

THESIS

“THE TONIC OF WILDNESS”: RELIGION AND THE ENVIRONMENT AT THE YMCA OF
THE ROCKIES

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ABSTRACT

“THE TONIC OF WILDNESS”: RELIGION AND THE ENVIRONMENT AT THE YMCA OF THE ROCKIES

Americans in the 1920s and 30s were fascinated with the idea of a pure, untrammelled wilderness, particularly as an antidote to the perceived depravity and degeneracy of urban environments. Looking for sites of wilderness that might promote environmental engagement among children and adolescents, American educators and parents identified the YMCA of the Rockies in Estes Park, Colorado, as a place that perfectly embodied the ideal wilderness. Summer programs at the YMCA of the Rockies encouraged participants to actively engage with the wilderness setting of the region while simultaneously reaching for spiritual and moral growth. The summer camps and programs offered at and through the YMCA of the Rockies provided opportunities for children to engage with an ideal wilderness and thereby strengthen their relationship to the divine, improve their moral character, and build up their physical health. By analyzing the culture and context of the 1920s and 30s, the ways in which the summer programs promoted their camps, and the extent to which campers embraced and internalized the lessons offered at these summer programs associated with the YMCA of the Rockies, this thesis will deepen historians' understanding of the critical role that early-twentieth-century wilderness values were intended to have towards leading young boys and girls toward lives of spiritual, moral, and physical uprightness. It will also reveal significant differences in the way that wilderness values and camp settings were expected to shape the maturation of boys and girls.

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DEDICATION

For Dad, who first fostered my love of the wilderness and always answered my questions with
patience and love.

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INTRODUCTION

The young camper breathes in the crisp, pure air as she hikes through the woods. Her steps are punctuated by the crunch of dried twigs and shriveled leaves, the sounds startling the tranquility of the forest. As the breeze heightens, the trees sway and rustle around her, gracefully obeying the touch of the wind. A cheerful songbird adds its melody to the symphony of sounds; the squirrels chatter, disturbing the concert, as talkative spectators are wont to do. To the young camper, this is “true wilderness,” devoid of human interference or modification. She does not recognize the harsh cut of the trail through the forest—its trammeled dirt a stark contrast to the lush grass and flowers surrounding the path—as a human creation. The young camper may also not see the shriveled tree stumps along the trail, the artfully placed landscaping stones, and the decaying debris left behind by other hikers. No, to hike in these woods is to engage with the earth—an opportunity to escape from human impact, a reflection of pure nature.

The idea of an unsullied, untouched, untrammeled wilderness has appealed to modern, urban Americans since the late nineteenth century. To engage with a place that was truly “wild” and a reflection of its original design, to escape from the bustle and fog of the city, or to reinvigorate oneself with the fresh, clean air, had enormous appeal to people whose ordinary lives seemed hemmed in by tall buildings, paved streets, and belching smokestacks. “Wilderness” was, however, a concept that had undergone dramatic change over the course of early American history, from being a place of danger to a place of sublime awe. As Roderick Nash asserts in *Wilderness and the American Mind*, colonial Euro-Americans viewed the wilderness as “unimproved” nature and associated it with evil, moral degeneracy, and disorder, while civilization was the epitome of beauty, order, and God’s blessings; it took human

civilization, inspired by God's word, to transform what had once been wilderness into a place of reverence and in which God was present.¹ This early perception of the wilderness shifted dramatically, albeit slowly, as America became an industrial urban nation. With modernization, Americans reinvented the wilderness, seeing it as a place of purity, infused with divine spirit, developing eventually into the wilderness ideal of a pristine, untrammelled environment. As they sought to renew themselves in wilderness settings, modern Americans tended to ignore the numerous ways in which wilderness access, stewardship, and preservation depended upon modern interventions. In the modern era, "wilderness" depended, for its continued existence, on an industrial and touristic infrastructure. From the construction of roads and lodges in parks affecting the physical qualities of the wilderness, to the public's mental characterization of wilderness, the features of "wild places" in the twentieth century were a product of the time. But it was an understanding of wilderness as a place of purity, timeless and separate from society, which marked summer programs and camps in the early twentieth century. Throughout the 1920s and 30s, the summer programs offered at the YMCA of the Rockies promoted opportunities for children to engage in true "wilderness" and thereby offset the deficiencies and problems of urban life. Camp leaders promised parents and children that living in the wilderness would enhance health and physicality while also strengthening campers' spirituality and faith.

Examining the early twentieth-century summer programs at the YMCA of the Rockies reveals how the religious and urban culture of the time produced, in the unique space of a Rocky Mountain environment, summer programs that wedded modern wilderness values to the spiritual, moral, and physical improvement of youth. Combining a fascination with wilderness with an overt focus on religious development at the YMCA of the Rockies, these summer programs were

¹ Roderick Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 24.

unique and ideal places in which a child could grow—in health, spirit, and mind. The culture and context of the 1920s and 30s reveal a fascination with this ideal wilderness, as noted by several scholars. The fascination influenced the national park system, peoples’ engagement with the natural environment and spurred a growth of involvement in and desire to attend summer camp programs in the wilderness. The YMCA of the Rockies provided a picturesque, ostensibly pristine environment that perfectly emulated the wilderness ideal. In response to both the environment and the context of the time, camp creators and program managers created programs and activities that were well-suited for participants seeking to encounter the wilderness while also improving themselves by engaging with nature.

The YMCA of the Rockies was, at this time, an increasingly popular vacation spot. Founded in 1908—in response to the growing YMCA movement throughout Colorado—the YMCA of the Rockies became the site of the Western Conference of the Young Men’s Christian Association, a YMCA group that was searching for a suitable place for inspiration, rest, and reinvigoration for their summer retreat.² The Western Conference of the YMCA bought the property after a resoundingly successful summer retreat in 1908 and founded the YMCA of the Rockies with a vision of constructing permanent lodges and buildings to house the ever-more numerous visitors.³ In subsequent years, the popular weeklong summer retreat transformed into a variety of summer schools, and the YMCA of the Rockies became an increasingly popular site of spiritual and physical reinvigoration for the many men and their families who vacationed in the picturesque location. Building on this site as a place of spiritual inspiration, the YMCA founded several summer programs for children as early as 1908, programs that were incredibly popular

² Jack R. Melton and Lulabeth Melton, *YMCA of the Rockies: Reflections, Traditions & Vision* (Estes Park: YMCA of the Rockies, 2006), 19.

³ Melton and Melton, *YMCA of the Rockies: Reflections, Traditions & Vision*, 34.

and which parents perceived as invaluable to their children's moral, spiritual, and physical education.

This focus on and encouragement of spirituality and the Christian faith was singular to the summer programs hosted at or through the YMCA of the Rockies, an idea that has thus far been neglected in historical research. Historians have, however, long considered the role of an idealized definition of wilderness, addressing its implications in two main historiographical areas: the landscape of summer camps and various religious traditions' connections to the environment. Also important to this study, however, is research that has been conducted on the YMCA and its ideologies and philosophies. While historians have not often considered the role of summer programs held at YMCA facilities, the philosophies and goals that guided the organization are essential to evaluating and analyzing the goals of localized summer programs—notably, a concern with the vice of urban settings.

Fascination with an untrammelled wilderness can be drawn back to the musings of Emerson and Thoreau, of whom the latter recommended the “tonic of wildness” as a way in which people could reconnect with the environment. The allure and awe of the wilderness inspired many other Americans, as well—from John Muir to Enos Mills, the perceived pureness of nature was enthralling. In the 1970s, too, two writers—Calvin Rutstrum and Sigurd Olson—waxed poetic on the appeals of the wilderness. Discussing the “true essence” of nature, both authors utilized the written word as a means of promoting engagement with true wilderness. Olson offered a poetic and philosophic perspective on the ways in which one may engage with nature, appealing to its transformative and meditative effects, and thus encouraged his readers to find this wilderness for themselves.⁴ Rutstrum also promoted this vision of the wilderness, and

⁴ Sigurd F. Olson, *Wilderness Days*, Fesler-Lampert Minnesota Heritage Book Series (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012), x.

organized his book as a “how to” guide for engaging with the wilderness, offering advice on how to best “scrutinize” or reflect on the natural world through experiential, hands-on visits to the wilderness, as opposed to requiring a scientific understanding of the wilderness.⁵

A more recent and historical examination of the United States’ fascination with the wilderness, however, is well found in Robert Keiter’s monograph, *To Conserve Unimpaired: The Evolution of the National Park Idea*. Keiter asserts that the Organic Act of 1916 has largely shaped the ways in which national parks are conceived and managed, resulting in an unrealistic and pristine vision of the natural landscape these environments offer. Consequently, Keiter wrote his monograph as a means of encouraging his readers to “see the national parks as they are,” so that they may recognize the many obstacles, challenges, guidelines, and imperfections within the national park system and the wilderness these parks offer.⁶ This invaluable, and recent, analysis is extremely applicable to the idealistic vision of the wilderness in general. As other historians—such as Abigail Van Slyck and Leslie Paris, both discussed later—demonstrate, construction within natural spaces is intended to create an idealized vision of nature. Summer campgrounds and their built landscapes are intended to be perceived as natural environments rather than a construction of idealized wilderness. While Keiter focuses his research and analysis to national parks, the same vision of the wilderness may be applied to this study.

Historians have studied the applications and implications of this understanding of wilderness only recently. One facet of this understanding is the constructed landscape of summer camps and the ways in which these reflect the ideal of wilderness. Abigail Van Slyck, for example, in her monograph *A Manufactured Wilderness: Summer Camps and the Shaping of*

⁵ Calvin Rutstrum, *The Wilderness Life*, Fesler-Lampert Minnesota Heritage Book Series (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004), ix.

⁶ Robert B. Keiter, *To Conserve Unimpaired: The Evolution of the National Park Idea* (Washington, D.C.: Island Press, 2013), xiv-xv.

American Youth, 1890-1960, examines the built landscape of summer camps, noting the ways in which the camps manufactured a wilderness that would meet the ideals and “expectations of campers and their parents.”⁷ In particular, Van Slyck situates the American summer camp in opposition to urban life, asserting that the wilderness and nature these summer camps promoted was simply a construction of what urban families desired from the wilderness. Furthermore, the emphasis on this “manufactured wilderness” is further demonstrated in the architecture of the camps themselves—the rudimentary and basic structures within the camp, recreational activities designed to be held outdoors, etc. The placement of these camps in the wilderness and the examination of this landscape will support the questions at the heart of this research, yet Van Slyck focuses her analysis only on the landscape and not the ways in which the landscape and the education programming at these summer camps interacted.

In yet another examination of summer camps, Leslie Paris studies multiple aspects of the “summer camp” experience: the adults who organized and structured the camps, the goals of the camps themselves and the ways in which these goals changed over time, children’s experiences in summer camps, and the changing ideologies and structures of summer camps during the interwar years.⁸ These summer camps promoted themselves as institutions that taught children how to live in a “healthful, cultural, and constructive manner,” goals that were best achieved in the wilderness.⁹ Indeed, these values would then be taught to future generations, as parents—who themselves were former campers—encouraged their children to attend these camps and engage with this vision of nature. Paris’ monograph will also bolster the research for this study,

⁷ Abigail Van Slyck, *A Manufactured Wilderness: Summer Camps and the Shaping of American Youth, 1890-1960* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), xx.

⁸ Leslie Paris, *Children’s Nature: The Rise of the American Summer Camp* (New York: New York University Press, 2008), 2.

⁹ Paris, *Children’s Nature*, 3.

in particular the educational ideologies of the American summer camp, though she does not focus on the religious aspects of camp education and experiences.

Samuel Hays's monograph, *Conservation and the Gospel of Efficiency: The Progressive Conservation Movement, 1890-1920*, informs this thesis due to its examination of the cultural and environmental context of the years preceding the 1920s and 30s. In his study, Hays asserts that conservation at this time focused more on the ways in which the land was utilized as opposed to who owned the land—a “scientific” conservation movement as opposed to a political one. This focus on the use of the land is intriguing and may have informed the ways in which the YMCA of the Rockies sought to utilize the land in the early twentieth century; it certainly informed Keiter, Van Slyck, and Paris's examinations, all of which consider the ways in which the environment has been utilized by various groups. The summer programs offered at the YMCA of the Rockies emphasized engagement with the natural environment, and Hays's study provides substantial evidence for the reasons behind this. However, this interpretation of the reasons behind environmental engagement neglects to consider the role of religion—a gap this thesis will fill. As these scholars assert, the wilderness and a certain perception of the wilderness has informed peoples' uses of this natural space, an idea that is certainly reflected in the summer programs held at the YMCA of the Rockies.

Several scholars have also examined the ways in which spirituality and the wilderness have been interrelated, though they do not necessarily consider the historicity of these themes. Roger Gottlieb, for example, focuses on a specific type of philosophy known as “ecothology” in his studies; this philosophy is used to examine the ways in which various religions focus on the environment in their theologies. The volume has four stated goals: to draw from and reinterpret religious texts and traditions in order to ascertain environmental concerns inherent in them; to

extend agreed upon religious values to include nature; to synthesize elements from a variety of traditions to further their ecotheology; and to consider the ways in which others establish new religious traditions and values that include a concern for nature.¹⁰ Gottlieb defines religion to involve a variety of beliefs and faith traditions and considers many different traditions throughout his edited volume, stating: “By ‘religion’ I mean those systems of belief, ritual, institutional life, spiritual aspiration, and ethical orientation which are premised on an understanding of human beings as *other* or *more than* simply their purely social or physical identities [emphasis in original].”¹¹ His work is useful for better understanding the ways in which religion and the environment may be linked and the tenets of ecotheology may be applied to this study.

Similarly linking the environment to religion—through environmental history rather than religious history or analysis—Thomas Dunlap, in his monograph *Faith in Nature: Environmentalism as Religious Quest*, asserts that environmentalism as a movement must focus more on religiosity as a means of better promoting the cause. This is not, however, an assertion that religion and the environment are or have been intricately linked, but an argument for the ways in which environmentalists may benefit from some aspects of religious quests. The connection between environmentalism and religion may influence an analysis of environmental educational programs at the YMCA of the Rockies, though Dunlap does not explicitly link religion and religious ideologies to the environment, as the summer programs of the YMCA did. In an earlier examination of religious connections to the environment, David Cooper and Joy Palmer compiled various essays on the ways in which the human relationship with the land was linked to religion in their edited volume, *Spirit of the Environment: Religion, Value and*

¹⁰ Roger S. Gottlieb, ed., *This Sacred Earth: Religion, Nature, Environment*, 2nd ed. (New York and London: Routledge, 2004), 11.

¹¹ Gottlieb, ed., *This Sacred Earth*, 8.

Environmental Concern. In particular, one aspect of this volume analyzes “nature as a source and object of wonder,” a perspective that is in many ways applicable to the use of the environment as a classroom and haven for religion.¹² This thesis builds upon these scholars’ examinations of spirituality by consider the role of wilderness in regards to spirituality within the YMCA of the Rockies’ summer programs.

Despite these analyses of religion and its connection to the environment and the environmental history of the early twentieth century, the field of environmental history has yet to fully consider the role of religion as a means of better understanding the field. Indeed, the latest edition of *The Oxford Handbook of Environmental History*, a review of the study of environmental history and its various trends and developments over time, uniformly neglects to consider religion in relation to environmental history. Particularly striking is the absence of religion in the second part of the handbook, which is entitled “Knowing Nature.” As Andrew Isenberg states in his introduction, environmental historians “must wrestle in their efforts to integrate their field with other approaches.”¹³ The historians in this handbook consider solely the influence of scientific understanding—that is, environmental engagement and knowledge that has been furthered through scientific study—though, as this thesis will demonstrate, these YMCA summer programs sought to inspire their campers to better understand and “know” the environment through the lens of religion and vice versa. This trend—of neglecting the ways in which religion has been utilized to better understand and “know” the environment—is reflected

¹² David E. Cooper and Joy A. Palmer, eds., *Spirit of the Environment: Religion, Value, and Environmental Concern* (London: Routledge, 1998), x.

¹³ Andrew Isenberg, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of Environmental History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 11.

in other encyclopedias on environmental history.¹⁴ Thus, while many scholars question the role of religion in relation to the environment, the ways in which it may be connected to both religious and environmental history remains a gap in the historiographical literature. Both religious and environmental historians may benefit from an analysis of the connections between the two and the ways in which each informed the other throughout history.

A third historiographical field must be examined in order to effectively establish an historiographical niche for this study. The history of the YMCA has been the subject of a number of scholars' works, and several monographs analyze the ideologies of the YMCA and the history of its programs in particular. Thomas Winter, for example, examines the ideals of manhood articulated by the YMCA, arguing that men of the middle class and workingmen in urban environments were able to articulate new ideals of masculinity through their participation in the YMCA and its programs.¹⁵ In contrast to the analysis offered by Winter, other histories of the YMCA seek to document the major events or movements within the organization's history. C. Howard Hopkins, for example, in his 1951 history of the YMCA entitled *History of the YMCA in North America*, offers a detailed presentation of the organization's past, focusing on its notable leaders, the origins of the YMCA in the United States, and the various movements within the organization's history.¹⁶

Building upon Hopkins' broad history, Nina Mjagkij and Margaret Spratt present a volume on the history of the YMCA and YWCA as service organizations in specifically urban

¹⁴ See also: Kathleen A. Brosnan, *Encyclopedia of American Environmental History* (New York: Facts on File, 2011); Shepard Krech, John McNeill, and Carolyn Merchant, *Encyclopedia of World Environmental History* (New York: Routledge, 2004).

¹⁵ Thomas Winter, *Making Men, Making Class: The YMCA and Workingmen, 1877-1920* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 5.

¹⁶ C. Howard Hopkins, *History of the YMCA in North America* (New York: Association Press, 1951).

settings, also examining changes in the organization's programs and values over time.¹⁷

Similarly, David MacCleod and Bruce Gore, in their monograph *Building Character in the American Boy: The Boy Scouts, YMCA, and Their Forerunners, 1870-1920*, analyze the ways in which the YMCA proffered itself as a “character-building” organization, as it focused on improving moral and religious character of boys in the middle class.¹⁸ These, and many other studies, are useful for better understanding the history of the YMCA, several of which note changes in the organization over time, yet a detailed analysis of the summer programs offered by the YMCA and their values and ideologies has yet to be conducted.

Furthermore, these monographs neglect to consider the importance and function of the YMCA in a wilderness setting. The aforementioned monographs consider the role of the YMCA and YWCA as character-building institutions *in the city*—for example, Mjagkij and Spratt's discussion of YMCA and YWCA service programs in the city or Hopkins' analysis of urban YMCA programs and movements. The YMCA of the Rockies provided another—and what was believed to be better—setting in which to encourage and promote character-building and spirituality: the wilderness. Examining the summer programs hosted by the YMCA of the Rockies provides an opportunity to examine more fully how the YMCA wanted children to operate in cities. By instilling in children “wilderness values”—self-reliance, upright morals, and a strengthening of their spiritual life, among others—children returning to the city would be morally and spiritually protected; no longer would the depravity and sickness of urban living be a detriment—instead, it would be a reminder to children of how not to act and a glimpse of the person they could have been had they not spent a summer in the wilderness. The wilderness

¹⁷ Nina Mjagkij and Margaret Spratt, eds. *Men and Women Adrift: The YMCA and the YWCA in the City* (New York: New York University Press, 1997).

¹⁸ David MacCleod and Bruce Gore, *Building Character in the American Boy: The Boy Scouts, YMCA, and Their Forerunners, 1870-1920* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1983).

supported the YMCA's interest in Christian education due to the belief that God was more present in the wilderness, and, more importantly, the wilderness also supported the application of Christian education as a means of developing children who would be better, more moral adults in the city. Thus, the YMCA of the Rockies used nature to teach both greater faith and greater effectiveness in an industrial society.

Finally, the religious history to which this thesis contributes must be considered. The 1920s and 30s were critical years in the history of American Christianity, during which time American Protestants split into two groups: Fundamentalists and Modernists. As George Marsden notes in his monograph, *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism*, American Protestants struggled with the emerging trends of intellectualism and urbanization; as intellectuals questioned major tenets and doctrines that served to “erod[e] faith in the Bible,” rising urbanization led to encounters with more and more individuals who were not Protestant, and thus “produced a secularism that removed much of the nation’s life from effective religious influence.”¹⁹ As Marsden asserts, the two groups split, not only theologically, but also politically, with the Modernists correspondingly becoming Progressives.²⁰ It was largely this group, the Modernists/Progressives, who carried out many of the reform and education movements—out of a concern for the rising urbanization and the social ills cities created—that became central to the summer programs at the YMCA of the Rockies. For, while the Fundamentalists/Conservatives were also concerned with the social ills and vices of the city, progressive politics and reform had become associated with “liberal and nonevangelistic theology,” and thus the Fundamentalists were less vocal and concerned with curing these ills.²¹ Consequently, the majority of Christians

¹⁹ George M. Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1991), 16.

²⁰ Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism*, 30.

²¹ Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism*, 29.

involved in the summer programs offered at the YMCA of the Rockies were Protestants from a variety of denominations, but all of whom were concerned with curing the depravities urban living had encouraged in the lives of children.

Despite their valuable contributions to the study of summer programs, religious connections to the environment, the urban mission of the YMCA, and the religious history of the 1920s and 30s, these scholars do not examine the ways in which idealized environmental and religious engagement were intertwined at these summer programs, nor do they consider the underlying definitions of “wilderness” and “faith” that dictated these interactions. Connecting each of these historiographical areas together creates an opportunity to better understand the ways in which religion and spirituality influenced environmental engagement and learning in the hopes of preparing boys and girls for spiritual and secular success in their urban homes and schools.

A discussion of the terms and the ways in which they are utilized throughout this thesis is necessary in order to provide a thorough analysis of the summer programs at the YMCA of the Rockies. Wilderness is certainly difficult to define and is in itself an ideal. The Oxford dictionary defines “wilderness” as “an uncultivated, uninhabited, and inhospitable region.”²² The Wilderness Act of 1964 builds upon this idea, stating that wilderness is “in contrast with those areas where man and his own works dominate the landscape, is...an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammelled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain.”²³ While these definitions may align with the ideal of nature—that is, an untrammelled landscape devoid of human influence—they are neither realistic nor achievable. Summer camps

²² “Wilderness,” Oxford Dictionaries, accessed November 20, 2014, http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/us/definition/american_english/wilderness.

²³ “The Wilderness Act of 1964,” National Park Service, accessed March 14, 2015, <http://wilderness.nps.gov/document/wildernessAct.pdf>.

and their specific placement in the wilderness is, according to many scholars, the result of the specific goals of the camps—that is, to encourage children to “engage with” nature by experiencing it through various activities, living among nature, and learning from nature. By placing the summer camps in the “wilderness,” children would become more healthy, more robust, and more well-rounded individuals. However, these camps’ specific placement in the “wilderness” does not serve to define the term more clearly. For idealistic authors Sigurd Olson and Calvin Rutstrum, wilderness was an untouched, primitive landscape in which true engagement with the environment could occur. Again, while this is an ideal that cannot be achieved, this was the understanding of wilderness that was propagated by the summer programs of the YMCA of the Rockies. Many of the camps encouraged hiking, fishing, and trekking out into this primitive, untrammelled wilderness—which was, in itself, manufactured for the purposes of the camp. Wilderness was also seen as a place of purification—by spending time in true wilderness, one would purify themselves of the sins of their city life—an implicit reference to the ways in which wilderness was utilized and referenced in the Bible. Thus, “wilderness” for this project may be defined as the ideal of a natural, primitive, and untrammelled landscape.

The spirituality that was promoted at these summer programs must also be defined, given the vague definition of the word. The Oxford dictionary defines spirituality as “relating to, or affecting the human spirit or soul as opposed to material or physical things,” and “Of or relating to religion or religious belief.”²⁴ These two definitions suggest a connection to the surrounding world that is rooted in personal perceptions, particularly perceptions and understandings of the world in a religious sense. While camp programmers and counselors at these summer programs encouraged this personal connection to nature, it was rooted in Christianity specifically, as

²⁴ “Spirituality,” Oxford Dictionaries, accessed March 12, 2015, http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/us/definition/american_english/spiritual.

opposed to a reference to a general religious connection to the land. Consequently, camp programmers and counselors understood spirituality to mean recognition of God and his work in everything—particularly God’s presence in and creation of the wilderness, though this was a spirituality that children were to take home upon their return to the city. Furthermore, the spirituality of these summer programs had a distinct “flavor”; that is, although many of the camps promoted themselves as “non-denominational” and appealed to a variety of Christian denominations, the programming was rooted in an experiential interaction with the wilderness that served to improve and foster spirituality.

The summer programs this thesis analyzes deserve definition due to the broad range of programs, attendees, and locations. Summer camps are included and understood as “summer programs” for this research. Consequently, this research examines both boys’ and girls’ camps, as well as Boy Scout and Girl Scout camps. Most of these were held either within the YMCA of the Rockies area or organized through the YMCA of the Rockies, though these particular programs will be compared to summer camps held throughout Colorado. Also included under the term “summer programs” are the conferences that were held at the YMCA of the Rockies, with examples such as the Summer School conference held for pastors at the YMCA. The final understanding of “summer programs” is those programs held at Rocky Mountain National Park that facilitated and encouraged responsible engagement with the environment. The Junior Rangers, the “Heart of the Rockies” environmental education program, and others, are aspects of such summer programs, which serve as a beneficial comparative tool, though they are examined to a lesser degree than the others.

To best illuminate the ways in which the summer programs at the YMCA of the Rockies connected spirituality and the wilderness, this thesis will begin with a broad overview of the time

period and move towards a close examination of the summer programs themselves. The first chapter examines the culture and ideals of the 1920s and 30s, leading to an analysis of why and how the Rocky Mountains—and specifically Estes Park—came to be seen as an ideal wilderness location and a unique environment. Several scholars have made mention of the religious and wilderness culture of the 1920s and 30s, and thus a brief historiographical review of their work is offered to provide a cultural context for the summer programs offered at the YMCA of the Rockies. The Western Conference of the YMCA—which was the early name of the YMCA of the Rockies, as noted earlier—and its summer programs are also examined at length in this chapter, particularly the ways in which an improved spirituality was achieved as a result of vacationing in the Estes Park region.

