

The “Kosher Division” at T.M.R. 1938 – 1945



Jewish Services at Camp Manhattan, T.M.R.

The Kosher Divisions at T.M.R.

- In part due to the efforts of the Jewish Committee on Scouting for Greater New York, the number of Jewish boys in New York City Troops and Packs soared.
- Many of these Jewish Scouts attended summer camp at the Ten Mile River Scout Camps, creating a tremendous demand for kosher food. The camp leadership organized kosher dining halls at T.M.R. and the staff tried to keep them kosher.
- At this time, a New York City Boy Scout typically attended a summer camp affiliated with his home borough. The term “*Kosher Division*” referred to the two Brooklyn Camps and one Bronx Camp that offered kosher feeding, following the Jewish dietary laws, or “kashruth.”



From: Scouting for the Jewish Boy

The Kosher Divisions at T.M.R.

- The Ten Mile River Scout Camps was organized into “*Borough Camps*,” with one summer camp for each of the five N.Y.C. Boroughs, with kosher and non-kosher divisions:
 - **Camp Ranachqua** (Bronx) – 1 kosher and 1 non-kosher division.
 - **Camp Brooklyn** – 2 kosher and 2 non-kosher divisions.
 - **Camp Man** (Queens) – 3 non-kosher divisions.
 - **Camp Manhattan** – 2 non-kosher divisions.
 - **Camp Aquehonga** (Staten Island) – 1 non-kosher division.
- While Scouts mainly attended their own Borough camps, Jewish Scouts could request to attend a kosher-feeding division from another borough if his Borough camp did not provide kosher feeding.
- The kosher-feeding divisions were very popular and were usually filled first. The Queens and Manhattan camps had substantial numbers of Jewish Scouts but didn’t offer kosher-feeding.
- Volunteers constructed synagogues in the Bronx, Brooklyn and Manhattan Borough Camps.

