carolina and Georgia migrated directly from Europe. Those migrating to Georgia arrived in Savannah in 1734, one year after settlement of the colony. A group of 91 Lutherans and two clergymen from Salzburg, Austria, settled in an area named Ebenezer 20 miles from the port city; within six years their numbers had increased to about 1,200. As a result of their proliferation, a second church for the colony was built on St. Simon's Island, Georgia.

During the eighteenth century American Presbyterianism made great gains overtaking all of the principal religious families for the colonial era except the Congregationalists. The affiliation of the New England Puritans (Congregationalists) with the Scotch Independents of the middle colonies contributed significantly to the organization of the denomination. And, while the spirit of revivalism brought about hostility and division within the Presbyterians, a group of young ministers within their ranks began imitating the evangelistic preaching of George Whitefield. Thus, there was a split—the Old side anti-revivalist and the New Side or pro-revivalists. In 1741, a group of men from the New Side were expelled from the Synod of Philadelphia and formed the Synod of New York. Thirteen years later, the two united forming

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<sup>8</sup> Bailey and Kennedy, 64-66.

the Synod of New York and Philadelphia. Boosted by a wave of Protestant Scotch-Irish immigrants, the Presbyterians had established a total of 233 churches in America with one located in the young colony of Georgia.

In 1750, seventeen years after its founding, the colony of Georgia had only three denominations represented on its soil—Anglican, Lutheran, and Presbyterian—and only six churches. By comparison, there were 25 churches planted in North Carolina with a total of four denominations, and South Carolina had seven denominations represented by 45 churches.<sup>9</sup>

### The Revivalist Tradition

Revivalism has been a dominant force in the shaping of American religious traditions. It may well be that it has shaped the American mind and its culture more than any other single influence, save perhaps its Puritan progenitor.

Richard E. Wentz

*Religion in the New World: The Shaping of Religious Traditions in the United States*

Revivalism played a critical role in establishing public-civil religion. Although it is not a product of America, revivalism developed its own form and character in America, and as such, it has been called an American religious institution. It began not with a focus on the individual, but as a general stirring up of the public. Prior to the American Revolution, the colonies lacked a sense of ethnicity and the semblance of religious uniformity. Even though the majority of men and women were of English descent, there were a conspicuous number of other immigrants. And, during the early 1700s, all of the inhabitants still followed European creeds. The colonies were without art, literature, music, or cuisine that were common to the whole. Beginning around 1735, news accounts in American periodicals, and other more subtle sources such as folk housing, began to demonstrate a shift from localism to nationalism. But the first true social phenomenon to sweep across all territorial boundaries was the Great Awakening (1725-1750).

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<sup>9</sup> Edwin Scott Gaustad, *Historical Atlas of Religion in America* (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), 6-10, 16-21, 167.

### The Great Awakening (1725-1750)

There is little doubt that the Great Awakening was symptomatic of democracy in the making, that it was a grand facilitator of that democracy.

Richard E. Wentz,  
*Religion in the New World: The Shaping of Religious Traditions in the United States*

Minister Jonathan Edwards led from his pulpit in Northhampton, Massachusetts, what was called the first colony-wide movement. This awakening was ignited by revivalist frenzy. While Edwards preached fire and brimstone, another leader in the movement, George Whitefield, introduced congregations to a new style of evangelical preaching as he toured the colonies. The awakenings appeared to have been spontaneous and unplanned as they spread along the eastern seaboard from Massachusetts to fledgling Georgia. Such a movement suggests an alteration in American perceptions of the proper religious order. It was a revival, an awakening of liberal ideas that challenged the old ways of the colonial churches. The authority of the clergy and state-supported religion was no longer unquestioned. Countless sinners were converted during these revivals and traditional churches began to lose members to denominations such as the Baptists, who emphasized piety, emotions, and lay preaching. The religious fervor inspired by the Great Awakening set into motion forces that led to the American Revolution and the birth of the nation.<sup>10</sup>

### The Contagion of Liberty

After declaring independence, the issue of separation of church and state gained ground in popularity. Nine of the 13 colonies had an established official faith. In New York, Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia, the established faith was Anglican, while the legally established church in the three New England colonies of Massachusetts, Connecticut,

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<sup>10</sup> Wilber Zelinsky, *Nation into State: The Shifting Symbolic Foundations of American Nationalism* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 16-17, 226-228.

and New Hampshire was the well-entrenched Congregational church. Between in 1777 and 1833, all nine colonies disestablished the official faith within their borders.

Tainted by its association with the Church of England, the Anglican church re-formed as the Protestant Episcopal Church in 1784; however, it would never regain its former popularity.<sup>11</sup>

Tainted by its association with the Church of England, the Anglican church re-formed as the Protestant Episcopal Church in 1784; however, it would never regain its former popularity.

After the break with England, Methodism, also English in origin, appeared to be in danger.

Founded by John Wesley upon his return to England, the movement was organized within the Church of England. However, the strength of the “societies” in America was not constrained by the withdrawal of the Anglican missionaries when war erupted. On the contrary, under the care of the laity and patriot preachers, Methodism turned away from the Church of England en route to becoming an indigenous church. The birth of Methodism in America coincided with the birth of the nation, and Methodism was to play a central role in the religious development of the new country.<sup>12</sup>

Christianity was at low ebb across the land. Churches had been destroyed or dismantled and many of the educated clergy had returned to England, leaving the colonies with a spiritual void. With a population of approximately 80,000 people, Georgia had seen little growth in the number of churches or church membership since its founding as evidenced by this comment, “There was then, in 1786, in Georgia as far as we can get the facts, three Episcopal churches without rectors, three Lutheran, three Presbyterian and three Baptist. We may safely say there were not 500 Christian people in all.”<sup>13</sup>

American society experienced extraordinary social strains in the days leading up to the Revolutionary War. The impact of Revolutionary ideas called “the contagion of liberty” that inspired colonial rebels to become revolutionaries also created fear and anxiety during this period

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<sup>11</sup> Bailey and Kennedy, 19, 78-146.

<sup>12</sup> Gaustad, 74-75.

<sup>13</sup> Pierce, 32-34.

of impending change. Once the war was over, new social strains were imposed by independence and intellectual turmoil. Faced by an uncharted future, the new citizens develop a vague uneasiness and susceptibility to social change and movements. In the chaotic aftermath of the war, an epidemic of organization developed. From this need to create order in the new Republic, many voluntary societies were formed in cooperation with the new state and federal governments that reorganized American society. With churches destroyed and congregations dispersed, the religious situation following the Revolution also needed reorganization. Oppressed by ambiguous social situations and disheartened by the condition of the church during the 1780s and 1790s, the population was again susceptible to evangelical preaching.<sup>14</sup>

#### The Second Great Awakening or Great Revival (1780-1820)

...the Great Revival was a watershed in the religious history of the South.

John B. Boles, *The Great Revival: Beginnings of the Bible Belt*

Another wave of revivalism began to emerge, one providing a religious solution to the social as well as religious uneasiness. In the decades between 1780 and 1820, a second series of revivals occurred, planting the values of Protestantism deep in the American character. This religious movement, known as the Second Great Awakening, galvanized the entire nation after the American Revolution and helped form the distinct national character, a revivalist society, by the 1820s.<sup>15</sup> The camp meeting, a continuous religious service held outside, became the centerpiece of the evangelistic movement.

Except for Charleston and Savannah, which were visited by evangelists such as George Whitefield, and the more populated areas, where ministers effected some local upsurges, the

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<sup>14</sup> Donald G. Mathews, "The Second Great Awakening as an Organizing Process, 1780-1830: An Hypothesis," *American Quarterly* 21 (1969): 32-35.

<sup>15</sup> John B. Boles, "Revivalism, Renewal, and Social Mediation in the Old South," Chapter 4 *Modern Christian Revivals*, ed. Edith L. Blumhofer and Randall Balmer (Chicago: University of Illinois, 1993), 60.

southern colonies were relatively untouched by the Great Awakening, unlike the New England and mid-Atlantic colonies. Sparsely populated, without a network of churches and ministers, lacking the perceived social-economic-cultural tension and the desire for personal salvation witnessed in the north prior to the Revolution, the south was not ready for the first awakening. However, the Second Awakening, often called the Great Revival, was another situation entirely. The Great Revival became a regional phenomenon “in North Carolina as well as Kentucky, in Georgia as well as Tennessee”, evoking similar beliefs and fostering the development of the three denominations which would shape the future of the South. As the first revival common to the whole South, it was the South’s “Great Awakening.” The effect of the Revival on the region was to create a conservative cast that remains dominant in southern thought and life today, creating what some call the Bible Belt.<sup>16</sup>

#### Frontier Georgia: The Wilderness Below

In his dissertation titled, “The Settlement Patterns of Georgia” cultural geographer Wilbur Zelinsky said that the culture of Georgia remained “that of the frontier.” Zelinsky stressed that although Georgia was colonial and shared a “New World personality,” its cultural development was different. He explained that the main reason for its “distinctness” was that there had been a “retardation in its evolution.” He explained his theory by saying:

While it is true enough that the frontier experience was important in the development of every region in Anglo-America, the exposure of Georgians to frontier living not for a decade or two but throughout the range of their history has been of peculiar significance in the shaping of their culture. Much of what seem peculiar to the Deep South can, then, be attributed to a frontier that came and went elsewhere but has lingered on indefinitely in the Deep South, and the otherness [*sic*] of the South is as much a matter of temporal as areal [*sic*] differentiation.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> John B. Boles, *The Great Revival: Beginnings of the Bible Belt* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1996: Revised ed., of *The Great Revival, 1787-1805 of Kentucky*, 1972).

<sup>17</sup> Wilbur Zelinsky, “The Settlement Patterns of Georgia” (Ph.D. diss., University of California, 1963), 430.

Although the charter extended its border westward to the Mississippi River—including the greater part of what later became Alabama and Mississippi—most of Georgia was Indian territory. As late as 1800, white settlers living in Georgia had claimed only a narrow strip of land extending along the Savannah River and the Atlantic Ocean roughly 60 miles wide at any point. Chartered in 1732 and colonized in 1733, it took over 100 years to evolve or settle Georgia. The evolution occurred slowly, utilizing a succession of land lotteries to entice settlers.

It was not until 1832, when the sixth and final lottery was held taking the last of the Cherokee Indian land, that the landmass constituting present-day Georgia was formed.

Prior to the Revolutionary War, there was an influx of settlers from South Carolina, North Carolina and Virginia into the young colony. This followed the surrender of two large tracts of land by the Creeks and Cherokees in 1773 called the New Land Purchase. To colonists from older, more established colonies, Georgia promised a brighter future with readily available land and fewer people dividing it. These favorable conditions resulted in an increase of the population to about 18,000 whites at the time of the Revolution. By the time of the first Federal census in 1790, the state had a population of 83,548 people.<sup>18</sup> (See Figure 2.) Still, in comparison

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<sup>18</sup> Pierce, 32-34.



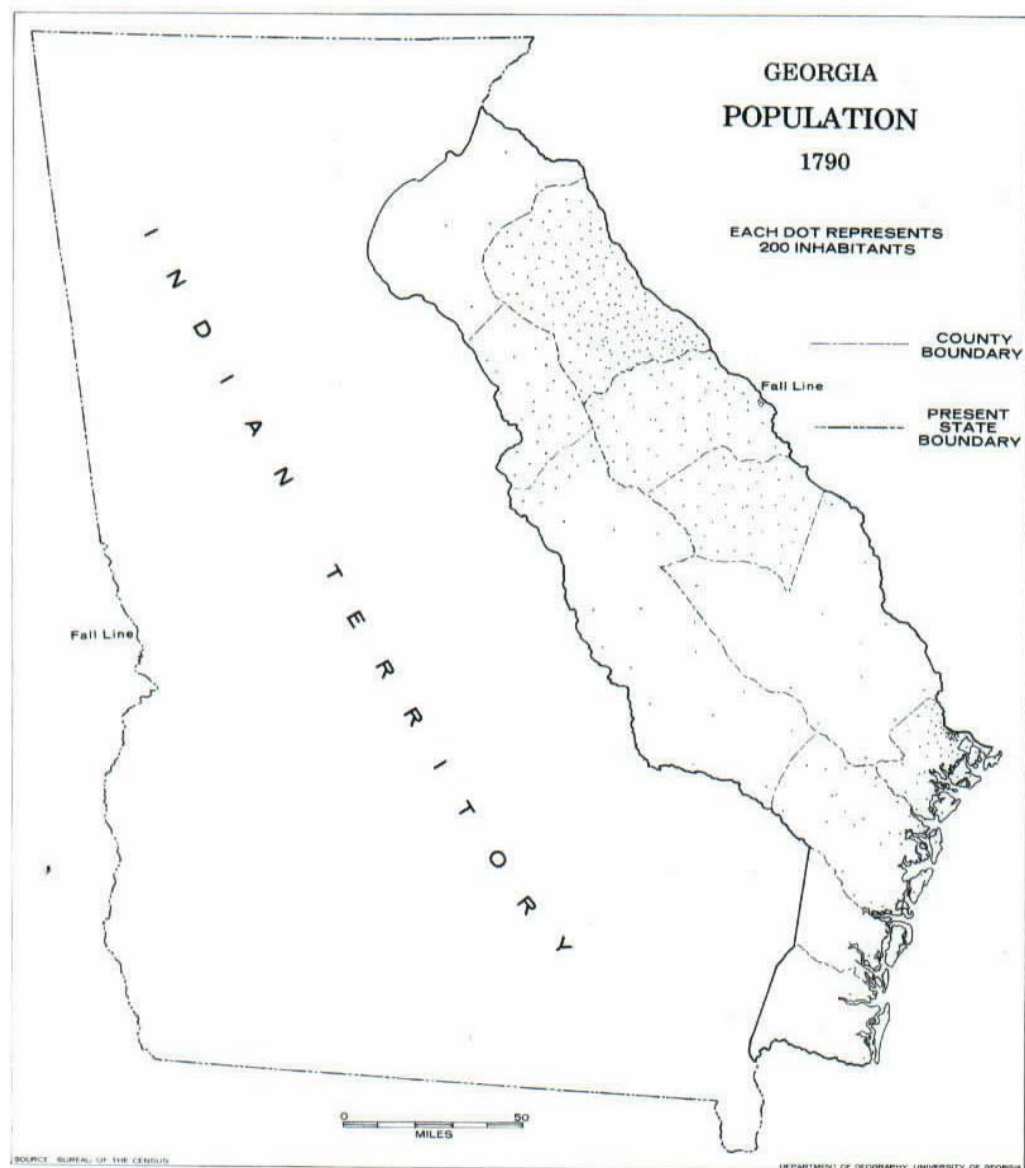


Figure 2. Georgia Population 1790

to the other colonies; Georgia ranked 11th in population, followed by Rhode Island and Delaware.<sup>19</sup>

With its small population concentrated along the coastline, most of Georgia was a wilderness that continued to attract large numbers of pioneers. During the last decade of the

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<sup>19</sup> Bailey and Kennedy, 144.

eighteenth century, Georgia's population almost doubled and its capital moved from Savannah to Augusta in 1786 as the population began shifting away from Savannah and the coast. By 1800, the population totaled 162,686 people. (See Figure 3.) Most of the population settled up country:

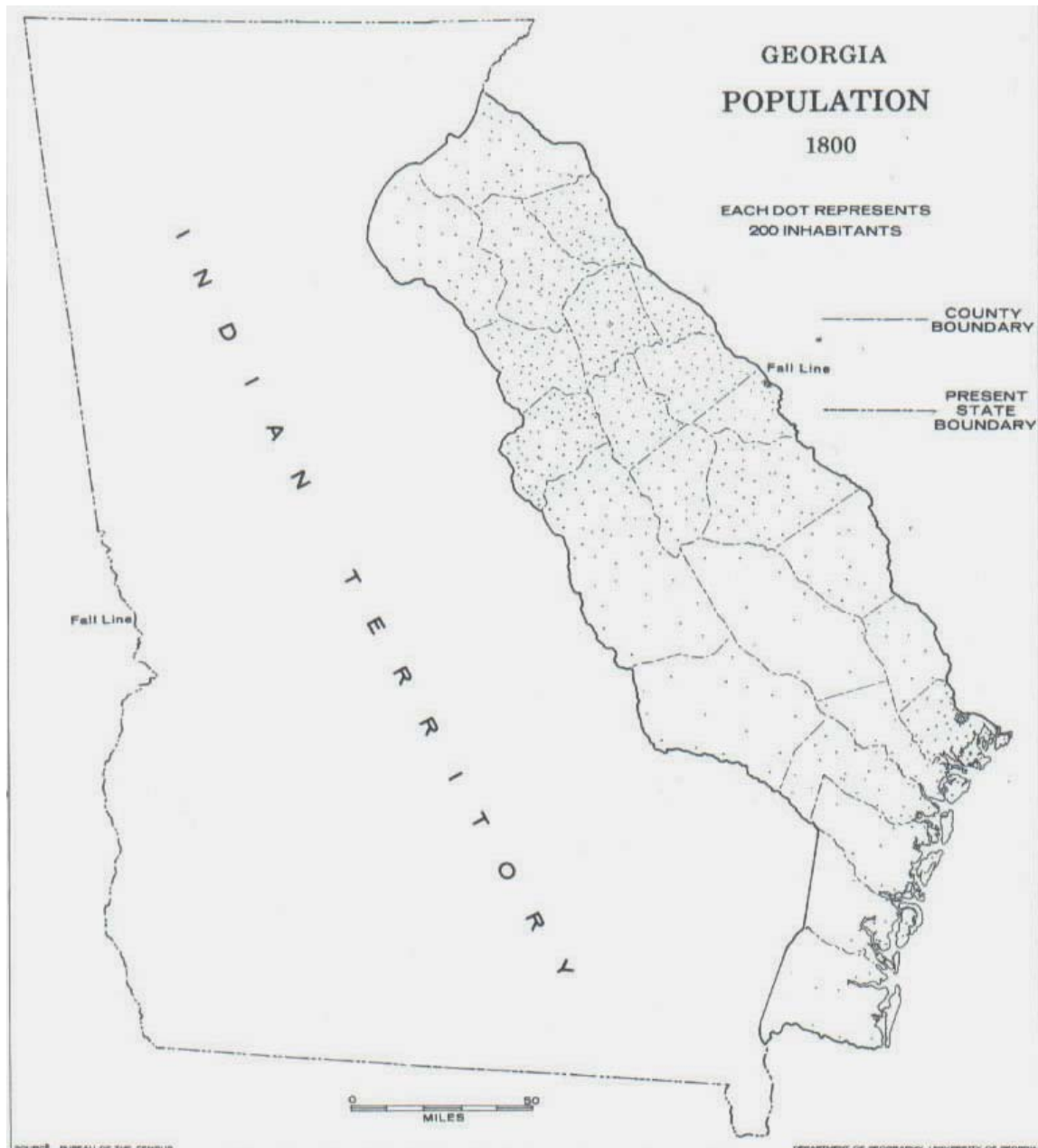


Figure 3. Georgia Population 1800

Virginians settled near the Broad River and North Carolinians in Wilkes County near Washington.<sup>20</sup>

American writers have used the word “frontier” in many contexts. Used to describe a setting, it may mean an arbitrarily line set to separate a settled area from an unsettled one or it may describe a geographical area within the line of settlement. The word frontier has also been used to describe a way of life; applied in this manner “the frontier life” has come to symbolize a rough, difficult lifestyle with many demands requiring adaptation. Finally, the word has been used to describe any pattern of unusual challenge to the human spirit or ingenuity of men. All of these uses for the word frontier would have been appropriate to describe the conditions in Georgia following the Revolutionary War. With only nine established churches and most of the state still inhabited by Indians, Georgia was a frontier—prime territory for the Second Great Awakening or Great Revival—and poised for the advent of the camp meeting.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Pierce, 34.

<sup>21</sup> Emory Stevens Burcke, et al., eds., *The History of American Methodism*. 3 vols. (New York: Abingdon Press, 1964), 494-495.

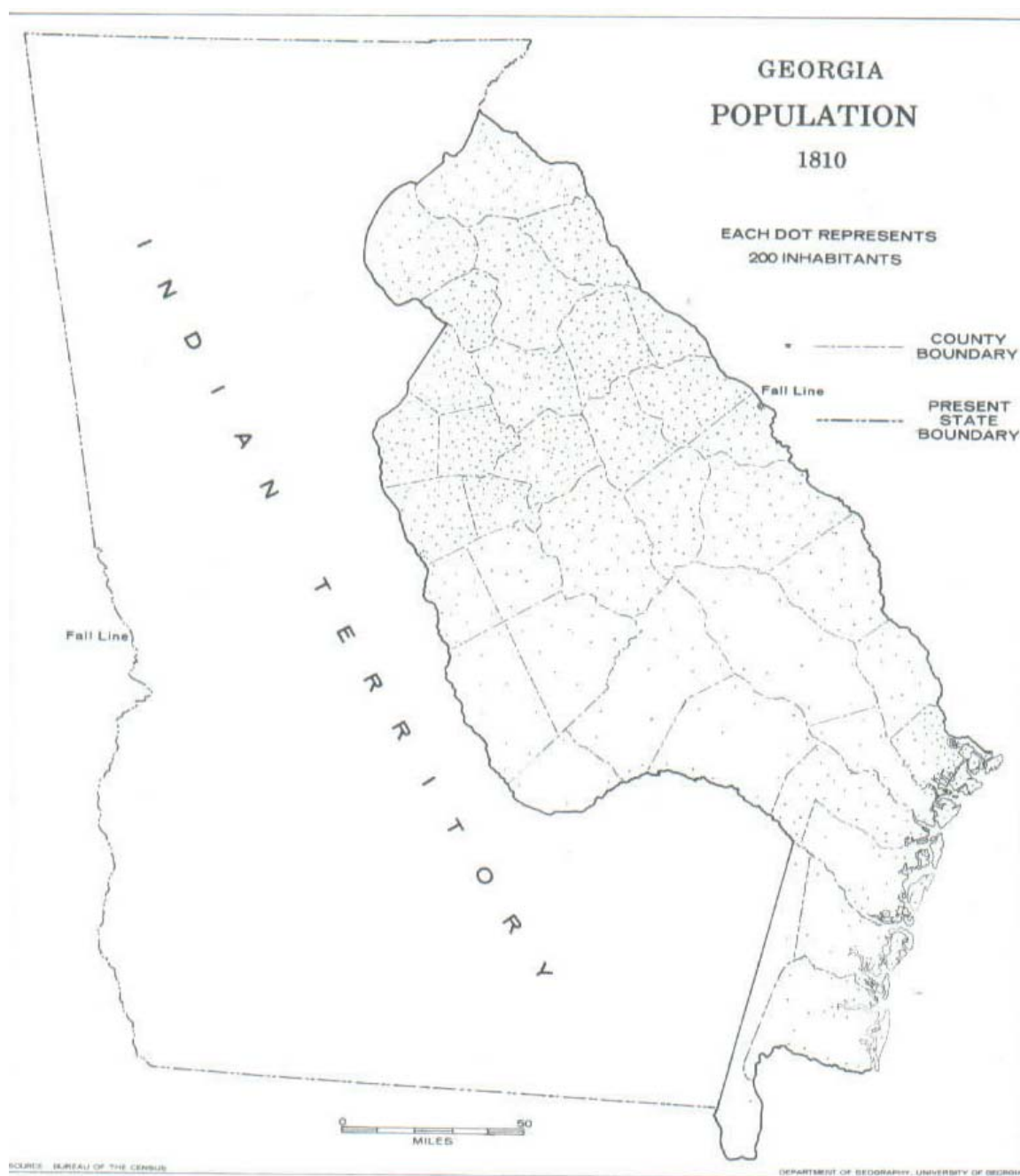


Figure 4. Georgia Population 1810

## CHAPTER 3: THE ORIGIN OF THE CAMP MEETING

### Theories

Church history has long been a controversial field of study; the camp story is no exception.

Charles Johnson, *The Frontier Camp Meeting: Religion's Harvest Time*

The camp meeting movement is a fascinating topic fraught with unanswered questions. There are many interesting theories emphasizing the role of the movement in America, and the origins of the camp meeting, its founder, and the location of the first meeting. The most widely accepted theory has been that the first camp meeting occurred on the “American frontier” at a sacramental service conducted by Presbyterian evangelist James McGready, in July 1800, at the Gasper River in Kentucky.<sup>22</sup> Another theory contends that camp meetings began earlier than the western or Kentucky revivals and were adapted from “non-frontier” practices of Baptist, Methodist, and Presbyterians.<sup>23</sup> A third theory is that the camp meeting was not an “American invention or phenomenon” at all. This interpretation claims that camp meetings were a continuation of the Presbyterian tradition brought to America by Scots-Irish immigrants. The theory goes on to claim that revivals can be traced to “holy fairs” which were held in Scotland as early as 1590.<sup>24</sup> Finally, the camp meeting also has a biblical reference, the Feast of Tabernacles or the ancient camp meeting of the Israelites. This feast was held in September, away from the usual place of worship, to remind the Israelites of their closeness with God during their wanderings before they found their way to the Promised Land. Although nothing specifically indicates that camp meetings

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<sup>22</sup> Charles A. Johnson, *The Frontier Camp Meeting: Religion's Harvest Time* (Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1955), 3, 36-37, 40.

<sup>23</sup> Kenneth O. Brown, *Holy Ground, Too: The Camp Meeting Family Tree* (Hazleton: PA: by author, 1997), 28.

<sup>24</sup> Richard D. Shiles, “America's Pentecost,” *Cross Currents* 42, no.1 (1992): 94-96.

began in imitation of the Feast of Tabernacles, historians and theologians note the similarities American pioneers shared with the Israelites as they wandered south and west, living in tents, looking for their Promised Land.<sup>25</sup>

Ye shall keep it a feast unto the Lord seven days in the year. It shall be a stature forever in your generations, ye shall celebrate it in the seventh month. Ye shall dwell in booths (tents) seven days, all that are Israelites born shall dwell in booths.