The second chapter discusses the development and creation of these summer programs at the YMCA and how the developers came to connect wilderness and spirituality in their summer programming. The summer programs were diverse in their duration, the number of campers who attended the program, and the various age groups to which the summer programs were catered. All of these programs, however, emphasized the ways in which their programming would serve to improve spirituality, offering themselves as a haven from the degeneracy of the city. There are two summer programs that are central to this analysis, given their abundance of remaining sources: Camp Chief Ouray and Allsebrook Camp for Girls. Camp Chief Ouray (hereafter CCO) was founded in 1908 by Mr. and Mrs. Jesse Arnold, longtime members of the Denver YMCA, and was initially a three-week summer program for boys ages twelve to eighteen. Although it was not hosted through the YMCA of the Rockies in its formative years—it was later purchased and hosted through the YMCA of the Rockies—its location in the Rocky Mountains, close to Granby, CO, and its connections to the YMCA make this camp and its ideals and goals integral

to this research. CCO was an incredibly popular summer program for the boys of Denver, CO, who made up the majority of its attendees—over 1,000 boys attended the program each summer throughout the 1920s and 30s—and the popularity of the program required CCO programmers to offer several camp sessions to accommodate all of the boys.²⁵ Furthermore, the leaders of CCO were almost always pastors and educators, and were repeatedly extolled for their virtues as Christian leaders in CCO advertisements.

Allsebrook Camp for Girls is the other major summer program that is considered in this research. Founded in 1934 by Bertha Allsebrook, the camp rented cabins on the YMCA of the Rockies' property—located at the base of Emerald Mountain. Allsebrook was a much smaller program than CCO, hosting up to sixty girls for an eight to ten week summer program. However, the camp hosted girls between the ages of six and eighteen, emphasizing the importance of educating children with “correct” morals and religion at an early age.²⁶ Indeed, the older girls often mentored and encouraged the younger campers, supporting them in their spiritual and character growth. Allsebrook was certainly the longest in duration of the summer programs analyzed and insisted on this length of time in order to effectively and permanently promote a girl's growth into a moral, Christian adult. Additionally, as CCO emphasized the religious background of the counselors and camp programmers, so did Allsebrook; noting the fact that the counselors were the “choicest and best types of young women,” Allsebrook also emphasized the spiritual development girls would receive as a result of a summer at camp. Indeed, other girls' programs also made sure to note the religious backgrounds of their counselors, all of whom were

²⁵ Unknown author, “Camp Chief Ouray, Thirteenth Season, 1920,” *Denver Young Men*, May 13, 1920, “Denver Young Men, 1908-32,” Box 3, Folder 6, YMCA of the Rockies Collection, Lula W. Dorsey Museum, Estes Park, Colorado.

²⁶ Unknown author “Allsebrook Camp For Girls,” 13, n.d., “Allsebrook Camp for Girls,” Box 3, Folder 10, YMCA of the Rockies Collection, Lula W. Dorsey Museum, Estes Park, Colorado.

either Baptist or Methodist Christians.²⁷ Various other boys' and girls' summer programs are examined in the second chapter, most of which were similar in their duration and number of campers hosted: usually two to three weeks long, and hosting between sixty and ninety campers for each camp session.

There were several Jewish and Catholic summer programs that emerged as well, though most were founded in the 1940s. Summer programs such as WeHaKee Camp for Girls in Wisconsin, Catholic Youth Camp of Minnesota, Ramah Outdoor Adventure Camp of the Rockies, and Maurice B. Shwayder Camp of Colorado similarly offered an outdoor, wilderness, and spiritual experience. Many of these programs also continue to operate today. However, these programs were not hosted at the YMCA of the Rockies and emerged later than the 1920s and 30s, and are consequently not analyzed in this thesis.

After the examination of the camps' structure and programming, the third chapter will consider how the campers responded to this focus on spirituality in the wilderness—how the integration of religion and the wilderness affected campers' perception of and interaction with the landscape. Campers and counselors participating in these summer programs came from a variety of backgrounds and locations around the United States. Most of the campers were between the ages of twelve and eighteen, though some of the summer programs also catered to children as young as six, seeking to educate them as early as possible. The majority of the counselors were college-aged, between eighteen and twenty-two; were always noted to be individuals of good, Christian character; and had themselves formerly participated in the summer programs for which they were working. For example, CCO's advertisements often listed the names of returning counselors, who, due to their connection to the YMCA and CCO, were likely

²⁷ Unknown author, "A New Camp for Girls," 4, n.d., "YMCA 'A New Camp for Girls' at The Heights," Box 3, Folder 36, YMCA of the Rockies Collection, Lula W. Dorsey Museum, Estes Park, Colorado.

well known, assuring parents of the good instruction their boys would be receiving. Most campers and counselors came from urban environments, particularly larger, highly populated cities. For example, Allsebrook campers mostly came from Cincinnati, Ohio, though a number of campers came from Chicago, IL, Minneapolis, MN, and Denver, CO—all of which were highly urbanized environments.²⁸ Most CCO campers called Denver home and were closely connected to the Denver YMCA, though there were campers who also came from out of the state, particularly campers whose parents had placed their boy in CCO in order to ensure he would have a beneficial vacation.²⁹

The fourth chapter will compare and contrast boys' and girls' summer programs, examining handbooks, brochures, and promoted camp ideals in order to consider the various ways in which wilderness and spirituality was presented. For both boys' and girls' programs, character traits and spiritual improvements were connected to the environment, though different features were noted for each. For example, girls' summer programs often made note of the beauty and grace of flowers, while boys' summer programs emphasized the strength and steadfastness of the mountains. The ideals and character traits that were instilled in girls and boys through these summer programs reflected the culture and gender expectations of the 1920s and 30s and reassured parents of the "correct" instruction these campers received.

To conclude the thesis, the final chapter will consider why the "wilderness ideal" has had such long-standing value with Americans and the ways in which these summer programs served to reinforce this ideal and add to its longevity. In particular, the concluding chapter will consider the extent to which science education within nature was minimized or neglected in the summer

²⁸ Unknown author, "Old Greet New Campers," 1, *Allsee News*, July 13, 1937, "Timberland Girl Scout Camp," Box 12, Folder 53, YMCA of the Rockies Collection, Lula W. Dorsey Museum, Estes Park, Colorado.

²⁹ Richard Lothrop, "Personal letter," 1997, "Letters Written by Former Campers," CCO Box 1, Folder 23, YMCA of the Rockies Collection, Lula W. Dorsey Museum, Estes Park, Colorado.

programs at the YMCA of the Rockies and thread this through the twentieth century. By doing so, the continued marginalization of science in summer programs—in favor of personal, observed experiences with nature—and its potential implications will be considered.

The interaction between religion and the environment through the summer programs at the YMCA of the Rockies allows for a better understanding of one of the ways in which Americans of the 1920s and 30s engaged with, appreciated, and learned from the natural environment. As *The Oxford Handbook of Environmental History* demonstrates, there is a major gap in historical scholarship in this area. Religion and religious belief was central to many peoples' interactions with the natural world. This thesis gives credence to those understandings and interactions and provides a framework for the ways in which historians may use religion and religious history to engage with environmental history.

CHAPTER ONE—CREATING A PLACE FOR INSPIRATION

In all Colorado, no other place contains so many natural wonders, so many scenic attractions, such a lavish wealth of Nature's beauties, as does Estes Park. In this natural park, 7,500 feet above sea level, a dozen miles long, of irregular width, will be found swift flowing mountain streams, beautiful lakes, heavy forests, gloomy canyons, mighty glaciers, and wide meadow lands, all surrounded by mountain ranges. . . . Nowhere in America could there be found a more beautiful place—for quiet, for rest, and for inspiration.³⁰

Located in an idyllic setting at the edge of Rocky Mountain National Park, surrounded by mountains and gazing into the valley, Estes Park is, by all accounts, a beautiful place. With the clear, cloudless blue sky as a backdrop to the mountains, the refreshing alpine breeze cooling residents during the summer, and the pine-covered hills, the natural wonders abound in Estes Park. Visitors to this area at the beginning of the twentieth century perceived a perfect, untrammelled wilderness, and reveled in the opportunity to experience “true” nature. Alongside the perception of Estes Park as a pristine, untouched environment, the culture of the 1920s and 30s was fascinated with environmental engagement. Conservation, environmental education, and the believed benefits of spending time in “true wilderness” were growing cultural ideals at this time, all of which became crucial to the eventual creation of summer programs rooted in ideals of wilderness and spirituality. Engagement with a “true” wilderness became increasingly important for Americans during the 1920s and 30s, and Estes Park provided the model setting in which to engage with this ideal.

The desire to encounter perfect wilderness, and the belief that it could be found in Estes Park, is shown through a variety of sources. Modern scholars, in their examinations of the years preceding the 1920s and 30s, note the ways in which the culture of the time contributed to a

³⁰ Author Unknown, “The Vacation Conference,” 1908, “Promotional Brochures, 1907-1919” Box 1, Folder 13, YMCA of the Rockies Collection, Lula W. Dorsey Museum, Estes Park, Colorado.

wilderness ideal. Individuals living and writing during this time, who expounded upon the beneficial effects of true “wildness” upon an individual, further support modern scholars’ assertions. In addition to these sources, the promotional material for the Estes Park region and the YMCA of the Rockies exhibited an awareness of the unique quality of their natural setting and the ways in which a visit to the region would help an individual. Both the culture of the time and the context of the Estes Park region served to contribute to the creation of summer programs that involved a firsthand experience with the spirituality of “true wilderness.”

Historians have often discussed the culture of conservation and environmentalism at the end of the nineteenth century and beginning of the twentieth. Key to this thesis, however, is the fact that several scholars assert that the years leading up to and including the 1920s and 30s involved an increased focus on the benefits of wilderness, especially in light of the diminishing “frontier” and an appropriate space in which to encounter the ideal wilderness. The growth of cities, the end of the frontier, and the rising industrialization of the United States, along with other factors, all contributed to the rising desire to encounter the “tonic of wildness.” Without this cultural foundation, the summer programs held through the YMCA of the Rockies would not have included such a focus on “true” wilderness and the spiritual effects of this experience.

Samuel Hays was one of the first scholars to consider this culture. In his 1959 monograph, *Conservation and the Gospel of Efficiency: The Progressive Conservation Movement, 1890-1920*, Hays examines what he calls the formative period of conservation, a time during which experts from a variety of fields were intimately concerned with the use of the land.³¹ His assertion is in opposition to the previously long-held belief that officials and experts

³¹ Samuel P. Hays, *Conservation and the Gospel of Efficiency: The Progressive Conservation Movement, 1890-1920* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1959), 4.

at this time were more concerned with ownership of the land. Indeed, Hays asserts that conservation was a scientific movement—for the “efficient development and use of all natural resources”—rather than a movement that targeted corporations and worked in opposition to them.³² The emphasis on applied science as a means of conserving the land for its future use reflects a fascination with and desire to preserve wilderness. As will be discussed in a later chapter, summer programs taught campers about good stewardship of the land, emphasizing respectful use of the land as a means of preserving its inherent spiritual qualities. The YMCA of the Rockies’ summer programs also relied heavily upon the idea of using the land for educational purposes.

Building upon the desire to use the natural landscape—whether for conservation or for education—Kevin Armitage’s study, *The Nature Study Movement: The Forgotten Popularizer of America’s Conservation Ethic*, analyzes the ways in which the nature study movement contributed to the culture of wilderness engagement. Armitage asserts that the nature study movement had its origins in the teachings of Louis Agassiz, who wanted his students to learn about the environment by studying it and engaging with it themselves rather than simply reading about it.³³ This method was, according to Armitage, incredibly influential and had a lasting impact on the public’s interaction with the environment; more people, “armed with guidebooks, cameras, collecting jars, and unrestrained curiosity,” began engaging with and learning about nature simply through their own treks into the wilderness.³⁴ Armitage argues that, as Hays demonstrated, the “protection of nature was necessary because contact with the green world allowed for moral conviction and aesthetic growth,” particularly in light of increased

³² Hays, *Conservation and the Gospel of Efficiency*, 2.

³³ Kevin Armitage, *The Nature Study Movement: The Forgotten Popularizer of America’s Conservation Ethic* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2009), 15.

³⁴ Armitage, *The Nature Study Movement*, 3.

urbanization.³⁵ This focused observation of and the need to interact with nature itself was central to the summer programs at the YMCA of the Rockies, as was the desire to escape from the city. Indeed, the nature study movement emphasized the same method for educating children and instilling in them a love of nature so that future generations would be more conservation-conscious. A major contributor to the culture of environmental engagement and conservation, the nature study movement was a key component to the creation of the summer programs held through the YMCA of the Rockies.

The idea of character improvement through environmental engagement—alluded to by Armitage—was also a fundamental aspect of the culture that helped shape these summer programs. David Macleod, in his monograph *Building Character in the American Boy: The Boy Scouts, YMCA, and Their Forerunners, 1870-1920*, argues that the Boy Scouts, YMCA, and similar programs provided experiences that filled a “need” in American society at the time.³⁶ This need was character growth and development, a major anxiety for middle-class Protestants at the time. Accordingly, Macleod argues that the rapid and exponential growth of participation in the Boy Scouts of America and the YMCA during these organizations’ formative years reveals a desire for character-building and a moral education.³⁷ Summer programs likewise instilled in children moral conviction and good character, and their increasing popularity demonstrates the ways in which they, too, filled the “need” in American society at the time outlined by Macleod.

Roderick Nash’s monograph, *Wilderness and the American Mind*, provides another example of the culture of environmental engagement that influenced the development of the summer programs held through the YMCA of the Rockies. In his study, Nash analyzes

³⁵ Armitage, *The Nature Study Movement*, 8.

³⁶ David Macleod, *Building Character in the American Boy: The Boy Scouts, YMCA, and Their Forerunners, 1870-1920* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1983), xiv.

³⁷ Macleod, *Building Character in the American Boy*, xii.

Americans' opinions and attitudes towards the wilderness as they developed over time and throughout American history. It is his chapter on the early twentieth century that is particularly relevant to this research. In this chapter, Nash asserts that there was a "wilderness cult" that came about as a result of the disappearing frontier and the rise of urban living.³⁸ Indeed, many of the aforementioned authors allude to or rely on this idea of the receding frontier and urbanization. According to Nash, the frontier, as a cultural idea, inherently instilled in people "frontier values" as a result of living in a wild place—notably, good morals, self-reliance, and a strong character. This wilderness cult was also abundantly concerned with preservation of the "wilderness," Nash asserts, which later led to a conservation movement.³⁹ Nash's idea of a wilderness cult supports the assertion that there existed a fascination with "true wilderness" in the years leading up to and during the 1920s and 30s. Furthermore, the "frontier values" Nash refers to were often taught at these summer programs and were particularly relevant given the programs' location in "true wilderness."

Reinforcing the emphasis on the frontier, Elliot West's monograph, *Growing Up with the Country: Childhood on the Western Frontier*, closely examines children's experiences on the frontier. Asserting that children were a key component to the culture and economy of the frontier, West also argues that primarily children, as opposed to adults, truly experienced the frontier. Children were closely connected to the environment around them and were themselves shaped by their interactions with the frontier.⁴⁰ The intricate relationship between children and their surrounding environment is essential to this study. The summer programs at the YMCA of the Rockies were intentionally located in a natural, "wild," and "pristine" environment,

³⁸ Roderick Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 141.

³⁹ Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind*, 160.

⁴⁰ Elliot West, *Growing Up with the Country: Childhood on the Far Western Frontier* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1989), 121.

particularly as an appeal to parents who wanted their children to experience nature. Seeking to reinforce these frontier values, the YMCA of the Rockies' summer programs successfully supported and fostered the culture of wilderness engagement.

Numerous other scholars could be referenced to demonstrate the culture of environmental engagement that was pervasive leading up to and during the 1920s and 30s. Yet, as the aforementioned authors effectively establish, this cultural context was ideal for the creation and promotion of summer programs that would instill in children a love of nature, good morals, and strength of character. Historians are not the only support for this cultural idea, however; several writings from authors during the time in question also revealed a fascination with wilderness and the spiritually restorative and healthful effects as a result of wilderness experiences.

The principal example of writings about the wilderness and its spiritual, peaceful, and wondrous nature are those of John Muir. As one of the United States' greatly loved and widely remembered naturalists, Muir has become an icon of environmental conservation and of the wonders found within the wilderness. Muir wrote a great deal during his travels in the American West in the late-nineteenth century, and thus they well reflect the ideals of wilderness and the rising culture of environmental engagement that contributed to the development of the YMCA of the Rockies summer programs. John Muir was a fervent advocate of preservation of wilderness areas, playing an integral role in the establishment of Yosemite National Park, among others.⁴¹

While a great portion of Muir's writings concern Yosemite National Park and the beauty of its natural surroundings, he also wrote about the Rocky Mountains and the beauty of the West in general. His writings on the wilderness focused on its beauty, its restorative effects, and the various experiences he had while on his travels. A recurring theme in his writings was his

⁴¹ Terry Gifford, ed., *John Muir: His Life and Letters and Other Writings* (London and Seattle: Baton Wicks Publications and the Mountaineers, 1996), 9.

reflections on the necessity of spending time outdoors, as exhibited in his essay “Wild Parks and Reservations”:

Thousands of tired, nerve-shaken, over-civilized people are beginning to find out...that wilderness is a necessity; and that mountain parks and reservations are useful not only as fountains of timber and irrigating rivers, but as fountains of life. Awakening from the stupefying effects of the vice of over-industry and the deadly apathy of luxury, they are trying as best they can to mix and enrich their own little ongoings with those of Nature, and to get rid of rust and disease. ... Briskly venturing and roaming, some are washing off sins and cobweb cares of the devil’s spinning in all-day storms on mountains... jumping from rock to rock, feeling the life of them, learning the songs of them, panting in whole-souled exercise, and rejoicing in deep, long-drawn breaths of pure wildness.⁴²

There are two key elements to this passage: the degenerative effects of city life and the spiritually restorative effects of nature. Muir, reinforcing the assertions of the aforementioned scholars, lamented the condition of those who live in cities, arguing that such a lifestyle merely led to sickness and deprivation of character. By spending time in nature, one may shake off the ills that result from city life and be restored. Indeed, the language of this passage is crucial in that regard; wilderness becomes a “fountain of life,” providing peace as opposed to anxiety and high-strung nerves, and reintroducing vitality, energy, and curiosity as opposed to apathy—the implied health and moral benefits of nature are clear.

Muir alluded to a spiritual restoration that came about as a result of engaging with and spending time in “pure wildness.” He made an explicit connection between God and the wilderness, asserting that God washes away your “sins and cobweb cares” when you are in the wild.⁴³ This passage does not represent his only reference to this—it was a common theme throughout his writings. Indeed, as the editors of an illustrated collection of his quotes contend, “The wilderness was a temple to John Muir. Each day that he spent in it was a day of worship. It

⁴² John Muir, *Our National Parks* (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1916), 3-4.

⁴³ Muir, *Our National Parks*, 4

was in the wilds that God was most clearly evident to him.”⁴⁴ This statement is reinforced in a wealth of Muir’s writings; references to the wilderness as a church, as a sign of love from “the Creator,” and as a reminder of God’s great “works” abound in Muir’s letters and journals—phrases and terms that are reminiscent of the Psalms.⁴⁵ Thus, not only was spending time in nature beneficial to one’s health and personal character, it was also an incredibly spiritual experience, according to Muir. The summer programs at the YMCA of the Rockies embraced this emphasis on spirituality within the wilderness, and it became integral to the programming.

Another prolific writer and admirer of the Western wilderness was Enos Mills, the “father” of Rocky Mountain National Park. Mills frequently waxed poetic on the beauty of the Rocky Mountains, and he often wrote of the deep peace he found during his travels there. Mills repeatedly wrote about the physically restorative effects of spending time in nature and the belief that spending time in the wilderness was the best form of education for children. The emphasis on the healthful effects of wilderness was also present in Muir’s writings, and Mills utilized similar language, as this passage demonstrates: “Outdoors is Mother Nature’s cure all—her only fountain of youth. If your character is stained or your body weary, take Mother Nature’s cure all—outdoor life.”⁴⁶ Mills contended that the wilderness provided a “fountain of youth”—similar to Muir’s assertion that parks were “fountains of life,” as noted earlier. Once again, themes of renewed energy, vitality, and improved character are evident in the passage; according to Mills, to spend time in the wilderness led to a reinvigorated, renewed, and cleansed character and lifestyle. This idea was central to the summer programming at the YMCA of the Rockies, and the

⁴⁴ Kent Dannen, Michael P. Dineen, and Robert L. Polley, eds., *The American Wilderness in the Words of John Muir* (Waukesha, WI: Country Beautiful, 1973), 164.

⁴⁵ Dannen et al, eds., *The American Wilderness in the Words of John Muir*, 166.

⁴⁶ Enos Mills, “Outdoor Life,” n.d., Box 1, Folder 48, Enos Mills Collection, Denver Public Library Archives, Denver, Colorado.

programs presented themselves and fashioned their programming around the belief that the wilderness was a hub of life and renewal, both morally and physically.

Mills also fervently believed that wilderness provided the best form of education for children, and he argued they should spend a significant amount of time outdoors. This belief reinforces Kevin Armitage's monograph concerning the nature study movement, further demonstrating the importance of this value to the culture leading up to and during the 1920s and 30s. Mills frequently noted the many ways in which nature provided an ideal education, providing examples of children who had experienced the benefit of a wilderness education and repeatedly listing the various benefits at length, as the following passage exhibits:

The wild gardens of Nature are the best kindergartens. The child who breathes the pure air that blows among trees, birds and flowers has the greatest of advantages. Children from Nature's Book and School stand highest in the examinations of life, and carry Life's richest treasures; health, individuality, sincerity and wholesome self-reliance.⁴⁷

Once more, similarities may be found in this passage to the writings of John Muir—for example, the “pure air” which an individual may only find in true “Nature.” However, this nature provided more than simply improved health—it instilled in children a variety of traits and values that encouraged maturity and strength of character. Mills did not state the exact elements of wilderness that led to these qualities; he merely claimed that spending time in “Nature's Book and School” allowed for the best education in life. Throughout his writings, Mills failed to definitively identify the specific elements of wilderness that could lead to this improved education, but his message was repeatedly asserted. For example, one day during his time as a guide on Long's Peak, Mills met a little girl, Ethel Husted, who had grown up near the trailhead of Long's. As he stated, “Ethel has been but little to school, but her mountain home and the trail

⁴⁷ Enos Mills, “Experiences in the Wild,” May 1906, Box 1, Folder 20, Enos Mills Collection, Denver Public Library Archives, Denver, Colorado.

have given her health, alertness and courage, and it will be interesting to follow her life.”⁴⁸ It is clear that, despite Ethel’s lack of a formal education, Mills believed she would have a bright future, given that wilderness provided a “child some of the rarest qualities that can fall to the lot of mortals, qualities that will last and be a blessing for life.”⁴⁹

Writers during the years leading up to the 1920s and 30s repeatedly presented “true wilderness” as a restorative place, a place in which an individual would grow in strength of character and spirituality, and as the best education to instill in children. While John Muir and Enos Mills are two well-known and noteworthy examples of the cultural wilderness ideals that were present during this time, they are not the only representations. Another way this cultural ideal is illustrated is a late-nineteenth century editorial entitled, “Matters of Climate,” in which the author discussed the effects of Colorado’s altitude on children. Insistent that children should have experiences in the Colorado Rocky Mountains, the author listed the many benefits of this place:

If high altitude increases the breathing capacity and strength of the heart, and the plains produce tall, athletic men, it is not improbable that places may be found in Colorado, where growing children may attain the best possible health and longevity. . . . This, added to the exhilarating effect of the atmosphere, which induces activity, and the brilliant and ever-changing sky scenery, the magnificent views of, and amidst our grand mountains and plains, which are to most natures ennobling, refining and Christianizing, would render such places of great national importance as sources of physical and intellectual strength.⁵⁰

The author displayed a clear fascination with and idealistic perception of the Rocky Mountains, one that was also reflected in Muir and Mills’ writings. Espousing the benefits of environmental

⁴⁸ Enos Mills, “The Little Mountain Climber,” n.d., Box 1, Folder 33, Enos Mills Collection, Denver Public Library Archives, Denver, Colorado.

⁴⁹ Enos Mills, “Nature’s Book and School,” n.d., Box 1, Folder 43, Enos Mills Collection, Denver Public Library Archives, Denver, Colorado.

⁵⁰ Unknown author, “Matters of Climate,” ca. 1870s, Box 1, Folder 121, Caroline Bancroft Family Papers, Denver Public Library Archives, Denver, Colorado.

engagement, these writers had a clear picture of the Rocky Mountains as the ideal place in which to experience improved health, improved spirituality, and improved character.

Building on this cultural construction of the benefits of “true wilderness,” Estes Park and general YMCA promotional materials also demonstrated the vital need for spending time in the wilderness—with the Estes Park region presented as the best place for this rejuvenation to occur. Estes Park and the YMCA of the Rockies promoted themselves extensively at the beginning of the twentieth century. There were a variety of programs and conferences hosted at the YMCA of the Rockies that appealed to pastors, vacationing men and their families, and various other groups. The brochures for these programs always noted the ways in which Estes Park—and, implicitly, the YMCA of the Rockies—provided the perfect location for study, rejuvenation, and vacation. One such event was the Vacation Conference, hosted by the YMCA of the Rockies. The purpose of the conference was to provide a place for men’s spiritual lives to be “stimulated” and “to afford opportunity for the discussion of vital Association problems, and to provide ample opportunity for real, restful recreation.”⁵¹ Another Vacation Conference brochure listed similar purposes, noting that the “prime object is that the men engaged in Christian work may be inspired and strengthened.”⁵² Vacation Conference brochures repeatedly emphasized these spiritual benefits, clearly connecting the ideal wilderness environment of Estes Park with a strengthened faith. With a YMCA located in the idyllic Estes Park region, programs and conferences such as the Vacation Conference were seen as unique opportunities for spiritual and physical renewal, and they promoted themselves as such.

⁵¹ Unknown author, “The Vacation Conference,” 1908, “Promotional Brochures,” Box 1, Folder 13, YMCA of the Rockies Collection, Lula W. Dorsey Museum, Estes Park, Colorado.

⁵² Unknown author, “The Vacation Conference,” 1908, “Promotional Brochures, 1907-1919,” Box 1, Folder 13, YMCA of the Rockies Collection, Lula W. Dorsey Museum, Estes Park, Colorado.