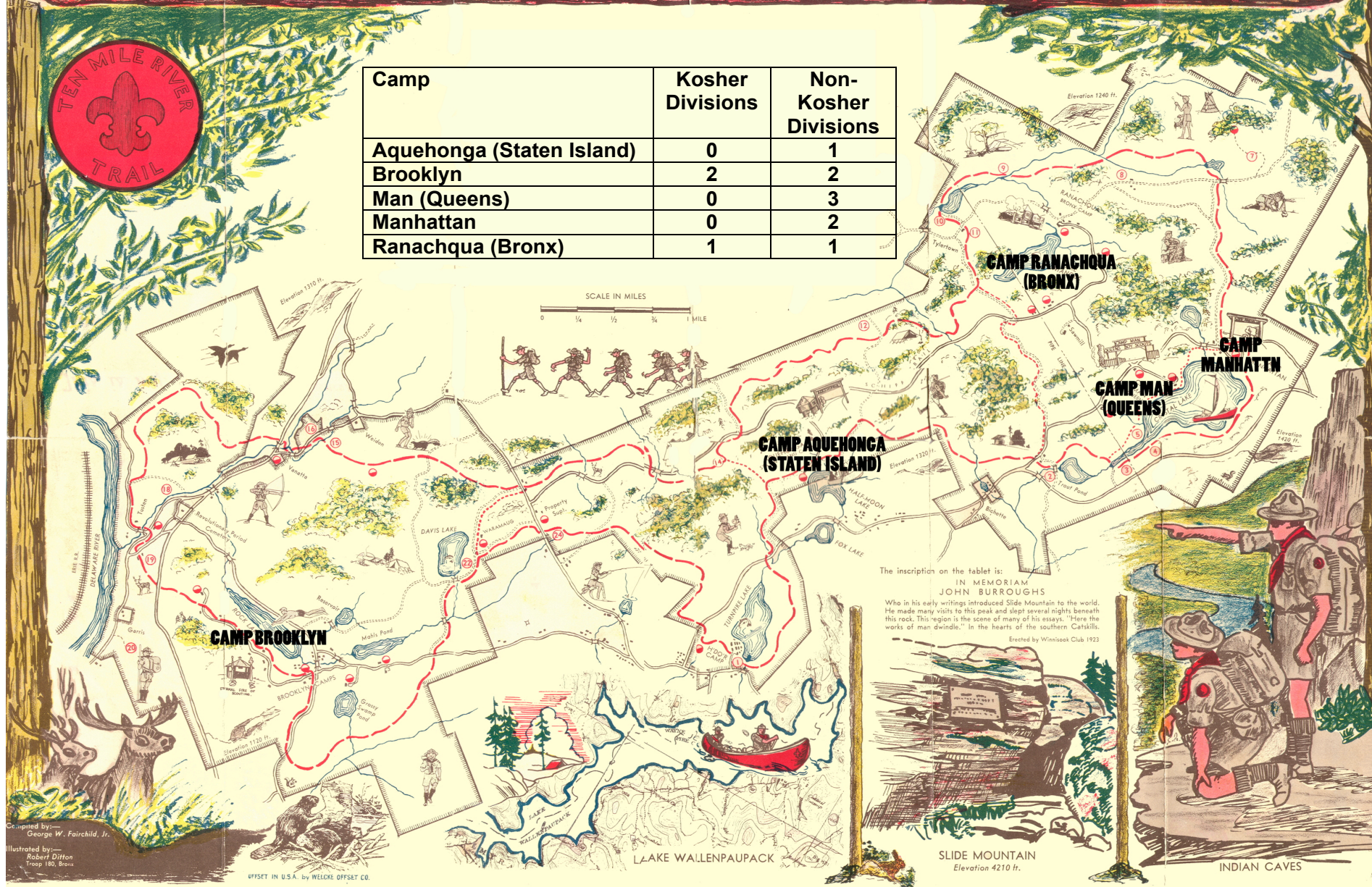


Jewish Scouts at T.M.R.

THE BOY SCOUT FOUNDATION OF GREATER NEW YORK TEN MILE RIVER SCOUT CAMPS



| Camp | Kosher Divisions | Non-Kosher Divisions |
|---------------------------|------------------|----------------------|
| Aquehonga (Staten Island) | 0 | 1 |
| Brooklyn | 2 | 2 |
| Man (Queens) | 0 | 3 |
| Manhattan | 0 | 2 |
| Ranachqua (Bronx) | 1 | 1 |



Role of the United Synagogue of America

- **October 1929** - Executive Director Samuel M. Cohen informed an inquirer that the United Synagogue of America supervised the kosher mess of five or six camps serving Greater New York and Chicago, arranged Jewish religious programs for these camps and appointed Rabbis who were in charge of this work.
- It arranged Jewish festival celebrations for Jewish Boy Scouts in the Greater New York area, including the Lag B'Omer celebration in a stadium; and published the monthly Scout Menorah newsletter for Jewish Boy Scouts (6,000 copies monthly).



Samuel M. Cohen



Camp Rabbis at the Ten Mile River Scout Camps

- The Camp Rabbis looked after the spiritual welfare of the Jewish Scouts while at camp and provided other religious and educational services.
- They were sometimes Student Rabbis from organizations including the Jewish Theological Seminar, with no previous knowledge of the Boy Scouts of America or summer camp. Each Camp Rabbi was typically paid \$100 for the summer.
- A Camp Rabbi was assigned to each of the two Brooklyn kosher divisions (D-I and D-II), one to the Camp Ranachqua (Bronx) kosher division (Unit-C) and one to cover both Camp Man (Queens) and Camp Manhattan (Manhattan), which did not have kosher kitchens. By 1941, Camp Man and Camp Manhattan each had their own Camp Rabbi. Camp Aquehonga (Staten Island) did not have sufficient Jewish Scouts to justify its own Camp Rabbi.



*Rabbi
Harold
Kamsler*



*Rabbi
Ephraim
Bennett*



*Rabbi
Sidney
Greenberg*



*Rabbi
Leonard Zion*



*Rabbi
Lawrence
Charney*



*Rabbi Herbert
Ribner*



*Rabbi
Samson A.
Shain*



*Rabbi
Baruch
Silverstein*



*Rabbi Morris
V.
Dembowitz*

The Camp Rabbis

Spiritual Welfare of the Scouts

- Jewish religious services were provided daily in most camps (although poorly attended), with greater attendance at services held on Friday evenings and on Saturday mornings.
- Camp Manhattan held Jewish services on Sunday mornings to be consistent with the Catholic and Protestant religious services organized at the same time.
- Depending on the number of Jewish Scouts attending Camp Aquehonga, they were either driven to a camp offering religious services (typically Camp Ranachqua) or a Camp Rabbi was driven to Camp Aquehonga to hold services for the Scouts.
- Some camps organized and trained Scouts for camp choirs.
- Jewish Scouts of the proper age were able to hold their Bar Mitzvah during summer camp.
- Special services were conducted in the evening and morning in recognition of Tisha B'av.



