

"TO FREE THOUGHT, FREE SPEECH, AND FREE INVESTIGATION:' THE CULTURAL
LANDSCAPE OF LILY DALE, NEW YORK"

by

MAXWELL STEVENSON NOSBISCH

(Under the Direction of Eric MacDonald)

ABSTRACT: This thesis looks at the Spiritualist community of Lily Dale, New York through the perspective of the first part of a cultural landscape report. Inside is a literature review, a summary of the history of Spiritualism and its beliefs, the history of Lily Dale, an examination of its existing conditions, an analysis of its integrity, and arguments for its significance.

INDEX WORDS: Cultural Landscape, Spiritualism, Religious History, Integrity, Significance, Historic Preservation, History, New York, Cultural Landscape Report

"TO FREE THOUGHT, FREE SPEECH, AND FREE INVESTIGATION:' THE CULTURAL
LANDSCAPE OF LILY DALE, NEW YORK"

by

MAXWELL STEVENSON NOSBISCH

B.F.A., College of Charleston, 2017

A Thesis Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of The University of Georgia in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

MASTER OF HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATHENS, GEORGIA

2020

"TO FREE THOUGHT, FREE SPEECH, AND FREE INVESTIGATION:' THE CULTURAL
LANDSCAPE OF LILY DALE, NEW YORK"

by

Maxwell Stevenson Nosbisch

Major Professor: Eric MacDonald

Committee: Scott Nesbit

Shelley Takei

Scott Nelson

Electronic Version Approved:

Ron Walcott

Interim Dean of the Graduate School

The University of Georgia

May 2020

© 2020

Maxwell Nosbisch

All Rights Reserved

DEDICATION

To the memory of Alpha Mae Husted whose research made this thesis possible.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis would not have been possible without the assistance of a number of people. Thank you to Eric MacDonald for patiently reading endless copies of this thesis and sorting through all the typos while providing helpful feedback. You have been the best major professor I could have asked for. I am greatly indebted to Emmie Chetkin for providing the resources and connections that made this thesis possible, trusting in this thesis, extending your hospitality to me, and becoming a helpful friend. I owe this thesis to you. Your kindness is unmatched. Thank you to Ron Nagy for taking the time to talk with me over the phone, answer all my emails, meet me in person, and for giving me a special tour of the Lily Dale Museum. Your level of passion for Lily Dale history is unmatched. I had many great conversations with people such as Bobbie Caswell, Christine Wicker, and Connie Dutcher. Thank you for taking the time to talk to me and letting me pick your brains. The first time I visited Lily Dale I was graciously welcomed by Brecht and Sara Saelens. Thank you for befriending me and always taking the time to chat with me when I visit Lily Dale. Thank you especially to Brecht for prying my car door open when I locked my keys inside my car. A huge thank you to Shelley Takei for the wonderful and interesting conversations along with all the insights you have provided. Lastly, thank you Rose for helping me figure out how to create these page numbers!

LIST OF TABLES

	Page
Table One: Historical Versus Contemporary Religious Practices Found in Lily Dale.....	299

LIST OF FIGURES

	Page
Figure 4.1: Lily Dale Development Map.....	81
Figure 4.2: The Bough House	83
Figure 4.3: Lily Dale band.....	86
Figure 4.4: Tents and cottages	88
Figure 4.5: The auditorium circa 1890s.....	90
Figure 4.6: Lily Dale plat map.....	91
Figure 4.7: The Ferris wheel.....	92
Figure 4.8: Lily Dale suffragettes.....	93
Figure 4.9: Interior of the auditorium.....	95
Figure 4.10: The new depot.....	96
Figure 4.11: Sunflower Pagoda.....	98
Figure 4.12: Group photo in Lily Dale.....	99
Figure 4.13: Marion Skidmore and friends.....	101

Figure 4.14: Auditorium with flags.....	103
Figure 4.15: Campbell Brothers cottage.....	104
Figure 4.16: Residents outside a cottage around 1900.....	106
Figure 4.17: 1901 Fire Damage.....	108
Figure 4.18: Original Lily Dale firehouse.....	109
Figure 4.19: 5 Cleveland Avenue.....	110
Figure 4.20: Getting ready for a boat ride.....	112
Figure 4.21: Early photograph of the Octagon Building.....	113
Figure 4.22: A Lily Dale inn.....	115
Figure 4.23: Lily Dale developmental map, circa 1885.....	115
Figure 4.24: Lily Dale developmental map, circa 1903.....	116
Figure 4.25: Crowd outside the newly renamed Maplewood Hotel.....	118
Figure 4.26: Swimmers pose in Upper Cassadaga Lake.....	119
Figure 4.27: Abby Pettingill and friends.....	121
Figure 4.28: Celebrating Children’s Day.....	123
Figure 4.29: The Fox Sister Cottage in Lily Dale.....	124
Figure 4.30: View of Newton Memorial Hospital.....	126
Figure 4.31: Woman’s Day on Cleveland Avenue.....	128

Figure 4.32: Andrew Jackson Davis Memorial Lyceum.....	130
Figure 4.33: People in Native American regalia outside the Auditorium.....	132
Figure 4.34: People in Native American regalia on Cassadaga Lake.....	133
Figure 4.35: Princess Neioma.....	134
Figure 4.36: Bowling/Billiards/Beach House.....	136
Figure 4.37: Jack Kelly, Louis Vosburgh, and Mae West.....	141
Figure 4.38: Lily Dale developmental map, circa 1945.....	143
Figure 4.39: Lily Dale developmental map, circa 2020.....	146
Figure 5.1: Chautauqua County.....	149
Figure 5.2: Chautauqua County Map.....	150
Figure 5.3: Lily Dale Topographic Map.....	151
Figure 5.4: Upper Cassadaga Lake.....	152
Figure 5.5: Topographic Map of Lily Dale.....	154
Figure 5.6: Topographic Map.....	157
Figure 5.7: Topographic Map.....	160
Figure 5.8: Parks of Lily Dale.....	163
Figures 5.9: The Leolyn Woods.....	164
Figure 5.10: Trail in the Leolyn Woods.....	165

Figure 5.11: Inspiration Stump.....	166
Figure 5.12: View from Inspiration Stump.....	166
Figure 5.13: The Pet Cemetery.....	167
Figure 5.14: Sign for the Healing Tree.....	168
Figure 5.15: Friendship Park.....	169
Figure 5.16: Fountain Circle Park.....	169
Figure 5.17: Lincoln Park.....	170
Figure 5.18: Lincoln Park.....	171
Figure 5.19: Melrose Park.....	172
Figure 5.20: Natalie’s Garden.....	173
Figure 5.21: Butterfly Habitat.....	174
Figure 5.22: Caldwell Park.....	175
Figure 5.23: Humphrey Park.....	176
Figure 5.24: Fox Sister Memorial Garden.....	177
Figure 5.25: Children’s Park.....	178
Figure 5.26: Streets and parking of Lily Dale.....	180
Figure 5.27: 2nd Street looking east.....	181
Figure 5.28: Fairy house on fairy trail.....	182

Figure 5.29: Boulevard Nature Trail.....	183
Figure 5.30: Circulation Map.....	184
Figure 5.31: Location of Historic railroad.....	185
Figure 5.32: Location of Historic railroad depot.....	185
Figure 5.33: Private v. Public buildings.....	186
Figure 5.34: Aerial picture of Lily Dale.....	187
Figure 5.35: Structural Map of Lily Dale.....	192
Figure 5.36: Gable-Front Cottage.....	193
Figure 5.37: Gable-Front.....	194
Figure 5.38: Gable-Front.....	195
Figure 5.39: Upright-and-Wing.....	196
Figure 5.40: Upright-and-Wing.....	197
Figures 5.41: Upright-and-Wing.....	198
Figure 5.42: Upright-and-Wing.....	199
Figure 5.43: Neoclassical.....	200
Figure 5.44: Queen Anne.....	201
Figure 5.45: Three Sisters appearance before renovation.....	203
Figure 5.46: Post office.....	203

Figure 5.47: Church of the Living Spirit.....	204
Figure 5.48: Lily Dale Volunteer Fire Department Depot.....	205
Figure 5.49: Maplewood Hotel.....	206
Figure 5.50: Lobby of Maplewood.....	207
Figure 5.51: The Auditorium.....	208
Figure 5.52: Double-Pile House.....	209
Figure 5.53: Lily Dale Residence.....	210
Figure 5.54: Vernacular Victorian.....	211
Figure 5.55: Bungalow.....	212
Figure 5.56: The Bough House Restaurant.....	213
Figure 5.57: Second Empire.....	214
Figure 5.58: Lily Dale Spiritualist Church.....	215
Figure 5.59: Victorian Gothic.....	216
Figure 5.60: Victorian Gothic.....	217
Figure 5.61: Modern.....	218
Figure 5.62: Gingerbread Victorian.....	219
Figure 5.63: Commercial.....	220
Figure 5.64: The Pagoda.....	221

Figure 5.65: Octagon Building.....	222
Figure 5.66: Medium signs.....	224
Figure 5.67: Sunflower bench.....	225
Figure 5.68: The Forest Temple.....	226
Figure 5.69: Historical interpretative signage.....	227
Figure 5.70: Ecological signage.....	228
Figure 5.71: Trellises.....	229
Figure 5.72: Statuary.....	230
Figure 5.73: Parking sign.....	231
Figure 5.74: Gazebo.....	232
Figure 5.75: The Iconic Lily Dale Sign.....	233
Figure 5.76: Lily Dale Bench.....	234
Figure 5.77: Flowers of Lily Dale.....	237
Figure 6.1: Historic cottage view versus modern.....	266
Figure 6.2: Historic Pagoda view versus modern.....	267
Figure 6.3: Historic image of the Maplewood Hotel versus modern.....	267
Figure 6.4: Historic image of Andrew Jackson Davis building versus modern.....	268
Figure 6.5: Historic image of Lily Dale post office versus modern.....	268

Figure 6.6: Evolution of Lily Dale gate.....	271
Figure 6.7: Historic view of Lily Dale dock versus modern.....	272
Figure 6.8: Historic view of Forest Temple versus modern.....	272
Figure 6.9: Historic view of Inspiration Stump versus modern.....	272
Figure 6.10: Historical view of Upper Cassadaga Lake versus the view today.....	274
Figure 6.11: Historical view of Upper Cassadaga Lake versus the view today.....	274
Figure 6.12: Historical view of Upper Cassadaga Lake versus the view today.....	294
Figure 6.13: Historical view of Upper Cassadaga Lake versus the view today.....	275
Figure 6.14: Historical view of the Leolyn Woods versus the view today.....	276
Figures 6.15: Historical view of what is now Glasgow Drive versus the modern view.....	276
Figure 6.16: Historical view of Inspiration Stump versus the view today.....	278

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements.....	v
1. Chapter One:	
Introduction.....	19
• Research Question.....	19
• Background, Relevance, and Goals.....	20
• Precedents.....	23
• Methodology, Methods, and Scope.....	24
• Determining Integrity and Significance.....	33
• Scope.....	34
• Synopsis of Chapters.....	35
• Conclusion.....	36
2. Chapter Two: Literature Review	
• Introduction.....	36
• Literature Review.....	37
• Similar Studies.....	53
• History of Scholarship.....	55
• Conclusion.....	60
3. Chapter Three: Spiritualism and its History	
• Introduction.....	62

• Spiritualist Belief and Practice.....	62
• History of the Camp Meeting.....	72
• History of Spiritualism.....	76
• Conclusion.....	105
4. Chapter Four: The History of Lily Dale	
• Introduction.....	105
• Lily Dale History: Pre-Development Period (1800-1879)	106
• Lily Dale History: Cassadaga Free Lake Association Period (1879-1903)....	113
• Lily Dale History: City of Light Period (1903-1906).....	145
• Lily Dale History: Lily Dale Historical Period (1906-1970).....	150
• Lily Dale History: Modern Lily Dale Period (1970-2020).....	169
• Conclusion.....	173
5. Chapter Five: Existing Conditions	
• Introduction.....	174
• Natural Systems and Features.....	175
• Topography.....	180
• Spatial Organization.....	181
• Circulation.....	200
• Cluster Arrangement.....	206
• Buildings and Structures.....	208
• Small-Scale Features.....	243
• Vegetation.....	254
• Land Use.....	257

•	Intangible Cultural Heritage and Traditions.....	259
•	Conclusion.....	266
6.	Chapter Six: Analysis and Evaluation	
•	Introduction.....	267
•	Analysis of Significance.....	267
•	Analysis of Integrity.....	279
•	Summary of Integrity Evaluation.....	301
•	Conclusion.....	303
7.	Chapter Seven: Conclusion	
•	Introduction.....	303
•	Question.....	303
•	Chapter Two.....	303
•	Chapter Three.....	304
•	Chapter Four.....	304
•	Chapter Five.....	305
•	Chapter Six.....	307
•	Preservation Practices in Lily Dale Today.....	308
•	Concluding Thoughts.....	309
•	Further Study.....	310

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Research Question

This thesis is an analysis of the cultural landscape of Lily Dale, New York, the largest and oldest continuously operating Spiritualist camp in America. Throughout the course of this thesis, Lily Dale's history and cultural landscape will be studied to see how they work together to convey the significance and integrity of the site. This will be done in the format of the first part of a cultural landscape report. Lily Dale is an important cultural resource because of its historical significance, its place in New York state history, the uniqueness of its landscape, and the fact that it attracts thousands of visitors every year. By using the cultural landscape report format, this thesis will answer the question of what is the history, physical conditions, significance, and integrity of Lily Dale?

A number of ancillary questions are aroused in lieu of the larger thesis question. What are the design influences of Lily Dale? What kind of architecture can be found in Lily Dale? What historical themes can be seen in the camp? What is the community's relationship to the natural world and environment? What does the physical design practices in the community tell us about the religion of Spiritualism? Why does the camp matter? These questions, hopefully, will raise larger more provocative questions such as how should knowledge of the cultural landscape's significance be reflected in preservation policies within the camp? How can Lily Dale use the knowledge of its own significance to help guide its path going forward?

Background, Relevance, and Goals

Throughout the course of American landscape and architectural studies, the religious camp has often been a subject of intense interest to scholars. Religious camps are the products of ideology and belief built into the physical landscape. Their construction, design, layout, and histories reflect aspects of the American religious experience and the beliefs of those that inhabited them. Many other narratives can be found in these camps as well for they are also reflections of contemporary societal norms, technologies, and sensibilities.

Certain camps, belonging to specific denominations have largely been ignored by academia, however. This is because it wasn't until the 1980s that, what had once been considered "the occult," now more commonly referred to as New Religious Movements, became acknowledged from a social, cultural, and historical standpoint. Spiritualism, a religion now described as one of these New Religious Movements, had not been studied thoroughly or holistically until the latter half of the twentieth-century when authors such as Geoffrey K. Nelson and Ann D. Braude began publishing scholarly works on the history of the religion. Their works inspired a slew of other authors, researchers, and academics to convey the sociological and anthropological ramifications Spiritualism has had on society. New Religious Movements such as Spiritualism often exist outside the power structures of their respective societies. Spiritualists in particular have long challenged traditional social mores and as a result have been largely excluded from the structural and social power other religions may have found ways to achieve in America. Without this power, Spiritualism has been, and in some circles continues to be, viewed as a mere curiosity rather than a legitimate religion.

Spiritualism is a religion based on the belief that the human spirit survives death and can communicate with the living. Spiritualism is an unorganized religion meaning there is no

hierarchy, structure, or tenets, although there are some organized groups such as the National Association of Spiritualist Churches (NSAC). Spiritualists have a myriad of beliefs and ideologies; the only common tenet they share is the belief in spirit communication.¹

As our culture at large has begun to acknowledge underrepresented perspectives, especially those that often subvert traditional narratives and power structures, the importance of the Spiritualists and their beliefs, now, and throughout American history, becomes even more undeniable. Places like Lily Dale have become more crucial to an understanding of ourselves as a society. It is important to recognize the physical and cultural contributions of the Spiritualists to our shared cultural fabric because the experience of the Spiritualists, and how they shaped their built environment, is that of everyday people, past and present. The values and ideas represented in the physical landscape of a place like Lily Dale tell a story of a certain group in American history and how they continue to impact the lives of people today by attracting visitors every year. To ignore the importance of Lily Dale as a cultural resource is to ignore and invalidate the experiences of everyday people.

Including Lily Dale, only a few Spiritualist camps still operate in America today. The two most studied from a historic preservation and cultural landscape perspective are Camp Chesterfield in Indiana and Camp Cassadaga in Florida. The work of Professor Todd Leonard, from the 1990s-2010s, recorded the historical landscape of Camp Chesterfield leading to its designation as a National Historic District. In 1997, a group of academics published *Cassadaga: The South's Oldest Spiritualist Camp*, a comprehensive history and analysis of Camp Cassadaga, now also a National Historic District.

¹ "Beliefs," BBC, 09/09/09, accessed: 3/4/20, https://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/spiritualism/beliefs/beliefs_1.shtml.

A miniscule number of researchers have studied the history of Lily Dale. The most prominent are former camp historian, Joyce LaJudice, and the current camp historian, Ron Nagy. Both have published books and pamphlets about the history of Lily Dale. Nobody has written anything about the contemporary cultural landscape of Lily Dale. There has been some work done to document the social, structural, and biographical history of Lily Dale. Most of this work has been conducted by Nagy who has published multiple books on Spiritualist topics and Lily Dale. Most of his Lily Dale histories focus on the history of the camp up until the 1910s. He also has published works on spirit art and slate-writing. A Spiritualist himself, Nagy provides an insider's view on the history of Lily Dale.

This thesis will serve to compliment previous studies of the camp. The history of Lily Dale, the existing conditions in the camp, the elements of the cultural landscape, the integrity of those elements, and their significance will be studied throughout this thesis. All of this will be studied using the guidelines dictated by the National Park Service for cultural landscapes. The end goal of this thesis is to provide the Lily Dale Assembly with an analysis of their own significance and importance for them to use moving forward into their future.

Precedents

A few Spiritualist religious camps and communities, similar to Lily Dale, are still operating in the United States. Two of these have already been added to the National Register of Historic Places. The fact that these religious camps have been acknowledged as historically and culturally significant lends credence to the argument that Lily Dale is also an important cultural and historical resource.

Camp Chesterfield in Indiana and Camp Cassadaga in Florida are both Spiritualist camps listed in the National Register of Historic Places. Lily Dale is not listed even though it is larger in both population and acreage than both Chesterfield and Cassadaga. Cassadaga was listed as a district with sixty-five contributing building and two objects. Its architectural classifications are “Wood Frame Vernacular and Mediterranean Revival.” Cassadaga was listed as “locally significant” under national register criterion A, association with an important historical event. Cassadaga’s areas of significance are listed as “exploration/settlement” and “religion.” Cassadaga was added in 1991.

Chesterfield was listed as a district with forty contributing buildings, nine structures, and two objects. Its architectural classification is “nineteenth & twentieth-century American Modern and Art Deco” and holds a “statewide level” of significance. Chesterfield is significant under the areas of “religion” and “community planning.” It also lists special criteria consideration A. Criteria consideration A is, “owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.” Chesterfield, like Cassadaga is also listed under National Register criterion A. Chesterfield was added to the National Register in 2002.² These camps demonstrate how religious camps can be added to the National Register and why. They set a precedent that camps of this type, including Lily Dale, are cultural landscapes worthy of study and are important.

² W. Carl Shiver, “Southern Cassadaga Spiritualist Camp Historic District,” National Register of Historic Places Inventory/Nomination Form, Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Florida Bureau of Historic Preservation, 1/16/91. Kato Smith and Carol Ann Schweikert, “Chesterfield Spiritualist Camp District,” National Register of Historic Places Inventory/Nomination Form, Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Kato Design Studio, 10/15/00.

Methodology, Methods, and Scope

This thesis is a case study. The Collins English Dictionary defines a case study as “the act or an instance of analyzing one or more particular cases or case histories with a view to making generalizations.” Lily Dale is representative of other Spiritualist camps in the United States and it also makes a good case study because it is not on the National Register of Historic Places but appears to be eligible due to its importance, distinctiveness, and history. In order to analyze the cultural landscape of Lily Dale, a model was needed to categorize and structure the documentation process.

Cultural Landscape Reports

The model and format of this thesis will follow the format of the National Park Service’s Cultural Landscape Reports. The NPS defines a cultural landscape report (CLR) as: “The primary report that documents the history, significance and treatment of a cultural landscape. A CLR evaluates the history and integrity of the landscape including any changes to its geographical context, features, materials, and use.”³ A CLR was chosen as the format because it is the only document that can adequately summarize a landscape as large and varied as Lily Dale. Unlike National Register nominations, cultural landscape reports include topics such as circulation, vegetation, topography, and other features that provide a more holistic understanding of the site.

³ Charles Birnbaum, *Preservation Brief 36: Protecting Cultural Landscapes: Planning, Treatment and Management of Historic Landscapes*, National Park Service, accessed: 3/4/20, <https://www.nps.gov/tps/how-to-preserve/briefs/36-cultural-landscapes.htm>.

This thesis will be only the first part of a Cultural Landscape Report which are usually comprised of three parts. Part one is the site history, existing conditions, and analysis of the site including significance and integrity. Part two are treatment recommendations and part three is the record of treatment. This thesis will focus on and follow the template of part one. Due to the extensive nature of CLRs, parts two and three will be excluded from this thesis. This thesis will conclude with an analysis of the significance and integrity of the character defining intangible and tangible cultural heritage of Lily Dale.

Furthermore, the CLR template answers the thesis question in two ways. These ways can be found in *The Guide to Cultural Landscape Reports*. First, CLRs “must establish preservation goals for a cultural landscape. The goals must be grounded in research, inventory, documentation, and analysis and evaluation of a landscape’s characteristics and associated features.”⁴ The goal of this thesis is to identify what Lily Dale’s character defining features are and their significance based on research and documentation. The guide then says, “a CLR may include information spanning numerous disciplines in order to evaluate a landscape’s historical, architectural, archeological, ethnographic, horticultural, landscape architectural, and engineering features, along with ecological processes and natural systems.”⁵ The variety and of topics covered by the CLR template allows for a deeper look into the site itself.

Literature provided by the National Park Service was utilized for the purposes of this thesis. *The Guide to Cultural Landscape Reports* provided a guide for the organization of this thesis and the research it required. Preservation briefs such as *Preservation Brief 36* also

⁴ Robert Page, Cathy Gilbert, and Susan Dolan, *A Guide to Cultural Landscape Reports: Contents, Process, and Techniques* (U.S. Department of the Interior: Washington D.C., 1998).

⁵ Page, Gilbert, Dolan, *Cultural Landscape Reports*.

provided structure and guidance for this thesis. The National Park Service's guidelines for researching cultural landscapes were utilized as a template for a systematic research methodology. The National Park Service defines the importance of research as: "Provide(ing) information for management decisions and compliance with preservation law and maintenance, assist(s) in determining appropriate treatment, and support(s) interpretive programs."⁶

Research Methods

The research methods utilized for this thesis derive from the three main objectives of the first part of a cultural landscape report. These objectives are a documentation of the site's history, a documentation of existing conditions, and an analysis and evaluation with the goal of determining significance and integrity. All the research methods employed were for the completion of these three objectives which comprise the bulk of the second half of this thesis.

Research Methods: History

Unraveling the history of Lily Dale required a variety of research tactics. The first was compiling and studying any secondary source written about Lily Dale. A summary of these books can be found in chapter two. These texts, dating between the 1880s-2010s in terms of when they were written, form the backbone of the historical narrative for the first fifty years of Lily Dale's history. Unfortunately, most textual histories of Lily Dale end their narrative around 1910. In order to fill in this gap, primary sources were consulted. Most of these sources came from private collections and papers. The most important collection belonged to a woman named Alpha Husted, a former Lily Dale resident with an interest in the camp's history. Before she

⁶ Birnbaum, *Preservation Brief* 36.

passed away, she had compiled a large number of historical documents relating to Lily Dale. Her collection was given to the author to peruse and it ended up providing most of the history from 1910 onwards. The process of sifting through Husted's documents required many hours and much patience. These documents included letters, brochures, promotional materials, board minutes, photographs, and more.

The Marion Skidmore Library, located in Lily Dale, is the largest collection of Spiritualist texts in the world and also provided many secondary sources on the history of Spiritualism. It includes books about mediums, Spiritualist belief, the history of Spiritualism, and more. Mandi Shepp was the head librarian during many of the site visits. Two visits were made to the Marion Skidmore Library, and Shepp was there both times. Shepp, unlike most Lily Dale workers and residents, is not a Spiritualist. Her perspective was crucial and illuminating because it provided a more nuanced view of the community. Shepp offered many sources, books, and pamphlets about Lily Dale. Unfortunately, the library does not have a large volume of texts on the history of Lily Dale itself.

The official camp historian, Ron Nagy, was also a source of historical information. Nagy was met in person during a site visit and was also consulted numerous times throughout the course of this thesis via email and phone. Nagy was able to provide more information in person that he wasn't able to put in many of his well-researched books on Lily Dale's history. The Lily Dale Museum itself, which Nagy is the proprietor of, also provided much information. This information came in the form of exhibits within the museum, facsimiles of documents on display, and on Ron Nagy's museum blog which is available online.

Historical and contemporary maps were utilized for the creation of this thesis. Many of the historical maps were provided by Ron Nagy. Contemporary maps were easy to find due to their extensive use in Lily Dale's brochures, magazines, and other media. Other maps were obtained from the Chautauqua County website and Google Earth. The Chautauqua County government maintains an online county GIS map. This map has multiple features. One that was useful was the parcel layout that divides the whole county into parcels of land. By clicking each parcel, a table appears that states who the owner is, the address of the building, and when it might have been constructed. This information was crucial for identifying structures and buildings that contributed to the historic cultural landscape.

The photographs used to document the history of the camp came from a variety of sources. Some were from the Alpha Husted collection while many were from individuals who happened to have a couple of historical photographs that they were willing to contribute. The number of historical photographs of Lily Dale available online is quite substantial and many were found just from browsing the internet. Lastly, many photographs came from the Lily Dale Museum. These photographs, most of which didn't make it into this thesis, provide a deeply fascinating visual record of Lily Dale's past.

Research Methods: Existing Conditions

In order to adequately document the existing conditions of Lily Dale, guidelines were needed. These guidelines came in the form of the seven aspects of integrity as dictated by the National Park Service. The seven aspects of integrity are location, setting, materials, design, workmanship, feeling, and association. Location is the "the particular point or position where the historic feature was located during the period of significance." Setting is "the character of the

place where the historic resource is located.” Materials are “the physical elements that are combined, deposited, grown, placed, built, assembled, formed, or were already there during the period of significance.” Design is “the combination of elements that creates the form, plan, space, structure, and style” of a feature. Workmanship is “the physical evidence of the crafts of a particular culture or people during any given period.” Feeling is “an element’s expression of the aesthetic, historic, or cultural sense of a particular period of time.” Association is “the direct link between an important historic event or person and the element.” The seven aspects of integrity were chosen because they provided a framework through which to analyze landscape features efficiently.⁷

The existing conditions recorded and studied for this thesis were the setting, topography, natural systems and features, spatial organization, circulation, cluster arrangement, buildings, structures, land use, and intangible cultural heritage. These topics were selected because they are all elements that make up the cultural landscape. Taken together, they provide a complete view of Lily Dale. Chapter five will explore their existing conditions and chapter six will analyze their integrity and significance using the seven aspects of integrity. To document the integrity and determine significance, site visits were needed.

Five site-visits were made to Lily Dale in order to document it. The goal of documentation, according to the National Park Service, is “to determine significance and integrity.”⁸ Significance is “the importance of a structure, object, district, or landscape.”

⁷ Patricia Duncan, “National Register 101: Seven Aspects of Integrity,” Louisiana State Historic Preservation Office, 03/11, accessed: 3/4/20, https://www.crt.state.la.us/Assets/OCD/hp/nationalregister/nationalregistry101/101_-_Seven_Aspects_of_Integrity.pdf.

⁸ “How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation,” Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1990, accessed: 3/4/20, https://www.nps.gov/subjects/nationalregister/upload/NRB-15_web508.pdf.

Integrity, as defined by the National Park Service is “the degree to which the landscape characteristics that define its historical significance are still present.”⁹ During these site visits, the most effective means of documentation was through photography, which captured the current condition, appearance, and views of different character defining features. Photographs were taken of any physical element that fit one of the seven the aspects of integrity decided upon. Photographing the historic structures, buildings, small-scale features, viewsheds, landscapes, and greenspaces was the priority. Businesses were also documented since, although maybe not historic, there are only a few (mediums withstanding) of them and they play an important role within the camp, especially for visitors. Most of the photographs used in this thesis were taken in the spring and summer of 2019.

The feeling of the camp and the activity within it largely depended on the season it was visited. Lily Dale’s “season” is during the summertime when there is the most activity. This is when the camp comes to life with visitors, guests, businesses, and events. During the summertime is also when cars have to stop at the gate and pay a fee in order to enter. The off-season at Lily Dale is much quieter, there is no gate fee, and many businesses close. The character of the camp between these two seasons is much different. Most of the site visits were made during the off-season but one was made during the season.

The first site visit was conducted during the off-season in the spring of 2019. The goal was to gain a basic familiarization with the community. The trails and streets were walked, mediums were visited, people were met, and the guest houses were utilized for lodging. The second site visit was also during the off-season in the spring of 2019. The purpose of this site

⁹ National Park Service, “How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation.”

visit was to gain a deeper understanding of the community. Services at the Church of the Living Spirit were attended, the Marion Skidmore Library was visited, the trails were hiked at night for a different perspective, and a canoe was taken out on Cassadaga Lake to get a different view of the camp. The third site-visit was the most comprehensive and was also done during the spring of 2019. The third site-visit involved photographing the physical structures and landscape, attending off-season events, revisiting the Marion Skidmore Library, going to the Lily Dale Museum, meeting residents, conducting interviews, and visiting the National Spiritualist Association of Churches office. The fourth site-visit was conducted during the summer of 2019 season. An outdoor service was attended at the Healing Temple, a service was attended in the auditorium, a service was attended at the NSAC church, private collections were looked through/organized, and the restaurants at Lily Dale were visited. Before, during, and after the documentation process, research was being conducted.

One of the most difficult parts of documenting Lily Dale was its vastness in scope and number of landscape elements. This was particularly problematic when recording the buildings and structures of the camp. There are nearly three hundred buildings in the camp and countless small-scale features. A survey of every building in the camp would far exceed the scope, timetable, and scale of this thesis. Instead, every architectural style and building type found in the camp was listed. Then examples of each of these was documented. Therefore, an accurate but not comprehensive sample of the variety of building types is recorded in this thesis.

Interviews with Lily Dale residents provided much insight into the existing conditions of the camp. The main interviewee for this thesis was the former assistant director of Lily Dale: Bobbie Caswell. The interview was conducted in the spring of 2019. Caswell played a key

leadership role within Lily Dale and offered insight on its preservation practices, its policies, and her thoughts on the future of the community. The interview was conducted in person at the Lily Dale main office. The interview with Caswell lasted about thirty-five minutes. The goal of this interview was to gain perspective on how Lily Dale is viewed from someone who holds a prominent role within its organization. Ron Nagy, historian and the director of the Lily Dale museum, was also interviewed. Nagy is an expert on Lily Dale history and he also resides in the camp. Many of the early interviews with Nagy were conducted over the phone during the winter of 2019. A face to face meeting was conducted in the spring of 2019. An interview with Connie Dutcher was conducted over the phone in January of 2020. Dutcher is an expert on the vegetation of Lily Dale. Lastly, an interview with author Christine Wicker, who wrote a book on the camp, was conducted over the phone in January of 2020.

Informal discussions were also held, in varying degrees, with other Lily Dale residents as well. Brecht Salaens, Sara Salaens, Teresa Schaeffer, and Mandi Shepp were all residents or workers of Lily Dale who were talked to but not formally interviewed. These conversations provided multiple perspectives and viewpoints of Lily Dale. The Salaens's are a married couple who own and operate Lucy's Coffee Shop within Lily Dale. Sara practices acupuncture and Brecht is a certified Lily Dale medium. Teresa Schaeffer runs the Jewel of the Lake Guest House, and also conducts reiki healings. None of these were formal interviews. These conversations were simple conversations about a variety of topics relating to Lily Dale. The main benefit of these discussions was to gain a sense of life within the camp from those who reside and work there.

Determining Integrity and Significance

One of the goals of this thesis is to identify the significance and integrity of Lily Dale's landscape elements. The seven aspects of integrity were used to determine the integrity of each landscape feature. Once the history was recorded and the existing conditions documented, a determination of integrity could be completed. The seven aspects of integrity were applied to the natural systems and features, topography, spatial organization, circulation, cluster arrangement buildings and structures, small-scale features, views and vistas, vegetation, land use, and intangible cultural heritage, and traditions in order to determine their integrity. Once the seven aspects were analyzed, each element was given a score of "high," "medium," or "low" in terms of its integrity. This review forms the core of chapter six.

