



**adirondacks, usa**

## **History of interest in the Adirondacks**

Originally published in 1869, W.H.H. Murray's "Adventures in the Wilderness (or Camp-Life in the Adirondacks)" is widely regarded as the first book on camping published in the United States, inspiring thousands of people to head for the Adirondack wilderness; the idea of the Adirondacks as a major tourist destination was born.

Murray presented a romantic explanation of the pristine wilderness of the Adirondacks restoring vitality to all who visit. Along with the discussion about nature's benefits, the book also provided a "how-to" manual regarding visits to the Adirondack wilderness. It included information about how to outfit oneself, required equipment, where to stay, how to cook and eat in the wilderness, how to stay healthy in the wilds, fishing and hunting tactics, and finding solace and spiritual connection in the woods.

## **Great Camps**

Murray's tales spurred tourism to the Adirondacks which lasted for years. Eventually, William West Durant realized that the region would be a perfect place to develop his burgeoning new architectural style. Durant seized the opportunity and began to design massive compounds out of native materials that gave root to the Adirondack style. His first project, camp Pine Knot, was under construction beginning in 1885 through the 1890's in Raquette Lake. Construction took some time, as these camps comprised a number of buildings, all serving different purposes.

Although not a formal architect, William West Durant is often considered the father of the Adirondack Great Camp Style with its rustic log construction, twig work, peeled bark siding, and separate buildings for different functions. Durant was also known for introducing the Swiss chalet roofline to the Adirondack vernacular.

During the Gilded Age of the 1920s, wealthy families took notice of the Adirondack region, Durant's unique architectural style and the cooler weather, and commissioned Durant to build compounds or purchase his previously-built "great camps" including Great Camp Sagamore (Vanderbilt family), Camp Uncas (JP Morgan family) and Camp Kill Kare. During this time, other wealthy families built great camps in the popular "Adirondack style" including the Rockefeller, Post, Carnegie, Whitney, and Pruyn families.

Each summer, the families, their friends and their guests would travel to their great camps, spending weeks at a time. Lavish parties, grand meals and all manner of outdoor activity took place in these rustic retreats, away from the outside world.