From: Scouting for the Jewish Boy



Camp Ranachqua Synagogue



Camp Brooklyn Synagogue

Typical Kosher Requirements

- Meat and dairy foods never mixed in the same meal.
- Meat-based shortening never used in a dairy meal.
- Soap used for washing dishes, etc., must be of vegetable origin.
- Serving various kinds of breads with meat or dairy meals.
- Kosher meat, which required washing and salting by a Rabbi.
- Food provided to Scouts for overnight hikes must also be kosher.
- Cooking and eating equipment provided to Scouts for overnight hikes not the same as those used in the camp dining halls, usually replaced by paper plates and cutlery.
- Two sets of pots, pans, dishes and cutlery for meat and dairy meals. These were kept apart at all times and were never mixed or cleaned together.
- Separate sinks or dishwashing machines to clean the two sets (above).

The Camp Rabbis

Compliance with Dietary Laws

- **By 1938** - Camp Rabbis at the T.M.R. kosher divisions were responsible to ensure that their kitchens were kept strictly kosher. This typically required the complete separation of pots, pans and cutlery used for the preparation and consumption of meat and dairy meals.
- The Camp Rabbis inspected the kosher camp kitchens regularly. They also reviewed the menus of foods used for overnight hikes to ensure that they were kosher. Cooking and eating equipment used by hikers also had to be kept kosher, sometimes requiring the use of paper plates and cutlery.
- **Starting in 1941** - The Camp Rabbis and multiple camp inspection visits by teams of Rabbis found problems with the kosher kitchens eventually requiring major changes in their construction and operations.
- **1945** - Director of Camping Al Nichols, Jr. recommended that Rabbis be hired solely to ensure the kosher status of each camp kitchen.



Al Nichols, Jr.

The Camp Rabbis

Jewish Education

- The Camp Rabbi maintained the camp library of books of Jewish interest provided by the United Synagogue of America and later by the Jewish Education Committee of New York. He also provided Hebrew and Bar Mitzvah lessons.
- The Camp Rabbi typically spoke to Jewish campers individually and explained the necessity of taking interest in Jewish life.
- At Camp Ranachqua, the Camp Rabbi told campers stories of Jewish life at Friday evening services. In 1939, Camp Rabbi Dembowitz provided Hebrew and Bar Mitzvah classes to approximately 20 Jewish Scouts in both divisions.
- Camp Rabbis at the Brooklyn Camps regularly held lectures and discussions for older Scouts dealing with contemporary Jewish problems.



*Rabbi Morris V.
Dembowitz*

The Camp Rabbis

Interaction with Scouts

- The Camp Rabbi acted as a big brother to Scouts regardless of their religion.
- He discussed personal problems with some of the campers and spoke to the Scouts' parents about their children's problems.
- The Camp Rabbi attended with homesick Scouts and discipline problems.
- He visited sick campers in the hospital, individual campers in their campsites and participated in the camper activities, sometimes as arbiters and umpires for the various camp sports.
- The Camp Brooklyn Rabbis typically accompanied weekly camp inspection parties and participated in the Saturday evening camp-wide Council fires.
- Jewish Scouts filled out questionnaires to discover their backgrounds and ideas.



*Rabbi Nelson and Scout at Camp
Ranachqua Carnival*

The Camp Rabbis

Interaction with other Camp Chaplains

- The Camp Rabbis attended camp religious services conducted by both Catholic and Protestant Chaplains, and relations with them were typically excellent.
- The Camp Rabbi's interaction with non-Jews and the camp staff was generally very positive. Many non-Jews, including the Catholic Parson and Protestant Minister were invited to attend the Jewish services.
- T.M.R. Director Al Nichols, Jr. sometimes attended the Jewish services.



Al Nichols, Jr.