This trend is demonstrated in the majority of the promotional materials for conferences and programs hosted through the YMCA of the Rockies during the beginning of the twentieth century. The Missionary Education Movement was another example; providing training for aspiring missionaries at the YMCA of the Rockies, the brochures emphasized the benefit of the natural environment of the Estes Park region for the young men who would soon evangelize around the world.⁵³ Summer schools were also offered at the YMCA of the Rockies, offering classes for men, women, and children—and one school that was specifically designed for pastors—and consequently appealed to whole families seeking to vacation in the Rocky Mountains. Most of the classes were Bible studies, though there were also nature study courses, knitting classes for women, and various activity classes offered, such as tennis, hiking, fishing, and others.⁵⁴ For all of these conferences and events, the Estes Park region perfectly embodied the wilderness ideal, and the promotional materials reflected Americans' growing cultural desire to spend time in a perfect, untrammelled wilderness.

Moreover, the wilderness in the Estes Park region was explicitly connected to Christianity in YMCA promotional materials. Repeatedly, Estes Park was touted as the perfect vacation spot—with brochures often appealing to families with children—particularly because it was seen as an enclave of people devoted to the “Christian life” and to “Christian values,” which the scenery itself reflected. Indeed, although the YMCA was a non-denominational organization, this Christianity was often solely Protestant—and with Baptist and Methodist overtones of experiential Christian opportunities in the wilderness. The experiential spirituality offered at the YMCA of the Rockies perfectly exemplified this—whereby spending one's vacation among the

⁵³ Unknown author, “Estes Park 1916; Program of the Fifth Annual Rocky Mountain Conference, under the direction of Missionary Education Movement,” 1916, “Missionary Education Movement Brochures,” Box 1, Folder 46, YMCA of the Rockies Collection, Lula W. Dorsey Museum, Estes Park, Colorado.

⁵⁴ Unknown author, “Summer Schools for the Country Pastor in War Time,” 1918, “Promotional Brochures, 1907-1919,” Box 1, Folder 13, YMCA of the Rockies Collection, Lula W. Dorsey Museum, Estes Park, Colorado.

Christian people and the Christian landscape of Estes Park and the YMCA of the Rockies, one would be improved morally and spiritually. Brochures explicitly referenced this “Christian” character, noting facts such as the prohibition of alcohol, the multitude of churches in Estes Park, and the proximity of the YMCA as examples of their Christian values.⁵⁵ The scenery was also publicized as a reflection of the Christian character of Estes Park, with statements such as:

Learn God’s might in the towering mountains and through thrill of glacier and precipice!
Hear His voice in the sighing of the pines and the tumbling waters! See the one immortal
artist in the flowers and the glorious sunsets, and then absorb some of the spiritual
mysticism, which we all need, from the grand silences of canyon and forest!⁵⁶

God is openly connected to creation with this statement; the reader feels that by spending time in the wilderness, they will certainly find God. Similar allusions to the landscape were made in the brochures when exhorting individuals to vacation in Estes Park. Various features of the landscape become associated with character traits; for example, ruts and deep-channeled brooks and streams with “no change in their course” are equated with depression and the absence of hobbies/recreation, while the mountains become the symbol of divine and personal restoration.⁵⁷ By vacationing in the mountains, individuals lifted themselves out of their ruts and experienced rejuvenation.

Indeed, one transcribed sermon from the summer schools printed in the *Estes Park Bulletin*—a promotional magazine printed by the YMCA of the Rockies—deliberately connected God to the mountains, noting the various Bible verses and biblical themes related to the mountains. Dr. John Timothy Stone, the pastor who wrote and delivered the sermon, noted five

⁵⁵ Unknown author, “Cottage Sites in Estes Park, Colorado, ‘America’s Most Wonderful Playground’—Roosevelt,” n.d., “Promotional Brochures, 1907-1919,” Box 1, Folder 13, YMCA of the Rockies Collection, Lula W. Dorsey Museum, Estes Park, Colorado.

⁵⁶ Unknown author, *Estes Park Bulletin*, 192?, “Estes Park Bulletin,” Box 1, Folder 29, YMCA of the Rockies Collection, Lula W. Dorsey Museum, Estes Park, Colorado.

⁵⁷ Unknown author, “Ruts and Hobbies,” *Estes Park Bulletin*, 192?, “Estes Park Bulletin,” Box 1, Folder 29, YMCA of the Rockies Collection, Lula W. Dorsey Museum, Estes Park, Colorado.

characteristics of the mountains that signified God’s abounding love and support: the mountains as a symbol of protection, as a place of worship, the permanence of the mountains, the mystery of the mountains, and the improved vision of the world that the mountains provided.⁵⁸ Each of these themes were then connected: for example, because the mountains provided and symbolized God’s protection, a person was better able to worship; as Stone asserted, “Round about in these mountains were the places of worship, and always have been. God sent Moses to Sinai. Jesus Christ Himself constantly went into the mountains that he might there find solitude and strength.”⁵⁹ Similarly, as God would always protect a person, the permanence of the mountains symbolized the steadfastness and dependability of protection. The article ended with an exhortation to travel to the YMCA of the Rockies, to abide in the mountains, simply because “God is there!”⁶⁰ With statements and promotions such as these, an unambiguous connection was made between the integrity of the people in Estes Park, the perfection of the scenery, and God’s active participation in people’s lives—clearly these people led a Christian lifestyle simply as a result of living in or visiting Estes Park.

The natural and “wild” characteristics of this region were also repeatedly referred to in promotional material; the words “beautiful,” “ideal,” “natural,” and “mountainous” were among the most common adjectives used to describe the environment surrounding Estes Park. Building on these extensive and detailed descriptions, the brochures and magazines emphasized the benefits of the “wilderness” this region provided and how it was uniquely capable of providing both spiritual uplift and better health. Indeed, this can also be seen in the previous examples—

⁵⁸ Dr. John Timothy Stone, “Divine Symbolism in the Mountains,” *Estes Park Bulletin*, March 1925, “Estes Park Bulletin,” Box 1, Folder 29, YMCA of the Rockies Collection, Lula W. Dorsey Museum, Estes Park, Colorado.

⁵⁹ Dr. John Timothy Stone, “Divine Symbolism in the Mountains,” *Estes Park Bulletin*, March 1925, “Estes Park Bulletin,” Box 1, Folder 29, YMCA of the Rockies Collection, Lula W. Dorsey Museum, Estes Park, Colorado.

⁶⁰ Dr. John Timothy Stone, “Divine Symbolism in the Mountains,” *Estes Park Bulletin*, March 1925, “Estes Park Bulletin,” Box 1, Folder 29, YMCA of the Rockies Collection, Lula W. Dorsey Museum, Estes Park, Colorado.

from Muir and Mills to the various promotions for conferences and events held at the YMCA of the Rockies. Many more examples of this abound in the promotional materials, such as the following:

Come in tired from your tramp among the hills or your hunt after doves, or your wade after the trout, or your visit and practice on the links, eat your supper, and as that beatific feeling of fullness and of bodily weariness comes over you, find your way to a seat by the fire and for a while let God speak to you.⁶¹

The advertisement asserted that God would be present as a direct result of engaging in true wilderness. Of particular note is the reference to the “hills” or “mountains” throughout the advertisements; “true wilderness,” in these promotional materials was only “true” in Estes Park, among the mountains. The emphasis on mountains and their unique contribution to the wilderness of Estes Park was repeated and constant. Several brochures included interspersed Bible verses throughout the information, all of which continued to allude to the presence of God in the mountains: “I will lift up mine eyes unto the mountains; from whence shall my help come?” [Psalm 121:1]; “For in this mountain will the hand of Jehovah rest” [Isaiah 25:10]; “And he went, and met with him in the MOUNTAIN OF GOD [Exodus 4:27].”⁶² Moreover, all of these promotions combined the various benefits outlined by Muir and Mills—indeed, some of the brochures even cited poems written by Muir.⁶³ Spiritual peace, physical health, and personal

⁶¹ Unknown author, “Denver Young Men,” 1908, “Denver Young Men, 1908-32,” Box 3, Folder 6, YMCA of the Rockies Collection, Lula W. Dorsey Museum, Estes Park, Colorado.

⁶² Unknown author, “The Vacation Conference,” n.d., “Promotional Brochures, 1907-1919,” Box 1, Folder 13, YMCA of the Rockies Collection, Lula W. Dorsey Museum, Estes Park, Colorado.

⁶³ “Climb the mountains and get their good tidings;
Nature’s peace will flow into you as sunshine flows
into trees.
The winds will blow their own freshness into you
and the storms their energy,
While cares will drop off like autumn leaves.”

John Muir, “Climb the Mountains,” *Estes Park Bulletin*, 1929, Box 2, Folder 13B, YMCA of the Rockies Collection, Lula W. Dorsey Museum, Estes Park, Colorado.

rejuvenation were championed as the unique benefits of vacationing in Estes Park, a place of true wilderness because of the presence of God in the mountains.

Modern scholars' analyses of the years leading up to the 1920s and 30s exhibit a growing culture of environmental engagement and a desire to find "true wilderness," a culture that is reflected in the writings of men like Muir and Mills. This "true wilderness" was discovered at the YMCA of the Rockies where, surrounded by the mountains of God, visitors could experience personal and spiritual restoration. Improved health, renewed vitality of life, strengthened character, and direct encounters with God were among the many benefits promoted by the YMCA of the Rockies. Americans were fascinated with and eager for the "tonic of wildness" and believed the Estes Park region was the perfect place to experience it. With this cultural context and an ideal location as a foundation, the summer programs held through the YMCA of the Rockies aimed to instill in children spiritual values, a love of the wilderness, and an improved capacity to live in an urban setting without suffering morally or spiritually. These programs relied heavily upon Americans' wilderness ideal and offered the perfect place in which children could be educated and improved—morally, spiritually, and physically.

CHAPTER TWO—CAMP PROGRAMMING: BUILDING THE IDEAL CAMP

Do you earnestly want your boy to grow?
Send him to Camp.
The rules of health and strength to know?
Send him to Camp.
To learn to love the wind and rain,
The wood and lakes and hills and plain,
The lilt of the lark and the bob-o-link's strain?
Send him to Camp.⁶⁴

Americans in the years leading up to and during the 1920s and 30s wanted to spend more time outside of the city in an untrammled, perfect wilderness in order to improve themselves—their morals, their health, and their spirituality—and to better prepare themselves for life in the city. Estes Park and the YMCA of the Rockies were promoted and perceived as ideal wilderness sites and as places in which children could improve their health and physicality as well as their spirituality. As this chapter will demonstrate, summer camp programming was built around the integration of wilderness and spirituality; as campers improved their health and physicality through constant engagement with the ideal wilderness, the summer programming would also provide spiritual fulfillment and instruction. Additionally, the YMCA was concerned with improving children's abilities to withstand the immorality that was rampant in urban settings and therefore sought to better prepare these campers for city life as upstanding, Christian adults. These summer programs may be seen as a direct product of the culture of the 1920s and 30s and the natural environment at the YMCA of the Rockies.

To best exhibit the summer programs, their ideals, and the activities used to integrate wilderness and spirituality, two main primary sources will be used. Promotional brochures and

⁶⁴ Unknown author, "Camp Chief Ouray Denver YMCA Boys' Camp, 1934" 1934, "CCO Brochures," Box 1, Folder 36, YMCA of the Rockies Collection, Lula W. Dorsey Museum, Estes Park, Colorado.

advertisements for the summer programs, written and printed with campers' parents as the intended audience, give a glimpse into the ideals and daily activities of these programs. Because these brochures and advertisements presented the programs in the best possible light as a means of encouraging parents to send their children to camp, they are excellent examples of the ideals and goals of the summer programs. Promotional materials for the summer programs held through the YMCA of the Rockies were also incredibly detailed. From anecdotes brimming with adventure and character-building exercises to comprehensive lists of what campers should bring to camp, these brochures were intended to convince parents of the many benefits a summer at camp would have on their children. The second major set of sources will be camp-provided materials—pamphlets and books printed for use by counselors and/or campers themselves. While there is no possible way of knowing the extent to which these were actually utilized over the course of the summer—except in letters and articles written by campers themselves that will be examined in the following chapter—these materials also serve to represent the ideals and goals of the summer programs. With these camp-provided materials, the intentions and desired effects are made obvious: counselors were trained to teach specific themes around the campfire, campers were encouraged to improve their character and personality traits by examining the natural world around them, etc. Throughout these primary sources, the integration of campers' engagement with “wildness” and spirituality is pervasive.

Both types of promotional and programmatic literature highlighted two key values held by camp leaders: first, the belief that God was present in the wilderness of the Estes Park region; second, the view that city life was potentially harmful to children, while camp served as an antidote to city life and a suitable place for secondary parenting. Camps promoted the idea that campers would be closer to God simply due to their presence in a true wilderness, reinforcing the

cultural wilderness ideal discussed in the previous chapter. Depicting urban life as a stark contrast to the wilderness, summer programs also appealed to the ways in which they would strengthen—morally, physically, and spiritually—the campers who spent a summer in the Rocky Mountains. Bolstering this assertion further, camp programmers used their promotional materials and camp-published materials to soothe parents’ anxieties. They well knew that parents in the early twentieth century were concerned with their children’s morality and spirituality, the depravity of urban settings, and the ways in which adult-led programs might fill gaps in their parenting.

This chapter examines a variety of summer programs, which related to the YMCA of the Rockies in a variety of ways. Numerous YMCA programs were at the height of their popularity in the 1920s and 1930s, including the conferences and summer schools mentioned in the previous chapter. This chapter highlights two summer programs that provide historians with an abundance of primary source material: Allsebrook Camp for Girls and Camp Chief Ouray, for boys. Allsebrook Camp for Girls was founded in the 1920s and was not owned or operated by the YMCA of the Rockies. However, Bertha Allsebrook—founder and director of the camp—rented cabins on the western edge of the YMCA land for the camp. Located near the Emerald Mountain trailhead (then known as Green Mountain), Allsebrook Camp for Girls was ideally placed in the Estes Park region. Owned through the Denver YMCA, CCO was originally located in the Rocky Mountains between Grand Lake and Granby. Although it was not hosted through the YMCA of the Rockies in its formative years—it was later purchased and hosted through the YMCA of the Rockies in the 1970s—its location in the Rocky Mountains and its connections to the YMCA make this camp and its ideals and goals integral to this research.

Three other summer programs will be considered, though to a lesser extent due to the limitations of the remaining primary source material: Cheley Camps for Boys, Camp Chipeta for Girls, and Timberland Girl Scout Camp. Noted for its emphasis on “frontier values” and the healthful and spiritual benefits of outdoor life, Cheley Camp for Boys was, like Allsebrook, located in the Estes Park region. Frank Cheley, the founder of Cheley Camps, hoped to instill in boys—and eventually girls—a love of the wilderness and upright morals.⁶⁵ Consequently, Cheley worked closely with the YMCA of the Rockies and emulated many of its goals and ideals for summer programs. Cheley Camp for Boys was thus presented as another ideal summer program for boys. Founded in the 1920s after the success of the Cheley Camp for Boys, Camp Chipeta for Girls was located in the Estes Park valley and also maintained close access to the YMCA of the Rockies and Rocky Mountain National Park. Though not formally associated with the YMCA of the Rockies, Timberland Girl Scout Camp is a final summer program that serves to exemplify the cultural ideals of wilderness and spirituality during the 1920s and 30s. This summer program was also located within the grounds of the YMCA of the Rockies—renting the “Friendship Lodge” and other cabins for the camp—and claimed to combine the value of pristine wilderness with personal growth and knowledge. Across the promotional materials and camp-published materials for each of these summer programs, there was consistent emphasis on God’s presence in the Rocky Mountains, summer programs as an antidote to urban life, and summer programs’ contributions to children’s moral instruction and development.

All of the summer programs at the YMCA of the Rockies promoted wilderness camps as places in which God was uniquely present and within reach. The idea of God’s presence in the

⁶⁵ “Cheley History,” Cheley Colorado Camps, accessed February 17, 2015, <http://www.cheley.com/camp-history.html>.

wilderness exemplified a marked shift in Americans' perception of the wilderness from earlier, colonial perceptions of the wilderness as savage—a place in which God was absent. With the rising culture of wilderness engagement, camps promoted themselves as centers of character and spirituality precisely because of their location in the wilderness. Accordingly, brochures and promotional materials for the summer programs repeatedly asserted that campers' health, character, and spirituality would improve as a result of attending unique, God-filled Rocky Mountain camps. Overall, there was consistency between promotions and camp-published materials, though there was one notable exception. Allsebrook Camp for Girls promoted itself to parents first and foremost as a place in which a girl could improve her health; the camp-published materials, in contrast, emphasized improvements in spirituality and character. As a rule, however, all of the promotional and camp-published materials expressed the belief that God was wholly present in the Rocky Mountain wilderness because it was a true wilderness, untouched and untrammelled by humans. Camps were seen as critically important because of their locations—the wilderness, a place in which God was present.

The belief in God's presence in the wilderness became a vehicle through which spirituality was fostered at summer programs—for example, teaching campers to “read messages” from God that were placed upon the landscape—emphasizing this aspect of the wilderness as opposed to a focused, scientific study of the environment for educational purposes. Allsebrook's “Sunrise Meditations” exhibited this idea. Allsebrook employed a “spiritual director” at the camp—Jessie Eubank of Minneapolis, MN—who developed the non-denominational Christian meditations, through which she sought to teach the campers about the wilderness, inspire campers' spirituality, and foster character development. Mountain by mountain, the Allsebrook Sunrise Meditations used the landscape and weather of the Rocky

Mountains to instill in the campers wilderness values, spiritual and character growth, and also to point to God's presence in the mountains as a means of instruction. The cover of the handbook immediately indicated the Christian character of the meditations, quoting two hymns—"Holy, Holy, Holy! Lord God Almighty" and "For the Beauty of the Earth." The quoted sections of the hymns speak to the time during which the meditations were studied by the campers, as well as the abounding spirituality of the wilderness, stating: "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, Early in the morning Our songs shall rise to thee," and "For the beauty of the earth, For the glory of the skies, Lord of Life to Thee we raise, This, our morning hymn of praise"—both of which served to connect God to the wilderness and the sunrise.⁶⁶ Moving from general meditations on the Rocky Mountain landscape to specific mountains themselves, the Sunrise Meditations connected specific character traits to the landscape as messages from God. Through each daily meditation, the campers were repeatedly told that God had created these unique characteristics in the landscape to instill spirituality and morality in those who experienced the mountains firsthand. Indeed, this was overtly stated in the fourth meditation—a meditation that studied Flattop Mountain—after several days of examining other mountains closely:

How different the mountains now that I am learning to SEE! How different will be my life if I can ACT upon even a little bit of the message that God, MY FATHER, has put here for me! ... The weeks at Camp are like Hallet. Something new each day. ... Back at school, life is less eventful. I do more ordinary things. Then it is that I travel on Flattop. To the careless and undiscerning, such life is an ordinary thing. But I shall see it this fall as different. I shall carry out in ACTION the inspiration of my Camp life. I will study as never before. I will be helpful at home. I will accomplish. [emphasis in original]⁶⁷

There are several key elements to this selection. First, the reader was told that God had put a message for campers in the mountains—a message that could be discerned with the right

⁶⁶ Unknown author, "Allsebrook Sunrise Meditations" ca. 1930s, "Allsebrook Camp for Girls," Box 3, Folder 10, YMCA of the Rockies Collection, Lula W. Dorsey Museum, Estes Park, Colorado.

⁶⁷ Unknown author, "Allsebrook Sunrise Meditations; Flattop" ca. 1930s, "Allsebrook Camp for Girls," Box 3, Folder 10, YMCA of the Rockies Collection, Lula W. Dorsey Museum, Estes Park, Colorado.

instruction. This idea had clear connections to the belief that God was present “in the mountains,” but it also allowed the camper to better understand the wilderness around her and her own spirituality as a result of careful study. This careful study and better understanding of the wilderness, however, was not the result of scientific inquiry nor was it scientific in its nature, but experiential—speaking to elements of the nature study movement noted earlier. The meditation also pointed to the camper’s return home—a theme that will be discussed below.

The selected passage relied upon the features of Flattop Mountain, a strategy that continued throughout the Sunrise Meditations. From Ypsilon, campers were to notice its distinctive features, and they were then asked if they, too, could be the distinctive person God wanted them to be upon their return home; from Otis Peak, campers were encouraged to observe the broad base of the mountain that united it to other peaks, and to thus remember their connection to each other, God, and the world around them; and from Long’s Peak, campers were reminded of their former, “lower” selves—their personalities and characters from before their time at Allsebrook—and were encouraged to continue to aspire to the highest peak of their character and spirituality.⁶⁸ The Sunrise Meditations consistently encouraged spiritual and character growth in response to God’s wilderness around them, as the following “Morning Prayer” also exhibited:

Thank you, Father, for the wind! As it blows through the pines with refreshing vigor,
As it tosses my hair and pulls at my body, help me to enjoy its sturdiness
Thank you, Father, for the Light!
For the blessed sun, for the glory of the new day!
Help me today to learn from all the winds that blow
Help me to be a center of radiant LIGHT

⁶⁸ Unknown author, “Allsebrook Sunrise Meditations; Ypsilon,” ca. 1930s, “Allsebrook Camp for Girls,” Box 3, Folder 10, YMCA of the Rockies Collection, Lula W. Dorsey Museum, Estes Park, Colorado; Unknown author, “Allsebrook Sunrise Meditations; Otis the Loaf,” ca. 1930s, “Allsebrook Camp for Girls,” Box 3, Folder 10, YMCA of the Rockies Collection, Lula W. Dorsey Museum, Estes Park, Colorado.; Unknown author, “Allsebrook Sunrise Meditations; Long’s Peak,” ca. 1930s, “Allsebrook Camp for Girls,” Box 3, Folder 10, YMCA of the Rockies Collection, Lula W. Dorsey Museum, Estes Park, Colorado.

Help me to look for criticism and enjoy taking it,
Help me to overcome my faults that I may be a SHINING ONE for Thee.
Amen.⁶⁹

While mountains were central to character development and spiritual growth, campers were also encouraged to learn from the pure, heavenly wilderness that surrounded them, as this prayer reveals. Indeed, later meditations asked campers if they could learn to thank God for “the winds that blow upon my mind and spirit? The winds of criticism, of disappointment, of deprivation?”⁷⁰ As the wind pushed against and hindered campers on their hikes and activities in the mountains, the meditations encouraged campers to perceive these winds as “exercising machines” in order to make themselves strong in spirit.⁷¹ Reinforcing the wilderness ideals and character goals outlined in their promotional materials, Allsebrook Camp actively sought to instill in their campers a love of the wilderness, a recognition of God’s presence in the wilderness, and an ability to learn from the wilderness.

CCO, too, embraced this perception of the wilderness, emphasizing the unique presence of God in the surrounding environment and how God’s presence served to promote better health, morality, and spirituality. Many of the advertisements in the *Denver Young Men* newsletters described the environment in great detail, from the Colorado River circling the bluffs of the camp to the backdrop of the forest and mountains. Several advertisements utilized the same language, as well; one common phrase asserted that the “location itself is an inspiration,” evoking the idea that by simply visiting CCO, one could be inspired by God to improve his

⁶⁹ Unknown author, “Allsebrook Sunrise Meditations; A Morning Prayer” ca. 1930s, “Allsebrook Camp for Girls,” Box 3, Folder 10, YMCA of the Rockies Collection, Lula W. Dorsey Museum, Estes Park, Colorado.

⁷⁰ Unknown author, “Allsebrook Sunrise Meditations; Wind in the Mountains,” ca. 1930s, “Allsebrook Camp for Girls,” Box 3, Folder 10, YMCA of the Rockies Collection, Lula W. Dorsey Museum, Estes Park, Colorado.

⁷¹ Unknown author, “Allsebrook Sunrise Meditations; Wind in the Mountains,” ca. 1930s, Box 3, Folder 10, YMCA of the Rockies Collection, Lula W. Dorsey Museum, Estes Park, Colorado.

morals and spirituality.⁷² Reinforcing this belief in the presence of God, CCO promoted a “natural religious program”—an education in religion that was only possible in the wilderness environment of CCO.⁷³ Camp buildings and other camp locations were also promoted in this light: the chapel was noted to be in the “most sacred spot in the Camp,” high on a bluff overlooking the Colorado River; the Council Ring—the favorite term for the campfire circle—was the ideal place for fellowship and learning and Bible study; and the activities were purportedly intended to engage a boy with “God’s out-of-doors,” the location of which was only at CCO.⁷⁴ The camp hymn—sung to the patriotic tune of “America the Beautiful,” which itself was inspired by the mountains of Colorado—also emphasized the pristine and ideal qualities of the surrounding environment and God’s presence in it, as the selected stanzas show:

At home in God’s great wonderland,
Our minds and bodies clean,
New truths are learned on ev’ry hand
From wood and field and stream;
Camp Chief Ouray, Camp Chief Ouray,
Long shall thy name endure;
Straight as a tree; our lives shall be,
As mountain waters pure....

Our Master camp upon the earth
For others’ good to live;
Let us, like Him, be men of worth
Who love and serve and give;
Camp Chief Ouray, Camp Chief Ouray,

⁷² Unknown author, “CAMP CHIEF OURAY; Opens June 15th---Closes August 24th,” *Denver Young Men*, 1920, “Denver Young Men, 1908-32,” Box 3, Folder 6, YMCA of the Rockies Collection, Lula W. Dorsey Museum, Estes Park, Colorado; Unknown author, “Camp Chief Ouray Denver YMCA Boys’ Camp, 1934,” 1934, “CCO Brochures,” CCO Box 1, Folder 36, YMCA of the Rockies Collection, Lula W. Dorsey Museum, Estes Park, Colorado.

⁷³ Unknown author, “WHY NOT CAMP CHIEF OURAY,” *Denver Young Men*, 1923, “Denver Young Men, 1908-32,” Box 3, Folder 6, YMCA of the Rockies Collection, Lula W. Dorsey Museum, Estes Park, Colorado.

⁷⁴ Leslie Deal, “The Camp Church” in “A Brief History of Camp Chief Ouray,” 1958, “Pre 1980 History,” CCO Box 1, Folder 3, YMCA of the Rockies Collection, Lula W. Dorsey Museum, Estes Park, Colorado; Unknown author, “Camp Chief Ouray Denver YMCA Boys’ Camp, 1934,” 1934, “CCO Brochures,” CCO Box 1, Folder 36, YMCA of the Rockies Collection, Lula W. Dorsey Museum, Estes Park, Colorado; Unknown author, “WHY NOT CAMP CHIEF OURAY,” *Denver Young Men*, 1923, “Denver Young Men, 1908-32,” Box 3, Folder 6, YMCA of the Rockies Collection, Lula W. Dorsey Museum, Estes Park, Colorado.