Lev. 23: 41-42

### The Frontier Theory

In the year 1800 the camp meeting sprang into being, was almost instantly universalized along the southwestern frontier, and almost as rapidly standardized into a pattern.

Charles Johnson, *The Frontier Camp Meeting: Religion's Harvest Time*

Although historian Frederick Jackson Turner had little to say about religion, his famous 1893 essay titled "The Significance of the Frontier in American History," influenced the interpretation of the history of American Christianity for years. Turner said that established religion of the East had little effect on the frontier West. Instead, he claimed that the "frontier" and its repercussions upon the nation as a whole changed American religious history.

Catherine C. Cleveland's book *The Great Revival in the West, 1797-1805*, written in 1916, *The Frontier Spirit of American Christianity*, written in 1923 by Peter G. Mode, and the 1930 textbook *The Story of Religion in America*, by William Warren Sweet, all employed Turner's frontier-religion hypothesis.<sup>26</sup> Sixty-two years after Turner's essay, the theme was

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<sup>25</sup> Harold Lawrence, *A Feast of Tabernacles: Georgia's Campgrounds and Campmeetings* (Milledgeville, GA by author, 1990), 1.

<sup>26</sup> John B. Boles, "Turner, the Frontier, and the Study of Religion in America," *The Journal of the Early Republic* 13, no.2 (1995): 213-215.

echoed by Charles Johnson in his book, *The Frontier Camp Meeting: Religion's Harvest Time*, published in 1955.

In *The Frontier Camp Meeting*, Johnson attempted to allay the stereotypical misconceptions promoted by both secular and church historians that had shrouded the camp meeting. He hoped to capture the essence of the camp meeting and establish its rightful place as a “socioreligious” institution in American culture. As the title suggested, Johnson believed that the camp meeting had originated on the frontier. Considered a classic, Johnson’s book became the primary source for scholarly research on the subject of camp meetings.

True to Johnson’s thesis, most historians accepted the camp meeting as an American phenomenon, a manifestation of the “Great Revival,” and a product of the southwestern frontier, especially Kentucky. Johnson maintained the woodland revival was an integral part of pioneer culture and that it arose out of circumstances created by the frontier. According to Johnson, the camp meeting emerged as an adaptation to the wilderness setting. He emphasized that it sprang into popularity because it awakened the pioneer’s deep emotional need for religion, and that it was no accident that the new religious device caught fire at the same time the Great Revival developed. He summarized by saying, “The early history of the frontier camp meeting is, in large measure, the story of the Great Revival of 1800.”<sup>27</sup>

#### The Frontier: Perfect Backdrop for Revivals

The frontier was crude, turbulent, and godless. Evangelical Protestantism, more than any other single force, tamed it.

Cultural historian Ralph H. Garriel, 1940

The timing was perfect for a resurgence of religious spirit during the late eighteenth century. Following the Revolution, religious and moral conditions across the nation were at the

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<sup>27</sup> Johnson, xiv, 25, 38, 40.

lowest ebb of the country's existence. The intellectual climate was another prevailing force threatening the religious attitudes of citizens. The organized religion of the colonial days was waning as rationalism gained favor with intellectuals, Revolutionary war heroes and many of the Founding Fathers. Thomas Paine's book *The Age of Reason*, published in 1794 embraced the liberal doctrines of Deism, which relied on reason, rather than the revelations of the Bible. Eventually this would shake the core of religiousness in the country and bring about a reaction against liberalism in religion—forever changing its history. This time period also marked the beginning of the great trans-Allegheny migration in America. Nowhere in America were moral standards more lax than in the unrestricted backwoods.<sup>28</sup>

Johnson believed the frontier presented the perfect background for this new technique of revivalism. To appreciate what Johnson termed the camp meeting's spontaneous birth one must understand the hostile environment experienced by the pioneer. Life in the raw backwoods was full of hardships with the constant threat of accident, starvation, sickness, and death—from native-Americans, wild animals or the lack of medical care. In Frenchman Alex de Tocqueville's classic account of life in the early years of the nation *Democracy in America* (1835), he recalled a pioneer's philosophy of survival due to the critical lack of doctors in the frontier: "They do like the Indians. They die or get well, as it pleases God."<sup>29</sup>

Pioneer life was also culturally destitute, removed from the influences of church, school, and organized society. For example, historian William Warren Sweet proclaimed that whiskey was the "greatest single curse" of the whole country. Homemade whiskey was readily available everywhere in the nation, especially the whiskey-sodden frontier where everybody—men, women, and children—indulged. Whiskey was almost considered a necessity, and it flowed

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<sup>28</sup> Bailey and Kennedy, 320.

<sup>29</sup> Johnson, 11.



freely at all social occasions. Even preachers and God-fearing men imbibed along with murderers, robbers and rogues.<sup>30</sup>

The camp meeting provided a place to affirm one's humanity, and to find meaning and order in the turmoil of pioneer existence. The Christian gospel preached at these revivals celebrated the worthiness of the individual soul amidst an environment that threatened human worth. The preaching, exhorting, and praying at these spirited revival meetings liberated the pent-up emotions of the anxious pioneers which sometimes led to wild excesses and inexplicable behavior. Accordingly, the success of this socioreligious American phenomenon was due to the loneliness, hopelessness, and fear that epitomized life on the edge of existence.<sup>31</sup>

In fact, outside revivals or "awakenings" date back to the 1730s and 1740s during the Great Awakening. Open-air religious gatherings were common practice as settlers moved farther away from organized religion. There was necessity in the absence of church buildings or when a crowd became too large for an existing meeting house. Worshipping amid the natural beauty of a wooded clearing was also considered inspirational and desirable, especially during the summer months. By Johnson's definition however, these gatherings were not "true" camp meetings because there were no provisions for camping. These gatherings merely set a "precedent" for outdoor meetings.

Other open-air precedents Johnson cited were: the "field meetings" held by John Wesley in England as early as 1739; the "quarterly-conference" often held outdoors due to its size; and "love feasts" held in groves, all Methodists practices. He also noted that Methodists, Baptists and Presbyterians, often observed outside sacramental occasions such as communion, in the summer. And, *Grosse Versammlungen* or "Big Meetings" had been held in Pennsylvania by traveling German Methodist and Lutheran preachers.

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<sup>30</sup> William W. Sweet, *Revivalism in America: It's Origin, Growth, and Decline* (New York: Charles Scribner's Son, 1944; reprint, Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith, 1965), 8, 117-18.

<sup>31</sup> Wentz, 157-158.

Several names and locations, called “forerunners” by Johnson, have been associated with the beginnings of the camp meeting movement. John Waller, a Separate Baptist minister, held what he called “camp meetings,” for male campers only, in Virginia during the early years of the Revolution. Waller even drew up a special set of rules to govern those attending these events. Samuel Harriss, James Read, and other evangelists held similar meetings during the same time period in and around Guilford County, North Carolina. These colonial prototypes held in Virginia by Separate Baptist were the most similar, of all the forerunners, to the real camp meeting except that women were forbidden to camp on the grounds, and the campers were not self-supporting, but depended on local people for sustenance.

#### Accounts of First Camp on the Frontier Meeting Differ

In 1794 while his church was being constructed, Methodist minister Daniel Asbury of Lincoln County, North Carolina, conducted a meeting with the assistance of fellow Methodists ministers William McKendree, Nicholas Watters, William Fulwood, James McGee, and Presbyterian James Hall. This has often been referred to as the first “camp meeting” due to the length of the service and the fact that it was held outside. The following year Asbury held two more encampments in Iredell County, North Carolina aided by Presbyterian co-worker James Hall. One was held at Bethel, and the second one, known as Union Camp meeting, occurred at Shepherd’s Cross Roads. Similar services occurred simultaneously in at least two more eastern states—Tennessee and South Carolina—staged by Baptists, Methodists, and Presbyterians.

In *The History of Methodism in South Carolina*, printed in 1884, historian Albert M. Shipp stated that although the practice was not firmly established in the state, Carolina was the first home of the camp meeting. Another Methodist writer, Henry Boehn, cited Methodist preacher John McGee as “the father of camp meetings in America,” setting the date as 1799, and the location in Smith County (now Summer County), Tennessee. In his book, *Reminiscences*,

*Historical and Biographical of Sixty-four Years in the Ministry*, Boehn also credits McGee's brother, William, a Presbyterian minister, for his assistance in the interdenominational gathering.

With all these claims it is understandable that Jesse Lee, first historian of the Methodist Episcopal Church, had difficulty establishing the date, the place and the founder of the first camp meeting. Lee could only estimate the starting date as "about" 1801, however, he wrote; "I could never learn whether they began in the upper parts of South Carolina, in Tennessee, or Kentucky."

Two Presbyterian ministers, James McGready and Barton Warren Stone, have been inextricably linked with the origins of the movement by advocates of the frontier theory. While working in Logan County, Kentucky, with three congregations on the Red, Gasper, and Muddy Rivers, McGready sponsored three meetings that would forever alter Protestantism in America. In June 1800, he sponsored what was probably the first planned meeting at the Red River Church in Logan County, Kentucky. A second service was planned at the Gasper River for July. Notices were sent out in advance and the response was great. People came from as far as 100 miles away, prepared to camp with food and tents. The congregation was so large it exceeded the capacity of the small church, necessitating a preacher's stand and simple log seats be constructed outside the building. Finally, in July 1800, "camp meeting" was established when the practice of camping was added to the continuous religious service, and held outdoors.

News of McGready's success spread to the settled areas of Kentucky and Tennessee and more pioneers came prepared to camp for the duration of meetings held by Presbyterians, Methodists, and Baptists. Even though authorities questioned some of Johnson's theories, the majority believed the necessary criteria was in place—where, for what reason, and when—for the camp meeting to originate and become firmly established as a ritual in frontier Kentucky. Traditionally scholars accepted Johnson's thesis that the camp meeting was a socioreligious

American phenomenon, that it ignited the fires of the Great Revival, and that Kentucky revivalist James McGready, a Presbyterian, was its originator.<sup>32</sup>



Figure 5. Camp Meeting of the Methodists in North America, 1819

### The Non-Frontier Theory

While the Great Revival can help explain the meteoric rise of the camp meeting on the American landscape, the evidence will no longer allow the claim that the revival, or the ministry of James McGready, led to the birth of the camp meeting.

Kenneth O. Brown, *Holy Ground: A Study Of The American Camp Meeting*

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<sup>32</sup> Johnson, 25-40.

A more recent interpretation of the origin of the camp meeting movement is that it began earlier than the ministry of James McGready and that camp meetings were not a product of the Kentucky frontier. In a 1990 article entitled “*Finding America’s Oldest Camp Meeting*” author Kenneth O. Brown argued that as the camp meeting approached its 200th anniversary it was time to dispel a number of inaccurate conceptions that had been perpetuated through the years. He stated that it was time to reevaluate Johnson’s conclusions and to reinterpret the origins of the institution. Brown provided details sharply contrasting with what scholars had accepted about the founding date, place and denomination. While implying that there was more research needed, Brown concluded, “It would seem at this point that the oldest camp meeting is either Cypress, South Carolina, Effingham, Georgia, or Rock Springs, North Carolina.”<sup>33</sup> The three sites were all Methodist camps, all in the Deep South, and all founded a decade earlier than 1800.

Two years later, in the book, *Holy Ground: A Study of the American Camp Meeting*, Brown confidently claimed that there were at least 41 separate camp meetings held by Methodists before 1800. Utilizing information he had been compiling since the 1960s, *Holy Ground* extended the general camp meeting story into the twentieth century and examined its influence on two historic religious movements that began in the Victorian era—the Chautauqua movement and Bible Conference movement. The book contained an extensive bibliography of camp meeting literature from journals to individual campground histories. However, the main emphasis of the book was to prove that the camp meeting, though changed and modified, was alive and well. Perhaps for the first time in its history, an attempt was made to document the locations and histories of individual camp meeting grounds. Brown’s list included 120 “live” encampments established by 1876 across the nation, and a grand total of approximately 1,800 camp meeting

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<sup>33</sup> Kenneth O. Brown, “Finding America’s Oldest Camp Meeting,” *Methodist History* 28, no.4 (July 1990): 253-54.

sites and the “descendent” Bible Conference Assembly Grounds, Chautauquas, and Christian Retreats.<sup>34</sup>

Brown did not stop researching the camp meetings and what he labeled its “children”. In *Holy Ground, Too: The Camp Meeting Family Tree*, published in 1997, his list had increased to more than 3,000 active and inactive sites. His knowledge of camp meeting grounds has increased and his research will no doubt be invaluable to others. Of particular interest is the listing of inactive sites in his second book. This information fills a void in the camp meeting story and demonstrates the widespread popularity of camp meetings throughout the country. As Brown’s accounting of campsites has evolved, the information he has gleaned about the movement’s history has changed. In the second book the author says he is “more convinced than ever” that the frontier theory promoted for so many years is incorrect.<sup>35</sup>

#### The Frontier versus the South

Brown’s theory had been articulated in the 1985 article “*From Quarterly To Camp Meeting: Reconsideration Of Early American Methodism*” by church historian Russell E. Richey. Richey pointed out the inconsistency of those supporting the camp meeting “in the economy of Methodism” while labeling it “the frontier camp meeting.” saying camp meetings were western affairs was tantamount to saying the eastern sites were “frontiers demographically or frontiers for Methodism.” On the other hand he proclaimed they should not be called “Methodist” camp meetings either because:

To place the camp meeting in the economy of Methodism is to remove it, rather arbitrarily, from its premier place in “the great revival,” from its continuing role as a largely Methodist undertaking in the 19<sup>th</sup> century revivalistic procedures that were largely shared, and from its part in the production of an Evangelical ethos

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<sup>34</sup> Kenneth O. Brown, *Holy Ground, A Study of the American Camp Meeting* (New York: Garland Publishing Inc., 1992), viii, ix, xii, 10, 25, 45.

<sup>35</sup> Brown, *Holy Ground, Too*, 7-8.

intended by Protestantism as the vehicle for the national establishment of Christianity.<sup>36</sup>

Richey hypothesized those quarterly meetings and annual conferences became revivals that became camp meetings. He surmised that the camp meeting allowed Methodism to conduct business at their conferences without abandoning the conferences as revivals. In a lighthearted manner he questioned whether the Methodist discovered the camp meeting or visa versa. Referring to church historian Jesse Lee's book *A Short Story of the Methodists* published in 1810 Richey reported that until 1801, when Lee first used the term camp meeting, he had attributed all growth in the church to revivals. Throughout the article he contends that by employing the camp meeting, Methodism "could change while remaining unchanged." For an example of this premise one has only to read Lee's account of a quarterly meeting that had taken place in 1776 to note that it reads like a description of a camp meeting. He wrote:

On Tuesday and Wednesday, the 30<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup> day of July, quarterly-meeting was held at Mabury's dwelling house in Brunswick (now Greenville) county. No meeting-house in Virginia could have held the people. We had a large arbour in the yard, which would shade from the sun, two or three thousand people. The first day was a blessed season; but the second day was a day never to be forgotten. We held the love-feast under the arbour in the open air; the members of society took their seats, and other people stood all around them by the hundreds. The place was truly awful, by reason of the presence of the Lord. Many of the members spake [*sic*]; and while some declared how the Lord had justified them freely, others declared how, and when the blood of Jesus had cleansed them from all sin. So clear, so full, and so strong was their testimony, that while some were speaking their experiences, hundreds were in tears, and other vehemently crying to God, for pardon or holiness. Such a work of God as that was, I had never seen, or heard of before. It continued to spread through the south parts of Virginia, and then parts of North Carolina, all that summer and autumn.<sup>37</sup>

"Non-frontier" was a term used by historian John B. Boles to describe the eligible forerunners of the frontier camp meeting, which he attributed to activities held by both the

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<sup>36</sup> Russell E. Richey, "From Quarterly to Camp Meeting: Reconsideration of Early American Methodism," *Methodist History*, 23, no. 1 (July 1985): 201.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 200-01, 203.

Baptists and Methodists along the southern seaboard. In an article written in 1993 entitled “Turner, The Frontier, and the Study of Religion in America,” Boles traced the work of several historians beginning in 1923 with Peter G. Modes book *The Frontier Spirit in American Christianity* with regard to the frontier being the dominant motif in interpreting religion. After comparing and contrasting the work, Boles said that while historians today do not automatically associate the frontier with revivals, they should not overlook the “synthesis” by which influences combined prior to the Kentucky revivals of 1800. He cautioned that historians should never simply look to the past, they should look for all the ways that details and reasons mesh together to understand history. In summary Boles said, “History is largely the art of enhancing and enriching the number of connections we see between one event and others removed in time, geography, and domain.”<sup>38</sup>

In denying the first planned camp meetings began in 1800 under the direction of Presbyterian James McGready, Kenneth Brown’s *Holy Ground, Too* has carefully woven new information into the time-honored camp meeting story. Within the confines of Johnson’s formal definition of the term “camp meeting” Brown has found 11 sites (antecedents) in five states that predate the Great Revival in Kentucky. There are three sites each in North Carolina, Georgia and South Carolina with the two remaining sites in Tennessee and Virginia. The three oldest sites are Cattle Creek Camp Meeting near Branchville, South Carolina with an oral tradition dating to 1786; a former brush arbor constructed in 1786 at Cracker’s Neck, now Liberty Church in Greene County, marked by a Georgia Historical Commission plaque; and Pleasant Grove Camp Meeting (active today) in Mineral Springs, North Carolina, believed to have been founded in 1787 as McWhorter’s Camp Ground.

Known originally as Grassy Branch Creek and later as Robey’s Campground, Rock Spring Camp Meeting near Denver, North Carolina, has been in continuous operation since 1794.

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<sup>38</sup> Boles, “Turner, The Frontier, and the Study of Religion in America,” 213, 215.



The site was designated a “United Methodist Historic Site” in 1985 and named “the first camp meeting grounds in North Carolina...probably the first campmeeting in the United States.”

Grassy Branch was recognized by Johnson’s 1955 book as the site of meeting conducted by Reverend Daniel Asbury and others, however, it did not fit within his criteria of what constituted a camp meeting. While the revival held at Grassy Branch Creek in 1794 may not have been a “planned” camp meeting, those following it were—and Methodist ministers McGee and McKendree who were in attendance became associated with the movement.

The seven other camp meetings that may also predate the Great Revival are: Tucker’s Grove Camp Meeting (AME Zion), near Machpelah, North Carolina, formed by black Christians (1876) who had previously worshipped at Grassy Branch Creek, Zion Camp Meeting (1790) in Mechlenburg County, Virginia, Cypress Creek Meeting (1794) near Ridgeville, South Carolina. Indian Field Camp Meeting (1775) near St. George, South Carolina, Effingham County Camp Meeting (1790) in Springfield, Georgia and an encampment held in the Greene Methodist Circuit in Tennessee (1796).

Brown argues that the frontier theory is one-sided and does not acknowledge the earlier work of the Methodists in the Carolinas and Georgia. Nor does it credit the antecedents as camp meetings even though they were held outdoors (utilizing stands or brush arbors) and people were camping and sustaining themselves on the grounds. As for the popularization and standardization, although these events may have only been popular on a local level, they were held annually, and yielded membership and conversions. And as for the accepted theory contending the antecedents were sacramental services, not camp meetings—Brown’s rebuttal is that these outdoor meetings in the Carolinas and Georgia were not sacramental; expect for one baptism at the Grassy Branch meeting (Rock Spring, North Carolina).<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Brown, *Holy Ground, Too*, 28-38.

McGee versus McGready

In *Holy Ground, Too*, Brown calls John McGee the “Hero of the Revival of 1800” saying he should be credited for the outbreak of the Great Revival. To support this claim he explains that McGee had experienced the power of revivals for a decade living in North Carolina, and that McGee had not only preached at Grassy Branch, but that he had helped organize that event and other outdoor camp meeting revivals in the state. And, that the preaching tour planned by John and his brother William in 1800 would have included McGready’s parish at Red River because William knew the fellow Presbyterian minister from McGready’s days in North Carolina. Historians agree that the McGee brothers preached at the Red River sacramental service, however, they have been credited as assistants to McGready and the other Presbyterian ministers who actually planned the event. Brown takes the opposite opinion based on his interpretation of several primary resources advising that each source has omissions and accounts vary. One account tells that when John McGee rose to preach on Monday June 23, 1800 he came to the pulpit singing:

Come holy spirit, heavenly dove  
With all thy quick’ning power  
Kindle a flame of sacred love  
In these cold hearts ours.<sup>40</sup>

This unusual, surprising manner of evangelizing apparently struck a cord with the crowd that started an hour of shouting, exhorting, praying for mercy, and ended with “the slain” covering the floor. Brown contends that McGee brought out the revival spirit at Red River leading to even more successful services at Gasper River and Muddy River (Kentucky) and Beech Meeting House (Sumner, County, Tennessee) that summer. Only Methodist minister John McGee had previously experienced such activity by a congregation—this was a new experience for the other preachers in attendance. In fact, one account tells that McGee attempted to claim the

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 39.

uneasiness of the others who had not witnessed such an outpouring of the Spirit by saying he “was acquainted with such a scene in another country.”<sup>41</sup>

### Two More Origin Theories

In recent years, several books have challenged the belief that camp meetings were exclusively an American phenomenon, as many scholars have asserted. Three such books are: *Holy Fairs: Scottish Communion and American Revivals in the Early Modern Period* by Leigh Eric Schmidt and *Triumph of the Laity: Scot-Irish Piety and the Great Awakening, 1625-1750*, printed in 1988, and Paul K. Conkin’s book, *Cane Ridge: America’s Pentecost* printed in 1990. These studies claim the emotional focus for the meetings can be traced to the “holy fairs” and “festal communions” held in Scotland as early as 1590; consequently, camp meetings were part of the Presbyterian tradition brought to the country by the Scots-Irish.<sup>42</sup> And, to this day, scholars continue to note the similarities with the Israelites citing Biblical references as the source of founding.

### Cane Ridge: America’s Pentecost

No matter which origin theory one supports, there is agreement that the most famous of all early camp meetings was at Cane Ridge, Bourbon County, Kentucky, in August 6, 1801. Reverend Barton Warren Stone, a Presbyterian minister, planned it. Like fellow Presbyterian James McGready, Stone believed the outdoor revival was an effective method for

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 40.

<sup>42</sup> Shields, 90-93.

communicating with the rough pioneer of the wilderness.<sup>43</sup> In his book, *The Frontier Camp Meeting: Religion's Harvest Time*, author Charles Johnson said, "Cane Ridge was, in all probability, the most disorderly, the most hysterical, and the largest revival ever held in early-day America."<sup>44</sup> it is estimated that between 10,000 and 25,000 people attended the Cane Ridge camp meeting, which lasted six days, despite the fact that, it rained the first three days. These numbers were remarkable in light of the fact that the largest city in Kentucky had less than 2,000 inhabitants in 1801. The congregation was so large that the twenty-two "invited" ministers—eighteen Presbyterian, four Methodist—preached as many as four sermons simultaneously from the meetinghouse and the platform outdoors. There were also uninvited Baptist and Methodist preachers who preached informally on tree stumps encircled by crowds. The assembly was so large that the noise was compared to the roar of Niagara Falls. However, it was not the size of the crowd, the confusion, or the noise for which Cane Ridge is remembered. The event is remembered for the behavior of the congregation, especially the incredible religious exercises that occurred. Soon, "falling," "running," "dancing," "jerking and "barking" were happening at other meetings across the nation. The Cane Ridge Revival stimulated the Second Great Awakening (or Great Revival) in American revivalism and, according to Conklin, it was "arguably the most important religious gathering in all of American history."<sup>45</sup>

There were many accounts written about the notorious Cane Ridge meeting. Presbyterian minister James B. Finley wrote the one most often quoted. Recollecting the day, Finley described the scene:

The noise was like that of Niagara. The vast sea of human beings seemed to be agitated as if by a storm. Some of the people were singing, others praying, some crying for mercy in the most piteous accents, while others were shouting most vociferously. While witnessing these scenes, a peculiarly-strange sensation, such

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<sup>43</sup> Charles A. Parker, "A Study of the Preaching At The Ocean Grove, New Jersey, Camp Meeting, 1870-1900" (Ph.D. diss., Louisiana State University and Agriculture and Mechanical College, 1959), 11.

<sup>44</sup> Johnson, 62-63.

<sup>45</sup> Shields, 90-91.

as I had never felt before, came over me. My heart beat tumultuously, my knees trembled, my lip quivered, and I felt as though I must fall to the ground. A strange supernatural power seemed to pervade the entire mass of mind there collected...Soon after I left and went to the woods, and there I strove to rally and man up my courage. After some time I returned to the scene of excitement, the waves of which, if possible, had risen still higher. I stepped up on a log, where I could have a better view of the surging sea of humanity. The scene that then presented itself to my mind was indescribable. At one time I saw at least five hundred swept down in a moment, as if a battery of a thousand guns had been opened upon them, and then immediately followed shrieks and shouts that rent the very heavens...I fled for the woods a second time, and wished I had staid at home.<sup>46</sup>

The event held at Cane Ridge has even been compared to the 1969 Woodstock Music and Art Fair held in Bethel, New York, at Max Yasgur's farm. Admittedly, Woodstock had more to do with "mass psychology" than music appreciation—just as Cane Ridge had more to do with sensationalism than revivalism. The enormity of the crowd and the social implications of Woodstock made it one of the most remarkable phenomena to have occurred in the twentieth century; however, "for the time, the place and the sparse population" Cane Ridge "drew as many people and created as great an impact."<sup>47</sup>

Held in a remote area outside of Paris, Kentucky, the meeting at Cane Ridge suddenly catapulted the camp meeting from an invention to an institution. As the news of the Cane Ridge meeting spread, the camp meeting itself spread with amazing rapidity. By the year 1803, the religious excitement created by this celebrated meeting had caught on in the Western Reserve District of Ohio, had spread back into western Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina, and to other parts of the East.

However, the emotionalism, disorder, and excess soon divided the western Presbyterians into two feuding groups, anti-revival and pro-revival. By about 1812, the Presbyterians rejected the camp meeting. Both the Baptist and Methodist sects, which preached personal conversion,

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<sup>46</sup> Johnson, 64.

