

CAMP MEETINGS AND THE CENTRAL PENNSYLVANIA CONFERENCE

by
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The camp meeting was a characteristic feature of Protestant Christianity on the American frontier at the turn of the nineteenth century, and for about fifty years thereafter. It had its rise in and was an effective instrument of The Great Revival which swept our developing nation during the early part of that period.

The seed out of which the camp meeting grew, however, can be found as far back as the outdoor preaching of John Wesley in England in the latter half of the eighteenth century. Denied access to most Anglican pulpits, he took to the open fields and to the mine pits to preach the gospel to motley crowds not unlike those to be found later in American camp meeting audiences.

In this country, the origins of the camp meeting appear in religious services, often held in groves and in large barns, necessitated by the lack of chapels or church buildings with accommodations adequate to care for the crowds which assembled to hear the circuit riders preach. When Freeborn Garrettson visited in the vicinity of York in 1871, it is related that "he frequently met such crowds of people at his appointments as no house would contain; and therefor was obliged to preach to them after the example of the venerable Wesley, in the open fields or in the groves."¹ It was at such a service in Isaac Long's barn, a few miles north of Lancaster, on that Whitsunday in 1767 that Martin Boehm and Philip William Otterbein first met and recognized a spiritual relationship which culminated in the organization of the Church of the United Brethren in Christ in 1800.

Outdoor meetings attracting large numbers of people were also frequently held for the administration of the sacraments. Due to the scarcity of ordained clergymen with the authority to conduct such services, Methodists, Presbyterians and Baptists often united to participate in them. In the absence of any building sufficiently large to accommodate the combined congregations, the meetings were held in the open. For similar reasons, the quarterly meetings of Methodist circuits were often held in groves centrally located on the circuit.

But the preceding were not camp meetings in the strict sense of the term. Those attending did not camp on the grounds. No tents were pitched, and no other structures were erected such as characterized the later camp meetings. Those who came from a distance found accommodations in the homes of friends living nearby or, if necessary, were given makeshift arrangements on the grounds.

Organized camp meetings as such seem to have developed first in Kentucky and Tennessee as early as 1799 or 1800. In the Red River, Muddy Run and Gasper River areas, evangelistic meetings were held in connection with sacramental services under the leadership of Presbyterian minister James McGready, assisted by the McGee brothers -- John, a Methodist, and William, a Presbyterian. Rev. McGready states that "thirteen wagons came to transport people and provisions"² at the Gasper River gathering and that many "provided for encamping at the meeting house"³ while others slept outside at the Muddy River sacramental meeting.

This seems to have been the first planned camp meeting, to be followed by an increasing number of such events in the months and years following. People came from great distances and lived in their wagons, in rude tents, or in rough huts made from the boughs of forest trees. Great excitement attended the meetings, and the practice spread like wildfire. Perhaps the most famous of these early meetings was the Cane Ridge Camp Meeting held in Kentucky in 1801. This extended for six days and was attended by an estimated crowd of ten to twenty thousand people, some of which came from as far away as Ohio. It is believed that there were between one and two thousand conversions during the course of the meeting.

While Presbyterians, Baptists and Methodists joined in the earliest of these meetings, the former two groups gradually abandoned the practice due to two factors: (1) a division of opinion within those denominations as to the propriety of such meetings, and (2) a lack of leadership and regional organization to administer them. By 1805 the field was left largely to the Methodists, who were eager to take full advantage of their opportunity. Francis Asbury urged his preachers to make use of these meetings and to organize them in the East as well on the western frontier. Writing in his journal at Fort Littleton on August 2, 1809, he noted, "We must attend to camp meetings; they make our harvest times."⁴

Camp meetings truly were such times of harvest. As early as 1807, writing to Elijah Hedding, Asbury observed, "from what I have collected, camp meetings are as common now

as quarter meetings were 20 years back, in many districts."⁵ For 1810, he set a goal of 600 camp meetings and one thousand conversions. He wrote to Jacob Gruber in 1811, "I rejoice that camp meetings still prevail more or less in all states, provinces of Upper Canada, Tennessee, New York, Jersey and Pennsylvania." The same letter continues with the startling statement that "Doubtless, if the states and provinces hold 12 million, we congregate annually 3 if not 4 million in campmeetings."⁶ According to W.W. Sweet, by 1820 there were nearly 1,000 annual Methodist encampments.⁷