Teach us His truth to see;
Unselfishness is nobleness,--
May we like Jesus be!”⁷⁵

Numerous elements of this camp hymn reflect the ideals that CCO camp programmers sought to teach campers. Character traits were connected to environmental features: “straight as a tree, our lives shall be, As mountain waters pure”; the camp fire was noted as sacred; CCO was claimed to be the “best” of “mountain spots”; and, most significantly, God was said to be everywhere. God was present at CCO for the benefit of the boys and their own personal growth, inspiring them to learn “His truth” through his “wonderland” of perfect wilderness. This hymn, taught to campers by the counselors and camp programmers, was useful for further instilling in campers a connection between the wilderness and God’s presence in it. As with Allsebrook’s meditations, however, CCO’s engagement with and better understanding of what was seen as God’s nature depended upon personal experiences within it, not scientific inquiry.

The belief that God was present in the wilderness of YMCA of the Rockies’ summer programs was a common theme across the summer programs. In the promotional materials for Camp Chipeta, the camp programmers prominently emphasized the idyllic location of Colorado and the Rocky Mountains. In one of their first advertisements, Camp Chipeta noted the appeal of the wilderness, stating “[t]hose who have learned the language of the hills, seek again and again this re-creative environment.”⁷⁶ Like Allsebrook, Camp Chipeta alluded to the idea that God was in and had placed messages for visitors in this wilderness—and as a result, people were eager to return. The appeal of the Rocky Mountain wilderness and God’s presence in it was reiterated on the inside cover of several brochures, where a poem entitled “Colorado” greeted readers:

⁷⁵ Unknown author, “Camp Chief Ouray Denver YMCA Boys’ Camp, 1934,” 1934, “CCO Brochures,” CCO Box 1, Folder 36, YMCA of the Rockies Collection, Lula W. Dorsey Museum, Estes Park, Colorado.

⁷⁶ Unknown author, “A New Camp for Girls,” 12, n.d., “YMCA ‘A New Camp for Girls’ at The Heights,” Box 3, Folder 36, YMCA of the Rockies Collection, Lula W. Dorsey Museum, Estes Park, Colorado.

There's a place where the gold of heaven
 Just drips when sunsets glow;
 Where the picturesque pine and the coy columbine
 And the timberline mignonette grow...
 Tis a storehouse of luring landscapes,
 Colorado—the home of the dawn.
 A rare land of fancy and true necromancy
 Where fairies in vacancy spawn.
 You have stilled us and thrilled us with wonder,
 You have shown us the old Earth in youth—
 From somewhere out yonder, you have taught us to ponder
 On lessons of infinite truth.⁷⁷

On the introductory page the camp promoted itself as a place of spiritual and moral uplift, particularly due to its location in Colorado. In this wilderness, God inspired the visitor; simply by observing the pristine wilderness, “lessons of infinite truth” were provided and the “gold of heaven” could be encountered. The brochure went on to note Camp Chipeta’s proximity to Estes Park, arguing that this region was the finest in the nation, with an abundance of lakes, rivers, mountains all reflecting the region’s “unchanged beauty.”⁷⁸ This phrase is of particular note, for it demonstrates the perception of the Rocky Mountain wilderness as pristine and untrammled, and thus *perfect* for wilderness-based moral and spiritual education. In a similar manner, the Timberland Girl Scout Camp also offered a spiritual connection to the wilderness, though not the explicitly Christian spirituality the other camps had chosen to emphasize. A poem on the back of a brochure demonstrated this, connecting God to the mountains, associating a camper in the wilderness to good morals, and emphasizing physicality:

Who knows a mountain?
 One who has gone to worship its beauty in the dawn;
 One who has slept on its breast at night;
 One who has measured his strength to its height;
 One who has followed its longest trail,

⁷⁷ Clement Yore, “Colorado” in “A New Camp for Girls,” n.d., “YMCA ‘A New Camp for Girls’ at The Heights,” Box 3, Folder 36, YMCA of the Rockies Collection, Lula W. Dorsey Museum, Estes Park, Colorado.

⁷⁸ Unknown author, “A New Camp for Girls,” n.d., “YMCA ‘A New Camp for Girls’ at The Heights,” Box 3, Folder 36, YMCA of the Rockies Collection, Lula W. Dorsey Museum, Estes Park, Colorado.

And laughed in the face of its fiercest gale;
One who has scaled its peaks and has trod
Its cloud-swept summit alone with God.⁷⁹

Perhaps this connection between wilderness and spirituality was influenced by Timberland's connection to the YMCA of the Rockies. Regardless, the intent was clear: by participating in this summer program, girls would find their own strength, would be full of vitality and health as a result of the camp's activities, and would certainly find God in the mountains.

The emphasis on combining wilderness living with spirituality was further reflected in the materials published by the camp for campers and counselors, as the Allsebrook Sunrise Meditations demonstrated. Frank Cheley's handbooks for the Cheley Camps offer additional examples of the ideals that were instilled in campers through the summer programs. His books ranged in content—from relating stories about the campers' experiences to instructional materials on how best to provide an ideal wilderness experience. This chapter will focus on his instructional material, which he provided for counselors as a means of fulfilling the goals and ideals of the Cheley Camps. Throughout the handbooks, Cheley combined the wilderness of camp life with good morals, an upright character, and spirituality, ideals that were to be instilled in campers through camp activities, Bible studies, and lectures/talks given by the counselors. Another feature of his handbooks that will be examined in a later chapter was his dogged focus on boys' education; these handbooks were not intended to be used for girls' camps, but specifically for boys and their moral, physical, and spiritual benefit. As they clearly outline the goals and ideals of Cheley Camps, the handbooks provide insight into these summer programs and their consistency with the promotional materials.

⁷⁹ Unknown author, "Timberland Girl Scout Camp" 1936, "Timberland Girl Scout Camp," Box 12, Folder 53, YMCA of the Rockies Collection, Lula W. Dorsey Museum, Estes Park, Colorado.

Though Cheley wrote a variety of handbooks on camp life and instruction, he placed the most emphasis on the role of the campfire—or Council Ring—and the ways in which it could be used to instruct campers in wilderness and God’s presence therein. Cheley believed the campfire to be a place of fellowship for campers, particularly after a long day of hikes, swimming, horseback riding, and other outdoor activities. It was a unique opportunity for campers to find fellowship that, according to Cheley, “comes only to a congenial group gathered about one of ‘Mother Nature’s hearthstones’ out in God’s great Out-of-Doors.”⁸⁰ As with the material for other summer programs, this handbook emphasized God’s possession of the wilderness, implying an improved capacity to encounter God while around the campfire due to its location in “Mother Nature.” It was also around the campfire that Cheley sought to instill in the campers certain values. For example, Cheley compiled a handbook of “campfire talks” on leadership, all of which discussed the various character traits of an ideal leader and which could be learned only at camp. One such leadership discussion focused on the ability to “see,” with the following story used to demonstrate this:

Two men walked through a long forest aisle. On either side of them rose a magnificent forest of prime, airplane spruce. One saw in each tree a poem, a majestic temple which awed him and inspired him. Each great monarch, old and majestic when he was a baby, told of hundreds of seasons of struggle in sunshine and shadow, in flood, in drought—the living struggle to grow and fulfill its destiny. “Marvelous timber, isn’t it?” he breathed. He was a deep “see-er.” “Yep, great tie-stock,” said the practical “looker.” ... Lookers’ miss so much that is beautiful and fascinating. As never before, the world needs ‘see-ers’ with ‘hearts’ in their eyes. The really truly leaders of the years ahead will perhaps *see* clearly all the human implications of every situation.⁸¹

The anecdote utilized to exhibit the qualities of a “see-er” was rooted in the forest wilderness, showing the campers the best way to interact with God’s nature. The “see-er” in this story encountered God’s true wilderness and was a better leader as a result. Indeed, in another

⁸⁰ Frank Cheley, *Told By the Camp Fire* (New York: Association Press, 1914), 2.

⁸¹ Frank Cheley, *After All It’s Up to You; Camp-Fire Chats on Leadership* (Boston: W.A. Wilde Company, 1935), 57, 65.

campfire talk Cheley asserted that real leaders should “seek to develop a life that is fundamentally, essentially, genuinely, and unaffectedly spiritual—which simply means...a frank recognition of God in everything and through everything...and expressing himself through *you* [emphasis in original].”⁸² This element of leadership, spirituality, was overtly displayed in the “see-er,” who saw the trees as temples, as poems, and as products of God’s design. Cheley clearly believed leadership was wholly rooted in a spiritual engagement with the world and expressly taught this to his campers. Leadership was not limited to experiences in camp; as the anecdote asserted, campers were exhorted to take the ability to “see” with them wherever they went, particularly upon their return to urban life.

In addition to his handbooks on campfire fellowship, Cheley wrote a handbook entitled *Camping and Outing Activities*. This was a guide that outlined various activities for counselors to utilize in summer programs in order to promote the betterment of the campers. Though his handbook covers a variety of activities, two key chapters are significant for this thesis: “Nature Education” and “Bible and Religious Activities.” These two elements of the camp experience were, according to Cheley, essential to a camp’s programming. The nature education proposed by Cheley was firmly rooted in the nature study movement. Cheley claimed that a nature education with science as its foundation would be too boring for campers and that by examining nature themselves campers would be able to encounter true wilderness, stating: “When Nature Education is made science to a boy it loses its real blood and vitality.”⁸³ That is, Cheley expressly rejected science education in regards to the wilderness and instead offered a form of environmental education that was more immersive and allowed campers to awaken and use their senses—as the “true see-er” perfectly exemplified. The Rocky Mountains were the ideal place

⁸² Frank Cheley, *After All It’s Up to You; Camp-Fire Chats on Leadership* (Boston: W.A. Wilde Company, 1935), 87.

⁸³ Frank Cheley, *Camping and Outing Activities* (New York: Association Press, 1915), 302.

for this nature study given the variety of environmental features—mountains, forests, rivers, and more. Furthermore, nature education and religious activities were closely linked, for, as Cheley stated: “No one can love nature and not love its Author; and, if we can find a nature study that shall insure a sincere love, we shall be laying the surest possible foundation for religious character for that boy. Experience proves it. Try it yourself.”⁸⁴ As Cheley argued, encouraging nature study would instill in campers strong spiritual values, which would then be reinforced by further religious education and a recognition of God’s role and place in the wilderness.

Cheley’s chapter on religious education reinforced the foundation of nature study by creating Bible studies that focused on God or Jesus’ role in nature. For example, one study, entitled “Jesus in the Mountains,” examined the reasons behind and benefits of Jesus’ journeys in the mountains—though it did not note differentiate between the various episodes of Jesus’ journeys in the mountains. This study asserted that by spending time in the mountains, Jesus was able to continue with his ministry and was strengthened for the hardships to come.⁸⁵ Another Bible study emphasized Jesus’ awareness of the wilderness, stating:

Jesus, with the sick crowding for His healing, and the ignorant needing His teaching, with His enemies seeking to entrap Him and His mighty mission pressing upon His heart, still had time and thought for the beautiful world of nature round Him. He noticed the lilies of the field, the birds in their carefree life, the ripening of the harvests, and the winds that swept over sea and shore. He lived largely out of doors, and gathered His parables and illustrations from the natural things about Him. Surely we need not be so busy as to hasten to our daily toil with no thought for the beauty of the morning, and turn to our rest at night without a glance at the starry sky in its wonder and glory. Nature is a marvelous teacher for those who will listen, a wondrous healer for tired souls and bodies that yield to her soothing touch.⁸⁶

Bible studies like this urged campers to revel in and learn from the pristine, untrammelled wilderness of the camp while also instructing them to grow in their religiosity and spirituality.

⁸⁴ Frank Cheley, *Camping and Outing Activities* (New York: Association Press, 1915), 304.

⁸⁵ Frank Cheley, *Camping and Outing Activities* (New York: Association Press, 1915), 392.

⁸⁶ Frank Cheley, *Camping and Outing Activities* (New York: Association Press, 1915), 400.

This passage also condemned the evils and depravity of urban life, noting that people were often too busy to learn from nature or unconcerned with the ways in which nature could benefit a person. Throughout all of these proposed Bible studies, Cheley demonstrated the belief that nature was the perfect place in which to find God—because he was there. With its emphasis on nature education and religious instruction, Cheley’s handbook thus explicitly revealed the ideals of his summer program and others like it that were located in the perfect wilderness of the Rocky Mountains.

Belief in God’s presence in the wilderness around Estes Park allowed camps operating in association with the YMCA of the Rockies to offer summer programs as a solution to the problems of urban life. Cities *did not* provide the moral, spiritual, and physical improvements the summer programs boasted, making the latter’s role in a child’s education essential in the minds of twentieth-century parents. As the introduction to this thesis noted, the belief that wilderness could offer instruction in character, morality, and spirituality—and even that God was present in the wilderness—was a striking shift from earlier, colonial perceptions of the wilderness. By the 1920s the city was no longer seen as a place of morality and improved living, but instead as a hub of degeneracy and sinfulness that caused character and moral weakness in children growing up in its midst. Promoting themselves as antidotes to the poisons of the city, summer camps thus emphasized the ways in which the combination of wilderness and camp programming strengthened the character, morals, and spirituality of the campers. Programming, accordingly, catered to parents’ anxieties and concerns over their children’s upbringing. Seeking to assuage parents’ fears by describing the ways in which children would be instructed in correct morals, character traits, and spirituality, the summer programs presented themselves as an escape from

the imperfect, depraved city. Considering the summer programs of the YMCA of the Rockies were outside of the city—in a perfect, God-filled wilderness—and wholly concerned with children’s growth and development that was lacking in an urban environment, parents were wholeheartedly convinced by and supportive of the ideals and goals of these summer programs.

Parents in the early twentieth century were concerned with the effects of the immorality and degeneracy of urban life on their children, seeking to provide for them better instruction than this environment provided. The idea of instructing children in good morals, character, and spirituality had developed over time, as several scholars have demonstrated. Margo Horn has argued that instructing children in religion and morality had been present in America since the colonial period and was carried through to the early twentieth century. Parents in the colonial era sought to “curb the child’s will,” believing that a spirited and unrestrained child exemplified the “original sin” inherent in the child; consequently, there was an emphasis on religious instruction in a child’s education.⁸⁷ According to Horn, as families moved out of the country and into the city throughout the nineteenth century, a concern with the ills of the city was on the rise. Whereas, previously, families had been “economically self-sufficient units” and thus always present in the child’s development, parents and children were now leaving the home to support their families, creating gaps in a child’s instruction.⁸⁸ Poor families and poor children became more visible in these urban settings, and the middle and upper classes were disgusted with the morals of these children, who often “strayed into illicit pursuits, such as petty theft and prostitution” in order to support themselves and their families.⁸⁹

⁸⁷ Margo Horn, “Childhood and Children,” in *Encyclopedia of American Social History*, vol. III, ed. Mary Kupiec Carton, Elliott J. Gorn, and Peter W. Williams (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1993), 2023.

⁸⁸ Margo Horn, “Childhood and Children,” 2026.

⁸⁹ Margo Horn, “Childhood and Children,” 2027.

With these themes as a precedent, parents in the twentieth century sought to “insulate their children from the threatening and disorderly elements of urban life,” and were extremely anxious about their children’s future in such a depraved environment.⁹⁰ Ruth Alexander similarly demonstrates parents’ concerns with city life and their children’s place in it in her historiographical essay, “Adolescence.” Children and adolescents growing up in an urban environment were perceived to be mentally unprepared to encounter the “social and sexual disorder” of the city. In response to these rising concerns, Alexander argues that various organizations offered “structured athletic, social, and cultural programs to American youths in cities, towns, and urban villages around the country”—among which are the Boy and Girl Scouts and the YMCA.⁹¹ Parents’ movement away from the homes exacerbated their concerns for their children’s moral and religious instruction, as Marylynn Salmon asserts in her essay, “Reproduction and Parenthood.” With fathers working, moral and religious instruction was left to the education system and to mothers—if they were not working themselves.⁹² Filling a gap in the instruction of urban children and assuaging the fears and anxieties of early-twentieth-century parents, the summer programs hosted through and at the YMCA of the Rockies offered a unique, God-filled wilderness in which children could escape from the depravities of the city and benefit from “correct” moral and spiritual instruction.

Several of the summer programs explicitly spoke to parents and their concerns for their children, overtly promoting themselves as institutions and places in which children could finally receive adequate moral and religious education and instruction. Allsebrook Camp for Girls directed its attention to the parents of younger children, offering to provide the right instruction

⁹⁰ Margo Horn, “Childhood and Children,” 2028-2029.

⁹¹ Ruth M. Alexander, “Adolescence,” in *Encyclopedia of American Social History*, vol. III, ed. Mary Kupiec Carton, Elliott J. Gorn, and Peter W. Williams (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1993), 2044.

⁹² Marylynn Salmon, “Reproduction and Parenthood,” in *Encyclopedia of American Social History*, vol. III, ed. Mary Kupiec Carton, Elliott J. Gorn, Peter W. Williams (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1993), 2007.

as soon as possible in these urban girls' lives, stating: "Some parents feel that girls of six and seven years of age are too young to be sent away from home, but the instilling of basic traits of self reliance, fairness, the ability to give and take, cannot begin too early."⁹³ Allsebrook emphasized the importance of sending these girls away from home—away from the city—because it was only through this escape that parents could be sure their children had obtained the right instruction. CCO also used this appeal to parents, promising a strengthening of character, morals, and spirituality outside of the city in an advertisement that directly appealed to parents—entitled "A Word to Parents":

Do you want to be sure that your boy's vacation is going to be a helpful one to him—one free from worry for you? Do you want to know that your boy is getting his fun under right supervision, in ways that will help his character develop and be ready to go back to school in the fall with renewed strength, robust health and increased moral strength? Then help him line up with the activities suggested in this issue of *Denver Young Men*.⁹⁴

The "activities suggested" were simple: to send your boy to camp. Parents, concerned with their boys' morals and character development, were easily convinced by this appeal. CCO would provide campers with a "renewed strength" to counter the immorality of the urban environment. In another advertisement for CCO—in which many of the same goals were listed—camp promoters argued that, due to CCO's place in the Rocky Mountain wilderness, a boy could reap the benefits for life: "The camp life, near to nature, in 'God's out-of-doors,' induces clean thoughts and right living. The object of the camp is not to pay dividends in money, but in the development of character."⁹⁵ Repeatedly, CCO promotional materials emphasized the connection

⁹³ Unknown author "Allsebrook Camp For Girls," 3, n.d., "Allsebrook Camp for Girls," Box 3, Folder 10, YMCA of the Rockies Collection, Lula W. Dorsey Museum, Estes Park, Colorado.

⁹⁴ Unknown author, "A Word to Parents," *Denver Young Men*, 1916, "Denver Young Men, 1908-32," Box 3, Folder 6, YMCA of the Rockies Collection, Lula W. Dorsey Museum, Estes Park, Colorado.

⁹⁵ Unknown author, "A WORD TO PARENTS," *Denver Young Men*, 1919, "Denver Young Men, 1917-19," Box 5, Folder 19, YMCA of the Rockies Collection, Lula W. Dorsey Museum, Estes Park, Colorado.

between God, improved character and morals, and the wilderness—and CCO, like Allsebrook and the other summer programs at the YMCA of the Rockies, could provide this ideal education.

Camp programmers often made overt comments on the ways in which they saw cities as places of degradation and harm, directly addressing parents' anxieties. Noting their unique placement in nature, these programs asserted that a summer in the wilderness, away from the city, would instill in children "for their future life, not only lessons in character, but an appreciation of those intrinsic values which guard against the perishable aspirations of the present-day social life."⁹⁶ Wilderness, unlike urban environments and the rampant consumerism within such an environment, was not "perishable"; rather, the values it provided would serve as a guard against the city. Similar sentiments abounded throughout camp materials, with a sweeping rejection of the "artificial conditions" these urban environments offered for the "upbringing of children and youth," or offering an escape from the "usual routine of school and neighborhood and home."⁹⁷ Another summer program appealed to campers and parents with the character of a sweet, cheerful puppy, who had been reinvigorated after a summer in the wilderness; the puppy asserted that "city life is wearing me down," and consequently just *had* "to get back to camp in Colorado."⁹⁸ Over and over again, the summer programs noted their awareness of the degeneracy inherent to life in the city and thus offered their programs as a means to address the problems children had acquired as a byproduct of city life.

⁹⁶ Unknown author, "Chipeta: A Camp for Girls at 'The Heights,'" *Estes Park Bulletin*, February 1926, "Estes Park Bulletin, 1920-1927," Box 1, Folder 29, YMCA of the Rockies Collection, Lula W. Dorsey Museum, Estes Park, Colorado.

⁹⁷ Unknown author, "Random Ramblings, 1921-1970; From the Catalog of 1934," 5, 1970, "Cheley Camps," Box 1, Folder 11, YMCA of the Rockies Collection, Lula W. Dorsey Museum, Estes Park, Colorado; Unknown author, "Allsebrook Camp for Girls," 5, n.d., "Allsebrook Camp for Girls," Box 3, Folder 10, YMCA of the Rockies Collection, Lula W. Dorsey Museum, Estes Park, Colorado.

⁹⁸ Unknown author, "Timberland Girl Scout Camp," 8, 1936, "Timberland Girl Scout Camp," Box 12, Folder 53, YMCA of the Rockies Collection, Lula W. Dorsey Museum, Estes Park, Colorado.

The importance of repairing the ills of urban living was, consequently, essential to the promotion of these summer programs. Camp Chipeta connected the benefits of the outdoor life to health and spirituality and asserted that the camp was a place “where Christian character-building influences, by leadership and program, will be outstanding.”⁹⁹ Camp Chipeta also utilized the proximity of the YMCA of the Rockies to display their Christian values and solution to urban living, claiming that the camp reflected the same ideals and goals that were taught in the boys’ summer programs at the YMCA.¹⁰⁰ As Allsebrook and CCO filled a need in American society at this time, so Camp Chipeta sought to do—combining the unique wilderness of Estes Park with a “physical, mental, social, and spiritual” education.¹⁰¹ Indeed, Chipeta advertisements also explicitly noted the void in children’s character created by urban living:

The object of the camp is stated to be to give young, growing girls a vacation which will be at once enjoyable and profitable and, in the very finest sense, educational; to instill in the hearts of girls a love and appreciation for Nature and also to give them for their future life not only lessons in character, but an appreciation of those intrinsic values which guard against the perishable aspirations of the present-day social life.¹⁰²

According to Camp Chipeta programmers, “present-day social life” had caused depravity of morals and character, as CCO had also claimed. By removing girls to the wilderness—capital “N” nature—girls would ostensibly be better prepared to withstand and avoid the degeneracy of urban life. Camp Chipeta of Cheley Camps was not the sole remedy to urban living—all of Cheley Camps promoted themselves as such. As one brochure argued to prospective campers’

⁹⁹ Unknown author, “A New Camp for Girls,” n.d., “YMCA ‘A New Camp for Girls’ at The Heights,” Box 3, Folder 36, YMCA of the Rockies Collection, Lula W. Dorsey Museum, Estes Park, Colorado.

¹⁰⁰ “With its beauty of location, its proximity to the lakes, streams, glaciers, and peaks of the region, its excellent equipment and moderate rates, backed by the fine ideals for which the Estes Park Conference of the Y.M.C.A.’s stands *The Heights* as a Girls’ Camp fills a very real need, and affords an ideal place for young girls to spend an enjoyable, wholesome and profitable vacation, under the guidance of trained, Christian leadership.” Unknown author, “A New Camp for Girls,” n.d., “YMCA ‘A New Camp for Girls’ at The Heights,” Box 3, Folder 36, YMCA of the Rockies Collection, Lula W. Dorsey Museum, Estes Park, Colorado.

¹⁰¹ Unknown author, “Random Ramblings, 1921-1970,” 1970, “Cheley Camp,” Box 1, Folder 11, YMCA of the Rockies Collection, Lula W. Dorsey Museum, Estes Park, Colorado.

¹⁰² Unknown author, “Chipeta: A Camp for Girls at ‘The Heights,’” *Estes Park Bulletin*, 1926, “Estes Park Bulletin,” Box 1, Folder 29, YMCA of the Rockies Collection, Lula W. Dorsey Museum, Estes Park, Colorado.

parents, a summer spent at Cheley Camps for Boys was “the best substitute for the frontier life which built grit and granite into the physical and moral fibre of our pioneer forefathers.”¹⁰³ The brochure went on to criticize urban living, arguing that it made future adults weak in body and spirit.¹⁰⁴ It was implicitly understood, then, that Cheley Camps would provide a tonic for urban life: wilderness.

Accordingly, a child’s inevitable return to the city was explicitly addressed by the summer programs; when campers returned home, they were encouraged to continue to demonstrate the better morals and stronger character that had been cultivated at camp and learned from God’s presence in the mountains.¹⁰⁵ The Allsebrook Sunrise Meditations exhorted campers to remember their “higher selves,” the Long’s Peak of their own character, and to remember their time in the wilderness as they lived out the next year in the city.¹⁰⁶ Other examples of the summer program as a remedy for the city abound; for example, on the inside cover of an Allsebrook brochure—that is, the *first* words a prospective camper or their parents would read—was a poem detailing the many lovely and beneficial aspects of nature. As this selection shows, there were clear connections made between an upright and moral character and time spent in the wilderness:

Give me again the trail,
The dripping morning wood,
The whistle now and then of quail,
The scared dash and flirt of cottontail,

¹⁰³ Unknown author, “Random Ramblings, 1921-1970; From the Catalog of 1934” 1970, “Cheley Camp,” Box 1, Folder 11, YMCA of the Rockies Collection, Lula W. Dorsey Museum, Estes Park, Colorado.

¹⁰⁴ Unknown author, “Random Ramblings, 1921-1970; From the Catalog of 1934” 1970, “Cheley Camp,” Box 1, Folder 11, YMCA of the Rockies Collection, Lula W. Dorsey Museum, Estes Park, Colorado.

¹⁰⁵ “I shall carry out in ACTION the inspiration of my Camp life. I will study as never before. I will be helpful at home. I will accomplish.”

Unknown author, “Allsebrook Sunrise Meditations; Flattop” n.d., “Allsebrook Camp for Girls,” Box 3, Folder 10, YMCA of the Rockies Collection, Lula W. Dorsey Museum, Estes Park, Colorado.

¹⁰⁶ Unknown author, “Allsebrook Sunrise Meditations; Long’s Peak,” n.d., “Allsebrook Camp for Girls,” Box 3, Folder 10, YMCA of the Rockies Collection, Lula W. Dorsey Museum, Estes Park, Colorado.

Glimpse of far summit draped in cloudy hood,
Keen ache of muscle and the sense of good.
Give me again the trail.