<sup>47</sup> Marion S. Houchens, "The Great Revival of 1800," *Register of Kentucky Historical Society* 69 (1972): 216-234.

contrary to predestination, reaped a huge harvest of souls from the fertile religious fields created by the Second Great Awakening or Great Revival. However, later, the Baptists also abandoned the camp meeting as a revival tool, leaving the Methodists to spread it across the western frontier, the South, and New England. Speaking for himself and the church he represented, Methodist Bishop Francis Asbury, a staunch supporter of the open-air revival, declared in an 1810 journal entry, “The Methodist are all for camp-meetings; the Baptist are for public baptizing.” Asbury frequently praised camp meetings in his *Journal* and although he attended his first one in 1800, he did not use the term “camp meeting” until 1802. Involved with the forest revival from its formative years, he saw the camp meeting’s potential for “great things” and as the leader of the church he enthusiastically urged them both on the frontier and in the eastern states. As early as 1802 he exclaimed that “the South Carolina and Georgia camp-meetings have been blessed to the souls of hundreds, and have furnished members to the Methodists, Presbyterians, and Baptist churches.”<sup>48</sup>

While the Presbyterians and Baptist mistrusted the camp meeting and did not realize its potential, the Methodists took advantage of this invigorated Christian movement. Smaller religious groups, such as the “Stonites,” the “Shakers,” and the Cumberland Presbyterians, held camp meetings throughout the nineteenth century, but these did not compare to the Methodist utilization of the forest revival. By 1812 the Methodist had established 400 camp meetings; there were 600 by 1816, and nearly 1,000 in 1820 held in almost every state. The movement became so popular in Georgia that by 1838 there were one or two in every county. Finally, by 1844, the Methodists, who had embraced the institution known as camp meeting and took their message to settlers in un-evangelized territories, became the largest single Protestant denomination in America.

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<sup>48</sup> Johnson, 67,82-83.

Organizing to Beat the Devil: The Methodist Stand Fast

The devil hates the Methodist  
Because they sing and shout the best.

Frontier Jingle

Although the Methodists never attempted to take over the movement, their Armenian doctrines were suited for it. The belief that God loved all, redeemed all and saved all that believed in him appealed to the masses. Total atonement, assured salvation and eternal salvation gave hope to those willing to work hard and ask the almighty Helper. The Methodist Church government was well suited to the conditions of the frontier due primarily to the itinerancy system. The training they provided their preachers made them at ease in the campground setting, and their system of church government provided itinerants when needed. As the people eagerly moved to claim more or better land in the vast new country, the itinerants moved under the system—told where to go and how long to stay. Taking their message to settlers to in un-evangelized territories the mighty, marching force of the Methodist circuit riders were effective beyond any other Church of the time. To understand the hardships of travel and to be more sympathetic with the itinerants, the bishops became itinerants and fellow-workers. With few roads and harsh conditions, traveling in the undeveloped countryside was not easy. In describing the muddy roads in Georgia, Bishop Asbury related, “in consequence of which, we were five hours in going twelve miles”; he continued saying “pierce through the woods, *scratch and go* in the bypaths—wind round the plantation—creep across the newly cleared grounds by clambering over trees, boughs and fence-rails.”<sup>49</sup>

As early as 1773, Methodists had been meeting in groups of ten or more, usually in private homes, until the societies became too large. Soon, log buildings were raised to serve as meeting houses. It was also customary for Bishop Francis Asbury to hold quarterly meetings as he traveled, as did the Presiding Elders in the organized circuits. Hundreds attended these,

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<sup>49</sup> Pierce, 56-61, 70,81.

requiring that they be held outdoors under brush arbors. Asbury's journals refer to these gatherings outside and the many conversions and rededication's. These meetings were planned in advance and normally lasted for two days, but could extend for protracted periods of time.

Another basis for the success of the Methodists was that their efforts were aimed at the "plain-folk" or group comprising the largest number of people in the ante-bellum south. The small farmers, engaged in subsistence farming, were the forgotten people of the South except for the attention given them by Methodist (and Baptist) evangelists. The church's most enthusiastic preachers came from plain-folk families; therefore, the camp meeting religion was embraced by plain-folk, led by them, and aimed at them.<sup>50</sup>

The combination of orderliness with zeal was Bishop Asbury's idea of how a proper Methodist camp meeting should be conducted. If camp meetings were to become a Methodist institution they should embody the norms of Methodism, become methodistic—orderly and consistent in form, plan and structure. The meetings were standardized, rules for policing the grounds were enacted and the Mourner's Bench was established. Asbury tried unsuccessfully to have the camp meeting incorporated in the charter of the Church. Yet, in spite of enthusiastic support, the camp meeting did not become an official part of the Methodist organization nor did the official church body authorize it. It was a locally controlled institution to supplement regular church functions. Asbury did succeed in having camp meetings held in conjunction with conferences—the Annual Conference, which met in the summer and the last quarterly conference of the year, which met in the spring. However, the Conference did not sponsor these outdoor revivals and the ministers conducting them acted outside their official duties.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Dickson D. Bruce, Jr., *And They All Sang Hallelujah: Plain-Folk Camp-Meeting Religion, 1800-1845* (Knoxville, TN: The University of Tennessee Press, 1974), 4-7.

<sup>51</sup> Charles W. Ferguson, *Methodists and the Making of America: Organizing to Beat The Devil*, Bi-Centennial Edition (Austin, TX: Eakin Press, 1983), 142-43.



## CHAPTER 4: THE PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT PATTERNS OF THE CAMP GROUND

### Site Preparation

No matter the founding date or location, camp meetings have been part of the American landscape for over 200 years. They have survived shifts in religious doctrines, wars, social and cultural changes, and countless modifications over the two centuries. Hundreds of sites have vanished, yet a surprisingly large number of them survive today, especially in the south. Many have remained true to their original purpose and design while other sites have become prosperous cities and resorts. All too often the citizens living in such a community have little or no knowledge of its past, therefore, no appreciation that the town plan was imposed by its original use. Trees and the landscape, open public space, buildings in close proximity to each other, inviting porches, a community center—all elements that make a camp meeting site special—make a community special. In fact, some designers and planners today are looking to these sites as models for modern town planning to provide a sense of belonging, a sense of place.

While the physical layout of the earliest camp meeting sites were not planned, with the passage of time a plan developed that has been almost universally followed. One has only to visit a single campground to see “the plan.” No matter the design shape (oblong square/ rectangle, open horseshoe/semi-circle, or circular) the tabernacle is centrally located—the focus of the site—with the cabins or tents encircling that most important structure. The tabernacle, and before it the brush arbor or tent, is both the physical and symbolic focus of all sites. Even twentieth-century camp meeting grounds adhere to this highly ordered space. It is tradition. In a paper presented at the 1997 Meeting of the Vernacular Architecture Forum in Portland, Oregon, writer Anna Vemer Andrzejewski investigated this established camp meeting building tradition as to its function and significance. Titled “The Gaze of Hierarchy at Religious Campmeetings, 1850-

1950” Andrzejewski’s paper explored the power of the “gaze” accustomed by design. She explained:

By gaze, I refer to a process of vision involving a sustained and purposeful look that has as its intent processes of transformation and the power to affect behavior through the very act of looking – in other words, this gaze surveilles while it simultaneously shapes the object of its attention. Further, the gaze found at campmeetings functioned as a means to create, negotiate and enforce boundaries between people and groups. From his elevated pulpit, the speaking minister or exhorter viewed his congregation, but equally significant, the worshippers looked at him, which to them provided an additional line of sight toward a “higher” power.<sup>52</sup>

There is no doubt in this author’s mind that this is an accurate assessment of the multiple lines of vision within the well-ordered space of an encampment. I recollect personally experiencing the powerful, yet intimidating, exposure while attending camp meeting as a girl, the feeling that not only could I see everything from the front porch of our tent, everyone could see me, too.

Just as a site plan developed with the passage time, from a simple meeting held in a grove to a structured environment, the architecture changed when the event became annual or permanent—the camp meeting went from spirit to structure.

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<sup>52</sup> Anna Vemer Andrezejewski, “The Gaze of Heirarchy at Religious Campmeetings, 1850-1959” (paper presented at the Vernacular Architecture Forum, Portland, Oregon, 11-14 June 1998), University of Delaware/Cultural Heritage Research Services, Inc.

### Phase I: The Primitive Camp Meeting (1800-1845)

Although the woodland revival was an integral part of pioneer culture, its place in our history has never been clearly established.

Charles A. Johnson, *The Frontier Camp Meeting: Religion's Harvest Time*

#### Clearing the Ground

There were four simple steps in setting up the earliest camp meeting grounds. First, the site was selected; second, the land was cleared; third, the stand or pulpit was erected; and fourth, the tents were positioned around the outside of the "sacred center." Benjamin Henry Latrobe, America's first professionally-trained architect, furnished one of the best definitions of an early encampment. Latrobe sketched the plan (See Figure 6.) and two sections (See Figure 7.) of the site he saw in Virginia in 1809. The camp was laid out in a semi-circular pattern consisting of two concentric, semi-circular rows of tents on the outside, separated by a street for cooking fires. Inside the arc of tents are two sets of benches on either side of an aisle leading to the stand or pulpit. According to the established policy of the day, the women sat on benches on one side and the men on the other side. Behind the stand was a row of tents for the Negroes. In front of the stand was "a boarded enclosure filled with straw, into which the converted were thrown that they might kick about without hurting themselves."<sup>53</sup>

#### The Sacred Grove

The forest clearing was the setting for the early frontier camp meeting. "Nature's temple" was just a step away from the log cabin meeting place. However, it provided nothing but the natural beauty of trees as a stimulus to worship. This natural setting is thought to have given the open-air revival its religious power, as seen during the Second Great Awakening.

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<sup>53</sup> Talbot Hamlin, *Benjamin Henry Latrobe* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1955), 319-22.

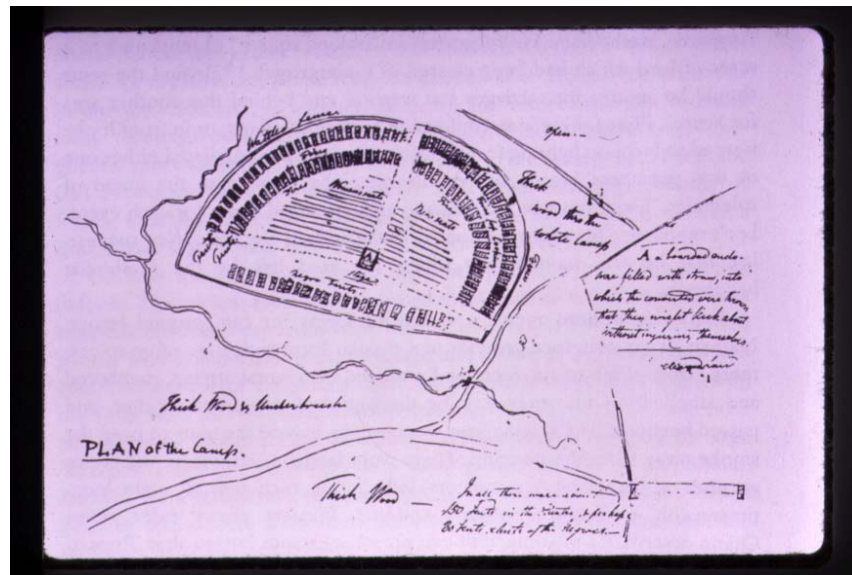


Figure 6. Latrobe's Sketch Plan of a Camp Meeting near Washington, D.C.

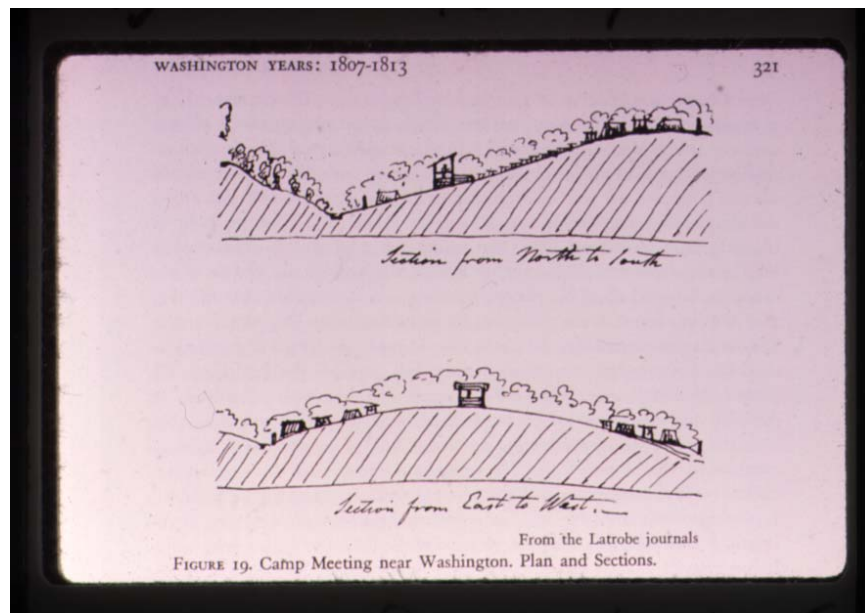


Figure 7. Latrobe's Cross Sections of a Camp Meeting near Washington, D.C.

A natural setting provided the perfect place for the settler to worship. In the forest, man was one with God and nature, stripped of worldly comforts and devoid of material possessions. He was free from the worldliness of the established church, its politics and its pecking order. The

wilderness assembly was a dramatic setting, which freed man and allowed the spirit of revivalism to ignite. At night, the forest was mysterious and awe-inspiring with the flickering lamps and smoking campfires of the early camp meeting.<sup>54</sup>

In *City in the Woods: The Life and Design of an American Camp Meeting on Martha's Vineyard*, Ellen Weiss described the early camp meeting setting: "shelter, privacy, and isolation were requirements for revival sites, not openness, drama, and splendid views." However, Weiss explained that even ordinary landscapes became special to those attending night services. Held under the trees in darkness of night, the evening service provided a dramatic, light-filled vision, a vision that could be solemn or emotional, frightening or empowering.<sup>55</sup> In describing the early, primitive camp ground, author Richard E. Wentz, declared, "The meeting grounds themselves were temples in the wilderness,...like a sacred center in an otherwise hostile environment."<sup>56</sup>

### The Stand

The pulpit was the center or main feature of camp meetings everywhere, and was set up immediately, once a site was cleared. There were often two pulpits facing the rows of seats, one at both ends of a natural amphitheater. Sometimes the pulpit would be a wagon bed or a simple raised platform on stilts. Other, more sturdy "stands" were built, some two levels high, with a roof to protect the speaker from the elements. They were elevated so that the preacher could be seen and heard above the congregation. These stands were also spacious, as wide as ten feet square, large enough to accommodate a dozen people. They provided plenty of room for the main

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<sup>54</sup> Johnson, 41-43.

<sup>55</sup> Ellen Weiss, *City in the Woods: The Life and Design of an American Camp Meeting on Martha's Vineyard* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987; Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1998), 11.

<sup>56</sup> Wentz, 158.



Figure 8. Religious encampment, Virginia, early 19<sup>th</sup> Century

speaker, other ministers waiting their turn, and exhorters ready to speak to the crowd. (See Figures 8, 5, and 20.)

Sometimes seats were not provided, which left the crowds to mill around beneath the pulpit. When seats were present, they were simple logs or planks laid across tree stumps that had been dressed and the tops adzed for comfort. Dividing the open-air auditorium with the women on the right and men on the left was common practice.

In the beginning, the lighting needed for the evening services was provided by candles and pine knot torches with campfires located in front of the surrounding tents to help illuminate the worship area. Torches were placed in the trees or other convenient places and attached to the preaching stand. Eventually, stands called “fire altars” were erected. These consisted of tripods,

some six feet tall, with earthen-covered platforms that burned pine wood fires on top of the earth and sod.<sup>57</sup>

Except for the preacher's stand and the tents, there were few manmade objects visible in these early settings. The trees were the architecture of early camp meetings; however, this often changed when the encampment became established. Next, the use of Brush arbors became common leading to more permanent structures.<sup>58</sup>

### The Brush Arbor

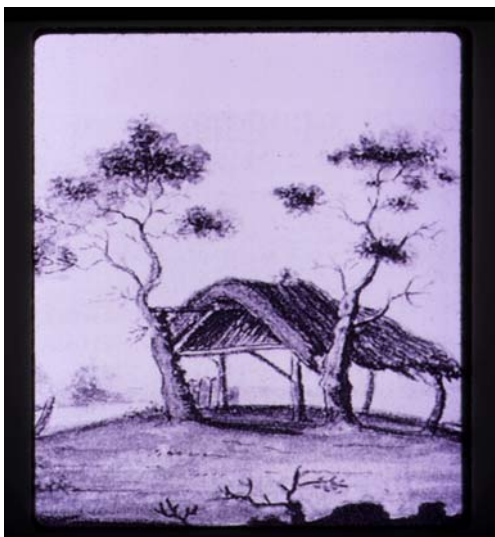


Figure 9. Charles Fraser, Arbor unknown location, South Carolina, 1796

A brush arbor is an open-air shelter used most often to shade the sun. Many camp meeting pulpits were covered by brush arbors constructed to protect the preacher and the crowd. They were also used as temporary housing by the campers erected alongside their wagons. Simple, easily constructed and impermanent, these were built using crude upright posts covered with leafy boughs and had a long tradition in Southern material culture. Three groups that historically comprised the Southern population—Native American, European (white), and

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<sup>57</sup> Johnson, 45-46, 48.

<sup>58</sup> Weiss, 13.

African—used brush arbors. Evidence suggests that brush arbors were used as temporary churches in the early Virginia settlement of Jamestown. African-Americans have painful associations with brush arbors being used by black worshippers. At a time when the assemblage of blacks was discouraged, often slaves worshipped secretly in brush arbors as they were easy to put up, easy to take down, and easy to store. Historically brush arbors have served many different purposes; however, they have been documented most often in a religious context. No matter what native vegetation was used, from Tidewater Virginia to the Texas hill country, this form has been associated with the formative years of Protestantism, especially the Methodist denomination.<sup>59</sup>

### Tents

The tents were arranged in either circular, rectangular, or horseshoe shaped rows or streets around the pulpit, with walkways or streets between. They formed a protective shell around the pulpit, the heart of the camp meeting. Most tents were made of a large piece of store-bought cotton or sailcloth or, for the tents of the wealthy, perhaps a bolt of new muslin. Other tents were made of things that were readily available such as sheets, old quilts or coverlets, sewn together to form a tent. Whatever the material, it was hung on poles to form a roof for a temporary tent. There were a few log tents or wooden shelters with clapboard roofs. However, the majority used cloth tents that were closed on one end, open on the other, with a campfire at the front.

The eastern counterpart was different in several ways from the frontier, backwoods camp meeting. Eastern encampments were usually larger in size and had more tents or shelters. Although similar in design, the eastern tents were often more pretentious. Some housed only a single family, but the typical canvas tent was large enough for twenty to one hundred people. The

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<sup>59</sup> J. Daniel Pezzoni, "Brush Arbors in the American South," Pioneer American Society," *Pioneer America Society Transactions* 20 (1997): 25-34.



pioneer brought little or no furniture, while eastern campers brought many of the comforts of home for their stay.<sup>60</sup>

During the early part of the century, only the preachers' stand and the tents were present at the campsite; however, this would change. By the 1820s, two new building types had appeared, especially in the South and the Ohio River Valley, which competed with the architecture of the trees. The two most important new forms were the great open tabernacles to cover the worshippers during the services, and permanent wooden structures to house them during the encampment. There were earlier accounts of large wooden tabernacles—evangelist Peter Cartwright wrote of them being used in Tennessee, Kentucky, and the Carolinas.

#### Arbors and Tents—Southern Style

The arbor (tabernacle) became the most important building at the southern campground and constitutes an American building type that was noticeably consistent from Virginia to Texas. The structures were powerful architectural forms constructed of squared hand-hewn timbers with angle braces and exposed trusses covered by great roofs large enough to cover the pulpit and the entire congregation. They were open on three or four sides to promote airflow and to foster the enjoyment of nature. Their design dates back almost to the beginning of the movement, with one arbor built as early as 1807 in Gosehen, Indiana being large enough to cover 700 people.

The southern cabin, called a “tent,” was usually a simple one-story wooden building with a gabled roof. (See Figure 11.) A side-gabled tent often had a “dogtrot” and a front-gabled tent had a central hallway. (See Figure 40.) Both commonly had dirt floors which were covered with sawdust or straw. Partial partitions allowed for air circulation above and through screened vents on the exterior of the building. Porches were customary. Some campgrounds, such as

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<sup>60</sup> Johnson, 44-49.

Shingleroof Campground in Henry County, Georgia, had continuous shed-roofed porches that ran along the front of each tent, which encouraged community bonding.<sup>61</sup>



Figure 10. Arbor, Tattnall County Camp Ground, Georgia

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<sup>61</sup> Weiss, 14-15.

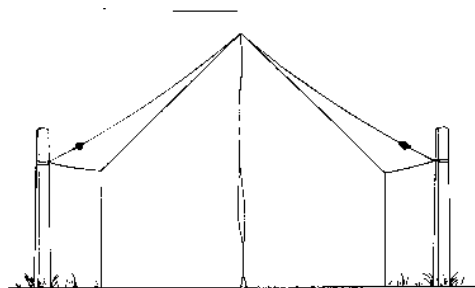


Figure 11. Typical gable-front “tent” with shed porch. The Meader’s Tent, oldest tent at Mossy Creek Camp Ground, White County, Georgia.

### Phase Two: Organized Camp Meetings (1845-1875)

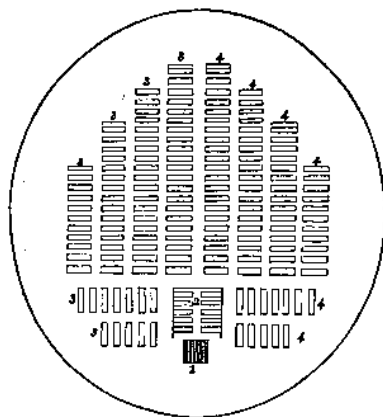
#### Camp Ground Patterns

The Methodists left nothing to chance as they actively tried to erase the stigma of the wild excesses in Kentucky and Tennessee long associated with camp meetings. By the mid-nineteenth century, much of the camp meeting experience was planned, from the timing of the meeting to the location of the tents. Reverend B.W. Gorham’s 1854 *Camp Meeting Manual, A Practical Book for the Camp Ground* recommended the physical form subsequently followed by many pre-Civil War campgrounds in New England, western New York and northern Pennsylvania.



Model for a tent (12 ft. wide),  
from B. W. Gorham, *Camp Meeting Manual*.

GROUND PLAN OF CAMP GROUND, 131 BY 264 FEET:



LEGEND:  
1. Stand, or speakers' platform.  
2. Altar.  
3. Seats—ladies' side.  
4. Seats—gentlemen's side.  
C. Circle on the outside of which the tents are to be built.

Campground plan, from B. W. Gorham, *Camp Meeting Manual*. Photographed from a copy deposited in the Kansas State University Library.

City In The Woods: The Life and Design of an  
American Camp Meeting on Martha's Vineyard

Figure 12. Cloth Tent and Circular Camp Ground Plan from Gorham's Manual.

He advised the use of the simple preachers' stand and cloth tents, "the old time frontier camp rather than the tabernacle and wooden cabins seen in the Ohio River Valley and the South." (See Figure 12.) Gorham's manual and others appeared in the 1840s through the 1850s, the time declared to be the beginning of the decline of camp meeting. These manuals insisted on the continuance of the institution for its own sake, forgetting that it had developed to serve the cause of winning people to Christianity. Gorham emphasized the importance of the selection of the site,

the preparation of the ground and the seating arrangement. He stressed strict rules of conduct to be followed, and even included a schedule for the day.<sup>62</sup>

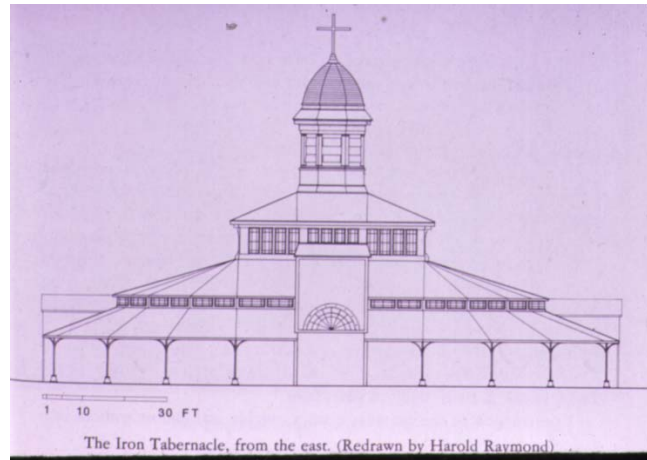


Figure 13. The Iron Tabernacle, from the east, Wesleyan Grove Campground, Martha's Vineyard, Massachusetts.



Figure 14. The Iron Tabernacle, John W. Holt, engineer, 1879.

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 17-20.