The rich harvest of the camp meeting is reflected in the amazing growth of Methodism during this period. In a letter to Dr. Coke in 1811, Asbury noted that in 1771 there were only 500 Methodists in America and that forty years later they numbered 185,000.⁸ The fact is that during the first half of the nineteenth century, the percentage growth of the Methodist Episcopal Church exceeded that of the nation in every decade but one. An outstanding example of this was the decade 1800-1810, during which the growth of the population was 36.45% while that of the denomination was 168.96%.⁹

As urged by Asbury, the camp meeting movement spread rapidly in the East. Although losing some of the extreme emotionalism manifested in the western frontier, it remained an effective force in the life of the church. There is abundant evidence to indicate that this type of meeting flourished in the territory of the Central Pennsylvania Conference.

As early as 1788, John Low near Shrewsbury, York County, converted his farm house into a meeting place for Methodists and sometime later, probably near the turn of the century, established a camp ground on his property. This was often called "the Baltimore camp," and large crowds assembled there. After the railroad was built, persons could reach the area conveniently from both the north and the south. It was at Low's Camp Meeting that ten year old Eugene R. Hendrix was converted while visiting his grandparents -- he became a Bishop in the Methodist Episcopal Church South, one of the organizers and the first President of the Federal Council of Churches, as well as one of the founders of both Scarritt and Hendrix Colleges. It was also at this camp meeting that internationally known singing evangelist Amanda Smith was converted.¹⁰ The fact that Miss Smith was black speaks to the inclusiveness of the camp meeting.

The first such gathering in the immediate vicinity of York was held in 1807 a short distance southwest of the town

in a grove belonging to Weirich Pentz. Asbury frequently stayed in the Pentz home when visiting in that vicinity.¹¹

The Annals of Buffalo Valley by John B. Linn state that the first Methodist camp meeting in that part of the state was held in 1806 on Chillisquaque Creek, one and one half miles from the Susquehanna River.¹² An 1876 article published in the Conference News, however, quotes a Mrs. Robins of Greenwood, Columbia County, as testifying that she was converted at a camp meeting held in 1805 where the village of Pottsgrove now stands. A narrative by the Rev. Joseph Carson in Bennett's Methodism in Virginia¹³ corroborates the earlier date by placing it when "brother Frye was pastor of the Northumberland Circuit" and he (Carson) was on the Wyoming Circuit.¹⁴

For the most part, camp meetings just "sprung up," and the exact date and circumstances of their origins were never formally documented. The Steward's Journal of the Quarterly Conference of the Huntingdon Circuit lists expenses that indicate the holding of camp meetings prior to 1810.¹⁵ Asbury's journal reveals that he preached at the Briar Creek Camp Meeting on July 24, 1813, even though ill and suffering pain.¹⁶ The first camp meeting in Clearfield County was held about a mile from Philipsburg in 1827 or 1828.¹⁷ It was at this camp meeting that Joseph S. Lee, one of the pioneer preachers in the Clearfield region, was converted.¹⁸ As time went on, numerous circuits throughout central Pennsylvania established camp meetings, many of them held in connection with their Fourth Quarterly Conference.

The program of the camp meeting was carefully planned and carried out. For months prior to its beginning, an atmosphere of expectancy was developed in the churches of the circuit and the surrounding area. Special efforts were made to secure attendance at the meeting by those not committed to the Christian life. Rules were drawn up for the operation of the camp, posted and strictly enforced. The Presiding Elder was usually in charge, assisted by ordained and local preachers and by exhorters.

While they were definitely moving experiences, most such camp meetings, especially in the later periods, did not involve the emotional excesses often associated with the early trans-Allegheny gatherings. Peter Cartwright, for example, describes meetings involving trances, the "jerks," rolling on the ground, barking like dogs, and such shouting that the noise carried for miles.¹⁹ Similar, but probably not as extreme, manifestations were the exception rather than the rule in central Pennsylvania.