The Borough Camps

Camp Ranachqua (Bronx)

- The camp was organized into two operational Units: “*Unit C*” was the kosher Unit and “*Unit E*” was the non-kosher Unit.
- Soon after Camp Ranachqua opened in 1929, Bronx volunteers constructed the camp synagogue on the hill overlooking Unit C. It had a permanent ark, reading desk, Sefer Torah, prayer shawls, skullcaps and prayer books.
- **1938** - Over the eight-week camp season, 1,892 Jewish Scouts and 24 Catholic Scouts attended Unit C, and 24 Jewish Scouts attended Unit E.
- Unit C had services on Friday evenings and Saturday mornings, which were attended by all Scouts, including Jewish Scouts from Unit E.
- Many Jewish Scouts in Unit E desired to go to Unit C but were unable due to lack of facilities. A considerable number of Jewish Scouts did not attend camp at all due to limited facilities in Unit C.
- Saturday morning services also typically included a few Jewish Scouts from Camp Aquehonga (Staten Island).
- A Bar Mitzvah was held in camp in 1939.



Camp Ranachqua Synagogue

The Borough Camps

Camp Brooklyn

- **1938** - Between 300-600 Jewish Scouts attended the two kosher camps each two-week period, including Scouts who ate in the non-kosher division because of lack of facilities.
- All the Scouts recited in unison the blessings before and after each meal. Waiters were given periodic instruction concerning the use of dishes and silverware.
- The two kosher mess halls were under constant supervision of the two Camp Rabbis. All silverware and other metal vessels were stamped with either “M” (meat) or “D” (dairy) to prevent intermixing. Two large wooden boxes (also marked “M” and “D”) were constructed and contained the silver, when not in use, was under lock and key. All menus of overnight hikers were inspected and confirmed kosher. Each meal was introduced and followed by a recitation of grace in uniform.
- The kosher units were very overcrowded at the heights of the season. A new, larger kitchen was considered urgently needed. From private conversations with Scouts, it was learned that with a larger kosher unit, attendance would move to it from the non-kosher units.



*Religious Services at Brooklyn –
Division I Synagogue*

The Borough Camps

Camp Brooklyn

- Religious services in the kosher units were held outdoors every Friday evening and Saturday morning. Attendance was voluntary and totaled 200-400 persons. All Scout activities were suspended during services.
- Efforts to conduct daily morning services were very difficult due to the lack of a centrally located chapel. The Camp Rabbis felt that attendance at services must be made compulsory.
- **1938** - For the first time at the Brooklyn Camps, religious services in the non-kosher units were held Sunday mornings. Attendance was compulsory and totaled between 100-150 persons. The three Chaplains (Catholic, Protestant, Jewish) organized the camp-wide general assembly and flag-raising ceremony. Following the ceremony, everyone divided up into three groups, each which held their own religious service.



Brooklyn – Division I Synagogue

The Borough Camps

Camp Brooklyn

- **July 4, 1939** - The two Camp Rabbis requested a special assembly at sundown on Independence Day. They provided a prayer for our Country and a message of good citizenship.
- The first choir in camp history was organized. Parents of Scouts whose 13th birthday fell during the camp period were contacted and persuaded to schedule their son's Bar Mitzvah at camp. Four Bar Mitzvahs were held at camp in the month of August alone.
- The two Camp Brooklyn Rabbis supervised the construction of the new synagogue. A special service dedicated the new synagogue, with distinguished visitors and a large group of visiting parents. This was considered the most important and beautiful service of the entire summer at Camp Brooklyn.
- On the last Sabbath of camp, non-Jewish Camp Directors and Chaplains were invited to attend services.

The Borough Camps

Camp Man (Queens)

- Camp Man did not offer kosher feeding. In 1939, a total of 599 Jewish Scouts and 1,497 Christian Scouts attended Camp Man over the four two-week period season. Religious services were held Friday evenings at 7:15 pm, with a 45% attendance and Saturday mornings at 7:30 am with a 70% attendance.
- **1940** - Religious services were held Friday evenings and Saturday mornings. Educational activities included a Hebrew “Sing” on Friday evenings, including both staff and Scouts, and a candlelight Friendship meeting. Contributions were collected for the repair of the Jewish Chapel.
- According to the Camp Rabbi, services were quite successful and were frequently attended by Christians. Scouts were very active in the service and a number of them, after some coaching, acted as cantors.



A Jewish Scout at T.M.R.