Significance was analyzed using the National Park Service's criteria for the evaluation of significance. There are four categories of significance: association with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history; association with the lives of persons significant in our past; embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction; and has yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.¹⁰ Historical themes, also utilized in the National Register were used in order to provide a fuller account of the historical patterns reflected in Lily Dale. There are also special criteria considerations. These special criteria were taken into account when determining significance. The special criteria considerations are described as the following:

"a religious property deriving primary significance from architectural or artistic distinction or historical importance; a building or structure removed from its original location but which is significant primarily for architectural value, or which is the surviving structure most importantly associated with a historic person or event; a birthplace or grave of a historical figure

¹⁰ National Park Service, "How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation."

of outstanding importance if there is no appropriate site or building directly associated with his or her productive life; a cemetery which derives its primary significance from graves of persons of transcendent importance, from age, from distinctive design features, or from association with historic events; a reconstructed building when accurately executed in a suitable environment and presented in a dignified manner as part of a restoration master plan, and when no other building or structure with the same association has survived; a property primarily commemorative in intent if design, age, tradition, or symbolic value has invested it with its own exceptional significance; or a property achieving significance within the past 50 years if it is of exceptional importance.”¹¹

Scope

The scope of this thesis is largely focused on the property limits of the Lily Dale Assembly. There are a few exceptions, however. Viewsheds, being an important part of the Lily Dale cultural landscape, were also considered and documented. Much of the property encompassed in these viewsheds is offsite and not owned by the Lily Dale Assembly. Other elements that were once important to the cultural landscape of Lily Dale but are not owned by the Assembly today, such as where the old train depots were, were also documented. All of the documenting, research, and analyzing was done with the goal of completing the first part of a cultural landscape report.

Synopsis of Chapters

This thesis is divided up by chapter. Chapter two will be a literature review. The first part of the literature review will look at Spiritualist histories from 1870- 1960. The second part will look at Spiritualist histories from 1961-2020. That will be followed by an analysis of studies similar to this one and then a review of what has already been written about Lily Dale. Chapter three will be divided into three parts. The first is an overview of the religion of Spiritualism. The second is a history of the camp meeting. The third is the history of Spiritualism. Chapter four will be a

¹¹ National Park Service, “How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation.”

history of Lily Dale. Chapter five will document the camp's existing conditions. These existing conditions will include setting, topography, water features, spatial organization, circulation, cluster arrangement, buildings, structures, small-scale features, vegetation, land use, intangible cultural heritage, and traditions. Chapter six will be an analysis of integrity and significance. It will include special criteria considerations, period of significance, levels of significance and arguments for significance. The integrity of the natural systems and features, topography, spatial organization, circulation, cluster arrangement, buildings, structures, small-scale features, vegetation, land use, intangible cultural heritage, and traditions will be analyzed. Chapter seven will be conclusionary content.

Conclusion

In summary, this thesis will be the first part of a cultural landscape report about the Spiritualist community of Lily Dale, New York. It will also include a literature review and a history of Spiritualism to provide context on Lily Dale itself within the framework of larger history. The formal acknowledgement of other religious camps by the National Register provides evidence for the claim that Lily Dale should be studied as an important cultural landscape. This thesis will be that study.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Multiple historical themes, relevant to the significance of Lily Dale, become evident when analyzing secondary sources on the history of Spiritualism. These historical themes exist in Lily Dale and reflect the larger character of the Spiritualist movement thus increasing Lily Dale's significance as a cultural landscape. Secondary sources on the history of Spiritualism often debate and convey the religion's historical importance as an empowering movement for women, as a vessel for Freethought, and as a force for social reform.

Literature Review

Spiritualism and Women's Rights

Almost every secondary source on the religion of Spiritualism discusses its importance to the suffrage movement. One of the first major texts that significantly analyzed Spiritualism's significance to the women's rights movement is Ann Braude's *Radical Spirits* which makes the argument that Spiritualism provided a political, religious, and social outlet for women in a time period in which their rights were largely denied. Countering that narrative is Robert Cox's *Body and Soul: A Sympathetic History of American Spiritualism*. This text argued that Braude's characterization of Spiritualism as a vessel for women's rights is unfounded and that the Spiritualist movement had plenty of conservative elements within it. The most recent contribution to the debate over the nature of Spiritualism's relationship with the women's rights

movement is Molly McGarry's *Ghosts of Future's Past*. McGarry argued that many people were critical of the Spiritualist movement not on religious grounds, but because it challenged traditional gender norms. These three texts represent the major pieces on Spiritualism's relationship to the women's movement, a movement which would be welcomed in Lily Dale.

Spiritualism and Freethought

Another larger historical theme relating to Spiritualism reflected in Lily Dale is the philosophy of Freethought. Lily Dale was founded by Freethinkers with the purpose of providing a safe space for ideas and opinions. Chapter ten of *Skepticism and American Faith* by Christopher Grasso explores how Spiritualism attracted Freethinkers who believed in an afterlife but rejected the dogma of mainstream Christianity or found it too accommodating to practices such as slavery. *Spiritualism in Antebellum America* by Brett Carroll has a chapter devoted to Spiritualism's relationship with Freethought and other notions of "spiritual independence." *Ghost Hunters* by Deborah Blum also devotes portions to Freethought and relating it to scientific investigations of Spiritualism.

Spiritualism and Social Reform

Spiritualism has had ties to numerous social reform movements. Lily Dale was a hotbed for many of these movements. The relationship between Spiritualism and social reform is explored in almost every major secondary source on Spiritualism's history. Geoffrey Nelson's, *Spiritualism and Society* covers this topic extensively. Ann Braude's *Radical Spirits* is entirely about Spiritualism and women's rights. Brett Carroll's *Spiritualism in Antebellum America* has chapters devoted to social reform and Spiritualism as well. The two most holistic books that explore this relationship are Molly McGarry's *Ghosts of Futures Past* and Robert Cox's *Body*

and Soul. These books cover Spiritualism's relationship with abolitionism, women's rights, the LGBTQ community, Native American rights, temperance, and more. One of the more recent texts on this subject is Mark Lause's *Free Spirits: Spiritualism, Republicanism, and Radicalism in the Civil War Era*. This text makes the tenuous argument that Spiritualism formed the moral basis for the founding of the Republican party. Reform movements will regularly intersect with the history of Lily Dale and contribute to the camp's significance.

Conclusion

These historical themes contribute to Lily Dale's significance. Spiritualism is a religion that has many connections to other reform movements. The history and cultural landscape of Lily Dale reflects this. These texts help contextualize and understand the importance of Lily Dale in a broader historical and social context. Without an understanding of the broader historical themes present, there can be no understanding of Lily Dale. The most helpful secondary sources for the purposes of this thesis are Ann Braude's *Radical Spirits*, Molly McGarry's *Ghosts of Futures Past*, and Christopher Grasso's *Skepticism and American Faith*. These texts provide the most comprehensive and useful histories of Spiritualist history.

Similar Studies

Scholarly analyses of Spiritualist camps as a general topic are few and far between but some do exist. These studies, books, and articles provide an idea of what has been written about other Spiritualist camps, as opposed to simply just religious camps. They also provide important reference on where the body of literature is currently at concerning Spiritualist camps specifically. These texts provide welcome context to Lily Dale.

One of the best studies of Spiritualist camps is William D. Moore's chapter, entitled "To Hold Communion with Nature and the Spirit World," in the 1997 volume of *Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture* Vol. 7. The chapter analyzes the Spiritualist relationship with nature and how that affected the planning of their religious camps. It focuses on camps in New England therefore Lily Dale is left out. The ideas relate to Lily Dale, nonetheless. This is because although Lily Dale is in the Mid-Atlantic region, it was still a Spiritualist camp and has much in common with its New England sister camps. Moore argued that Spiritualists sought out bucolic areas, close enough to cities to enable easy access, as places to build their camps. Natural areas, considered divine and places of healing to Spiritualists, were preserved within the camps themselves so adherents could "commune" there. All of this applies to Lily Dale since it is in between Buffalo, New York and Erie, Pennsylvania, was connected to railroads, and has a plethora of naturally preserved areas for residents and visitors to enjoy. Moore's chapter is one of the few publications that looks at Spiritualist camps from an architectural, planning, and cultural resource perspective.

That same year, in 1997, a book entitled *Cassadaga: The South's Oldest Spiritualist Community* was published. *Cassadaga* was edited by John J. Guthrie Jr., Phillip Charles Lucas, and Gary Monroe with photography also by Gary Monroe. *Cassadaga* is the most extensive piece written about any Spiritualist camp. It is a holistic approach to Cassadaga as it includes chapters devoted to the religion of Spiritualism, the practices of the believers within Cassadaga, the history of Cassadaga, the landscape, the architecture, and biographies of Cassadaga's current residents. The chapter on Cassadaga's architecture was particularly useful for this thesis because the camps are very similar. The book was published by the University of Florida Press, and includes a foreword written by Ann Braude, the author of *Radical Spirits*.

Camp Cassadaga has a close connection with Lily Dale and is named after the Cassadaga chain of lakes which are near Lily Dale. This is because Camp Cassadaga was founded by many of the founders of Lily Dale and they were sister camps up until the early 1990s. In the 1990s, Cassadaga left the National Association of Spiritualists Churches (NSAC). By leaving the NSAC, Cassadaga effectively severed ties with Lily Dale, an NSAC camp.

More recently, Todd Jay Leonard, a college professor, wrote an article about Spiritualist camps in *The Year 2018 Proceedings of the ASSR*. The ASSR is the Association for the Scientific Study of Religion. The publication is a collection of papers and presentations from members of the ASSR as well as some student work that is submitted yearly. His article is entitled “Safeguarding America’s Religious Past through Active Preservation Efforts: Sustaining and Maintaining Spiritualism’s Rich Heritage through the Brick and Mortar Conservation of Historic Camp Chesterfield: A Case Study.” Leonard’s article covers the history of Spiritualism, Camp Chesterfield’s historical significance, and current preservation efforts in Chesterfield all in the context of the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Historic Preservation.

These works represent a small but growing body of literature on the topic of Spiritualist camps. This thesis will be most similar to the 1997 book *Cassadaga* and Todd Leonard’s book in that it will attempt to be a holistic look at a single Spiritualist camp. These studies provide interesting insight into the history, design, and preservation of Spiritualist camps with many lessons applicable to Lily Dale.

History of Scholarship

There have been several pieces written and produced about Lily Dale itself. These pieces are incredibly useful as they lay out aspects of Lily Dale’s history and cultural landscape. There are

multiple lenses through which to view Lily Dale and by analyzing what has already been produced, different elements of the cultural landscape, and its significance, can be determined and contextualized. These pieces range from documentaries to written books.

The first history of Lily Dale was written in 1891 and is entitled *Cassadaga: It's History and Teachings*. The book's title refers to "Cassadaga" instead of "Lily Dale" because when Lily Dale was founded in 1879, it was called the "Cassadaga Lake Free Association." It did not become the "Lily Dale Assembly" until 1906. *Cassadaga: It's History and Teachings* was edited and compiled by two Lily Dale Spiritualists named Harrison D. Barrett and A.W. McCoy. Barrett was an editor for the Spiritualist newspaper *The Banner of Light* and was also the main author of the book, which is really a collection of essays written by Lily Dale Spiritualists. McCoy, a newspaperman from Pennsylvania, assisted Barrett in collecting and organizing the essays.

Cassadaga: Its History and Teachings is an excellent primary source as it includes a history of Spiritualist camp meetings, the history of Lily Dale, the history of Spiritualism, the ethics of Spiritualism, and the philosophy of Spiritualism. It even includes biographical sketches of Lily Dale residents during the 1890s. The book is proof that Lily Dale was recognized as an important cultural resource by its residents as early as the 1890s. Works such as *Cassadaga: Its History and Teachings* are often hard to come by. It shows remarkable foresight and the authors' belief in the mission of Lily Dale. It is an excellent record of the first twenty years of the history of the camp through the eyes of actual historic Lily Dale residents.

Amazingly, it would take about ninety-years for another book to be published on the history of Lily Dale. Written by Joyce LaJudice in 1984, *Lily Dale: Proud Beginnings (a Little Bit of History)*, is a thirty-page booklet on the history of Lily Dale that emphasizes the importance of the camp's founding. LaJudice, the camp historian at the time, worked for nearly thirty years

collecting Lily Dale paraphernalia, documents, letters, and more. The story of Lily Dale's beginning has long held a prominent position in the lore of the camp for many of its residents who take pride in their community as an early place for Freethinkers. Much of LaJudice's work inspired Ron Nagy to publish many of his pieces.¹²

Nearly two decades later, in 2003, a reporter for the *Dallas Morning News* named Christine Wicker, wrote a book entitled *Lily Dale: The True Story of the Town that Talks to the Dead*. Wicker is not a resident of Lily Dale and is not a Spiritualist. Her interest in Lily Dale spawned from an interest in religious studies. Wicker's book is perhaps the most widely-known text about Lily Dale since it was a National Bestseller. Half memoir and half piece of investigative journalism, Wicker's book looked at Lily Dale from a modern, religious, and skeptical perspective. The book contains mostly human-interest pieces about the people visiting and living in Lily Dale. Snippets of history are included, however. The last section of the book is Wicker's own opinion on the nature of belief and religion.¹³

Lily Dale: The True Story in many ways does not offer many unique insights into the camp. It is essentially, the musings of a journalist who wanted to know if Spiritualism is real or not. This is often the main question of many pieces about Spiritualism. What Wicker's book does, however, is contribute a very readable first-hand account of someone visiting Lily Dale and it humanizes the camp along with its inhabitants. It engrosses the reader with what many people personally experience or feel within and about the camp. It makes the camp feel alive in ways many other pieces about Lily Dale do not. Perhaps unsurprisingly, it should also be noted that

¹² Ron Nagy w. Joyce LaJudice, *The Spirits of Lily Dale*, (Lakeville, Minnesota: Galde Press Inc., 2017) xi.

¹³ Biographical information on Christine Wicker comes from her book: Christine Wicker, *Lily Dale: The True Story of the Town that Talks to the Dead* (San Francisco: Harper's, 2003).

many residents of Lily Dale have accused Wicker of making up stories about things that never happened and painting specific people in Lily Dale in an unfair light.

If Wicker's book is the most famous piece written about Lily Dale then the HBO documentary, *No One Dies in Lily Dale*, is a close second. Filmed in 2011, the documentary highlights the experiences of different people, visitors, and mediums in Lily Dale. The documentary does a poor job of indicating the scope, size, and layout of the town which is forgivable because that isn't the point of the documentary. Like most of the media surrounding Lily Dale, the documentary focuses on mediumship and if there is any truth to it. Much of the documentary consists of interviews with mediums and footage of people reacting to mediums. Brief segments delve into the nature of the community and there is a very short portion devoted to the history of Lily Dale.

The documentary is not without its controversies, however. There is a segment in which "Christian protestors" picket outside the gates of Lily Dale. It seems that the overall opinion, shared by many Lily Dale residents, about this segment is that either HBO paid the protestors to do that or the protestors heard about HBO filming and decided to protest during production in order to gain publicity. Christian protestors standing outside the gates of Lily Dale does not appear to be a regular occurrence like the documentary makes it out to be.

The same year as *Nobody Dies in Lily Dale* was released, in 2011, a book entitled *Haunted Ground: Journeys Through a Paranormal America* was published by Darryl V. Catherine, a professor in religious history at Le Moyne College. Catherine's book is part travelogue and part analysis of American religious history. *Haunted Ground* is divided into three sections: the first about Lily Dale; the second about Roswell, New Mexico; and the third about Danville, Vermont. All three of these places are connected to the "paranormal" somehow according to Catherine. The

goal of the book is to understand the reasons behind the appeal of these places to the general public. He concluded that Lily Dale, and the religion of Spiritualism itself, represent a manifestation of repressed guilt about America's colonial past. In particular, he cites Native American spirit guides, common in Spiritualism, as examples of this repressed guilt. The usefulness of Catherine's book is that it provides an excellent narrative and description of the camp. Catherine describes the area around Lily Dale, the camp itself, and many of the camp's features such as the museum and library. Catherine also offers a brief historical analysis of the religion of Spiritualism which is helpful in understanding Lily Dale's context.¹⁴

In 2017, Lily Dale historian and museum curator Ron Nagy, with Joyce LaJudice, published the third edition and fourth printing of *The Spirits of Lily Dale*. The first edition was printed in 2010. This is the most comprehensive historical book written about Lily Dale. Nagy, being the Lily Dale historian is quite knowledgeable about the details of Lily Dale's history. Because of that, *The Spirits of Lily Dale* is full of interesting historical anecdotes that aren't found in any other source on the camp. The graphics Nagy uses within the book are also useful as they are plentiful and illuminating. Although there is no bibliography or notes, one of the major sources for this book appears to be newspaper clippings from the early days of Lily Dale's history. *The Spirits of Lily Dale* is a complete history up until the first-half of the twentieth-century.

Another book, published in 2017, was written by Lily Dale resident, Patricia Price. The book is about the "vortexes" in Lily Dale and is entitled *Lily Dale: The Major Vortexes*. A vortex, according to some adherents of New Age thought, is a sacred place of high spiritual energy. Vortexes are thought to be portals into other dimensions or the afterlife. Although not an

¹⁴ Biographical information on Darryl V. Catherine comes from his page on the Le Moyne College website: "Darryl Catherine," Le Moyne College, accessed: 2/23/20, <https://www.lemoyne.edu/Academics/Our-Faculty/Religious-Studies/Darryl-Catherine>.

academic or historical text, Price's book is important because it shows a perspective on how Lily Dale is perceived by Spiritualists and residents.

Price's book chronicles vortexes as part of the intangible cultural heritage of Lily Dale. The definition of a vortex according to Price is, "a sacred place where the high-vibration energy whirls with intensity in a circular direction. These vortexes ... form in sacred places, and may be observed by the sixth sense, by dowsing rods or by pendulums. The further away from the axis or middle you are, the less the energy flows. Vortexes are capable of decreasing or increasing in intensity depending on human awareness and consciousness."¹⁵ Vortexes are just one of many claims of the supernatural and paranormal in Lily Dale. These claims are a part of what makes the camp unique and are why so many curiosity-seekers visit the camp.

Conclusion

Secondary sources, similar studies, and the history of scholarship all provide the context, history, and established narratives of Lily Dale. These all form a baseline for which this thesis seeks to expand upon. Knowing the historical themes present will help determine significance, knowing the camp's history will help establish integrity, and knowing how others have viewed Lily Dale helps establish what the important existing conditions are. These texts and media form the core sources for the rest of this thesis and will be used as references throughout.

¹⁵ Patricia Price, *Lily Dale: The Major Vortexes* (CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform: 2017).

CHAPTER THREE: SPIRITUALISM AND ITS HISTORY

Introduction

This chapter will provide an overview of Spiritualist beliefs and practices followed by a history of the Spiritualist movement. The goal of this is to provide context and an understanding of what exactly Spiritualism is. This overview and history will often describe things in generalizations. This is with the caveat that Spiritualism is a largely unorganized religion in which disparate beliefs among adherents are not only tolerated but are often encouraged. This chapter will do its best to simplify a complex and varied belief system. The reader should understand, however, that almost every Spiritualist believes in something different from one another.

Spiritualist Belief and Practice

Types of Spiritualists

There is no universal consensus of beliefs amongst Spiritualists. Essentially, the only belief that all Spiritualists share is that spirit communication is possible. Beyond that there is a plurality of religious practice, doctrine, and thought under the Spiritualist umbrella. There are a few unorganized categories of loosely-grouped Spiritualists, however. There are Christian Spiritualists, New Age Spiritualists, classical Spiritualists, and members of the National Spiritualist Association of Churches (NSAC). None of these are actual literal groups (except for the NSAC), just certain terms that could loosely define some clumps of Spiritualists. In these

groups, aside from the NSAC, there is no organization or hierarchy. The NSAC has official pastors, doctrine, hierarchy, and leadership. It is also a recognized religious group by the United States government. It receives much criticism from anti-organizational Spiritualists, however. Anti-organizational Spiritualists believe that there should be no organizations, dogmas, creeds, or standards of belief.

Some Spiritualists are “Christian Spiritualists” or “New Age Spiritualists.” Christian Spiritualists incorporate the tenets of Christianity into their Spiritualist beliefs. Non-Christian Spiritualists may accept Jesus but view him as just another talented medium. Conversely, many Spiritualists reject Christian orthodoxy and doctrine outright.¹⁶ The New Age Spiritualists combine Spiritualism with New Age beliefs. Many syncretize eastern religions such as Buddhism or Hinduism into their beliefs. In fact, it is not uncommon to see statues or iconography of Buddha or Hindu deities throughout the landscape, homes, and yards of Spiritualist camps. Eastern religious beliefs gained traction amongst Spiritualists during the New Age Movement that began in the 1950s. Other New Age Spiritualists might include other elements of esoteric or occult beliefs into their practice. Tarot cards, auras, acupuncture, drum circles, numerology, yoga, astrology, chakras, and more are all common interests and practices amongst New Age Spiritualists.¹⁷

Classical Spiritualists are traditional and shy away from New Age or Christian influences. Classical Spiritualists are more closely aligned with the original beliefs and practices of the nineteenth-century Spiritualists. They believe in communion with the spirit world through

¹⁶ Abingdon Spiritualist Church, “What is Christian Spiritualism?” [abingdonspiritualistchurch.co.uk](http://www.abingdonspiritualistchurch.co.uk), accessed: 2/23/20, <http://www.abingdonspiritualistchurch.co.uk/home/what-is-christian-spiritualism>.

¹⁷ Society for Religious Tolerance, “New Age Spirituality,” [ReligiousTolerance.org](http://www.religioustolerance.org), accessed: 2/23/20, <http://www.religioustolerance.org/newage.htm>

seances, mediumship, going into trance, and more. They place a higher emphasis on the reality of physical mediumship and may practice slate writing, table tipping, trumpet seances, or use Ouija boards. Being a religion that emphasizes Freethought, there are many debates between Spiritualists. The New Age, Christian, and classical Spiritualists often disagree on doctrine and tenets. In Camp Cassadaga in Florida, this disparity can be seen in the physical landscape as the classical Spiritualists reside inside the official camp while the New Age Spiritualists usually dwell right outside the camp's boundaries.¹⁸

Spiritual Planes

Some Spiritualists believe in spiritual planes while many don't and what these planes actually are is a source of debate. The planes of existence in Spiritualism are oftentimes described as dimensions. Many Spiritualists, especially classical Spiritualists, adhere to the idea of an ordered cosmos that spirits move through on a path to total enlightenment. Subscribers to this belief would consider humanity on the "material" or "earthly" plane of existence. The placement of this earthly plane is usually in the middle of this cosmic order. The Spiritualist "Heaven" is oftentimes called "Summerland." Most Spiritualists reject the idea of a literal "Hell" and "Devil." The idea of "demons" is also contrary to Spiritualist belief. Many Spiritualists believe that Hell and Heaven are states of consciousness or being. Heaven is a state of oneness with the universe or complete enlightenment. Hell is a state of being out-of-sync with the universe and means the spirit filled with negative emotions and ignorance.¹⁹

¹⁸ Clara Malley, "Meet the Spiritual Healers and Mediums of Cassadaga Florida- 'The Psychic Capitol of the World,'" Document Journal, 11/25/19, accessed: 2/23/20, <https://www.documentjournal.com/2019/11/meet-the-spiritual-healers-and-mediums-of-cassadaga-florida-the-psyche-capitol-of-the-world/>.

¹⁹ Patti Wingington, "What is the Summerland?" LearnReligions.com, 03/19/18, accessed: 2/23/20, <https://www.learnreligions.com/what-is-the-summerland-2562874>.

Spiritualists believe that spirits do not immediately achieve enlightenment when they move to the next plane (when people die). Therefore, many spirits can be tricksters or malevolent. Even after death, the spirit still can learn, make mistakes, etc. Many Spiritualists readily admit that spirits are not a form of definite knowledge and are not 100% correct in their messages all the time because they can still be wrong, play pranks, and be misled. In the afterlife, Spiritualists believe the personality of the soul, while it was on earth, is retained.

Souls also can shapeshift in other planes of existence per Spiritualist doctrine. That is why oftentimes, according to Spiritualists, they appear as orbs of light in photographs. Spirits may even have brought objects and clothes with them into the afterlife or, according to some, manipulate the living's perception so that we see objects and clothes that make sense to the living in order to help us identify the spirit when the objects and clothing aren't physically there.²⁰

Spirit Beings

Spiritualists often refer to God as “Infinite Intelligence” which is usually a state of being or state of oneness with the universe rather than a corporeal being. Although many Spiritualists seemingly reject the notion of demons, many believe in angels and ascended masters. The idea of ascended masters comes from Theosophy, a new religious movement founded by Helena Blavatsky. Theosophy is an off-shoot of the Spiritualist movement since Blavatsky was originally a Spiritualist and then incorporated Spiritualist belief into her new Theosophical practice. In Theosophy, an ascended master is, according to one New Age website: “a group of souls who allegedly earned their right to ascend and return to Earth from time to time as teachers,

²⁰ Sally Painter, “Spirit Orb Types and Theories,” LovetoKnow.com, accessed: 2/23/20, https://paranormal.lovetoknow.com/Spirit_Orbs.

or just teach from a higher plane of existence.”²¹ Ascended masters were usually once humans who evolved in the spirit world to achieve enlightenment. One of the most famous ascended masters in Lily Dale is Azur. Also known as “the helper,” Azur is a spirit guide that first appeared to a medium named A. Campbell. Azur gets his fame from a large portrait painted of him by Campbell that now hangs in the Maplewood Hotel in Lily Dale. Spirit guides, like Azur, are a common belief among Spiritualists. Like the notion of guardian angels, spirit guides attach themselves to one or more living humans and protect or guide them. Oftentimes, spirit guides help humans explore the spirit world and other planes of existence. Some spirit guides were humans when they were alive while others were not. Some can be angels, beings from other planets, or beings from other dimensions.²²

Energy and Vibrations

Spiritualists frequently use the terms “energy” and “vibrations.” These terms are enigmatic and hard to define since they mean different things to different people and are often used interchangeably. Some Spiritualists believe that the departed exist in a different energy form from humans which is what allows them to shapeshift. Oftentimes magnetic fields are believed to be associated with this mysterious energy. It is these magnetic fields that are being referred to as “energy.” This energy allows spirits to move objects, give feelings, make your hair stand on edge, and more. The first law of thermodynamics, which states that energy can neither be created or destroyed, is often cited by Spiritualists as a scientific rationale for their beliefs because when

²¹ “Ascended Masters”, Crystalinks, accessed: 10/30/19, <https://www.crystalinks.com/ascendedmasters.html>.

²² Gaia Staff, “What is a Spirit Guide?” Gaia.com, 04/4/2017, accessed: 2/23/20, <https://www.gaia.com/article/what-is-a-spirit-guide>.

you die, as the argument goes, your energy simply changes form and is released back into the universe.²³

Vibrations, on the other hand, are basically the energy or feeling a person, spirit, or place has. Spiritualists may say “this place has a negative vibration,” “you need to raise your vibration,” or “this spirit has an amazing vibration.” These vibrations are the residue and physical effects of spiritual manifestation or energy. Spiritualists intuit vibrations via their own consciousness in order to perform mediumship. If the spiritual vibrations put off by a person or place give a Spiritualist a certain feeling, then they can deduce their vibration.²⁴

Types of Mediumship

There are two types of mediumship. Most commonly, especially in Lily Dale today, mediums use “mental mediumship.” According to one Spiritualist church, the First Spiritual Temple in Sandwich, Massachusetts: “Mental mediumship involves the relating of information, through communication, via the varied aspects of thought transference, or mental telepathy. Mental telepathy is the relaying of information via thought, without using any of the five physical senses.” Imagine sitting down with a medium who says, “there is a female presence with you. She is old and had heart issues. I’m sensing she liked the color green. Do you connect with the color green?” That is an example of mental mediumship. Physical mediumship, which was very popular in the nineteenth-century, is defined by the First Spiritual Temple as, “the manipulation and transformation of physical systems and energies. The spirit operators, in this case, are causing something to happen upon the Earth plane.” If a medium makes a cup fly across the

²³ The Aetherius Society, “Spiritual Energy” The Aetherius Society, accessed: 2/23/20, <https://www.aetherius.org/spiritual-energy/>

²⁴ Global Healing Exchange, “Understanding Spiritual Vibrations,” Global Healing Exchange, 6/05/13, accessed: 2/23/20, <https://www.globalhealingexchange.com/understanding-spiritual-vibrations-part-1-energy/>.

room psychokinetically or makes the lights switch off while channeling a spirit, then that is an example of physical mediumship.²⁵

Spiritualists also employ many tools in order to try to contact the spirit world. Perhaps the most famous is the Ouija Board, which is a brand name given to what is called a “talking” or “spirit” board. Talking boards existed for many years before the first Ouija Board was patented. One Associated Press reporter in 1886 described a talking board craze amongst a Spiritualist camp in Ohio. This was five years before the Ouija Board patent was issued in 1891 to Charles Kennard. Talking boards are a flat surface marked with letters, numbers, and words. Users touch a planchette, a piece of wood or plastic with a hole in the middle, which moves around the board and hovers over a specific letter, number, or word that is being conveyed by a spirit. Talking boards are often used in séances.²⁶

Communicating with Spirits

Séances are broadly defined as “any attempt to communicate with spirits.” The word séance comes from the French word for “session.” Séances have been conducted throughout history, but the modern notion of the séance comes from the Spiritualist movement. In the popular imagination, séances usually involve a group of people sitting around a table, holding hands, lit candles flickering, in the presence of a medium. However, there is no formal or dogmatic way to conduct a séance amongst Spiritualists. Mediums may employ one of their many tools during séances, including the Ouija Board. Other methods include “automatic writing,” which is the

²⁵ First Spiritual Temple, “What is Mediumship/Channeling?” First Spiritual Temple, <https://www.fst.org/mediumship.htm>, 1996, accessed: 10/7/2019.

²⁶ Linda McRobbie, “The Strange and Mysterious History of the Ouija Board”, Smithsonian, <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/the-strange-and-mysterious-history-of-the-ouija-board-5860627/>, 10/27/2013, accessed: 10/7/2019.

claimed psychic ability to write written words unconsciously or while being possessed by a spirit. Oftentimes this is done on slate with chalk and can be referred to as “slate writing.” Another method often seen during séances is “table-tipping.” Table-tipping is when participants place their hands on a table, sing a song or say a prayer, and wait for the table to start moving due to it being enacted upon by a paranormal force. The table-tipping indicates when a spirit is amongst the living and can be used to convey different messages by asking the spirit to tip the table a certain way to answer a question.²⁷

Spirit “trumpets” are another famous tool used by Spiritualists during séances. The trumpet looks nothing like a musical trumpet. It is essentially an aluminum cone that more closely resembles a traffic cone. The trumpet sits in the middle of a table with participants sitting around the table. Oftentimes, the trumpet levitates in the air. Supposedly, the trumpet can either rock back and forth or move on the table in certain ways that allow for spirit communication (i.e. “can the spirit move the trumpet to the left to indicate ‘yes’ and move the trumpet to the right to indicate ‘no’”). More famously, the trumpet is used by spirits to speak through. Participants are supposed to be able to hear the spirits’ voice amplified by the trumpet. The NSAC office in Lily Dale sells spirit trumpets for those willing to try it.²⁸

Nature and Spiritualism

Outside of the séance, Spiritualists usually revere nature because it is a supposed manifestation of Infinite Intelligence. The influence of the Transcendentalist movement is clearly seen in the Spiritualist view of nature. Like the Transcendentalists, Spiritualists view nature as

²⁷ Deborah Blum, *Ghost Hunters: William James and the Search for Scientific Proof of the Afterlife* (New York: Penguin Books, 2007).

²⁸ Sabrina Imbler, “How Victorian Mediums Gave Shy Ghosts a Megaphone,” *Atlas Obscura*, 10/23/19, accessed: 10/27/19, <https://www.atlasobscura.com/articles/spirit-trumpets-dead-speak>.

healing, sacred, and full of energy. The Transcendentalists popularized this notion and the Spiritualists coopted it. One Spiritualist, in 1869, wrote, “the groves were God’s first temples.”²⁹ Since everything is a result of Infinite Intelligence, the functions of nature are a perfected representation of spiritual processes. Similarly, since many Spiritualists believe everything is connected spiritually, nature must be protected and revered. Some Spiritualists even believe that elements of the natural world including rocks, trees, plants, etc. have spirits themselves. The Spiritualist appreciation for nature is evidenced in many Spiritualist camps including Lily Dale. Spiritualist camps are usually situated in naturally beautiful or aesthetically pleasing settings and include many parks or preserved natural areas.³⁰

Spirits can manifest themselves in real-time as well. The Lily Dale Museum holds a collection of spirit art. Spirit art comes in many forms. The most common is called “precipitated spirit painting.” Ron Nagy defines precipitated spirit painting as “a work of art, usually a portrait, which appears on canvas without the use of human hands during a Spiritualist seance.”³¹ This is how the spirit painting of Azur was created. Another type of spirit painting happens when the medium is using their hands to paint but claims to be possessed by a spirit. The supposed tell-tale sign of a spirit painting is that there are no brushstrokes. Spirit painting and the creation of spirit art is a common activity in Lily Dale. Visitors can pay a medium, who claims to have the ability, to have a spirit painting done of whatever spirit may be with them.³²

“Healing” is a common practice in Lily Dale and amongst Spiritualists. It is a form of alternative medicine and is a type of energy healing. A typical healing consists of two people, the

²⁹ William D. Moore, “To Hold Communion with Nature and the Spirit World,” from *Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture Vol. 7* (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 1997), 239.

³⁰ William D. Moore, “To Hold Communion with Nature and the Spirit World.”

³¹ Ron Nagy, *Precipitated Spirit Paintings* (Lakeville, Minnesota: Galde Press Inc, 2006).