The sermons of the camp meeting preacher were aptly described as "loud and vigorous, crude but effective." They were loud and vigorous because they gave expression to a profound conviction of the truth which the preacher felt must be proclaimed to needy souls. They were crude because they came from the lips of men who lacked the refinement and polish of expression derived from formal education. But they were effective because they were in the language easily understood by their hearers, expressed in local idiom, and interspersed with illustrations out of the everyday experiences of those who listened. As Cartwright once noted, "It is true we could not, many of us, conjugate a verb or parse a sentence, and murdered the king's English almost every lick. But," he continued, "there was a divine unction [that] attended the word preached and thousands fell under the power of God, and thus the Methodist Episcopal Church was planted firmly in this western wilderness."²⁰

For the most part, the sermons were extemporaneous, plain, straightforward, and aimed at producing an immediate effect -- the conversion of the listener. Often they were accompanied by dramatic gestures on the part of the preacher in order to secure the attention of his hearers or to illustrate his point. The Arminian theology of free will, free grace, and personal responsibility appealed to the individuality and independence of these pioneer people. No doubt one of the reasons the Presbyterians, who were among the first to hold camp meetings, later largely abandoned them was the failure of the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination to mesh with the spirit of the camp meeting and the attitudes of the backwoods pioneers.

But the camp meeting preacher did not feel that his work ended with the conversion experience of the individual. He pointed out to them their moral and ethical responsibilities and attacked every form of social evil with courage and vigor. In no uncertain terms he lashed out against immorality, intemperance, the use of tobacco, blasphemy, gambling, slavery and Sabbath desecration. At an Ohio camp meeting in 1806, for example, William McKendree exposed profiteering practiced at the expense of migrants "by selling them corn and other produce at double price."²¹

Probably one of the most outstanding examples of the social emphasis of camp meeting preaching was that of Jacob Gruber when he was serving as Presiding Elder of the Carlisle District. In the summer of 1818, he visited a camp meeting in Washington County, Maryland, then a part of his District. He had not expected to preach; but upon arrival at the camp, he discovered that the preacher scheduled to give the message was ill and unable to appear. Reluctantly, Gruber agreed to substitute and, without specific

preparation for the occasion, spoke on Proverbs 14:34, "Righteousness exalteth a nation; but sin is a reproach to any people." Present were four or five thousand whites and between three and four hundred blacks, most of whom were slaves.

In the course of his sermon, Gruber called attention to some of the sins of the nation -- mentioning infidelity, intemperance, profanity, gambling, slavery and oppression -- and condemned them with all the vigor of which he was capable. Emphasizing particularly slavery and oppression, he laid upon the consciences of the whites, many of whom were slave holders, the evils of slavery and the degraded plight of the negroes held in servitude. He urged the negroes who were present to open their hearts to the Gospel that they might not be in bondage to sin and also become slaves of the devil.

Some of the slave holders present were greatly displeased with the sermon. A short time later a warrant was issued for Gruber's arrest, charging him with "unlawfully, wickedly and maliciously intending to instigate and incite divers negro slaves, the property of divers citizens of the said state, to mutiny and rebellion, for the disturbance of the peace of said state and to the great terror and peril of the citizens thereof." He was arrested about two months later at a quarterly meeting in Williamsport, Maryland. There was feeling that a fair trial was not possible in Washington County, and the trial was transferred to the Frederick County Court at the request of the counsel for the defense.

Gruber secured as his chief counsel Roger B. Taney, a distinguished graduate of Dickinson College who later became Chief Justice of the United States Supreme Court and is best remembered in connection with the Dred Scott decision. Upon the conclusion of the testimony of the witnesses for the prosecution and the defense, and the summation by the counsel for each, the jury retired for deliberation; but they returned immediately and, upon the call of the Clerk, presented a verdict of "not guilty."²² The decision confirmed the right of clergy to speak freely, and without fear of reprisal, their convictions on matters of public morality. Needless to say, Gruber continued his attacks on the evils of slavery.

What were the values of these early camp meetings? Francis Asbury saw them as the means of tremendous growth for the church on the frontier, which indeed they were. Following each camp meeting, converts were assigned to classes and new societies were organized in the surrounding circuits. While the previously documented phenomenal growth

of Methodism during this period is ample evidence of the effectiveness of camp meetings, their value extended far beyond this increase in church membership. The camp meeting lifted the level of morality and brought a measure of refinement to the rough frontier life. It also provided a means of fellowship and social contact for the lonely and isolated settlers. It turned the attention of these pioneers, almost entirely consumed with providing the physical necessities of their existence, to the invisible and spiritual values of life. It was the effective instrument that enabled evangelical Christianity to spread to all parts of the nation.

By 1830 the camp meeting had begun to mature. It was to be more carefully planned and to be conducted in a more orderly fashion. More permanent and more comfortable facilities were built. Heretofore the gatherings had been largely held on a circuit basis; now there began to develop District camp meetings located on desirable sites secured for this particular purpose, on which were erected permanent facilities adequate to accommodate large crowds of people from all parts of the District. Some of these developed from existing circuit camp meetings, while others were newly established on sites acquired specifically for such meetings.