### The Tabernacle—Northern Style

Until the late nineteenth century, the tabernacle at most eastern campgrounds was a huge tent. Wesleyan Grove, founded in 1838 on Martha's Vineyard, used a series of stands (some covered) for the preachers until 1870 when a large canvas tabernacle was erected over the traditional preaching area. In 1874, there was a proposal to replace the canvas tabernacle with a wooden structure to serve as both a chapel for the growing winter population and tabernacle for the summer crowds. Five years later, there were two new buildings at the site, a combination Stick Style and Queen Anne church for 250 people and an iron building that would seat 3,000-4,000 worshipers. Three competing designs ranging from \$10,000 to \$15,000 were submitted for a wooden tabernacle. However, they all exceeded the \$7,200 budgeted for its construction therefore, a contract was negotiated with the firm of Dwight and Hoyt of Springfield, Massachusetts, to build an iron structure to be completed by July 1, 1879 at a cost of \$6,200. Corrugated iron dealer George C. Dwight was the builder and his partner was John W. Hoyt, a civil engineer and campground resident. Wesleyan Grove's Iron Tabernacle, constructed at a cost of \$7,147.84, has been called an "amazing" American building—yet it is hard to classify in American metal building construction. Professor Ellen Weiss wrote:

The most obvious precedents, such as railroad stations, were much larger. The building is probably best understood as a translation into metal of a wooden building type, the hipped-roof "arbor" of southern camp meetings.<sup>63</sup>

The Iron Tabernacle enclosed a nearly circular space about 130 feet in diameter on a north-south axis with three tiers of roofs separated by two bands of clerestory windows with a wooden cupola at the top 100 feet above grade. The lower clerestory windows are about two feet high with colored glass, whereas the clear glass upper windows are about eight feet, suggesting verticality and lightness. The two lower roofs—now corrugated asbestos instead of the original corrugated iron—have progressively rounded corners, so that the building appears almost circular

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 128-29, 134.

at its base while the upper roof is square in plan with a cupola at the center. Beneath the central roof there are four major iron supports also forming a square set at 40-foot intervals and extending 75 feet high meeting at the center. There is an elaborate primary truss system consisting of vertical and horizontal trusses explained below:

These vertical trusses are fixed rigidly at the level of the upper clerestory by four horizontal trusses, these lying on edge, parallel with and just behind the windows, almost invisible against the light. The horizontal trusses make a square in plan and are the only circumferential metal members attached to each other, metal to metal in the building. Beyond this square, all metal-to-metal members are radiating lines, the circumferential connections being in wood.<sup>64</sup>

To complete the structural core, there are five arches fanning out from the four central vertical arches. These 20 supports start the arching motion again, ending at the perimeter with 20 more supports. Finally, there are the secondary supports consisting of four T-sections interlocked and the tertiary supports which are two T-sections and two 2-inch pipes.<sup>65</sup>

### Cottages and Cabins

The camp ground “cottage,” at Wesleyan Grove in Massachusetts was developed between 1859-64 and constituted a new vernacular building type. Romantic and richly decorated with gingerbread trim, these two-story rectangular cottages maintained the narrow proportions of the tents from which they evolved. Another defining feature was double front doors—reminiscent of tent openings or church doors. The gable-front cottages had centered double entrance doors with narrow side windows. There were also double doors under the gables leading onto the second story balconies, projecting over the entrances. Although most of the doors in use were of the Gothic Revival style, Romanesque style and square doors were also used. Another

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 129-31.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 131-32.





Figure 15. A “New York cottage,” Wesleyan Grove, Martha’s Vineyard, Massachusetts.

embellishment was the hood-moldings to accentuate the shape of the windows and doors. The cottages were constructed of random width vertical tongue-and-groove siding. The method of construction was as specific as the type of wood. The cottages were framed using six three-by-fours on each side of the structure with notch and dowel joinery, most always using yellow long-leafed pine. Although they varied in width from 11 to 16 feet, the roofs of the Wesleyan Grove cottages were all constructed with a 45° roof pitch. The feature that defines these cottages best is their sawnwork, especially the vergeboard, lending a “sweetness” to the otherwise plain structures. Lastly, the scale of these “little houses” was odd with their double doors absurdly large for the width of the cottages, dwarfing those who entered, and the double doors on the second level appearing like a window for a giant. Multiplied by 50, these large openings on the narrow facades create a curious, noteworthy setting.



The design and arrangement of the two-story cabins at the 1852 Duck Creek camp meeting (east of Cincinnati, Ohio) which were shown in Gleason's Pictorial appeared to be an interpretation of the biblical "booths" of the Israelites. Constructed of horizontal planks these unusual structures surround the preaching stand like a bunker. The only opening visible from the front of the building is a second story balcony allowing the people to look down at the preacher as though they are watching a theater production from the balcony.<sup>66</sup>

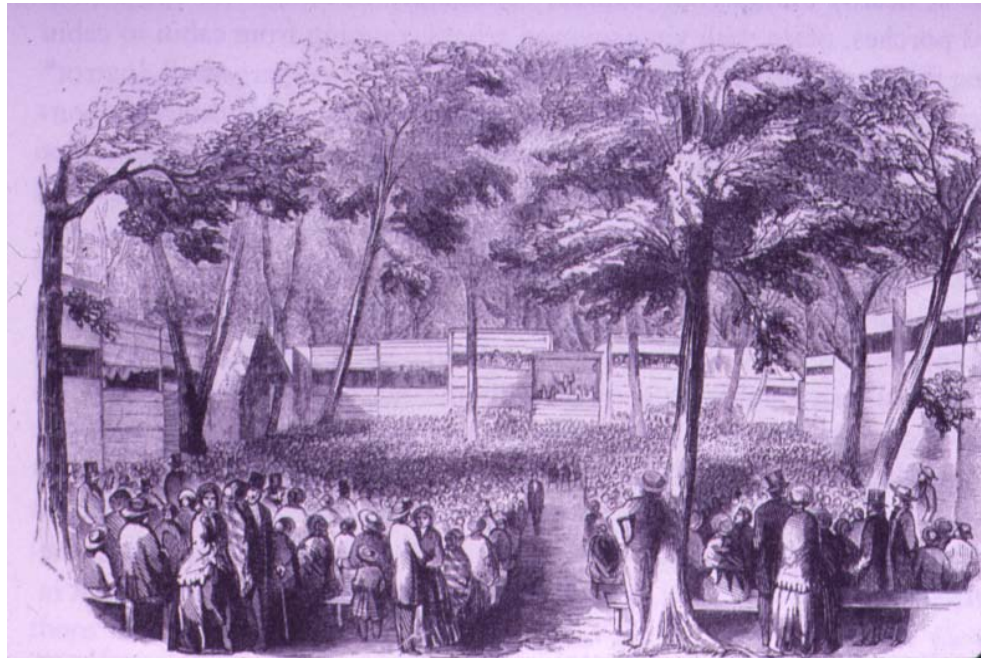


Figure 16. Duck Creek camp meeting, near Cincinnati, 1852. (*Gleason's Pictorial*)

### Phase Three: The Decline and Abandonment (1845-Present)

#### The Victorian Camp Ground

By the middle of the nineteenth century, the camp meeting began to decline. As the frontier (west and south) became more settled and more churches were established, the institution became less important in the lives of many. By 1845 many were in a state of decline, and during

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 13-14, 39-46.

the Civil War hundreds of camp meetings sites were abandoned and never revived. However, after the Civil War, there was a renewed enthusiasm for camp meetings, especially in the North. This was due to the popular interest in summer vacations by the middle class and the Chautauqua movement, which began in the 1870s. During this time, many campgrounds became religious resorts that featured camp meeting services. There were nearly 150 of these in operation along the Atlantic coast by 1889.

It has been written that Ocean Grove reflected the “internal changes of the nineteenth century resulting from the industrial revolution and urbanization of America.”<sup>67</sup> Founded in 1869, as a Methodist campground on the New Jersey shore near Asbury Park, and still standing today, Ocean Grove is one of the best known of the religious vacation sites. Established as a utopian village safe from the demands of the city, the charter granted the Ocean Grove Camp Meeting Association municipal powers to govern “this place where the rules of everyday life no longer applied.” Until 1979, Ocean Grove was the longest-lived ecclesiarchy in American history.<sup>68</sup>

Like Wesleyan Grove at Martha’s Vineyard and Pacific Grove in California, the site for Ocean Grove was chosen for the beauty of the landscape. It was organized in 1869 under the auspices of the National Association for the Promotion of Holiness, which had been created in Vineland, New Jersey in 1867. The campers at Ocean Grove were “to assemble from year to year, and enjoy our summer rest in bathing, fishing, worshipping or sauntering socially along the shore.”<sup>69</sup> In the 1999 book *Holy Leisure: Recreation and Religion in God’s Square Mile*, author Troy Messenger said the atmosphere allowed the campers at Ocean Grove “to move seamlessly between play and devotion.” Ocean Grove was established to resemble the mature frontier camp

<sup>67</sup> Randall H. Balmer, “From Frontier Phenomenon to Victorian Institution: The Methodist Camp Meeting in Ocean Grove, New Jersey,” *Methodist History* 25, no.3 (1987): 200.

<sup>68</sup> Troy Messenger, *Holy Leisure: Recreation and Religion in God’s Square Mile*, (Minneapolis: the University of Minnesota, 1999; Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2000), 4-5.

<sup>69</sup> Balmer, 195.

meeting experience, with daily schedules almost identical to those in Gorham's 1850 manual and with architecture that was an elaboration of the frontier-style preacher's stand and tents.<sup>70</sup>

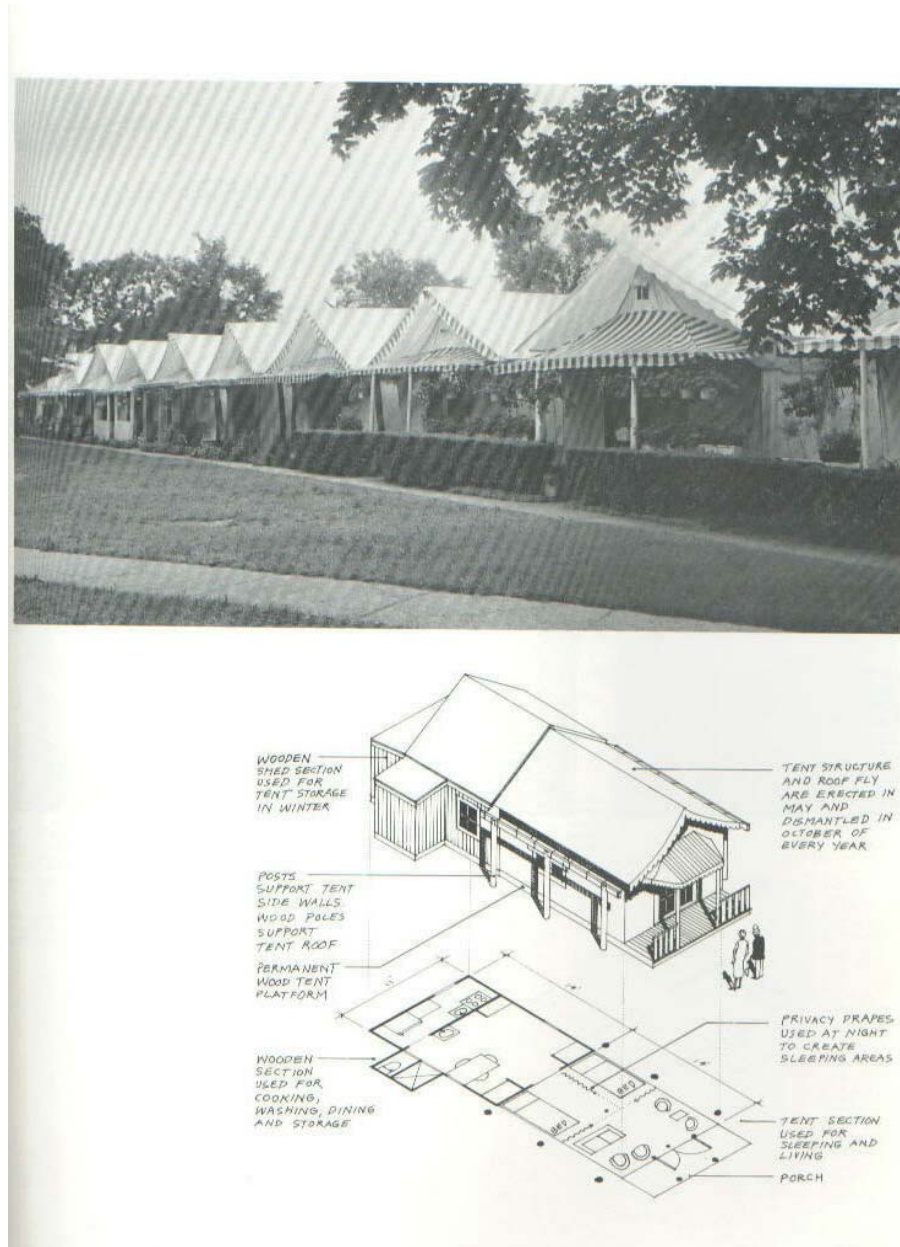


Figure 17. "Tents" Ocean Grove, New Jersey

<sup>70</sup> Messenger, 11

In 1894, the Great Auditorium of Ocean Grove was built after a succession of open-air structures. Constructed of wood, it used iron trusses and stopped short of full enclosure, and as such it was interpreted as "a continuity of the past." Resembling a permanent tent or hippodrome, the auditorium is the centerpiece of the site, a site that bespeaks the influence of frontier revivalism, however removed.<sup>71</sup>



Figure 18. Postcard from Camp Hilton, Atlantic Highlands, New Jersey.

Initially large society tents were popular, however, the first permanent cottage at Ocean Grove, called Pioneer Cottage, was built in 1870. Unlike Wesleyan Grove, which took years to evolve from tents to cottages, Ocean Grove changed almost immediately to a combination of tents and cottages. Within three years of its founding there were a total of 300 permanent

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<sup>71</sup> Balmer, 195-98.

structures. However, there is still a neighborhood of tent residents today.<sup>72</sup> The traditional “tent” at Ocean Grove (See Figure 17.) consists of a canvas-covered porch, a canvas-covered living-sleeping area, and a wooden section with kitchen, dining area and bath at the rear. Simply stated they are canvas tents attached to the front of wooden structures.<sup>73</sup>

### Holy Leisure

Although religion was the dominant factor, the camp meeting was more than a religious gathering: it was an important social event. It was a time of great emotional and psychological release for the early settlers who lived isolated, difficult lives. The gathering, with its singing, shouting, and meals shared as well as prayers created an uncommon bond and welcome break from the hardships of rural life. The trip from home and the camp meeting itself gave the settler an opportunity to indulge in his love of camping, which was considered a pleasurable pastime, especially for rural residents. They like to get away from home and looked forward to the journey. The lifestyle of the plain-folks denied time for travel and leisure except during the time of year when the crops were “laid by.” That time of year, once the crops had been cultivated plowed or weeded and just prior to the harvest, usually represented a time of reprieve for the farmer. Camp meeting was as recreational as it was spiritual, because it represented a break from the hardships of farming life.<sup>74</sup> As for the camp meeting resorts of the late nineteenth century, it was acknowledged that religious people could become “worn down with the toils of professional and business life”, too.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Messenger, 16, 48.

<sup>73</sup> Lester Walker, *Tiny Houses* (Woodstock, New York: The Overlook Press, 1987), 58.

<sup>74</sup> Lawrence, 4-5.

<sup>75</sup> Balmer, 194.

#### Phase Four: Modern Camp Meetings

The Twentieth century was a period of tremendous change, but the institution known as camp meeting endured. It continues today as an important religious and social phenomenon, especially in the South. In assessing the camp meeting's role in American history, author Kenneth Brown pointed out that this institution has been a model for over 200 years. In the twenty-first century, a number of old-timey camp meetings and their younger "relatives" such as church camps and summer assemblies thrive. (See Appendix 1.)

Hundreds of them continue to be used annually for the ritual that made such a tremendous impact on religion and culture. While the number of camp meeting sites listed on the National Register of Historic Places is increasing, these sites and the vernacular architecture they inspired have not been given the recognition they deserve by architectural historians or preservationists.

## CHAPTER 5: THE SIGNIFICANCE OF CAMP MEETINGS IN AMERICA

### Impact on Protestantism

No phenomena defined the nineteenth-century religious experience as much as the camp meeting...

Randall H. Balmer, *Methodist History*

Religion, especially revivalism, has been a significant aspect of America life. Along with cultivating a fervent Protestant population and religious activity, the camp meeting produced new public roles for women and propagated a wide variety of organizations dedicated to social and political reform.

The camp meeting influenced the establishment and popularity of the evangelical Methodist and Baptist churches in the country. The Second Awakening or Great Revival changed the character of American thought and social action in dramatic ways.

### Impact on Popular Culture

#### A Singin' Tradition

The spiritual songs that emerged from the camp meeting movement were distinguished from other forms of religious songs by the presence of a repeated, simple refrain (chorus) attached to the song or appearing alone. Like the entire camp meeting experience, its music addressed the sentiments of plain-folk. Due to illiteracy on the southern frontier, these repeated refrains made singing easier for more people. The worshippers did not have to use a songbook or





Figure 19. The second “Preacher’s tent (1939), built in memory of Rev. C.B. McKenzie, Mossy Creek Camp Ground, White County, Georgia.

depend on seeing clearly in the dimly lit evening services. The simplicity of these songs made them easier to remember them, therefore, a pioneer could commit a larger number of them to memory—to learn them “by heart.” Although disseminated primarily by oral tradition, there were numerous songbooks by the 1830s and 1840s. One songbook, *The Southern Harmony* (published in 1835) was so widely distributed that it sold 600,000 copies. These early compilers were plain-folk themselves, raised in the upland south. For example, “Singin’ Billy” Walker, the compiler of *The Southern Harmony*, was from Spartanburg, South Carolina, Ananias Davisson, who compiled the collection *Kentucky Harmony*, was actually from northwestern Virginia. B.F. White, a South Carolinian, compiled the important *Sacred Harp* songbook (still in print today), while living in Georgia. These tune-book makers lived and worked in small towns across the



south. Three towns in Georgia were home to songbook compilers between 1815 and 1855: Andersonville, Hamilton and Wadley.

The words of the songs were those of the converted, which made the songs themselves important. Their phrases articulated the frontier religious experience and formed a system of religious expression that was consistent in elaborating on both the experience of conversion and the camp meeting experience itself. These words that were so important that the writers wanted their message to be remembered outside the camp meeting context.

The songs expressed ideas such as world-rejection and that the singer's only hope was to seek that distant place they would enter as a stranger. An example is this chorus:

I'm a stranger,  
I'm a pilgrim,  
I can tarry but a night,<sup>76</sup>

Or the more positive symbol or image of heaven as "home" used in this famous chorus:

I am bound for that Promised Land,  
I'm bound for that Promised Land,  
O, who will come and go with me?  
I'm bound for the Promised Land.<sup>77</sup>

Many of these songs survive and are imbedded in the minds of people no matter if they ever attended a camp meeting. Camp meeting was a time when you sang about the "Amazing Grace" of that "Old Time Religion" and parted at the end of the week asking "God be With You 'Til Me Meet Again."

### Camp Meetings Find Their Way into Literature

Whether in fictitious settings or in nonfiction journals, camp meetings left an indelible impression on writers of the day and became part of the literary landscape of the country. Writer

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<sup>76</sup> Bruce, 99.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 103.



Figure 20. French Artist's Impression after visiting a camp meeting in the 1830s.

Washington Irving (1783-1859) shared his impression of a camp meeting with a Mrs. (Flora Foster) Dawson. She kept a journal and in it outlined Irving's alleged love for her niece, Emily Fuller, and details about his visits to see Emily, who was, during a particular passage, staying with her aunt. While visiting them in Dresden Germany, he told them of his life in New York. At that time, he was about age 40. He described a camp meeting in New York that he attended sometime between 1803 and 1815, though a date was not specified. This commentary is valuable because of his status as a renowned American writer who had a reputation for objectivity during a time when other writers were prone to sensationalize. In Mrs. Dawson's account, dated Feb. 13, 1823, Irving described the setting of the camp on the Hudson, and referenced blacks in attendance at the services. While Dawson was not clear in her account as to whether these were slaves or free

men of color, she noted that Irving was most impressed by the singing and ongoing services which many people attended, black and white.<sup>78</sup>

In his journal labeled III, containing comments on life, literature, and philosophy written between 1806 and 1809, architect Benjamin Henry Latrobe offered an account of “enthusiastic religion” he witnessed at a camp meeting outside of Washington, D.C. Confessing that he “always endeavored to prevent his wife from being led by her curiosity to attend the meeting” the two of them attended an event accompanied by Mr. Henry Foxall (an iron founder). Dated August 6, 1809, the entry tells of how the Latrobes approached the meeting on Leesburg Road in Virginia and saw “well-dressed Negroes and mulattos”, whose tents were to the rear of the stage. He and his wife learned they could not sit together, but rather were separated on the benches that faced an excited speaker. Latrobe noted that the audience gave voices to the characters in the preacher's sermon. For if one moaned, the whole crowd moaned in anguish for the character.<sup>79</sup>

Georgia humorist Bill Arp (Charles Henry Smith) wrote a colorful, folksy chapter entitled “Visit to a Camp Meeting” recollecting his visit to a camp meeting held in a brush arbor in *Bill Arp's Scrap-Book* published in 1879. Arp commented on the freedom and simplicity of the brush-arbor meeting that “just suits country folks.” He said these meetings (the revivals popular at the time which lasted for days without camping) “just fit the time and season” as opposed to “old camp meetings.” He especially liked these meetings because folks could go to them “on an equality” lamenting there was “no use in taking it all day and night too.” Using the language of the every-day man tinged with humor, he spoke of the honor of listening to the popular evangelist Rev. Sam Jones for an hour even though it “did not seem so long” and the feast on the grounds that followed. Ending the article Arp said:

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<sup>78</sup> Elmer F. Suderman, “Washington Irvin’s Comment on an Early Camp Meeting,” *Methodist History* (January 1968): 47-48.

<sup>79</sup> Hamlin, 319-23.

A good sermon is a good thing and so is good singing, but a poor, frail mortal can enjoy it more when he knows a good dinner is to follow. There is no virtue that I know of that thrives on an empty stomach.<sup>80</sup>

Rev. Samuel Porter Jones (born 1847) was unsuccessful as a lawyer in his early days, and by his own admission was a drunk. In the early 1870s, at his father's deathbed, he had a religious experience during which he promised to abstain from drinking and to preach the Gospel. He rode the circuit in North Georgia until his appointment in 1880 as a fund-raising agent for the Methodist Orphan Home in Decatur, Georgia, gave him freedom to travel, preach and raise money. His often-quoted saying, "quit your meanness", became a message of hope and salvation for thousands who heard him preach at camp meetings all over the state. A flamboyant evangelist, Jones was sometimes likened to being the P.T. Barnum of the evangelistic circuit. His favorite slogan, "I always did despise theology and botany, but I do love religion and flowers," often set him at odds with his peers, but spurred his popularity with the masses. He soon gained a reputation as an evangelist, an educator, and a promoter of industrialization throughout the South. As a strong proponent of the "New South", Jones wrote a weekly column in the *Atlanta Journal* that covered a variety of topics, but many were peppered with his urgings toward industrialization and spirituality.<sup>81</sup>

Probably one of the most well read descriptions of a camp meeting can be found in Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. Written in 1876, this story of a young boy's adventures drifting along 1,000 miles of the Mississippi River with a runaway slave (Jim) point to the political and social events of the day. In the tale, Huck, and his companion/friend Jim come upon two shysters, Duke and King, who knew every trick in the book for conning good folks out

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<sup>80</sup> Charles Henry Smith, *Bill Arp's Scrap-Book: Humor and Philosophy* (Atlanta: J.P. Harrison, 1884), 232-35.

<sup>81</sup> David B. Parker, "Quit Your Meanness": Sam Jones's Theology for the New South" *Georgia Historical Quarterly*, Vol. LXXVII, no. 4 (Winter 1993): 711-16.

of their money. While the foursome was planning to put on a "show" in a small town, they discovered that nobody was in town.

When we got there ... and he said that everybody that weren't too young or too sick was gone to camp-meeting, about two mile back in the woods. Then King got directions and allowed he'd go and work that camp-meeting for all it was worth, and I might go too. We got there in about a half an hour... there was as much as a thousand people there, from twenty mile around.

Huck continues to describe the scene, including "sheds made of poles and roofed over with branches," "preaching going on under the same kinds of sheds, only they was bigger and held crowds of people" on benches, and the preacher was high on a platform. In the tale, the "Polkville camp-meeting" took up a collection for the King [sic] who confessed to being a reformed pirate now penniless and down on his luck, but desperate to go back to the Indian Ocean to convert other pirates. His take was \$87.75 plus a three-gallon jug of whiskey.<sup>82</sup>

Occasionally a magazine such as *Smithsonian* (August 1996) will feature a story about camp meetings, but more often a newspaper article written in July or August will exclaim that it is "that time" of year again. For example, the popular columnist Celestine Sibley often wrote about an upcoming event in her folksy manner for *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, and staff writer Charles Seabrook included camp meetings as part of his 1996 series "Disappearing Georgia" for *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*. Most often these articles cover three things that never seem to change at the annual gathering: the hospitality that abounds; the good food that is on every table; and the sentiment that a stranger is always welcome. Another topic that seems to find its way into many descriptions is that of courting. In a 1959 article for the Atlanta paper Laura McGregor related the story of a Georgia girl's secret comments in her diary about a circa 1846 Houston County camp meeting saying it had been "most enjoyable." She notes that she had

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<sup>82</sup> Mark Twain, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, Children's Classics, a division of Dilithium Press, Ltd. (NJ: Random House, 1992) 109-113.

met “beaux in abundance, which always gratifies the vanity of girls.”<sup>83</sup> Even Pulitzer Prize winning author of *Gone With the Wind* Peggy Mitchell AKA Margaret Mitchell wrote an article for *The Atlanta Journal* magazine in August 1924 titled “Camp Meetin” about the socializing going on at a certain Atlanta area camp ground.<sup>84</sup>

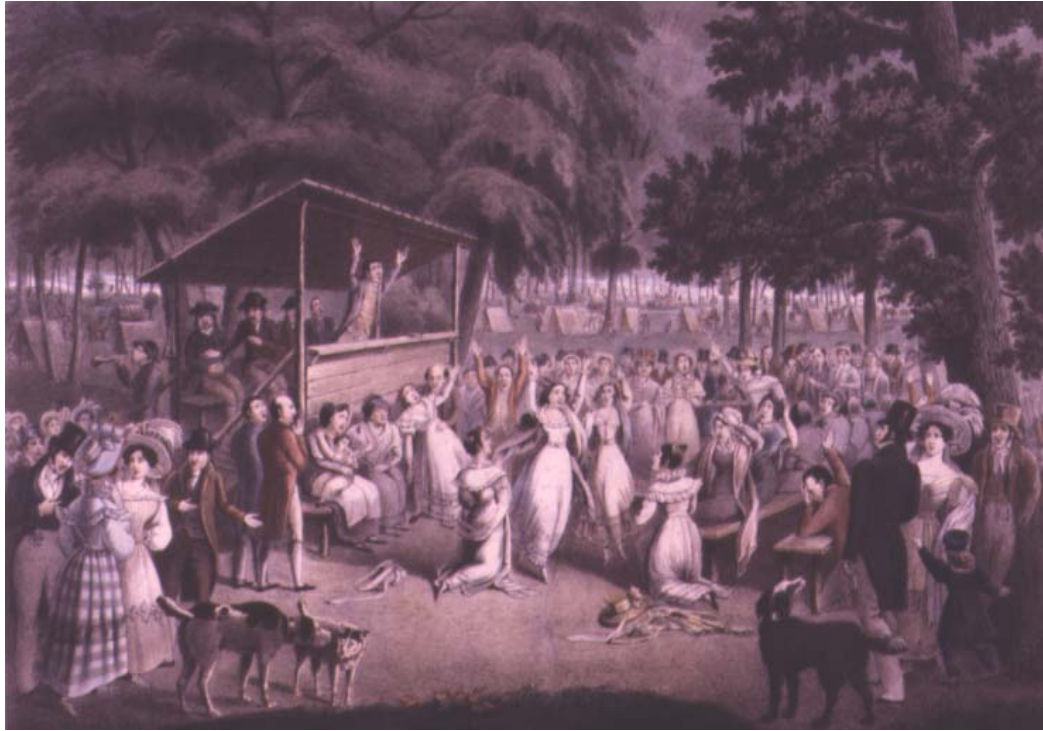


Figure 21. “Camp Meeting,” lithograph, no date.