Give me again the thrill of timberline,
The wide, clear world, the sudden lift,
The breeze and light of heaven like a wine,
Bush, shrub and tree defeated here, a sign
Though boundaries to things are set, the gift
Of spirit may o'er pass them. Man may drift
Give me the thrill of timberline¹⁰⁷

The “sense of good,” the “gift of spirit”—these and other descriptions in the poem pointed to the benefits girls would receive after a summer in the Rocky Mountains. Further, these descriptions do not solely reference improved character, but improved spirituality. As the YMCA and Estes Park brochures described, God and spirituality could be found in the mountains—or, in this case, the timberline—and explicitly *not* in the city.

It is important to note, as well, that this poem immediately connected the wilderness to good character and the gift of spirituality—this theme is repeated throughout summer programs’ promotional and camp-published materials. Some of the Allsebrook brochures explicitly focused parents’ attention towards the benefits of a summer in the Rocky Mountains, asking “WHAT SHOULD A GIRL GAIN FROM HER SUMMER AT ALLSEBROOK?”¹⁰⁸ The eye is drawn toward the capital letters, and the answer to the hypothetical question was simple and clear: “health”; this benefit was closely followed by a list of character traits—namely, self reliance, fairness, and “the ability to give and take.”¹⁰⁹ These character traits were mentioned in numerous Allsebrook brochures and would purportedly be uniquely nurtured as a result of spending time in

¹⁰⁷ Frank E. Thompson, “Allsebrook Camp For Girls; Give Me Again” ca. 1930s, “Allsebrook Camp for Girls,” Box 3, Folder 10, YMCA of the Rockies Collection, Lula W. Dorsey Museum, Estes Park, Colorado.

¹⁰⁸ Unknown author, “Allsebrook Camp For Girls,” ca. 1930s, “Allsebrook Camp for Girls,” Box 3, Folder 10, YMCA of the Rockies Collection, Lula W. Dorsey Museum, Estes Park, Colorado.

¹⁰⁹ Unknown author, “Allsebrook Camp For Girls,” ca. 1930s, “Allsebrook Camp for Girls,” Box 3, Folder 10, YMCA of the Rockies Collection, Lula W. Dorsey Museum, Estes Park, Colorado.

the fresh, pure, mountain air as opposed to the city. Indeed, parents were reassured that their daughters would be improved in these areas with promises of weekly updates concerning the girls' progress, both in health and character. Considering these promotional materials were so rooted in the benefits of the surrounding wilderness—specifically noting the presence and benefits of the mountains—it is clear the camp programmers fervently believed in the cultural ideals of the time and saw their summer programs as an antidote to the immorality and corruption of urban living.

Another way in which these summer programs offered to address the problems of the city was through promises of character and spiritual improvement as a result of a summer in the wilderness. CCO, for example, appealed to parents with language focused on character building, improved health, and building a solid foundation in religion. As one advertisement stated, the goal of CCO was to “direct energy, develop latent ability, cultivate right habits and make Christian character”; it was not a vacation for boys, but rather a unique and perfect place to grow.¹¹⁰ All of these goals were firmly rooted in the experience boys would have in the wilderness, particularly the spiritual goals—for example, *every* CCO advertisement referred to the surrounding Rocky Mountain environment as “God’s out-of-doors.” These promotions also explicitly argued that a boy could only grow in strength and morals by attending camp—implying that city life, as a place outside of camp, could not provide the same education. As one advertisement stated:

With a well-rounded and carefully directed program of activities, Camp Chief Ouray presents to every boy who attends, a splendid opportunity to develop those qualities which every modern boy should possess, and in a manner which cannot be done in any other place. He is placed on his own responsibility and taught to plan, make decisions and

¹¹⁰ Unknown author, “WHY NOT CAMP CHIEF OURAY,” *Denver Young Men*, 1923, “Denver Young Men, 1908-32,” Box 3, Folder 6, YMCA of the Rockies Collection, Lula W. Dorsey Museum, Estes Park, Colorado.

depend upon himself. In these days of ultra-modern urban life, many boys are being deprived of this opportunity which means so much to the development of character.¹¹¹

This advertisement overtly claimed that this wilderness, moral, and religious education could not be achieved in any other location and particularly could not be learned in the city. By spending a summer at CCO, the camp programmers believed that boys would be better prepared for urban living, a lifestyle that was understood to be devoid of morals, spirituality, and led only to poor health. This was further demonstrated in another advertisement, in which CCO asserted that boys would be “better prepared for manhood for having been at Camp Chief Ouray. He doesn’t simply go there—he **grows** [emphasis in original].”¹¹² CCO programming also claimed to instill in boys habits of “religious devotion,” so that as a result of attending CCO, boys would thereafter daily devote themselves to studying the Bible and living a Christian lifestyle.¹¹³ These themes were reiterated in promotional materials for CCO throughout the 1920s and 30s—it was not a phenomenon localized to one or two years; certainly this longevity reflects the effectiveness of these promotions.

The location of these camps in the wilderness also emulated the ideal of “frontier living,” a lifestyle that was seen as beneficial to the physical and moral strength of young men at this time; this will be examined more fully in the fourth chapter. Consequently, the emphasis of providing a “frontier” and pioneer living as an antidote to the wickedness of urban life—because this lifestyle encouraged character and spiritual growth—was an essential goal of the YMCA in general and explains the summer programs’ repeated emphasis on remedying the ill of the city. In a general YMCA promotion—tellingly titled “Sixty-Six Years of Character Building”—

¹¹¹ Unknown author, “Camp Chief Ouray Denver YMCA Boys’ Camp, 1934,” 1934, “CCO Brochures,” CCO Box 1, Folder 36, YMCA of the Rockies Collection, Lula W. Dorsey Museum, Estes Park, Colorado.

¹¹² Unknown author, “WHY NOT CAMP CHIEF OURAY,” *Denver Young Men*, 1923, “Denver Young Men, 1908-32,” Box 3, Folder 6, YMCA of the Rockies Collection, Lula W. Dorsey Museum, Estes Park, Colorado.

¹¹³ Unknown author, “WHY NOT CAMP CHIEF OURAY,” *Denver Young Men*, 1923, “Denver Young Men, 1908-32,” Box 3, Folder 6, YMCA of the Rockies Collection, Lula W. Dorsey Museum, Estes Park, Colorado.

frontier life was upheld as the ideal towards which all young men should strive. More than that, engaging in the values of the frontier was ostensibly essential to growing into a responsible, Christian adult: “Years alone do not make a great nation, a great institution, nor a great man. It is boldness of spirit, the welding of determination and energy, and willingness to serve—typified in the American pioneer—THAT is greatness itself.”¹¹⁴ The YMCA promoted itself as a center for instilling in growing boys essential character traits and values. Moreover, frontier living was exemplified at the summer programs held through the YMCA of the Rockies, serving to further the ultimate goals of the YMCA. All of these promotions and camp-published materials reinforce the assertions of several scholars from the previous chapter—that urban life was seen as immoral and an inadequate place for education. These promotions clearly associated frontier living and morals with the wilderness of the Estes Park region, and consequently the summer programs hosted at or through the YMCA of the Rockies believed they provided this essential education to modern, urban children.

Throughout their promotions, advertisements, brochures, and camp programming materials, the summer programs hosted at and through the YMCA of the Rockies demonstrated a concerted effort to appeal to the culture of wilderness engagement. In the process, these programs emphasized the ways in which their programming would fill a vital gap in the instruction and education of children in the early twentieth century. Utilizing the idea that God was present among the campers and the wilderness—due to its pristine and untrammelled nature—summer programs asserted that a summer in the Rocky Mountains would provide ideal spiritual instruction; what better spiritual and religious education than that which has been

¹¹⁴ Unknown author, “Sixty-Six Years of Character Building,” 1926, “Sixty-Six Years of Character Building,” Box 12, Folder 55, YMCA of the Rockies Collection, Lula W. Dorsey Museum, Estes Park, Colorado.

provided by God himself? Building upon this idea, these summer programs offered an escape from and antidote to the depravities of urban life—a prospect which greatly appealed to parents in the early twentieth century.

Certainly there were other spiritual aspects to the summer programming offered at and through the YMCA of the Rockies, though some activities and curricula varied between the programs. For example, CCO and Cheley camps emphasized the role of the campfire, leading Bible studies at this time, singing hymns together, and encouraging the fellowship and growth this experience offered. Allsebrook, on the other hand, daily studied the Sunrise Meditations, beginning this period of study by singing hymns—such as “The Spacious Firmament On High” and “Lo, I Shall Never Want”—and also carried out two evening vesper services on Sundays.¹¹⁵ Almost all of the summer programs, however, traveled to Estes Park on Sundays in order to participate in a church service. Although they offered transportation to a Catholic mass, most of the campers were Protestant—especially Baptist and Methodist, and consequently participated in the YMCA non-sectarian services.¹¹⁶ Regardless of the various curricula and activities utilized to impart ideals of morality and spirituality, the concern for and focus on fostering children into better, more moral adults as a result of encountering God’s presence in the wilderness was consistent across the various summer programs.

The promotional materials and camp-published materials emphasized the integration of wilderness and spirituality at the summer programs hosted through or at the YMCA of the Rockies. It was only in a unique, pristine, and untrammled environment that a camper could

¹¹⁵ Betty Dean Davies, “Vespers,” 2, *Allsee News*, August 18, 1934, “Allsebrook Camp for Girls,” Box 3, Folder 10, YMCA of the Rockies Collection, Lula W. Dorsey Museum, Estes Park, Colorado

¹¹⁶ Unknown author, “Allsebrook Camp For Girls,” ca. 1930s, “Allsebrook Camp for Girls,” Box 3, Folder 10, YMCA of the Rockies Collection, Lula W. Dorsey Museum, Estes Park, Colorado; Unknown author, “A New Camp for Girls,” n.d., “YMCA ‘A New Camp for Girls’ at The Heights,” Box 3, Folder 36, YMCA of the Rockies Collection, Lula W. Dorsey Museum, Estes Park, Colorado

benefit in character, morals, and—most importantly—spirituality. Indeed, the environment of the Rocky Mountains became central to the programming, from using the landscape as a demonstration of the best character traits and an opportunity to directly encounter God’s teaching to singing songs and engaging in fellowship that was firmly rooted in the wilderness. A direct reflection of the culture leading up to and during the 1920s and 30s, the summer programs promoted and built themselves as character-building, spirituality-instilling institutions that would better prepare a camper for urban living.

CHAPTER THREE—EMBRACING CAMP PROGRAMMING: CAMPERS' RESPONSES

So many things point skyward:
The glistening tip of needled pine;
The upturned face of trumpet vine;
The snowy sweep of rising peak;
The tilted curve of jaybird beak;
A slender wisp of grassy blade;
The splashing drops of white cascade;
The rising swirl of wind sprayed mist;
The dreams and hopes of lovers tryst.
It is not strange that this should be
These things to live, must look to Thee.

-A poem by Allsebrook camper Lauriel Eubank¹¹⁷

Experiencing wilderness and spirituality was an integral component of the summer programming of the YMCA of the Rockies and was intended to instill in campers various values and character traits that they would apply to their lives in the city. These intentions prompt an obvious question: how did campers respond to this instruction? Campers were extremely responsive to the wilderness and spirituality programming these summer camps offered and exhibited an affinity for reading “spiritual values” into the environment and great interest in spending time in “God’s out-of-doors.” Furthermore, campers consistently expressed a desire to retain camp teachings and values regarding spirituality, morality, and health upon their return home, and asserted that, because of their immersion in the wilderness through outdoor activities, they had developed into and returned home as better, more capable adults. Through their shared experiences in spiritual and outdoor activities in the wilderness, campers also repeatedly expressed an appreciation for the friendships they made and their desires to sustain them. Further

¹¹⁷ Lauriel Eubank, “Aspiration,” *Allsee News*, 1936, “Timberland Girl Scout Camp,” Box 12, Folder 53, YMCA of the Rockies Collection, Lula W. Dorsey Museum, Estes Park, Colorado.

reinforcing the extent to which campers adopted and embraced the values and ideals of the summer programs, parents and counselors also remarked on the positive changes they saw in campers; indeed, these were so positive that parents asked for summer programs catered to adults!

Campers participating in these summer programs came from a variety of backgrounds and locations around the United States. Across the summer programs, most campers came from urban environments, particularly larger, highly populated cities. For example, Allsebrook campers mostly came from Cincinnati, Ohio, though a number of campers came from other, highly urbanized environments.¹¹⁸ Most CCO campers called Denver home and were closely connected to the Denver YMCA, though there were campers who also came from out of the state; parents, upon vacationing in Colorado, noted CCO as an ideal vacation camp for their boys and thus sent their boys to participate in camp while vacationing elsewhere in Colorado themselves.¹¹⁹ Though some campers came from rural environments, across the summer programs campers were noted for escaping from the city.

There are a variety of primary sources that can be used to ascertain campers' responses to wilderness and spiritual programming. Many of the sources are diverse and are not of the same medium—for example, the campers at Allsebrook Camp for Girls printed a very popular weekly newsletter, and the newsletter is the most common primary source in the archives from this summer program. There are several other primary sources that inform this chapter—primarily testimonials from campers and parents, camp histories, and campers' letters. Although there are few remaining letters from campers at this time, those that do remain reveal the values that were

¹¹⁸ Unknown author, "Old Greet New Campers," 1, *Allsee News*, July 13, 1937, "Timberland Girl Scout Camp," Box 12, Folder 53, YMCA of the Rockies Collection, Lula W. Dorsey Museum, Estes Park, Colorado.

¹¹⁹ Richard Lothrop, "Personal letter," 1997, "Letters Written by Former Campers," CCO Box 1, Folder 23, YMCA of the Rockies Collection, Lula W. Dorsey Museum, Estes Park, Colorado.

ingrained in these campers during their summer away from the city. Furthermore, the limitations of this source material must be noted. Only campers who enjoyed camp life and embraced its values expressed their views through the newsletter, leaving those who did not voice their opinions and who may have rejected the camps' ideals absent from the source material. Additionally, the letters that have survived notably do not reject the ideals, despite the fact that they were written in a medium that was far more open to expressing opinions. These opinions are also limited, due to the fact that many campers' letters home do not survive in the archives. Thus, although the primary sources are not the same between all of the summer programs and though they may not be a representative sampling of all the campers, each serves to portray the ways in which some campers responded to camp life and camp programming.

After spending a summer in the wilderness and experiencing the religious instruction in the summer programs, campers began to express their belief in finding instructional value in the wilderness itself. Campers wrote their own poems, editorials, and letters revealing the many ways they embraced the landscape and wilderness as a source of spiritual and character-building instruction. These sources show the ways in which a spiritual perception of and engagement with the wilderness had an effect on campers. Additionally, campers alluded to the lasting value of these spiritual and character-building lessons, referencing the ways in which they would apply these principles and values to their own lives upon their return home.

Letters and other documents written by the campers themselves are the ideal way to understand the extent to which campers embraced the spiritual and wilderness values of these summer programs. One of the best and most extensive examples of campers' perspectives on the spiritual and character-building nature of the wilderness were in the Allsebrook Camp for Girls'

weekly newsletter, *Allsee News*. Printed and disseminated within the camp, *Allsee News* was very popular among the campers and was also sent home to campers' parents as an exhibition of the progress their girls were making during their summer away. The campers themselves wrote, edited, and printed the paper while at camp, making the newsletter an excellent source for their own perspectives and thoughts during their summer at camp.

Throughout the various poems and editorials printed in *Allsee News*, it is clear the campers who wrote for the newsletter embraced the connection between spirituality, character building, and the wilderness of the Rocky Mountains. The language of these writings were rooted in the wilderness—applying character traits to certain features of the landscape, reading messages from God that were placed in the wilderness, and more. One such poem, entitled “Mountain Prayer,” displayed the ideals of the summer programs brilliantly:

May I be like a flower, God,
Beauteous,
Lovely,
My heart an unlifted stamen,
My life like a graceful petal
Pearl-tinted by Thee.

May I grow like a pine tree, God,
Stately,
Upright,
Clean as the wind sweeps through me,
Pure in the flick'ring sunlight,
Created by Thee.

May I live like a mountain, God,
Stronger,
Nobler,
With summit heav'ward pointing,
With foundation of wind-worn granite,
Deep-rooted in Thee.¹²⁰

¹²⁰ Laile Eubank, “Mountain Prayer,” *Allsee News*, July 26, 1934, “Allsebrook Camp for Girls,” Box 3, Folder 10, YMCA of the Rockies Collection, Lula W. Dorsey Museum, Estes Park, Colorado.

Speaking through the language of the wilderness as a means of connecting to God, Eubank's poem reflects an internalization of the values and ideals promoted at these summer programs; indeed, as the step-daughter of the spiritual director at Allsebrook, Jessie Eubank, Laile's internalization of the spiritual and wilderness values were likely strengthened. Every aspect of the wilderness was noted to be pure and rooted in spirituality and were perceived as the best possible way to communicate with God. Through the wilderness, Laile's spirituality had been improved, her character traits were improved, and the wilderness was revered as an exemplar and demonstration of both. The language and writing strategies are reminiscent of the promotional materials and camp-published literature discussed in the previous chapter. These themes are repeated throughout the articles in *Allsee News*; campers exhorted each other to "change from a folded bud" of a flower into a "blossom of ever increasing appreciation and beauty"; another camper urged her compatriots to learn from the "bubbling energy of the mountain stream, the gentle friendliness of aspens, and the fortitude of evergreens at timberline..."¹²¹ Associating personality traits and spirituality with features in the wilderness, these campers internalized the wilderness ideal.

Though Allsebrook offers the most extensive documentary materials for evaluating campers' responses to the summer programming, other sources also show that campers internalized the goals and ideals that could be found by living in the wilderness. When preparing for an anniversary celebration of their history with CCO, the YMCA of the Rockies contacted former CCO campers in the early 1990s. Several responded, recalling fondly their summers spent at CCO and the many experiences they had during their time at camp. What is particularly

¹²¹ Laile Eubank, "Editorial," *Allsee News*, ca. 1930s, "Allsebrook Camp for Girls," Box 3, Folder 10, YMCA of the Rockies Collection, Lula W. Dorsey Museum, Estes Park, Colorado; Betsy Platt, "Editorial," *Allsee News*, July 13, 1937, "Timberland Girl Scout Camp," Box 12, Folder 53, YMCA of the Rockies Collection, Lula W. Dorsey Museum, Estes Park, Colorado.

striking about these letters, however, is the specificity of the memories these campers had in regard to the environment—whether of the wilderness surrounding CCO, the inspiring and favored campfire talks, or of their own treks in the woods, the campers detailed many of their experiences at length. One such camper recalled that the camp was “a real rugged camp,” “a real frontier camp,” and that during his time there all the campers were “healthy and happy.”¹²² Some campers gave their own interpretations of the camp experience, stressing the ruggedness of their outdoor experience. Indeed, for these campers, it was the toughness, the ruggedness of the outdoors that made them stronger—not simply the intrinsic healthfulness of the wild.

The aforementioned camper’s references to ruggedness and the frontier are key; associating his camp experience with his idea of the frontier, and with the idea of having a rough and tough experience in the outdoors, the former camper believed the outdoor life made him and his fellow campers healthier. His letter continues with extensive descriptions of the various activities he and his comrades enjoyed—swimming in the lake (when it was not too cold), hiking the “nature trails,” and sitting about the campfire listening to stories.¹²³ Another camper remembered fondly the “camp fires and the songs we sang around it,” but also asked “how much the surroundings have changed over so many years?”¹²⁴ This question is critical to understanding how he responded to the camp programming; the wilderness was central to the programming offered at CCO, and this camper, with his specific reference to the wilderness, made an emotional, now nostalgic connection to the landscape surrounding CCO. This perception of the

¹²² Robert J. Uplinger “Personal letter,” 1993, “Letters Written by Former Campers,” CCO Box 1, Folder 23, YMCA of the Rockies Collection, Lula W. Dorsey Museum, Estes Park, Colorado; Robert J. Uplinger “Personal letter,” 1996, “Letters Written by Former Campers,” CCO Box 1, Folder 23, YMCA of the Rockies Collection, Lula W. Dorsey Museum, Estes Park, Colorado.

¹²³ Robert J. Uplinger “Personal letter,” 1993, “Letters Written by Former Campers,” CCO Box 1, Folder 23, YMCA of the Rockies Collection, Lula W. Dorsey Museum, Estes Park, Colorado.

¹²⁴ Richard Lothrop, “Personal letter,” 1997, “Letters Written by Former Campers,” CCO Box 1, Folder 23, YMCA of the Rockies Collection, Lula W. Dorsey Museum, Estes Park, Colorado.

wilderness was exactly the goal of summer programs offered through the YMCA of the Rockies, and the campers whose letters have survived revealed they had embraced it.

These campers' letters are central to understanding the lasting impact of the summer programming that was offered at the YMCA of the Rockies. Even while they were still at camp, young girls and boys expressed their thoughts on how they would apply camp values to their lives in the city. Various poems and editorials in *Allsee News*, for example, alluded to the campers' imminent return home. Home had become a place in which these new values and ideals would have greater importance, given the perceived lack of morals and religiosity in urban settings. Campers expressed their desire to retain the lessons in character building upon their return home, as the following editorial reflects:

In the last few Camp days that are left, let us each make the following resolution:
-From the tall pine, I will gain enough strength for the entire year to come;
-From the clear air, I will breathe in peace, and serenity;
-From boulders, I will breath in the lesson of infallibility and steadfastness;
-Wisdom will I glean from the stars;
-Grace from the aspen tree;
-I will take the joyous spirit of the waterfall, so that I may ever be radiantly happy;
-The blue of Colorado skies will show me truth;
-And from the mountains that I have learned to love so deeply, I will take bigness, -
bigness of heart, for a courageous and fearless year.¹²⁵

As the campers were nearing the end of their summers, their minds were turned towards the ways in which the instruction they had received could be applied to their lives at home. The wilderness imagery and connection is apparent throughout the editorial and is specific to the Rocky Mountain wilderness. Serenity, wisdom, truth, strength—all of these values and more were ostensibly learned as a result of a summer in the wilderness. The goal of embracing these values while at home was continually reinforced and aspired to in other articles. Indeed, one camper explicitly stated that, “At Allsebrook, each girl tries to gain from the surroundings of

¹²⁵ Laile Eubank, “Resolution,” *Allsee News*, August 18, 1934, “Allsebrook Camp for Girls,” Box 3, Folder 10, YMCA of the Rockies Collection, Lula W. Dorsey Museum, Estes Park, Colorado.

nature a symbol of action which can be carried out in her happy camp life and in her changed attitudes at home.”¹²⁶ Camp *changed* the campers, as the promotional materials claimed it would. These articles, editorials, and poems were not written by counselors or camp directors, but instead the campers themselves expressed their altered and improved worldview. A summer at the YMCA of the Rockies instilled in campers wilderness values, a growing spirituality, and a belief that, in the wilderness and through the wilderness, a person could grow and find God.

Fellowship and friendship between the campers also served to reinforce the spiritual values gained from the wilderness. Campers exhorted each other to hold true to the lessons of camp, to return home fully true to their new personality and spirituality, and to ultimately hold fast to the friendships gained as a means of holding each other accountable. *Allsee News*, for example, included articles detailing the many “inside jokes” between the campers, the various nicknames given to each other, and articles introducing various staff members or recently arrived campers to the rest of the girls.¹²⁷ These friendships were incredibly strong, and the campers used their connections to one another to build themselves up and improve themselves. As one camper noted, “friendships are made which endure forever”; even when separated after a summer of fellowship and friendship, campers yearned to return to reunite with their friends, seeking once again the support of their friends as they navigated and understood their improved spirituality.¹²⁸

¹²⁶ Jule Platt, “Daily Thought Uplifting,” *Allsee News*, July 13, 1937, “Timberland Girl Scout Camp,” Box 12, Folder 53, YMCA of the Rockies Collection, Lula W. Dorsey Museum, Estes Park, Colorado.

¹²⁷ Unknown author, “Old Greet New Campers,” 1, *Allsee News*, July 13, 1937, “Timberland Girl Scout Camp,” Box 12, Folder 53, YMCA of the Rockies Collection, Lula W. Dorsey Museum, Estes Park, Colorado; Unknown author, “Personalities,” 3-4, *Allsee News*, August 6, 1937, “Timberland Girl Scout Camp,” Box 12, Folder 53, YMCA of the Rockies Collection, Lula W. Dorsey Museum, Estes Park, Colorado.

¹²⁸ Tom Carse, “From a Camper,” 4, *Denver Young Men*, 1924, “Denver Young Men, 1908-32,” Box 3, Folder 6, YMCA of the Rockies Collection, Lula W. Dorsey Museum, Estes Park, Colorado.

In addition to reading spiritual and character values from the landscape, campers also expounded upon the benefits of the outdoor activities offered at these summer programs, particularly hiking. Outdoor pursuits and activities were promoted by the summer programs themselves, particularly for the healthful and spiritual benefits that would be awakened in campers after spending time in the outdoors. Indeed, spending time in the mountains was central to the general Estes Park and YMCA of the Rockies' promotional materials, as the first chapter discussed—for it was on hikes and in the mountains that one could find themselves and encounter God. Campers at the summer programs offered through the YMCA of the Rockies found great joy and inspiration from their activities in the Rocky Mountain wilderness, noting that it was through participation in these outdoor activities that they had improved themselves.

This complete immersion in the wilderness through outdoor activities further reinforced the extent to which campers embraced the idea of “ruggedness.” One young camper was particularly amazed at the difficulties involved in “frontier living”: former CCO camper Everett Sutton. Sutton's letters are an incredible primary source to have access to, as they represent the only collection of “letters to home” found in the YMCA of the Rockies archives. Contacted by a CCO historian, Sutton sent copies of his letters to the archive in order to add to the history of CCO's early years. Sutton was a camper at CCO in 1908, the second year of CCO's existence. At this point, CCO was still considered a “true frontier camp,” in that the boys were expected to live as frontiersmen. They did not stay in cabins, but in tents; they did not shower, but bathed in the Colorado River. The camp “modernized” soon after, due to several health concerns raised by camp sponsors—health concerns that Sutton also mentions. For example, one day a dead cow was found in the river in which the boys had been bathing, swimming, and from which they had

been obtaining their drinking water.¹²⁹ Sutton's experiences are integral to understanding how campers experienced living and playing in the wilderness, as he and his fellow campers spent all of their time at CCO in the midst of wilderness.