In the Central Pennsylvania Conference, the first of these camp meetings established to minister to a wider constituency was the Summit Grove Camp Meeting located near Shrewsbury in southern York County. It was the outgrowth of Low's Camp Meeting begun in the early 1800's. When the railroad running from Harrisburg to Baltimore was built, the meetings were moved a short distance west to New Freedom, to a site along the railroad, and immediately became very popular with people from Baltimore to the south and from York and Harrisburg to the north -- as well as with the local people in the southern part of York County.

Another such early camp meeting was Patterson Grove, still in operation, which was the outgrowth of a camp meeting organized sometime prior to 1847 at Wadsworth Grove, between Town Hill and Huntington Mills. When the crowds outgrew the facilities there, the meeting moved to Harvey Woods, located between the Huntington Mills-Benton Road and the Town Hill Road, the site commonly called the Old Camp Ground. The accommodations there were rough and temporary. People camped in tents or covered wagons and cooked on open fires; the preachers' stand and the seats were rough planks routinely borrowed from a nearby sawmill and returned when the meeting was over. Desiring more adequate facilities, the camp meeting moved in 1868 to Headley's Sugar Maple Grove.

Here, in the midst of more than one hundred sugar maple trees -- some of which measured more than three feet in diameter -- a permanent camp ground was established with a tabernacle, a boarding house and a circle of cottages. Upon the death of Mr. Headley, his heirs and the camp trustees engaged in legal battles which halted the meetings for a year or two. Finally the grove, with a heavy debt, was awarded to the trustees and the camp continued. When approached for a contribution to pay the debt, Ezekiel Patterson agreed to pay it off entirely if the name were changed to Patterson Grove in honor of his mother. This was done on August 26, 1878, and Patterson Grove Camp Meeting was officially born.

In 1893 fire swept the camp ground, destroying all the cottages and the stately maple trees. The camp meeting had become so much a part of the life of the people in that section, however, that there was never a thought of abandoning the project. Maples and faster growing trees were planted, a larger tabernacle was built, a new boarding house was erected, and additional facilities -- including a commissary, barber shop, meat market, and even a newspaper -- were established. Large crowds thronged the camp grounds, especially on Sundays, and it has been a popular religious center ever since.²³

The largest expansion of District Camp Meetings came following the Civil War and occurred, as previously mentioned, at new sites acquired for that specific purpose. Under the leadership of Presiding Elder Dr. W. Lee Spottswood, the West Branch Camp Meeting was organized in 1868 at a meeting of delegates from the circuits and stations of the Williamsport District. The first meeting was held in August of that year on a site located near Wayne Station, on the Philadelphia and Erie Railroad, about five miles east of Lock Haven. The following year an Association was formed and a charter obtained from the Clinton County Court. The trustees elected included: J. N. Welliver, president; The Honorable G.O. Deise, secretary; The Reverend Milton K. Foster, treasurer. The land was deeded to the Association by The Honorable J.W. Quiggle of Philadelphia, and stock in the amount of \$20,000 was issued -- held principally by members of the Methodist Episcopal Church.

The association erected over 400 board tents, a tabernacle seating 2500 persons, two boarding houses, an auditorium and other buildings. Meetings were held annually, with large crowds in attendance. The June flood of 1889, however, ruined the camp grounds and terminated the use of the property. Records of the camp ground and the futile attempts to rebuild following the flood are contained

in the conference archives. A camp ground later developed at nearby Pine Station, east of McElhattan, and served that section of the district for a number years. In addition, it was the site of the conference's first Epworth League Institute.²⁴

In 1870, the Presiding Elder of the Carlisle District noted in his annual report that circuit camp meetings "because of their smallness and want of general interest, had declined and indeed died out in the district." He then organized a District Camp Meeting at Oakville, near Newville, along the Cumberland Valley Railroad. This site was developed by the erection of 113 ground floor tents, 120 two-story tents, a tabernacle, two boarding tents, a commissary, a bookstore, a post office, and a barber shop. A boardwalk was built from the camp to the railroad station, and Sunday excursions brought as many as 10,000 people to the site.