### Camp Meetings and Women and Blacks

A woman’s place was in the home. This was the mantra of the 1800s and before and any woman wanting more than to give birth to and take care of children, more than tending to the home and keeping her husband happy, was a troublemaker. Women's rights activist Fanny Wright

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<sup>83</sup> Laura McGregor, “It’s Camp Meetin’ Time,” *Atlanta-Journal Constitution*, August 1959, no pagination.

<sup>84</sup> Margaret “Peggy” Mitchell, “Camp Meetin,” *Atlanta Journal Magazine*, 24 August 1924, p. 9.

was maligned in the press, and the general consensus was that any woman stepping outside of preset boundaries was, like Fanny, deserving of "every lash" from a whip for carrying such high-minded notions in her head.

With this prevailing attitude, it is amazing that women dared to speak out at camp meetings. However, their attendance at camp meetings and their involvement in its related activities helped change the course of the institution and that of political rallies (which camp meetings often became).

Some stereotypes remained in force at camp meetings. For instance, like most churches, camp meetings segregated men and women, at least until there was an emotional outpouring at the mourning bench or when emotional frenzy had everyone up and about the camp site. Many women rebelled from the cooking and cleaning the meetings required of them, for they missed out on the sermons. Such was the same at political rallies, but efforts were made to do as many chores as necessary before hand, so as not to miss the events of a rally.<sup>85</sup>

On the whole, camp meetings were wonderfully freeing to women interested in ministry, as well. During the 1800s, when women interested in preaching were looked upon as "lost to their place", camp meetings generally gave them a forum from which to speak openly about their religious convictions and to do the work of God.

Black women, slaves and free, attended camp meetings with increasing numbers. For slaves, it often was a rare time when they could be away from laboring on the plantation. For slaves and free women alike, camp meetings were a time to socialize, hear more about the redemptive nature of God, and to behave in unrestricted manners (card playing for the men, flirting for the women) between sermons. Those slaves interested in retaining some of their African culture and religious customs were intrigued by the similarities between the trials

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<sup>85</sup> Joe L Kincheloe, Jr., "Transcending Role Restrictions: Women at Camp Meetings and Political Rallies," *Tennessee Historical Quarterly* 40, no. 2 (1981): 158-169.

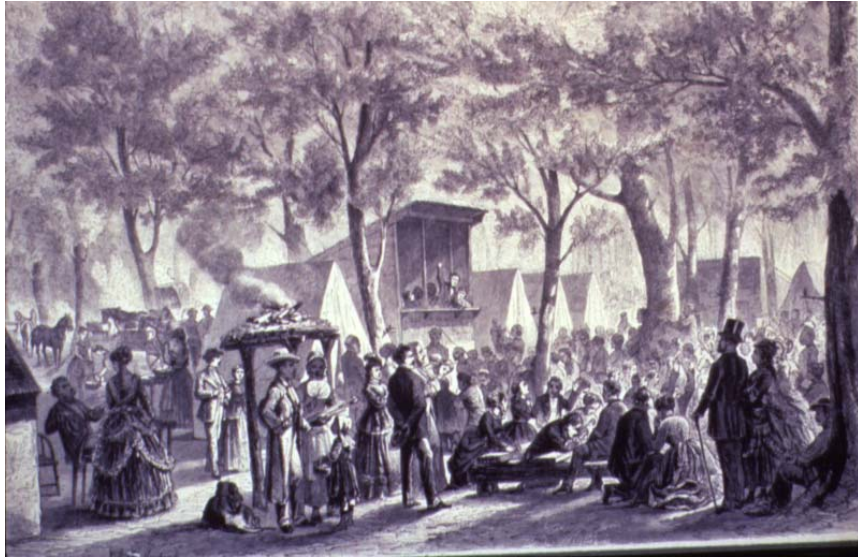


Figure 22. "Ein Methodisten-Campmeeting." "Church Hill, Queen Anne's County, Maryland."

and tribulations of Jesus and his followers and the pain and punishment they as slaves endured at the hands of their masters.<sup>86</sup>

One camp meeting female minister, Rebecca Chaney Miller, began her fourteen-year career preaching which lasted through her marriage, the birth of three children, and extensive travels to and from various camp meetings during the early half of the nineteenth century. She was accepted by her peers and the Christian Connection ministers who were quick to see that she was truly called by God, and her charismatic way led many to the altar. They honored those called to labor for God over theological education, and in the case of women preachers or "Sisters in Christ" or "Mothers of Israel" this was a positive attitude, given the attitude towards women in most of the churches at that time.

This attitude was diametrically opposed to the oppression suffered by females interested in preaching in more traditional church settings during the 1830s and 1840s. During this time, women were banned from preaching and thus subjected to great injustices at the hands of the very

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<sup>86</sup> Sally G. McMillen, *Southern Women: Black and White in the Old South*, American History Series (Arlington Heights, IL: Harlen Davidson, Inc., 1992), 78-95.



institution that fostered their beginnings. Female evangelist Sally Thompson, who was called to preach in the early 1820s, is one of many female preachers who endured similar treatment. In the beginning, Thompson was respected for being called to labor only to be shunned and in fact excommunicated from the Methodist Church because she was a woman who was presenting the Word of God in an evangelistic way that was deemed by some as unbecoming behavior to a woman. She was "lost to modesty and prudence", according to the all-male "jury" who denounced her.

Black female preachers faced even more struggles than their white counterparts, challenging the religious hierarchy on two fronts: sex and race. Mainline clergy were the most outspoken against women perhaps for several reasons:

1. Their interpretation of the Bible was that it was the literal word of God, and thus, women should remain silent;
2. Female preacher Nancy Towle insisted they were jealous, because their sex made them charismatic at camp meetings and their popularity among the masses was greater than male counterparts;
3. There was a belief that female preachers were less than feminine at a time when femininity was highly prized.

Perhaps, in one female minister's opinion, male preachers were outspoken because they felt threatened. Meanwhile, it was the female preachers who were being tossed out of meeting houses, threatened with violence while preaching, and subjected to jeers and catcalls.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> Catherine A. Brekus, *Female Preaching in America: Strangers & Pilgrims, 1740-1845* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 5, 10, 140-42.

### Powerful Politics

There has always been a unique relationship between religious and political institutions in America, but the advent of the camp meeting brought about a “merger of religious and political methodologies” that exists today. Tennessee Jacksonians used the crowd control techniques used in at camp meetings on a limited basis in 1828; however, they surfaced completely during the campaign of 1840. Some forty years after the Second Awakening or Great Revival the Whig Party attempted to employ these successful techniques Americans had come to associate from the camp meeting experience. In an effort to find an egalitarian base the political rally was a natural outgrowth of the camp meeting service. The combined effects of the processions, the symbolism, the evangelical rhetoric of the speeches, and the use of music elicited powerful responses from the crowds at political rallies. After all, many of the political leaders of the day had been reared in the ways of the camp meeting. Both preachers and politicians knew the importance of the emotion generated by large crowds. Another method politicians discovered from camp meeting promoters were that it pays to advertise. Those attending camp meeting services and political rallies came “linked together” more by emotion than by reason. And, they heard words and expressions like “the good book,” “the love of god,” “the flag,” and “patriotism,” intended to unite them. By merging the emotional appeal of evangelical Protestantism with politics—using the tried and true camp meeting formula of crowd control—the political missionary achieved much the same results from his congregation.<sup>88</sup>

### Family Values

In the book *Methodist and the Making of America: Organizing to Beat The Devil*, author Charles Ferguson referred to camp meetings as “the frolic of faith.” This is true for the

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<sup>88</sup> Joe L. Kincheloe, Jr., “Similarities in Crowd Control Techniques of the Camp Meeting and Political Rally: The Pioneer Role of Tennessee,” *Tennessee Historical Quarterly* 37, no. 2 (1978): 155-69.

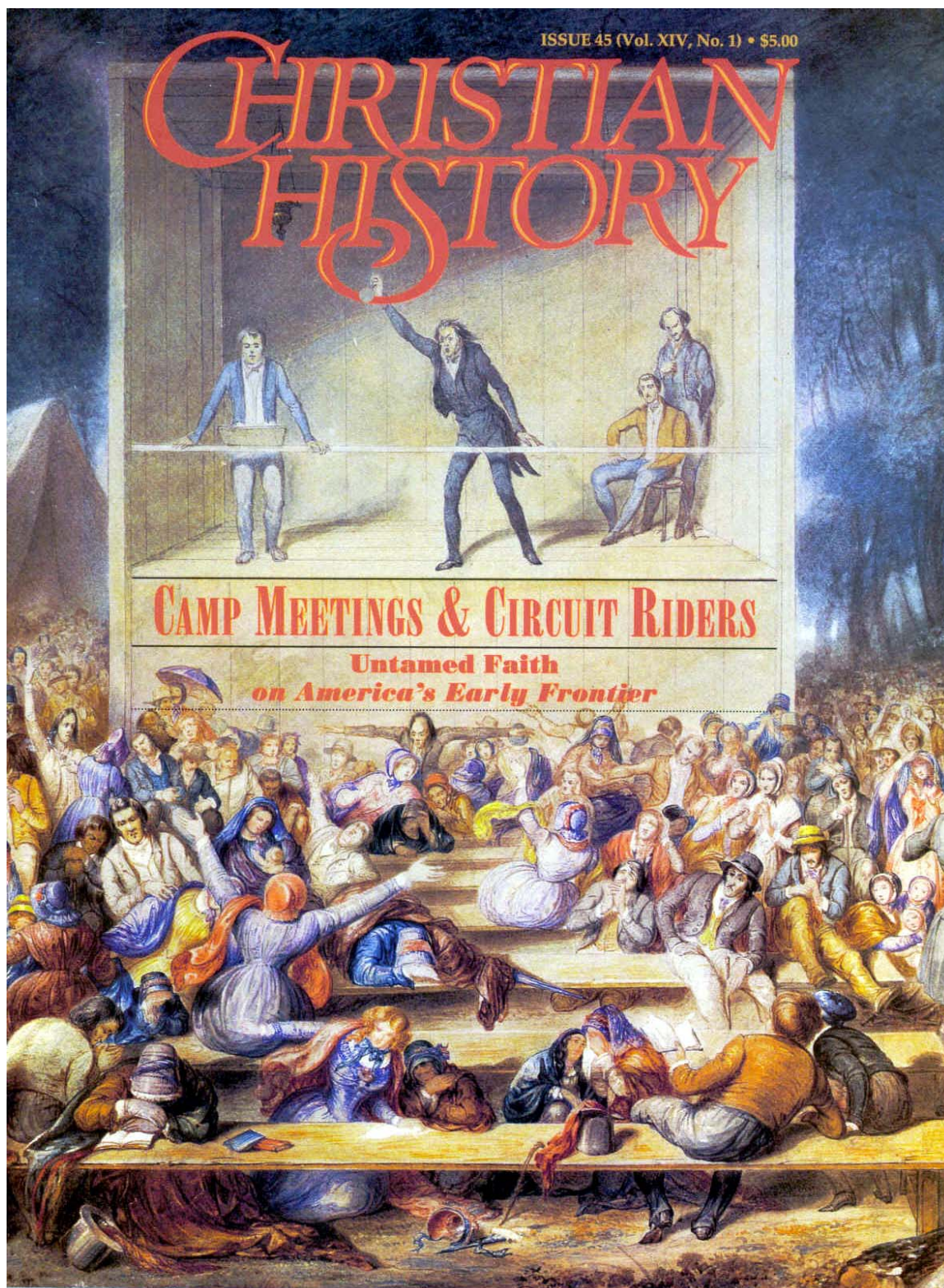


Figure 23. "Religious Camp Meeting" by J. Maze Burbank c. 1839 watercolor.

thousands who attend camp meetings annually. Ferguson said that camp meetings provided the stimulus for folks to come together for the joy of coming together. He added that camp meetings were special places that transformed pleasure into virtue.<sup>89</sup> Charles Johnson called the camp meeting a vital “socioreligious institution.” Johnson’s frontier theory contended that camp meetings provided lonely pioneers and hard-working farm families a chance to socialize and rest—filling a need that they could find nowhere else.<sup>90</sup> Today a week at camp meeting supplies campers with enough family time, good food and fellowship to keep devotees coming back year after year. Of course, camp meetings are religious; they are soul-saving revivals that extend for days. At the same time they are family reunions at special places where folks swap tales, catch up with relatives, and explore their common histories. Attendees hear inspiring sermons and have a chance to slow down and get grounded again. Sitting under the “Arbor” savoring those last days of summer—usually aided by a pasteboard fan advertising the local funeral parlor, one experiences a sense of place and belonging. Being part of the camp meeting family is something akin to belonging to an exclusive club. Although the accommodations are crude, there is usually another family waiting to take a tent left vacant for a year or two or one that does not pass on to the next generation of a family. Lastly, there is music at camp meetings. No matter if it is the music performed by talented professionals or the hymns sung by the congregation, music is an integral part of every service at every camp meeting. It is a time to harmonize to old favorites, singing as loudly as possible sitting by that cousin or sister one rarely sees in these busy times. Camp meetings are a tradition, providing a chance to hold on to a shared past.

### The Camp Meeting Family

Chautauquas are "the most American thing about America."

Theodore Roosevelt

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<sup>89</sup> Ferguson, 120.

<sup>90</sup> Johnson, 5, 8-12.

Often referred to as "The Sunday School Camp Meeting," the original Chautauqua came into being in 1873 at the hands of Lewis Miller, an Ohio Methodist layman, and his friend the Reverend John H. Vincent. It was created as the first "Sunday-School Teachers Assembly, and was held at the Fair Point (New York) Camp Ground in August, 1874. While some felt it a perversion of a camp meeting, Miller and Vincent saw and promoted it as a religious educational institute, and it soon became an "institution" of its own, free of denominational barriers. While the original site held but a few rustic structures on approximately 50 acres, Chautauqua now has modern structures situated on over 700 acres. Starting with summer sessions of public lectures, concerts, and the now famous Chautauqua Literary and Scientific Circle (CLSC), the program now enrolls participants worldwide up to one million.

In what might be considered the first self-help seminars, the original event spun off clones so quickly that by 1919, there were approximately 10,000 circuit or "chain" chautauquas, and by the movement's peak in 1921, there were nearly 100 chautauquas serving 9,597 communities. Author Theodore Morrison referred to this incredible offering as a "social phenomenon" of American culture.<sup>91</sup>

Chautauquas became cultural happenings with entertainment, revival and self-education all rolled into one event. They were what some writers referred to as a middle landscape, a buffer between wilderness and overly sanitized civilization found in burgeoning cities. Their appeal was broad between the Civil War and World War II, because their cultural displays in a natural setting were reinforced by what was happening in spatial design elsewhere: suburbs, college campuses, parks, and world fairs. By their very nature, they emphasized space, geography and gentility. Chautauquas grew in popularity, and spin-offs included vacation spot camp-grounds, youth camps and by the 1870s, summer chautauquas held at the same site every year or consisting of traveling shows that used multiple sites along their routes. Their popularity increased as traveling became easier with thousands of people flocking to the sites by way of steamboat, dedicated

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<sup>91</sup> Brown, *Holy Ground, Too*, 58-59.



trolleys and personal cars.<sup>92</sup> Today, there are approximately a dozen active assemblies throughout the United States, including the original site located at Chautauqua, New York.<sup>93</sup>

### More Descendants of Camp Meetings

Historian, author and camp meeting authority Dr. Kenneth O. Brown assessed the importance of the institution saying:

The camp meeting has been like the giant Atlas, among the institutions developed by American Christianity. It has served as a school for revivalism, church planting, missions, Christian education, national reform and Christian political action. Moreover, it has been a model for the Christian resort, the Chautauqua, the family camping movement, the ‘tabernacle’ mode of revivalism, Christian conference centers and even community planning and development. No other single institution of the church has carried such a burden, and carried it so well.<sup>94</sup>

Camp meetings have had a tremendous impact on a variety of gatherings, religious and secular, over the last century. From vacation camp meetings that rivaled secular resorts to Christian music festivals, camp meetings have left their mark on many organizations and activities. (See Appendix 1 for a complete listing and description of the many descendants of the camp meeting movement existing today.)

### Impact on Architecture and Planning Techniques

In existence for over 200 years, it is fitting that we take a closer look at the architecture that this important movement produced. The camp meeting is alive in Georgia and the vernacular architecture it inspired is an important part of our cultural landscape and history. However, little has been written about Georgia’s camp meeting architecture. The author has seen no coffee-table

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<sup>92</sup> Thomas J. Schlereth, “Chautauqua: A Middle Landscape of the Middle Class,” *Old Northwest* 12, no. 3 (1986): 265.

<sup>93</sup> Brown, *Holy Ground, Too*, 60.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.

books like Catherine Bishir's impressive book entitled *North Carolina Architecture* with its section devoted to camp meeting architecture and its glossy black and white photography.<sup>95</sup> Ellen Weiss may be the only author who has written a book that probes into the story and architectural design of the encampment as she did in her book *City in the Woods* about the site at Martha's Vineyard, Massachusetts. Lester Walker features three sites—Wesleyan Grove at Martha's Vineyard, Ocean Grove in New Jersey, and the "Pink House" in Pacific Grove, California, a former camp meeting site, in his book *Tiny Houses* published in 1987. Lastly, Michael Miller examines "a unique town form" in his thesis "The American Camp Ground Community: An Urban Nucleus as Basis for Community Planning." Miller cites eight Georgia campgrounds in his work.<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> Catherine W. Bishir, photography by Tim Buchman, *North Carolina Architecture* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 177-80.

<sup>96</sup> Michael Miller, "The American Camp Ground Community: An Urban Nucleus as Basis for Community Planning" (Thesis, Mississippi State University, 1996), 41-97.

## CHAPTER 6: GEORGIA'S HISTORIC CAMP MEETING GROUNDS

### General History

I seem to labor in vain. God help me. I am dull & languid myself, & I verily believe, the people & I am mutually affected & influenced by each other in that respect.

Moses Waddel, 1795, Georgia Presbyterian

After the Revolutionary War, there was the feeling of crisis about the state of religion throughout the nation. In 1794 a Presbyterian minister in Georgia wrote, he was “greatly distressed in mind, from a view of the present apparent languishing state of religion in this country. Coldness and formality prevails [sic]. In a letter written for the Georgia Baptist Association in 1795, Silas Mercer attempted to explain God’s purpose for the languishing state of religion, its coldness and its indifference.

But why are these things so? To which we answer. The great Governor of the Universe does not always work by miracles, neither offers violence to the human will. It cannot be thought, but that he could have made his people perfect in soul, body and spirit, at the same time when he converted their souls. But it appears to us, that Jehovah, in his wise providence, saw proper to continue them in connection with an old corrupt nature, in order to properly discipline them, that by the various combats between flesh and spirit they may be weaned from sensual delight, and learn to trust their all in him. But again: in a lively time of religion, hypocrites and formalists are apt to creep into the Church, therefore, a time of trial is necessary to purge these, as dross from the pure gold or real Christians. And, further: the Lord intends, it may be, by this way to prove that salvation is by grace alone; for in a time of declension no man or set of men, no, not all the people in the world, can make a stir of religion. So this proves that religion is of the Lord.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> John Boles, *The Great Revival*, 29.



Despite the effort of its itinerants, Methodism did not flourish in Georgia until the turn of the century when the awakening began to occur in the state. While speaking at a conference of Georgia preachers in 1791 Bishop Francis Asbury characterized: “the work, in general, very dead.” It appeared that the influx of new settlers in Georgia was only interested in “new lands, good trade, buying slaves.” Perhaps this is what prompted Asbury to omit the state in his travels for several years during the late 1790s. However, when he visited the state in 1799 he discovered an area more receptive to the church. Writing in his Journal Asbury commented: “Little did I think I should ever visit Georgia again much less the frontiers of it.”



Figure 24. PACESETTER. Methodist Francis Asbury (1745-1816) became one of the best-known circuit riders in America.

There were numerous protracted quarterly meetings in Georgia at the turn of the eighteenth century similar to what became known as camp meeting. The two primary leaders in the revival movement from 1800 through 1803 were Hope Hull, who has been called the father of Georgia Methodism, and Stith Mead, the Methodist preacher in the Augusta Circuit. While attending the quarterly conference at Coke's Chapel near Washington, Georgia, in November 1800 the men were inspired by Bishop Asbury's account of "the work of God" he witnessed a month earlier traveling in the Cumberland region in Tennessee. Asbury told of this unmistakable revival power flaming up and spreading rapidly at the edge of the migration into the west and south and urged the preachers to expect its coming. At the conference a year later, Asbury appointed Mead presiding elder of the Georgia District (the land within the state) of the South Carolina Conference. Offering words of encouragement and challenge, Asbury corresponded with the new presiding elder, saying: "God hath given us hundreds in 1800, why not thousands in 1801, yea, why not a million if we has faith"?

True to Asbury's predictions, the revival flowed quickly into the state. By Mead's first quarterly conference, held in mid-July 1801, manifestations of the long promised Spirit were evident. The awakenings increased with rapidity during the next few months. When Asbury returned to Georgia in late October, Mead, Hull and others accompanied him as he traveled through eleven counties. Attendance was great—over a thousand people attended the quarterly conference at Pope's Chapel. The excitement of the crowd was so great that they began to shout and sing as Asbury preached. Even though Asbury left the state predicting "something great," Georgia was yet to experience a "real" camp meeting.<sup>98</sup>

Although Effingham Camp Ground in Springfield, Georgia claims to have held camp meetings as early as 1799, most scholars, including Boles, believe that they did not occur in the state until late 1802. There were documented awakenings and revivals conducted in central

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<sup>98</sup> James W. May, "How the Great Revival Came To Georgia," *Historical Highlights* 4, no. 2 (December 1974): 6-11.

Georgia under the leadership of Reverend Stith Mead, presiding elder of the Georgia District Methodists and revival activity occurred in Elbert County in 1801. After a period of despair about the apathy that surrounded religious activities, news of the August 1801 Cane Ridge camp meeting reached Georgia. From that point forward, revival fever heated up across the entire state—except in the Savannah area. Later that same year and well into 1803, numerous camp meetings were held throughout Georgia as interest and enthusiasm built among members of the clergy and citizens who would attend the events.<sup>99</sup>

In the book, *A History of Methodism in Georgia*, author Alfred M. Pierce states that the camp meeting did not reach Georgia until around 1801 or 1802 and that they were first held in Oglethorpe or Wilkes County. Once established, they spread quickly in the state, and he claimed that there were approximately 400 camp meetings being held annually by 1812 and by 1816 there were another 200 in existence.<sup>100</sup>

While accounts vary (slightly) as to the date and place of the first camp meeting held in the state, the author has attempted to combine the information of three works. Methodist historian Alfred Pierce wrote that Georgia's first camp meetings were held about 1801 or 1802 in either Wilkes or Oglethorpe County. Stith Mead is reported to have attended his first camp meeting from Friday, October 8 and extending until Tuesday, October 12, 1802 at Rehoboth Chapel in Warren County. This was an interdenominational gathering with 26 preachers—18 Methodist, five Baptist, and three Presbyterian—attending to the spiritual needs of the 7,000 in attendance. Much like Cane Ridge, the gathering required a large plot of land to be cleared for the crowd and two preaching stands to be constructed for the preachers. Although some historians may label this as a sacramental service, due to the fact that 600 received communion on Sunday with Hope Hull presiding, there was an “oblong” area cleared around the meeting house for the campers. Two days later on October 14 Mead attended a camp meeting sponsored by

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<sup>99</sup> Boles, *The Great Revival*, 81-83.

<sup>100</sup> Pierce, 81.

Presbyterians, and on October 23 he was involved in another interdenominational meeting. The one held in the Apalachee Circuit was apparently strictly Methodist, but the other two were joint meetings held with Presbyterians. One of the joint meetings took place in November at an encampment near Lexington that was a mile in circumference. With estimates of 8,000 to 10,000 in attendance, there were 25 ministers, including one Episcopalian.