Throughout Sutton's letters to his parents, he often mentioned the various activities and highlights of his day. These activities most often involved hikes, which Sutton seemed to greatly enjoy despite the fact that he was very homesick. Sutton's initial discussions of these hikes are brief and cursory—noting that he and the other campers “have to climb 3 mountains” in order to earn their camp badges.¹³⁰ As the summer progressed, however, Sutton began to make observations about the wilderness around him in his letters home, particularly on hikes with a camp counselor, “Mr. Hersey,” who often urged Sutton and his fellow campers to observe the surrounding landscape. Indeed, Sutton's letters become increasingly more descriptive, as this July 8, 1908 letter exhibits:

I went out with Mr Hersey yesterday. . . . We went into the heavy timber. Birds were scarce until we got near the creek. Before we got to the creek the only bird[s] we saw were the Longcrested Jay, Robin and to Flickers. On the creek bank stood two dead pine trees. In one was a bluebird nest in a hole. Below the Bluebird nest was a Flicker nest. In some trees there was a couple of woodpecker nest[s]. In the other tree were several Robin nests. About ten feet away was another dead tree. In a hole we found a birds nest. We have not identified it yet. We think it is the nest of a Nut Hatch [sic].¹³¹

Sutton was wholly focused on the wilderness—the placement and identity of the birds, their place next to the creek, their use of the dead trees as homes. Although Sutton did not explicitly state his growing interest in the wilderness, from the progression of his letters it is clear that the Mr. Hersey instilled in him a desire to interact with, know, and participate in the wilderness

¹²⁹ Everette Sutton, “Personal letter,” June 28, 1908, “Everette Sutton Letters,” CCO Box 1, Folder 29, YMCA of the Rockies Collection, Lula W. Dorsey Museum, Estes Park, Colorado.

¹³⁰ Everette Sutton, “Personal letter,” 1908, “Everette Sutton Letters,” CCO Box 1, Folder 29, YMCA of the Rockies Collection, Lula W. Dorsey Museum, Estes Park, Colorado.

¹³¹ Everette Sutton, “Personal letter,” July 8, 1908, “Everette Sutton Letters,” CCO Box 1, Folder 29, YMCA of the Rockies Collection, Lula W. Dorsey Museum, Estes Park, Colorado.

around him. Indeed, Sutton also mentioned his growing fondness for hiking—even connecting this activity to God, albeit in jest: “There is vesper services at night. The moon rides the top of the mountain. Mr. Stone is a good Christian. He says ‘God is every place. We must walk in his way.’ Frank said, ‘God must be awful busy walking every where [sic].’”¹³² Sutton and his fellow CCO campers spent much of their time hiking in the mountains, walking in God’s way. With his growing observation of the wilderness and the amount of time spent hiking in the mountains, Sutton represented the ways in which spending a summer in the wilderness could benefit a person’s health, character, and spirituality.

Campers were engrossed in their wilderness activities, excitedly relating stories to their parents and to each other. The most common articles featured in *Allsee News* discussed the various hikes Allsebrook campers participated in during the previous week. In these articles, the girls frequently noted their sense of elation, accomplishment, and pride upon completing a hike in addition to the benefits these hikes added to their health. Several *Allsee News* articles list the mountains that were “conquered” by Allsebrook campers—sometimes several mountains in one day—emphasizing the physical and healthful “victory” of having hiked to a mountain summit.¹³³ In various editorials, as well, the benefits of outdoor activities are cheerfully listed, and it is clear that Allsebrook campers were aware of and pleased with the effects of an outdoor life:

Here at Allsebrook are more than air, food, sun, and water, although these are an important part of camp life. There is every opportunity for physical and mental development. A delightful canter or a refreshing swim gives health and a taste of the joyousness of life. Mountains are brought into intimacy on numerous trips. ... The mountains are mought [sic] but virtuous.¹³⁴

¹³² Everette Sutton, “Personal letter,” 1908, “Everette Sutton Letters,” CCO Box 1, Folder 29, YMCA of the Rockies Collection, Lula W. Dorsey Museum, Estes Park, Colorado.

¹³³ Unknown author, “Ypsilon Conquered on Twenty-mile Trip,” *Allsee News*, July 23, 1936, “Timberland Girl Scout Camp,” Box 12, Folder 53, YMCA of the Rockies Collection, Lula W. Dorsey Museum, Estes Park, Colorado.

¹³⁴ Betsy Platt, “Editorial,” *Allsee News*, July 13, 1937, “Timberland Girl Scout Camp,” Box 12, Folder 53, YMCA of the Rockies Collection, Lula W. Dorsey Museum, Estes Park, Colorado.

Horseback riding, swims in the mountain lakes, and hiking are all listed as sources of “physical and mental development.” Through improving their health, according to this camper, the girls at Allsebrook were able to add to their “joyousness” in life. These assertions were not made by camp programmers hoping to appeal to parents, but by the campers themselves, claiming that the outdoor life and engagement with the wilderness had provided for them improved health and thus greater joy.

It was on hikes, as well, that Allsebrook campers often alluded to their “Sunrise Meditations”; by actually encountering the terrain and experiencing the beauty and mystery of the mountains for themselves, the girls expressed deep awe, fascination, and spiritual growth. Allsebrook camper Betty Lou Bolce, in her article about Long’s Peak, “From the Top,” described the various values and feelings she had only as a result of climbing the mighty mountain:

However, the feeling of intense success for having conquered Long’s predominated when I first ascended the summit, - but, before beginning the descent, I seemed to be a very different person. The greatness and the mightiness seemed to overpower me. I realized how very tiny and insignificant I was on that mountain, for I had discovered that the outer dimension of ourself varies with the greatness of the thing we are over against. I was subdued, and that impression of the power of the mountains will never leave me.¹³⁵

Bolce asserted that it was the exercise of hiking that had changed her, and this unique experience in the mountains reminded her of the power of God. Furthermore, throughout her article Bolce associated character traits with the features of the trail, the surrounding mountains, and the passing streams and waterfalls. This attention to the detailed beauty of the trails was repeated in various *Allsee News* hiking articles—and demonstrated the lasting impact of Jessie Eubank’s “Sunrise Meditations.” Indeed, one camper, disappointed that her fellows had neglected to

¹³⁵ Betty Lou Bolce, “From the Top,” *Allsee News*, ca. 1930s, “Allsebrook Camp for Girls,” Box 3, Folder 10, YMCA of the Rockies Collection, Lula W. Dorsey Museum, Estes Park, Colorado.

appreciate the lessons of the surrounding wilderness, exhorted her compatriots to “be more aware of the beauties of the trail,” for it was while hiking on the trail that one could gain a unique, growing, spiritual experience.¹³⁶ Based on these campers’ writings, it is clear that engaging in various wilderness activities—and particularly through hiking—allowed campers to better internalize the ideals and goals of the summer programs.

These activities also created opportunities for fostering and nurturing the unique, lasting friendships between campers. Indeed, campers did not hike the mountains by themselves, but rather with their fellows and friends, rejoicing together in the wilderness. Hiking campers cheerfully and eagerly noted the “beauties of the trail” that surrounded them, observing to each other the various ways in which they could learn from the landscape.¹³⁷ The Council Ring of CCO, described as a perfect place of “fellowship” within the wilderness, was ostensibly the outdoor place and activity that inspired the most “happy memories”; a place of “perfect fun,” the “fine group” of boys would always end their evening “hand in hand for the closing campfire song and the prayer to end a perfect day.”¹³⁸ These friendships were fostered and strengthened through their shared participation in the wilderness.

Campers themselves repeatedly emphasized and expounded upon their experiences in the wilderness and growth of character and spirituality, providing ideal source material to demonstrate the efficacy and impact of summer programming at the YMCA of the Rockies. However, the observations of campers’ parents, camp directors, and counselors also serve to reveal the ways in which campers internalized the values promoted at these summer programs.

¹³⁶ Unknown author, “The Beauties of the Trail,” 2, *Allsee News*, July 15, 1935, “Timberland Girl Scout Camp,” Box 12, Folder 53, YMCA of the Rockies Collection, Lula W. Dorsey Museum, Estes Park, Colorado.

¹³⁷ Unknown author, “The Beauties of the Trail,” 2, *Allsee News*, July 15, 1935, “Timberland Girl Scout Camp,” Box 12, Folder 53, YMCA of the Rockies Collection, Lula W. Dorsey Museum, Estes Park, Colorado.

¹³⁸ Leslie Deal, “Camp Stories – Leslie Deal, 50th Anniversary; The Council Ring,” 3, ca. 1970s, “Camp Stories—Leslie Deal, 50th Anniversary,” CCO Box 1, Folder 15, YMCA of the Rockies Collection, Lula W. Dorsey Museum, Estes Park, Colorado.

Parents observed the changes to their children's personalities and spirituality upon their return home, and the various camp directors and counselors, in their day-to-day experiences with the campers, were able to witness the changes in campers' personalities, character, and spirituality.

Having interacted with these campers daily for a summer, the observations of camp directors and counselors exhibited a belief that campers had wholly internalized the wilderness and spirituality ideals that were promoted at the camp—that is, the campers exhibited a reverence for the wilderness, were increasingly aware of God's presence in it, and were thus able to improve themselves. One example of these perceptions of the campers comes from Jessie Eubank, the spiritual director at Allsebrook Camp for Girls. In a letter sent to her former campers, Eubank enclosed a "Sunrise Meditation" in celebration of Thanksgiving. Eubank's letter and the Sunrise Meditation were replete with references to the wilderness of Allsebrook and the ways in which it inspired "correct" thought and action—using the wilderness as a point of instruction while the campers were apart from it. For example, Eubank writes of her hopes for the flowers that were "hidden now in root and seed ready to blossom for us in next year's spring!"¹³⁹ Certainly Eubank believed that Allsebrook inspired in campers their best thoughts and actions—and sought to inspire campers to be mindful of their "better" selves. Indeed, Eubank overtly appeals to the campers' fond memories of their time at Allsebrook, stating, "Meanwhile, I am enclosing for you, in happy remembrance of the beauty of our quiet morning meditation on the mountainside, a copy of our Thanksgiving Meditation."¹⁴⁰

In writing this letter to the Allsebrook campers—and including a new meditation for them to ponder—Eubank was clearly aware of the effects Allsebrook had upon the campers. The

¹³⁹ Jessie Eubank, "Allsebrook Thanksgiving Meditation," ca. 1930s, "Timberland Girl Scout Camp," Box 12, Folder 53, YMCA of the Rockies Collection, Lula W. Dorsey Museum, Estes Park, Colorado.

¹⁴⁰ Jessie Eubank, "Allsebrook Thanksgiving Meditation," ca. 1930s, "Timberland Girl Scout Camp," Box 12, Folder 53, YMCA of the Rockies Collection, Lula W. Dorsey Museum, Estes Park, Colorado.

campers had embraced the instruction of the Sunrise Meditations, had spent a summer reveling in and learning from the wilderness, and had grown spiritually as a result—effects Eubank had clearly observed.

These memories of camp life and its benefits repeatedly emphasized the extent to which campers internalized the values and ideals of these summer programs. Camp histories, written by former camp directors and counselors, serve to exhibit the ways in which campers at the YMCA of the Rockies' summer programs embraced these new lessons and ideals. Elaine Allsebrook Hostmark wrote a brief history of the camp in 1994, having participated at Allsebrook as both a camper and a counselor. Of particular note in this history was Elaine's discussion of Jessie Eubank and her Sunrise Meditations—further revealing the extent to which campers positively responded to her teachings. According to Elaine, the campers found deep meaning and inspiration through the combination of wilderness and Sunrise Meditations—even going so far as to assert that a pervasive feeling of seeking to better oneself was prominent throughout the camp: “There was always an aura of aspiration, of growth, of seeking to be the best one could be. These ideals were put into words in morning meditations and in the Sunday evening vespers, both often planned and written by campers.”¹⁴¹ Hostmark repeatedly returned to descriptions of the landscape, the various wilderness activities of Allsebrook campers, and the importance of reading the landscape for their own character and spiritual development. As both a camper and a counselor at Allsebrook, Hostmark clearly embraced the ideals of the camp and also perceived her fellow campers finding deep meaning and great joy from the same lessons.

Leslie Deal, camp director of CCO from 1923 to 1945, also wrote a personal history of his experiences with campers. Deal devoted most of his CCO history to describing very specific

¹⁴¹ Elaine Allsebrook Hostmark, “Allsebrooks in Estes Park,” 30, 1994, “Allsebrook Camp for Girls,” Box 3, Folder 10, YMCA of the Rockies Collection, Lula W. Dorsey Museum, Estes Park, Colorado.

events and encounters he had with the CCO campers. Each encounter described by Deal emphasized the happy, pleasant disposition of his campers; often Deal explicitly asserted that it was simply due to spending time at camp that every camper was always so well-behaved and pleasant to be around. There were, however, two specific encounters described by Deal that perhaps best demonstrate the ways in which campers responded to and adopted the ideals taught by the camp. The first was a light-hearted, uplifting discussion between Deal and two of his campers:

One Saturday, two boys, brothers, showed up at camp with a fox terrier dog. Of all the things that the camp did not need more of, dogs was most of them. I asked why in the world they brought the dog to camp. They said, "Mr. Deal, this dog has poor health and needs the outdoor life." Well, the Y.M.C.A. has always done a lot of preaching about good health and if that was the case perhaps the dog had better stay.¹⁴²

This incident is significant given the very specific regurgitation of the camp ideals and slogan. The boys in Deal's anecdote, having seen the positive effect of the "outdoor life" upon their own lives sought to instill in the dog the same values and experiences. Deal went on to describe the complete transformation of the dog; surrounded by young campers who doted upon it and living daily in the outdoors, Deal stated that the dog was completely changed and greatly improved in health.¹⁴³ The campers, according to Deal's memory, had benefited from the ideals and activities of the summer program and sought to improve the dog's life similarly.

In another anecdote, Deal noted the campers' perception of CCO as a perfect, healthful place in which to spend a summer. The story is best related in Deal's own words:

One day, I saw a little colored boy in camp. He had a smile from ear to ear. I said to him, 'Are you having a good time?' He replied, 'Yes sur, I was just thinkin' why wait for

¹⁴² Leslie Deal, "Camp Stories – Leslie Deal, 50th Anniversary," 16, ca. 1970s, "Camp Stories—Leslie Deal, 50th Anniversary," CCO Box 1, Folder 15, YMCA of the Rockies Collection, Lula W. Dorsey Museum, Estes Park, Colorado.

¹⁴³ Leslie Deal, "Camp Stories – Leslie Deal, 50th Anniversary," 16, ca. 1970s, "Camp Stories—Leslie Deal, 50th Anniversary," CCO Box 1, Folder 15, YMCA of the Rockies Collection, Lula W. Dorsey Museum, Estes Park, Colorado.

heaven.’ Here he had found a place where he was a real individual in his own right and an equal with every other boy. [...] This world needs a boys viewpoint and sense of fairness.... [sic]¹⁴⁴

There are several notable elements to this story. Certainly there are racial undertones to Deal’s anecdote—the significant differences between the dialogue of the boys in the previous story and this boy’s vocabulary, for example—but his presence in the camp was significant, according to Deal. He repeatedly asserted that there were no problems with racism in the camp, and that campers were more fair and equal in their treatment of other races and peoples than any other group; indeed, in a note added to his original text, Deal even argued that there would be no more wars or conflict if all people acted and thought like campers.¹⁴⁵ What is particularly fascinating about Deal’s anecdote about this boy is the fact that this was not singular; Everette Sutton also made note of an African American camper, Tom Bell, though Tom was also treated and described differently by Sutton throughout his letters.¹⁴⁶ These two sources represent the only mentions of African American campers, speaking to the racial composition of the campers involved in the summer programs at the YMCA of the Rockies. Despite the differences in portrayal, however, as in the previous anecdote, Deal’s camper emphasized the idyllic setting of CCO and its perfection. CCO was so perfect, indeed, that it was akin to heaven. In many of his

¹⁴⁴ Leslie Deal, “Camp Stories – Leslie Deal, 50th Anniversary,” 16, ca. 1970s, “Camp Stories—Leslie Deal, 50th Anniversary,” CCO Box 1, Folder 15, YMCA of the Rockies Collection, Lula W. Dorsey Museum, Estes Park, Colorado.

¹⁴⁵ Leslie Deal, “Camp Stories – Leslie Deal, 50th Anniversary,” 16, n.d., “Camp Stories—Leslie Deal, 50th Anniversary,” CCO Box 1, Folder 15, YMCA of the Rockies Collection, Lula W. Dorsey Museum, Estes Park, Colorado.

¹⁴⁶ Tom Bell participated in the camp only as a result of his mother’s job as cook at the country club from the boys’ hometown of Denver—though, according to Sutton’s commentary on the letters, Bell was “one of the gang” and allowed to participate in all camp activities. Sutton, like Deal, asserted that “no one ever knew of a color line, except the colored people themselves.” Such a statement, unfortunately, does not consider the ways in which Tom was treated by the campers—in Sutton’s descriptions and stories that included Tom, his language was altered, he is intentionally berated for his race, and young Sutton stated that Bell often acted better than he should: “Tom is getting along with the boys rather slow. At first he was considered a funny chap. He thinks he is Governor of the camp... and struts like a n*gger at a clambake.” Clearly Sutton’s belief in a “lack of the color line” was rather limited—a perception that may also have been misguided in Deal’s case. Everette Sutton, “Personal letter,” 1908, “Everette Sutton Letters,” CCO Box 1, Folder 29, YMCA of the Rockies Collection, Lula W. Dorsey Museum, Estes Park, Colorado.

stories, Deal references the many ways in which the campers benefited from the influence, and consequently his history is an excellent source for displaying the extent to which campers internalized the ideals and goals of these summer programs.

The lasting impact and influence of immersing campers in a spiritual wilderness was also observed by pastors who taught at these summer programs and by parents upon children's return home. The *Denver Young Men* newsletter for the Denver YMCA printed several testimonials, from both parents and former campers. These articles were intended to encourage readers to sign up for a summer at CCO; despite the clear advertising intent, the articles further reveal the extent to which campers embraced the wilderness ideals and goals of the summer programs. Most often, the testimonials focused on the benefit of the wilderness and campers' joyful experiences within this true wilderness. For example, one father expressed his profound delight over the positive effects a summer at CCO had had upon his boy:

One father told us just a few days ago that he wouldn't take five times what it cost him to send his boy to camp last year, because he said the boy came home with positive ideas regarding right conduct and was greatly helped physically and mentally. No finer experience can come to a boy than that of the fellowship, work and play in a well organized, properly controlled boys' camp.¹⁴⁷

This statement alludes to the concerns of parents at this time that were discussed in the previous chapter. The camper had returned to the city with improved character as a result of the right instruction in the proper setting—spiritual instruction in the wilderness. No longer hindered by the depravity of the city, this camper was perceived to be “improved” and more spiritual by his father upon returning home. Another father also noted the improvements made to his son as a result of his summer at CCO, particularly as a result of the strong, Christian character of the camp, stating, “Your awards of merit have taught boys to strive to excel and to realize the

¹⁴⁷ Unknown author, “Camp Chief Ouray, Thirteenth Season, 1920,” *Denver Young Men*, May 13, 1920, “Denver Young Men, 1908-32,” Box 3, Folder 6, YMCA of the Rockies Collection, Lula W. Dorsey Museum, Estes Park, Colorado

meaning of good sportsmanship. In Buddy's case at least it has created in him an ambition to succeed."¹⁴⁸ Buddy, like the other CCO campers, would return home more ambitious in his spirituality and his personal goals for improvement. Indeed, Buddy's father, Alston McCarty, noted that 1934 was not Buddy's first summer at CCO, and that he would be returning every summer thereafter—demonstrating the extent to which parents perceived a change in their children.

Some of the testimonials were also from former pastors at CCO, who often expressed astonishment and awe at the impact this camp had upon the campers. The CCO advertisement listed a slew of quotes from former CCO pastors, over and again pointing out the positive influence of the wilderness and spiritual life of CCO:

In my mind there is no other institution outside of the home and church, which does so much for boys as Camp Chief Ouray. No boy could possibly spend two weeks under this splendid Christian influence without being benefited. —Leon C. Hills.¹⁴⁹

It's a great place for a Boys' Camp. The natural surroundings are ideal--- woods, flowers, birds, scenery, mountains, and a lake – good hiking trails; good fishing. The life is so directed that unhappy personal corrections are almost unneeded. The religious climate is sane and healthy. —Wm. Hints.¹⁵⁰

Never to my observation have boys been so happy in their duties as well as in play. If my girl were a boy, I would want him to be at Camp Chief Ouray. —Benjamin H. Freye.¹⁵¹

These selected quotes demonstrate a number of key themes: the unique moral and spiritual instruction offered at CCO, the ideal wilderness setting of CCO, and the exceptional benefits for

¹⁴⁸ Alston McCarty, "Camp Chief Ouray Denver YMCA Boys' Camp 1934," 1934, "CCO Brochures," CCO Box 1, Folder 36, YMCA of the Rockies Collection, Lula W. Dorsey Museum, Estes Park, Colorado.

¹⁴⁹ Leon C. Hills, "Camp Fire and Council Ring; From the Pastors Who Were Bible Study Instructors Last Year," *Denver Young Men*, 1924, "Denver Young Men, 1908-32," Box 3, Folder 6, YMCA of the Rockies Collection, Lula W. Dorsey Museum, Estes Park, Colorado.

¹⁵⁰ Wm. Hints, "Camp Fire and Council Ring; From the Pastors Who Were Bible Study Instructors Last Year," *Denver Young Men*, 1924, "Denver Young Men, 1908-32," Box 3, Folder 6, YMCA of the Rockies Collection, Lula W. Dorsey Museum, Estes Park, Colorado.

¹⁵¹ Benjamin H. Freye, "Camp Fire and Council Ring; From the Pastors Who Were Bible Study Instructors Last Year," *Denver Young Men*, 1924, "Denver Young Men, 1908-32," Box 3, Folder 6, YMCA of the Rockies Collection, Lula W. Dorsey Museum, Estes Park, Colorado.

boys offered at CCO. Hills' assertion did not diminish the value of good parenting and church instruction but rather emphasized the integration of character and spiritual instruction that was uniquely beneficial at CCO. Having taught the campers himself, Hills must have perceived a marked change in the campers to argue that no boy could leave without being improved.

Expounding upon this Christian influence at CCO, Hints highlighted the influence of wilderness in this regard. Further, Hints noted the extent to which camp life was "directed," also alluding to the ways in which CCO strengthened parents' instruction of their children; simply by attending the camp, Hints claimed to have seen a correction to "unhappy" personality traits. The final quote by Freye offered further observation of boys' behavior at camp—stating that they were overall happier while at CCO. Freye also asserted that he would send his daughter to the camp if he could (CCO later did organize a girls' program), attesting to the improvements the summer program had instilled in the campers.

Whether the boys of CCO returned home from camp inspired by the wilderness, excitedly related their various experiences at CCO to their parents, or were truly better behaved and more spiritually grounded, parents noticed—and soon clamored to experience it for themselves. As a final testament to the extent to which campers embraced the ideals and values of these summer programs, CCO eventually developed an adult men's summer program in response to popular demand. An article in the *Denver Young Men* newsletter that announced this new program claimed the demand for an adult men's summer program was the result of the widespread success of CCO's children's program, with "[o]ver five hundred different boys...made better in 'body, mind and spirit' because they have responded to the call of the camp."¹⁵² Having

¹⁵² Unknown author "Men's Vacation Camp," *Denver Young Men*, 1917, "Denver Young Men, 1917-19," Box 5, Folder 19," YMCA of the Rockies Collection, Lula W. Dorsey Museum, Estes Park, Colorado.

witnessed the extent to which campers were changed and affected by the programming offered in the Rocky Mountain wilderness, parents sought to escape from the city and be improved as well.

Repeatedly, campers—those who wrote for the newsletter or whose letters survive—expressed delight and fascination with the wilderness at the YMCA of the Rockies and internalized the spiritual values that were explicitly connected to the natural landscape. Campers expressed themselves and their changed perspectives in a variety of ways—creative writing, poetry, newsletters, letters home, regurgitating the values many years later, and more. Summer camp programmers sought to instill a lasting, changing perception of the wilderness and campers' place in it through these summers in the Rocky Mountain wilderness, and they inspired values of conservation, spiritual connections to the wilderness, and frontier living as a result. However, the programming involved at boys' and girls' summer camps was not the same, and deserves independent analysis. As Benjamin Freye, former CCO pastor, himself noted, a camp like CCO was not suitable for girls; separate programs were developed, and with each program different character traits were emphasized, different connections to the wilderness, and different interactions among campers.

CHAPTER FOUR—BOYS' AND GIRLS' SUMMER PROGRAMS

As the golden sunlight quickens the life on these slopes, may the light of Thy love bless each girl in camp. May beauty, and joy, courage, truth, and love fill each heart TODAY.¹⁵³

-Instruction in an Allsebrook Sunrise Meditation

Each new lesson learned arouses and nurtures elemental forces that makes each boy a better and bigger man.¹⁵⁴

-Promotion for YMCA boys' camps

Campers readily internalized the ideals and values offered at the summer programs of the YMCA of the Rockies. The spiritual and wilderness values offered at these programs had deep resonance for the campers who encountered the pristine wilderness of the Estes Park region, and this, alongside the daily engagement with the outdoors, had a significant effect upon the lives of the campers—so much so, indeed, that the campers' parents took notice. However, in considering the various responses to the camp programming offered through the YMCA of the Rockies, a point of distinction must be considered—were there differences between the programming offered at boys' and girls' summer camps? This chapter therefore considers the various ways in which summer programs differed for boys and girls. The language used by these camps and summer programs in a variety of mediums reveals a clear distinction between the education, programming, and goals offered at boys' versus girls' summer programs. For example, words such as “cheerfulness,” “fairness,” and “selflessness” marked the various materials for girls' summer programs—and were connected to elements of the wilderness that also exhibited those traits, such as flowers. In contrast, terms such as “independence,” “self-

¹⁵³ Unknown author, “Allsebrook Sunrise Meditations; A Morning Prayer,” 10, n.d., “Allsebrook Camp for Girls,” Box 3, Folder 10, YCMA of the Rockies Collection, Lula W. Dorsey Museum, Estes Park, Colorado.