The Borough Camps

Camp Manhattan

- **1939** - Camp Manhattan did not offer kosher feeding. A total of 1,222 Jewish Scouts and 627 Christian Scouts attended over the four two-week period season. Religious services were held Friday evenings at 5:15 pm, with a 45% attendance. This was considered low due to competing camp activities.
- Sunday morning services were held at 7:45 am in July and at 9:00 am in August. The Jewish, Protestant and Catholic religious denominations in camp held their services at the same time and all other camp activity was suspended. As a result, 95% of the Jewish Scouts participated. A Bar Mitzvah of a Scout took place on a Sunday morning in July.
- One evening, Camp Rabbi Shain told the entire camp a story, which served as the evening activity.
- The Camp Rabbi asked the Jewish Scouts their preference and found that many of them wanted to have their meals in a kosher mess hall. This was not available in Camp Manhattan at that time.
- **1944** - The site was approved for a Jewish Chapel at Camp Manhattan.



Jewish Chapel – Camp Manhattan

Challenges in Camp

- The “*Kosher Division*” had several controversies during this period, which eventually resulted in a reorganization of the Brooklyn Camps and the opening of Camp Kunatah in 1946.
- The camp kitchens underwent increased scrutiny, often by Rabbi inspection teams, and it was found that they were not strictly kosher. Director of Camping Al Nichols, Jr. attributed this to a shift of supervision, from Conservative Rabbis to Orthodox Rabbis.
- There were repeated requests to the Jewish Committee on Scouting for Greater New York to clarify to what extent T.M.R. followed the Jewish dietary laws.



Al Nichols, Jr.

Challenges in Camp

Segregation of Jewish Scouts

- The two Brooklyn kosher dining hall camps (Div.-I and Div.-II) were located at the end of the camp road, isolating the Jewish Scouts from the other, non-Jewish Scouts. Due to high demand for kosher feeding the kosher kitchen camps were almost entirely populated by Jewish Scouts. This was recognized as a problem as far back as 1935 and was characterized as segregation and discussed at the meetings of the Jewish Committee on Scouting for Greater New York.
- The Jewish Committee recommended shifting one of the Brooklyn kosher divisions to another site, while one of the non-kosher divisions is shifted up to the end of the camp where both kosher divisions were located. It felt that the Jewish and non-Jewish Scouts should mingle during normal camp program except during meals and religious services.
- **1945** - Director of Camping Al Nichols, Jr. suggested that both the Brooklyn and Bronx Camps be reorganized to solve this problem. This would have required scrapping some existing dining halls, building new ones and constructing new housing.
- **1946** - Camp Kunatah opened with a capacity of 400 (compared with the previous 100-person dining halls) specifically to deal with this problem. No substantial changes were made to the Bronx Camps.



Al Nichols, Jr.



Camp Kunatah Dining Hall

Challenges in Camp

Lack of Kosher Feeding

- Camp Man and Camp Manhattan both had substantial numbers of Jewish Scouts but never had kosher dining.
- **1939** - A total of 599 Jewish Scouts attended Camp Man and a total of 1,222 Jewish Scouts attended Camp Manhattan. Surveys by the Camp Rabbis indicated considerable interest in kosher food by the Scouts. This was a repeated topic of discussion at meetings of the Citywide Jewish Committee and the Manhattan and Queens Jewish Committees.
- A limited number of slots were reserved at the Bronx and Brooklyn Camps for Scouts from other Boroughs desiring kosher food, but these were insufficient to satisfy the demand.

Challenges in Camp

Lack of Kosher Feeding

- **May 23, 1943** - The Manhattan Jewish Committee appointed a subcommittee to study the subject of kosher kitchens at Camp Manhattan. The motion carried to recommend that kosher kitchen facilities be made available at the earliest possible date. A similar recommendation had been made at the meeting of the Metropolitan Jewish Advisory Committee on April 22nd.
- The Camp Rabbis at the Bronx and Brooklyn Camps reported that during the peak periods, the demand for kosher feeding far exceeded their capacity and that many Scouts desiring kosher food did not attend summer camp as a result.
- Regardless of the large number of Jewish Scouts attending Camp Man and Camp Manhattan, kosher feeding was never made available at these camps.

Challenges in Camp Incomplete Prayer Books

1938 – Camp Rabbi Morris V. Dembowitz at Camp Ranachqua reported that prayer books were not uniform and had pages missing.