³² Ron Nagy, *Precipitated Spirit Paintings*.

healer and the patient. The healer stands behind the patient while the patient is seated with their eyes closed and palms facing upwards on their lap. The healer then hovers their hands over, or sometimes even touches, the patient's body. Supposedly, this does some sort of healing. This is one of the most common practices in Lily Dale.³³

Conclusion

Spiritualist belief is best summed up by Alan Baker, president of the Havant Spiritualist Church in England: "We (Spiritualists) believe in freedom of religion and freedom of worship, and that you worship God in your own way. Spiritualism gives you a set of values that enables you to think about how your relationship with God should be."³⁴ Most Spiritualist churches, especially those not in the NSAC, have their own set of principles. There are multiple Spiritualist churches within Lily Dale that all have different principles and styles of services.

History of the Camp Meeting

The origin of the camp meeting in North America goes back to the First Great Awakening of the 1730s-1740s. This was a religious revival that was concentrated in the Northeast, where religiosity in Colonial America was the most prevalent. Barry Hankins, author of *The Second Great Awakening and the Transcendentalists*, defined a revival as, "a preaching method...which is geared toward eliciting immediate conversions to the Christian faith...The preacher, almost always a man in that the time period, seeks to convince his listeners that they are wretched sinners in need of God's grace."³⁵ Revivals were often emotionally-charged,

³³ Lily Dale Assembly, "Healing Temple," Lily Dale Assembly, accessed: 2/23/20, <https://lilydaleassembly.org/venue/healing-temple/>.

³⁴ BBC Staff, "Spiritualist Beliefs", BBC, 09/09/2009, accessed 10/9/2019, https://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/spiritualism/beliefs/beliefs_1.shtml.

³⁵ Barry Hankins, *The Second Great Awakening and the Transcendentalists* (Westport, Connecticut: Westport Press, 2004), 4.

theatrical, and drew large crowds of curiosity-seekers. People would come from near and far to participate in a revival. If they were traveling some distance, they would often bring tents and other supplies so that they could spend a few nights at the revival ground.³⁶

Revivals were popularized by the so-called “Great Revival of 1800.” This particular revival, held in Kentucky, included multiple speakers, singing, praying, and calls for repentance. Nonetheless, that revival was soon dwarfed by the six-day long Cane Ridge Revival only a year later. Estimates of attendance at the Cane Ridge Revival are around 10-25,000 people. This revival included preaching by multiple Protestant Christian denominations on separate speaking stands. During the revival, the converted howled, barked, rolled on the ground, and gesticulated in a mass religious ecstasy. The Cane Ridge Revival was a crucial epoch in the development of the camp meeting. Because of its popularity, success, and scope, the format of the revival was copied throughout the nation.³⁷

It wasn’t until the Second Great Awakening, which the Great Revival and Cane Ridge Revival helped launch, however, that the camp meeting would become fully developed in its modern form. The necessity and popularization of camp meetings is linked with U.S. westward expansion. As people moved beyond the Appalachian Mountains, many people settled in impermanent or makeshift communities. These communities often lacked houses of worship or even a majority denomination. In response to this, many established and structured eastern denominations sent out itinerant preachers to ride circuits for the faithful beyond the mountains. These ministers traveled into the frontier, entered communities, hosted a “revival”, then traveled

³⁶ Hankins, *The Second Great Awakening*; Richard Carwardine, *Trans-Atlantic Revivalism: Popular Evangelicalism in Britain and America, 1790-1865* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1978); Lee Sandlin, *Wicked River: The Mississippi When It Last Ran Wild* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2010).

³⁷ John Boles, *The Great Revival: 1787-1805* (Lexington, Kentucky: University of Kentucky Press, 1972).

on to the next stop on their circuit. This practice began around the mid-eighteenth-century and largely continued until the American Civil War.³⁸

Camp meetings usually had several similar characteristics. Early camp meetings usually were made up of tents due to the ephemeral nature of the practice. People brought their own tents and savvy entrepreneurs brought large tents that they would turn into hostels, hospitals, taverns, or kitchens. Tents were so prominent that camp meetings were often called “tent meetings.” Crowds would often get so large at camp meetings that many speakers would be talking at once to the same crowd. These speakers and preachers would often drive the crowds into wild religious ecstasy. These phenomena even received names: “the falling exercise” (violent fainting spells), “the jerks” (convulsive movements), “the rolling exercise” (twisting their bodies around), and “the dancing exercise” (ecstatic dancing). Writhing, barking, screaming, singing, and more were all common at the camp meeting.³⁹

Regardless of the rancorous nature of the camp meeting, it wasn’t long before they became permanent fixtures on the American landscape. Camp goers began building semi-permanent and then permanent structures at the campgrounds. Cottages, churches, stages, etc. began going up as certain revivals became annual affairs. The circuit-riding ministers would return to convert new followers as these now formalized camps gained a reputation and grew in stature. The three largest Christian denominations at the time, the Methodists, the Baptists, and the Presbyterians, hosted most of the revivals in antebellum America.⁴⁰

³⁸ Hankins, *The Second Great Awakening*.

³⁹ Sandlin, *Wicked River*.

⁴⁰ Timothy Smith *Revivalism and Social Reform* (Nashville, Tennessee: Abingdon Press, 1955).

The revivalist movement also began to spread back eastward. Charles Finney, perhaps America's most renowned revivalist of the nineteenth-century, began his ministry in western New York in 1824. Finney brought revivalism to urban Americans by staging revivals in the hearts of America's burgeoning cities. At the time, many urbanites, considered revivalism to be a low-brow, rural phenomenon. Finney's most famous urban revival occurred in Rochester, New York from 1830-1831. It attracted national attention and drew a massive attendance. The fact that it lasted over a year is a testament to its sustained popularity. The Rochester Revival was so successful many Protestant elites invited Finney to host similar revivals in cities such as Boston and New York.⁴¹

Due to Finney's success in America's cities, urban citizens began to flock to rural camp meetings for revivals and ecclesiastical experiences similar to those they had experienced previously with urban revivalists like Finney. "Rural" camps, usually created by different Protestant denominations, were set up near population centers in order to attract urban citizens. City-dwellers were attracted to the camps both for the religiosity and to escape the often crowded, disease-ridden, and dirty cities. Camps usually were situated just far enough from cities to retain their bucolic charm, yet close enough to enable easy commuting, usually by railroad. Examples of these are the camps in Ocean Grove, New Jersey; Toronto, Ohio; Balls Creek, North Carolina; Covington, Georgia; and Douglas, Massachusetts. All of these are rural Protestant camps set up in the nineteenth-century near urban centers.⁴²

It seems that many viewed camps as more of a weekend getaway than a serious religious summoning. Camps were a place for likeminded Protestants to congregate, make connections,

⁴¹ William Warren Smith, *Revivalism in America: It's Origin, Growth and Decline*, (Gloucester, Massachusetts: Peter Smith, 1965); Timothy Smith, *Revivalism and Social Reform*.

⁴² William Warren Smith, *Revivalism in America*; Hankins, *The Second Great Awakening*.

and enjoy amusements. There were even reports, especially early on, that some revivals and camps attracted participants who were inebriated or sought more carnal pleasures. Sex workers often conducted business during camp meetings and it wasn't uncommon for makeshift brothels to be set up near the periphery of the camps. In the Mississippi River Valley, the term "camp meeting baby" referred to children born nine months after a major camp meeting. Drunkenness was common as well which often led to fighting. By the 1850s, camp meetings began forming or hiring "vigilance committees" that would police the meetings. This practice, coupled with the establishment of permanent, rather than temporary, camps around the same time, helped clean up the more lascivious camp meetings.⁴³

By the 1870s, the general camp format had been well established and Spiritualist camps started to form. There were over 400 religious camps in the country by the end of that decade. One of the first Spiritualist camp meetings occurred on July 26, 1866, in Lynde's Woods, Massachusetts. Over the following decades many other Spiritualist camps formed: Lake Pleasant, Massachusetts, 1870; Camp Wonewoc, Wisconsin, 1874; Camp Etna, Maine, 1876; Oniset Wigwam, Massachusetts, 1877; Lily Dale, New York, 1879; Camp Chesterfield, Indiana, 1891; Cassadaga, Florida, 1894; and Harmony Grove, California, 1896. One Spiritualist newspaper, *The Banner of Light*, estimated that there were over 60 Spiritualist camps in the United States by 1898.⁴⁴

As the twentieth-century dawned, the development of Spiritualist camp meetings began to cease as the demand for them became saturated and the number of Spiritualist adherents began

⁴³ William Warren Smith, *Revivalism in America: It's Origin, Growth and Decline*, (Gloucester, Massachusetts: Peter Smith, 1965); Timothy Smith, *Revivalism and Social Reform*; Sandlin, *Wicked River*; Hankins, *The Second Great Awakening*.

⁴⁴ Ron Nagy, *The Spirits of Lily Dale* (Lakeville, MN: Galde Press Inc., 2017); "First Spiritualist Mass Camp Meeting; Announcement and Proceedings," *The Banner of Light*, August 25th, 1866.

to stagnate and even decline. Many Spiritualist camps still exist today, however. Spiritualist camps are more likely to resemble small towns than the stereotypical idea of an outdoor “camp.” They have post offices, restaurants, churches, houses, shops, and more. The natural world, or at least the idea of it, still plays a crucial element in these camps as well. This is exemplified by the many parks and trails that hold a prominent place within Spiritualist camps. Many are gated and there is sometimes a fee to enter during the “season,” usually during the summer months. Lily Dale is a prime example of the Spiritualist camp form.

History of Spiritualism

Swedenborgianism

Spiritualism is a modern religion with roots in the mid-eighteenth-century. Humans from various cultures, throughout history, have often believed that some sort of communication with the deceased has been possible. Spiritualism in its modern, however, sense began with the Swedenborgian movement. Swedenborgianism is based on the writings and teachings of an eighteenth-century Swedish mystic named Emanuel Swedenborg. A product of the Enlightenment, he began his career as a scientist, but, by the 1740s, his interests had evolved towards mysticism. He claimed to have undergone a series of visions, strange dreams, and trances that opened his eyes to “the world of spirits, Hell and Heaven ...”⁴⁵

Swedenborg postulated that the spirit world was organized into seven ascending “spheres.” As a spirit progressed and grew, it entered into the next sphere up until it reached pure enlightenment at the top. The Earthly plane constituted the fourth sphere. Spirits could move

⁴⁵ Quote from Bret Carroll, *Spiritualism in Antebellum America*, (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1997), 17; Carroll, *Spiritualism in Antebellum America*.

down if they were wicked and they could move up if they were good, all the while having the ability to interact with the Earthly plane. Swedenborgianism, otherwise known as The New Church, began as a religious movement in England where Swedenborg's work had attracted a substantial following. The New Church is still a religion today. The idea of free-will, personal responsibility, an ordered universe, and astral planes would all be ideas many Spiritualists would coopt from Swedenborg.⁴⁶

Mesmerism

The next precedent to Modern Spiritualism was the Mesmerist movement. Mesmerism was also known as "animal magnetism." Mesmerism got its name from the studies of Austrian doctor Franz Anton Mesmer (1734-1815). Mesmer believed that humans have mysterious fluids that contain metals, which are susceptible to magnets, inside of them. By the application of magnets on certain parts of the body, Mesmerists believed they could control this mysterious fluid and cure people of ailments. Mesmer would induce patients into a trance-like or hypnotic state whereupon he would begin his healings. As Mesmerism gained in popularity, the magnets were abandoned and Mesmerists would simply hover their hands over a hypnotized patient in order to draw out negative energy. From Mesmerism, Spiritualism appropriated the ideas of spiritual healing, alternative medicine, and the connectedness of all living things.⁴⁷

Transcendentalism

The final major influence on the development of Spiritualism was the Transcendentalist movement. In 1836, Bronson Alcott, Orestes Brownson, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Frederic Hedge,

⁴⁶ Carroll, *Spiritualism in Antebellum America*.

⁴⁷ Geoffrey Nelson, *Spiritualism and Society*, (New York: Schocken Books, 1969).

Convers Francis, and James Freeman Clark met at the home of George Ripley in Boston to discuss the failings of Unitarianism. They believed the biggest problem with Unitarianism was it's cold and isolating rationality. The discussion proved to be fruitful, so the group decided to meet more frequently. They called themselves the "Symposium" and dedicated themselves to discussing philosophy, theory, science, morals, and more. These meetings inspired Emerson to publish his essay, *Nature*. It became the manifesto of a movement that became known as "Transcendentalism." The Transcendentalists rejected the overtly rationalist or "Enlightened" world they lived in. Emerson postulated that the natural world was the manifestation of God and that nature was part of a universal spirit. Life and the world, to the Transcendentalists, were not just objects of study, but were to be experienced. One could not understand "truth" from a Baconian scientific or rationalist viewpoint. Feelings and intuition were also important in arriving at "truth" according to the Transcendentalists.⁴⁸

After Emerson, Henry David Thoreau became a member of the Symposium. Inspired by the Symposium's discussions, Thoreau decided to live alone at Walden Pond in Massachusetts from 1845-1847. Thoreau wanted to live independently, simply, and thoughtfully. In 1854, Thoreau published *Walden*, which became the Transcendentalist follow-up to *Nature*. *Walden* postulated that man was made to be free, freedom comes through self-reliance, living in accordance with nature is the best way to happiness, and that truth is the most noble virtue that man could seek. The Transcendentalist movement helped pave the way for Spiritualism. The Transcendentalists were anti-clerical, advocated Freethought, claimed to be connected with

⁴⁸ Hankins, *The Second Great Awakening*; Nelson, *Spiritualism and Society*.

nature, and rejected established dogma. Spiritualists would follow in Transcendentalist footsteps by incorporating all of those qualities into their own movement only a few years later.⁴⁹

Andrew Jackson Davis

The Spiritualist movement of the nineteenth-century began in earnest with a man named Andrew Jackson Davis. His place in Spiritualist history is exemplified by his moniker as “the John the Baptist of Modern Spiritualism.” Davis was born in 1826 and grew up in Poughkeepsie, New York. In 1844, at the age of 22, Davis claimed he fell into a trance and communicated with Swedenborg and Galen of Pergamon. After this dream he became a trance medium and was branded as, “the Poughkeepsie Seer.” Davis made a name for himself by conducting Mesmerist healings which many credited with successfully curing them of ailments. In 1847, Davis published *The Principles of Nature, Her Divine Revelations, and Voice to Mankind*. In the book, Davis described the spiritual origins of the universe, his out-of-body experiences, philosophy, the nature of the spirit world, and more. The book was a commercial success, and it popularized ideas such as mediumship and clairvoyance to a general American audience. Davis subsequently published over thirty books on Spiritualist topics and would remain a major force in Spiritualism until his death in 1910.⁵⁰

The Second Great Awakening

There were many people throughout America that were experiencing a new religious fervor similar to Davis’. This period was called the Second Great Awakening and it was a spike in religiosity that occurred during the first few decades of the nineteenth-century. Although many

⁴⁹ Nelson, *Spiritualism and Society*; Hankins, *The Second Great Awakening*.

⁵⁰ Molly McGarry, *Ghosts of Futures Past: Spiritualism and the Cultural Politics of Nineteenth-Century America*, (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 2008); Nelson, *Spiritualism and Society*.

scholars date the beginning of the Second Great Awakening as early as the 1790s, revivalism and the Second Great Awakening reached its peak in the 1820s-1830s. The Second Great Awakening, like Transcendentalism and Romanticism, arose as a cultural response to the cold rationality and skepticism of the Enlightenment era. Protestant denominations, especially the Baptists and Methodists, benefited the most from the Second Great Awakening as their numbers saw the most substantial growth during this era.⁵¹

During the Second Great Awakening, a swath of New York State was nicknamed “the Burned-Over District.” Charles Finney came up with this moniker. It was called this because it was so “burned-over” with religious fervor. The main reason New York proved to be such fertile ground for religious zealotry was the construction of the Erie Canal. The Erie Canal was the most efficient and quickest way into what is now the upper Midwest. One could take barges and boats all the way from New York City, through the Mohawk Valley, across the Great Lakes, and beyond. This caused a surge of immigrants from New England and Europe to move through New York along the canal route. These new settlers brought their folkways, religious beliefs, and ideas with them.⁵²

The Fox Sisters

Spiritualism would be one of many new religions founded in the Burned Over District. The small farming hamlet of Hydesville, about thirty miles east of Rochester, New York, was the home to two young girls, neither over the age of 15, named Kate and Margaret Fox. The girls claimed to hear mysterious rappings in their small home. A “rapping” is simply another word for

⁵¹ Hankins, *The Second Great Awakening*.

⁵² Judith Wellman, *Grassroots Reform in the Burned-Over District of Upstate New York: Religion, Abolitionism and Democracy* (London: Routledge Publishers, 2000); Peter Bernstein, *Wedding of the Waters: The Erie Canal and the Making of a Great Nation* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2005)

knocking. The rappings became so boisterous, that it attracted the attention of Kate and Margaret's parents. The family quickly realized that the rappings were intelligent. They would ask questions aloud and the raps would respond accurately. The family deduced that the source of the rappings originated from the spirit of a murdered peddler whom they had dubbed, "Mr. Splitfoot."⁵³

Neighbors and curiosity-seekers came to witness and experience the raps themselves. One neighbor, William Duesler, wrote a famous account of his visit. During his visit, he questioned the spirit on "the number of children in the different families in the neighborhood...also, the number of deaths that had taken place in these families?" In response, the spirit "told correctly." In order to further test the veracity of the raps, people asked very personal questions which the raps would often answer accurately. The raps seemed to follow Kate and Margaret wherever they went. Soon, their older sister Leah also proclaimed mediumistic ability and joined her two younger sisters. The hubbub around the phenomena caught the attention of the local press and the story proliferated from there.⁵⁴

Growth of Spiritualism

The Spiritualist movement grew rapidly during the last years of the 1840s and the first couple of years of the 1850s. Part of the rapid growth was due to the fact that the Fox Sisters, and the raps that apparently followed them around, began traveling. The rappings continued to baffle skeptics. The first public investigation of Spiritualism occurred in Rochester, New York, in November of 1849. After public demonstrations, the Fox Sisters were put through grueling tests

⁵³ Barbara Weisburg, *Talking to the Dead: Kate and Maggie Fox and the Rise of Spiritualism* (New York: HarperCollins Books, 2004).

⁵⁴ Weisburg, *Talking to the Dead*.

in order to detect fraud. These tests, oftentimes humiliating, included standing on glasses, removing their clothing in front of people, and being tied-up. Leah described one physician who tested her as, “very insulting and even violent.”⁵⁵ Most frustratingly to skeptics and believers alike, the tests achieved mixed results. The following year they traveled to Buffalo.⁵⁶ The newspaper reports and mystery behind it all propelled the word of Spiritualism throughout the country. In 1850 alone, Spiritualist “circles” were founded in places like Philadelphia, Providence, Memphis, Cincinnati, St. Louis, and Albany. Spiritualist circles are just a group of Spiritualists gathering regularly, usually in a member’s house. By 1851 there was reported to be over fifty circles in Brooklyn alone.⁵⁷

Spiritualism grew at different rates throughout the country. It took until the late 1850s for Spiritualism to reach the West Coast. A few prominent San Francisco newspapermen advocated Spiritualism as early as 1857. In the South, Spiritualism was greeted much mildly. This is because Spiritualism closely aligned itself with movements such as abolition and feminism which were unpopular movements in the South. It was viewed with suspicion at best and downright hostility at worst in most Southern communities. The Alabama legislature even passed a bill that fined Spiritualists \$500 for demonstrating their faith. There were a few exceptions, however, and Spiritualism did find footholds in some Southern communities. These include Wilmington, North Carolina and Memphis, Tennessee. New Orleans, Louisiana, was the largest Spiritualist stronghold in the South and enjoyed appeal in the Creole community. The de facto

⁵⁵ Weisburg, *Talking to the Dead*, 81.

⁵⁶ Weisburg, *Talking to the Dead*.

⁵⁷ Nelson, *Spiritualism and Society*.

leader of the Spiritualist movement in New Orleans was Henry Louis Rey, a free person of color and a civil rights activist.⁵⁸

Many prominent figures became involved with Spiritualism during the 1850s. Nathaniel Tallmadge, former governor of Wisconsin, became an adherent. Horace Greeley became so enamored with Spiritualism that the Fox Sisters lived at his house for a time. Sojourner Truth converted to Spiritualism in the latter-half of the 1850s and then moved to a Spiritualist community called Harmonia in Battle Creek, Michigan. Victoria Woodhull, America's first female candidate for president, was an ardent Spiritualist and medium. Harriet E. Wilson, who became the first black American of any gender to publish a novel, converted to Spiritualism in the 1860s and became active in the movement. Perhaps the most well-known Spiritualist was Mary Todd Lincoln. Lincoln visited trance mediums and often held seances in the White House.⁵⁹

Spiritualism attracted people from all walks of life. Cornelius Vanderbilt dabbled with Spiritualism. He once sought out the services of a medium in order to perform an exorcism on two spirits he believed were attached to him. Vanderbilt also kept company with Tennessee Claflin, the sister of Victoria Woodhull, who was a Spiritualist and the first female to open a Wall Street brokerage firm. Charles and Isabella Beecher, members of the famous Beecher

⁵⁸ Melissa Daggett, *Spiritualism in Nineteenth-Century New Orleans* (Oxford, Mississippi: University Press of Mississippi, 2016); McGarry, *Ghosts of Futures Past*; Nelson, *Spiritualism and Society*.

⁵⁹ Joseph McCabe, *Spiritualism: A Popular History from 1847* (New York: Dodd, Mead, and Company, 1920); David Ruggles Center for History and Education Staff, "Sojourner Truth (1797-1883)", davidrugglescenter.org, 2018, accessed 10/9/2019, <https://davidrugglescenter.org/sojourner-truth/>; R.J. Ellis and Henry Louis Gates Jr., "'Grievances at the Treatment She Received': Harriet E. Wilson's Spiritualist Career in Boston, 1868-1900," from *American Literary History*, (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 2012); Nelson, *Spiritualism and Society*; Dianca Potts, "Holy Spirits: The Power and Legacy of America's Female Spiritualists", [Shondaland.com](http://shondaland.com), Oct. 10, 2018, accessed Sept. 3, 2019, <https://www.shondaland.com/live/a23652668/legacy-of-spiritualists/>; Ann Braude, *Radical Spirits: Spiritualism and Women's Rights in Nineteenth-century America*, (Bloomington, Indiana: University of Indiana Press, 2nd edit. 2001).

family, became Spiritualists while their sister, Harriet, investigated the phenomena but never became a believer. The Grimke Sisters and William Lloyd Garrison became committed Spiritualists which partly cemented Spiritualism's relationship with abolition. In 1851, even a United States Supreme Court Judge, John Edmonds, became a Spiritualist. The famous diarist George Templeton Strong wrote in 1855, "what would I have said six years ago to anybody who predicted that before the enlightened nineteenth century was ended, hundreds of thousands of people in this country would believe themselves able to communicate with the ghosts of their grandfathers?"⁶⁰

Spiritualism and Social Reform

Spiritualism during the nineteenth century is often associated with many of the social reform movements at the time. *Hall's Journal of Health* published an article in 1864 that begged the question of, "how is it when we meet a vegetarian, he is almost sure to be a phrenologist, a free lover, a root doctor, a woman's rights, a mesmerist, a Spiritualist, a socialist, a cold waterist, a ranting abolitionist, an abnegator of the Bible, the Sabbath day, and the religion of his father?"⁶¹ Although sardonic, this quote reveals a popular perception that Spiritualists were radicals due to their alliances with other social movements. Andrew Jackson Davis responded to these criticisms with, "One-idea-ism is no finality, and every advocate of a single reform idea, is sure ultimately, to become a true Cosmopolitan Reformer..."⁶² Many Spiritualists quickly allied themselves with the causes of abolitionism, feminism, Native American rights, and temperance.⁶³

⁶⁰ Quote from Carroll, *Spiritualism in Antebellum America*, 1. Braude, *Radical Spirits*.

⁶¹ McGarry, *Ghosts of Futures Past*, 55.

⁶² McGarry, *Ghosts of Futures Past*, 55.

⁶³ McGarry, *Ghosts of Futures Past*.

The reason Spiritualism aligned itself with social reform movements is that it attracted Freethought advocates who believed in an afterlife but thought contemporary mainstream religion was too accommodating to things like slavery, Native American genocide, alcoholism, and sexism. Freethought was a philosophical movement gaining traction in the mid-nineteenth-century that advocated a liberation from established creeds and dogmas. Freethinkers questioned the morality espoused by mainline Christian doctrine and sought out a religion that accommodated their reformist ideals. Spiritualism, being an unorganized religion with no hierarchy, gave them an avenue to explore spirituality and social reform. Freethought would also find its home in Spiritualist camps such as Lily Dale.⁶⁴

Most prominently, Spiritualism has close ties to the suffrage movement. Writing in the *History of Woman Suffrage*, Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony wrote that there are, “but very few Spiritualists who were not in favor of woman suffrage.”⁶⁵ In fact Spiritualism and the American Women’s Rights Movement both trace their origins to the same year, 1848. They also developed in the same region, western New York. The Declaration of Rights and Sentiments was signed twenty-three miles away from Hydesville in Seneca Falls. The same table that was used to sign the declaration was later used as a medium’s table.⁶⁶

Mediumship provided a new outlet of authority and leadership for women during the antebellum era. The doctrine of Spiritualism had no qualms about women leading circles or giving lectures. There was also no formal hierarchy to tell them what was right and wrong. Mediumship subverted gender roles because women could say whatever they wanted to, a right not normally granted to them at the time, simply because they claimed it wasn’t them personally

⁶⁴ Christopher Grasso, *Skepticism and American Faith* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), chapter 10.

⁶⁵ Braude, *Radical Spirits*, 58.

⁶⁶ Braude, *Radical Spirits*.

speaking, it was the voice of the spirits they channeled. In a strange paradox, mediumship also complied to gender roles while also subverting them. One male Spiritualist wrote, “women in the nineteenth century are physically weak and declining, the functions depending on force and muscle are weak...the nerves are intensely sensitive...Hence sickness, rest, passivity, susceptibility, impressionability, mediumship, communication, revelation!”⁶⁷ The belief that women made better mediums because they were weaker often worked in women’s favor by giving them a voice.

Many prominent feminists were Spiritualists or had close associates who were Spiritualists. Lucy Stone’s sister-in-law, Susan B. Anthony’s cousin, and Elizabeth Cady Stanton’s neighbors were all Spiritualists. Anthony and Stanton even went as far as dabbling in Spiritualism. Anthony famously quipped, “The only religious sect in the world ... that has recognized the equality of woman is the Spiritualists.”⁶⁸ Amy Post, a former Hicksite Quaker and organizer of the women’s movement, became one of the first believers in Spiritualism. Conversely, many leaders in the antebellum Spiritualist movement were female as well. Emma Hardinge Britten, Victoria Woodhull, the Fox Sisters, and Cora L.V. Richmond all played prominent roles within the Spiritualist movement. Perhaps not coincidentally, the sunflower, the traditional symbol of women’s rights, is also the symbol of Spiritualism.⁶⁹

Nor was the institution of marriage sacred amongst the Spiritualists and many advocated free-love. The idea of radical independence of body and mind was popular amongst nineteenth-century Spiritualists. The sanctity and freedom of the soul drove this impetus. One Spiritualist,

⁶⁷ Braude, *Radical Spirits*, 83.

⁶⁸ Braude, *Radical Spirits*, 102.

⁶⁹ Braude, *Radical Spirits*.

Mary Fenn Love, described “domestic uncongeniality” as one of “the chief evils of society.”⁷⁰ Another Spiritualist protested, “rape is punished out of wedlock but in it paid no attention to.”⁷¹ Many Spiritualists became advocates of free love. Ann Braude, author of *Radical Spirits*, wrote, “‘free love’ is a problematic term for the historian because it was more frequently an accusation leveled at others than a positive self-identification.”⁷² Braude explained what Spiritualists really meant by ‘free-love’ was “the belief that morality of sexual intercourse depended on freely experienced mutual desire.”⁷³ Not all Spiritualists were anti-marriage but Spiritualism’s association with female liberation enabled such thinking.⁷⁴

Like the women’s rights movement, many Spiritualists aligned themselves with the abolitionist movement as well. There are many theological reasons for this alignment. The idea of a radical independence of the soul that so dominated Spiritualist belief was naturally at odds with the prospect of one soul “owning” another soul. Furthermore, the idea of an ordered cosmos meant that everything was interconnected. Therefore, the insidious nature of slavery infected all things on this earthly plane.⁷⁵

Many Spiritualists claimed to channel the spirits of former slave-owners in order to denounce the institution of chattel slavery itself. An example of this is when the medium Isaac Post said that he was in touch with the spirits of both George Washington and John C. Calhoun. Through Post, the spirit of Washington claimed, “we are on an equality here ... he that had enslaved his fellow man, was on a level with the enslaved.” Washington’s apparent spirit

⁷⁰ Braude, *Radical Spirits*, 117.

⁷¹ Braude, *Radical Spirits*, 119.

⁷² Braude, *Radical Spirits*, 127.

⁷³ Braude, *Radical Spirits*, 128.

⁷⁴ Braude, *Radical Spirits*.

⁷⁵ Robert Cox, *Body and Soul: A Sympathetic History of American Spiritualism* (Charlottesville, Virginia: University of Virginia Press, 2003).

continued with, “loose every fetter, so that the oppressor will see the necessity of loosening the binds that fasten him to his bondsman.”⁷⁶ Calhoun’s spirit also supposedly regretted his pro-slavery advocacy and bemoaned the institution referring to it as, “the delusion with which my mind had been filled.”⁷⁷

Not all Spiritualists were abolitionists, however. An example of this is Robert Hare. Hare, a famous nineteenth-century scientist and writer was a famous social and economic conservative who advocated laissez-faire economic policies, class-hierarchy, anti- Jeffersonianism, anti- Republicanism, and was staunchly pro-aristocracy. Hare became a Spiritualist during the 1850s and claimed that he was the “successor” of Benjamin Franklin and one of the few people who could contact the spirits of the Founding Fathers directly. Hare claimed to be a moderate abolitionist who believed in gradual emancipation. As section tension grew, however, Hare became estranged from abolitionist thought and blamed the rising national tension on the abolitionists. Hare thought the abolitionists provoked Southern slave owners which resulted in violence like Bleeding Kansas. Many Southern Spiritualists, although a definite regional minority in the Spiritualist movement, openly embraced pro-slavery ideology. One Tennessee Spiritualist pronounced that slaves, “are utterly discontented, unhappy, and worthless except when in subjection to the whites.”⁷⁸

The abolitionist Spiritualist voice in the North was far greater, however. Many prominent abolitionists became Spiritualists. William Lloyd Garrison, one of the most famous abolitionists in America, became interested in Spiritualism when he attended a séance in which a spirit rapped

⁷⁶ Cox, *Body and Soul*, 143.

⁷⁷ Alicia Puglionesi, “Perfect Medium”, *The Point Magazine*, 4/8/17, accessed Sept. 4, 2019, <https://thepointmag.com/2017/politics/perfect-medium>.

⁷⁸ Quote from Cox, *Body and Soul*, 151; Cox, *Body and Soul*.

out, “Spiritualism will work miracles in the cause of reform.”⁷⁹ Another prominent abolitionist and free woman of color, Rebecca Cox Jackson, claimed to have her first spiritual visions as a child. She became a Shaker and founded the first black Shaker community, located in Pennsylvania. With the explosion of Spiritualism onto the national scene during the 1840s, she turned her living room into a séance room. In 1842, Harriet Jacobs escaped slavery in the South and eventually wound up in Clinton, New York. Jacobs published *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl in 1861*. In her book, Jacobs uses the language and subtext of Spiritualism to convey her abolitionist message to a white readership. The famous sex magician and erotic alchemist, Paschal Beverly Randolph, also a racially mixed emancipationist, wholeheartedly embraced Spiritualism.⁸⁰

Like much of America, however, belief in emancipation did not mean belief in racial equality. After the Civil War, the Spiritualist movement largely neglected or disassociated itself from social reform movements. In 1922, the National Spiritualist Association of Churches expelled its black members making it a whites-only organization. In response, the National Colored Spiritualists Association was founded by black Spiritualists. One of the most famous and influential black Spiritualists was Leafy Anderson, a medium who founded the Spiritual Church Movement. Spiritual Churches are congregations that syncretize Christianity,

⁷⁹ Karen Abbott, “‘A Very Common Delusion’: Spiritualism and the Fox Sisters,” Smithsonian Institution, 10/29/12, accessed 10/13/19, <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/a-very-common-delusion-spiritualism-and-the-fox-sisters-97825064/>.

⁸⁰Potts, “Holy Spirits: The Power and Legacy of America’s Female Spiritualists;” John Deveney, *Paschal Beverly Randolph: A Nineteenth-Century Black American Spiritualist, Rosicrucian, and Sex Magician* (Albany, NY: State University Press, 1997).