¹⁵⁴ Unknown author, “Sixty-Six Years of Character Building; The Boys' Camp,” 1926, “Sixty-Six Years of Character Building,” Box 12, Folder 55, YMCA of the Rockies Collection, Lula W. Dorsey Museum, Estes Park, Colorado.

reliance,” and “virile” were used to describe boys’ summer programs, and were subsequently connected to the abundant strength of and steadfastness of the mountains—speaking to the significant difference in programming. While the programming offered at girls’ camps focused on instilling in campers ideals of selflessness, service, and working together, boys’ programs emphasized leadership that was rooted in Christian values and improving moral and physical strength. This difference in programming reflects the cultural ideals of the time, particularly family and gender ideals. As the second chapter asserted, parents were abundantly concerned with and anxious about their children’s “correct” education, particularly in the correct cultural ideals, such as motherhood, gentleness, and meekness for young women and assertiveness, independence, and Christian leadership for young men.¹⁵⁵

To effectively demonstrate the differences between the programming of boys’ and girls’ camps, much of the same primary source material of the previous chapters will be referenced, though discussed in a different framework. Rather than discussing the promotional and camp-published materials in terms of how the summer programs sought to promote themselves to parents, for example, they will be considered for the actual content of their programming and the language utilized to describe their programs. Camp handbooks—particularly Boy and Girl Scout handbooks—will also be utilized to demonstrate the stark contrast between boys’ and girls’ summer programming. Although the Boy and Girl Scout programs did not have as visible a presence at the YMCA of the Rockies—evidenced by the dearth of Scout material in the YMCA of the Rockies’ archive—both institutions were very active at this time, and their programming parallels the ideals of the boys’ and girls’ summer programming offered at and through the

¹⁵⁵ Margo Horn, “Childhood and Children,” in *Encyclopedia of American Social History*, vol. III, ed. Mary Kupiec Carton, Elliott J. Gorn, and Peter W. Williams (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1993), 2028-2029; Ruth M. Alexander, “Adolescence,” in *Encyclopedia of American Social History*, vol. III, ed. Mary Kupiec Carton, Elliott J. Gorn, and Peter W. Williams (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1993), 2044.

YMCA of the Rockies. Boy Scouts, Girls Scouts, and an increasing participation in wilderness summer programs all emerged from the same cultural context noted in the first chapter of this thesis. That is, each organization sought to instill in children values of wilderness, spirituality, and the correct moral instruction that was absent from city life. Consequently, the ideals and values of the Boy and Girl Scout organizations serve as an effective parallel to the values and ideals of the summer programs offered through the YMCA of the Rockies.

Although both boys' and girls' summer programs offered character-building, improved spirituality, and better health as a result of spending a summer in the Rocky Mountains, these goals were ultimately carried out in different ways. Summer programs for boys held through the YMCA of the Rockies emphasized ideals that were, at the time, associated with masculinity— independence, self-reliance, and strong Christian leadership. Promotional materials highlighted the importance of using the camp experience to change boys into young men. Camps were not simply offering a vacation—rather, they offered boys a setting and instruction that would help them achieve the nation's cultural ideal of masculinity. Indeed, many of the encouraged character traits were connected to the wilderness as a means of reinforcing the cultural and gender expectations. By spending a summer in God's great out-of-doors, young men would ostensibly be prepared for their return to the city, and would also have begun their transformation into strong, morally upright, men.

Instilling values of Christian leadership and strength in growing young men was integral to the cultural values of this time. As Marylynn Salmon asserts in her article, "Reproduction and Parenthood," in the late nineteenth-century and into the twentieth century, men, with a reduced role in the household, "relied increasingly on schools" and other educational programs to instruct

their children and train them in correct living.¹⁵⁶ Accordingly, the language in the promotions for boys' summer programs emphasized the ways in which a summer at the YMCA of the Rockies would substitute for direct fathering and encourage Christian leadership, strength, independence, and resourcefulness. Promotions asserted that young men would "come to know the spirit of the Christ Life," that growing boys would learn "to live by living, hardening muscles, broadening vision and mastering the art of happy association with others," and youths would grow to have a "strong body and live a clean life, with a natural and true relationship to God" and other men.¹⁵⁷ Strength was fostered in the great frontier experience of true wilderness, which would thereby nurture a true relationship to God—one that was "natural," due to God's presence in the wilderness, as the second chapter to this thesis discussed.

Particularly striking to the language used to describe boys' summer programs at the YMCA of the Rockies was the combined focus on promoting fierce independence in conjunction with friendliness and the ability to work with others. Young men fostered skills of Christian leadership not only as a means of standing apart from others, but also to help lift up and educate others. As one promotion stated, "...every boy who attends the Camp may, through precept and practice, come away with higher ideals of patriotism, a spirit of sacrifice, and the knowledge of how and the will to do service for humanity."¹⁵⁸ These ideals were certainly reinforced in the programming—CCO's camp hymn was sung to the tune "America the Beautiful," for example.

¹⁵⁶ Marylynn Salmon, "Reproduction and Parenthood," in *Encyclopedia of American Social History*, vol. III, ed. Mary Kupiec Carton, Elliott J. Gorn, and Peter W. Williams (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1993), 2007.

¹⁵⁷ Unknown author, "Sixty-Six Years of Character Building," 7, 1926, "Sixty-Six Years of Character Building," Box 12, Folder 53, YMCA of the Rockies Collection, Lula W. Dorsey Museum, Estes Park, Colorado; Unknown author, "Random Ramblings, 1921-1970; Brief excerpts from the camp brochures and camp newspapers over the past fifty years; From the 1937, 1938, and 1939 Trail's End Ranch for Boys Catalog," 7, n.d., "Cheley Camps," Box 1, Folder 11, YMCA of the Rockies Collection, Lula W. Dorsey Museum, Estes Park, Colorado; Unknown author, "Rocky Mountain Boys' Camp," 3, n.d., "Rocky Mountain Boys' Camp," Box 9, Folder 8, YMCA of the Rockies Collection, Lula W. Dorsey Museum, Estes Park, Colorado.

¹⁵⁸ Unknown author, "Camp Chief Ouray," 1, *Denver Young Men*, May 23, 1918, "Denver Young Men, 1908-32," Box 3, Folder 6, YMCA of the Rockies Collection, Lula W. Dorsey Museum, Estes Park, Colorado.

But the focus on leadership as a means of uplifting and educating others in their future was unique to the boys' summer programs. Strength was integral to this leadership, as one promotion noted:

The earlier he can learn to mix well with all types of boys, acquire the habit of friendliness... and self-control, and learn to give and take good-naturedly, the better, for he must learn these lessons sooner or later if he is to be a forceful man in the world of affairs.¹⁵⁹

As this quote suggests, camp life endeavored to provide lessons in being a *forceful*, Christian leader. Moreover, the strength acquired at camp was to transform a boy's life forever, nurturing and developing him into a great man through "the experiences of the Great Outdoors."¹⁶⁰ These character traits were also connected to features in the wilderness—notably, mountains. Men who were spiritual in the mountains were noted to be "strong, simple, frank, rough, active, free"; mountains, like these young campers would soon have to do upon their return home, withstood "severe tests" against the storms, but remained "solid, sound, hard, lasting" in character and faith.¹⁶¹

This emphasis on strong, Christian leadership for boys was reinforced in the education at the summer programs of the YMCA of the Rockies. Handbooks that instructed counselors and camp directors utilized this language, encouraging the counselors to instill these values in the camper over the course of a summer in the wilderness. The handbook of "Cheley Camp Mottoes," for example, instructed boys on how to grow into a strong, responsible, and great man. These mottoes were likely repeated in daily camp life, with the handbooks distributed among the campers to reinforce the ideals daily instructed through various outdoor activities. Mottoes

¹⁵⁹ Unknown author, "Rocky Mountain Boys' Camp," 4, n.d., "Rocky Mountain Boys' Camp," Box 9, Folder 8, YMCA of the Rockies Collection, Lula W. Dorsey Museum, Estes Park, Colorado.

¹⁶⁰ Unknown author, "Random Ramblings, 1921-1970; Brief excerpts from the camp brochures and camp newspapers over the past fifty years," 1, n.d., "Cheley Camps," Box 1, Folder 11, YMCA of the Rockies Collection, Lula W. Dorsey Museum, Estes Park, Colorado.

¹⁶¹ Frank Cheley, *Camping and Outing Activities*, 392, 390.

ranged from vague exhortations of greatness—“Don’t wait until you’re a man to be great—be a Great Boy”¹⁶²—to warnings of what a young, growing camper could lose if they did not embrace their spiritual leadership: “Every time a boy goes bad—a good man dies.”¹⁶³ Frank Cheley’s handbooks, especially, were essential to nurturing young, impressionable, male campers into strong, Christian leaders. Indeed, his handbooks were specifically intended to be used at boys’ summer programs, published and disseminated for other summer programs to use in their instruction of male campers.

Labeling these growing campers as “little explorers” who were eager to become the “dew-dryers” of the world—that is, those who were willing to boldly wade through “the wet, wet grass of the liquor question”—and who sought to uplift the rest of humanity through their growth as leaders, Cheley compiled handbooks for the purposes of instructing these young men “correctly.”¹⁶⁴ Indeed, Cheley’s language suggests there were specific urban vices with which summer programs were concerned—even for the young boys of CCO and Cheley camps, who were sometimes only twelve years old. Consequently, camp programmers targeted specific vices that would be a threat to the creation of a good, Christian man. Alcohol consumption was clearly a concern, though camp programmers also noted thievery in the city, laziness that was developed due to the easy life within the city, and selfishness and emotional immaturity that developed as a result of living in the bustling, consumer environment of the city.¹⁶⁵ Fears and anxieties concerning the possibility of boys adopting these vices abounded, and thus the programming

¹⁶² Unknown author, “Cheley’s Camp Mottoes,” 1, n.d., “Cheley Camps,” Box 1, Folder 11, YMCA of the Rockies Collection, Lula W. Dorsey Museum, Estes Park, Colorado.

¹⁶³ Unknown author, “Cheley’s Camp Mottoes,” 1, n.d., “Cheley Camps,” Box 1, Folder 11, YMCA of the Rockies Collection, Lula W. Dorsey Museum, Estes Park, Colorado.

¹⁶⁴ Frank Cheley, *After All It’s Up to You; Camp-Fire Chats on Leadership* (Boston: W.A. Wilde Company, 1935), 9.

¹⁶⁵ Marylynn Salmon, “Reproduction and Parenthood,” 2007; Frank Cheley, *After All It’s Up to You; Camp-Fire Chats on Leadership*, 51; Unknown author, “Why Camp Chief Ouray?” 1, n.d., “Pre 1980 History,” CCO Box 1, Folder 3, YMCA of the Rockies Collection, Lula W. Dorsey Museum, Estes Park, Colorado.

offered through these summer camps made a focused effort to teach boys the values of honesty, leadership in alcohol sobriety, daily physical activity, and emotional maturity—all of which served to develop boys into the ideal, strong, Christian leader.

For example, Cheley's handbook entitled, *After All It's Up to You: Camp-Fire Chats on Leadership*, served as a resource, with a compilation of all the discussions and stories on leadership that summer programs offered around the campfire. From instruction on how to understand oneself to cultivating strong character, the leadership discussions covered a variety of subjects, culminating in a firm, instructive talk on the Christian faith of the best leaders.¹⁶⁶ Cheley exhorted his campers to embrace religion in their daily lives, to move beyond believing “because mother does,” but to adopt an “active, aggressive, going-somewhere” religion.¹⁶⁷ Cheley asserted that it was this religious belief—a vivacious, energetic, and strong Christian faith—that ultimately made these boys into young men, ready to return to the city as morally-prepared adults. This strident, assertive, and active Christian leadership was at the root of all boys' summer programs, and this, alongside the real, physical strength gained from a summer in the wilderness, would make boys into men.

To reinforce these ideals of strong, Christian leadership, the Bible studies Cheley created for boys' summer programs drew focused attention to Biblical characters that demonstrated these values. From Peter, one could learn Christian service to others and strength of faith¹⁶⁸; from Moses and David, a camper could learn to be a strong, spiritual leader¹⁶⁹; and from Paul a boy would learn the value of uplifting and supporting others.¹⁷⁰ Moreover, strength—that is, strength

¹⁶⁶ Frank Cheley, *After All It's Up to You; Camp-Fire Chats on Leadership*, 242.

¹⁶⁷ Frank Cheley, *After All It's Up to You; Camp-Fire Chats on Leadership*, 249.

¹⁶⁸ Frank Cheley, *Camping and Outing Activities* (New York: Association Press, 1915), 369-370.

¹⁶⁹ Frank Cheley, *Camping and Outing Activities*, 416.

¹⁷⁰ Frank Cheley, *Camping and Outing Activities*, 416.

of body, faith, and will—was repeatedly appealed to in Cheley’s Bible studies. For example, Cheley offered a variety of topics of debate—noting that the leader of the Bible study should be sure to close the debate with the given argument—one of which stated: “*Resolved*: That David’s grief for Absalom was an indication of weakness rather than of strength.”¹⁷¹ David, a Biblical leader normally extolled for his strength in Cheley’s studies, was criticized for exhibiting emotion. This emphasis on strength of will and faith was singular to the boys’ summer programs, and served to build the boys into strong, Christian men. Originality, faith, self-control, and steadfastness—learning these and other character traits marked these boys as Christian leaders, and repeatedly boys were urged to “Break the constraining habits of your family, community, former life” and bring these lessons home with them to become Christian leaders at home.¹⁷²

This reference to the “constraining habits” of home life is striking and speaks to the cultural concerns at this time of boys becoming effeminate and weak. As Marylynn Salmon noted, mothers were increasingly present in the home—and fathers increasingly absent—at the beginning of the twentieth century, which led to a concern that boys, with only mothers as a role model, would not become the strong, Christian leaders they should be.¹⁷³ Indeed, Theodore Roosevelt’s statements about “effeminate” boys are well-known. Roosevelt—who, notably, was the honorary Vice-President of the Boy Scouts of America—vehemently asserted that there was no place in the United States for “sissy” or “timid” boys, and they should no longer be “mollycoddled” by urban living.¹⁷⁴ His concern for the grit and masculinity of boys is striking, especially, given the proximity of these summer programs to Roosevelt National Forest, which was named after Roosevelt in 1932—a year during which the summer programs were extremely

¹⁷¹ Frank Cheley, *Camping and Outing Activities*, 384.

¹⁷² Frank Cheley, *Camping and Outing Activities*, 344.

¹⁷³ Marylynn Salmon, “Reproduction and Parenthood,” 2007.

¹⁷⁴ Theodore Roosevelt, “A Message to All the Boys of America,” accessed March 7, 2015, <http://www.theodore-roosevelt.com/images/research/treditorials/by12.pdf>.

popular.¹⁷⁵ This concern is also noted in Kenneth Kidd’s monograph, *Making American Boys: Boyology and the Feral Tale*. Kidd asserts that the correct supervision and education of boys at this time was a major concern—which organizations such as the YMCA and, especially, Boy Scouts sought to remedy—and led to the idealization of the “feral boy,” a mythological character that perfectly embodied self-reliance and independence, and therefore constituted an ideal towards which the city boy should strive.¹⁷⁶ Living in the wilderness, as feral boys had, made them more rugged and strong—a physically capable and gritty boy as a result of living in a frontier setting and the wilderness.

The language within testimonials, letters home, and reminisces about their time at camp at the YMCA of the Rockies reflected the extent to which boys internalized the ideals of independence, Christian leadership, and strength. Everette Sutton, the young camper who participated in the first year of CCO’s summer program, noted the various ways in which CCO encouraged physical and spiritual growth into a strong, Christian adult. According to Sutton, the boys competed amongst each other to “Be the best athlete, the best in Bible study, and the best in 7 other feats,” most of which were based on physical strength and spirituality.¹⁷⁷ Every day, as well, Sutton and his fellow campers hiked in the mountains, learned the true “grit” of frontier living—which caused Sutton to miss the comforts of home—and spent their evenings studying the Bible around the camp fire. Another CCO camper noted that a summer in the Rockies “helps a fellow physically—he returns home hard as nails and ready for football or anything,” and also

¹⁷⁵ “About the Forest,” United States Department of Agriculture: Forest Service, accessed March 12, 2015, <http://www.fs.usda.gov/main/arp/about-forest>.

¹⁷⁶ Kenneth Kidd, *Making American Boys: Boyology and the Feral Tale* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004), 7.

¹⁷⁷ Everette Sutton, “Personal letter,” 1908, “Everette Sutton Letters,” CCO Box 1, Folder 29, YMCA of the Rockies Collection, Lula W. Dorsey Museum, Estes Park, Colorado.

made one “self-reliant and resourceful.”¹⁷⁸ Other campers reminisced about the many happy memories of their summers in the Rocky Mountains and the ways in which their time there served to make them healthier, stronger, and happier boys.¹⁷⁹ Each of these campers adopted the language of the summer programs offered through the YMCA, embracing their role as strong, resourceful, independent Christian leaders in response to the strength and ruggedness they obtained from the wilderness.

The Boys Scouts institution, too, sought to reinforce these values of strength, Christian leadership, and independence. Due to the fact that the Boy Scout organization emerged and developed in the same cultural context as the summer programs offered at the YMCA of the Rockies, their ideals and values paralleled what was offered through the summer programs. In particular, this institution was used to fill the gaps in boys’ education, making them stronger in morals and spirituality for themselves and for others around them.¹⁸⁰ Indeed, as the original Boy Scouts handbook noted, Scouting promoted a variety of subjects, notably “First Aid, Life Saving, Tracking, Signaling, Cycling, Nature Study, Seamanship, Campcraft, Woodcraft, Chivalry, Patriotism...”¹⁸¹ All that was required to learn these skills was “the out-of-doors, a group of boys, and a competent leader,” demonstrating the close connection to the values and ideals of the summer programs held at the YMCA of the Rockies.¹⁸² The Boy Scouts institution was also concerned with a boy’s role upon his return to the city and thus sought to instill in him skills that

¹⁷⁸ Tom Carse, “From a Camper,” 4, *Denver Young Men*, 1924, “Denver Young Men, 1908-32,” Box 3, Folder 6, YMCA of the Rockies Collection, Lula W. Dorsey Museum, Estes Park, Colorado.

¹⁷⁹ Robert J. Uplinger “Personal letter,” 1993, “Letters Written by Former Campers,” CCO Box 1, Folder 23, YMCA of the Rockies Collection, Lula W. Dorsey Museum, Estes Park, Colorado; Richard Lothrop, “Personal letter,” 1997, “Letters Written by Former Campers,” CCO Box 1, Folder 23, YMCA of the Rockies Collection, Lula W. Dorsey Museum, Estes Park, Colorado.

¹⁸⁰ Boy Scouts of America, *Boy Scouts of America: The Official Handbook for Boys* (New York: Doubleday, Page & Co., 1911), 3.

¹⁸¹ Boy Scouts of America, *Boy Scouts of America: The Official Handbook for Boys*, 3.

¹⁸² Boy Scouts of America, *Boy Scouts of America: The Official Handbook for Boys*, 3.

could “fit the town as well as the wilderness,” making a boy an “expert in Life-craft as well as Wood-craft, for he is trained in the things of the heart as well as head and hand.”¹⁸³ Furthermore, the Boys Scouts sought to foster a strong spirituality in their Scouts, a spirituality that was exhibited through “practical religion,” for a Scout was believed to be honoring “God best when he helps others most.”¹⁸⁴ Considering the many ways in which the Boys Scouts organization exhibited the same ideals of wilderness, leadership, and spirituality promoted and offered at the YMCA of the Rockies, the particular elements of the Boys Scouts institution that were used to help boys grow into strong, responsible young men are essential for demonstrating the differences between boys’ and girls’ summer programs.

The Scouting Law and Oath were the crux of Boy Scout programming and education and thus best exhibit the values and ideals of the organization. The Scout Law listed the various traits a Scout was required to internalize and act upon, and are reminiscent of the values that summer programs of the YMCA of the Rockies claimed a boy would learn: “A scout is trustworthy, loyal, helpful, friendly, courteous, kind, obedient, cheerful, thrifty, brave, clean, and reverent.”¹⁸⁵ Each of these traits spoke to the idea of becoming a reliable, strong, reverent person, ideals of adulthood and growth that are in common with boys’ programs at this time. Of particular interest are the traits of bravery and reverence, which the handbook later expands upon. A brave Scout was not simply one who was courageous in the face of danger, but who was also willing to “stand up for the right against the coaxings of friends”—speaking to the moral dangers a boy faced when at home in the city.¹⁸⁶ Similar to the concerns noted by Cheley with campers’ return to their home life, this emphasis on the “coaxings of friends” demonstrated a specific fear of the

¹⁸³ Boy Scouts of America, *Boy Scouts of America: The Official Handbook for Boys*, xi.

¹⁸⁴ Boy Scouts of America, *Boy Scouts of America: The Official Handbook for Boys*, 10.

¹⁸⁵ Boy Scouts of America, *Boy Scouts of America: The Official Handbook for Boys*, 10.

¹⁸⁶ Boy Scouts of America, *Boy Scouts of America: The Official Handbook for Boys*, 16.

vices within the city. Friends could encourage these growing boys to imbibe alcohol, participate in thievery, lazily wile away their days wandering the morally depraved streets, and more. A Scout was to be brave in the face of these vices and aware of the places from which this vice could come—even from friends. Reverence, too, was a characteristic trait singular to a strong, upright Scout; as Cheley’s leadership speeches also noted, a good, strong leader was firmly rooted in their Christian values, recognizing God in all things and remaining “reverent toward God.”¹⁸⁷ Similarly, the Boy Scout Oath—the promise a boy made before officially becoming a Scout—embodied these ideals of strength and Christian leadership:

On my honor I will do my best:

1. To do my duty to God and my country, and to obey the scout law;
2. To help other people at all times;
3. To keep myself physically strong, mentally awake, and morally straight.¹⁸⁸

As was noted earlier and is reflected in the Oath, patriotism and obedience were key elements to becoming a Scout. However, the Oath also exhorted Scouts to remain faithful to God, and to remain strong in body and morals. The emphasis on strength of faith, body, and mind was integral to the Boy Scouts organization and part of its core values, as it was in the summer programs for boys at the YMCA of the Rockies. Boys were to be independent, strong, and self-reliant, but were also pushed to be Christian leaders, uplifting others around them and acting as a righteous example.

Summer programs for girls offered at and through the YMCA of the Rockies, in stark contrast to the boys’ summer programs, sought to instill in their campers values of selflessness, service, grace, and quiet spirituality, hoping to provide the “correct” education for these young

¹⁸⁷ Boy Scouts of America, *Boy Scouts of America: The Official Handbook for Boys*, 16; Frank Cheley, *After All It’s Up to You; Camp-Fire Chats on Leadership*, 245.

¹⁸⁸ Boy Scouts of America, *Boy Scouts of America: The Official Handbook for Boys*, 14.

women upon their return home. These values and emphases were exhibited in promotional materials, the activities offered at the camps, and the education which camp-published materials provided. While there were broad overlapping goals and activities offered at boys' and girls' summer programs, the ultimate purpose and utility of the camps differed by gender. In accordance with the cultural values of the time, young women were educated to be competent and cheerfully dependent. Their instruction in service, grace, and quiet spirituality not only differed from the instruction of boys—it also suggested the need for strong, Christian male leaders to serve as women's protectors. As the boys' programs also sought to do, girls' summer programs sought to instill in these young women these positive ideals as a means of counter the negative and harmful influences of city life.

In describing their programs and the benefits they would offer to impressionable campers, summer programs used focused and specific language to demonstrate their adherence to the cultural values of the 1920s and 30s. As Margo Horn asserted in her article, "Childhood," twentieth-century parents were abundantly concerned with the correct instruction of their children, particularly concerned with the future adult lives of their children.¹⁸⁹ Parents encouraged their growing daughters to embrace the values of gentleness and grace inherent to motherhood, and consequently the summer programs' language reflected the importance of fostering these principles.¹⁹⁰ In conjunction with these cultural ideals, girls' summer programs offered "wholesome" instruction, "careful" guidance in personality development, and a program wholly rooted in Christian ideals.¹⁹¹ This instruction was couched in terms of gentleness,

¹⁸⁹ Margo Horn, "Childhood and Children," in *Encyclopedia of American Social History*, vol. III, ed. Mary Kupiec Carton, Elliott J. Gorn, and Peter W. Williams (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1993), 2029.

¹⁹⁰ Marylynn Salmon, "Reproduction and Parenthood," in *Encyclopedia of American Social History*, vol. III, ed. Mary Kupiec Carton, Elliott J. Gorn, and Peter W. Williams (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1993), 2007.

¹⁹¹ Unknown author, "A New Camp for Girls," 4, n.d., "YMCA 'A New Camp for Girls' at The Heights," Box 3, Folder 36, YMCA of the Rockies Collection, Lula W. Dorsey Museum, Estes Park, Colorado.

selflessness, and fostering close connections with other campers, all of which served to demonstrate the connection between a Christian character and gender roles. As one brochure noted, camp life would encourage “helpfulness, and a sense of group responsibility, or perhaps, orderliness and neatness” in these young women.¹⁹² This group responsibility among the campers that was ostensibly fostered is in striking contrast to the boys’ summer programs; certainly friendships between male campers occurred, but values of independence, self-reliance, and physical prowess and strength were held up as the ideals towards which an individual should strive, which would thereafter serve to benefit the group as a whole. In contrast, female campers were exhorted to encourage each other, be responsible for each other, and selflessly help each other—essentially becoming supportive, motherly figures for each other.

The language of selflessness, grace, and quiet spirituality for improving female campers was further reinforced by the campers and counselors themselves. Numerous articles and editorials in the popular weekly newsletter, *Allsee News*, emphasized soft, graceful, and implicitly feminine characteristics that could be learned from the wilderness. Flowers, second only to mountains in their number of references, were frequently cited as symbols of graceful, beautiful growth, soft personality, and everything “sweet and lovely.”¹⁹³ Campers encouraged each other to grow, like a flower, “into a blossom of ever increasing appreciation and beauty!”¹⁹⁴ Indeed, when Bertha Allsebrook, the founder and camp director, was asked what the ideals of the camp were, she noted the specific development of a young woman’s personality—especially their appearance:

¹⁹² Unknown author, “Allsebrook Camp for Girls,” 2, ca. 1930s, “Allsebrook Camp for Girls,” Box 3, Folder 10, YMCA of the Rockies Collection, Lula W. Dorsey Museum, Estes Park, Colorado.

¹⁹³ Unknown author, “Editorial,” 2, *Allsee News*, July 13, 1937, “Timberland Girl Scout Camp,” Box 12, Folder 53, YMCA of the Rockies Collection, Lula W. Dorsey Museum, Estes Park, Colorado.

¹⁹⁴ Laile Eubank, “Editorial” 2, *Allsee News*, ca. 1930s, “Allsebrook Camp for Girls,” Box 3, Folder 10, YMCA of the Rockies Collection, Lula W. Dorsey Museum, Estes Park, Colorado.