*Rabbi Morris V.
Dembowitz*

Challenges in Camp Quality of Camp Rabbis

- The Camp Rabbis were often inexperienced students with limited previous experience with summer camps and the Boy Scouts of America.
- During this period, they were typically paid \$100 for the entire season. In 1937 and 1939, there were requests for a better class of more mature men, with more experience in youth leadership, even if it was necessary to pay higher salaries.

Challenges in Camp

Poor Attendance at Religious Services

- **1939** - Attendance at services varied from camp to camp. The Brooklyn Camp Rabbi noted that attendance was rarely more than satisfactory although Scout activities were suspended during services. The reasons for this were considered many:
 - The synagogue was quite distant from Division II.
 - Due to limited capacity, it was not feasible to seat all Scouts comfortably.
 - Apathetic and indifferent patrol leaders.
 - Services competed with Scout preparation for the camp Court of Honor Saturday afternoon.
 - Service attendance by boys was not compulsory, due to the lack of necessary space.
 - The Scouts found services they attended in N.Y.C. highly unattractive.
- It was felt that construction of the new and larger synagogue conveniently located between the two Divisions should solve many of these problems.



*Religious Services at
Camp Brooklyn*

Challenges in Camp

Identifying Jewish Scouts

- **1939** - According to Camp Rabbi Shain (Camps Man and Manhattan), it was difficult to identify and meet with Jewish Scouts, since both Christian and Jewish Scouts were in camp.
- He suggested that each Scout be obliged to report to his Chaplain just as he was obliged to report to the Camp Physician. This should increase attendance at services, since each Scout would feel that the Chaplain knew him and noticed his absence.



*Rabbi Samson A.
Shain*



Challenges in Camp

Overnight Hikes Friday Nights

- Camp Rabbi Shain (Camps Man and Manhattan) suggested that Jewish Scouts not go on overnight hikes on Friday nights due to the Sabbath.
- This was not adopted because it would have disrupted the entire summer camp program.

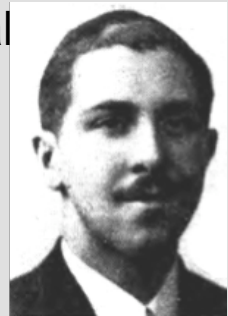


*Rabbi Samson A.
Shain*

Challenges in Camp

Cooking on the Sabbath

- **1941** - Rabbi Herbert Ribner, a junior student at Jewish Theological Seminary, served as Camp Ranachqua Rabbi and caused several controversies:
 - He insisted that no cooking be done on Saturdays, creating unrest among the staff, campers and visitors.
 - He also requested dairy meals for the Tisha B'Av holiday (Sunday) plus on Thursday and Friday and Saturday as well.
 - Camp Rabbi Ribner requested an additional dishwasher, without which, he thought, the kitchen wasn't kosher. He also recommended that the Camp Synagogue be enlarged.
- It was clear to the parties concerned that, to prevent similar controversies in the future, the Jewish Committee on Scouting should be asked to set down once and for all the kashruth principals for the Scout camps. This way, the Camp Rabbi and all other concerned persons would know to what extent the camp actually was kosher.

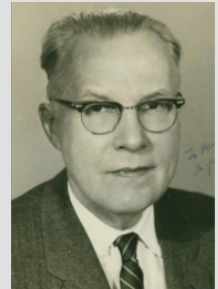


*Rabbi Herbert
Ribner*

Challenges in Camp

Blowing Bugles on the Sabbath

- **Saturday, July 7, 1945** - The first Saturday of the Brooklyn period, Camp Rabbi Lifschitz ordered that no bugles were to be blown on the Sabbath and that swimming and other camp activities be curtailed.
- Al Nichols, Jr. countermanded such orders and insisted that the camp program be followed except during the period of actual religious services. Rabbi Berliant and Edward S. Silver agreed that Camp Rabbi Lifschitz had overstepped his authority, and supported Al Nichols, Jr. in his decision.



Al Nichols, Jr.