Spiritualism, and even West African religion such as Vodun into their practices. Leafy founded the Spiritual Church Movement in New Orleans, Louisiana, and it persists to this day.⁸¹

Like feminism and abolitionism, Spiritualism has a complex relationship with Native Americans. “Indian spirit guides” are a common trope amongst mediums and Spiritualists. Many have criticized this trope as perpetuating the stereotypical notion of the “noble savage.” Indigenous peoples were seen by Spiritualists as the holders of ancient wisdom, pure, mystical, and connected with nature. One of the first records of an Indian spirit guide comes was in 1853 from a thirteen-year-old medium living in New Hampshire. This medium claimed to channel the ghost of Powhatan. One of Powhatan’s supposed lamentations was,

“There are but few left to lament the departure of a once powerful race, none to sit by the council fire, to seek friendship or plot revenge. No daring footsteps now climb the hills and precipices of our native land. And where is now the Indian maiden, who roamed through the glens and valleys, or skimmed o’er the lake in her swift canoe? All, all are gone! What is the cause of this downfall of a whole nation? Look to your brothers for an answer.”⁸²

This quotation reveals a cognitive dissonance amongst antebellum Spiritualists towards Native Americans. Spiritualists, or the spirits they channeled, spoke of the Native Americans as if they were all already gone when active relocation and extermination was still happening. The idea of a “vanishing race” was popular not just amongst Spiritualists, but in the larger national consciousness. The Spiritualists, however, actively adopted the idea of a “vanishing race” into their ideology more so than most other contemporary religions.⁸³

⁸¹ “National Colored Spiritualists Association,” encyclopedia.com, 11/8/19, accessed: 12/17/19, <https://www.encyclopedia.com/science/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/national-colored-spiritualist-association-churches>; Claude Jacobs, *The Spiritual Churches of New Orleans: Origins, Beliefs, and Rituals of an African-American Religion* (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 1991).

⁸² McGarry, *Ghosts of Futures Past*, 68.

⁸³ McGarry, *Ghosts of Futures Past*.

The Spiritualists appropriated the “vanished” Native Americans as their ancient forebears. This was common amongst the burgeoning religious landscape of nineteenth century America. The Mormons also claimed historical roots amongst the Native Americans. Appropriating the Native Americans into a sort of religious family-tree worked to legitimize new religious movements by giving them a sense of history. One amateur Spiritualist historian wrote an article entitled, “Spiritual Manifestations among the Indians”. In the article, the author described the Native Americans as once having had regular “intercourse with Spirits.”⁸⁴ The stereotypical view of Native Americans as spiritual, mystical, and noble appealed to white Spiritualists who themselves wanted to embody those same virtues.⁸⁵

In 1859, Emma Hardinge Britten gave a speech in which she extolled,

“the blessed Spiritualism! Reviled and scoffed at by the many, what glorious reforms does it not advocate? It forms no narrow circles around its own firesides, seeking to draw its earnest exponents of truth and justice, co-operating with every effort to reform, strives for the poor, neglected Indian, driven from his home and hunting-grounds by the arrogant usurpations of his white brother. God speed the Indians’ cause, for it is a just one.”⁸⁶

This speech represented a growing awareness of contemporary indigenous peoples amongst Spiritualists. During the 1860s, tension grew between the United States and Native American nations exponentially due to the Dakota War. The Spiritualists, joining the national zeitgeist, were one of the only large societal groups where many members advocated the cause of the Dakotas over the white settlers. The *Banner of Light*, a Spiritualist newspaper, was one of the few newspapers in the country that advocated openly for the justice of the Dakota cause against the United States government.⁸⁷

⁸⁴ McGarry, *Ghosts of Futures Past*, 75.

⁸⁵ McGarry, *Ghosts of Futures Past*.

⁸⁶ McGarry, *Ghosts of Futures Past*, 79.

⁸⁷ McGarry, *Ghosts of Futures Past*.

In 1863, a letter sent to *The Banner of Light* demanded action for the rights of Native Americans. The letter was signed by “King Phillip, Tecumseh, Osceola, and Billy Bowlegs,” all Native American spirits. Cora Wilburn, a medium, perhaps inspired by the letter, decreed, “We, as Spiritualists, pledged against all forms of slavery...the voice of the united body of Spiritualists go forth to the world in earnest protest against further infringements of the Indians’ rights.”⁸⁸ At a National Spiritualist Convention three years after her proclamation, a resolution was adopted: “we (the Spiritualists) issue our firm and unqualified condemnation, assured that we (the United States) are at war without just cause.”⁸⁹ These proclamations demonstrate the oftentimes public willingness of Spiritualists to support the cause of Native Americans.

Reactions Against Spiritualism

Many of the reforms advocated by Spiritualists were not popular and did not help the religion’s public image. The Spiritualist movement encountered resistance and drew detractors throughout the nineteenth-century. Critics of Spiritualists came from three main groups: scientists, journalists, and Christian clergymen. Scientists were the most ambivalent of the three groups. Many scientists endorsed or sympathized with the Spiritualists since the movement was relatively open to scientific inquiry and theory. Andrew Jackson Davis even wrote, in his book, *The Principles of Nature, Her Divine Revelations, and a Voice to Mankind*, “any theory, hypothesis, philosophy, sect, creed or institution that fears investigation, openly manifests its own error.”⁹⁰ Some scientists even became believers in Spiritualism themselves after conducting “experiments” on mediums. Other scientists were not convinced by Spiritualism and denounced

⁸⁸ McGarry, *Ghosts of Futures Past*, 90.

⁸⁹ McGarry, *Ghosts of Futures Past*, 90.

⁹⁰ Andrew Jackson Davis, *The Principles of Nature, Her Divine Revelations, and a Voice to Mankind* (Boston: Adamant Media Corporation, 2005), 21.

its practices. The press, echoing the sentiments of many non-believers and skeptics, largely had a field-day ridiculing Spiritualists. Spiritualists in the press were usually decried as hucksters, charlatans, and frauds. One political magazine, *Round Table*, described Spiritualists as “lank, long-haired and cadaverous...fattening on the ignorance of the public.”⁹¹ The most vocal critics of Spiritualism were Christian denominations, however. Many Spiritualists satisfied themselves by saying that the vitriol spewed at them by Christians was out of jealousy because members were leaving Christian congregations for Spiritualist circles. Clergy, priests, and pastors often disagreed with Spiritualist doctrine and rejected it on theological grounds. Ironically, Spiritualists often brought criticism upon themselves as they openly attacked organized religion and established dogmas.⁹²

Many saw Spiritualism as dangerous because it presented a threat to the status-quo. One book published in 1855 was entitled: *A book for the Times, Lucy Boston; Or Woman's Rights and Spiritualism: Illustrating the Follies and Delusions of the Nineteenth Century*. Spiritualists were labeled as courting sin, promoting adultery, and prone to insanity. The Reverend H. Mattison claimed that over 90 people had been driven insane in 1852 alone by “spirit-rapping.” At times, anti-Spiritualist rhetoric could even turn violent. In 1850, Margaret Fox was attacked by a mob of Irish Catholics on a visit to Troy, New York. This vitriol spewed at Spiritualists was more in reaction to their Freethinking and challenges to societal norms rather than a reaction against their religious beliefs.⁹³

⁹¹ Quote from McGarry, *Ghosts of Futures Past*, 55; McGarry, *Ghosts of Futures Past*.

⁹² Nelson, *Spiritualism and Society*.

⁹³ McGarry, *Ghosts of Futures Past*; Nelson, *Spiritualism and Society*.

Many prominent citizens denounced Spiritualism. Ralph Waldo Emerson, himself a harbinger of the new Transcendentalism, called Spiritualism “the rat-hole revelation.”⁹⁴ American author Nathaniel Hawthorne, was critical of Spiritualism. When he discovered his wife was engaging in mesmerist healings, he wrote to her, “Supporting that this [mesmeric] power arises from the transfusion of one spirit into another, it seems to me that the sacredness of an individual is violated by it; there would be an intrusion into thy holy of holies—and the intruder would not be thy husband!”⁹⁵ Hawthorne was not the only literary figure who took a harsh view of Spiritualism. Charles Dickens wrote, “although I shall be ready to receive enlightenment from any source, I must say I have very little hope of it from spirits who express themselves through mediums; as I have never yet observed them to talk anything but nonsense.”⁹⁶

It is unclear how many Americans turned to Spiritualism during the 1850s. Estimates range from 6,000, to one million, and even as high as eleven million (the latter being hazarded guesswork by an alarmed Catholic Church). The number of Spiritualists in the antebellum-era is hard to quantify due to the decentralized belief system, lack of organization, and the fact that it is unclear how many were genuine believers, curiosity seekers, or simply amused by the notion of a séance. Other sects also adopted Spiritualist beliefs into their own theology. The Shakers, Quakers, Mormons, the Seventh-Day Adventists, some sects of Protestantism, and Unitarians all incorporated some sort of Spiritualist practice into their tenets. People within these religious

⁹⁴ Ruth Brandon, *The Spiritualists* (London: Knopf Publishers, 1983), 48.

⁹⁵ Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The Centenary Edition of the Works of Nathaniel Hawthorne, The Letters: 1813-1843* (Columbus, Ohio: Ohio State University Press, 1965).

⁹⁶ Brandon, *The Spiritualists*, 56.

communities viewed Spiritualism as not a standalone religion but another plank to add to an already formed doctrine.⁹⁷

Freethought

The philosophical Freethought movement would continue to integrate itself into the Spiritualist movement. The disorganized nature of Spiritualism naturally complimented the philosophy of Freethought which was popularized due to the democratizing intellectual fervor of the Enlightenment and Revolutionary eras. Spiritualists adopted Freethought practices by promoting the ideas of spiritual freedom, democracy, personal experience, and equality. In 1857 the Spiritualist newspaper, *The Spiritual Age*, claimed that the Declaration of Independence was “radically repugnant to all sectarianism, to all Protestant-popery, to all authority over individual conscience, to all spiritual rule or dictation, to all bigotry and intolerance, and to all prescription and persecution, in any way for opinion’s sake.”⁹⁸ Religious institutions and dogma were seen as insidious and contrary to Freethought and Spiritualism. Mary Fenn Davis, a Spiritualist and women’s right’s advocate, declared that, “ecclesiastical regulations merge into customs; individualism ceases; and men become automatons, and exist for centuries on a dead level of mental slavery and conservatism.”⁹⁹ Another Spiritualist, John Murray Spear said that spirits informed him that ministers and the clergy “cannot easily utter his highest thought” because they were being controlled by an earthly hierarchy that valued power and money over truth and morality.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁷ R. Laurence Moore, *In Search of Crows: Spiritualism, Parapsychology, and American Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press: 1977); Carroll, *Spiritualism in Antebellum America*.

⁹⁸ Quote from Carroll, *Spiritualism in Antebellum America*, 36; Carroll, *Spiritualism in Antebellum America*.

⁹⁹ Carroll, *Spiritualism in Antebellum America*, 39.

¹⁰⁰ Carroll, *Spiritualism in Antebellum America*.

Spiritualism and the Civil War

Unfortunately, debates over the veracity, morality, philosophy, and “science” of Spiritualism would soon all be drowned out by the Civil War. Spiritualists would play an active part in the conflict. Two of John Brown’s “secret six,” Thomas Wentworth Higginson and George Luther Stearns, were Spiritualists. One of Brown’s collaborators was Aaron Dwight Stevens, a proselytizing Spiritualist who was executed because of his role in the raid on Harper’s Ferry. Lydia Maria Child, one of the most active reformers of the nineteenth-century and a harbinger of the national divide, delved into Spiritualism in her personal life and in her writings. Many members of Lincoln’s cabinet had involved themselves in or had close family members that were active in the Spiritualist movement. These included Hannibal Hamlin, William H. Seward, Charles Sumner, Benjamin F. Wade, and Isaac P. Walker. Gideon Welles, Secretary of the Navy under Lincoln, and his wife Mary Jane, often consulted with mediums. Edwin Stanton, Lincoln’s second Secretary of War, had family members who believed “mediumistic abilities” ran in their family. Julia Grant, the wife of Ulysses S. Grant, claimed she had psychic and mediumistic abilities. She credited psychic visions as saving her and her husband’s lives twice. First, when she had a vision telling her not to go to Ford’s Theatre and second, when a vision warned her to get out of Chicago right before the Great Fire of 1871.¹⁰¹

Spiritualists used their religion to try to influence the war. The *Boston Daily Evening Transcript* reported in 1862 that, “The Spiritualists, or at least some of them, think that the rebels get their intelligence of the designs of the Union Generals through mediums, who are able to get

¹⁰¹ Mark Lause, *Free Spirits: Spiritualism, Republicanism, and Radicalism in the Civil War Era* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2016); University of Michigan, *Lydia Maria Child Papers (1835-1894)*, repository: William L. Clements Library, University of Michigan, accessed: 10/17/19, <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/c/clementsead/umich-wcl-M-1497chi?view=text>; Cormac O’Brien, *Secret Lives of the First Ladies*, (Philadelphia: Quirk Books, 2005).

into their thoughts and swindle them out of their plans.”¹⁰² Thomas Richmond, a Spiritualist and industrialist, delivered a message to Lincoln himself that supposedly came from the spirit world.

The note read:

“How shall these evils be arrested? Only by immediate and vigorous prosecution of the war, by the government’s availing itself of every possible instrumentality in its power. By arming the negroes wherever they can be reached, as rapidly as possible; and by discharging all officers who are not really in earnest in the work of crushing the rebellion.”¹⁰³

The Civil War, in many ways, hurt the Spiritualist movement. The war took the national spotlight off Spiritualism and, with the dramatic social upheaval caused by the conflict, its force as a social movement waned. Interest turned away from the exploits of mediums, stories of the supernatural, and the reality of the spirit realm and towards tales from the battlefields, the momentous political dealings, and the horrors of war. As evidence of this decline, Spiritualist newspapers like the *Herald of Progress*, *Christian Spiritualist*, and *Spiritual Telegraph* did not survive the war due to lack of readership.¹⁰⁴ There was a brief spike in Spiritualism after the war, but then it continued to decline throughout the late 1860s and the 1870s.

Physical Mediumship

The decline in Spiritualism led many mediums to desperately conduct even more impressive, supposedly supernatural, feats to retain business. Mediumship had become big business for many people and there was an impetus for mediums to out-do other mediums in order to earn more clients. This trend started as early as the beginning of the 1850s. By the

¹⁰² *Boston Daily Evening Transcript*, Boston, MA, April 8, 1862.

¹⁰³ Thomas Richmond, *God Dealing with Slavery: God’s Instrumentalities in Emancipating the African Slave in America. Spirit Messages from Franklin, Lincoln, Adams, Jackson, and others* (Chicago: Religio-Philosophical Publishing House, 1870).

¹⁰⁴ Lause, *Free Spirits*.

1860s, it had reached even greater levels. Simple rappings were not a draw anymore. This led mediums to utilize all sorts of tactics to produce incredible phenomena. This included slate-writing, materialization of objects, levitation, table-tipping, phantom lights, manifestations of ghostly limbs that could physically touch people, the mysterious playing of musical instruments, objects moving by unseen forces, and full-bodied apparitions. Much of this was produced using fraudulent practices and chicanery.¹⁰⁵

The Society for Psychical Research

The reaction to incidences of fraudulent mediumship led to the establishment of groups seeking to verify Spiritualist claims. One such group was the Society for Psychical Research (SPR). Established in Britain in 1882, it sought to investigate supernatural and paranormal claims in a supposedly scientific manner. The SPR rose out of dissatisfaction amongst scholars, scientists, and researchers towards the scientific establishment's negative view on investigating paranormal claims. Henry Sidgwick, one of the founders of the SPR, called this establishment snobbery "a scandal to the enlightened age we live."¹⁰⁶ Likeminded individuals, with an interest in investigating paranormal phenomena, wanted some sort of organization that was open to this type of research. The result of this was the SPR. Over two-hundred investigators initially joined the SPR. They came from occupations such as varied as artists, clergymen, politicians, scientists, and writers. Psychical research was largely a hobby of the wealthy and names such as Balfour, Tennyson, and Ruskin joined the ranks of the SPR.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁵ Weisburg, *Talking to the Dead*; Brandon, *The Spiritualists*.

¹⁰⁶ Blum, *Ghost Hunters*, 72.

¹⁰⁷ Blum, *Ghost Hunters*.

The Confession of the Fox Sisters

The Spiritualist movement itself did more to discredit itself than the SPR ever did, however. Particularly the Fox Sisters, who, after years of stress in the public limelight, had formed a reliance on alcohol. Margaret, in an attempt to disassociate herself with the religion and get her life back on track decided to admit that her mediumship was fraudulent. Kate, her famous sister, agreed. Therefore in 1888, Margaret sent a letter to the *New York Herald*. The letter was entitled, “The Curse of Spiritualism” and its contents denounced the religion as fraudulent and full of charlatans. She claimed that Spiritualism promoted ignorance and ruined the lives of many of its adherents. Margaret was far from finished, however. After the publication of the letter, she summoned a reporter from the *New York Herald* to her apartment. She fulminated to the reporter about how Spiritualism was a hoax, even going as far as to show him how they had performed the initial rappings in their Hydesville cabin over forty years ago. Perhaps the most pitiful aspect of her tirade was her rant about how hard she personally had sought proof that life exists after death. This desire for answers had been fueled by the early death of her husband. The results were disappointing, however. She said, “I have explored the unknown as far as a human will can ... nothing came of it- nothing, nothing.”¹⁰⁸

What followed was a public confession from Margaret Fox. The next day the reporter published an article entitled, “A Celebrated Medium Says the Spirits Never Return.”¹⁰⁹ The most important aspect of the article was that Margaret promised to make a public appearance at the New York Academy of Music on October 21, 1888. She claimed that this appearance would expose the true nature of Spiritualism. On October 21, Margaret and Kate entered the Academy

¹⁰⁸ Quote from Weisburg, *Talking to the Dead*, 240; Weisburg, *Talking to the Dead*.

¹⁰⁹ Weisburg, *Talking to the Dead*, 239.

of Music to the mixture of cheers and jeers. Margaret walked on stage and began addressing the crowd by implying her own innocence. She regaled the audience by recounting how she was just only eight when “this horrible deception began.”¹¹⁰ Margaret was actually thirteen when she first purported to hear the Hydesville rappings. She then stated that she and Kate had tied apples to strings and dropped them on the floor while her parents were asleep or downstairs to mimic rappings. It was meant to be an April Fool’s prank, she continued. When the apples proved insufficient, they learned how to crack their joints in specific ways to create a rapping. She then invited several physicians onstage to examine her as she demonstrated the rappings made with her joints. The physicians acknowledged that the rappings were indeed coming from a cracking in their joints.¹¹¹

The National Spiritualist Association of Churches

During the latter half of the nineteenth-century there was a movement within Spiritualism for more organization and, in the wake of the Fox Sister fallout, more regulation against fraudulent mediums. Irregularly, since the 1860s, Spiritualists had held national conventions to pass resolutions, create doctrine, speak in unison, and display their national presence. These conventions attracted criticisms from Spiritualist circles that believed in non-organization and who believed that any organization would infringe upon their spiritual independence. The movement to organize persisted, however. At the National Convention of Spiritualists in 1867, one speaker proclaimed, “our forces are disorganized, scattered, and so individualized, that they

¹¹⁰ Weisburg, *Talking to the Dead*, 242.

¹¹¹ Weisburg, *Talking to the Dead*.

can accomplish nothing. Let us marshal and equip them for the contest between sectarian bigotry and free thought. Disintegrated, we can do nothing. United, what can we not do?"¹¹²

Seeking more organization than mere annual conventions (Spiritualists had been meeting in national conventions since 1862) some Spiritualists gathered in Chicago in 1893, to form the National Spiritualist Association of Churches (NSAC). The founders of the NSAC were Harrison D. Barrett, James Peebles, and Cora L.V. Richmond. The NSAC was founded with the expressed goals of centralizing the chaotic and disparate Spiritualist movement and to also establish standards for mediums in response to accusations of fraud. With the founding of the NSAC, Spiritualism became a federally-recognized religion in the United States. The NSAC has a British counterpart called the Spiritualists' National Union which was founded in 1901. The NSAC and the SNU remain the two largest Spiritualist organizations in the world.¹¹³

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle

A member of neither organization but perhaps the most famous Spiritualist of all time was Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, author of the *Sherlock Holmes* series. A member of the SPR since the 1890s, he became even more obsessed with Spiritualism after he reportedly heard the spirit his son Kingsley whisper "forgive me" a year after he had died from the Spanish Flu.¹¹⁴ Due to this event, Conan Doyle became a Christian Spiritualist and also joined the Ghost Club, a society similar to the SPR, yet older and more exclusive.¹¹⁵

¹¹² Quote from McGarry, *Ghosts of Futures Past*, 62; McGarry, *Ghosts of Futures Past*.

¹¹³ Joyce LaJudice, *Lily Dale: History as it Happened, Book One: 1800-1883*; J. Gordon Melton, *Encyclopedia of American Religions* (Detroit: Gale Publishers, 2009).

¹¹⁴ Weisburg, *Talking to the Dead*, 264.

¹¹⁵ Weisburg, *Talking to the Dead*.

Famously, Conan Doyle's Spiritualism extended to a belief in fairies. In 1917 two cousins, Elsie, aged sixteen, and Frances, aged nine, took photographs of themselves with cardboard cutouts of fairies in rural England. They showed their parents and insisted the photos portrayed real fairies. Their mother believed that the fairies were genuine and took the pictures to a local meeting of the Theosophical Society. One of the members saw the photographs and sent them to a photographic expert who said that the photographs were untampered and unedited. Word of the fairy photographs spread from there and attracted the attention of Conan Doyle, who included them in an article in *The Strand Magazine*. The article was a success and that particular issue of *The Strand* sold out days after publication. Doyle, believing that the photos proved the existence of fairies, published a book in 1922 called *The Coming of the Fairies*. In 1983, Elsie and Frances admitted that the photographs were faked, although they continued to assert that they had seen actual fairies throughout their lives.¹¹⁶

Harry Houdini

One person who was unconvinced by the photos was Harry Houdini, one of the most renowned critics of Spiritualism ever. Houdini began visiting mediums during the 1890s after the deaths of his half-brother and father. Houdini also began collecting books on Spiritualism and, in 1902, attended the trial of a medium suspected of fraud in Germany. Legend states that Houdini's passion for debunking Spiritualists arose from the fallout over the death of his mother. Houdini had a famously close relationship with her and many claim that it was after her death in 1913, Houdini began attending séances. Unconvinced by these séances, however, and incensed

¹¹⁶Josh Jones, "Arthur Conan Doyle & the Cottingley Fairies: How Two Young Girls Fooled Sherlock Holmes' Creator," Open Culture, 1/23/13, accessed: 11/5/19, http://www.openculture.com/2013/01/arthur_conan_doyle_the_cottingley_fairies_how_two_young_girls_fooled_the_creator_of_sherlock_holmes.html; Simanek, Donald Simanek, "Arthur Conan Doyle, Spiritualism, and Fairies," lockhaven.edu, 1/2009, accessed: 11/5/2019.

by what he perceived as fraud, he made it his personal mission to expose mediums. Many scholars point out, however, that this legend is likely false as Houdini did not publicly expose any mediums until 1920, well after his mother's death, and had an interest in Spiritualism well before his mother even died.¹¹⁷

During the First World War, Houdini became close friends with Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. As interested in Spiritualism as ever, Houdini discussed the topic with the Spiritualism-obsessed Conan Doyle. Things between the two soon ran amuck when Conan Doyle's wife, Lady Conan Doyle, claimed to channel Houdini's mother. Lady Conan Doyle claimed Houdini's mother spoke perfect English when in reality, his mother spoke none. Furthermore, Lady Conan Doyle was repeatedly factually incorrect about specifics regarding Houdini's mother. Interested in preserving his friendship with Conan Doyle, Houdini kept the fact that he was unconvinced by Lady Conan Doyle's claims to himself. Conan Doyle interpreted Houdini's silence as belief and publicly pronounced that he had converted Houdini to Spiritualism. Offended by Doyle's impudence and left with no other choice, Houdini publicly denied Doyle's proclamation and expressed his disbelief in Spiritualism. Conan Doyle, taken aback, defended himself and his beliefs publicly. Houdini, escalating the situation, began exposing fraudulent mediums to prove his point.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁷ Ken Trombly, "Houdini and the Spiritualists," Lecture, National Capital Area Skeptics, Washington, D.C., 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b-iE09us7zA>; Joe Posnanski, "The Trial of Harry Houdini," LitHub, 10/22/19, accessed: 11/26/19, <https://lithub.com/the-trial-of-harry-houdini/>; Javier Yanes, "Houdini, the Hunter of Fake Ghosts," OpenMind, 03/24/18, accessed: 11/5/19, <https://www.bbvaopenmind.com/en/science/leading-figures/houdini-the-hunter-of-fake-ghosts/>.

¹¹⁸ Brian Dunning, "Harry Houdini and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle," Skeptoid, 11/2/14, accessed: 11/26/19, <https://skeptoid.com/episodes/4430>; Joe Schwarcz, "The Strange Friendship Between Harry Houdini and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle," McGill: Office for Science and Society, 03/20/17, accessed: 11/5/2019, <https://mcgill.ca/oss/article/history-you-asked/how-did-sir-arthur-conan-doyle-trick-houdini>.

Houdini's most famous debunking was that of the medium Mina Crandon. In 1924, *The Scientific American Magazine* was ready to pay \$2,500 to whomever could prove Crandon's chicanery. She was chosen because of her skill as a medium and her disinterest in receiving money for her services. Houdini and a group of researchers convinced Crandon to let them study her. After a few seances, Houdini was convinced he knew her tricks. He demonstrated to his fellow researchers how she pulled off her feats, which included levitating tables, ringing a bell trapped in a box, and supposedly moving objects telekinetically. Not all of Houdini's fellow researchers were convinced that she was fraudulent, even after Houdini's display, however. Because the team was divided on their conclusions, *The Scientific American* refused to reward the money. The event did, however, publicize Houdini's attacks on Spiritualism.

Partly due to the bad press caused by Houdini's exposures, Spiritualism languished throughout the 1930s and 40s. Overall, in fact, the 1940s represented a low in American religiosity that mirrored the disinterest in Spiritualism. According to Tobin Grant, a professor at Southern Illinois University and an editor for the *Journal of Scientific Study of Religion*, Americans in the 1940s were about as religious as Americans in the 2010s, the 2010s being an era of historic low in American religiosity. Spiritualism was especially hard-hit due to the Great Depression, which slammed the mostly middle-class Spiritualists. The 1930s and 1940s was perhaps the lowest point in the history of Spiritualism.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁹ Grant Tobin, "Why 1940s America Wasn't as Religious as You Think," Religious News Service, 12/11/14, accessed: 9/23/19, <https://religionnews.com/2014/12/11/1940s-america-wasnt-religious-think-rise-fall-american-religion/>.

Spiritualism in the Modern Era

Interestingly, it was America's Cold War policies and ideology that would reinvigorate interest in Spiritualism and religion as a whole. The U.S. cast itself as the protector of freedom of religion in the face of state-mandated Soviet atheism. President Dwight D. Eisenhower added the phrase "under God" to the Pledge of Allegiance, and "In God We Trust" became the official motto of the United States. America's Cold War shift towards state Christianity, the use of new mass media by Evangelists such as Billy Graham, and books such as *The Power of Positive Thinking* helped revive religious zeal in the United States. In 1950, only 49% of Americans belonged to a church, by 1960 that number had jumped to 69%. Evangelical Christianity became mainstream and Christianity began to be more and more associated with the status quo of white middle-class America.¹²⁰

As early as the 1950s, a popular counterculture emerged that challenged mainstream and traditional belief, including Christianity. With the counterculture came different ways of spiritual thinking. The term "New Age" was coined in the nineteenth-century by Helena Blavatsky, founder of Theosophy, when she announced the coming of a "new age" or the "Aquarian Age." The term was utilized in the 1960s to describe the range of new, revived, or appropriated religious belief. Religions and beliefs such as Theosophy, Spiritualism, Satanism, Paganism, Hinduism, Buddhism, UFO religions, and Native American religions all substantially rose in popularity during the New Age movement. This occurred concurrently with the other

¹²⁰ Jeffrey Owen Jones, "The Man Who Wrote the Pledge of Allegiance," *Smithsonian*, 11/03, accessed 9/23/19, <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/the-man-who-wrote-the-pledge-of-allegiance-93907224/>; "Society in the 1950s," *Shmoop*, accessed: 11/26/2019, <https://www.shmoop.com/1950s/society.html>; Tobin, "Why 1940s Religion Wasn't as Popular as You Think."

countercultural movements of the 1960s. The New Age brought reinvigorated interest into the Spiritualist movement.¹²¹

Conclusion

This history of Spiritualism leaves out many episodes, events, nuances, and other perspectives of Spiritualist history. Like any other religion, Spiritualism has a vast, complicated, and rich history. The goal of the preceding history was to demonstrate Spiritualism's impact on American society, its importance as a movement, and to help contextualize Lily Dale. As will soon be seen, the camp has many connections and associations with famous Spiritualists and events in the religion's history. These connections and associations would be lost without an understanding of the overall history of Spiritualism. The religion has also waxed and waned numerous times over the course of American history. These ups and downs are reflected in the overall history of Lily Dale as well. Lily Dale also reflects many of the trends common in the Spiritualist movement such as promoting social reform and advocating Freethought. The impact Spiritualism has had on social movements, pop culture, and religious history is undeniable, nonetheless.

¹²¹ Weisburg, *Talking to the Dead*.

CHAPTER FOUR: THE HISTORY OF LILY DALE

Introduction

The history of Lily Dale is essential to understanding the community as an important cultural landscape. There are many perspectives through which to view the history of Lily Dale since the narrative of its past often intersects with the larger history of Spiritualism and other historical topics including the suffrage movement, economic history, and more. This historical account will attempt to convey as much of an all-encompassing view of Lily Dale's past as is possible.

Lily Dale's history can be broken up into five historical periods. The first is the "Pre-Development Period," 1800-1879. This period represents the time before the camp was constructed in 1879 and includes how it was formed. The second is "the Cassadaga Free Lake Association Period" from 1879-1902. This was the name of the camp when it first opened in 1879. This period also coincides with what has been dubbed "the golden age of Modern Spiritualism (i.e. the nineteenth-century)." This is the most celebrated and renowned period of Lily Dale's past amongst camp-goers today. The third period is the "City of Light Period," 1903-1906. It derives its name from when the Cassadaga Free Lake Association changed its name to

the City of Light. This was a transitional period and the shortest period of significance in the camp's history. The fourth period is the "Lily Dale Historical Period," 1906-1970. This period is the least understood and the least studied due to the lack of easily accessible historical sources on it. The final period, the "Modern Lily Dale Period," 1970-2020, is the camp in its modern form and is not considered historical due to the fifty-year rule dictated by the National Park Service.

Lily Dale History

Pre-Development Period (1800-1879)

White settlement in what is now Chautauqua County, where Lily Dale would come to be located, began during the early nineteenth-century. By 1806, up to twenty families now resided near what is now Chautauqua Lake. The official organization of Chautauqua County occurred in 1811. The village of Cassadaga was also organized in the 1810s. "Cassadaga" comes from the Seneca word "Gus Da Ga" which means "under the rocks."¹²² The area around Cassadaga was swampy and isolated. The village of Cassadaga was in an area called the Cassadaga Swamps. The swamps were notoriously thick with evergreens and underbrush. Wolves made their homes in the swamps and tormented the new white settlers by hunting their sheep and other livestock. Four communitywide wolf hunts were conducted in 1824 alone to subdue the ravenous animals. Roads in the area were not much more than small paths through the forest. This rugged isolation wouldn't last much longer, however, as more settlers poured into the county, including eight slaves by 1817.¹²³

¹²² Joyce LaJudice, *Lily Dale: History as it Happened, Book One: 1800-1883*, self-published booklet.

¹²³ LaJudice, *Lily Dale: History as it Happened*.

Throughout the 1820s and 1830s, the pace of white settlement in Chautauqua County increased. In 1818, the steamboat *Walk in the Water* became the first of its kind to navigate Lake Erie. This new development signaled the beginning of increased transportation, communication, and trade with Cassadaga and the burgeoning city of Buffalo. One of the first newspapers in the county, *the Chautauqua Eagle*, began printing in 1819. Farmers also began introducing non-native crop species including Catawba grape root. By 1827, the town of Fredonia boasted 393 residents, a few shops, some stagecoach lines, and more. An attempt was made to clear the Cassadaga Lakes for navigation that same year. Unfortunately, the lakes proved too unruly and the Cassadaga Navigation Company, the organization behind the clearing effort, folded. Nonetheless, by 1828, steamboats from other companies had found ways to ply the Cassadaga Lakes. The main industries in the county during this time were lumbering, the manufacturing of fertilizer, asheries, and farming. In 1838, the first post office opened in the village of Cassadaga.¹²⁴

1844 turned out to a pivotal year for the history of Lily Dale. It was in this year that a “Dr. Moran” came from Vermont to Laona, New York, near Cassadaga, to give lectures on mesmerism. One of those who came to see Dr. Moran was a frail Tuberculosis-ridden house painter named Jeremiah F. Carter. Interested in Moran’s lecture, Carter began to experiment with mesmerism himself. Carter and a group of likeminded individuals met at Graham’s General Store in Laona to practice mesmerism. A Mr. William Johnson, the son of a local Methodist minister, attempted to mesmerize Carter. Apparently, the experiment was successful and Carter began frequently going into mesmeric trances. While in trance, Carter would identify information he would have no other ways of knowing and would miraculously diagnose the

¹²⁴ LaJudice, *Lily Dale: History as it Happened*.

ailments of the sick that came to see him. Carter's trances became locally famous and he attracted fellow mesmerists to the area. Eventually, he would also begin attracting Spiritualists.¹²⁵

In 1855, Jeremiah Carter and other likeminded individuals began the Religious Society of Free Thinkers of the Village of Laona. This group was not exclusive to Spiritualists and advocated Freethought and a diversity of belief amongst members. They argued that any person was entitled to voice their thoughts, "regardless of creed, race, sex, or color."¹²⁶ Many in the group were Spiritualists, including, by this time, Carter himself. In December, seven trustees were elected and the group shortened its name to the Laona Free Association (LFA). That same year they purchased an old Universalist church and used it to host speakers and hold discussions. Spiritualists such as Andrew Jackson Davis, Cora L. V. Scott, and John Murray Spear all spoke at different times to the LFA. One of the largest draws to the LFA was to witness Carter's uncanny ability to diagnose and treat ailments. By this time, Carter was claiming that a he could channel a spirit named Doctor Hedges that was giving him the knowledge to diagnose people. Many people were convinced by Carter's ability and joined the LFA because of it. The LFA, being the progenitor of Lily Dale, represents the importance of Freethought since Lily Dale's beginning.¹²⁷

The enthusiastic discussions and debates held by the LFA reflect the spirit of independence prevalent throughout Spiritualism and the ideology of Freethought. In 1870, the

¹²⁵ LaJudice, *Lily Dale: History as it Happened*.

