

**S0206 Werner, L. Matthews (1903-1981)
Papers, 1917-1981
7 Folders, 1 Volume (Microfilm)**

MICROFILM

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Mrs. Margaret Steele Werner donated L. Matthews Werner's papers to the Western Historical Manuscript Collection at the University of Missouri on March 1, 1983.

Matt Werner attended Interlochen School in Rolling Prairie, Indiana where he was influenced by Professor A.E. Hamilton's philosophy of learning. During the summer, Hamilton operated a boys' camp in Maine. In the summer of 1922, Hamilton was injured in an accident and Werner directed the camp's activities for the rest of the season. Werner so enjoyed the experience that he went to New Rochelle, New York to organize an after-school recreational group with boys from the summer camp.

From his experiences as a camper and camp director, Werner concluded that play taught valuable lessons and favorably influenced a child's development. Werner felt city children, especially those of the well-to-do, had little opportunity to experience the fun of outdoor recreation away from the restrictions of parents and schools.

Returning to St. Louis, Werner discussed his ideas with the principal of a St. Louis private school who introduced him to her pupils' parents. Werner presented them with the idea of organizing an after-school day camp. They agreed to enroll their children in the camp and the first after-school day camp in the midwest, the Sebago Club, was organized in the Fall of 1923. Werner named the camp after a lake in Maine, which the Indians called Sebago, meaning "Great Water" or "Beautiful Water." The first year the camp had 20 members. Leo Drey, the Sebago Club's first camper, later became a prominent University City conservationist.

Werner located the Sebago Club camp on Warson and Litzsinger roads. By 1926, the membership had reached 108 and Margaret Steele was hired as director of the girls' camp. Steele had graduated from Washington University with a law degree and had worked as a city playground and dance supervisor. She and Werner later married.

In 1924, Werner opened a summer camp for boys in Harrison, Maine called Camp Ironwood. The Werners founded the Sebago School, a boarding school for disturbed children in 1929. They operated it from their home with a maximum enrollment of eight children from out-of-town families. Most of the troubled youngsters went on to college and became successful professionals.

While directing activities at his various enterprises, Werner promoted his ideas about

camping to the public. He lectured to educators and other civic groups about the benefits of the Sebago Club and urged establishing day camps in the public school system. Also, Werner founded the Missouri Chapter of the American Camping Association.

To outline his ideas on camping, Werner wrote a book and several manuals. Werner's book, *My Child and Camp* (1933), appealed to parents and camp directors to realize the true significance of camp in a child's life. It also covered camp methods, attitudes, and organization. The manuals dealt with training techniques for camp staff and leaders. Werner's pioneering concepts for camping were used as guides for establishing similar camps, like the Sebago Club near Cincinnati, Ohio.

The Sebago Club and Sebago School in St. Louis operated until June 1959 when the Werners moved to Miami, Florida. In Miami, they re-established a Sebago School. It closed in 1963. The Werners continued their interest in Camp Ironwood where they spent their summers.

Matt Werner died on April 17, 1981.

SCOPE AND CONTENT

The L. Matthews Werner papers, 1917-1981, document Werner's pioneering work in children's day camps. The collection is divided into two series: Writings, 1933-1948; and the Sebago Club, 1917-1981.

SERIES DESCRIPTION

The Writing series (folders 1-3) contains a book and two training manuals. The book, *My Child and Camp* (1933), covers camp methods, attitudes, and organizations. It appeals to parents and camp directors to understand the true significance of a camp to a child. The two manuals, titled *The Camp Ironwood Community Plan* (March 1948) and *Leadership Training Course Notes for Camp Ironwood Community* (c.1948), reflect Werner's ideas for techniques to train staff and leaders to live and teach at Sebago Club, Sebago School, and Camp Ironwood.

The second series consists of folders 4-7 and one scrapbook (1922-1959) on microfilm. Folder 4 contains the Sebago Club newsletter, *Oak Leaf* (1937-1946, 1954). Started as a creative outlet for the Sebago Club campers, the publication later included poems and articles from elementary school children throughout St. Louis. The 1954 issue honored a former Sebago Club counselor, Helen Hewitt Arthur (1918-1953). Folder 5 includes loose newsclippings that have been xeroxed and a letter (1917-1981).

Volume 1, a scrapbook (1922-1959), reflects Werner's work as a founder and director of the Sebago Club and Sebago School in St. Louis, Camp Ironwood in Maine, and Sebago School in Florida. The scrapbook includes newsclippings, pamphlets, and photographs. Folders 6 and 7 contain scrapbook photographs, 1926-1940s.

FOLDER LIST

BOX 1, FOLDER 1-4

SERIES 1- WRITINGS, 1933-1948, FOLDERS 1-3

1. My Child and Camp, 1933
2. The Camp Ironwood Community Plan, March 1948
3. Leadership Training Course Notes, c. 1948

SERIES 2 - THE SEBAGO CLUB, 1917-1981, FOLDERS 4-7, 1 ROLL MICROFILM

4. Oak Leaf, newsletter, 1939-1946, 1954
5. Newsclippings and correspondence, 1917-1981
6. Scrapbook Photographs, 1926-1040s, #9557-9582
7. Scrapbook Photographs, 1940s, #9583-9603

Microfilm Volume 1. Scrapbook, 1922-1959

INDEX

Arthur, Helen Hewitt, v. 1
Brown, Judy, v. 1, f. 6
Brown, Paul Jean, v. 1, f. 6
Camp Ironwood, v. 1; f. 1-7
Camping, v. 1; f. 1-7
Dance, v. 1, f. 6
Day Camps, v. 1; f. 1-7
Drey, Leo, v. 1; f. 5, 6
Goodall, William N., v. 1, f. 6
Lee, Bud, v. 1, f. 6
Maxwell, Virginia, v. 1, f. 6
Orwig, Mercer, v. 1, f. 7
Recreation, v. 1; f. 1-7
Rossman School, v. 1
Rowlette, Carol, v. 1,
St. Louis Camp Association, v. 1, f. 6
Schools, v. 1; f. 1-7
Sebago Club, v. 1; f. 1-7
Sebago School, v. 1; f. 1-7
Sherman Park Community Center, v. 1
Sommers, Gus, v. 1, f. 6
Steele Lawson, Peggy, v. 1, f. 7
Swing, Philip, v. 1, f. 6
Werner, L. Matthews, v. 1; f. 1-7
Werner, Margaret Steele, v. 1; f. 5, 6
White, Lauri, v. 1, f. 7