*Rabbi Samuel
Berliant*



Edward S. Silver

Challenges in Camp

Maintaining Kosher Kitchens

- The necessity to maintain kosher kitchens at some of the TMR divisions was a unique challenge for the camp staff. A declaration by a Camp Rabbi that the kitchen was no longer kosher could potentially close a camp in mid-season.
- *“No continuity of leadership of the kosher divisions – no set standards. As each new Rabbi was brought into the picture, difficulties were encountered as he endeavored to alter the system to suit his particular training. Many of the suggestions made by the Rabbis, often-inexperienced students, would have required major alterations. These were met with vigorous opposition from campers and staff alike.” Al Nichols, Jr., G.N.Y.C. Director of Camping (07/18/45):*

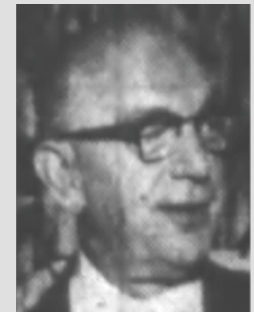
Challenges in Camp

Two Dishwashing Machines Required

- **June 17, 1942** - Rabbi Max Drob informed Rabbi William F. Rosenblum, head of the Camp Chaplains Committee, that meat and dairy dishes and silverware at camp were being washed in the same machine, thus making meals served in them non-kosher.
- He requested that two, smaller, dishwashing machines be provided for each camp kitchen so that the dishes could be kept separate.
- **June 18** - Rabbi Rosenblum forwarded Rabbi Drob's letter to Frank L. Weil with a request to purchase and install the washing machines as requested, otherwise Rabbi Drob would not declare the T.M.R. Camps to be kosher. Rabbi Rosenblum felt that the Jewish Committee on Scouting should purchase and install the requested dishwashing machines.



Rabbi Max Drob



*Rabbi William F.
Rosenblum*

Challenges in Camp

No Preparation of Meals on the Sabbath

July 29, 1942 - Representatives of the New York Board of Jewish Ministers visited T.M.R. They advised the Metropolitan Jewish Advisory Committee on Scouting that in order for the three kitchens where kosher food is to be served, to maintain their adherence to Jewish Law, the preparation of meals on the Sabbath must be eliminated.

Challenges in Camp

Complete Separate Pots & Tableware for Meat & Dairy use

- **1941, 1942, 1944 and 1945** - The Camp Rabbis or Rabbi inspection committees found that the kosher kitchens either did not have separate sets of cooking utensils and eating plates and cutlery or that they were being cleaned together, contrary to Jewish dietary laws.
- **1945** - Substantial changes were made to the Bronx and Brooklyn kosher kitchens at the start of the camp season to satisfy these requirements, resulting in substantial disruption to the camp operation.

Challenges in Camp

Certifying the Kosher Kitchens

- **Before 1941** - The Camp Rabbis were responsible to ensure that the camp kitchens were strictly kosher. In the following years, there was increased scrutiny over who would certify that the camp kitchens were actually kosher.
- **1941** - A Rabbi that was not a member of the camp staff was appointed as the expert on the Jewish dietary laws.
- **July, 1944** - Edward S. Silver, Chairman of the Brooklyn Jewish Advisory Committee visited T.M.R. and discovered that the kosher divisions were operating without two separate sets of pots and pans and utensils.
- **1945** - A team of Rabbis inspected the Bronx and Brooklyn Camp kitchens and found that the kosher kitchens either did not have separate sets of cooking utensils and eating plates and cutlery or that they were being cleaned together, contrary to Jewish dietary laws.



Edward S. Silver

Challenges in Camp Obtaining Kosher Meat

- **1945** - Due to war shortages, it was not possible to obtain kosher meat, ready for the pan, from the New York City kosher butchers.
- Meat was available from the Monticello kosher butcher, but it had to be made kosher under rabbinical supervision. Local Rabbis could not be found to perform this service.
- Teams of Camp Rabbis, along with volunteer adult Leaders and Scouts, had to make two trips a week to Monticello to kosherize the meat before delivery to the T.M.R. kosher divisions.
- This took the Camp Rabbis away from their normal camp responsibilities and tied up use of the camp station wagon and driver.

Challenges in Camp Kosherizing the Brooklyn & Bronx Camp Cooking Equipment

- Following the 1945 visit by a team of Rabbis, it was decided that a committee of Rabbis would visit the T.M.R. camps to kosherize the cooking and eating utensils.
- The manpower required to complete the task was initially underestimated and it took multiple visits and the assistance of the camp staff at the start of the camp season to complete the process.

The “Kosher Division” at T.M.R. 1938 – 1945



Jewish Services at Camp Manhattan, T.M.R.

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