¹²⁶ H.D. Barrett and A.W. McCoy, *Cassadaga: It's History and Teachings* (Meadville, Pennsylvania: The Gazette Printing Company, 1891), 42.

¹²⁷ Alpha Husted, "The Founder of Lily Dale," Lily Dale Mediums League, accessed: 3/13/20, <https://themediumsleague.org/lily-dale>; LaJudice, *Lily Dale: History as it Happened*; Barrett and McCoy, *Cassadaga*.

LFA hosted a “Mediums and Speaker Convention” in Laona and it attracted Spiritualists from all over the region. The first debate held at the convention was over a resolution on whether the LFA should condemn organized Christianity or not. A Mrs. Clark argued that they ought not to, “condemn the bridge that had carried us safely over” and compared orthodox Christianity to a crutch that was needed “until sufficient strength was gained to carry on without it.”¹²⁸ A Mr. Wheelock responded by arguing that, “the church makes the crutch necessary, by making the cripple.”¹²⁹ A Mr. Fish noted that Spiritualism was not blameless itself and it wasn’t fair to condemn one religion when their own had its problems. Later in the meeting Fish pronounced, “when we can agree to disagree, we shall have a (sic) organization that God himself cannot overthrow.”¹³⁰ Debates like this were common amongst Freethinkers like those in the LFA and would be common throughout the history of Lily Dale.¹³¹

1877 would prove to be another pivotal year in the development of Lily Dale. That year, a committee of the LFA met at Carter’s house and decided to hold a large Spiritualist camp meeting near the Cassadaga Lakes from September 11th to the 16th. The LFA was already having yearly “Spiritualist Picnics” as early as 1873. The new 1877 camp meeting, however, was Carter’s idea as he claimed a spirit voice clearly told him to, “go to the Aldens and arrange for a camp meeting.”¹³² Willard Alden, whom the spirit voice had commanded Carter to see, was a wealthy supporter of the LFA and owned a farm six miles from Laona near Middle Cassadaga Lake. A moment that lives long in the lore of Lily Dale was when the sickly Jeremiah Carter walked the six miles from Laona to Willard Alden’s farm to tell him of the spirit command for

¹²⁸ LaJudice, *Lily Dale: History as it Happened*, 21.

¹²⁹ LaJudice, *Lily Dale: History as it Happened*, 21.

¹³⁰ LaJudice, *Lily Dale: History as it Happened*, 21.

¹³¹ LaJudice, *Lily Dale: History as it Happened*.

¹³² Barrett and McCoy, *Cassadaga*, 43.

the camp meeting. Carter told Alden, “from no other place do I find so widely a radiating spiritual influence for good as from Lily Dale. I have nothing but brightness to prophecy for its future.”¹³³ The meeting consisted of six speakers and saw an attendance of around 100 people every day until the last day of the meeting, a Sunday, which saw about 400 attendees. Carter, stood in the road on the way to the camp and collected the ten-cent fee to attend. Because the first camp meeting was a success, the LFA decided to host annual camp meetings. In order to do this, some wealthy supporters of the LFA purchased a new steamship, named *The Marion Skidmore*, to ply the Cassadaga Lakes and bring people from one side to another.¹³⁴

This camp meeting was undoubtedly inspired by the nearby Chautauqua Institution which was founded just a few years earlier in 1874. The Chautauqua Institution began as a training school for Sunday School teachers. With each consecutive summer, the Institution expanded its programming to include topics such as the arts and music. It eventually added entertainment opportunities such as concerts, plays, debates, and lectures. The Chautauqua Institute was by and for Christians, however, and shied away from controversial topics such as suffrage, evolution, and more. The Chautauqua Institute began what was called the Chautauqua Movement which was a flurry of similar camps set up throughout the country. Lily Dale’s geographical proximity to the Chautauqua Institute is likely no coincidence. Lily Dale became the Freethought and Spiritualist version of the Chautauqua Institute. It differentiated itself from its predecessor by openly allowing speakers who spoke on non-Christian theology, science, women’s rights, and other topics not suited for a Christian organization like the Chautauqua Institute.¹³⁵

¹³³ Husted, “The Founder of Lily Dale.”

¹³⁴ LaJudice, *Lily Dale: History as it Happened*; Ron Nagy w. Joyce LaJudice, *The Spirits of Lily Dale* (Lakeville, Minnesota: Galde Press Inc., 2017); Barrett and McCoy, *Cassadaga*.

¹³⁵ Victoria Chase, *We Called it Culture- The Story of Chautauqua* (Orange, California: Chapman University Press, 2013).

After the first camp meeting in 1877, however, things fell apart. Carter and two men had built a cottage on the Alden's grounds. The LFA also spent \$160 to fence off their new property. The arrangement began to falter, however, when Alden passed away and there was a disagreement over what percentage of the gate fee should go to the Alden heirs as rental payment for the property. The LFA thought it unfair that any percentage go to the Alden heirs as the LFA paid for the maintenance and general expenses of the site. On August 29th, 1879, a committee met at Carter's cottage to discuss what to do. The consensus was that the LFA should purchase land independent of the Alden's and host a new camp meeting there. The committee then formed a corporate body for the purpose of buying land under New York state law. The corporate body crafted by-laws and had acquired investors in its stock. A woman named Amelia H. Colby concocted the name of the new venture, the Cassadaga Free Lake Association (CFLA). The articles of incorporation were filed on August 26th, 1879.¹³⁶

The search then began for a new location for the camp meeting. Members of the CFLA debated over where the new site should be. Some argued for a site near Chautauqua Lake, others for a spot near Lake Erie, and another group supported buying land near Cassadaga Lake. The third group won out and, in 1879, approximately 20 and 5/8 acres of land was purchased on Fern Island. The land was purchased by CFLA representative Albert Cobb from John and Marion Fisher for \$1845.12. The new site neighbored the former camp meeting site on the Alden Farm to the north. Although the new site was formally named the Cassadaga Lake Camp Meeting Grounds (CLCMG), it was colloquially called "Lily Dale." Cobb then engaged a surveyor to have the grounds divided into cottage lots.¹³⁷

¹³⁶ LaJudice, *Lily Dale: History as it Happened*.

¹³⁷ LaJudice, *Lily Dale: History as it Happened*.

The construction of the CLCMG began in September of 1879. Albert Cobb, now the president of the CFLA, had the honor of felling the first tree when they began clearing the grounds for the camp. When the cottages were built, they were supposed to be rented out for \$3.00 a year and none of the lots were allowed to be privately sold. The first cottage was built by May and Inez Huntington and was located somewhere along where Cottage Row is today. The Huntington cottage was built before the CLCMG was incorporated, however. The first cottage constructed under the auspices of the CFLA was built and occupied by a man named Linus Sage. Mrs. Mary E. Clark was the first permanent year-round resident of the CLCMG. Cobb also wanted a hotel and a CFLA office building to be built on the grounds. A fence was then built on three sides of the camp.¹³⁸

During the Pre-Development Period, Fern Island and the Cassadaga Swamps went from an inhospitable wilderness to the beginning stages of a developed pleasure grounds and camp meeting. The CFLA, founded by Jeremiah Carter, imbued the forming camp with a sense of purpose and encouraged philosophical and religious debate based on Freethought. The bucolic setting was meant to attract people from nearby Buffalo and Erie via railroad. Soon Lily Dale would blossom into a full-blown religious camp.

¹³⁸ LaJudice, *Lily Dale: History as it Happened*; Barrett and McCoy, *Cassadaga*; Nagy, *Spirits*; Merle Hersey, *75th Anniversary of the Lily Dale Assembly: 1879-1954* (Lily Dale, NY: The Lily Dale Book Shop, 1954).

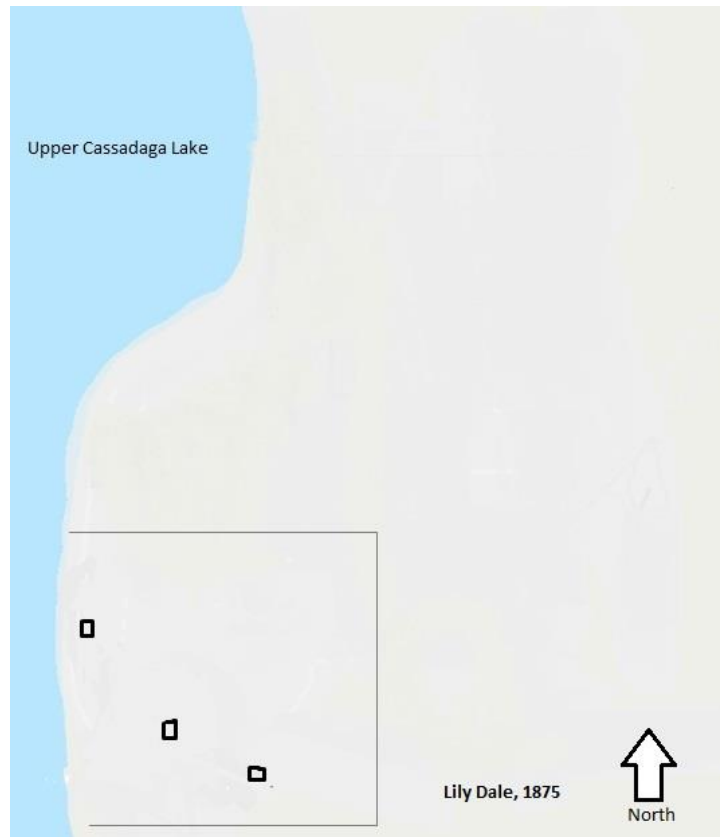


Figure 4.1. Lily Dale development map, 1875

Cassadaga Free Lake Association Period (1879-1903)

Plans were made to formally open the CLCMG in June of 1880. On May 6th, committees were appointed to direct the music, railroad fares, and the speakers for the grand opening event. On June 1st, Cobb employed a Mr. Benjamin Baldwin to erect a two-story hotel building on site. Only a few days later, on June 15th, a “Spiritual Picnic” was held at the CLCMG to formally open it to the public. Two speakers, Mrs. E.L. Watson and Mrs. Amelia Colby, were decided upon to deliver the dedication of the grounds to “free thought, free speech, and free investigation for all time to come.”¹³⁹ A hall of forty-by-eighty feet had been constructed to accommodate

¹³⁹ LaJudice, *Lily Dale: History as it Happened*, 33.

dancing and the steamship *Water Lily* ferried visitors across Cassadaga Lake. Boats for rowing were also available for guests. An advertisement was placed in a local paper. This advertisement helps demonstrate the camp's reliance on the railroad:

“CASSADAGA FREE LAKE ASSOCIATION: There will be a hall dedication and basket picnic on Fern Island near Cassadaga on Tuesday, June 15. A stock company owns 20 acres of timber land at this point, which they fitted up with every convenience for the accommodation of excursionists, and other public purpose. The new hall on the grounds will formally be dedicated and opened to the public, and the Upper Lake will be navigated by steam for the first time that day. Able speakers have been secured, good music will be in attendance, and all the usual means of recreation and enjoyment will be offered. Special rates have been obtained of the DAV & PRR and excursion trains stopping at all points along the line, will re-run both ways on that road. Trains take and leave passengers within one minute's walk of the gate. Admission to the grounds is free. The Association was organized with the intention of giving the use of the building and grounds to parties designing them at a nominal cost.”¹⁴⁰

The dedication of the grounds and the formal opening of the CLCMG finally arrived on June 15th. The address and dedication were delivered by Watson and Colby on a speaker's stand that had been erected and was called the Bough House (fig. 4.2.). The Bough House got its name from being decoratively covered in boughs, ferns, and vines from the nearby forest. Marion Skidmore, who would eventually become the CFLA's vice president, further decorated the Bough House by hanging water lilies from the ceiling and hanging portraits of her favorite poets. Colby's train was late which forced Watson to improvise a nearly two-hour speech that held the nearly 1,200 spectators over until Colby arrived. A large tree had also been felled and carved into smooth planks which were then used as seats in front of the Bough House.¹⁴¹

¹⁴⁰ LaJudice, *History as it Happened*, 33.

¹⁴¹ LaJudice, *Lily Dale: History as it Happened*.

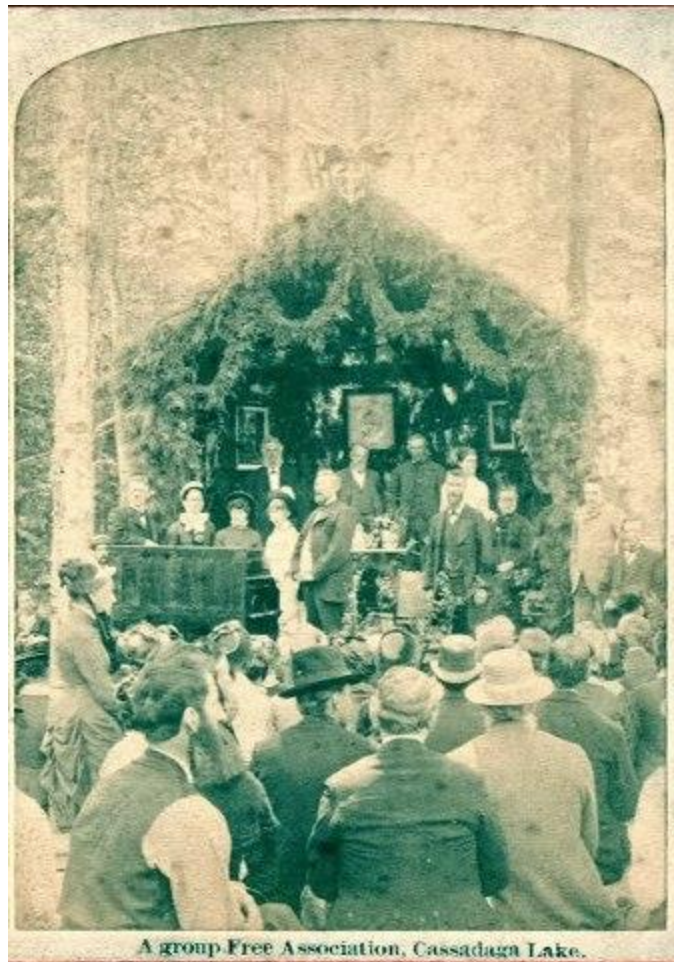


Figure 4.2. The Bough House, circa. 1880s (Source: courtesy of Ruth Marentette)

The CLCMG continued to develop throughout the summer of 1880. Four camp meetings were held between June and August of 1880. On August 7th, the “Grand Hotel” was opened for business with C.B. Turner as the proprietor. Turner was replaced in 1881 by a man named Alonzo Edwards. The structure was originally a barn that was converted into a hotel. The hotel was constructed using the hung suspension building technique. It wasn’t the only addition to the camp that summer, either. A new horse barn was needed after the original was renovated into “the Grand Hotel.” The new horse barn was built at the eastern end of what is now North Street. A ticket office, a CFLA office building (which later became the post office), a wooden bridge,

and a railroad depot were all also built. The first cottage, built by Mr. Sage, was constructed on 6 Cottage Row. Interestingly, these structures were built by men, women, and children, all working together. They had been divided up into what they called “working bees” to contribute to the camp’s construction. One of the most captivating events of the summer of 1880 was the slate writing demonstrations given by the medium R.W. Sour. Under test conditions, Sour baffled investigators by producing mysterious writing on slates. Although successful, the meetings turned out to be expensive affairs with total expenditures for the first June camp meeting alone being \$1,983.65.¹⁴²

Preparation for the next camp meeting season began in the winter of 1881. One of the earliest meetings was in February when the trustees of the CFLA met to discuss business relating to the damage of the hotel by the winter snows. That same year, a third story and ten more rooms were added to the hotel as well as a refurbishing of the second floor. This refurbishing was paid for via private donation. The donors included camp president Albert Cobb and Thomas Skidmore, a leader in the camp, major benefactor, and relation of Marion Skidmore.¹⁴³

The camp further developed throughout the summer of 1881. In July, a lunch counter was “rented” for the camp with “all articles sold there to be served cold, except tea and coffee.”¹⁴⁴ The lunch counter was located inside the Grand Hotel. Lastly, the grounds increased “one-third in its capacity.”¹⁴⁵ By August, the camp had been connected to the outside world via telegraph and a new railroad station. The season began in June of that year. The CFLA was holding their camp meetings in conjunction with the Alden’s who were still hosting their own right next door.

¹⁴² Barrett and McCoy, *Cassadaga*; LaJudice, *Lily Dale: History as it Happened*; Nagy, *Spirits*.

¹⁴³ LaJudice, *Lily Dale: History as it Happened*.

¹⁴⁴ LaJudice, *Lily Dale: History as it Happened*, 39.

¹⁴⁵ LaJudice, *Lily Dale: History as it Happened*, 40.

An arrangement was made in which the camp meeting was begun early in June at the Alden site and then would continue later in the month at the CLCMG. This was an attempt to satisfy both parties. The advertisements for the 1881 season mentioned that, “topics of general interest will be discussed daily from the platform- science-philosophy-Spiritualism and Religion will be among the most important themes.”¹⁴⁶

The recreational amusements offered at the CLCMG were often as heavily promoted as the religious fare. During the off-season, the hotel hosted weekly Saturday night dances. When the camp meeting season began, the dances continued “from time to time” and were conducted with the “upmost order and decorum (sic).”¹⁴⁷ A group called Maxham’s Orchestra (fig. 4.3.) furnished the music for the dances. They “embrace(d) a large repertory of standard, operatic, and classical selections, together with the largest compositions of lighter character.”¹⁴⁸ Another group, the Gratten (alternatively spelled as “Grattan”) Smith Family, performed vocal performances occasionally in the camp that year as well. Music and dancing weren’t the only amusements either, “boating and fishing will find everything needed for such excursions on the lake” one newspaper wrote.¹⁴⁹ One visitor wrote a lengthy description of his stay at the Cassadaga Lake Free Association Camp Meeting. The description describes the landscape of the camp during this early period:¹⁵⁰

“I have just closed a four day’s stay on an island and this beautiful lake, or chain of lakes, three miles long. Here the Association have twenty-five acres of land and can get more. A bridge links them to the depot- some forty rods from their gate- of the Dunkirk and Alleghany Valley Railroad, fourteen miles southeast of Dunkirk. The native forest of large pines and oak stood untouched on these grounds a year ago, and they have made some feasible for roads and tents by clearing away trees and brush that were too thick. A plain hotel, in which forty persons can find

¹⁴⁶ LaJudice, *Lily Dale: History as it Happened*, 40.

¹⁴⁷ LaJudice, *Lily Dale: History as it Happened*, 41.

¹⁴⁸ LaJudice, *Lily Dale: History as it Happened*, 41.

¹⁴⁹ LaJudice, *Lily Dale: History as it Happened*, 40.

¹⁵⁰ LaJudice, *Lily Dale: History as it Happened*.

room is full and well kept. A score of cottages and tents are up, and more are building. Thirty lots are sold and more wanted as soon as surveyed, and a larger hotel will go up. All is paid for, and stock is selling in twenty-dollar shares for future enlargements.

“The lake is six hundred feet above Lake Erie, giving a pure, cool air. The location is midway between seaboard Camp-meetings and those in the West, and a well settled farming region with many Spiritualist and liberal people, is about. With wise good management this is to grow to a large camp.”¹⁵¹



Figure 4.3. Band in Lily Dale. Possibly Maxham's Orchestra. (Source: Alpha Husted collection)

Positive reviews such as this brought more attention to the camp and it increased in size once more in 1882. By that year, every original cottage lot from the original survey had been leased and in response, twenty-five more were plotted. Stock in the CFLA was selling for twenty dollars a share. Admission to the camp was raised to fifteen cents rather than ten as it had been in previous years. Children were admitted for free. The hotel was charging rates of \$1.50 for the first two days of any stay and only \$1.00 after that. Each meal at the hotel cost twenty-five cents.

¹⁵¹ LaJudice, *Lily Dale: History as it Happened*, 42-43.

Wells had been dug “at convenient intervals around the camp grounds (sic).”¹⁵² Horses and drivers could also be hired at the railroad depot to carry luggage from the depot to the camp.¹⁵³

Lily Dale historian Ron Nagy provides illuminating descriptions of the camp during this early period, “men had long hair and beards, women short hair, and some wore bloomers. Visualize a small city of tents with campfires burning, horses and carriages stabled away from the tent area, people milling about the campfires talking and discussing the latest news or national event of interest. Trees were cut in half-lengths for benches.”¹⁵⁴ One aspect that differentiated Spiritualist camps from other religious camps was their willingness to let non-Spiritualists speak. Nagy describes, “all the platform speakers at camp meetings were not Spiritualists. Camp programs did not specify what religion a speaker was or in most instances the subject of the lecture.”¹⁵⁵

¹⁵² LaJudice, *Lily Dale: History as it Happened*, 46.

¹⁵³ LaJudice, *Lily Dale: History as it Happened*; Nagy, *Spirits*.

¹⁵⁴ Nagy, *Spirits*, xviii.

¹⁵⁵ Nagy, *Spirits*, xviii.



Figure 4.4. The early days of Lily Dale consisted of a mixture of buildings and tents (colorized)

(Source: Alpha Husted collection)

Not everything was running smoothly, however. Tensions continued to mount between the CFLA and the Alden's. Divvying up speakers and trying to schedule them between the two camps was proving difficult. When Margaret Fox arrived in either 1881 or 1882, both camps vied for her attention. The issue was resolved in 1884 when the Alden camp ceased operations. It is unclear why they did but Theodore Alden, the proprietor of the Alden camp, moved into a cottage on the CLCMG after 1884. Before the Alden camp closed, however, they constructed a hotel called the Alden House. The Alden House was purchased by Mrs. Abby Louise Pettengill in 1894 and renamed "The Leolyn Hotel ('Leolyn' was the name of Pettengill's granddaughter)." The Leolyn remains a fixture within Lily Dale to this day.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁶ Nagy, *Spirits*.

With the money raised from selling stock, gate fees, donations, and more, the camp continued to expand. Thomas Lees, a Spiritualist missionary, began a permanent children's lyceum on what is now 15 North Street sometime in the mid-1880s. Marion Skidmore turned her tent into a library by collecting books on Spiritualist topics. Her tent was located next to Thomas Lees' lyceum. In one of the largest audiences ever, 6,000 people turned out to hear a lecture given by a woman named Jennie Hagen. As large crowds such as this began becoming more frequent, a fifty-by-fifty-foot auditorium, enclosed on three sides, was constructed in 1883 (fig. 4.5.). Because of the sell-out crowds visiting the auditorium, it was quickly expanded. To make room for the expansion, stores nearby were forced to physically move from their original location near the Auditorium to the main gate area. That same year, a bathhouse, featuring hot and cold water, was built on the beach. In 1887, the CFLA bought fifteen more acres between North Street and Cassadaga Lake (fig. 4.6.). This land cost \$2,550. By 1888, thirty more cottages had been built on this land.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁷ Nagy, *Spirits*; Barrett and McCoy, *Cassadaga*.



Figure 4.5. The Auditorium circa 1890s (Source: Alpha Husted Collection)

More development would come during the years 1887-1888. A building called Library Hall was constructed in 1888. The second story was to hold Marion Skidmore's expanding library and the first floor was to be used for classes and séances. The building still stands today and is now known as "Assembly Hall." In 1923, a new building was constructed to house the Marion Skidmore Library. This building also still stands and continues to be the Marion Skidmore Library. In June of 1888, enough people were living in Lily Dale that the US government established a post office in the camp. The sign for the post office said, "Lilly Dale," with two L's. This mistake was not corrected until 1927. A newsstand was also built sometime before the end of 1888. By 1889, there were 108 cottages on the CLCMG.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁸ Nagy, *Spirits*; Hersey, *75th Anniversary*; Alpha Husted, collection.

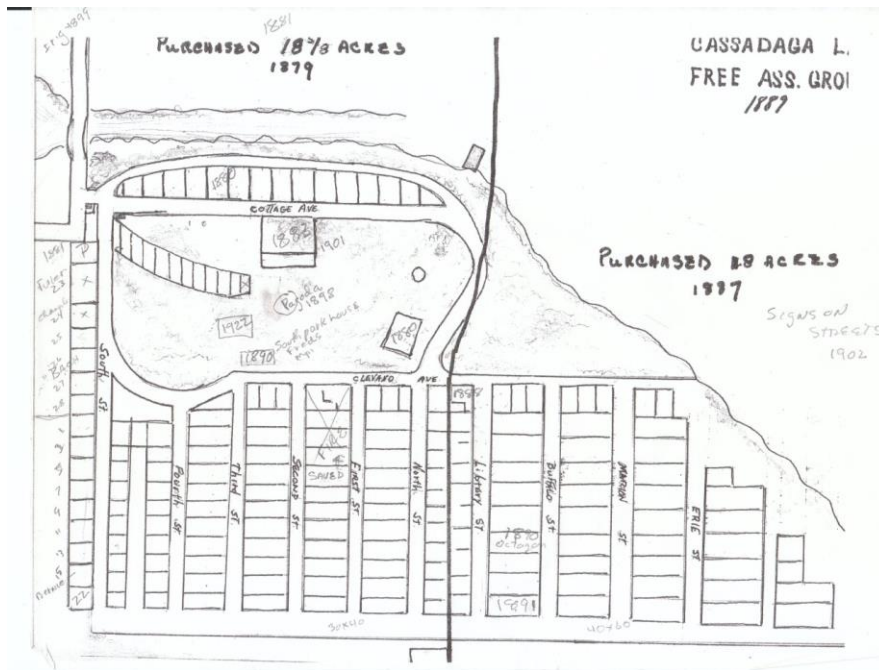


Figure 4.6. Lily Dale Plat Map that shows what was owned in 1879 versus what was purchased in 1887. The black line down the center represents the line of demarcation. (Source: courtesy of Ron Nagy)

The 1890s saw more growth. The camp was valued at a total of \$100,000 by 1891 and that price would only go up as the camp developed. A school was established on the CLCMG and classes were held in Library Hall. The first teacher was a woman named Harriet Barrett. In 1890, a stand-alone schoolhouse was built to meet the camp's burgeoning pedagogical needs. This building is now the Lily Dale Museum. The Grand Hotel also received an addition called "the wings" and modern improvements were added to the kitchen. The dining room of the Grand Hotel could now seat 150 people and there were 119 beds in the building. In 1892, what is now called "the Octagon Building" was either sold or gifted to the CFLA. The Octagon Building is a landmark in Lily Dale due to its unique shape. At one point the Octagon Building was the home of the Lily Dale Assembly Mediums' League. Another hotel called the South Park House was

built on Cleveland Avenue in the early 1890s but unfortunately burnt down in 1903. The ruins were cleared away and a large stone building was built on the site. This new building still stands today and is called the Morris-Pratt Building. Further amusements were also constructed during this era. By 1898, a Ferris wheel, an electric power plant, and a building housing a bowling alley and four pool tables were also built. Amazingly, the Ferris wheel lasted all the way until 1998 when it was finally dismantled due to a series of noise complaints (fig. 4.7.). All these buildings and structures were near the shore of Cassadaga Lake and none stand today.¹⁵⁹



Figure 4.7. The Ferris Wheel (Source: Lily Dale Museum)

Spiritualism's ties to the women's rights movement is palpable in Lily Dale as well. Branches of both the Universal Temperance Union and the Political Equality Club were founded within the camp. The Political Equality Club was a feminist group. Because of these two

¹⁵⁹ Husted, collection; Nagy, *Spirits*; Barrett and McCoy, *Cassadaga*; Hersey, *75th Anniversary*.

organizations, and Lily Dale's willingness to accept woman speakers, the camp became a hotbed of suffrage activity in Chautauqua County. One local newspaper wrote a lengthy article about the first Woman's Day celebration in Lily Dale, held in 1892:¹⁶⁰

"On Woman's Day the grounds were packed to capacity. Twenty-five-hundred tickets were sold at the gate. Everyone wore yellow and white buntings; star spangled banners and the suffrage badge for the cause they were here to celebrate. The Auditorium was packed to capacity and it was difficult to even obtain standing room within hearing distance of the rostrum. The Northwestern Orchestra played a patriotic selection; Mrs. Cora L.V. Richmond offered the invocation after which Harrison H.D. Barrett, chairman of the CLFA, made a short welcome. Mrs. Elnora M. Barrett, president of the Chautauqua County Political Equality Club, in taking the chair, stated nowhere in the county were Suffrage Women so warmly received as in Lily Dale; and drew a sharp contrast between 'tolerance' of Chautauqua Institute and the cordial support of Cassadaga."¹⁶¹



Figure 4.8. Lily Dale suffragettes, notice "votes for women" sign top left (Source: courtesy of Ruth Marentette)

¹⁶⁰ Nagy, *Spirits*.

¹⁶¹ Nagy, *Spirits*, 17-19.

On August 24, 1892, another newspaper, *The Buffalo Express*, recorded a more detailed chronology of the first Lily Dale Woman's Day. One of the most interesting quotes from the article is when Susan B. Anthony claimed, from the stage in the Auditorium, that Spiritualists, "are just as unpopular as the suffragists" and then led a grand opening march at the dance that night in the auditorium.¹⁶² The article then continues with a vivid description of that day that emphasizes how much Lily Dale was a part of the larger suffrage movement:

"The Lily Dale cottages were up bright and early this morning. From 8 till 10 o'clock it seemed though every woman in the camp was trying to get the best of every other woman in the way of decorations. Waving flags, evergreens, ferns, potted plants, trailing vines, Chinese lanterns, gorgeous sunflowers and yards upon yards of yellow bunting were everywhere lavishly displayed. Near the entrance to the gates two large banners were strung, bearing the inscriptions, 'Political Equality' and 'Lily Dale Greeting to Political Equality.' The Auditor (auditorium) was gay with festooned flags, appropriate mottoes, and a profusion of flowers and golden draperies. The platform was backed by a graceful showing of stars and stripes, through which were caught glimpses of green boughs and yellow draped pictures of Lincoln, Thomas Paine, Lucretia Mott, and Elizabeth Cady Stanton. Staring the audience full in the face were large lettered inscriptions: 'Government derive their just powers from consent of the governed' and 'Woman's ballots mean enlarged opportunities for doing good'""¹⁶³

¹⁶² Nagy, *Spirits*, 24.

¹⁶³ Nagy, *Spirits*, 24.



Figure 4.9. Interior of the auditorium as Susan B. Anthony may have seen it during the 1890s

(Source: Alpha Husted Collection)

The same article, written by *The Buffalo Express* on August 24, 1892, also includes descriptions of the various new amenities and developments within the camp. In 1893 alone, it was reported that the CFLA spent around \$10,000 in improvements to the CLCMG. A new system of waterworks was added to bolster fire protection and to supply running water to the cottages. Sewers had been built throughout the camp and incandescent electric lamps were hung among the trees for the convenience of residents and visitors. The camp now had 215 cottages with forty leaseholders living there year-round. Leases still cost three dollars a year. The New

York Central railroad began constructing a new depot near the camp to ease travel to the site (fig. 4.10.).¹⁶⁴



Figure 4.10. The new depot. (Source: Lily Dale Museum)

Development would not stop there, however. To ease the commute between the camp and the railroad, part of the swamp in between the two was filled-in and a wooden walkway was built across it. A livery stable had also been built for those who arrived at the camp via the regular roads and not railroads. Louise Pettingell, the owner of the Leolyn Hotel and a new member of the board of the CFLA, repainted the hotel and added new carpet. She had the dining room painted a pale green as well. Other dining options were available within the camp or nearby. For

¹⁶⁴ Nagy, *Spirits*.

example, a restaurant and ice cream parlor were located in “the Reed Cottage” near the Auditorium. Another ice cream parlor called “Champlain’s” was located near the gate. One of the most notable changes mentioned in the article, was the replacement of the main gate. The original wooden gate was removed and a new iron gate with “CFLA” emblazoned across it now greeted guests. Additionally, six acres between the new gate and the railroad were purchased by the CLFA. In 1898, another iconic structure in the camp was built, the Sunflower Pagoda. This structure was constructed by W.H. Bach and served originally as a newspaper and literature stand. Bach’s wife, Evielena, worked in the Sunflower Pagoda and eventually diversified the options of material sold there to include, “literature, badges, taffy, patriotism,” and “sorrowful to relate, the cigar nuisance!”¹⁶⁵ Eventually, the Sunflower Pagoda dropped the “Sunflower” portion of its name and became known simply as the Pagoda. The Bach’s owned it for 49 years. The structure was given to Lily Dale in 1951 and it still stands today (fig. 4.11.). It is now a café.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁵ Nagy, *Spirits*, 56.

¹⁶⁶ Nagy, *Spirits*; LaJudice, *Lily Dale: History as it Happened*; Hersey, *75th Anniversary*.



