

Thousands partook of these opportunities during these years of growth and hundreds contributed leadership including the men who have served as General Executive of the association. Of the latter, great was the contribution of William J. Jones who served in that capacity longer than any other - from Sept. 1921 to August 1947, and Roland W. Ure from 1947 until his retirement in 1963.

CAMP SARGENT HISTORY

As remembered by Frederic Shaw - October 1993....

I was 10 years old when I went to Camp Sargent, that means it must have been 1924. An important person involved with camp was William J. Jones, who was General Secretary of the YMCA when it was located on Temple Street. He was the spark plug of many projects at the Y. A small dynamic man who had a strong Hi Y, boys department, athletic teams, gymnastics groups and of course he was the quarterback of the very beginning of Camp Sargent. He served as the General Executive of the YMCA from Sept. 1921 to August 1947.

The Camp is named Sargent to honor Eaton D. Sargent who was at one time the Mayor of Nashua, a prominent businessman, President of the White Mountain Freezer Company, President of the YMCA and I suspect that he gave money to the YMCA for the acquisition of the land and buildings now considered to be Camp Sargent property.

The other men I remember are Clarence Maxhem, a builder in Nashua, and my father Elijah Ray Shaw. In my first year, as these pictures show, the lodge was still standing, a big white building. The dining hall was a large tent attached to the kitchen area of the lodge and we slept in tents. My father was a member of the NH National Guard, and they had mustered earlier for the Mexican Rebellion. I believe the two tents in this picture were military tents, most likely borrowed or absconded from the military establishment in Concord, and at age 10, I went along with the tents.

I remember the camp director and many of the boy campers. The director was the minister of the Arlington Street Methodist Church, most likely recruited by Bill Jones, and most of the boys came from the Crown Hill area of Nashua. Individuals such as John Cate, Ray Little, Ray Peters, Messer Shattuck, Harley Harmon, Joe Adams, and so forth. I guess they have all passed through this material world, but I'm trying to track down through the current minister at the church, the actual name of that camp director.

Let's switch over to the second year. The six cabins in this picture were built during that second year. These cabins were donated by the Nashua Lions Club, Rotary Club, Young Business Men's Club and other groups like that. That same year came the building of the dining hall on the west side of the camp and it is still there. As the camp grew we added 6 more cabins. When we changed from resident camping to day camping, cabins were moved to different locations largely to keep various age groups separated or girls and boys separated. As time went by we brought in the Navy Seabees and Army engineers reserves to build a new dock, a bathhouse, a pavilion which was on the left side going down to the lake and was later enclosed. Sometime in there, the lodge burned flat to the ground, so it became necessary to quickly acquire another building. There happened to be a large barn located in the center of, what today, is the baseball field. We moved that barn to where the lodge is now located, and a porch was added to expand the usefull space. It's still there with many repairs over the years.

Let's go to the third year of camp. David Campbell, former Police Chief of Litchfield, was a camper that year. He's in his 80's now and not in good health. Also, as the camp kept growing some outstanding boys came from Hollis such as Henry Hilldreth and Henry Hills. As

camp continued to grow, the Nashua YMCA had an exchange program with campers from Fall River Massachusetts. That also grew into an exchange program with the local Y with basketball games back and forth. I remember one of them very vividly because I got into a difference of opinion with the opposing center on their team and later in the locker room we got into a fist fight. I wouldn't want to report who won or who lost, but I do know that when I went home my father said, "What happened to You?" I had a substantial cut over my left eye. My father had earlier taken me to the Nashua YMCA to sign up for boxing lessons from the physical director who's name was Holmes. The whole purpose was to teach me how to defend myself, and not lose so many fights in the school yard!

That story was a fable, exaggerated by neighborhood boys over the years, of course as you know I have a very peaceful and gentle personality.

I'd like to wrap this up with a couple more thoughts. I've had the good fortune to locate Philip Sargent who is the son of Eaton D. Sargent. He is now 86 years old and living in Hancock NH. I knew him as a boy. After speaking with him, he said he would like to come down some day and talk to us about his memories of the camp. I would also like to show him the Merrimack YMCA facility.