Mead preached at other encampments during the winter and spring of 1803. Eager crowds estimated at 3,000 to 5,000 gathered to hear the word of the Lord in Columbia County; also a crowd of 3,000 is purported to have come to a camp meeting in February 1803 in Hancock County despite the cold weather. From 1802 to 1804 Georgia camp meetings thrived, setting the stage for a revival element that became “an institutionalized feature” of religion in the state, especially for the Methodists.<sup>101</sup>

The Hancock County meeting was the first “recorded” camp meeting held in Georgia. It was held in 1803 at Shoulderbone Creek and recorded by Lorenzo Dow in his journal, *History of Cosmopolite*. Reverend Dow described the scene saying:

A camp meeting, the first I ever attended was held on Shoulderbone Creek, where I arrived on the third day of its sitting, about the dawn of it. I spoke several times, and the Lord was with us; ten came forward and testified that they found the pardoning love of God, among whom Judge Stith, who had been a noted deist.<sup>102</sup>

For the next several years, the movement continued to grow until each county had one or more campgrounds, and some individual charges had more than two. Finally, around 1838, the Georgia Conference advised against the establishment of further encampments within the state.<sup>103</sup>

Jesse Lee, the historian of the Methodist Episcopal Church and a camp meeting veteran, said:

In 1806 I attended a camp meeting in Hancock, at what was called the ‘Piney-woods house’ seven miles from Sparta. There was the largest encampment I ever

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<sup>101</sup> See John Boles, *The Great Revival*, 81-83; May, 10; and Pierce, 80-81.

<sup>102</sup> Lawrence, 3.

<sup>103</sup> Pierce, 80.

saw (176 tents) and the congregation on Sabbath was estimated at 10,000....Preaching was had at two stands regularly; great power attended the word and there was a wonderful outpouring of the Spirit and scores of souls were converted. I recollect one evening in particular, while the sweet songs were sounding from hundreds of voices, while converts were shouting all around, it seemed almost as if heaven *were coming down to earth*. All creation seemed to brighten, and even the tops of the tall pines to wave 'glory to God!' To one at least it appeared so.”<sup>104</sup>

This service yielded over 100 conversions as it continued though the remainder of the day and night. Worshippers in Georgia were to experience this very emotional type of camp meeting for many years.<sup>105</sup>

In the book, *The Great Revival: Beginnings of the Bible Belt*, author John Boles attempts to explain the origin of the movement that swept across the South in terms other than what he termed “the narrow frontier thesis.” Boles stated that the frontier thesis was justified in terms of geography and emotion, but that it never explained the how and why of the origin of the camp meeting movement. He contends that the most popular theory of origin does not explain why camp meetings spread so rapidly throughout the entire South—not just in the newly settled areas or under dire frontier conditions.

Boles asserts that most of the leaders of the movement, such as James McGready and the McGee brothers, were too new to the frontier to have been strongly influenced by these harsh conditions. The term itself—frontier—is too vague and geographically imprecise to have created this dramatic revivalist movement. Boles' work attempted to look closer at the “antecedents” of the movement. Instead of focusing on the West, he focused on the South. He studied the literature leading up to the Great Revival according to the views of evangelists whose training and techniques were developed in the East. He particularly looked at the camp meeting as it slowly evolved from a spontaneous overnight meeting to a planned revival technique: from spirit to structure. His book is a study of the religious sphere of the southern mind during the period

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<sup>104</sup> Ibid., 84.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid

1800 to 1805. Boles refers to the Great Revival as the watershed in the religious history of the South and examines how it created the Bible Belt still evident today. He concurs with the old theory that the news of the Kentucky Revival, especially what transpired at Cane Ridge, was a catalyst that inspired an outburst of activity, but he asserts that it was a revival spirit that had been simmering for years before 1801.<sup>106</sup>

Kenneth Brown is among a growing group of scholars who have also been looking more closely at the antecedents of the Kentucky and Tennessee revivals. In his book, *Holy Ground, Too*, Brown points to eleven campground sites in Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia that claim to predate the long established date of 1801. He also argues that the leaders of those famed events in Kentucky and Tennessee were Methodists from the Deep South and that the camp meeting began in the Carolinas or Georgia. While Brown's theory may not be widely embraced, his thesis about Georgia's role is thought-provoking for three reasons. Firstly, there are an impressive number of early, extant sites dotting Georgia's countryside today. Secondly, Georgia was the last of the original colonies to be established; meaning it was less developed or populated than the other states after the Revolutionary War. Thirdly, Georgia took approximately 100 years from its founding date in 1733 until the last lottery held in 1832 to be peopled by whites. A vast portion of what became the total landmass of the state was still wilderness at the time of the millenium. Therefore, after the war and during the Great Revival (1780-1820) when camp meetings developed, Georgia was still an unsettled frontier, even though most scholars have not deemed it as such. He also asked the question why so many extant sites have survived in the state.<sup>107</sup>

Kenneth Brown and John Boles have taken the study of the revivalistic movement to a greater depth than most historians have to date. While they both have looked to the antecedents of the Great Revival and to the south, they have taken different paths in their research. While

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<sup>106</sup> Boles, *Great Revival*, xiii-xiv, 53-64, 183.

<sup>107</sup> Brown, *Holy Ground, Too*, 28-48.

Boles has looked at the theology and sociology of the revival on the Southern mind, Brown has looked at the facts and figures of accumulated data attempting to pinpoint the origin of the camp meeting. After reading the material collected for this thesis the author believes they are both “right.” The Second Awakening and the camp meeting movement did not begin in Kentucky or Tennessee; it began in the south, probably in the Carolinas or Georgia. In fact, it *was* the South’s “Great Awakening” and as such it helped created the religious sphere of the southern mind. The Great Awakening (as Boles calls it) or Great Revival (as Brown calls it) firmly planted revivalism and the camp meeting in the southern mind, thus creating the “Bible Belt” which exists today. This is probably *why* we have so many active camp meeting sites in the south today. The author believes that the camp meeting movement was started on the “frontier,” however, she concludes the word has been used in too narrow a context. Like cultural geographer Wilbur Zelinsky the author believes the rural south was still very unsettled and frontier-like following the Revolutionary War.



Figure 25. Loudsville Campground, Nacoochee Valley Charge

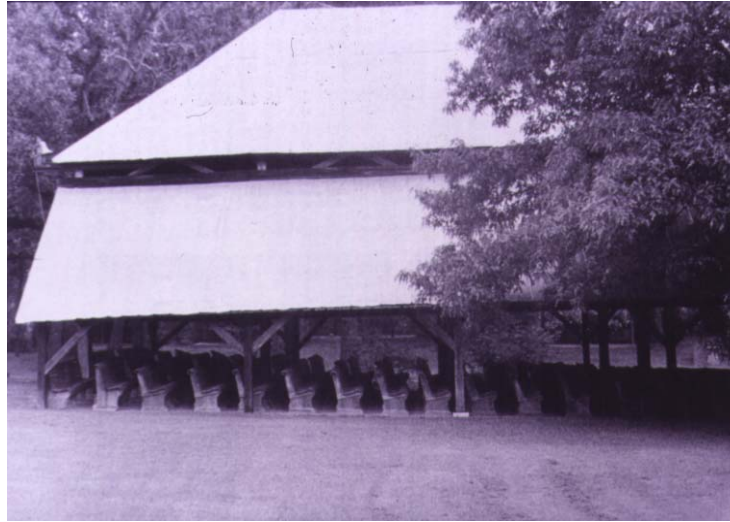


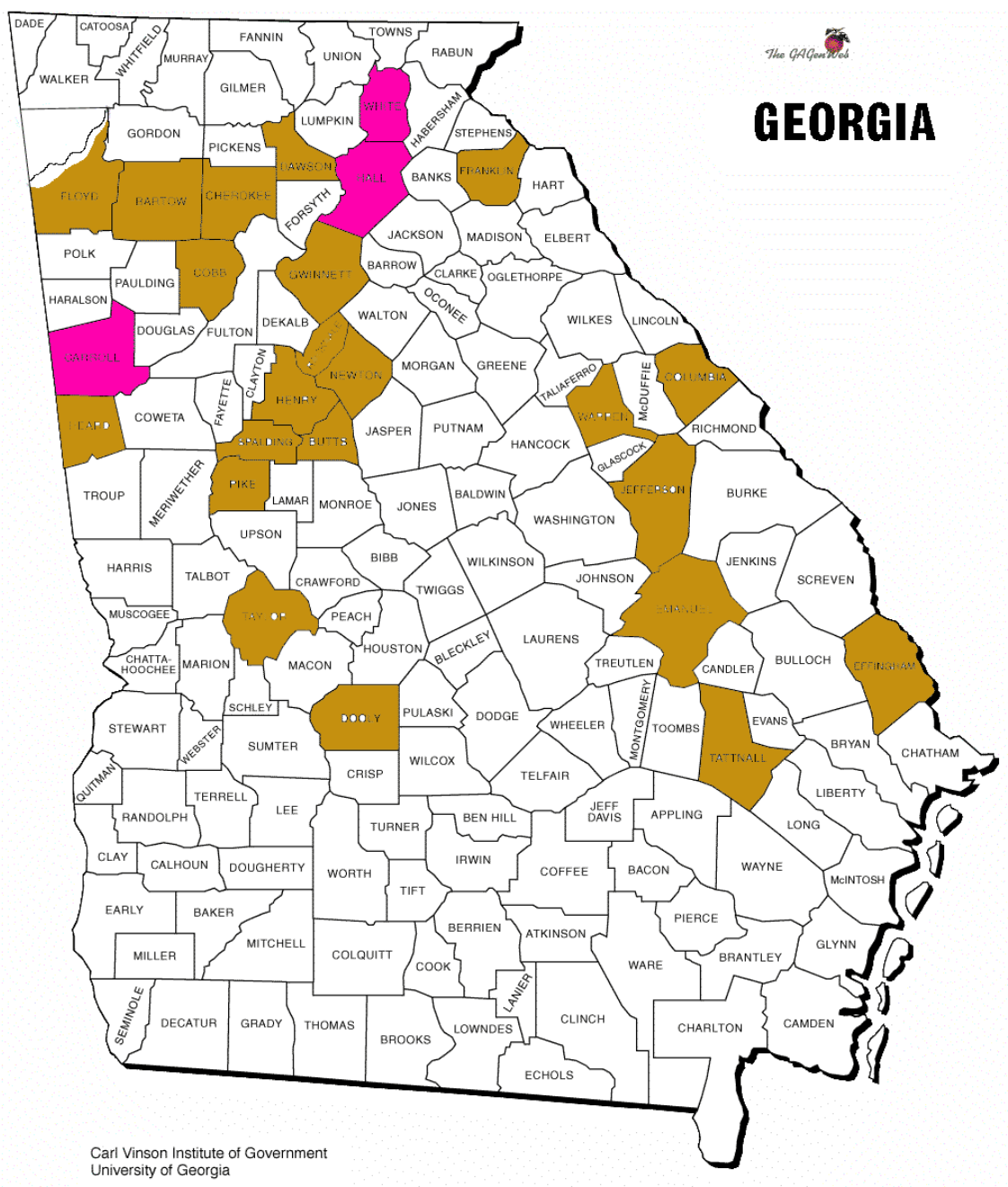
Figure 26. “Original” 1838 Arbor, Marietta Camp Ground, Marietta, Cobb County, Georgia.

#### Extant Sites: General Description

Georgia proved to be fertile territory for the camp meeting movement; even now there are approximately thirty-five extant historic sites located in twenty-seven counties. The greatest concentration is in White County, which has four sites and there are two sites each in Carroll and Hall counties. By regional development areas: nine are located in the Georgia Mountains Region; six are in the Atlanta Region; four each in the Central Savannah River Area, Chattahoochee-Flint Region, and MacIntosh Trail Region; there are two sites each in the Coosa Valley Region, Middle Flint Region and the Northeast Georgia Region; and one each in the Coastal Georgia Region and the Heart of Alabama Region.

The founding dates of these 35 sites range from circa 1820 to 1945, with 16 being established prior to the Civil War. There are eight sites with conflicting founding dates, some of these conflicts due to a change of location. The most widely disputed founding date is that of Effingham County Camp Ground in Springfield. Effingham County Camp Meeting is believed to





be oldest camp meeting in the state, dating from 1790. The Pine Mountain Campground, founded in 1945, is the youngest according to the author's research. It should be noted that while the author surveyed more than 35 sites, only those listed below qualified as "traditional" camp meeting grounds—exhibiting typical vernacular architecture arranged in a square and/or rectangular shape with a centrally located arbor. (See Appendix 2 for the survey form created and used by the author.) These sites appear in alphabetical order with county and founding date:

Table 1: Sites Surveyed

<b>Name</b>	<b>County</b>	<b>Founded</b>
Antioch Camp Ground	Hall County	1837
Bethel Camp Ground	Carroll County	1868
Dooly Camp Ground	Dooly County	1874
Effingham Camp Ground	Effingham County	1907*
Flat Rock Camp Ground	Heard County	1876
Fountain Camp Ground	Warren County	1820s*
Holbrook Camp Ground	Cherokee County	1838
Indian Springs Campground	Butts County	1890
Lawrenceville Camp Ground	Gwinnett County	1832
Lebanon Camp Ground	Hall County	1845
Loudsville Camp Ground	White County	1838
Lumpkin Camp Ground	Dawson County	1837
Marietta Camp Ground	Cobb County	1837
Morrison's Camp Ground	Floyd County	1868
Mossy Creek Camp Ground	White County	1833
Mt Moriah Campground	Jefferson County	1828
Mt Zion Camp Ground	Spalding County	1834
Nazarene Camp Ground	Emanuel County	1918
Pine Log Camp Ground NR	Bartow County	1834
Pine Mountain Campground	Pike County	1945
Pirkle Memorial Campground	Spalding County	1940*

<b>Name</b>	<b>County</b>	<b>Founded</b>
Pleasant Hill Campground	Hall County	1872
Poplar Springs Camp Ground	Franklin County	1832
Rock Springs Camp Ground	White County	1886*
Salem Camp Ground NR	Newton County	1828
Shiloh Camp Ground	Carroll County	1867
Shingleroof Camp ground	Henry County	1831
Smyrna Campground	Rockdale County	1840*
Taylor County Camp Ground	Taylor County	1939
Tattnall Camp Ground	Tattnall County	1867*
Union Camp Ground	Carroll County	1875*
Union Grove Campground	White County	1925
White Oak Camp Ground	Columbia County	1872*

Those sites with asterisks have conflicting or undocumented information regarding the date they were founded or they may have been held at more than one location before being permanently located. In these instances the author used the documented information and/or the date the extant structures were built. Details are subject to change, as more data becomes available.

### Religious Affiliations and Ownership

Historically, Georgia's camp meeting grounds were Methodist sites. Although some of them have become "interdenominational," the majority of Georgia's sites remain Methodist. Other denominations represented are Congregational Holiness, Church of the Nazarene, and Presbyterian. Smyrna Campground located in Rockdale County is the only Presbyterian site in the state. Founded in 1831, it is one of Georgia's oldest sites, and one of only three Presbyterian campgrounds in the nation. Georgia also has two African-American sites, Pleasant Hill in Hall

County and Rock Springs in White County. These sites are rare in that few African-American campgrounds survive.

A self-perpetuating Board of Trustees manages most of the sites surveyed and the majority of them have remained Methodist. However, many of them have become distinctly interdenominational or non-Methodist. While a governing body owns the land, individual families “own” the cabins or “tents,” as they are most often called in Georgia.

Ownership issues have been a problem in the past and continue today. According to Dr. Harold Lawrence’ book on Georgia campgrounds, these problems began once camp meetings became organized, with governing boards, and permanent after the acquisition of property. Ownership or the “right” to a property developed due to reversion clause in the some deeds has caused conflicts between campground trustees and church officials. Some of these conflicts have had to be resolved by the court. He elaborated on this subject saying:

Issues of ownership of such places have always been points of dispute which the county or state legal entities have found difficulty ruling upon one way or another. According to church law, those properties deeded to trustees of Methodist churches have, for two hundred years, been subject to the trust clause which identifies them as church property. The absence of an original deed, in most cases, or the legal instruments citing the disposal of church properties when churches have closed, have tended to confuse the issue of ownership.<sup>108</sup>

This issue has become aggravated more than ever, as camp meetings today have become more comparable to family reunions (for church-going people) than opportunities for conversion and new membership. Other contemporary issues of concern regarding these properties may stem from rural churches in less populated areas of the state that can no longer sustain a membership. Often these churches, and the accompanying buildings at the site, become endangered. While the other extreme may occur in urban areas where land is so expensive it becomes a temptation for the church proper to sell these valuable land holdings at sites only used for one week a year.

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<sup>108</sup> Lawrence, 13.

Ownership of a tent means that a family assumes financial responsible for its maintenance and usually paid for its construction. At most sites in Georgia, the tents have been passed down through generations. Should a family leave a tent vacant for a certain period of time, another family who has been waiting to become "tent owners" at the site will quickly purchase it. As with any custom, there is a specific manner or procedure followed as to how and when this passing of the ownership may occur.

### The Role of the Landscape

Many emotional, elaborate, and explicit descriptions have been penned regarding the selection of these holy sites. One has only to read the written histories of the various sites to value the importance of this process. The description of how Reverend George Emby found the site chosen for Dooly Camp Ground (Dooly County) is typical of what many of the histories describe. It is a passage from the campground history *A Tabernacle of Living Water*, written by Jacquelyn Cook and published by the Dooly Camp Ground Trustees. It describes what happened when Rev. Emby was out for a ride and felt his horse pulling at the rein:

Embry wondered why his horse kept pulling farther upstream. Deciding to investigate, the circuit rider allowed the horse his head. Sparkling cascades of water tumbled over the rocks here at the ford on Peennahaatchee Creek there and one-half miles northeast of Vienna, Georgia. The coolness of the water was an inviting contrast to the hot sun of summer 1874, but still the horse went farther. On the south side of the creek, they came to a large spring of bubbling water out from under a rocky hillside. A pool of clear, pure water was formed several steps from the creek and made a small branch before the water flowed from the spring to the run of the stream.<sup>109</sup>

The average area per site is approximately 40 acres. Rock Springs Camp Ground in White County is the smallest with a total 7.43 acres and the largest site is Fountain Camp Ground in Warren County with 150 acres. In many cases the land was accumulated over a number of

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<sup>109</sup> Ibid., 111.

years, and some sites have surrendered land due to issues of eminent domain and boundary disputes. Fountain Camp ground has had two serious legal battles, one for land, after gold was discovered and the heirs of the grantor claimed the land had only been leased, the deed having been lost. The second case also involved the issues of ownership when the Augusta District Conference tried to oust the Trustees, claiming the site was owned by the North Georgia Methodist Conference.<sup>110</sup> Mossy Creek Camp Ground in White County and Pine Log Camp Ground in Bartow County have lost property due to railroad right-of-way takings. Currently some sites are threatened by urban sprawl.

Given the idea that camp meetings provided a chance to commune with God in nature, topography and other landscape features of an area have played a significant role in the selection of the sites. As site names like Mossy Creek, Rock Springs and Fountain indicate, the availability of a water source has been a crucial role in some site locations. While locations such as Flat Rock and Pleasant Hill highlight other pleasing landscape features, the necessity of trees or the sacred canopy has often determined the place and name of a campground for yearly retreats. Of the camps surveyed, the following three use types of trees as descriptors of the sacred sites: Pine Log in Bartow County, Pine Mountain in Pike County, and White Oak in Columbia County. The founders of Poplar Springs Camp Ground in Franklin County used both water and trees to name their location in 1832. In 1890 the founders of Indian Springs Holiness Camp Meeting walked for hours in the woods seeking inspiration to find a site. Finally, kneeling beside a large oak tree, they had what one would later call “an epic spiritual event” when the four realized that God had directed them to the perfect spot.

Through the years, camp attendees have also embellished many of these hallowed sites by replacing fallen trees, painting the trunks of the trees to accentuate them and planting trees in specific locations on the grounds. Lumpkin Camp Ground in Dawson County and Holbrook

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<sup>110</sup> Ibid., 13-21.



Figure 28. Tent Row, shaded by trees whitewashed annually, Lumpkin Camp Ground, Dawson County, Georgia.

Camp Ground in Cherokee County traditionally paint the trunks of the trees encircling their grounds. Morrison's Camp Ground, founded in 1868 in rural Floyd County, has an alley of oak trees (Water Oaks and Laurel Oaks) leading up an incline to the arbor—the focus of all camp meeting sites.

But perhaps the most striking vision is to glimpse a historic campground with a large stand of trees in an urban area where real estate is at a premium and trees are often sacrificed for space. Marietta Camp Ground in Cobb County, Smyrna Campground in Rockdale County and Lawrenceville Camp Ground in Gwinnett County (all metropolitan Atlanta counties) have maintained the sheltering canopies at their respective sites. At Salem Camp Ground in Newton County, a row of trees has been planted along the entire road front to buffer the site from the





Figure 29. Alley of Water Oaks and Laurel Oaks leading to the Arbor at Morrison's Camp Ground, 1868.



Figure 30. The third arbor at Morrison's Camp Ground, Floyd County, Georgia. Constructed in 1960 utilizing some original timbers.



noise of the traffic and grant some privacy to the worshipers at this metropolitan site. Rural or urban, the importance of trees to each setting is obvious. The power of the sacred canopy, as it has been called, is part of the total experience of attending a camp meeting.

The sanctity of place has often been marked by the existence of a living tree. This idea of a sacred tree has been a recurring theme in many cultures around the world. The periodic rebirth of a tree's leaves (vegetation) has come to symbolize the divine power to renew life.<sup>111</sup>

However, author and cultural geographer J.B. Jackson has an opposite opinion. In "The Sacred Grove in America," Jackson began his essay by pointing out the prolific use of the word "grove" in American place names and followed with detailed examination of perception, use, and development of the sacred space of the American camp meeting ground. Jackson concluded that the reason for considering a grove sacred in America is not the place, but the use of the space that made it holy.<sup>112</sup>

A survey of the types, ages and conditions of the trees and shrubbery was done by representatives of the Georgia Forestry Commission at 19 of the 33 campgrounds sites that are part of this study. It should be noted that many of the trees at campgrounds in Georgia were harvested to construct the arbors and the tents at the sites, sometimes more than once, or lost due to fires and acts of God such as tornadoes.

### Physical Development Patterns

Historically campgrounds adhered to three general patterns or shapes in their layout: oblong square (rectangular), horseshoe (semi-circular), and circular. According to the landmark

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<sup>111</sup> Carol L. Meyers, "The Tabernacle Menorah: A Synthetic Study of a Symbol from The Biblical Cult (Ph.D. diss., Brandeis University, 1974). Thayer Fellow Albright Institute of Archaeological Research, Jerusalem, Israel, 95-96.

<sup>112</sup> J.B. Jackson, *The Necessity for Ruins and Other Topics* (Amherst: MA: The University of Massachusetts, 1980), 77-88.

book, *The Frontier Camp Meeting: Religion's Harvest Time*, the most popular design was the circular plan. Author Charles Johnson's sources were two editorials written in the 1830s that had appeared in the *Western Christian Advocate* magazine.<sup>113</sup> The circular shape was also encouraged by B.W. Gorham's *Camp Meeting Manual*, published in 1854. However, the most common pattern seen in Georgia is the oblong square (rectangle) shape or an actual square shape.

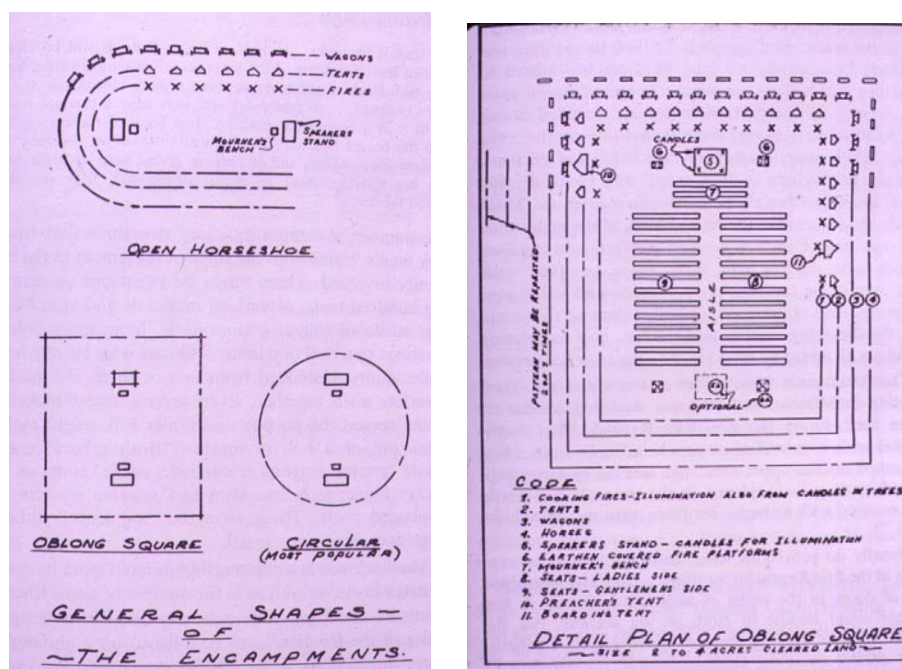


Figure 31. Recommended Shapes of Camp Meeting Grounds.

