



Great Camps of the Adirondacks

Harvey Kaiser

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Adolph Lewisohn, requiring a staff of forty to minister to his guests' comfort in the wilds of the Adirondacks, imported to his camp a major-domo, barber, caddy, chess-player, singing teacher, and two chauffeurs, Majorie Merriweather Post made do with eighty-five servants for the sixty-five building of Topridge, which was approached by a private funicular railway and graced by a Russian dacha a token of affection for her third husband, a former ambassador to the Soviet Union.

Equally magnificent was J.P. Morgan's Camp Uncas, Julius Bache's Wenonah Lodge, and William Seward Webb's Nehasane. These 'Great Camps' were to the beautiful and secluded Adirondack region what the 'Cottages' were to Newport: contradictions in terminology, but marvels of construction and architectural imagination. Truly fabulous structures, built primarily of wood and stone and set deep among the great forests, they are at once relics of a bygone age and prototypes for the contemporary architect, amateur builder, and historian.

Harvey Kaiser traces the history of the Adirondacks from their first sighting by a European in 1535, through the eras of trapping, iron mining, and lumbering, to the development of railroad and steamboat lines that led to the influx of tourists and the building of the 'Great Camps.' The sixty years from 1870 to 1930 were the heyday of these camps, the 'Gilded Age' of the Adirondacks, and Kaiser give a fascinating account both of the personalities who engineered and financed these fabulous structures and of the buildings themselves...

More than forty years after the Depression put an end to this princely life-style, the camps themselves are threatened by the forces of politics and nature. In Great Camps of the Adirondacks, Harvey Kaiser make a strong case for preservation: the obliteration of these remarkable structures would be an irreparable loss not only to our architectural heritage but to every individual to whom they are a resource and an inspiration.

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