Figure 4.11. *Sunflower Pagoda* (Source: Lily Dale Museum)

Non-physical developments also were occurring throughout the camp according to *The Buffalo Express*. In June of 1893, a Summer School of Psychic Science began in the Octagon Building. Eighty mediums resided in Lily Dale during the summer season of 1893. Jeremiah Carter, still alive, was one of the oldest mediums in the camp. A school of “Science and Philosophy” was also opened where people could take classes in physiology, mental science, mediumship, philosophy, and mythology. Spiritualists weren’t the only religious group that spoke during camp seasons during the 1890s as well. “Jainists” (sic.) and Hindu “scholars” also visited the camp along with “the distinguished son of the orient, A.H. Dharmapala.”¹⁶⁷ One speaker, the Spiritualist Rev. Anna Shaw, declared, “there is no penalty for heretics in Lily Dale.”¹⁶⁸ Allowing different religious groups to speak at the camp is part of what differentiated

¹⁶⁷ Nagy, *Spirits*, 48.

¹⁶⁸ Nagy, *Spirits*, 33.

Spiritualist camps from Protestant camps. In particular, Lily Dale, with its emphasis on Freethought, created an atmosphere where dissenting opinions and a variety of viewpoints was not only tolerated, but encouraged. New amusements were also being introduced to the camp. Bicycling, fishing, rowing, croquet, lawn tennis, toboggan slides, baseball, and semi-weekly dances provided recreation along with the Ferris wheel, bowling alley, and billiards rooms.¹⁶⁹



Figure 4.12. Group photo in Lily Dale (Source: Alpha Husted Collection)

The camp was also the setting for a number of personal milestones and achievements for its residents and visitors. One local newspaper described “A Spiritualist Wedding” in Lily Dale in the 1880s or 1890s. The account not only highlights the importance of the camp to the individual stories of the real people that resided in it but also provides vivid imagery of the camp during this historical time-period:

“On Monday every hand and every heart entered into the work as with a single impulse of love. Water lilies were gathered from the lakes and the fields, woods and lawns were rifled of their flowers and foliage and by a little past noon the rostrum and vicinity constituted a bower of

¹⁶⁹ Nagy, *Spirits*.

tint and odor. A bell composed of pure white flowers on the outside and green leaves and ferns inside, hung from the ceiling over the bride and groom; a table made of beautiful bright clover blossoms in the center of which were two white lilies, representative of the two pure lives about to be united, stood in front of the rostrum; wreaths, hearts and other ingenious and pretty devices of flowers and ferns were overhead and in every nook and corner ... As Gaston (the president of the CLFA at the time of the wedding) placed her hand in that of the groom he pronounced the following ceremony:

“‘We shall not adhere to the old custom of exacting promises of obedience from you, Jennie, we should exact it equally of both; but, in your case, obedience to a higher power is required of both of you.’ At this moment, it was recorded that a spirit named Boy White interrupted the ceremony and through a medium said ‘Now don’t look so serious, you have, both of you, got to mind us.’ The ceremony continued: ‘Now in the presence of these witness and the higher intelligences- in the name of love, the most divine power than which there is no higher- in the name of the Spirit world and of the intelligences which control your organism, and in the name of the Infinite Spirit, I pronounce you husband and wife.’”¹⁷⁰

More somber occasions have also been observed within Lily Dale as well. In 1895, Marion Skidmore passed away. Her remains arrived in Lily Dale for the funeral that was held in her home. Upon hearing the news, Susan B. Anthony wrote a letter to a colleague that resided in Lily Dale. This letter reflects the importance of Lily Dale and its residents to the women’s movement:

“It seems impossible that dear Mrs. Skidmore has gone from our mortal sight forever. I loved her. She was the light and life of Lily Dale. How we all who impartially shared in her kind thoughts, will miss her! And on Woman Suffrage Days- can it be possible that the noble, motherly woman will be no more there to preside over it? And yet, when I think of the belief or knowledge, as she would say, of so many of her dear friends, that she is not gone, but with them in fuller sense than ever, I am led to exclaim, ‘Verily Spiritualists eat the bread of the world knows not of.’ Your sincerely, Susan B. Anthony.”¹⁷¹

¹⁷⁰ Nagy, *Spirits*, 19-21.

¹⁷¹ Nagy, *Spirits*, 49.



Figure 4.13. Thomas Skidmore (left), Maggie Gaul (seated front-right of Skidmore), Marion Skidmore (seated, top-right, white dress), Susan B. Anthony (black dress, seated far-right), and friends pose in front of 13 Cottage Row. (Source: Alpha Huston Collection)

The CLCMG offered a smorgasbord of Spiritualist fare throughout the 1890s. In 1896, groups of Spiritualists descended upon Lily Dale to hold a meeting for the purposes of establishing a statewide Spiritualist association. Therefore the New York State Spiritualist Conference was founded in Lily Dale. The Conference became an ancillary group of the NSAC. Classes were also offered in the camp on topics ranging from palmistry, psychometry, phrenology, “Soul Teaching,” and more. Séances, readings, slate-writings, displays of trumpet mediumship, and more likewise could be found on the CLCMG. “Forest meetings” were held in the woods around the CLCMG. These forest meetings were initially called “pow-wows” but the name was changed for unexplained reasons. Forest meetings were Spiritualist services offered

outdoors in the shade of the trees. By the end of the 1890s, there was even a periodical called *The Cassadagan* being published on the grounds of the CLCMG.¹⁷²

Lectures held in the camp were on a variety of topics and were given by a diverse set of speakers. A large portion of lecturers were reformers and other progressives of the day. An example of this is “The Great Agnostic” Robert G. Ingersoll who spoke at Lily Dale and was an avowed defender of agnosticism. In Lily Dale, Ingersoll argued the benefits of agnosticism. The Freethinkers of Lily Dale were proud of their openness to people like Ingersoll. In May of 1898, the *Banner of Light* wrote, “Lily Dale welcomes all varieties of people, and tolerates all their creeds and fads.”¹⁷³ Theosophists such as Annie Besant, who like Ingersoll were not Spiritualists, spoke at the CLCMG, for example. Freethought was always emphasized. One speaker, William Lockwood, proclaimed, “if the brain at any one present was befogged by dogmatism and superstition, the electrifying searchlight of his reasoning must forever dispel it.”¹⁷⁴ One article described the CLCMG as a place where, “the most vital questions- social, political, scientific and religious- have been discussed.”¹⁷⁵

¹⁷² Nagy, *Spirits*.

¹⁷³ Nagy, *Spirits*, 56.

¹⁷⁴ Nagy, *Spirits*, 42.

¹⁷⁵ Nagy, *Spirits*, 43.



Figure 4.14. This colorized photograph shows a number of national flags hanging in the Auditorium. This speaks to the open and welcoming nature of the camp. (Source: courtesy of Ruth Marentette)

Lily Dale has interesting ties to LGBTQ history as well since it was home to the famous Campbell Brothers. Charles Shourds and Allan Campbell were a gay couple that posed as brothers in a time period when their sexuality was not largely tolerated. The Campbell's owned a cottage in Lily Dale at 1 Cottage Row (fig. 4.15.). From their cottage, they conducted mediumship via spirit paintings and slate writing. They are perhaps the most well-known spirit painters in Lily Dale's history. Their most famous painting is of Azur, the spirit guide of Allan Campbell. The painting is done on a forty-by-sixty-inch canvas and was painted in 1898. It is claimed that the Azur painting was done in only an hour and a half. Although the Campbell's

traveled often, Lily Dale was their home and they would both live there until they died, Allan in 1919 and Charles in 1926.¹⁷⁶



Figure 4.15. Campbell Brothers cottage on 1 Cottage Row, burnt down in 1964 (Source: Lily Dale Museum)

By 1900, the CFLA was advertising the CLCMG in a new way, as a health resort. The *Banner of Light* boasted that Lily Dale offered, “materialization, etherializations, transfiguration, etc., slate writers, spirit artists, clairvoyance, business mediums, healers, doctors, palmists, spirit photographers, trumpet mediums, and various others.”¹⁷⁷ Not only that, however, it continued with, “this place is becoming famous as a health resort. Why should it not? We have the finest drinking water, invigorating pine groves, natural lakes, situated eight hundred feet above Lake

¹⁷⁶ Emma Prendergast, et al, *Spirit Painting: Azur, 1898* (Lily Dale, N.Y.: Lily Dale Historical Society); Ron Nagy, *Precipitated Spirit Paintings* (Lakeville, Minnesota: Galde Press Inc, 2006).

¹⁷⁷ Nagy, *Spirits*, 65.

Erie, and last though not least, are the pleasant drives surrounding this locality, in fact we have everything to make life beautiful and healthful.”¹⁷⁸

The emphasis the Spiritualist’s placed on the natural world was reflected in the physical landscape of Lily Dale. This led to a desire to preserve much of the bucolic setting the camp was located in. These efforts were not lost upon visitors. One visitor wrote a lengthy account of his visit to Lily Dale in 1900 in which he describes not only the people he encountered, but the landscape:

“I have been taught from infancy that Spiritualists were composed of longhaired men and short haired women who wore a No. 7 shoe, and carried the marks imbecility in their countenance, with cloven feet, seven horns, and forked tongue and all the adornments that embellish his ‘Satan’s Majesty’ pictured by Dante and St. John. But what was our surprise in stepping from the train at Lily Dale, to be met by at least 200 of the brightest, most intelligent, fairest looking, best dressed people of the United States ...

“We found a miniature city in the distance, surrounded by lakes upon which steamers ply to and fro, and upon 15 cents depends your entrance into this spiritual enclosure. There you find displayed the beauties of architecture, innocent amusements, flowers in profusion, shady walks, a refreshing breeze from the lake, boat rides, etc. ... Taking a primeval forest, lowland adjoining lake, draining, filling in with gravel, piling brush- much of it done by women, showing the earnest desire for the uplifting of humanity and the dissemination of knowledge to those that have the price. I was informed upon good authority that there is at present \$500,000 invested in the camp at Lily Dale.

“Lily Dale is really an island. Then imagine that it was a primeval forest and then see it as it is today, one cannot help but approve and applaud the efforts and zeal of the men and women who pioneered this great resort as a camp for the belief that they had in the Cause for which the camp is noted. Inside the grounds today are about 300 cottages, 2 hotels, a library and reading room, a spacious auditorium, bandstand, billiard hall, bowling alley.”¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁸ Nagy, *Spirits*, 65.

¹⁷⁹ Nagy, *Spirits*, 70.



Figure 4.16. Residents outside a cottage around 1900 (Source: courtesy of Ruth Marentette)

The bucolic Lily Dale would face disaster. On December 28, 1901, at 4:30 AM, Lily Dale residents were awoken by sounds of screaming, gunfire, and people frantically running around outside. Residents were firing guns in the air to awaken those who were sleeping since a fire had started in the camp. The conflagration quickly engulfed three cottages. Residents fought to battle the flames and remove as many objects from the houses as possible. Two residents, Clayton McCarthy and J.F. Witherall, mounted horses to rouse the fire departments in nearby communities. While awaiting professional help, the residents battling the flames divided themselves into four squads. Three squads were devoted to fighting fires in individual cottages while another was tasked with tearing down a cottage to create a firebreak between the burning buildings and the others that were so far untouched. The cottage slated for demolition belonged to the Wadsworth family and chains were attached to the building. With the chains attached, a team of horses pulled the chains thus tearing the building asunder. Bucket brigades were organized and were comprised of both men and women. The inferno raged as residents fought to quash it. The fire had begun on the northwest corner of the camp in the cottage of Mrs. May

Colville on 7 First Avenue. The fire then spread to Mrs. Nellie Warren's cottage, 5 First Avenue. Once Warren's cabin went up, the flames engulfed the Scheu cottage at 3 First Avenue. Three more cottages were subsequently burned. Residents dragged wet carpets onto the roofs of buildings in an attempt to prevent smoldering embers from burning buildings from catching other roofs on fire.¹⁸⁰ Mrs. Louisa Scheu, whose house was one of the first engulfed, battled the flames with a group of women and no men. One newspaper heard about this and wrote, "Lily Dale has always been a woman's right place, and when it comes to fire she fills her place to perfection."¹⁸¹ Many locals converged on Lily Dale to help the camp battle the fire. The fire department of Jamestown arrived after the fire had been put out. The total financial losses from the fire equaled \$6,450.¹⁸²

¹⁸⁰ Nagy, *Spirits*.

¹⁸¹ Nagy, *Spirits*, 82.

¹⁸² Nagy, *Spirits*.



Figure 4.17. 1901 Fire Damage (Source: Ron Nagy's Blog)

New precautions were implemented to mitigate the risk of catastrophic fires. The CFLA beseeched cottage owners to contribute to a community fund that was to be used to purchase new firefighting equipment. On February 19th, 1901, the Lily Dale Volunteer Fire Department was formed. Equipment such as hooks, ladders, axes, and more were purchased to supply the new fire department. A water tank house served as the fire departments first headquarters (fig. 4.18.). The piece-de-resistance however was the new double-action force pump, which shot water, mixed with fire-retardant chemicals, out of hoses.¹⁸³

¹⁸³ Nagy, *Spirits*.



Figure 4.18. Original Lily Dale firehouse. This building still stands and is located on 1st Street. It is now a shed. (Source: Lily Dale Museum)

The 1901 season was an interesting one. It was the first season in which a telephone system was operating in the camp. This was just in time for the new Pan-American Exposition being held not far away in Buffalo. The Exposition caused a debate within the camp on whether it was going to detract or add to visitation numbers during the summer. It is unclear what impact the Exposition had on Lily Dale but it is now most notoriously remembered for being where President William McKinley was assassinated. Adding to the uniqueness of the season was the arrival of Dr. L.H. Freedman, “the Australian Healer.” Freedman made headlines when he spent time in an Erie, Pennsylvania, jail after being sued by the medical professionals there for practicing healing and medicine without a license. The citizens of Lily Dale hosted a “benefit séance” for Freedman to raise money in order to help him recoup the financial losses he sustained via the trial and while in jail. That same month, August of 1901, the Chautauqua County Veteran’s Union and the Grand Army of the Republic held their annual reunion and

campfire in Lily Dale. Although the weather was stormy, the veterans marched through the camp to the cottage of a Mr. Van Duzee, a Lily Dale resident who had fought in the Civil War. Bands played and speeches were given in the auditorium.¹⁸⁴



Figure 4.19. 5 Cleveland Avenue festooned in American flags for the GAR. (Source: Lily Dale Museum)

The most compelling attraction that summer was what was called “the Hull-Jamieson Debate.” In one of the greatest displays of Freethought ever witnessed by the camp, Lily Dale hosted a Spiritualist reverend, Moses Hull, and the secretary of the National Liberal Party, W.F. Jamieson, in a debate on Spiritualism. The two resolutions argued were, “that the phenomena and philosophy of Modern Spiritualism prove that departed spirits exist and communicate with mankind” and “that the phenomena and philosophy of Modern Spiritualism can be explained

¹⁸⁴ Nagy, *Spirits*.

without admitting the agency of departed human spirits.”¹⁸⁵ The debate lasted eight nights and was held in the Forest Temple. One observer described the debate as, “Both speakers held the undivided attention of the audience. Loud applause was frequent. Their speeches abounded in wit, humor, and sarcasm. Both are scholars.”¹⁸⁶ Debates such as this would hardly ever be found on the camp meeting grounds of any other religious denomination during this era, including other Spiritualist camps. Only Lily Dale, with its Freethought strain would host such a novelty.

The same year as the debate, a Lily Dale newspaper, *The Sunflower*, gave a lengthy description of the camp (*The Sunflower* was one of two newspapers that were published in Lily Dale. The other was *The Cassadagan*, first published in 1892. Both were defunct by 1910.). The description provided by this piece paints an illuminating image of the landscape and physical layout of the camp during this time:

“The grounds consist of fifty-two acres covered with a fine growth of shade trees consisting principally of maple, beech, birch and hemlock. The camp is divided into sections by nine streets that run east and west and three that run north and south, besides foot paths through the parks. There are three parks, Melrose, between the auditorium and the entrance; Lincoln, extending from the auditorium north past the Grand Hotel and around the shores of the lake to the bowling alley and electric light works; and Caldwell with swing, croquet grounds, etc. ... these parks are filled with flowerbeds, nice grassy lawns, beautiful shade trees, settees and all that goes to make a delightful summer resort.”

¹⁸⁵ Moses Hull and W.F. Jamieson, *The Greatest Debate within a Half Century Upon Modern Spiritualism* (Chicago: The Progressive Thinker Publishing House, 1904), i.

¹⁸⁶ Hull and Jamieson, *The Greatest Debate*, 26.



Figure 4.20. Getting ready for a boat ride on Cassadaga Lake (Source: Lily Dale Museum)

“The principal place of meeting is at the auditorium near the entrance, It is built upon a side hill, with a floor 50 x 80 feet back of which are eleven rows of seats raised one above the other, making seating capacity for about 1,500 people. The rostrum is about 18 x 50, giving plenty of room for speakers, chairman, band and singers and instruments.

“Library Hall is used for many of the smaller meetings and classes. Children’s Lyceum meet every morning except Saturday and Sunday, the Thought Exchange nearly every evening and private classes of different kinds during the day. The Octagon is so called on account of its shape (fig. 4.21.). It is used as a classroom, gatherings and for dancing school.

“... its platform (the CFLA’s) has been open for free discussion of all topics. For this reason it has become a rendezvous for all classes of people who are interested in the progressive movement of the day. As is to be expected some ‘cranks’ are attracted and in many cases make it amusing for the people. Other (sic.) have their whims and idiosyncrasies which they take every opportunity of presenting to the public; but taking it as a whole, there is a very fine line of thought presented.”¹⁸⁷

¹⁸⁷ Nagy, *Spirits*, 85-91.



Figure 4.21. Early photograph of the Octagon Building, circa 1880s or 1890s (Source: Lily Dale Museum)

1902 saw further changes and developments within the camp. The youth and teenagers of Lily Dale formed a society called “the Jolly Club,” which hosted social events and had a baseball team. A popcorn stand was also opened just outside the gate. This stand was popular amongst the bicyclists who rode a popular route between Cassadaga and Lily Dale. The train depot was renovated and moved twelve-feet east as well. This was done to get around a large mud-pit and swamp in which travelers often found themselves stuck in. That year also marked one of the first times “Canadian Day” was celebrated in Lily Dale which was, and continues to be, a special day to honor Canadian Spiritualists.¹⁸⁸

Not all news was good, however. The Spiritualists Training School, located on the CLCMG, closed in 1902 and a series of scathing articles that criticized the camp were published

¹⁸⁸ Nagy, *Spirits*.

in a Buffalo newspaper. In the article, the unnamed author listed examples of fraudulent mediumship found in the camp. The author also wrote that one of the mediums in Lily Dale was probably “a lineal descendant of the Dodo.”¹⁸⁹ The article then reported that another medium was “controlled by the Devil.”¹⁹⁰ *The Sunflower* sniped back by saying the author must have investigated Spiritualism “out of a bottle” or while “hit(ting) the pipe.”¹⁹¹

The Cassadaga Free Lake Association historical period was one of substantial growth and change for the camp. It went from a small picnic ground to what was essentially a town, complete with a post-office, hotels, businesses, newspapers, a fire department, and restaurants. The Cassadaga Free Lake Association attracted Free-Thinkers, Spiritualists, and other open-minded individuals from all over the region. At the Cassadaga Lake Camp Meeting Ground, these people found a place of camaraderie, tolerance, and dialogue. Obviously, much chicanery was occurring amongst the mediums of the camp but that too speaks to how unregulated the camp really was during this time period. The Cassadaga Lake Camp Meeting Ground was a place of freedom and expression for many people who might not have found it elsewhere. Important buildings such as the Auditorium, Assembly Hall, the Octagon Building, the post-office, the Leolyn Hotel, the Maplewood, and many of the cottages were built during this era. Lastly, the New York State Spiritualist Conference was founded in the camp during this time.

¹⁸⁹ Nagy, *Spirits*, 102.

¹⁹⁰ Nagy, *Spirits*, 102.

¹⁹¹ Nagy, *Spirits*, 102.



Figure 4.22. A Lily Dale inn circa 1900s or 1910s (Source: Lily Dale Museum)

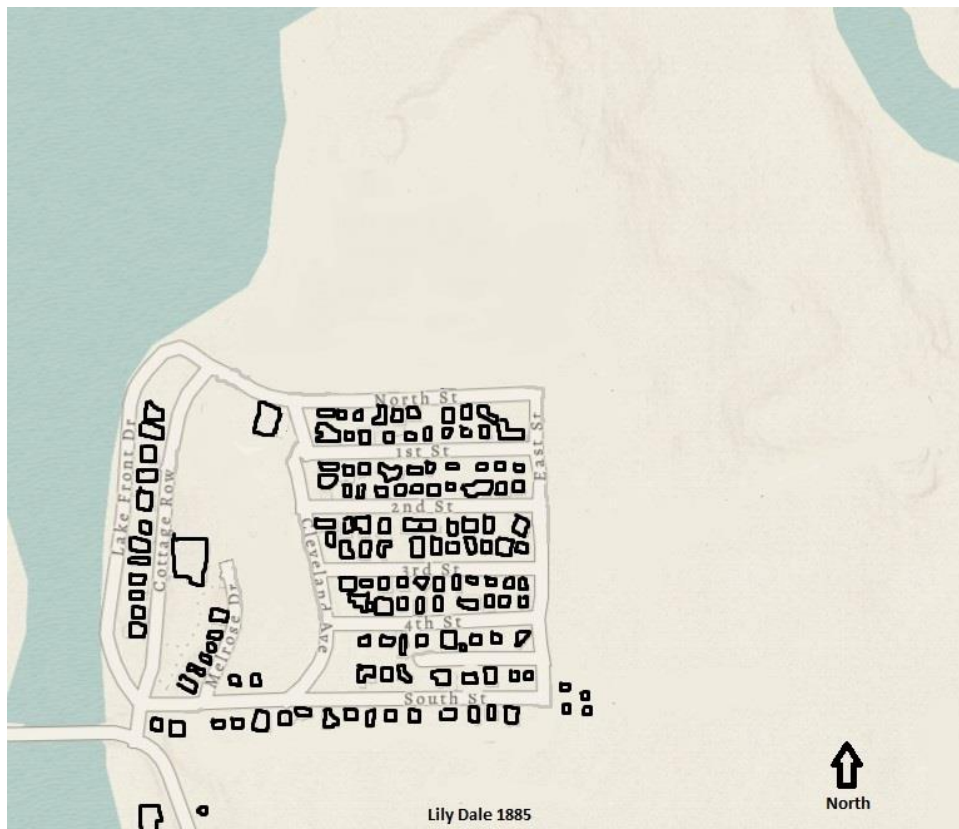


Figure 4.23. Lily Dale development map, circa 1885.

City of Light Period (1903-1906)



Figure 4.24. Lily Dale developmental map, circa 1903.

Within the camp, many were not satisfied with the current state of Lily Dale. There was a by-law in the charter of the camp that stated no stockholder shall exceed fifty shares of stock. This law was implemented as a way of preventing one person from holding disproportionate power over the camp. Unfortunately, there were many loopholes to that by-law and a few board members managed to acquire well over fifty-shares. These few board members had the ability to pass or veto whatever rules they wanted. Tensions were heightened when some of the more powerful board members wanted to secularize the CLCMG and turn it into a summer resort with no Spiritualist affiliation. This caused a controversy in the camp and support to remove the board and patch the loopholes reached a fever pitch. Under pressure from residents and other

stockholders, the board members who held the majority of the stocks, were forced to resign. New board members were voted in, led by the new president Mrs. Abby L. Pettengill, owner of the Leolyn Hotel. Pettengill was introduced to the camp when she met Marion Skidmore on a train while heading out on vacation. Skidmore convinced Pettengill to forego her original vacation plans and spend it in Lily Dale instead. Pettengill fell in love with the camp and bought the Alden House turning it into the Leolyn Hotel. As president, she vowed to fix the loopholes in the by-laws and keep the CLCMG Spiritualist.¹⁹²

The CLCMG saw many changes under the tenure of A.L. Pettengill. When she came into office in 1902, she vowed to beautify the camp by grading the streets, removing trees, renovating the Grand Hotel, creating new flowerbeds, and changing the camp's name. Removing trees was done because on sunny days, sunlight had a hard time piercing through the canopy of trees. This was annoying to visitors and residents. Another reason listed of removing trees was for the "preserving of buildings."¹⁹³ This demonstrates that as early as the 1900s, there was a preservation impulse within the camp. The Grand Hotel received a new roof, its dormers were removed, and it received a fresh coat of paint. In 1903 the name of the Grand Hotel was changed to the Maplewood (fig. 4.25.). The hotel wasn't the only name change that happened in Lily Dale during this time either. The name "Cassadaga Lake Camp Meeting Grounds" was frustrating to many people who considered it too loquacious and very confusing because "Cassadaga" was also the name of the lakes, town, and train station Lily Dale sat next to (not to mention the name of the new Spiritualist camp in Florida, opened in 1894). Therefore, in 1903 it was voted that the name should be changed from the CLCMG to "The City of Light Assembly." This name was

¹⁹² Nagy, *Spirits*.

¹⁹³ Nagy, *Spirits*, 107.

chosen because, “the sunflower, as the emblem of Spiritualism, is always turned towards the light, as are souls in search of light turned toward Lily Dale.”¹⁹⁴



Figure 4.25. Crowd outside the newly renamed Maplewood Hotel (Source: courtesy of Michelle Whitedove)

More changes came to the newly christened City of Light in 1903. Notably, spearfishing was legalized on Cassadaga Lake. During the winter, Cassadaga Lake had always been used for ice-harvesting but now fishermen could carve a hole in the ice and spear fish through it. Further improvements were made as part of Pettengill’s campaign to beautify the camp. In March, all of the telephone poles and fire-hydrants were painted green. A businessman named Frank Fuller came to the camp and built a thirty-by-forty-foot store on South Street. This store had a twelve-foot ceiling and a twenty-four-foot-wide glass front. Fuller was joined by William Wheeler who opened a barbershop in the camp as well. The popcorn stand, owned by a man named G.L.

¹⁹⁴ Nagy, *Spirits*, 107.

Bellows (nicknamed “Our Old Popcorn Man”), once relegated to the outside of the gate, was finally allowed inside the camp. On the eastern side of the camp, there was a row of “shanties and sheds.” These were removed so more cottages could be built there.¹⁹⁵ Perhaps most notably, however, was the dredging of the outlet of Upper Cassadaga Lake. This was done to lower the water level of the lake. The outcome of this would be to dry up many of the swampy or muddy areas near the camp and to increase the size of the beach. This venture cost \$4,000.¹⁹⁶



Figure 4.26. Swimmers pose in Upper Cassadaga Lake, date unknown (Source: Lily Dale Museum)

Pettengill proved to be an effective leader. She strengthened ties between the City of Light and the women’s rights movement by inviting Susan B. Anthony back to the camp and hosting new women’s rights symposiums. In 1903, a new sewer system was installed in the camp and new galvanized iron bathtubs were added to the bathhouse. The Post Office was also improved by moving it thirty-feet and adding a veranda around it on three sides. The City of Light also attracted the attention of William A. Hammond, one of the founders of the American Neurological Association and a former Surgeon General of the United States Army. He visited the camp in August of 1905. One hundred mediums were operating in the camp during this time

¹⁹⁵ Nagy, *Spirits*, 115.

¹⁹⁶ Nagy, *Spirits*.

and it was reported that there were thirty to forty slate-writings a day and that seances were being held three times a week.¹⁹⁷

By 1905, Pettengill and two family members sat on the board and controlled much of the stock of the City of Light (apparently neglecting her pledge of stock equity amongst all the camp's stockholders). Not all were happy with Pettengill's iron-grip over the camp, however. The *Buffalo Courier* noted that she, "has now secured absolute control of it (the City of Light)." ¹⁹⁸ One resident, A. Gaston, a member of the camp's old guard and a former board member, who was ousted upon Pettengill's takeover, defected from the City of Light and threatened to start his own Spiritualist camp near Chautauqua Lake. This camp never came into fruition. The *Sunflower* wrote a sardonic comment about Pettengill in its notes on the 1905 board meeting, "the Association is desirous of selling the bonds that come due in January- or did the Pettengill family want further controlling stock in the Association?" ¹⁹⁹ The fall of the Pettengill dynasty would not come from opposition within the City of Light, however. Pettengill had invested heavily into multiple projects in San Francisco, California. In 1906, a devastating earthquake rocked San Francisco and ruined Pettengill financially. In order to recoup her losses she was forced to sell her stocks in the City of Light, the Leolyn Hotel, and her cottage to the City of Light Assembly. Part of her sale included what is now Leolyn Woods.²⁰⁰

No other period in Lily Dale's history was dominated by the personality of one person. Pettengill is largely forgotten and little acknowledged in Lily Dale today. Her control of the camp simultaneously encouraged its physical development while also stifled the atmosphere

¹⁹⁷ Nagy, *Spirits*.

¹⁹⁸ Nagy, *Spirits*, 117.

¹⁹⁹ Nagy, *Spirits*, 127-128.

²⁰⁰ Nagy, *Spirits*.

of freedom that characterized the camp during the CFLA period. Her reign was short but important as it laid the foundations for the modern version of Lily Dale. The most important addition to the camp during this period is the area that became the Leolyn Woods.



Figure 4.27. Abby Pettingill and friends (including Marion Skidmore and future founder of Camp Cassadaga in Florida, George Colby) outside 8 Melrose Park, 1891 (Source: Alpha Husted Collection)

Lily Dale Historical Period (1906-1970)

The fall of Pettengill brought further changes to the camp. In 1906, the new board voted to rename the camp once more to “the Lily Dale Assembly.” The Pettengill specter loomed over the Lily Dale Assembly, however. When she sold the Leolyn Hotel, a brief crisis began when possible buyers threatened to start their own private Spiritualist retreat literally right outside the gates of Lily Dale. Fortunately, Lily Dale acquired the property in 1910. Pettengill also demanded that \$8,000 worth of bonds she had invested into Lily Dale be repaid to her. The new

board members had to fundraise in order to acquire the cash required to pay Pettengill back. In more positive news, the athletic field on the eastern side of the camp was constructed in 1908.²⁰¹

1907 proved to be another disastrous year for the camp because *the New York Times* published an expose on fraudulent practices within the camp. A man named Hereward Carrington was hired by the American Society for Psychical Research and charged with infiltrating and investigating Lily Dale. He arrived in the camp under a fictitious name, Charles Henderson. Carrington attended seances, slate-writing demonstrations, and more. He reported to his handlers that he had discovered much fraud within the camp. The SPR sent his findings to the *Times* who published a lengthy expose. Many fraudulent mediums were listed by name and they refused to return for the 1908 season. Lily Dale responded to the expose by publishing a series of rebuttals in its own papers. Lily Dale was just one of a number of Spiritualist institutions that were targeted by the SPR during that period.²⁰²

Newspaper accounts of Lily Dale become scarce by the end of the 1900s. The Spiritualist newspaper, *The Banner of Light* ceased publishing in 1907. *The Sunflower* also ceased publishing that same year. *The Cassadagan* was gone as well by 1910. Most of the sources on Lily Dale's history from 1910-1990 comes from pamphlets, local secular newspapers, letters, oral histories, collections, and more.²⁰³

The 1910s brought about some development within Lily Dale. In 1914, Fred's Restaurant was built on Cleveland Avenue. It occupied the former site of the South Park House which had burnt down some time previously. The Fred's Restaurant building still stands and is now the

²⁰¹ Nagy, *Spirits*.

²⁰² Nagy, *Spirits*.

²⁰³ Husted, collection.

Morris Pratt Institute building. 1914 also saw the introduction of natural gas used for heating and lighting into the camp. Old barns, that stood near the Forest Temple, were also removed that year. In 1915, a tennis court was built, the camp cost \$5 to enter, classes on “Social and Folk” dancing were offered, suffrage meetings were held, and a meeting of the Chautauqua County Lawyers Association was hosted. Starting in 1916, a yearly “Children’s Day” also began in the camp (fig. 4.28.). In 1912, a similar event, “Fireman’s Day” was first observed which was followed by annual celebrations.²⁰⁴



Figure 4.28. Celebrating Children’s Day (Source: Lily Dale Museum)

The most substantial development of the 1910s was the arrival of the Fox Sisters Cottage to Lily Dale (fig. 4.29.). In 1915, the cottage was disassembled, floated down the Erie Canal to Buffalo, and then transported to Lily Dale. It was reassembled in the northeastern corner of the camp. A woman named Floy Cottrell, a medium in Lily Dale, was the supervisor of the cottage when it arrived. Cottrell and many visitors told stories of mysterious rappings heard throughout

²⁰⁴ Nagy, *Spirits*; Hersey, *75th Anniversary*.

the cottage while it was in Lily Dale. The cottage served as a museum and housed objects, photographs, and other antiques. In 1926, an admission fee was charged in order to enter the cottage. 50% of the proceeds went to Cottrell. These fees were also used to pay for the running water and electricity that was added to the cabin in the 1930s. The admission fee ended up being unpopular within the camp. Many residents thought the cottage should be free and open to the public. One medium reported to receive this message from the spirit of Margaret Fox:²⁰⁵

“The Fox Cottage should be opened. It is a public institution. It’s (sic.) hallowed environments have become enshrined in the hearts and souls of all Spiritualists of the world. People come here from far and near to see it and to be turned away from it’s closed doors is like denying food and drink to the weary laden Soul in his own home. Such a course is a rebuff to every Spiritualist and non-Spiritualist interested in this wonderful cottage.”²⁰⁶

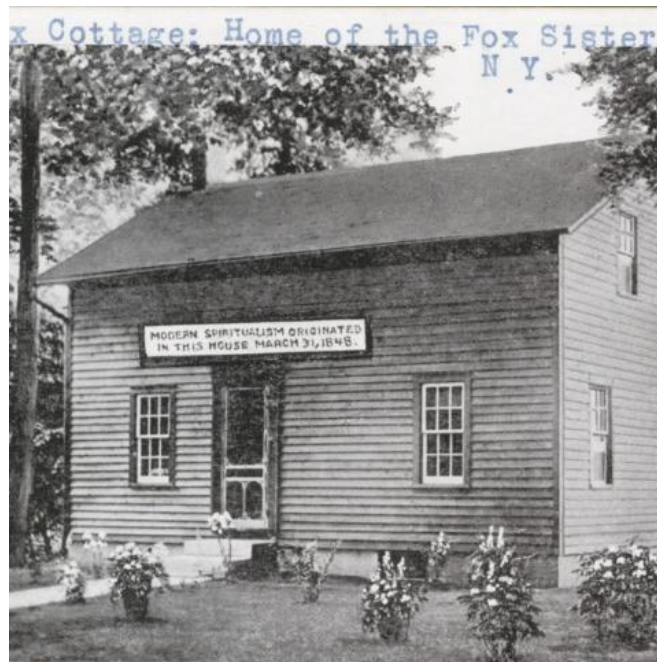


Figure 4.29. The Fox Sister Cottage in Lily Dale, date unknown (Source: New York Heritage)

²⁰⁵ Hersey, 7th Anniversary; Letter from Assistant Secretary of Lily Dale to Mr. B.F. Bartlett, 06/21/1926.