The Mountain Grove Camp Meeting was organized at a convention of the district stewards and ministers of the Danville District in 1872. A site on the Danville and Hazleton Railroad near the Luzerne-Columbia county line was secured and developed by a stock company chartered by the Pennsylvania legislature in 1873. This camp attracted large crowds from the Hazleton and Danville areas, as well as from other sections of the District. A large hotel and boarding house were purchased and operated by the Association on a strictly temperance basis. The camp meeting was said to have been "a great center of interest and power in this area."

It was also in 1872 that the Juniata Valley Camp Meeting, at a site purchased near Newton Hamilton, held its first session. It became the focal point of interest for years in the Juniata Valley and attracted large crowds each summer. The camp had four circles, with preaching stands in each, together with a large tabernacle and the other buildings usually included in camp meeting grounds. In the 1920's, when it was no longer feasible to hold the Epworth League Institutes at Eagles Mere, this site was purchased by a nonprofit corporation of ministers and laymen of the Central Pennsylvania Conference and developed as The Methodist Training Camp. A full summer program of camps, institutes and other meetings for the various age groups -- from children to adults -- was held on the grounds. Included was a camp meeting which often featured Bible studies and other programs. The camp operated until the 1950's, when it was sold and a number of smaller youth camps were established in different sections of the conference.

While the Crystal Spring Camp Meeting was one of the latest to be organized and incorporated as an Association, it was the outgrowth of and located on the grounds of a circuit camp meeting established prior to the Civil War. In 1867, under the leadership of the Rev. William Henry Stevens [the father of Dr. Emory M. Stevens], who was then the junior pastor of the Bedford Circuit, a tract of land owned by Perry Barton in Fulton County's Brush Creek Valley was cleared and a camp meeting held. It became known as The Barton Camp Meeting Ground.

The Barton camp meetings had many features of the early camps. Some of the people came in covered wagons drawn by oxen and lived in their wagons during the course of the meeting. Other attendees erected rough temporary tents of brush and used thatched roofs. The worship services were held in a large canvas tabernacle. The camp continued in this fashion for about fifteen years and was then abandoned for about a similar period, during which many people of the area attended the Juniata Valley Camp Meeting at Newton Hamilton.

In 1886, ten acres of land were purchased from Joshua Barton and N.B. Hixson and a charter of incorporation as The Crystal Spring Camp Meeting Association was secured from the Fulton County Court. Eventually a tabernacle seating 3,000 was built, together with a first class boarding house, a commissary and a number of cottages. A 1900 announcement of the camp meeting lists costs for meals and lodgings of ninety and twenty-five cents per day respectively.

One distinction of this camp meeting is that a large number of young men who later became prominent ministers in the Central Pennsylvania Annual Conference attended its sessions. Undoubtedly, they were greatly influenced in the choice of their life's work by both the camp meeting itself and the spiritual vitality of the churches in the surrounding area nourished by the meetings. Among the well-known Conference leaders coming from this general area are such names as the Stevens, the Skillingtons, the Duvalls, the Karns, the Akers, Souser, Weeks, the Deavors and a great host of others. There was, in fact, a common saying that "Fulton County is noted for its hoop poles, buckwheat, Methodist preachers and lack of railroads." This camp meeting still operates annual programs.²⁵

From the standpoint of popularity and attendance, the last quarter of the nineteenth century was the heyday of the camp meeting in central Pennsylvania. Contributing no little to their attraction was the program of speakers secured -- especially for the Sunday services. Outstanding ministers of the Conference -- such as President E.J. Gray

of Dickinson Seminary, Prof. S.L. Bowman of Dickinson College, B.B. Hamlin, J.S. McMurray, B.F. Stevens, S.C. Swallow, M.K. Foster, M.L. Ganoe, E.H. Yocum, J.E. Bell, D.S. Monroe and others -- drew large crowds.

In addition, nearly every large camp meeting featured at least one speaker known nationally, if not world-wide. Dr. Charles C. McCabe, who served as a chaplain in the Civil War and was later elected bishop, was one of the most popular and always drew vast throngs of listeners. William Taylor, known originally as Father Taylor the California Street Preacher and later as Bishop Taylor of Africa, appealed strongly to many. Bishop Matthew Simpson, friend of Abraham Lincoln and an eloquent preacher, and J.H. Vincent, founder of Chautauqua and later a bishop of the church, were in constant demand. Other popular speakers were Bishop J.P. Newman, C.H. Fowler and J.M. Buckley, the latter two each having served for a period as editor of The Christian Advocate. Upon occasion, the Governor of the State was invited as the featured speaker.