The shape and the details of most sites in Georgia remain true to the plan seen in Gorham's book. Although 16 of the encampments surveyed were established before 1845 (during what has been dubbed the primitive stage of development) they do not appear to be haphazardly laid out. In fact, most of them adhere to the suggestions set forth in Gorham's oft-cited work. As noted earlier, numerous camp meeting sites have become towns, and in recent times the campground community has been hailed as a design worthy of emulation when

<sup>113</sup> Johnson, 42-47.

planning today's new communities. Gorham's composed a checklist of nine items necessary for the site preparation at a campground seen on the next page instructing his readers saying:

The following directions may be perhaps useful to an association or committee not well acquainted with the business of laying out a campground:

1. Is there a bountiful supply of good water?
2. Is the site in a neighborhood of Methodists who will...sustain the meeting?
3. Are there adequate pasture grounds nearby?
4. Is the grounds [*sic*] easy access from principle thoroughfares?
5. Is the surface a dead level or very little inclined?
6. Is there [*sic*]considerable extent of forest land?
7. If it is probable that there will be an hundred family tents, or their equivalent in society tents, then the ground, for the tents, should be at least half an acre; or a full acre, including the sites of the tents; and the ground should be larger or smaller, in proportion, for a larger or smaller meeting.
8. In shape it should be nearly circular.
9. The first work to be done after ascertaining your bounds, is to clear the ground of all underbrush, stumps, and roots as may be liable to fall. The remaining trees should be trimmed.<sup>114</sup>

Most campground sites in Georgia is laid out in an oblong square (rectangle) or square pattern as seen in the following examples at Loudsville Camp Ground in White County (See Figure 32.), Effingham Camp Ground near Savannah (See Figure 33.) and Shingleroof Camp Ground in McDonough (See Figure 34.). While the plan at Indian Springs Holiness Camp Meeting is unlike any other site in Georgia, both in its physical layout and size. The site is not

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<sup>114</sup> Rev. B.W. Gorham, *Camp Meeting Manual, A Practical Book for the Camp Ground: In two Parts* (Boston: H.V. Degen, 1854), 7-8.

laid out in any of the patterns suggested by Gorham or seen at other sites across the state. (See Figure 39.) There are also more tents than the typical Georgia campground with an average number of 27 tents.



Figure 32. Loudsville Camp Ground, White County, Georgia

Established in 1890 as the flagship of the holiness movement in Georgia, it has been called “The Greatest Camp Meeting in the South”. The holiness revival movement began in the North out of a desire to promote the doctrine of entire sanctification traced directly to the founder of Methodism John Wesley. However, it did not develop fully in the South until after the Civil War and the formation of the National Camp Meeting Association for the Promotion of Holiness in 1867. The National Association pledged to promote Wesley’s theology of Christian perfection and to conduct itinerant holiness camp meetings to fulfill the mission. Perhaps Indian Springs is different because it was the flagship campground for the holiness movement, or maybe it was the



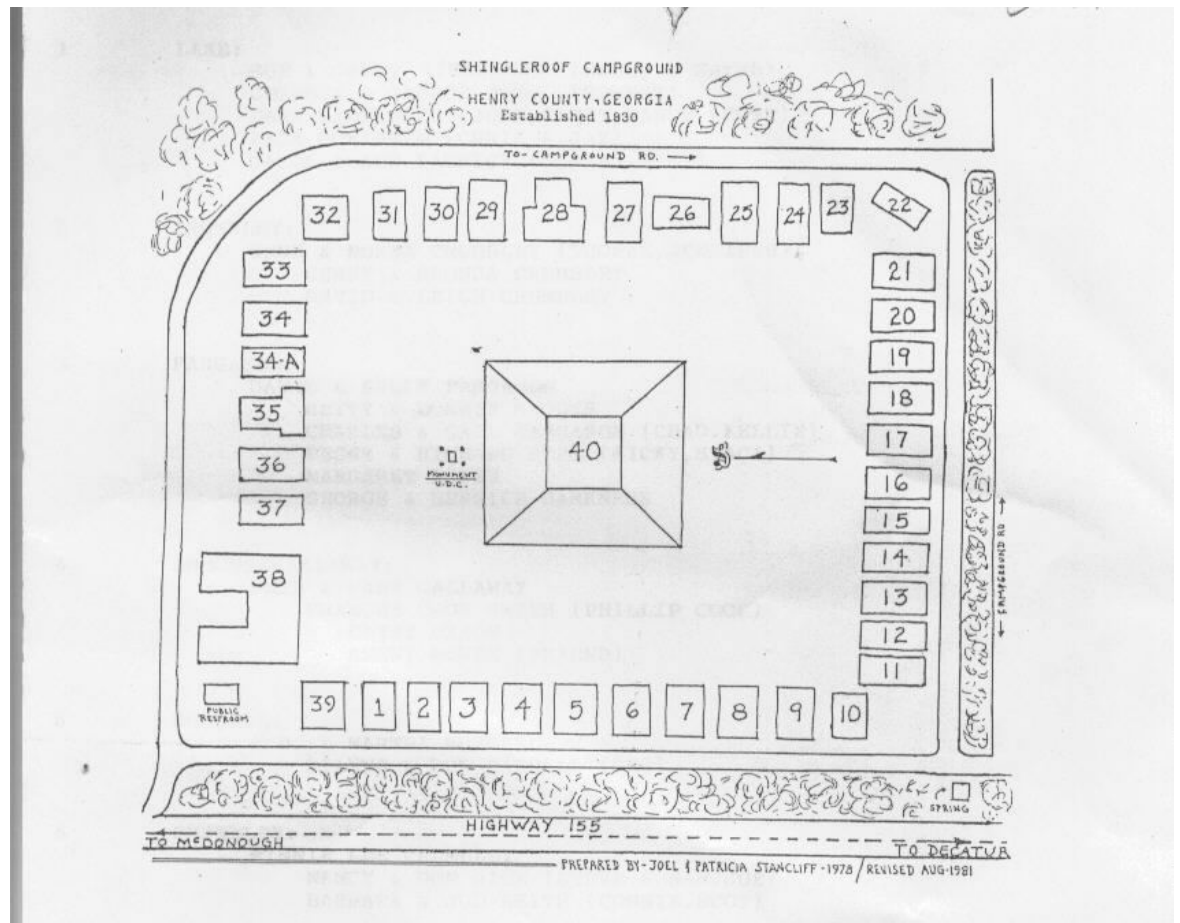


Figure 34. Plan drawn in 1978 (revised 1981) of Shingleroof Camp Ground, Henry County, Georgia.

genteel Victorian America. Whatever the reason, Indian Springs is atypical of southern campgrounds. It is laid out more like a small town.<sup>115</sup>

### Cemeteries and Churches

Lastly, a common physical development pattern seen at many Georgia camp meeting sites is the presence of a church and cemetery. Of the 35 sites surveyed 13 of them have both a church and cemetery on site or visible from the site. Two of the sites visited had only a cemetery on the property. The cemetery at Rock Springs Campground in White County has recent burial sites and is well maintained. Only a few miles away at Mossy Creek Camp Ground the old cemetery, located on a hillside across the highway, is not visible due to the overgrowth of trees and lack of maintenance. The logical combination of church, cemetery and campground would adequately fulfil a community's spiritual needs. At Shiloh Campground in Carroll County a church and cemetery on the grounds are joined by a historic school building and store within a short distance of the campground, completing the crossroad community and making possible a rural historic district.

### Brush Arbors

At least 21 of Georgia's remaining camp meeting grounds have documented use of "brush arbors" before building permanent wooden structures, a tradition that continued well into the twentieth century. Pine Mountain Campground in Pike County constructed a brush arbor as late as 1945 and there was one remaining in Heard County as recently as the 1950s. Today there is a reconstructed brush arbor at Lawrenceville Camp Ground in Gwinnett County.

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<sup>115</sup> Kenneth O. Brown, *Indian Springs Holiness Camp Meeting: A History of "The Greatest Camp Meeting in the South"* (Hazleton, PA: Holiness Archives Publication, 2000), 7-9.





Figure 35. Shiloh United Methodist Church, Carroll County, Georgia



Figure 36. Arbor at Shiloh Camp Ground (1867) and eight camp meeting tents are located on the grounds with Shiloh United Methodist Church, Carroll County, Georgia.



### Georgia's Arbors

The arbor or tabernacle is the single most important feature—natural or manmade—at all camp meeting sites. As the landmark structure, it is the major organizing feature in the planning of the grounds. Arbors are powerful architectural forms constructed with large square timber supports with angle braces and exposed trusses topped by massive sheltering roofs usually covered with tin. The roofs are pyramidal, hipped, gabled, or a combination, and some of them feature tiers of roofs with clerestories for light and ventilation. Many of Georgia's arbors display hand-hewn timbers and use pegs or mortise and tenon construction. As the central focus of the campground their location on the site and their relationship to the tents or cabins is of utmost importance. Most campground arbors were oriented on north-south axis to avoid the glare of the sun. The arbor and its grounds represent the common public space functioning much like a village green or courthouse square, and for that reason, the arbor should be visible from every perspective at the site.

Although thought to be permanent, most of the wood tabernacles at the 35 extant sites surveyed are not original buildings. Fire and acts of nature such as snowfalls or tornadoes have destroyed many of them. (The Arbor at Mossy Creek Camp Ground in White County was abandoned to make way for the Gainesville & Northwestern Railroad in 1912.) Many of them were simply torn down and replaced by new structures. Today, however, there are sixteen sites in Georgia with original tabernacles or arbors, thirteen built in the nineteenth century (a span of 120 years). The earliest arbor appears to have been constructed at Fountain Campground during the late 1820s or early 1830s.

Admittedly some of these structures have been repaired through the years, often for reasons other than simple maintenance. For example, Union Camp Ground in Carroll County was hit by hurricane "Eloise" in 1975 resulting in \$8,000 in damages. According to a booklet printed for the one hundredth anniversary (1876-1976) a caption beneath the "after" photograph

reads, “The arbor after hurricane damages were repaired. It was placed back on its foundation and rebuilt and re-roofed.” Another paragraph in the booklet reads:

In September of 1975 the hurricane “Eloise” came and did extensive damage to the arbor. The high winds moved it on its foundations and took most of the roof off. The estimated damage was approximately \$8,000. It was rebuilt by Danny R. Smith, Smith Construction Co. of Bremen, Ga. This expense was met by the generous contributions of individuals and businesses.<sup>116</sup>

Below is the honor role of “original Georgia Arbors” listed in order by the date of construction with the counties in which they are located:

Table 2: Honor Roll

1830	Fountain Camp Ground, Warren County (Wr)
1833	Poplar Springs Camp Ground, Franklin County (Fk)
1838	Marietta Camp Ground, Cobb County (Co)
1839	Antioch Camp Ground, Hall County (Hl)
1854	Salem Camp Ground, Newton County (Ne)
1865	Rock Springs Camp Ground*, White County (Wh)
1872	Pleasant Hill Camp Ground**, Hall County (Hl)
1872	White Oak Camp Ground, Columbia County (Cb)
1873	Smyrna Campground, Rockdale County (Ro)
1875	Dooly Camp Ground, Dooly County (Dy)
1878	Flat Rock Camp Ground, Heard County (He)
1889	Union Camp Ground, Carroll County (Cl)
1893	Indian Springs Holiness Campground, Butts County (Bs)

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<sup>116</sup> Bernice Awtry and Hassie Hancock, *History of Union Camp Ground 1876-1976*, n.p., 1976. no pagination.

1907 Effingham County Camp Ground, Effingham County (Ef)

1940 Taylor County Camp Ground, Taylor County (Tr)

\*While the first recorded deed for Rock Springs Camp Ground is 1886, the original arbor on site is believed to be earlier than that date based on construction methods and its similarity to the arbor at Lumpkin Campground in Dawson County. It is known that African-Americans in this area attended had Mossy Creek Camp meeting before the Civil War.

\*\* While Pleasant Hill Camp Ground has only an arbor today it is a documented fact that tents were erected this African-American site.<sup>117</sup>

There is another classification of Arbors that should be mentioned, named by the author as the “Arbors Only” for lack of better terminology. These are also original structures listed in alphabetical order:

Table 3: Arbors Only

Mt. Gilead	Futon County (Fu)	Tents “gone,” Second Arbor
Pleasant Hill (1865)	Hall County (Hl)	Tents “gone,” adjacent to church
Redwine Arbor	Hall County (Hl)	Adjacent to church
Scare Corn/Ryo (1930s)	Pickins County (Pi)	Adjacent to church
Union Point NRD (1932)	Greene County (Ge)	
Yellow Creek Arbor (1840)	Stewart County (Sw)	Baptist, Moved from Hall County
White’s Chapel Tabernacle	Rockdale County (Ro)	
Zion Hill Arbor (1917)	Forsyth County (Fo)	Baptist, adjacent to church

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<sup>117</sup> Lawrence, 101, 166.

The original Yellow Creek Arbor was constructed in Hall County and moved to Westville in Lumpkin, Stewart County, Georgia in 1969. Westville is a living history village outside of Lumpkin which began with the purchase of an extensive “collection” of buildings belonging to history professor and former president of North Georgia College Colonel John Word West. A non-profit corporation was formed as the nucleus of an outdoor living history museum or exhibit of a functioning Georgia community, circa 1850. This was the second move for the historic structure having been moved earlier to Jonesboroug [sic] in 1933. Once moved the arbor underwent “significant restoration” primarily of the roof system, and there was an addition built. The author has not visited this site, therefore, has no knowledge as to the structural integrity of the building. The fact that this was a Baptist tabernacle is significant, as they are rare. Also, it is written that Benjamin Park, the discover of gold in Lumpkin County was instrumental in its building.<sup>118</sup>

As author Kenneth Brown has pointed out, the camp meeting movement has spawn other types of encampments, therefore, the author acknowledges her choices were limited to extant, active sites that that fell within her interpretation of tradition camp meeting settings.

#### Tents, Cottages and Other Buildings

Although Indian Springs Holiness Campground in Jackson, Butts County, is not the largest campsite in acreage, it is the largest encampment with a total of 141 cabins, including several non-contributing mobile homes. However, the majority of the cabins can not be labeled “tents”, the traditional name given permanent cabins in most of the South. The typical tent at most of the extant sites in Georgia is a one-story, one bay gable front building with a shed porch. (See Figure 11.) The housing at Indian Springs is far more elaborate; these structures are cabins

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<sup>118</sup> Sandra Dixon, Westville, 1966-1986, *A History of Westville Historic Handicrafts, Inc., A Recreation of Early Middle West Georgia, Where its Always 1850*. Lumpkin, GA: published by Westville, 1986.



Figure 37. "Cottage" at Indian Spring Holiness Camp Meeting Butts County, Georgia



Figure 38. Another "cottage" at Indian Springs, Butts County.

and cottages. The oldest cabin at Indian Springs, established in 1890, was probably built in 1896. Instead Indian Springs is similar to that of larger, northeastern sites, such as Wesleyan Grove at Martha's Vineyard or Ocean Grove, New Jersey, although the construction is not as uniform or elaborate.

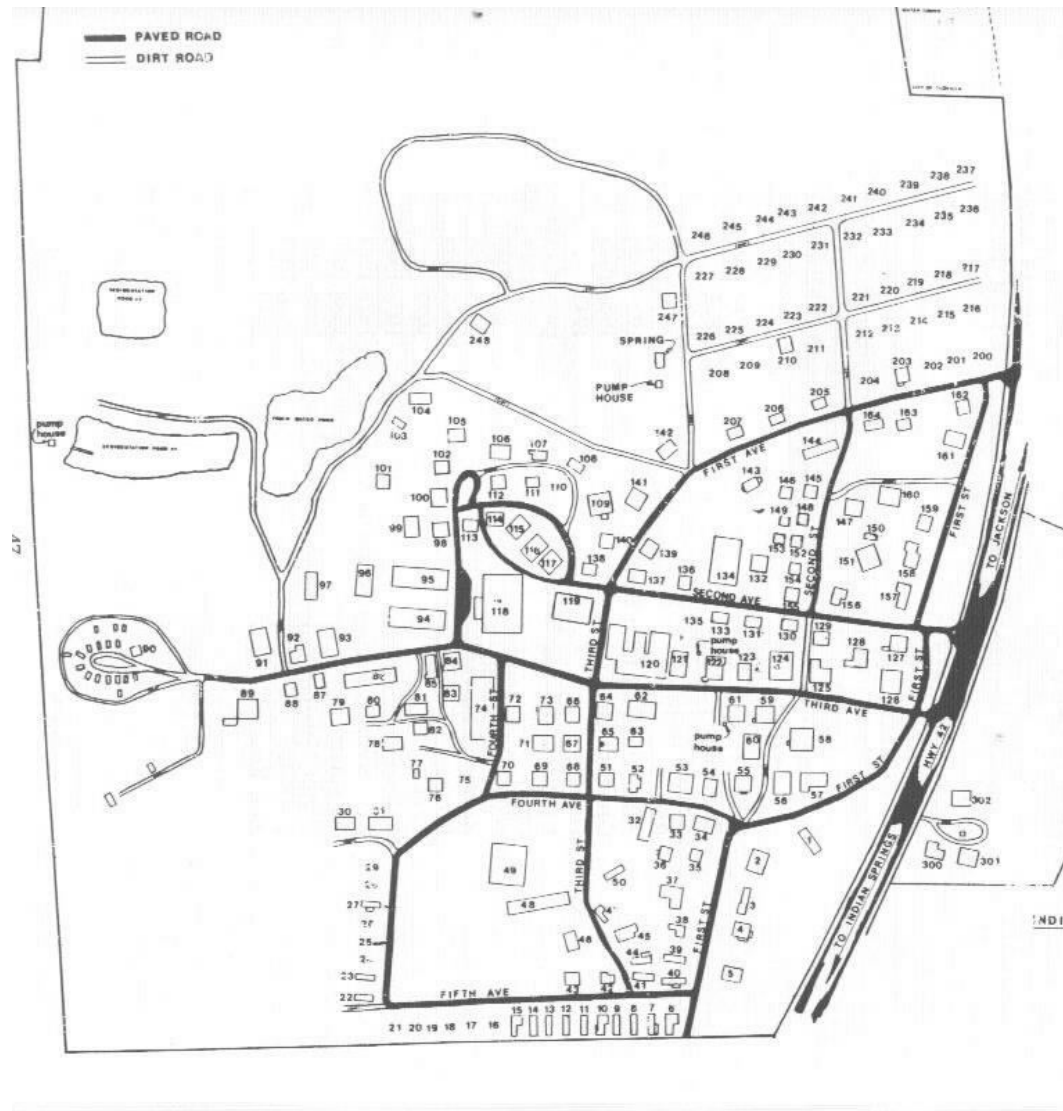


Figure 39. Indian Springs Holiness Campground Cottage Layout with Tabernacle (#118).

Also, the physical layout of Indian Springs is more that of a town, again more like the resort camp meeting grounds in the northeast. It stands alone in comparison to the typical Georgia camp meeting ground in sophistication. There have been five books written about the history of Indian Springs, however, none has dealt with the vernacular architecture that evolved there or its site plan. And, it is unfortunate that a large number of the accessory buildings have been constructed of concrete block, thus making them “non-contributing” to the historic nature of the site.



Figure 40. Example “Dog-trot” tent (enclosed with screen) at Tattnall Camp Ground, Tattnall County, Georgia.

Camp meeting tents in Georgia are almost consistently one-story wooden buildings with front gable roofs as described earlier; however, there are some exceptions. The cottages at Indian



Springs and it should be noted that the “cabins” at Smyrna Campground (the only Presbyterian site in the state) are also larger, two-story structures. Another exception is the side-gabled tents with “dogtrots.” In most cases the use of a “dogtrot” indicates more than one tent under the same roof. Examples of this type of construction may be found at Effingham County Camp Ground, Tattnall Camp Ground in Tattnall County and Lebanon Camp Ground in Hall County.

Without fail each site has non-contributing structures, most often they are the “common” buildings such as dining facilities, public baths and hotels or dorms. A substantial number of these intrusions have been in place for years, however this trend will continue unless a sensitivity and appreciation of the historic nature of the site is advocated.

### Assessment of Georgia’s Historic Camp Meeting Sites

#### Georgia’s Wealth of Sites

Georgia has a wealth of extant camp meeting sites as noted in *Holy Ground, Too* by Kenneth Brown. Brown also makes a strong case that Georgia may possibly be where the movement began saying the rural landscape of Georgia is “dotted” with camp meetings. He makes a convincing argument with the following comments:

Out of eighty surviving camp meetings founded before 1860, only two are Presbyterian, and one Adventist; all the rest are Methodist related. Eight, 10%, are black encampments, and these are all Methodist. Twenty-one of these camps are located in the north, and 59 of them, or 76% are located in the south. Interesting, twenty-four Georgia camp meetings are extant, 30% of the total, and the twenty of these Georgia camps were founded before 1840! <sup>119</sup>

In a more recent book titled *Indian Springs Holiness Camp Meeting: A History Of “The Greatest Camp Meeting In The South”* Brown added:

There is evidence to suggest that Georgia brush arbors contributed to the founding of the camp meeting. It is certain that Georgia encampments cast a

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<sup>119</sup> Brown, *Holy Ground, Too*, 48.



heavy influence on the early permanency of the institution. In fact, these meetings were so popular by the 1890's that the phrase "at a Georgia camp meeting" became a trite expression the world over. I have in my collection of camp meeting material an original piece of sheet music by Kerry Mills entitled, "At A Georgia Campmeeting," dated 1897. The piece is billed as a "Two-Step Polka, or Cake Walk."<sup>120</sup>

### Unique Sites in the State

In addition to the large number of extant, early campsites, Georgia has (at least) five unique sites. We have one of only three Presbyterian sites in the nation at Smyrna; we have Indian Springs Holiness Camp Meeting, the flagship of the holiness movement in Georgia, called "The Greatest Camp Meeting in the South;" we have two rare extant African-American sites; there is Salem, the only HABS "meeting house" surveyed in the nation during the 1930s (See Figure 1.); and we may have one of the oldest camp meeting sites in the country in Effingham County.

### Threatened Sites

We have lost many camp meeting sites in Georgia through the years, and unfortunately a very old encampment in recent times. Although a vital part of the community for years, Mt. Gilead Camp Ground, founded in 1833 closed in 1987 due to "property changes" and "changes in the community."<sup>121</sup> Other sites in the Atlanta metropolitan area appear threatened due to urban sprawl. Fortunately these sites are not subject to property taxes, but there are four located within the Atlanta area where real estate prices are high and the competition for land is great. An example of this type of setting can be found at Marietta Camp Ground located on the heavily traveled Roswell Road in an area where real estate is at a premium.

In researching the material available for this thesis the author uncovered a number of extinct sites across the state, many in counties that no longer have active sites. Some of these

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<sup>120</sup> Brown, *Indian Springs*, 7.

<sup>121</sup> Lawrence, 135.

sites are documented in county histories; however, most of them were discovered by chance. They had become forgotten landmarks due to lack of documentation of the camp meeting movement and its architecture in the state.

### Georgia's National Register Sites

To date, only two extant, "active" camp meeting sites in Georgia have been listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Pine Log Methodist Church Campground and Cemetery (historic district) in Bartow County was listed in 1988, and Salem Camp Ground in Newton County was listed in 1998. Union Point Wesleyan Campground, located within an historic district in the town of Union Point, Green County, was listed in 1991. And, Wesleyan Methodist Campground and Tabernacle (1902-1994) in Ashburn, Turner County, Georgia was listed December 12, 1998. (It should be noted that Wesleyan Methodist Campground has two additional historic buildings constructed in 1914, a kitchen and a "sleeping room.")

Pine Log Campground (NR) near Rydal in Bartow County was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1988. It is believed the campground was established as early as 1834-35 and that the large barn-like building accidentally destroyed by fire in 1864 was the first permanent arbor. The current arbor, erected in 1888, is used today for the annual camp meeting and other events throughout the year. It is built with heavy wooden beams, exposed rafters, clerestory, hipped-roof, and open on three sides. The interior choir and pulpit areas are on rock foundation and there is an atypical concrete floor. Surrounding the arbor are 12 simple one-story wooden tents with front gabled roofs and shed porches. All 12 of the tents are historic, eleven constructed during the 1920s and 1930s, with the final one being built in 1947. Approximately 15 tents were lost when the railroad was built in 1904. ("Pine Log Methodist Church, Campground, and Cemetery" National Register nomination form, 1988.)



Figure 41. Pine Log Camp Ground (NR) Arbor, Bartow County, Georgia

Founded in 1828, Salem Camp Ground (NR) in Newton County near Covington is perhaps the best known site in the state. Through the years Salem has received a great deal of publicity, including national exposure in the July 1996 issue of *Smithsonian Magazine*. Its arbor had the distinction of being surveyed as part of the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) founded in 1933. Surveyed in 1936 and categorized as a “meeting house”, Salem was the only such listing in the 1941 book *Historic American Buildings Survey*.

A fact sheet was compiled and there were four photographs taken of the arbor, two exteriors, and two interiors. The building is a wood rectangular open shed 70' by 100' with a five-bay front and a gable roof covered with shingles. It is post and truss construction with hand-hewn mortise and tenon structural members and clapboard in the gables and over the braced part of the posts. The concrete piers under the posts, roof, rafters, and intermediate bracing are not original to the building. The first camp meeting at Salem was held in 1828 under a “brush arbor.” The next four years the Salem Church camp meeting was held at Bear Creek, and then it return to

the present site in 1835 where it has been conducted every year since except during the Civil War.