²⁰⁶ Letter from Benjamin F. Bartlett to Lily Dale Board, 1926.

One of the most unusual controversies in the camp began in 1919. That year, the Newton Memorial Hospital, a tuberculosis sanatorium, was built. The hospital was located on a hill on the far western side of Upper Cassadaga Lake. The sanatorium was the result of a state law passed in 1917 that mandated all counties with populations of more than 30,000 inhabitants construct facilities for the treatment of tuberculosis. Lily Dale residents were not pleased with their new sanatorium neighbor fearing it would keep visitors away and spread the disease to their community. Supporters of the sanatorium came into Cassadaga to launch a public education campaign. Evidently, the campaign worked and once their fears were assuaged, Lily Dale's resistance to the sanatorium faded away. The Newton Memorial Hospital ceased operations in 1958 and now houses the Cassadaga Job Corps Center (fig. 4.30.).²⁰⁷

²⁰⁷ Historic American Buildings Survey/Historic American Engineering Record, "HABS: Newton Memorial Hospital (Cassadaga Jobs Corps Center)," Philadelphia, PA.: U.S. Dept. of the Interior, National Park Service, Cultural Resources, HABS No. NY-6338;



Figure 4.30. View of Newton Memorial Hospital looking east. Lily Dale can be seen across the lake. (Source: Jamestown Gazette)

There is a word of mouth legend in Lily Dale that claims that Harry Houdini visited the camp in 1920. In July of that year, Harry Houdini wrote to Arthur Conan Doyle, “if time permits, I shall go to Lily Dale, and look around at the various mediums and their work. I’ll report to you in detail.”²⁰⁸ Whether Houdini made it to Lily Dale or not is unclear but it seems that such a visit would have been better recorded if it did indeed happen. The only evidence of Houdini coming to Lily Dale is a word of mouth story told around camp that when Houdini arrived, “within minutes every medium in town had pulled in their ‘open signs,’ slammed down their shades and locked the doors.”²⁰⁹ All of this seems unlikely since *A Magician Amongst the Spirits* was not published until 1924; the investigation of Mina Crandon, which publicized Houdini’s debunking

²⁰⁸ Mary Catherine Gabriel, “Ordinary Spirits in an Extraordinary Town: Finding Identity in Personal Images and Resurrected Memories in Lily Dale, New York,” Master’s Thesis, Utah State University, 2010.

²⁰⁹ Gabriel, “Ordinary Spirits.”

of Spiritualists, didn't take place until that same year; and Houdini never reported to Conan Doyle about visiting. Houdini's reputation as a debunker of mediums seems unlikely to have been that great and well-known by 1920 if at all. It is likely people are confusing Hereward Carrington with the more famous Houdini.²¹⁰

A variety of new events began in the 1920s. In 1920, a yearly "Men's Day" began in Lily Dale. "Woman's Day" had already been a celebration since 1892. Socials, balls, square dances, lectures, and more were held on Men's Day. The last Men's Day was hosted in 1940. The Women's Day celebration would also discontinue sometime in the mid-twentieth century but would be revived in 2000 (fig. 4.31.). In 1926, a Baha'i event was held in Lily Dale. That same year marked the hundredth anniversary of the birth of Andrew Jackson Davis. To honor this occasion a dance was held. From 1926-1931, there was an annual day devoted to "Indians." Usually the day included "Indian entertainment," powwows, war dances, lacrosse games, the "Green Corn Dance", the "Smoke Dance," and more. Also beginning in the 1920s was a stronger Freemason presence within Lily Dale. The Freemasons used Lily Dale for dances, banquets, and other events frequently from the 1920s to at least the 1950s. Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, Lily Dale applied for and received tax exempt status in 1924.²¹¹

²¹⁰ Gabriel, "Ordinary Spirits."

²¹¹ Hersey, *75th Anniversary*, 35.



Figure 4.31. Woman's Day on Cleveland Avenue in 1927 (Source: Lily Dale Museum)

The 1920s also saw a power-shift within the camp. Not many primary sources exist on this topic but in 1926, an Assembly member discovered that Lily Dale was a membership corporation, yet it was operating as if it were a stock corporation. The member then read the legal rules for membership corporations in New York and discovered that legally, according to membership corporation laws, stockholders were only allowed to have one vote in corporate matters. Lily Dale had not been practicing this and had been voting based on proportion of number of stocks owned. This is the exact way Pettengill had assumed control over the camp in the 1900s. The news of this discovery caused a “great upheaval” in the camp. The Assembly was legally bound to revote for new board members based on the one-vote per member policy. As a

result, the board who had controlled power before 1926, was replaced by a new board who called themselves “the Old Board,” although it is unclear what was old about them.²¹²

The Old Board enacted many changes to the camp. They began an extensive marketing campaign in an attempt to bring in new visitors to the camp; roads were regraded and resurfaced; new concrete docks were built out on the lake; the old butcher shop, barn, and pump house were demolished; new garages were built on the southern side of the camp; electric systems were replaced; a new well was dug; a new, nearly \$10,000, water system was added; buildings were repaired; and the hotels were renovated. The Old Board also purchased thirty-seven acres of land in front of the Assembly gate to ensure it wouldn’t be developed by “unwelcome neighbors.”²¹³ In the late 1920s, the Andrew Jackson Davis Memorial Lyceum was also constructed and held the honor as being the only Spiritualist children’s lyceum in the world. This building still stands today (fig. 4.32.).²¹⁴

²¹² Letter to Lily Dale Residents titled “Plain Facts for Fair Minds,” signed by Lily Dale Board members: F.W. Constantine, Jean Reed, C.A. Burgess, John Witherel, and Mary Gross, 8/9/1930; Letter to F.W. Constantine from Buffalo lawyer (name illegible), 08/5/1925.

²¹³ Lily Dale Board Members, “Plain Facts for Fair Minds.”

²¹⁴ Lily Dale Board Members, “Plain Facts for Fair Minds.”



Figure 4.32. Andrew Jackson Davis Memorial Lyceum, date unknown but likely 1920s-1940s (Source: Alpha Husted collection)

The Old Board had its controversies, however. Many of the new improvements were funded by the will of a wealthy Lily Dale resident named Dr. Hewitt who, upon passing away, left much of his money to the Assembly. Many within Dr. Hewitt's estate sued saying that Dr. Hewitt was not mentally sound due to the nature of his religion. The courts decided in favor of Lily Dale recognizing that Spiritualism was a valid belief system that did not constitute mental insanity. That wouldn't be the only lawsuit the Old Board faced, however. A disgruntled former board member removed during the "great upheaval," sued the Assembly over his ousting. It is unclear what the decision of the courts was in this lawsuit was, however.²¹⁵

Lily Dale slogged through the Great Depression. During the early days of the Depression, the camp seemed to receive an uptick in visitation. During an annual report to stockholders, it was noted that the camp was, "running ahead on gate admissions, season tickets, and ground

²¹⁵ Lily Dale Board Members, "Plain Facts for Fair Minds."

collections.”²¹⁶ Lily Dale’s ace seemed to be the reverend Jack Kelly, a British World War One veteran turned Spiritualist medium. For whatever reason, Kelly was purported to produce extremely convincing phenomena, conduct highly accurate readings, and perform uncanny healings. Crowds flocked to Lily Dale to see him. Nonetheless, after an initial increase in visitation, visitation fell. By 1933, the camp faced a debt of \$17,700. The board blamed the “lack of attendance in regarding concerts and all events” as the reason for the financial slump.²¹⁷ Each cottage leaser in Lily Dale could help the camp stay afloat financially by taking out a \$500 bond to help pay off the debt. Money wasn’t the only issue in the camp during the Depression. Lily Dale faced a crossroads in 1932 when the New York State Spiritualist Conference elected to end relations with the National Spiritualist Association of Churches. Lily Dale, being a member of both organizations, was forced to choose allegiance. A referendum was held, and the Assembly voted to stay loyal to the NSAC. Also, of note, Evielena Bach, proprietor of the Pagoda was still alive and now managed the water system of the camp and a horse was buried in the pet cemetery.²¹⁸

The upswing in Native American themed entertainment, celebrations, and events, begun in the 1920s, continued throughout the 1930s. Library Hall, for example, was advertising sales of a book called *Gone Before the White Man Came* for twenty-five cents. The camp also had Native American, or at least people who claimed to be, on display for visitors. One promotional pamphlet described this occurrence:²¹⁹

“Lily Dale is to have, during the entire summer, Oskenton and Chiniquilla, two full-blooded Indians of the Mohawk and Cheyenne Nations. Oskenton is an accomplished singer

²¹⁶ Address to Lily Dale Assembly from President Esther C. Humphrey, Lily Dale, New York, August 11, 1930.

²¹⁷ Husted, collection.

²¹⁸ Address to Lily Dale Assembly from President Esther C. Humphrey, Lily Dale, New York, August 11, 1930; Husted, collection.

²¹⁹ Unknown author, from the collection of Alpha Husted, Lily Dale promotional pamphlet from the 1920s or 1930s.

and comes from New York, where he has been a pupil of Franz X. Arens, the eminante (sic.) vocal specialist. Chinquilla is the daughter of the famous Chief Lone Star of Dakota Black Hills and is also an artist in the music and folk lore of the Indian people. These young people will live in their tepee on the Assembly grounds where they will manufacture and sell Indian baskets and novelties.”²²⁰



Figure 4.33. Unclear who is being pictured, people in Native American regalia outside the Auditorium, circa 1920s (Source: Alpha Husted collection)

Oskenton, or Chief Rowi Oskenton as he was called, lives long in the memory of Lily Dale. Indeed, Oskenton was a popular singer who was friendly with contemporary musical giants like Enrico Caruso. Born in Chaghnawaga, Canada, he grew up on the reservation there. Oskenton eventually moved to New York City where he began recording songs for the Columbia label. He also hosted a weekly radio program. In 1927, he had the honor of singing at the Hollywood Bowl to a crowd of 45,000 people. Oskenton first arrived in Lily Dale during

²²⁰ Unknown author, from the collection of Alpha Husted, Lily Dale promotional pamphlet from the 1920s or 1930s.

the 1930s and became a fixture within the camp. In 1944, he received a lot on East Street. In 1946, he was reported as conducting “fine work in offering healing classes.”²²¹ Oskenonton passed away in 1955.²²²



Figure 4.34. People in Native American regalia, Cassadaga Lake, date unknown (Source: courtesy of Ruth Marentette)

Oskenonton wasn't the only Native American popular at Lily Dale. A woman named Princess Neioma, who claimed to be the daughter of the Sioux chief White Cloud and an unnamed French woman, often took part in the “Indian Entertainments” of the camp (fig. 4.35.). Like Oskenonton, Neioma was a musician and further claimed that she had graduated from the Chicago Conservatory of Music. Neioma's true origins are enigmatic. Not much is available about her online. One blog claims she began her career playing the organ at the Fox Theater in Atlanta, Georgia, for silent films and then attended European musical schools along with further

²²¹ Husted, collection.

²²² Ron Nagy, “Chief Os-Ke-Non-Ton.” Ron Nagy's Blog, 8/4/12, accessed: 1/9/20, <http://ronnagy.net/ronsblog/2012/08/chief-os-ke-non-ton/>.

studies at Julliard and Rutgers University. Eventually she settled in Biloxi, Mississippi where she played the organ professionally and on the radio. A regular attraction in Lily Dale throughout the 1930s, it is said that she got into a terrible car accident on her way out of the camp in the late 1930s, survived, but vowed never to return because of the traumatic wreck.²²³



Figure 4.35. Princess Neioma in Lily Dale, 1938 (Source: Alpha Husted collection)

World War II also impacted the community. Visitation was down due to gasoline rationing which prevented many from driving to the camp. The bowling alley was also closed for the duration of the war and a Victory Garden was planted behind the picnic pavilion. The lull in the camp gave the community time to form a committee that was charged with repairing the beach house (the same building that housed the bowling alley and billiards tables) on the lake. The committee jokingly called themselves “the Termites” and went to work constructing a new porch on the structure. Eventually, the Termites formed their own social club and the board let

²²³ Hersey, 75th Anniversary; FredK, “The Sounds of Princess Whitecloud,” Blogspot, 8/22/08, accessed: 1/10/19, <https://princesswhitecloud.blogspot.com/>.

them use the beach house as their meeting place as long as they “came up with a more suitable name.”²²⁴ Unfortunately for the Termite Club, the bowling/billiards/beach house was torn down due to “unsafe and deplorable conditions” in 1949 (fig. 4.36.).²²⁵ In 1944, Lily Dale was financially well-off reporting a “fine credit rating” and having enough funds to construct a new wishing well near the gate, and a new ticket office (the old ticket office was converted into a bus stop shelter).²²⁶ Two bathrooms were also added to the front of the Assembly Hall. In 1945, the Maplewood dining room was reopened for the first time since the war began. This was particularly fortunate because a new dining room had just been added when the war broke out. It sat 250 people. The Leolyn Hotel, on the other hand, received a new roof and the old dormers were stripped off it.²²⁷

²²⁴ Husted, collection.

²²⁵ Husted, collection.

²²⁶ Husted, collection.

²²⁷ Lily Dale Historical Society pamphlet, *Historical Maplewood Hotel: Continuous Use Since 1880*; Husted, 75th Anniversary.



Figure 4.36. Bowling/Billiards/Beach House and Home of the Termite Club, pictured in the early 1900s, torn down in 1949 (Source: Lily Dale Museum)

A new set of bylaws was adopted in 1944. These by-laws replaced an older set of bylaws that was passed in 1923. The 1944 by-laws shed some interesting light on the mission and purpose of Lily Dale in the 1940s. Section 2 of Article I states, “the particular business and object of this Corporation shall be devoted to Benevolent, Charitable, Literary and Scientific purposes and mutual improvement in the religious knowledge of Spiritualism.”²²⁸ Section 4 of Article II restricted Assembly member votes to only one per member. New members had to pay a \$10 fee and prove to the board that they were Spiritualists. There was also an annual fee of \$5 to retain membership.²²⁹

²²⁸ By-Laws of the Lily Dale Assembly, 1944, article II, pg. 3

²²⁹ By-Laws of the Lily Dale Assembly, 1944.

According to the new by-laws, the Board of Directors controlled Lily Dale. There were seven board members who were elected by Assembly members. The board members received more or less votes based on the authority of their position. The director received the most votes on community matters while lower offices had less. The director could be disposed of if the majority of Assembly members decided to vote them out during a special referendum.²³⁰

The board of directors also had numerous powers. They could authorize the issuances of leases, transfer lots, control the income of the Assembly, employ mediums, schedule speakers, appoint ticket sellers, remove “nuisances” within the grounds, prevent “immoral” conduct, and consent to or prevent changes to buildings, groves, greenery, or trees.²³¹ The major exception to this was that “the Leolyn Woods must be preserved as a virgin forest” unless otherwise directed by the State Forestry Department.²³² Any changes to existing structures and buildings or the erection of new ones required board approval as well. There was also an elected president of the Assembly who served as a check and balance to the board. The president could call special meetings, review decisions made by the board, and serve as a liaison between Assembly members and the board.²³³

The 1944 by-laws also include some measure of social control over the camp. Article XII specifically banned intoxicating liquors from the campgrounds including the in the hotels and cottages. The board also reserved the right to enter and inspect any member’s cottage or premises if there was deemed to be a “nuisance” within the space.²³⁴ Assembly members do not own their cottages or homes in Lily Dale, even today. They are leased to members by the Assembly.

²³⁰ By-Laws of the Lily Dale Assembly, 1944.

²³¹ By-Laws of the Lily Dale Assembly, 1944, article V, pgs. 7-8.

²³² By-Laws of the Lily Dale Assembly, 1944, article V, pg. 8.

²³³ By-Laws of the Lily Dale Assembly, 1944.

²³⁴ By-Laws of the Lily Dale Assembly, 1944, article XII, pg. 12.

Because of this, the board could also notify residents that they needed to adhere to maintenance and aesthetic standards as well. Article XVI of the new by-laws gave the board the power to eject “undesirable persons” from the Assembly grounds.²³⁵ What qualifies as an “undesirable person” is not stated. The board also was the body that approved the mediums who worked within the camp. At least until the 1910s, the board made it explicitly clear that they did not control what type of mediumship was happening on camp premises. This evidentially had changed by the new 1944 by-laws. The board now required that perspective mediums give three private manifestations to the board as proof of their ability. If the board was satisfied then the board would approve them to operate within Lily Dale.²³⁶

Lily Dale, like the rest of the country, boomed in the postwar years. In 1947, neon signs, a symptom of modernity, were becoming an issue and were banned from the camp. That same year the roads were finally all paved. A new beauty parlor opened in the Post Office as well and was run by a woman named Mrs. Valvo. A grocery store, opened by a George Kopp, was enlarged and was noted as “becoming an institution at Lily Dale.”²³⁷ The old wooden floors of the cafeteria were removed and replaced with concrete. The floors of the cafeteria weren’t the only thing getting redone with concrete, either. In 1952, Inspiration Stump, a famous stump used as a speakers platform in the Leolyn Woods, was infilled with concrete in order to preserve it. One newspaperman described Lily Dale in the 1950s as such: “Great changes have taken place since those golden years which ran well ‘through the turn of the century. Fire and demolition

²³⁵ By-Laws of the Lily Dale Assembly, 1944, article XVI, pg. 13.

²³⁶ By-Laws of the Lily Dale Assembly, 1944,

²³⁷ Gerald Todd, “The Great Days at Lily Dale,” *The Evening Observer*, Dunkirk, NY, 07/12/1951.

have obliterated many of the old landmarks. New year- round homes have been constructed. It still retains much of its early charm, however.”²³⁸

Unfortunately, that serenity would be shattered when disaster struck Lily Dale in 1955. On a cold night in September, the Fox Sister cottage burnt down. At about 3:30 AM a motorist saw the glow of a fire emanating from Lily Dale. The motorist entered the camp blaring his horn to arouse the sleeping residents. The Lily Dale Fire Department rushed to the scene, but it was all for naught. The loss was devastating to the community. The Fox family Bible, record books, and more were all destroyed in the fire. The cottage stood as a symbol of Spiritualism and Lily Dale’s past. The destruction aroused deep emotions. Arthur Myers, a previous camp historian, remembered the visitors, who came from all over the world, just to see the Fox Sister cottage. Myers melancholically wrote, “Can it be that we have failed in our duty to Spiritualism. Have we been careless of the precious heritage given to our care.”²³⁹ The board pondered a plan to rebuild the Fox Sister cabin in 1976 but it was never realized. The Fox Sisters Memorial Garden now sits where the cottage was.²⁴⁰

The 1956 seasonal program provides insights into the Lily Dale of the 1950s. Lily Dale, at this time, was marketing itself as “the New City of Light,” harkening back to its old name. It is full of seemingly New Age vernacular as well. In the opening preamble, the term “New Age” is even used to describe the precipice of a seemingly new phase of existence that the camp seemed to be entering. The preamble also uses the term “New Order” and “Soul Age” to describe the coming era. The buildings listed as attractions in the camp were the Marion Skidmore Library, the Andrew Jackson Davis Lyceum building, the Maplewood Hotel, and the Universal Sanctuary

²³⁸ Todd, “The Great Days at Lily Dale.”

²³⁹ Arthur Myers, *Fox Cottage Burns*, pamphlet from the Lily Dale Historical Society, 1

²⁴⁰ Myers, *Fox Cottage Burns*.

of Divine Healing which was housed in a structure built in 1955 and still stands today (it is now the NSAC affiliated Spiritualist church in Lily Dale).²⁴¹

By 1956, there was also what was called the Louis T. Vosburgh Library. The library was in the cottage of Vosburgh and began operations in 1951. The library is no longer present in Lily Dale. Vosburgh, however, played an important role in the development of mid-century Lily Dale. A wealthy man and president of Lily Dale in the mid-1950s, Vosburgh funded the construction of the new healing temple for the medium Jack Kelly to use in 1955. When the building was finished, it was commemorated to the memory of Oskenton who had died that same year. Kelly had also become the personal favorite medium of movie star Mae West who visited Lily Dale in the 1950s to meet with him (fig. 4.37.). Vosburgh then donated a private lot that he owned in the camp, 16 Erie Street, to be used as a park.²⁴²

²⁴¹ Lily Dale 1956 Seasonal Program; Husted, collection.

²⁴² Husted, collection; Ron Nagy, "Jack Kelly, Mr. Vosburgh, Mae West- Healing Temple Dedication Lily Dale," Ron Nagy's Blog, 10/19/11, accessed: 1/9/2020, <http://ronnagy.net/ronsblog/2011/10/jack-kellymr-vosburgh-mae-west-healing-temple-dedication-lily-dale/>.



Figure 4.37. Jack Kelly, Louis Vosburgh, and Mae West standing outside the Healing Temple built by Vosburgh, 1960 (Source: Alpha Husted collection)

Lily Dale had ample reason to see itself standing on the precipice of a new age, there was plenty of new and interesting developments in the camp around this time. The season ticket to Lily Dale in 1956 was six dollars while the one-day ticket was sixty-five cents. For this price, visitors could see the new happenings in the camp. An antique store, called the Ada Darling Antique Shop, was opened in the mid-1950s along with a coffee shop. In 1959, the Lily Dale Athletic Club was founded and two rooms on the ground floor of the Post Office were turned over to its use. In 1961, the Lily Dale Assembly Charter was made subordinate to the NSAC charter therefore giving the NSAC power over the camp. In 1963, Elliott Roosevelt, son of former president Franklin D. Roosevelt, spoke at Lily Dale. In 1966, Dr. George Lamsa, a

famous Assyrian Biblical scholar, visited the camp. In 1967, the Maplewood Hotel received another large renovation, aluminum siding was added to it and the second-floor balcony was removed. The original dormers of the building were also removed.²⁴³

Although the Historical Lily Dale Period is the longest in the camp's history, it is also the most overlooked. Little is written about Lily Dale after the 1910s. The period is remarkably important, however because it comprises much of the twentieth century. The camp went through many changes and challenges during this period. The most significant additions to the camp during the Historical Lily Dale Period are the Cafeteria, the Healing Temple, the Picnic Shelter, the new Fire Depot, and the Andrew Jackson Davis Memorial Lyceum. The losses the camp experienced were also equally important. The destruction of the Fox Sisters Cottage and the Beach House both altered the character of the camp.

²⁴³ Husted, collection: Lily Dale Historical Society pamphlet, *Historical Maplewood Hotel: Continuous Use Since 1880*, 2.



Figure 4.38. Lily Dale developmental map, circa 1945.

Modern Lily Dale Period (1970-2020)

The New Age finally did come to Lily Dale during the 1970s. By 1977, Lily Dale had some 168 acres of land. Multiple churches were located within Lily Dale and some were taking issue with the new fashions of the 1970s. One church printed signs indicating preferred attire at services to battle the epidemic of “shorts and slacks” infecting congregations.²⁴⁴ A new psychic fair was held on the grounds in 1976. The board refused to sanction or participate in the fair citing that “Spiritualism is a religion and should not take part in commercial fairs of this

²⁴⁴ Husted, collection.

nature.”²⁴⁵ Lily Dale would incorporate New Age philosophies and beliefs more gracefully than other Spiritualist camps such as Cassadaga, Florida, which has experienced tension between its classical Spiritualists and New Age adherents.²⁴⁶

The New-Age wasn't the only thing creeping into Lily Dale. In 1974, non-Spiritualists sued Lily Dale for denying them a rental in a house on Assembly grounds. As aforementioned, Lily Dale has rules stating that only Spiritualists can live on Assembly grounds. The plaintiffs claimed “that Lily Dale Assembly is not a religious institution as understood in the context of subdivision 11 of section 296 Exec. Of the Executive Law; that the exemption found in the Executive Law for religious institutions does not apply to the residential property in question here; and that even if the assembly is a religious institution and would be exempted by the statute, nevertheless the assembly may not discriminate arbitrarily and capriciously by permitting certain non-Spiritualists to rent property but not permitting petitioners to do so.”²⁴⁷ The judge threw out all of the plaintiffs charges and sided with Lily Dale.²⁴⁸

The 1980s saw a few notable events happen in Lily Dale. In 1983, an arsonist attempted to burn down the Leolyn Hotel. The fire damaged a portion of the thirty-three-room hotel. In 1987, a sanitary sewer easement was signed between Lily Dale and the town of Pomfret. The easement gave Lily Dale the right and authority to “lay, construct, maintain, repair, and replace sewer pipelines.”²⁴⁹ The last “cottage” to be built in Lily Dale was also built in the late 1980s. It

²⁴⁵ Husted, collection.

²⁴⁶ Arthur Myers and Helen Foote, “Historical Reflections,” *Sign of the Dove News*, 4/15/1977; Husted, collection.

²⁴⁷ Cowen v. Lily Dale Assembly, 1974, 44 A.D.2d 772, casetext.com.

²⁴⁸ Cowen v. Lily Dale Assembly

²⁴⁹ Sanitary Sewer Easement, 1987, Town of Pomfret.

is situated in the northeastern corner of the camp. The most recent building constructed in Lily Dale is the Bargain Shoppe built in 1995 on the eastern side of the camp.²⁵⁰

The 1980s also saw a notable row between self-proclaimed Christian Spiritualists in Lily Dale and the other Spiritualists. In 1985, a Christian Spiritualist Lily Dale resident named Mr. Hanny, along with five other Christian Spiritualists, attempted to set up two Christian churches in Lily Dale. Non-Christian Spiritualists were furious and attempted to evict the Christians on the grounds that they were violating the rule that Lily Dale was for Spiritualists only. Mr. Hanny claimed that Lily Dale was “anti-Christ” and that, “the only reason they’re trying to kick me out is because of my belief in Christ as my Savior.”²⁵¹ Hanny also said he was baptized in Lily Dale in 1937. “I refuse to be told that my heritage doesn’t belong here when I know that it does,” he stated.²⁵² Lawsuits were filed and the courts sided with Lily Dale thus ending the attempts to establish Christian churches in the camp.²⁵³

The changes to Lily Dale during this period demonstrate that it is a place that is still very much alive. The character and rules of the camp are still evolving, oftentimes reflecting the larger shifts in Spiritualism itself. This period had few major additions to the camp. From 1970-2020, only the Bargain Shoppe and a cottage were built (although renovations and rehabilitations were also being done to existing buildings during this period).

²⁵⁰ Fire at the Leolyn Hotel,” Chautauqua County, accessed: 1/16/2020, http://app.chautauquacounty.com/hist_struct/Pomfret/LeolynHotelFire1983.html

²⁵¹ Special to the New York Times, “Eviction Dispute Splits Community of Mediums,” *New York Times*, 10/6/1985, accessed: 1/21/2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/1985/10/06/nyregion/eviction-dispute-splits-community-of-mediums.html>

²⁵² Special to the New York Times, “Eviction Dispute Splits Community of Mediums.”

²⁵³ Special to the New York Times, “Eviction Dispute Splits Community of Mediums.”



Figure 4.39. Lily Dale developmental map, circa 2020.

Conclusion

In general, the history and landscape of Lily Dale echo larger patterns of Spiritualist history. It was founded by Freethinkers as a camp meeting to attract adherents and curiosity seekers. Revering nature, they found a spot that was bucolic and aesthetically pleasing for this camp. More specific chapters of Spiritualist history are particularly relevant to Lily Dale. The most glaring is reflected in the demographics of the camp. Lily Dale is overwhelmingly white and most of the mediums in the camp are women. This is a product of the historical appeal of Spiritualism amongst women and the expulsion of black Spiritualists from the NSAC during the

1920s. Other historical reflections of the Spiritualist movement are found in Lily Dale as it was a hotbed for suffrage activity during its own history, it being a target for SPR investigation due to the mediums there using both physical and mental mediumship, legends abounding that Houdini and Conan Doyle made visits, and more. Spiritualist history is reflected in the physical landscape as well. There are buildings in the camp named after Spiritualist luminaries such as Andrew Jackson Davis and the cabin the Fox Sisters first heard their famous rappings in was eventually moved to Lily Dale. Without understanding the history of Spiritualism, Lily Dale and its cultural landscape make little sense.

Lily Dale was once actually just one of a number of Spiritualist camps in New York State. These camps, except Lily Dale, are now all defunct. By 1898, there were four Spiritualist camps in the state including Lily Dale. Lake George, Freeville, Oneida Lake, were where the other three Spiritualist camps were located. Lily Dale was the largest, sometimes attracting up to 5,000 people a day in the 1890s. In Findley's Lake, New York, not far from Cassadaga, a smaller Spiritualist meeting space, which the *Banner of Light* refused to call a "camp" because it "lack(ed) the organization needed," was established and was seeing up to 1,200 people show up for its events.²⁵⁴ The fact that Lily Dale is the last of these camps, and the only founded by Freethinkers, to remain operating lends credence to the argument that it is an important cultural resource at least on a statewide level.²⁵⁵

Lily Dale has a layered and remarkable history with many intersections into women's, architectural, religious, Native American, LGBTQ, economic, and social history. The Lily Dale Assembly, founded by Freethinkers, has long stood as a place of equality, free speech, and

²⁵⁴ Nagy, *Spirits*, 55.

²⁵⁵ Nagy, *Spirits*.

tolerance. Through the ebb and flow of history, Lily Dale has endured good times and hard times. Today the camp remains a reflection of its colorful past and stands as a testament to the various events and ideas that have transpired within its grounds.

CHAPTER FIVE: EXISTING CONDITIONS

Introduction

This chapter builds on the previous chapter by documenting the existing conditions of Lily Dale. Following the National Park Service's *Guide to Cultural Landscape Reports*, this section provides an overview of several landscape characteristics including natural systems and features, topography, constructed water features, spatial organization, circulation, cluster arrangement, buildings and structures, small-scale features, views and vistas, vegetation, land use, and cultural traditions.

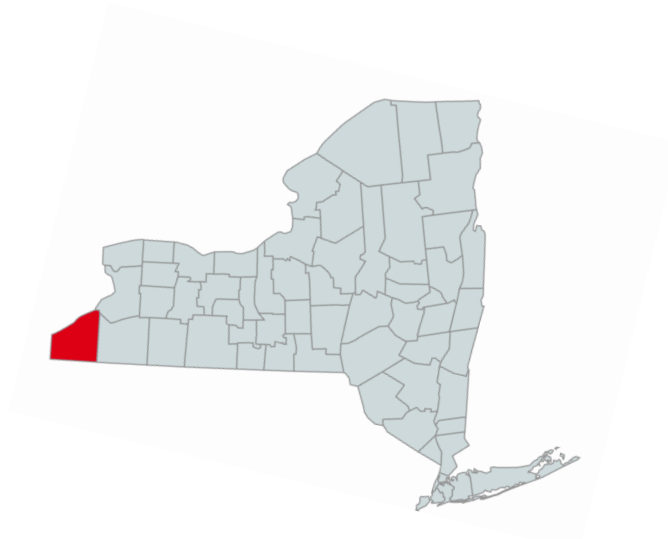


Figure 5.1. Chautauque County's position in New York State (Source: Wikipedia)



Figure 5.2. Map of notable Lily Dale buildings. 1. Maplewood Hotel, 2. The Auditorium, 3. The Cafeteria, 4. Marion Skidmore Library, 5. The Pagoda, 6. Lakefront pavilion, 7. Lucy's Coffeeshop, 8. post office, 9. Leolyn Hotel, 11. Andrew Jackson Davis building, 12. The fire station.