Our Camp slogan has always been, “Be careful of what you think for that is what you will become.” More than ever this year, we are concentrating on personality development. We are adding all possible helps for the girls in improvement of appearance, speech, posture, grace, in fact, everything contributing to a sweet and lovely personality.¹⁹⁵

Each trait listed by Mrs. Allsebrook was rooted in the cultural ideals towards women, and was in stark contrast to the goals for boys’ personalities noted earlier. Certainly no summer program for young men sought to improve “appearance” or “grace,” while these young women were encouraged to develop a perfect persona that consisted of outward and inner beauty. Even more significant is the camp slogan of Allsebrook; Allsebrook’s programming did not merely intend to improve girls’ personalities, but also their very *thoughts* and ideas of how they should act and appear.

As female campers reflected upon the wilderness, they were encouraged by their camp programmers to consider the correct qualities and characteristic traits ascribed to their gender. From the hills, one could gain beauty—speaking to Mrs. Allsebrook’s reference to improving appearance as a means of achieving improved personality—and quietude, another personality trait that was emphasized in girls’ summer programs.¹⁹⁶ Being still and silent, though offered as a means of providing inner peace for campers, was never an element of boys’ summer programming, which is striking. Certainly boys were encouraged to find spirituality in the wilderness, but this spirituality was rooted in leadership and boldly improving oneself, as was noted earlier, as opposed to the element of quietude that was encouraged at girls’ summer programs. This theme of quietude was repeated: from the mountains, a girl could gain “quiet

¹⁹⁵ Unknown author, “Introductions and Interviews, Aunt Bertha,” 4, *Allsee News*, July 13, 1937, “Timberland Girl Scout Camp,” Box 12, Folder 53, YMCA of the Rockies Collection, Lula W. Dorsey Museum, Estes Park, Colorado.

¹⁹⁶ Unknown author, “Allsebrook Sunrise Meditations; I” 1, ca. 1930s, “Allsebrook Camp for Girls,” Box 3, Folder, 10, YMCA of the Rockies Collection, Lula W. Dorsey Museum, Estes Park, Colorado.

strength”¹⁹⁷; a girl camper would “quietly” observe the “quiet” and “stately” mountains¹⁹⁸; “inner poise” and “steadiness” were directly linked to this quietude—by being quiet, one developed a grace and poise that marked her personal growth.¹⁹⁹ It was repeatedly affirmed that a girls’ spirituality could be better developed by experiencing and embracing quietude and fostering a demure personality, whereas a boys’ spirituality was strengthened in bold, strident action and leadership.

The various activities offered at the girls’ summer programs, too, had a specific intent and purpose. Improving physical health was certainly a goal at girls’ summer programs, but the ultimate purpose of this differed substantially from the boys’ programs. Girls’ programs sought to teach these campers to have better control over their bodies, developing “poise, grace of movement, and naturalness in foreign situations” through improving physical health.²⁰⁰ Indeed, the “camp personality advisor” of Allsebrook—remarkably, an actual, paid position at the camp—listed the various ways in which different activities offered personality benefits: “Dramatics and poetry readings provide work for the voice; the dancing class works toward better posture; and the courtesy talks are helping girls to be more at ease and gracious to others.”²⁰¹ Most activities involved hiking, though there were also dance, drama, writing, knitting, painting, and horseback-riding classes offered, all of which served to reinforce the poise, grace, and personality of the campers. Summer programs often hired educational

¹⁹⁷ Unknown author, “Allsebrook Sunrise Meditations; Otis the Loaf,” 1, ca. 1930s, “Allsebrook Camp for Girls,” Box 3, Folder 10, YMCA of the Rockies Collection, Lula W. Dorsey Museum, Estes Park, Colorado.

¹⁹⁸ Unknown author, “Allsebrook Sunrise Meditations; Hallett’s Peak,” 2, ca. 1930s, “Allsebrook Camp for Girls,” Box 3, Folder 10, YMCA of the Rockies Collection, Lula W. Dorsey Museum, Estes Park, Colorado.

¹⁹⁹ Unknown author, “Allsebrook Sunrise Meditations; Beaver Mountain” 5, ca. 1930s “Allsebrook Camp for Girls,” Box 3, Folder 10, YMCA of the Rockies Collection, Lula W. Dorsey Museum, Estes Park, Colorado.

²⁰⁰ Unknown author, “Introductions and Interviews, Mrs. Coursey,” 2, *Allsee News*, August 6, 1937, “Timberland Girl Scout Camp,” Box 12, Folder 53, YMCA of the Rockies Collection, Lula W. Dorsey Museum, Estes Park, Colorado.

²⁰¹ Marge Primrose, “Introductions and Interviews, Mrs. Van Deason,” 2, *Allsee News*, July 21, 1937, “Timberland Girl Scout Camp,” Box 12, Folder 53, YMCA of the Rockies Collection, Lula W. Dorsey Museum, Estes Park, Colorado.

professionals to ensure correct instruction; for example, Camp Chipeta hired a “Dramatics and Recreation” director who had experience with drama troupes, glee clubs, and orchestras, as well as other educators who specialized in “feminine” activities.²⁰² These activities did not simply improve the outward appearance of a young woman, but the timbre of her voice would ostensibly become more appealing, quietude would be encouraged when silently painting the wondrous landscape, and motherly skills would be nurtured when knitting. Indeed, even activities that were outside of the norm for girls’ summer programs soon became incorporated into a more “feminine” framework; when a one-day fencing course was offered at Allsebrook, the girls excitedly demonstrated their newfound skills, eager to explain why everyone had suddenly started “brandishing knitting needles so dramatically!”²⁰³

As with the boys’ summer programs, the directors and programmers of girls’ summer camps were deeply concerned with the campers’ return to the city and noted specific vices that were a concern. In contrast to the concerns camp programmers had for boys, the vices of the city for girls were far more focused on an individual’s personal improvement. A girl’s personality, for example, was to be gracious, selfless, and sweet, as opposed to coarse, loud, and selfish—a personality that was the result of city living.²⁰⁴ This selfishness extended to values of appearance; girls’ summer programs encouraged girls to appreciate and revel in the beauty of the world around them and the beauty of their inner selves, rather than to focus on and be conceited about their own outward beauty and appearance. As one article asserted—once again using a

²⁰² Unknown author, “A New Camp for Girls,” 4, n.d., “YMCA ‘A New Camp for Girls’ at The Heights,” Box 3, Folder 36, YMCA of the Rockies Collection, Lula W. Dorsey Museum, Estes Park, Colorado.

²⁰³ Unknown author, “Fencing Innovation Given at Allsebrook,” 3, *Allsee News*, July 15, 1935, “Timberland Girl Scout Camp,” Box 12, Folder 53, YMCA of the Rockies Collection, Lula W. Dorsey Museum, Estes Park, Colorado.

²⁰⁴ Unknown author, “Pixies Play at Palace,” 1, *Allsee News*, July 21, 1937, “Timberland Girl Scout Camp,” Box 12, Folder 53, YMCA of the Rockies Collection, Lula W. Dorsey Museum, Estes Park, Colorado.

flower to demonstrate the argument—when girls first arrived at camp they were selfish, only looking towards themselves and not the beauty and potential of the world around them:

When each of us grows at Allsebrook, may we change from a folded bud into a blossom of ever increasing appreciation and beauty! At first, we can not see it all—we are conscious mainly of ourselves, our leaves are closed about us. But as we continue to reach up toward the sunshine and cooling breeze, we begin to see more; we realize that around us is a world of interesting things.²⁰⁵

By turning away from only themselves, adopting a selfless manner, and appreciating the wilderness as opposed to the city, campers could strive for other improvements. Indeed, the imagery of the quote reveals the extent to which wilderness was affecting and developing these campers; connecting their own character and spiritual development to the nature that surrounded them, the campers learned how to improve themselves. For example, campers were to eliminate the “petty” things in life that city living inspired—jealousy of other girls’ beauty, worry over their own appearance, and to overcome these obstacles in order to reach their “higher self.”²⁰⁶ As one article noted, the values learned at camp stayed with a camper upon her return home: “At Allsebrook, each girl tries to gain from the surroundings of nature a symbol of action which can be carried out in her happy camp life and in her changed attitudes at home.”²⁰⁷ Further, with the imagery of a flower, appeals to a girls’ sexual purity was also implicit; rather than becoming “de-flowered” as a result of sexual promiscuity that was surely the influence of urban life, girls were to remain “a folded bud” that would grow into a blossom as she herself became a mature, Christian adult.

²⁰⁵ Laile Eubank, “Editorial,” 2, *Allsee News*, July 26, 1934, “Allsebrook Camp for Girls,” Box 3, Folder 10, YMCA of the Rockies Collection, Lula W. Dorsey Museum, Estes Park, Colorado.

²⁰⁶ Unknown author, “Allsebrook Sunrise Meditations; Long’s Peak,” 10, ca. 1930s, “Allsebrook Camp for Girls,” Box 3, Folder 10, YMCA of the Rockies Collection, Lula W. Dorsey Museum, Estes Park, Colorado.

²⁰⁷ Jule Platt, “Daily Thought Uplifting,” 4, *Allsee News*, July 13, 1937, “Timberland Girl Scout Camp,” Box 12, Folder 53, YMCA of the Rockies Collection, Lula W. Dorsey Museum, Estes Park, Colorado.

Further reinforcing the ideals and values of selflessness, social grace, quietude, and spirituality, the Girl Scouts institution injected these cultural ideals into their own programs. As was noted earlier, the Girl Scouts organization emerged from the same cultural context as the summer programs offered at the YMCA of the Rockies and sought to offer an improved education that would remedy and fill the gaps of the education offered in cities. As with the Boy Scouts, the handbook for this organization serves to demonstrate the specific goals and ideals for its participants. What is particularly fascinating about the Girl Scouts handbook is its specific changes to the Scouting ideals, codes, and goals; for boys, the institution was rooted in the physical, moral, and spiritual strength in an individual Scout, but for girls, the “spirit of Scouting” was, in its essence, “the work of friendliness and cheerful service.”²⁰⁸ This stark contrast is reinforced in a multiplicity of ways throughout the handbook—the most significant of which is with the Girl Scout Oath and Law. The Girl Scout Law was, significantly, very similar to the Boy Scout Law, though with one notable difference—“brave” and “reverent” were not included in the Girl Scout Law.²⁰⁹ Although religion, and specifically Christianity, was as integral to the Girl Scouts organization as it was to the Boy Scouts, it was perhaps because girls were not instructed to be strong, Christian leaders as the boys were that it was not a “law” for a girl to exhibit bravery and reverence. Similarly, there were subtle differences in the actual descriptions of the laws. An excellent example was the law of “obedience”; a Boy Scout was instructed to obey “his parents, scout master, patrol leader, and all other duly constituted authorities”; on the contrary, a Girl Scout was to “cooperate with others when their directions

²⁰⁸ The Program Division, Girl Scouts, Inc., *Girl Scout Handbook for the Intermediate Program* (New York: Girl Scouts, Inc., 1940), vi.

²⁰⁹ The Program Division, Girl Scouts, Inc., *Girl Scout Handbook for the Intermediate Program*, 6.

lead to the health, safety, and happiness of herself and of others.”²¹⁰ Once again, this exhibited the values of “motherhood” that parents insisted their daughters learn; a Boy Scout, when an adult, implicitly understood that he also became an authority, while a Girl Scout was to remain obedient and cooperative with all others, to ensure their happiness and health.

The Boy Scout Oath also revealed the differing ideals between boys and girls, with its inclusion of an exceptionally striking line: “. . .to keep myself physically strong, mentally awake, and morally straight.”²¹¹ This line, however, is entirely absent from the Girl Scout Oath, which reads: “On my honor, I will try: To do my duty to God and my country, To help other people at all times, To obey the Girl Scout Laws.”²¹² Girls, unlike boys, were not to required to or expected to be physically strong, but inherently helpful, providing service to other people. Indeed, the use of the word “try” in the Girl Scout Oath is striking; girls were only expected to *try* and be a good Scout, whereas boys *had* to embody all of the character traits of a Scout, stating that he “will” fulfill those goals. Although boys were exhorted to lead others and uplift them, this type of “help” was a sharp contrast to the ideals a girl was to embody; boys “helped” others by setting a strident, bold, Christian example, whereas girls were to help by providing “friendly” and “cheerful” service. Indeed, as the Girl Scout handbook stated, the organization sought to instill in girls this value of selfless service: “[Girl Scouting] is built upon the belief that to do one’s share of the world’s work it is necessary to learn what people need, to be willing to help with those needs, and to learn how to be of real service.”²¹³ Service, selflessness, grace, and quiet spirituality were integral values and ideals within the Girl Scout organization and reinforce

²¹⁰ Boy Scouts of America, *Boy Scouts of America: The Official Handbook for Boys*, 15; The Program Division, Girl Scouts, Inc., *Girl Scout Handbook for the Intermediate Program*, 8.

²¹¹ Boy Scouts of America, *Boy Scouts of America: The Official Handbook for Boys*, 14.

²¹² The Program Division, Girl Scouts, Inc., *Girl Scout Handbook for the Intermediate Program*, 4.

²¹³ The Program Division, Girl Scouts, Inc., *Girl Scout Handbook for the Intermediate Program*, 24.

the ways in which the girls' summer programs at the YMCA of the Rockies differed in goals and values from boys' summer programs.

As the language, goals, ideals, and values of the summer programs held through the YMCA of the Rockies demonstrate—in addition to the language and goals of the Boy and Girl Scouts organizations—the difference between girls' and boys' summer programming was significant. Both boys and girls spent a summer in the true wilderness as a means of receiving a “correct” education in morals and spirituality, but this education was inconsistent between the genders. In accordance with the cultural ideals of the time, and to assuage parents' anxieties as to the proper education of their sons and daughters, these summer programs fulfilled a perceived need at this time, and contributed to the continuation of these gendered cultural ideals and values.

CHAPTER FIVE—SCIENCE, SUMMER PROGRAMS, & CONCLUDING REMARKS

The anecdotal camper highlighted at the beginning of this thesis believed she was experiencing true, untrammelled wilderness. As she hiked in the midst of the mountains, listened to the cool breeze move through the pines, and learned through her engagement with the wilderness, she did not perceive the management of this wilderness. The path on which she was hiking was carved through this “untrammelled” wilderness, leaving rotting tree stumps along the edge of the path. The gravel that served to mark the path was not naturally a part of this environment, nor was the evidence of previous hikers who had walked on the path. Yet, due to her personal engagement with the wilderness and her understanding of the wilderness as an inherently spiritually place, these details were overlooked. The understanding of a managed, created wilderness was lost to such campers, as summer programs instead chose to encourage their campers to engage with the spirituality of the wilderness, to perceive the messages left by God in the wilderness, and to learn from the environment in order to better themselves. The camper thus learned strength from the towering pines; she perceived hardships and growth through the pressures of the wind; she saw herself rising to the heights of her character at the tops of the mountains.

As this thesis has demonstrated, religion was integral to better understanding nature and the ways in which humans were to interact with it. Emerging from a specific cultural context and utilizing the perfect environment of the Rocky Mountains—and specifically the Estes Park regions—summer programs offered themselves as an antidote to the ills of urban life, emphasizing the presence of God in an unchanged wilderness of original, pure beauty. Campers, both boys and girls, wholly embraced the programming offered at these summer programs and

saw themselves as improved, growing young adults, more capable of returning to life in the city with the changes made to their character and spirituality. Boys learned to be strong, Christian leaders, unwavering in their commitment to Christianity and boldly leading and uplifting the people around them. Girls became gentle, quiet exemplars of spirituality, exemplifying the ideals of motherhood upon their departure from camp. Engaging with the spirituality and character-building offered at these summer programs, boys and girls who participated returned to their homes in the city as little crusaders, prepared to encounter and defeat the moral degeneracy and the depravity of urban life.

Importantly, these camps explicitly did not engage with science. Camp programmers utilized an understanding of the wilderness that rejected scientific analysis and inspired personal and spiritual connections to the environment. Because science was considered too “boring” to merit attention in a child’s education, summer programs instead encouraged and fostered personal and spiritual engagement with the environment in order to inspire fascination and wonder with the idea of an untrammelled, untouched wilderness.²¹⁴ These camps made a choice to highlight one path of the nature study movement—that of personal encounters and education in the wilderness. Considering the majority of the campers and counselors were Protestants as opposed to Catholics, the emphasis on individual encounters with and experiences in nature are reminiscent of Baptist and Methodist teaching—most of the counselors were either Baptist or Methodist, according to several of the summer programs’ brochures. There was an experiential aspect to the nature study movement, yet, as Kevin Armitage notes in his monograph, there were elements of the nature study movement that were interested in scientific study. Proponents of the nature study movement utilized the term “science” in a variety of ways; desiring to still utilize

²¹⁴ Frank Cheley, *Camping and Outing Activities* (New York: Association Press, 1915), 302.

science while promoting love for the environment, “Nature study attempted to embrace scientific modernity while simultaneously recoiling from the narrow, instrumental, and ugly society engendered by industrial civilization.”²¹⁵ Essentially, while trying to encourage people to leave the city and personally engage with nature, some nature study advocates also sought to integrate values of science in these interactions, leading to multiple facets of the nature study movement which engaged with science to varying degrees. Samuel Hays also points out this interest in scientific study—though the interest in scientific engagement with the environment was limited to professionals and scientists in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries—and how best to use and manage the landscape.²¹⁶ In the *Oxford Handbook of Environmental History*, historians demonstrate an awareness of and concern for how people engaged with and better understood nature on a scientific level.²¹⁷ Yet the YMCA of the Rockies’ summer programs discarded science as a means of understanding the environment and instead offered religion and spirituality in order to understand the environment and themselves. As noted earlier, the summer programs considered science too “boring” and instead encouraged experiential learning in nature in order to promote the growth and development of urban children into better, more moral, Christian adults. It is precisely because these camps saw nature as an important building ground for urban children and a perfect, untouched place in which they could find personal and spiritual uplift, that a reverence for nature has continued to an unrealistic extent, leading to marginalization of science in summer programs throughout the twentieth century.

²¹⁵ Kevin Armitage, *The Nature Study Movement: The Forgotten Popularizer of America’s Conservation Ethic* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2009), 2.

²¹⁶ Samuel P. Hays, *Conservation and the Gospel of Efficiency: The Progressive Conservation Movement, 1890-1920* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1959), 4.

²¹⁷ Andrew Isenberg, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of Environmental History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 11

The lasting implications of this perception of and engagement with the wilderness are demonstrated in summer programs both at the YMCA of the Rockies and Rocky Mountain National Park. Some of these programs, such as CCO, continued to be wildly popular among YMCA members and families, and continue to operate even today. The promotional materials for these programs reveal a continued reverence for the wilderness as God’s creation and the unique benefits of spending a summer in this wilderness. As one quote from a brochure for Snow Mountain Ranch—another YMCA of the Rockies program that continues today—asserted:

Must we always teach our children with books? Let them look at the mountains and the stars up above. Let them look at the beauty of the waters and the trees and the flowers on earth. They will then begin to think and to think is the beginning of a real education.²¹⁸

The summer programs offered through the YMCA of the Rockies in the 1920s and 30s encouraged their campers to learn from nature, and this continued in their programming. Indeed, this brochure asserted that this was a “real” education, as opposed to the education children were receiving at home, in the city, through books. Repeatedly, the benefits of the outdoors and the true wilderness were promoted as places in which children could receive a spiritual and character education, rather than knowledge about the environment and a scientific study thereof. One 1951 brochure asserted that, by giving a “healthful outdoor mountain life to each boy,” his “ideals, temperament...and spiritual life” would undergo “proper development”²¹⁹; another argued that when a boy arrived at camp, “Already the keen mountain air has brought a glow to his cheeks, an uprightness to his bearing, a purposefulness to his stride.”²²⁰ An even later brochure, a 1970s promotion for Cheley Camps, asserted still the beneficial effects of the wilderness, arguing

²¹⁸ David Polis, “Snow Mountain Ranch,” ca. 1950s., “Outdoor Education Brochures,” Box 4, Folder 48, YMCA of the Rockies Collection, Lula W. Dorsey Museum, Estes Park, Colorado.

²¹⁹ Unknown author, “Rocky Mountain Boys’ Camp,” 1951, “Rocky Mountain Boys’ Camp,” Box 9, Folder 8, YMCA of the Rockies Collection, Lula W. Dorsey Museum, Estes Park, Colorado.

²²⁰ Unknown author, “CCO, Where a Boy Sits on Top of the World,” 1941, “CCO Brochures,” Box 1, Folder 36, YMCA of the Rockies Collection, Lula W. Dorsey Museum, Estes Park, Colorado.

“[camp and its activities] provide an understanding and appreciation of simple living in the outdoors, something which is needed as a balance to the more complex and hectic life of our schools and communities,” and that it also was “unusually effective” for inspiring “spiritual values in the lives of growing boys and girls.”²²¹ Repeatedly, engagement with the wilderness was encouraged in order to improve oneself, to better understand one’s spirituality, and to personally engage with the environment for pure joy and natural study rather than scientific education.

Programs offered at Rocky Mountain National Park (RMNP) also reflected this idealized perception of the wilderness and offered the Rocky Mountains as a perfect place for urban children to escape from the city and learn from nature itself. Offering a variety of interpretative and education programs, RMNP repeatedly described the Rockies as “an ideal outdoor classroom” for teachers who wanted to teach their classes in the wilderness.²²² For example, RMNP’s “Heart of the Rockies” environmental education program promoted itself as an “environmental education program that is committed to instilling respect for the quality of all life by enhancing student’s sense of wonder and love of nature [sic],” through which students would be invested in the “future of the National Parks” system.²²³ Indeed, although some of RMNP’s environmental education programs incorporated science into the programming, science continued to be touted as “boring,” as Cheley had asserted years before. In a *Trail-Gazette* article, a RMNP staffer discussed the uses of environmental education programming, noting that

²²¹ Unknown author, “Answers to your Questions about the Cheley Camps,” ca. 1970s, “Cheley Camp,” Box 1, Folder 11, YMCA of the Rockies Collection, Lula W. Dorsey Museum, Estes Park, Colorado.

²²² Unknown author, “Heart of the Rockies, Rocky Mountain National Park, Environmental Education Program,” n.d., “Larry Frederick Interp Files,” Rocky Mountain National Park Collection, Rocky Mountain National Park Archives, Estes Park, Colorado.

²²³ Unknown author, “Rocky Mountain National Park, Heart of the Rockies Adventure Program,” n.d., “Larry Frederick Interp Files,” Rocky Mountain National Park Collection, Rocky Mountain National Park Archives, Estes Park, Colorado.

teaching children to value the environment at an early age allowed for better stewardship of the land in the future; however, the staffer asserted that “Environmental education seems to get pigeonholed as science. I think that approach is really limiting. So students will learn about the relationship between music, art, literature and social studies and the environment.”²²⁴ This marginalization of science and emphasis on other avenues for learning about and from the environment demonstrates the lasting implications of the summer programs of the 1920s and 30s.

In RMNP’s 1990 Environmental Education plan, key phrases and goals denote the continued reverence for the environment and minimization of a scientific understanding of the landscape. In a list of what entails a “successful and effective” environmental education program, RMNP asserts the following, among others, as key goals to achieve:

Successful and effective EE:

- Addresses the total environment, natural, cultural, historical, technological, social, economic, political, moral and ethical...
- Stresses equality of and respect, reverence, and responsibility for all life.
- Is concept-based as opposed to fact-oriented...
- Is participatory, discovery, inquiry, activity-oriented as opposed to lecture...
- Develops in all people, and especially children, a sense of magic, wonder and love of the outdoors and nature. These are the strongest motivators to action and can lead to positive and sustained environmental quality improvement.
- Fosters a personal relationship with nature....[emphasis in original]²²⁵

These goals reveal several crucial ideas. An environmental education program could only be successful if it encouraged active and direct engagement with the environment itself, and inspired a sense of “magic, wonder, and love” towards nature. Remarkably, these ideas reflect the goals noted by Frank Cheley in his own environmental education program—the language is even similar. Children should be “reverent” towards the environment, activities within the

²²⁴ Jackie Hutchins, “New RMNP staffer to add link to environmental education,” *The Trail-Gazette*, August 28, 1992, “Larry Frederick Interp Files,” Rocky Mountain National Park Collection, Rocky Mountain National Park Archives, Estes Park, Colorado.

²²⁵ Unknown author, “Interp Plan for Environmental Education,” 5-6, 1990, “Larry Frederick Interp Files,” Rocky Mountain National Park Collection, Rocky Mountain National Park Archives, Estes Park, Colorado.

environment should be encouraged, and children should develop a “personal relationship with nature.” This language parallels Christian ideals of a relationship with God. Although RMNP sought to encourage a close connection with nature in order to allow for better stewardship and management of the park in the future, it is clear this goal was to be achieved by marginalizing science in their environmental education programs. Indeed, although the goals for environmental education noted a desire to instill in children an understanding of stewardship and management of the land, the ways in which this would be carried out was not made clear. How could an appreciation of and reverence for the environment lead to a better understanding of the ways in which the environment, and especially parks like RMNP, is managed? Children were considered central to maintaining the integrity and stewardship of the environment, yet the programming utilized reinforced an idealized perception of the wilderness, while not making it clear the ways in which this would foster a greater understanding of natural resource management. Is this, perhaps, the root of a problem for land managers who are often ostracized and criticized by the public for managing and changing the “untrammelled,” “magical,” and already “perfect” wilderness?

Spiritual engagement with the wilderness as a means of understanding nature and oneself must be considered in future research. As demonstrated by the glaring gap in the *Oxford Handbook of Environmental History* and other encyclopedias of environmental history, this topic has been uniformly neglected by historians. The connection between religion and the wilderness as a means of better understanding and knowing the environment is an idea that reaches back to ancient cultures. Greek gods and goddesses were created out of a desire to explain the natural processes of seasons, earthquakes, and storms. Norse gods served a similar purpose; Thor, like Zeus, was the god of thunder and lightning—associated directly with the environment. However,

these summer programs did not perceive God *as* the wilderness, but rather emphasized his *presence* in the wilderness as a means of strengthening their own faith and spirituality—a recognition of God in everything as opposed to God as everything. Despite the historical prevalence of using religion in order to know the natural processes of and understand the environment, it has remained a gap in the historiography of environmental history. As this thesis has demonstrated, spiritual engagement with the wilderness was integral to the summer programming offered at the YMCA of the Rockies, and its potential implications throughout the twentieth century in terms of Americans’ perceptions of “wilderness” are monumental.

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