(Salem Campground National Register nomination form, 1998)

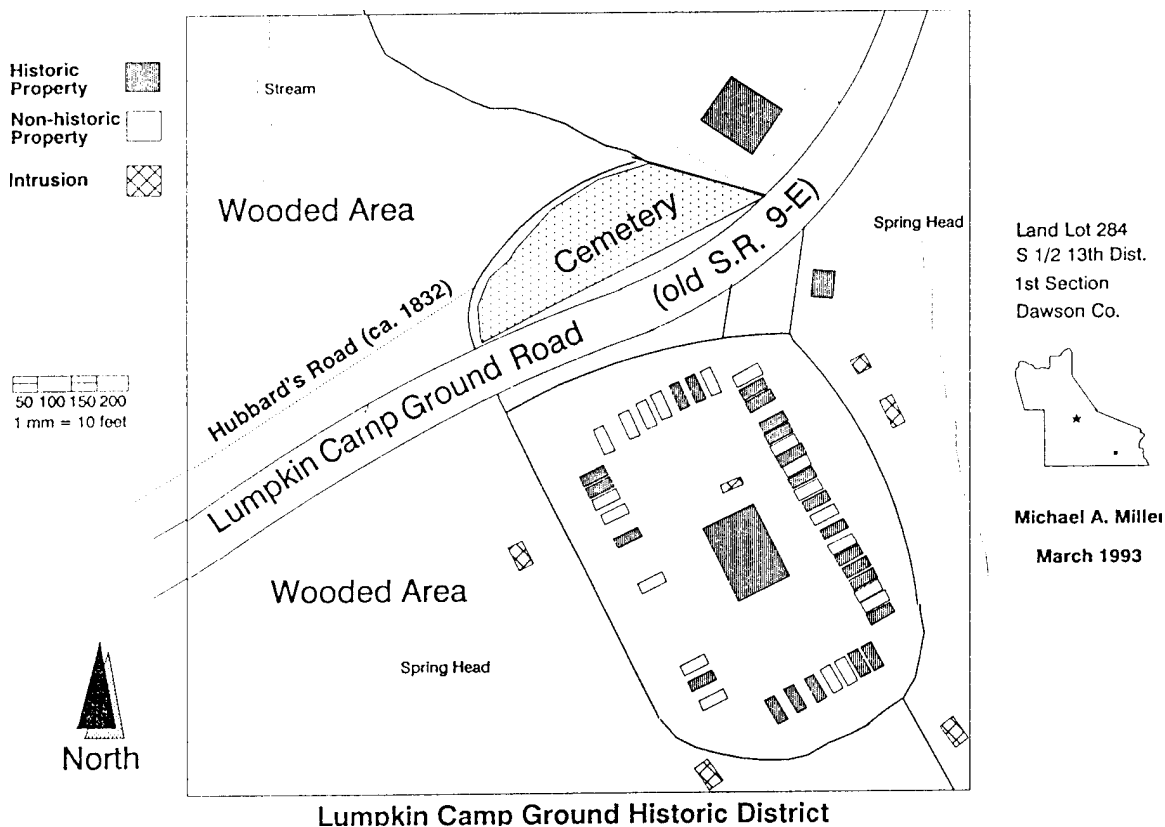


Figure 42. Plan of Lumpkin Camp Ground (1837), Bethel United Methodist Church and Cemetery, Dawson County, Georgia

A nomination to the National Register of Historic Places has been prepared, but not submitted for Lumpkin Camp Ground, located in Dawson County near Georgia Highway 400. The first deed was recorded in 1845 for the historic site, however, local people believe it was organized about 1837. The arbor is almost completely post and beam construction primarily composed of 10-inch square hand-hewn pine beams joined by wooden pegs inserted through mortise and tenon joints supported by 4' x 6' timbers located at 45 degree angles. The building

measures 60' x 70', is open on four sides and has a "double-pitch" (spraddle) front-gabled roof with asphalt shingles. The pulpit and choir areas are raised above a clay floor, which slopes slightly from the rear of the building producing a "theater-like" effect. There are two tents surrounding the arbor, twenty-three of, which are historic dating from 1900. Most of the tents are one-story front-gabled wood structures that measure between 15 to 20' in width and 38-42' in length.

(Application prepared Lumpkin Camp Ground, Bethel Methodist Church, Bethel Methodist Cemetery, National Register nomination form, 1993)

## CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION: A CALL FOR ACTION

### Recommendations

The uniqueness of camp meeting sites, and their significance as a part of national history, should serve as a basis for their preservation. A review of state historic preservation office activity across the nation reveals some National Register (NR) listings as well as other sites that have been reviewed. A summary of this information indicates 59 National Register listings by 24 states, 74 additional sites surveyed by 18 states and 19 states without either surveys or National Register listings. Details are indicated below in Tables 4 and 5.

Table 4: Survey of States with NR Listings

<u>State</u>	<u>NR listings</u>	<u>Survey listings</u>
Alabama	---	1
Arkansas	2	---
Connecticut	1	2
Delaware	1	4
Florida	1	---
Georgia	4	25
Kentucky	2	---
Maine	2	6
Maryland	4	---
Massachusetts	6	---
Michigan	1	---
Minnesota	3	2
Mississippi	1	9
Missouri	2	3
New Jersey	3	3
New York	5	2
North Carolina	11	---
North Dakota	1 nominated	---
Ohio	2	10
Pennsylvania	2	1
Rhode Island	1	---
South Carolina	4	---

<u>State</u>	<u>NR listings</u>	<u>Survey listings</u>
Tennessee	2	---
Texas	1	---
Vermont	1	8
Virginia	1	5
Washington	---	1
Wisconsin	1	1

Table 5: Survey of States with no NR Listings

**State**

Alaska  
 Arizona  
 California  
 Colorado  
 Idaho  
 Illinois  
 Indiana  
 Iowa  
 Kansas  
 Louisiana  
 Montana  
 Nebraska  
 Nevada  
 New Hampshire  
 New Mexico  
 Oklahoma  
 Oregon  
 South Dakota  
 Utah  
 West Virginia  
 Wyoming

It should be noted that although they have no National Register listings to date, Illinois, Oregon and West Virginia have identified one camp meeting site each.

Action Needs

Three Basic Needs

In researching the camp meeting sites in Georgia the author found that very little has been written about these sites except for the occasional brochure printed in celebration of a

special date, a brief windshield survey or a paragraph or two written in a county history. The only book published to date those looks beyond one site to see the whole picture of the camp meeting in Georgia is *A Feast of Tabernacles* written by Dr. Harold Lawrence. Lawrence collected and compiled information about each site—deeds, charters printed histories—to produce his book published in 1990. However, he dealt primarily with the history of the sites not the architecture. Attention should be given to these physical reminders of a bygone era in their present context. The three basic needs for the perpetuation of Georgia's camp meeting sites are education, recognition, and protection.

Education and recognition can be secured through: (1) a comprehensive survey of all sites utilizing an approved survey form from the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO); (2) development of an inventory of sites eligible for the National Register; and (3) nomination of eligible sites to the National Register of Historic Places.

Enhancing public awareness, appreciation, and understanding of the value of these historic resources and encouraging public support for their preservation will be required as the first step in the plan of action.

Protection involves a more intensive effort that will be successful only if supported by those responsible for the individual camp meeting sites. Those most closely involved with these sites must embrace the cause of preservation. The development of a protection plan would require the following steps:

1. Assessment of potential dangers, or limitations, to the continued use of camp meeting sites. These may vary from site to site.
2. Identification of additional uses that could help to defray site-related maintenance expenses and provides the basis for year-round use, where desired.
3. Development of guidelines for a preservation of camp meeting sites.
4. Identify sites to be included in heritage tourism corridors across the state.



5. Investigate the potential and value of using conservation easement as a site protection tool.

There appear to be many dangers related to ownership of these sites as mentioned in chapter six. Economical considerations rank high on the list of potential dangers especially since these sites are used so infrequently. Smyrna Campground in Conyers appears to be one of the few sites in use year-round. While the author is aware of some activities taking place at a few sites, greater use of these encampments for activities other than the annual camp meeting could generate revenue and create a greater awareness of these sites.

Heritage tourism has become a major consideration in the economic development of historic towns and sites across the state. The attraction of these unique historic sites for cultural events such as festivals is well within the realm of heritage tourism and site appropriate. The rural, secluded settings, beauty of the landscape and simplicity of these sites could also provide an ideal spot for a writer's retreat or similar type of activity. Appropriate use of the sites and guidelines for their use could be established to assure tent owners and trustees these additional events would not disturb or distort the sites' traditional role.

Also, guidelines for the preservation of these sites are important to prevent further intrusive building and to assure that they maintain the special sense of place they have provided campers for generations. Legal agreements such as conservation easements could be investigated to protect some, if not all, of the acreage at the sites to guard against physical intrusions and provide buffers for the vernacular architecture. These agreements have become more popular in recent years to protect natural open space for the enjoyment of many. Taking steps to evaluate and investigate current conditions confronting these historic resources, investigating new methods of revenue and sources of protection will enable those in charge to make wise decisions for their future protection.

While most of these properties are "owned" by the church and exempt from property taxes there are other financial considerations in running a camp meeting. The funds to manage

these sites has always been generated or supported financially by the gifts of those who attend the annual meetings and ultimately the responsibility of the trustees. At least one site “owned” by an interdenominational Board of Trustees has dealt with expenses and support in another manner. In 1939 Salem Camp Ground in Covington was incorporated as an independent interdenominational body and in 1981, the Board of Trustees established an endowment fund called The Salem Foundation to provide for additional yearly income. Those who contribute \$1,000 or more may list gifts in honor or memory of a loved one, these gifts are invested and only the interest is used for the upkeep and capital improvements. All gifts to Salem are tax deductible, as they have received the 501(c)-(3) Federal tax-exempt status.<sup>122</sup>

The following are immediate and long range recommendations for the advocacy, protection and preservation of these historic sites.

#### Immediate Recommendations

1. Conduct a survey of camp meeting sites utilizing approved survey form from the State Historic Preservation Office.
2. Develop an inventory of sites eligible for National Register
3. Nominate sites eligible to National Register
4. Develop and implement educational program to make those who control meeting site properties and the general public aware of the historic significance of the sites as well as those key physical factors that represent that significance.

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<sup>122</sup> Salem Camp Ground, “The 167<sup>th</sup> Salem Camp Ground Camp Meeting,” n.p., 1995, no pagination.

### Long Range Recommendations

1. Develop guidelines for preservation of camp meeting grounds
2. Investigate the potential and value of using conservation easement as site protection tools
3. Investigate potential for site uses or users for year-round activities
4. Investigate the potential and value of using conservation easements as a site protection tool.

While the author strongly recommends a listing on the National Register of Historic Places, this will only provide minimal protection through the Section 106 Review process with regard to federal funding. Other means of protection must be investigated. However, the author believes the support that must be generated to proceed with this process will be the beginning to a more secure future for these unique sites. As with any preservation effort, the preservation planners and campground advocates leading the crusade during the process must make a concerted effort to involve the younger participants of the camp meeting family. Developing a communal bonding of the generations to maintain the traditions and ceremonies that hold prominence at these sites will foster the sense of belonging important in the continuation of these camp meetings.

### Conclusion: From Spirit to Structure

The early camp meeting movement was interdenominational, fueled by the frontier life style of the American pioneer or the “plain-folk.” The Methodist Church recognized its importance and used the encampment setting as a way of appealing to the masses, thus converting them to Methodism. From a simple religious gathering in a grove of trees to the development of religious building types with historical, cultural and architectural significance the camp meeting movement went from spirit to structure. It was an extremely successful institution that spread across the entire nation. There were regional differences seen in the buildings and eventually in

the focus of some of the camp meeting gatherings themselves. Yet they are all physical reminders of a socio-religious phenomenon that is deeply rooted in America's history, cultural landscape, and vernacular architectural heritage.

In the past, these historic sites and the vernacular architecture created by the movement have been overlooked. However, a growing number of them have been listed in the National Register of Historic Places, recognized for their influence on the movement from which they arose, and their place in America's history, cultural landscape, and vernacular architecture.

Georgia's extant camp meeting sites should be recognized, as active sites, not landmarks of forgotten lifetimes. They are symbols of a movement that had tremendous impact on American history and society. Georgia's camp meeting grounds should be listed on the National Register of Historic Places and should be preserved and protected for future generations to enjoy.

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## APPENDIX 1

The following are descendants from Kenneth Brown's book, *Holy Ground, Too* published in 1997, pages 50-67.

### Vacation Camp Meetings

During the last 30 years of the 1800s, vacation camp meetings gained popularity, as summer vacations became the norm. Resorts were established up and down the eastern seaboard, and an increase in affordability of transportation fostered the movement. Often situated near secular vacation campsites, religious resorts of the 1860s were permanent outdoor meeting grounds and could be seen in the mountains, by lakes, or by the ocean. They provided a Christian substitute for popular secular locales such as Atlantic City, New Jersey. Often, they were run for profit or for the finances needed to help maintain facilities. State legislatures chartered the religious organizations that ran the sites, and the lands were divided into lots leased for terms of up to 99 years. There were special rules regulating commerce and public conduct with a certain radius of the land, and visitors and leaseholders had to abide by the set rules.

Vacation camp meetings also had an impact on the development of nearby secular communities. Ocean Grove, New Jersey, for instance, was established before the adjacent community of Asbury Park was established. The oldest resort on the east coast, Martha's Vineyard's Oak Bluffs is another example of the importance vacation camp meetings played on local development. Land values in seaside resorts skyrocketed and investors got wealthy buying up lots and reselling them at a hefty profit.

Camp meeting calendars kept up with the happenings and locations of various sites, and were carried on a regular basis in religious newspapers of the day. News of the meetings also

found its way into the secular press. A "if you can't beat them, join them" attitude eventually overtook *The New York Daily Tribune* who in 1890 admitted after many an adverse editorial that their readers wanted to know what was going on in the vacation camp meetings, and published schedules of events at local meetings.

A daily agenda for the 1887 camp meeting at Ocean Grove mirrors others presented to campers of the day:

1. Consecration meeting in Tabernacle, 5:45 a.m. to 6:45 a.m.
2. Family devotions, Auditorium, 6:45 a.m. to 7:00 a.m.
3. Holiness meeting, Tabernacle, 9:00 a.m.
4. Public services, Auditorium, 10:30 a.m., 3:00 p.m. and 7:30 p.m.
5. Mrs. Lizzie Smith's meeting (holiness) Tabernacle, 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.
6. Mother's Meeting, Temple, 2:00 p.m.
7. Helping Hand Tent, 4:30 p.m.
8. Workers' Training Class, Temple, 4:30 p.m.
9. Twilight Service, Temple, 6:30 p.m.
10. Infant Baptism, Wednesday, 31<sup>st</sup> at 9:00 a.m. sharp, followed by closing exercises.

(Section above Charles A. Parker, "The Camp Meeting on the Frontier and the Methodist Religious Resort in the East—Before 1900" *Methodist History* 18, no. 3 (1980), 183-84, 191.)

### Keswick Movement

Though diametrically opposed in theology, the Keswick movement's can be traced in part to the holiness movement of the National Camp Meeting Association. Two of the Keswick's early leaders, husband and wife team of Robert Pearsall Smith and Hannah Whiteall Smith, attended the 1868 national Camp Meeting in Manheim, Pennsylvania, a few years prior to Keswick's inauguration. Founded in 1875, the movement gained recognition and impacted

religious organizations worldwide. Today they remain two permanent sites in the United States, including "America's Keswick," in Whiting, New Jersey.

#### The Christian Assembly Grounds

Still active across the United States, Christian assembly grounds were established as an answer to complaints that camp meeting sites were left unused once the summer events were over. Thus, Christian assembly grounds could handle multiple meetings at the same site, and often more than one event at a time.

#### The Denominational Camp Meeting

Certainly, Methodists held more camp meetings than any other denomination, but camp meetings were also held by other denominations. The denominational camp meeting resembles its ancestors closer than any other descendant. Not including youth camps, the number of denominational camps numbers between 3,000 and 10,000—a wide range, because many meetings are small and may not be counted by their presiding church as camp meetings.

#### The Pentecostal Camp Meeting

The modern Pentecostal or charismatic movement is in part an outgrowth of camp meetings, and camp meetings serve the denomination well even today in their revivals. Some would say that the movement had its beginnings back in 1896 when B.H. Irwin preached his "baptism of fire" sermon at camp meetings in Iowa and Kansas. These transient pentecostal camp meetings were not replaced until April 1906 during what has come to be known as the "American Jerusalem" held at Los Angeles' Azusa Street Mission Revival. By the 1920s, the Pentecostals were using camp meetings as a regular part of their revivals regardless of whether they were fixed or transient campsites.

### The Family Camping Movement

Family camping originated at camp meetings, as it was necessary for families to take with them all of their provisions for the length of the meeting. There were preachers who catered to children as well, and preached to them so that they could understand the word of God. Notably, Martha Inskip did so at the National Holiness Camp Meetings, and was soon known as the Children's Apostle. Similarly, children camping under the flag of a church may have begun in 1880 when Reverend George W. Hinkley took seven boys from his West Hartford, Connecticut parish to Gardner's Island in Rhode Island. Following this idea, organizations sprang up imitating the feat, including the Young Men's Christian Association (1885), the Boy Scouts of America whose founder impressed Juliet "Daisy" Gordon Low, who in turn founded the Girl Scouts of America in Savannah, Georgia.

### Tabernacle Revivalism

Taking their cue from brush arbors of earlier camp meetings, some traveling revivalists used canvass tents under which an entire audience could be sheltered from weather. Soon, when a dedicated band of people in a community could make such a commitment, they would add walls and flooring and have a permanent structure to the strengthened portable tent for their church. Examples of Tabernacle Revivalism have been in use by such revivalists as Dwight L. Moody, Sam Jones, Henry Clay Morrison, Oral Roberts and Billy Graham—though the more recent tents have been far grander than their primitive elders have.

### The Christian Conference Center

The Christian conference center of the twentieth century offers Christians a year-round facility to hold meetings of various sizes. Many facilities arrange for the program, speakers, music, food, and activities, and are usually open to every denomination.

### The Christian Retreat Center

Similar to the conference center, the Christian retreat center offers visitors meals, sleeping accommodations, and support personnel, but it is up to the visitors to plan their programs. Able to house small or large groups, many centers can cater to the needs of many groups at one time.

### Other Modes of Christian Camping

Other offshoots of Christian camping include camps geared toward young people, many of which involve travel and mission work.

### The Christian Rock Festival

A Christian folk or rock festival draws enormous crowds, and like its ancestor camp meetings, boasts a variety of entertainment possibilities all in the same venue. The nation's largest festival is "Creation" held at Agape Farm near Shirleysburg, Pennsylvania.

### Christian Camping International

Christian Camp International (CCI) is the brainchild of some 1950s camp leaders who felt Christian camping could be better promoted and organized. While it has changed names since its founding from Christian Camps and Conferences Association to its present-day name of CCI, the organization runs an active worldwide, nondenominational ministry.

## APPENDIX 2

Survey Form Historic, Religious Camp Meeting Grounds in Georgia

Name\_\_\_\_\_Founded\_\_\_\_\_

City\_\_\_\_\_County\_\_\_\_\_

Address\_\_\_\_\_

Location\_\_\_\_\_

RDC\_\_\_\_\_USGS Quad\_\_\_\_\_

Chartered\_\_\_\_\_Incorporated\_\_\_\_\_

Owner\_\_\_\_\_Denomination\_\_\_\_\_

Deed\_\_\_\_\_Plat/Survey\_\_\_\_\_Acerage\_\_\_\_\_

If no plat, is there an informal drawing of the site? \_\_\_\_\_

Legal Description\_\_\_\_\_

Shape\_\_\_\_\_Aerial Shot\_\_\_\_\_

Tax Map\_\_\_\_\_

Trees/shrubs\_\_\_\_\_

Other landscape features\_\_\_\_\_

Is there a written history of site? Title? \_\_\_\_\_

Annual Meeting Date\_\_\_\_\_

History of Arbor/Tabernacle (Date constructed, etc.)\_\_\_\_\_

Dimensions of Arbor/Tabernacle\_\_\_\_\_

Type of construction (i.e. hand-hewn)\_\_\_\_\_

Estimated number Arbor will seat\_\_\_\_\_Floor: Dirt\_\_\_\_\_Concrete\_\_\_\_\_

Number of Tents\_\_\_\_\_Historic\_\_\_\_\_Non-historic\_\_\_\_\_

Contributing\_\_\_\_\_

Non-contributing \_\_\_\_\_

Is there a history of the ownership/construction date of the tents? \_\_\_\_\_

Are there rules about the use of the tents/cabin? \_\_\_\_\_

What \_\_\_\_\_

Is their new construction? \_\_\_\_\_

Are there other buildings at the site? \_\_\_\_\_

Cemetery \_\_\_\_\_ Location \_\_\_\_\_

Church \_\_\_\_\_ Age \_\_\_\_\_

Other comments \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Interesting information about the site \_\_\_\_\_

Is the site on the National Register? \_\_\_\_\_

Listed in what name? \_\_\_\_\_

Contacts \_\_\_\_\_

Are there any threats to the campground's future? \_\_\_\_\_



## APPENDIX 3

The following is the 1838 Charter for Fountain Camp Ground copied from state records.

## AN ACT

To incorporate the Methodist Episcopal Camp Ground in the county of Warren, known by the Name of "Fountain Camp Ground."

WHEREAS, a portion of the citizens of the county of Warren, and the adjacent counties, have located and made permanent, by purchase, a tract of land, containing two hundred acres, more or less, in the county of Warren, for use of a Camp Meeting Ground, known as Fountain Camp Ground; and whereas, it is necessary for the promotion of religion and virtue, that Churches or Religious Societies, be made capable of holding, enjoying and defending, any property which they may acquire by purchase, donation or otherwise.

SECTION 1. *Be it therefore enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the State of Georgia in General Assembly met, and it is hereby enacted by the authority of the same,* That Spivy Fuller, Seaborn Dozier, Reuben Webster, William Gresham, John H. Beall, Alpheus Fuller, Thomas H. White, Aaron T. Kendrick, and Henry W. Massengale, and their successors in office, be, and they are hereby declared to be, a body corporate, by the name and style of "Trustees of the Fountain Methodist Episcopal Camp Ground, at Fountain Warren County."

SEC. 2. *And be it further enacted,* That the said Trustees and their successors in office, shall be invested with all manner of property, real or personal, all monies due, or to become due, donations, gifts, grants, purchases privileges and immunities whatsoever, which shall or may belong to the said Fountain Methodist Episcopal Camp Ground, at the time of passing this act, including the tract of land where said Fountain Camp Ground is situate, containing two hundred

acres, be the same more or less, having such shape, mark, and boundaries, as is contained in a deed of conveyance from John Nesbit and Aaron T. Kendrick, to Spivey Fuller, Seaborn Dozier, Reuben Webster, Wm. Gresham, John H. Beall, Alpeus Fuller, Thomas H. White, Aaron T. Kendrick, and Henry W. Massengale, by the name and style of the Trustees of Fountain Camp Ground, in Warren county, and also all property which may hereafter be conveyed or transferred to them, or their successors in office, to have, and to hold the same, to proper use, benefit, and behoof, of said Trustees in office shall, and they are hereby declared to be capable of suing and being sued, impleading and being impleaded, and of using all legal and necessary steps for recovering or defending any property whatever, which said Camp Ground or Church may hold, claim or demand; and also for recovering the rents, issues, and profits of the same, or any part or parcel thereof.

SEC. 3. *And be it further enacted*, That when any vacancy map happen in the Trustees, by death, resignation, or otherwise, that a majority of the Trustees in office shall, and are hereby required to fill any and every such vacancy, or vacancies, from time to time.

SEC. 4. *And be it further enacted*, That the said Trustees have full power to make all by-laws and regulations in relation to the property of said Camp Ground, and for preserving good order and quiet during the public worship of God, and any and every meeting, and other matters, as they, or a majority of them, may deem proper, and which are not inconsistent with the laws and constitution of this State.

SEC. 5. *And be it further enacted*, That all the rights, privileges, franchises, and immunities, hereby and herein granted, shall continue for the space and term of thirty years from the passage of this act, and no longer.

JOSEPH DAY, Speaker of the House of Representatives.

CHARLES DOUGHERTY, President of the Senate.

Assented to 31<sup>st</sup> December, 1838.

GEORGE R. GILMER, Governor.

## APPENDIX 4

## GLOSSARY

“Camp Meeting” This is an elusive term, one that may pre-date the American Revolution. The term has traditionally been used to refer to an outdoor religious gathering, usually held over several days during the summer by evangelical sects such as Methodist and Baptists, and characterized by emotional fervor. Today, this term is difficult to define due to the variety of usage. It may be used to describe a district camp, a children’s camp, a youth camp, a family camp, etc., and they may not necessarily be held outside nor do the attendees necessarily camp or otherwise sustain themselves. These all comprise part of the meaning of the term ‘camp meeting’ for today’s church. See the appendix for a complete listing of these modern camp meeting descendents.

“Stand” One of the earliest outdoor religious forms, often called the “preacher’s stand.” Sometimes elevated, it consisted of a pulpit and an overhanging roof for protection from the weather. Many times the pulpit consisted only of a tree stump in the woods. Such stands appear to have been in popular use before 1750. At later camp meetings the ‘stand’ referred to the preacher’s platform, and some of these were built large enough to accommodate visiting ministers and even a choir.

“Brush Arbors” An impermanent shelter consisting of a leafy, shaded recess formed by tree branches, a trellis, or lattice work, sometimes found in gardens and pleasure grounds; also a shaded alley or walk. The earliest camp meetings utilized ‘brush arbors’ to protect the preacher and the people from the extremes of weather. They sometimes resembled a lean-to, or tent, and have been depicted in some of the earliest drawings. They have also been called “harbors” because of the basic function of shielding people from the weather.

Easily constructed, easily dismantled, this basic form was used by itinerant revivalists well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

“Arbors” An open-air area where church congregations or revival gatherings met for preaching and communal services. Church arbors often consisted of covered shelters made from trees, branches, and vines supported on a framework under which ministers preached and some listeners gathered. In the early 19<sup>th</sup> century the temporary and rustic nature of such arbors was sometimes lost as congregations and camp meeting sponsors converted the canvas tents and preaching shed of camp meeting grounds into more substantial and permanent structures. The large, framed, open preaching sheds that evolved continued to be called *arbors*, and the small wooden houses around them *tents* especially in the south.

“Tents” The earliest and most common usage of this term applied to living quarters for campers. It did not necessarily mean a canvas tent, but could simply indicate sleeping quarters with a brush roof. The use of canvas tents for living quarters at camp meeting probably dates before 1800. Some campgrounds later improved the “tent city,” as canvas quarters were called, by adding wood floors or sides. These ‘tents’ are still used each year at some campgrounds, such as Ocean Grove, New Jersey. In the south the term ‘tent’ often applies to the small wooden houses surrounding the ‘arbor’ or tabernacle as defined above.

“Tabernacles” A house of worship especially one for a large congregation and often applied to those nonconformist denominations and sects. The term is sometimes applied to temporary places of worship. The main sanctuary on any camp meeting ground is called the tabernacle. It is the structure in which campers gather for preaching or sacramental services. A tabernacle may be made of wood, metal or canvas.

“Fire Altars” or “Fire Stands” Stands erected in the four corners of the tabernacle or arbor consisting of earthen covered platforms on raised tripods some up to six feet. Bark, twigs, or ‘pine wood fires’ burned on top of a layer of earth and sod.