I have a number of pictures that I would like to contribute. Some are from friends and I have more in my cellar collection. I may need some help with that project.

Let me add this, the minister from the Arlington Street Church just called me to give me the name of that first camp director. His name was the Reverend Glen M. Frye.

Here is a short history of the Shaw family participation in Camp Sargent. Captain Elijah M. Shaw, a Civil War Veteran who came to Nashua in the late 1800's to be the General Manager of the Nashua Manufacturing Company. After turning it around to a profitable situation, he retired and built a house at 85 Concord Street in Nashua. He became interested in a lot of charitable efforts, particularly in the group that founded the Nashua YMCA in the old Goodrich block on Main Street (corner of Water Street & Main). He served as President of the Board for the first few months, and then retired to work on other projects. He also owned a cottage out at the camp that later became known as the Shaw Cottage. My father would tell me the story that Capt. Shaw would hitch up his team of horses and go out there to spend a few days. I don't recall when the cottage became known as the Shaw Cottage. It probably happened this way, my grandfather died in 1903 and my father then inherited the property. It was sold to some people from Pepperell Massachusetts who also owned the big white lodge. We could determine those dates through research at the Register of Deeds Office.

I started camp at age 10 and came up through the ranks of the Nashua YMCA. I was president from 1952 through 1957. When I retired from this position Rupert Kimball, who was the Chairman of the Camp Sargent Committee, asked me to take over his position and I did so for about 20 years. We had a great experience. A lot of wonderful people served on that committee. At one time the Camp Director was Orwell Towsley, then another man named Baker, and then along came George LaRocque Sr. who did a great service for many years.

I had three children who went to Camp Sargent. My wife, Muriel Evans Shaw went to camp for one night and hated it so much that she walked down the road to call her mother to pick her up!

I think it's important to know why and when Camp Sargent changed from a resident camp to a day camp. Resident camping in the early days was a great success. Boys would go for 4 weeks then the girls went for 4. Time went by and we began to find that changing staffs in mid-stream created a problems. Staff quality declined as we couldn't pay two staffs enough as the years went by, and then there was the matter of the kitchen facilities and staff. During those resident days the cook was Andy Boyle who used to come up from Boston.

He loved the place. The Camp Committee decided to analyze the pros and cons of a resident camp versus day camp & family camping in order to help make a good decision. They decided to make the change, because the latter would be easier to control with less cost involved, and better serve the growing population in the area. That analysis also clearly showed the area candidates for resident camp found it more exciting and rewarding to get away to such Y camps as Belknap, Coniston, and Huckins.

This is a hasty recollection of YMCA Camp Sargent History. I have some materials on the Camp Sargent Committee reports and much of the promotional material used to develop and fund the Y building in Nashua, all tucked away in my storage area!

RECENT HISTORY

The programs of YMCA service today have grown to a scope of which its founders could but have dreamed. All programs are open to boys and girls; men and women of all ages. building exists much the same way today except for some minor additions, some renovations, and additional parking.

Over the past several years the YMCA board was looking once again for a means to expand, in order to meet the ever increasing needs of the surrounding community. Architectural plans were undertaken to enlarge the Prospect St. facility as well as plans to build an additional facility at another location. In December of 1992, under the guidance of then President Christopher Fleming, this dream became a reality. The YMCA was fortunate enough to have the opportunity to purchase the former Merrimack Athletic Club located at 6 Henry Clay Drive in Merrimack. This full facility now houses The Merrimack YMCA, a branch of the YMCA of Nashua and the association's Corporate Offices. The Board of Directors still remain committed to the Nashua facility and all of the existing programs will continue unabated.

The YMCA is excited about the opportunity to continue serving the surrounding community, specifically in family programming and after school care; programs that are consistent with the YMCA mission.

In March of 1993 Darlene Stromstad of St. Joseph Hospital was elected as President of the YMCA Board of Directors. Although women have been members of the board, Ms. Stromstad is the first woman to hold the position of President.

HEY GANG, LOOK CAMP SARGENT!