But in spite of its seeming success and its widespread popularity, the post Civil War camp meeting was not without its problems. The work of local churches near the camp -- and even those at a distance -- was seriously hindered by the exodus of much of their leadership to the camp meeting. Excursion trains that ran to the camp sites on Sundays brought all types of people, many of whom came only for a day's outing and had no sincere interest in the meeting. Such persons typically did not bother to attend the services, but instead promenaded over the grounds -- often disturbing the meetings by their laughter and loud conversation. In short, they made it a holiday rather than a day of worship.

Commercial interests were quick to take advantage of the opportunity for profit and erected stands at the borders of the camp grounds to sell various kinds of merchandise and refreshments. Conditions became so bad that the 1878 State Legislature passed a law prohibiting the erection of booths or stands for the sale of merchandise of any kind within one mile of a camp meeting without consent of the trustees of the sponsoring association.

A spirited controversy raged within the Conference between 1875 and 1882 regarding the question of keeping the Sabbath at the camp meetings. Many ministers urged that the gates be closed from Saturday night until Monday morning to discourage those who came on excursions or by other means just for a day's holiday. The Annual Conference twice passed resolutions asking camp meeting associations to adopt a "closed gates" policy on Sundays.²⁶ Some groups did so,

others did not. Some Presiding Elders, who had the official oversight of Methodist camp meetings within their districts, and some ministers refused to attend where the "open gate" policy was practiced and urged their people to stay away.

Part of the difficulty was that the Annual Conference had no legal control of the camp grounds, but could only exert its moral influence in the determination of the policies by which the camps were operated. Nearly all of the larger camp meetings were incorporated associations financed by the sale of stock and controlled by directors or trustees elected by the stockholders. Often, some of these directors were not even Methodists and were more concerned about the financial success of the meeting than for its spiritual influence. While widely used throughout Methodism, the camp meeting was never officially recognized as part of its polity. No reference to camp meetings seems to appear in the Discipline, and no legislation was ever passed by General Conference to govern their operation. They were simply the vehicle used to carry on the program of evangelism of a circuit or district, under the direction of a pastor or presiding elder.

By no means, however, were all ministers opposed to an "open gate" policy on Sundays. Some camp meetings with such a policy were as orderly and as conducive to worship as those with "closed gate" regulations. Statistics were quoted to argue that the Sunday crowds at camps with "closed gates" were proportionately larger than those at camps with "open gates" -- indicating that the former policy was creating ill will while not keeping many people away. It was likewise argued that an excursion train was less objectionable than the hundreds of horses, vehicles and drivers which would otherwise be necessary to transport the visitors. In addition, it was noted that the "closed gate" regulations deprived those whose employment made it impossible for them to attend the camp meetings except on Sunday.

As might be expected, one of the leaders of the "closed gate" policy was Silas C. Swallow, temperance and Sabbath observance advocate and Prohibition Party candidate for President of the United States. In an 1879 pamphlet titled "Camp Meetings and the Sabbath," he vigorously opposed the "open gate" policy. He contributed many articles to the *Central Pennsylvania Conference News*, edited by like-minded W.M. Frysinger, which championed the cause of proper Lord's Day conduct. He attacked railroads which ran Sunday excursions to the camp meetings as "godless corporations" and criticized the directors of camp meetings that solicited from the railroads royalties based on a

percentage of the price of all tickets sold to persons visiting the camp grounds.

These protests had their effect in bringing about a tightening of the rules and a marked improvement in the atmosphere of some of the camps. In 1878 the West Branch Camp Meeting, which a visitor a few years earlier had said "lacks piety and smacks of worldliness," was conducted with the best of order and allowed no "Sunday selling." The improvement over the years at that particular meeting was so striking that one well-acquainted with the camp was heard to remark: "It once patted the world on the back with one hand and the devil with the other; but we saw during this season, it was the world under one foot and the devil under the other -- while it used both hands to hold up the cross."

During the closing years of the nineteenth century and the early part of the twentieth, the trend was away from a serious evangelistic emphasis to that of a series of preaching services to which people came for worship and social contact. As Sunday School Conventions, and later Epworth League Institutes, assumed greater importance over the years, they indirectly detracted from the camp meeting. The camp meeting having served its purpose well, most associations eventually disbanded and the services were discontinued. A few still remain, however, as a vestige of that unique institution which probably did more than any other single aspect of the life of the church to give impetus to the expansion of Methodism in the developing years of our nation.

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