Natural Systems and Features

Chautauqua County has a geological record that dates back 370 million years to the Late Devonian Period. Most of the bedrock in the county was formed from sediment deposited during that time period. This sediment was formed from the erosion of what is now called the Acadian

Mountains which once dominated what is now eastern New York State and New England. These mountains formed from the collision of a small continent called Avalon with the North American continent during the Devonian period. As the Avalon Mountains eroded, its sediment fell into the Catskill Sea, a tropical sea that once covered western New York State. The sediments compiled and formed the Catskill Delta. As more sediment compiled, the sea began to fill-in thus forming the land that is now New York.²⁵⁶

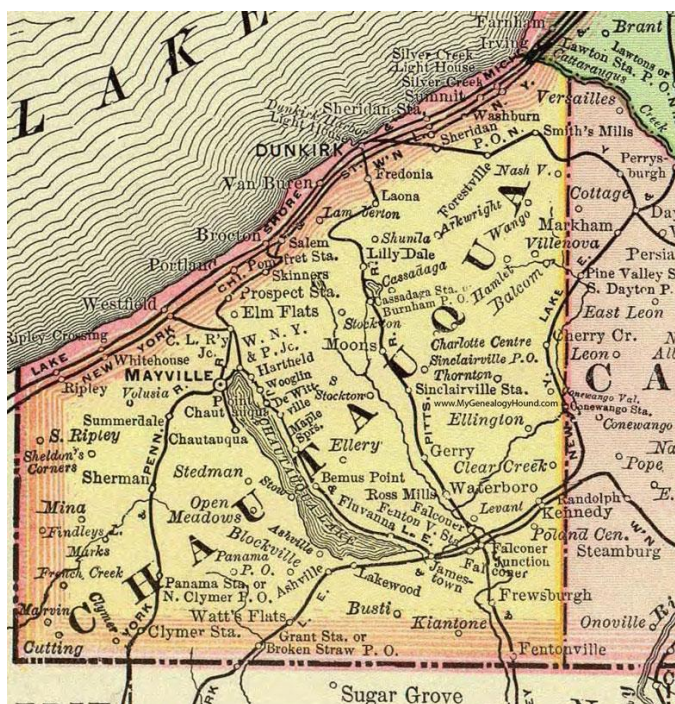


Figure 5.3. Chautauqua County Map (Source: MyGenealogyHound.com)

Today, Chautauqua County is known mostly for its bucolic countryside. The famous Chautauqua Lake sits near the center of the county and Lake Erie forms the northern border of the county. Part of the Eastern Continental Divide runs through Chautauqua County. Conewango

²⁵⁶ Brian Muirhead, "A Brief Geological History of Chautauqua County," *Earth Science Field Trips for High School Students*, New York State Geological Association, accessed: 2/25/20, <https://www.nysga-online.net/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/NYSGA-1999-SunE-Workshop-Earth-Science-Field-Trips-for-High-School-Students.pdf>.

Creek drains into the Gulf of Mexico while the rest of the county's watershed empties into Lake Erie. The county is comprised of rolling hills, valleys, swamps, and flatlands. Wineries, farms, windmills, and more dot the landscape throughout the county. The major cities are Dunkirk, in the northern part of the county, and Jamestown, in the southern.²⁵⁷

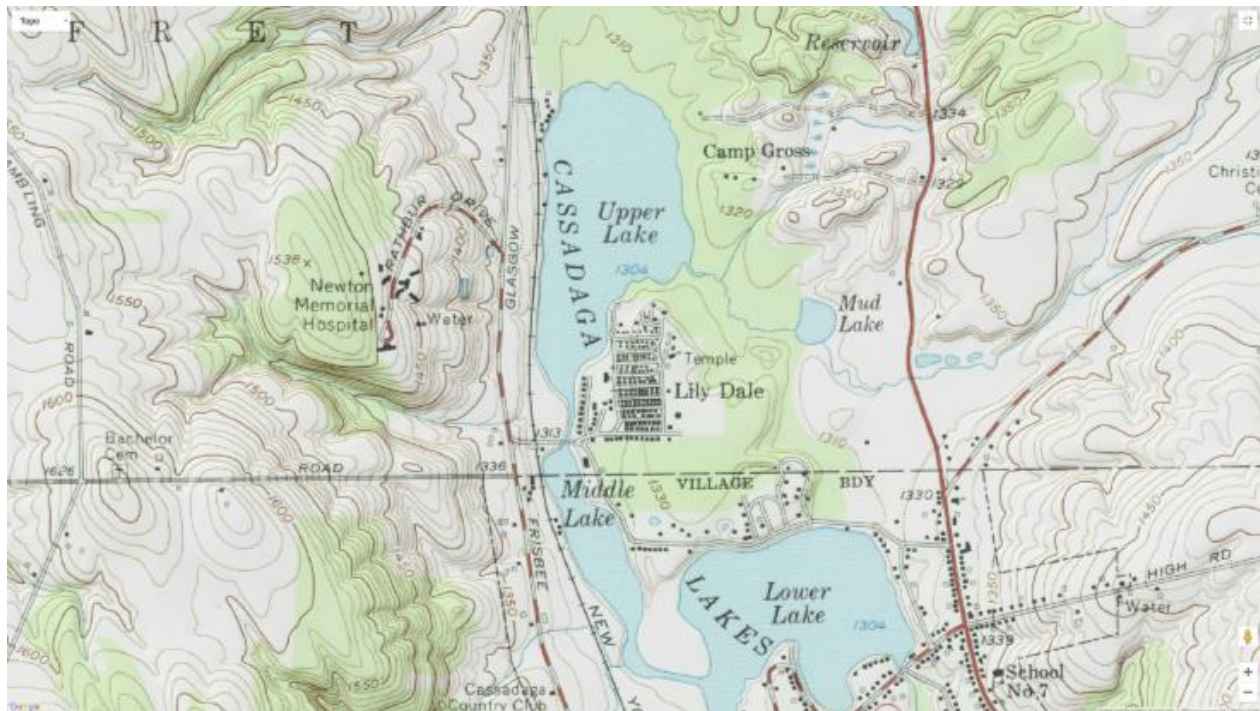


Figure 5.4. Lily Dale Topographic Map (Source: Topozone)

The climate of Chautauqua County provides comfortable summers and intense winters. Chautauqua County is within a humid temperate region. Deciduous forests dominate the landscape that has not been cleared for farming. On average, 46 inches of rain and 120 inches of snow fall on the county every year. There is an average of 159 sunny days per year as well. July is usually the warmest month with January often being the coldest.²⁵⁸

²⁵⁷ Nichols Dean, "Legislators Cite North-South Discrepancies," *The Post-Journal*, 08/3/2009, accessed: 1/13/20.

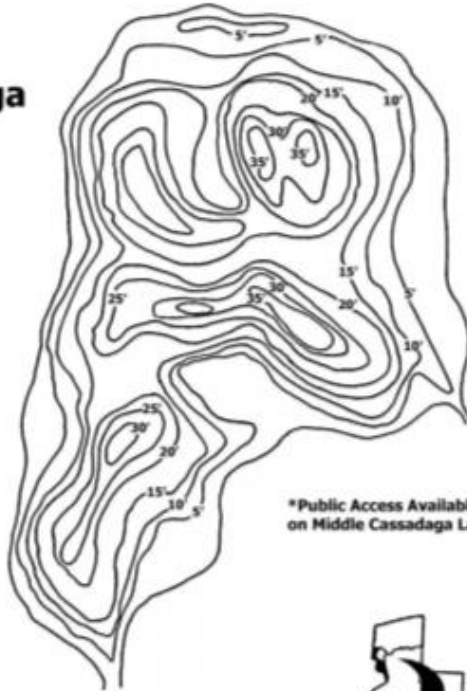
²⁵⁸ Best Places Staff, "Climate in Chautauqua County, New York," Best Places, accessed: 1/13/20, https://www.bestplaces.net/climate/county/new_york/chautauqua.

The landscape of Lily Dale reflects many of the characteristics of Chautauqua County. The camp occupies a site that is 1,300 feet above sea level. Upper Cassadaga Lake forms Lily Dale's northern and western border. To the east of Lily Dale is woodland and Mud Lake which connects, via unnavigable creek, to the Cassadaga Lakes. The Village of Cassadaga is on the eastern side of Mud Lake. Lower Cassadaga Lake sits to Lily Dale's south. A single bridge, near the gate of Lily Dale, spans the narrow spillway between Upper and Middle Cassadaga Lake. White pine, maple, red oaks, hemlock, basswood, black cherry, and cucumber magnolias are many of the types of trees found in and around Lily Dale. Lily Dale is surrounded on three sides by forested lands that the Assembly owns and maintains. The southern part of the camp is a forest known as the Leolyn Woods, the west is flanked by the woods containing a trail called the Fairy Trail, and the north is buttressed by the woods around what is called the Boulevard Nature Trail. Inside the camp, there are plenty of greenspaces and parks with trees populated throughout.

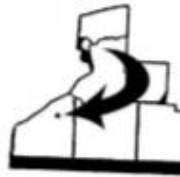
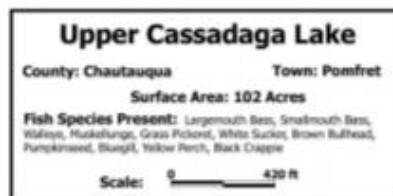


Region 9

**Upper
Cassadaga
Lake**



*Public Access Available
on Middle Cassadaga Lake



Not For Use in Navigation



Figure 5.5. Upper Cassadaga Lake (Source: New York State Department of Environmental Conservation Division of Fish, Wildlife, and Maritime Resources)

One of the most prominent character defining features of Lily Dale is its proximity to Upper Cassadaga Lake (fig. 5.5.). The site of Lily Dale was chosen specifically to be near the lake. Boating, canoeing, fishing, and swimming have all been recreational activities in Lily Dale that have been afforded by the lake. Ice-harvesting and fish-spearing have also been popular on the lake. Upper Cassadaga lake is 102 acres large on its own. The entire Cassadaga Lake chain is 217 acres total and contain 5.1 miles worth of shoreline with a maximum depth of 50 feet. A

gazebo called the Lake Pavilion and a dock jut out onto Upper Cassadaga Lake from the western side of the camp. These provide areas of gathering and recreation on the water. Spotting the aquatic creatures on the lake is a popular activity and many of the animals are famous within the camp. The lake's most well-known resident is a swan that can often be seen gliding around the lake. Otters and loons have also made the lake their home. Other species within the lake include largemouth bass, smallmouth bass, walleye, muskellunge, grass pickerel, white sucker, brown bullhead, pumpkinseed fish, bluegill, yellow perch, and black crappie. Public access to the lake is provided by a boat launch at the northern end of Middle Cassadaga Lake. A beach is maintained by Lily Dale as well and swimmers utilize it during the summertime.²⁵⁹

Upper Cassadaga Lake provides an important viewshed for Lily Dale as well. The lake contributes to the overall feeling and character of the camp by providing an idyllic view. The sound of wildlife on the lake, especially the loons, cultivate a feeling of closeness to nature. Sunsets and sunrises are often reflected on the lake and many residents and guests rise early or stay out late to see them. The breeze into Lily Dale is also amplified by the openness of the lake which visitors have noted since Lily Dale first opened. On the other side of the lake, a ridge can be seen. Along this ridge are modern homes and the Cassadaga Job Corps Academy.

The lake also provides an interesting aspect to the intangible cultural heritage of Lily Dale as well. Many Spiritualists believe paranormal activity is heightened by geological features including water. This theory posits that water serves paranormal and spiritual activity like a battery. Some believe spirits are made out of electrical particles and since water can charge

²⁵⁹ New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, "Cassadaga Lake, New York State government, accessed: 2/25/20, <https://www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/26964.html>.

electricity, the water increases paranormal activity. Therefore, many inhabitants believe that the Cassadaga Lakes serve as a spiritual reservoir for Lily Dale.²⁶⁰

Topography

Lily Dale is in a valley between two topographical ridges on either side of the Cassadaga Lakes. Since Lily Dale is located on former swampland, it is relatively flat compared to the surrounding area. There are slight topographical undulations throughout the camp, nonetheless. There is a slight ridge that runs from east to west through the camp. Another ridge runs north to south along Cottage Row and Melrose Avenue. These two streets follow the topography of the landscape. The high points in the camp help to form a depressed valley in the middle of the camp. The Pagoda, Lincoln Park, and the cafeteria all sit in this bowl and represent the lowest point in the camp. The flattest area in Lily Dale are the athletic fields behind the Andrew Jackson Davis Memorial Lyceum building on the eastern side of the camp. The only part of the camp where the topography can be seen as a character defining feature is on the western side where buildings and streets follow the curvature of the landscape.

²⁶⁰ Lindsey Danielson, "Using GIS to Analyze Relationships to Explore Paranormal Occurrences in the Continental United States," Department of Resource Analysis, Saint Mary's University of Minnesota, 2014, accessed: 1/13/2020, <http://www.gis.smumn.edu/GradProjects/DanielsonL.pdf>.



Figure 5.6. Topographic Map of Lily Dale and its environs. (Source: AnyplaceAmerica.com)

Spatial Organization

American architectural historian Anthony King linked community planning to "the way in which particular kinds of economy . . . and the ideologies with which they are associated, first give rise to distinctive institutions and activities, which in turn become embodied in urban and architectural forms."²⁶¹ Constructed as a camp meeting, Lily Dale's development embodied what King described, a religious and social pattern evolved into a physical institution- its activities based on the ideology King called, "an economy of religion."²⁶² That is, residents planned their community to enhance spiritual awareness and progress. Development of the camp, guided by

²⁶¹ Gary Monroe, Phillip Lucas, and John Guthrie, *Cassadaga: The South's Oldest Spiritualist Community* (Gainesville, Florida: University of Florida Press, 2000), 96.

²⁶² Monrow, Lucas, and Guthrie, *Cassadaga*, 96.

many prominent Spiritualists in New York state, combined religious needs with simple town planning to create an ideal camp meeting.²⁶³

Lily Dale's design and plan is unique amongst the remaining Spiritualist camps in the United States. Camp Chesterfield and Camp Cassadaga were both constructed during the height of the City Beautiful Movement and incorporate elements of that movement into their plans. Older than both camps, Lily Dale's spatial organization is uninfluenced by the City Beautiful Movement. Therefore, Lily Dale better reflects a typical nineteenth-century camp meeting form. Camp meetings usually entailed minimal planning, as the planners were almost always amateurs. Camp meetings usually worked with the landscape or adherents simply set up their tents and structures in a row. Lily Dale follows this pattern more than any other Spiritualist camp left. The western side of the camp works with the landscape, buildings follow the higher topography and the shore of the lake. On the eastern side of the camp, there is a formal grid pattern. This grid layout provided the greatest ease for Lily Dale's planners.²⁶⁴

The western side of the camp simply follows the curvatures and topography of the landscape. The streets and paths are often winding, follow topographical changes, and vary in size. Parks and greenspace proliferate in this part of the camp and there is little impetus to stay on roads or paths when one can meander through these parks. Many of the buildings do not sit on a north-south or east-west axis but are situated upon the natural features of the landscape. This unordered layout provides a sense of whimsy and evokes a pastoral atmosphere perfect for a camp meeting. The buildings, clustered between parks, are more monumental here than on the eastern side of the camp. This is because this side of the camp holds most of the public buildings

²⁶³ Gary Monroe, Phillip Lucas, and John Guthrie, *Cassadaga*.

²⁶⁴ Gary Monroe, Phillip Lucas, and John Guthrie, *Cassadaga*.

including the Post Office, the Auditorium, the Morris-Pratt building, the Maplewood Hotel, the Lake Pavilion, the staff office, the cafeteria, gift shops, and a few private businesses. Some of the oldest cottages in the camp are on the western side and rest upon a topographical ridge along the shore of Upper Cassadaga Lake.

The plan of the western side of the camp is no coincidence, either. It provided an easy design for the planners and suited the needs of the Spiritualists. Since the western portion of the camp is where most of the actual camp meeting activities take place, it made sense to design it in a way that allowed for plenty of open space for guests and events. The western side of the camp also has an open rural feeling. The interconnected parks allow people to wander through without staying on any actual paths or roads. This evocative rural feeling is likely what the Spiritualist community planners desired in order to achieve a sense of bucolic aestheticism. Due to the type of buildings found on this side of the camp along with its open space, many of the community events are held, and visitors cluster, in this portion of the camp.

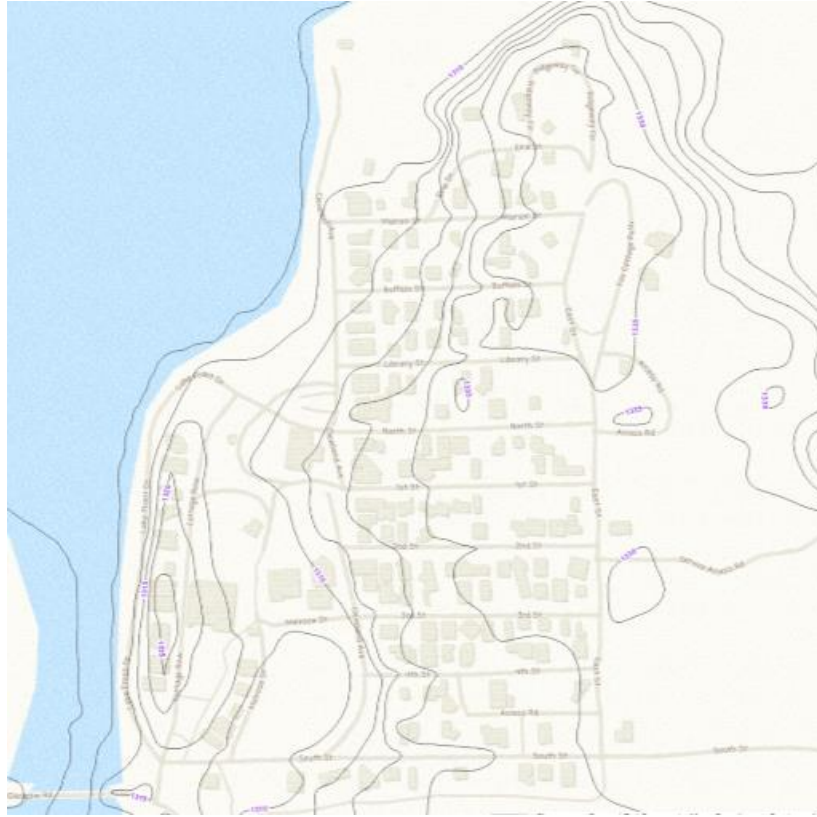


Figure 5.7. Topographic Map. Notice how Cottage Row is built on ridge on western side of the camp works with landscape while eastern side is a grid. (Source: Chautauqua County GIS)

The eastern side of the camp has a very different feeling. Cleveland Avenue separates the two sides of the camp. Since the western side of the camp is on a peninsula jutting out into the Cassadaga Lakes, it has less room therefore making the eastern side of the camp more than double in size. The eastern side of the camp loses any semblance of following the topography of the landscape. It is divided into a grid that runs the entirety of this side of the camp. The only areas free of this grid are in the northern portion of the eastern side above Marion Street and around the Fox Sisters Memorial Park. Here, the streets become winding and curvilinear once more around a few parks. The eastern side of the camp has most of the cottages in the camp with whole streets lined with them. There are a few businesses and landmarks within the eastern side

of the camp as well. These include the Bargain Shoppe, the Andrew Jackson Davis Memorial Lyceum building, the picnic pavilion, the Lily Dale Volunteer Fire Station, and the Fox Sister Memorial Park. Most of the churches are also located on the eastern side of the camp including the Lily Dale NSAC Spiritualist Church and the Church of the Living Spirit. Scattered throughout the rest of the grid on the eastern side is the Lily Dale Museum, an herb shop, and an angel figurine shop.

The rationale behind the grid is likely simple, it was the easiest thing to design. The grid is one of the most common planning designs in human history. Other camp meetings already utilized the grid pattern either organically, by people simply setting up tents next to each other, or by amateur planners who found it easy to design. Since the eastern part of the camp is where most of the cottages are, it is more private than the west. The grid allows for private backyards and porches away from the eyes of visitors. This privacy is not afforded to the cottages on the western side of the camp. The grid also allows easier access via vehicle to individual cottages for visitors of the residents.

Cleveland Avenue is the main thoroughfare through camp. Cleveland Avenue runs the length of the camp from South Street until it terminates at the Lily Dale community beach on a north-south axis. Along Cleveland Avenue there are multiple businesses and landmarks including the Angel House Guest House, the Crystal Cove souvenir shop, Lucy's Coffeeshop, Harmony House, and the Assembly Hall. Multiple parks are also situated off Cleveland Avenue including Caldwell Park, Natalie's Garden, Friendship Park, and Fountain Circle Park. Cleveland Avenue is the busiest road in the camp and divides it between east and west.

There are around twelve parks, greenspaces, and community gardens in Lily Dale. They vary in terms of size, shape, layout, amenities, and more. Some have structures within them

while others don't. These parks represent the manifestation of the Spiritualist reverence for nature. These parks represent some of the key land-uses that comprise the overall spatial organization of the landscape as a whole (fig. 5.8.).



Figure 5.8. Parks of Lily Dale.

1. The Leolyn Woods



Figures 5.9. The Leolyn Woods (Source: author)

The Leolyn Woods (fig. 5.9.) is the most important greenspace in Lily Dale and is located on the southern side of the camp. It is a ten-acre tract of old-growth forest with some trees ranging between 200-400 years old. The forest itself has been dated to be about 6,000 years old. The Leolyn Woods also has fourteen different types of old growth trees including Basswood, Cucumber Magnolia, Red Oak, Hemlock, Maple, Beech, Birch, Black Cherry, and Eastern White Pine. The trees are huge with one Eastern White Pine alone reaching 135 feet tall. In fact, the Leolyn Woods is the second tallest forest in New York State and the second most diverse. It contains rare and endangered plants including Giant Sarsaparilla. The tallest Red Oak and the tallest Black Cherry tree in New York State are both in the Leolyn Woods.²⁶⁵

²⁶⁵ Woodland Heritage Institute to Alpha Husted, 07/08/2004.



Figure 5.10. Trail in the Leolyn Woods (Source: author)

The Leolyn Woods is also home to Lily Dale's most famous landmark, Inspiration Stump (fig. 5.11.). Inspiration Stump is a large stump in the Leolyn Woods that is purportedly a vortex or psychic and spiritual energy. The stump was first used as a platform for mediums in 1898 and has been in continuous use since. In 1952, Inspiration Stump was filled with concrete to maintain its use. Today, however, the mediums that work there hardly ever stand on Inspiration Stump, but rather in front of it. In order to be a registered medium in Lily Dale, mediums in training must give a certain amount of free readings at Inspiration Stump to the public. Therefore, the mediums that often read there can be either mediums in training, registered Lily Dale mediums, or visiting mediums. People come from all over to attend the free services at Inspiration Stump. To accommodate these crowds, there are now multiple benches in front of it.²⁶⁶

²⁶⁶ Francesca Bond, "Lily Dale Attracts Visitors Looking for Spiritual Answers, Comfort," *Gusto*, 07/12/19, accessed: 3/16/20, <https://buffalonews.com/2019/07/12/lily-dale-attracts-visitors-looking-for-spiritual-answers-comfort/>.



Figures 5.11. and 5.12. Inspiration Stump and the view from it (Source: author)

There are two other notable landmarks within the Leolyn Woods besides Inspiration Stump. One is the pet cemetery (fig. 5.13.), located near the northeastern entrance to the woods. It bills itself as “the oldest pet cemetery in America.” Legend has it that in February of 1900, horses fell through the ice on Cassadaga Lake during ice harvesting. Pulled from the waters, the carcasses were transported to the Leolyn Woods. One horse, called Topsy, along with another horse, were buried in the forest. Because of that, people started burying their pets there. This story is likely true, but the historical record suggests it dates from the 1930s instead of 1900. Headstones and memorials dot the landscape in the pet cemetery.



Figure 5.13. The Pet Cemetery (Source: author)

The other notable landmark in the Leolyn Woods is the site of the former healing tree (fig. 5.14.). The tree was claimed to have been taller than all the rest and was reportedly over 250 years old. It was claimed that whoever touched the tree would be healed. This reputation caused people to start taking pieces of the tree and its bark as souvenirs. The loss of so much bark killed the tree and it was removed in 1911. The sign that demarcates its former location says, “our great tree is down but its legend lives on.”²⁶⁷

²⁶⁷ NYUp Staff, “A Day in Lily Dale: Photo Essay of People, Places in Upsate NY Hamlet,” NYUp, accessed: 11/16/20, https://www.newyorkupstate.com/western-ny/2017/07/a_day_in_lily_dale_photo_essay_of_people_places_in_upstate_ny_hamlet.html.



Figure 5.14. Sign for the Healing Tree (Source: author)

2. Friendship Park

Near the shore of Upper Cassadaga Lake, north of Lincoln Park and the Maplewood, is Friendship Park (fig. 5.15.), a small greenspace shaped like a triangle with the top of the triangle pointing west. The park has large boulders strewn throughout it. It also has a small decorative bridge, a concrete fountain, and a grassy opening with logs for seating in it. The most notable feature in Friendship Park is the Lakeside Rain Garden. The purpose of the Lakeside Rain Garden is to clean and channel the runoff from the camp entering Upper Cassadaga Lake.



Figure 5.15. Friendship Park and the Lakeside Rain Garden (Source: author)

3. Fountain Circle Park

Fountain Circle Park (fig. 5.16.) is a small park located east of Friendship Park and north of Lincoln Park. Fountain Circle Park derives its name from the fountain located in the center of it. This fountain is surrounded by wooden benches that form a semi-circle. This semi-circle of benches makes Fountain Circle Park a popular gathering place for classes and drum-circles. There is one red bench that faces out onto Upper Cassadaga Lake.

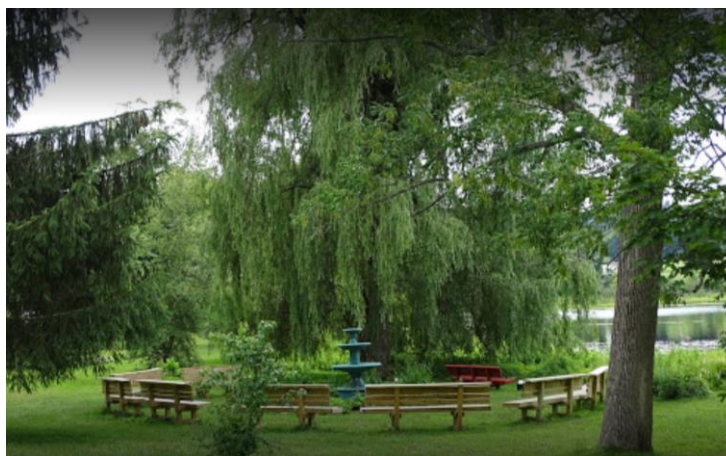


Figure 5.16. Fountain Circle Park (Source: Lily Dale Assembly)

4. Lincoln Park

Lincoln Park (fig. 5.17.) is west of the Maplewood and is one of the larger parks in Lily Dale. Its most prominent feature is a gazebo that sits in it. It is in a topographical bowl that forms between the ridges along Cottage Row and Cleveland Avenue. It is lush with grass and canopied by trees. Lincoln Park also has a series of wooden benches and tables throughout it. The park often fills with cars during the summer season.

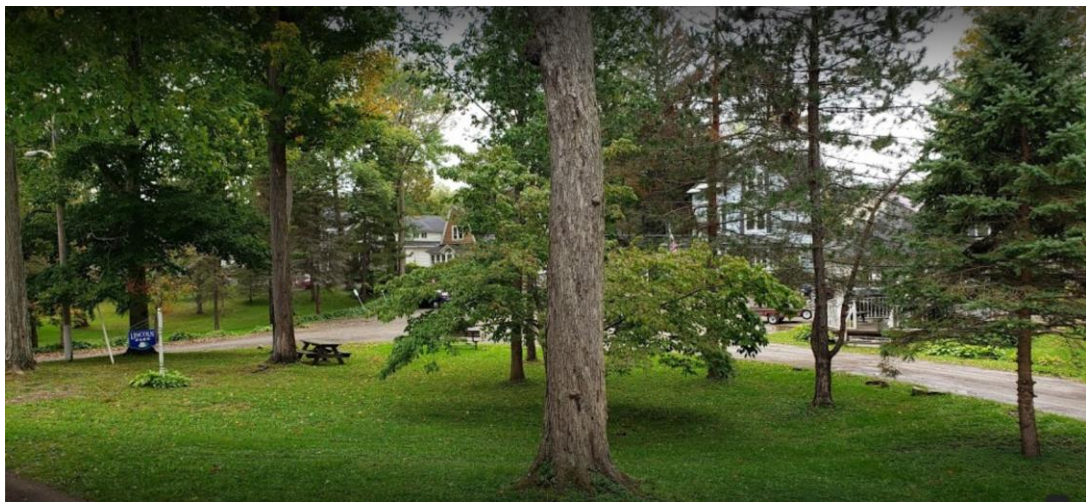


Figure 5.17. Lincoln Park (Source: author)



Figure 5.18. Lincoln Park (Source: author)

4. Melrose Park

Melrose Park (fig. 5.18.) is west of Melrose Drive. It has a large concrete fountain in the center of it and, like Friendship Park, is also shaped like a triangle. The streets around it form its edges. The most notable feature of Melrose Park is the small white mushroom gazebo on its western side. At its southern tip is a tiered area with fieldstone supporting each tier. In the top tier is a statue of a female figure. Throughout each tier are flowers, vines, and other plantings. This is directly across from the main gate and is one of the first things people view upon entering the camp. This park has less trees than Lincoln but still has some tree canopy over it. It also has benches and tables throughout it.



Figure 5.19. Melrose Park (Source: author)

5. Natalie's Garden

Natalie's Garden (fig. 5.20.) is one of the newer parks added to Lily Dale in recent years. It is a small rectangular garden with no trees and is located within Caldwell Park. It has formal plantings with vegetation planted in a designated dirt patch. It also has a concrete path running through it along with posts designating said path. The entrances to the Garden are designated by trellises.



Figure 5.20. Natalie's Garden (Source: author)

6. The Butterfly Habitat

The Butterfly Habitat (fig. 5.21.) is the most recent park added to Lily Dale. The Butterfly Habitat was the idea of the Lily Dale Environmental Committee which wanted to bring back the Monarch butterfly to Lily Dale. It was opened in 2017 and abuts Natalie's Garden within Caldwell Park. It is also rectangular in shape and has a path running through it. The Monarch's eat Milkweed so that was planted in ample supply within the habitat. The Butterfly Habitat is interesting from a historic preservation perspective because it simultaneously detracts and adds to the historic character of Lily Dale. It alters a historic park space, as it is a modern addition, but it also brings back a species type that was historically common to the area.²⁶⁸

²⁶⁸ Connie Dutcher, interview by author



Figure 5.21. Butterfly Habitat (Source: Lily Dale Assembly)

7. Caldwell Park

Caldwell Park (fig. 5.22.) is one of the larger parks within Lily Dale and is located east of Melrose Drive. It is large enough to encompass Natalie's Garden and the Butterfly Habitat. Caldwell Park has some of the largest Willow trees in Lily Dale and has a number of decorative plantings throughout it. There is a shallow topographical bowl within Caldwell Park that, when filled with rainwater, can almost be as large as a small pond. Caldwell Park also has statues of angels dispersed throughout it along with more benches and tables. Lastly, it has designated, often circular, zones for specific plantings within it.



Figure 5.22. Caldwell Park (Source: Lily Dale Assembly)

8. Humphrey Park

Humphrey Park (fig. 5.23.) abuts the Leolyn Woods to the north and is in the southwestern corner of the camp across from Caldwell Park. The northwestern entrance to the Leolyn Woods runs next to Humphrey Park. It is a small park with a fountain in the center. The entire park is focused around this fountain which depicts three cherubs. Concrete benches and decorative plantings of flowers surround the fountain. Like Caldwell Park, Humphrey Park is situated in a topographical low point. When it rains, almost the entire park floods.



Figure 5.23. Humphrey Park (Source: author)

9. Fox Sisters Memorial Garden

One of the most culturally significant greenspaces in Lily Dale is the Fox Sister Memorial Garden or the Fox Sister Meditation Garden (fig. 5.24.). Located in the northeastern corner of the camp, it was here that the Fox Sister cottage was brought when it was moved to Lily Dale in the 1910s. It sat on this location for about forty years before it burnt down in the 1950s. This garden is hallowed ground for Spiritualists due to its religious significance. It has gravel paths done in an orderly French-garden style running through it. At the center axial of the park is a large flowerpot surrounded by decorative plantings. Between the paths are small areas designated for plantings which are lined with bricks. Trees also canopy this park as it is near the edge of the camp and the Boulevard Nature Trail. Benches are available throughout the park for visitors to relax, reflect, and meditate.



Figure 5.24. Fox Sister Memorial Garden (Source: author)

10. Pumphouse Park

Pumphouse Park is located between East Street and the Nature Boulevard across from the Fox Sister Memorial Garden. It is triangular with the top of the triangle facing the south. In the center of the park is a wooden gazebo. It also has benches and tables throughout. This park is one of the densest in terms of tree canopy and is well shaded. It is one of the closest parks to the Forest Temple.

11. Andrew Jackson Davis Memorial Lyceum Building Parks

There are several parks around the Andrew Jackson Davis Memorial Lyceum building (fig. 5.25.). These parks are unnamed but are unique to the camp. The community vegetable garden is one. It is one of the only gardens in the camp that is enclosed on all sides. It is similar in size to Natalie's Garden. There is another park for children near the Andrew Jackson Davis Memorial Lyceum building as well. This park has a swing set, playground, and other amusements for kids. It also has birdhouses as well. The last park near the building is the

“Healing Area for Pets.” This is simply a patch of grass enclosed by a meager wooden fence on three sides. It is a designated area for pets to relieve themselves.



Figure 5.25. Children's Park near Andrew Jackson Davis building (Source: author)

The parks and gardens of Lily Dale have various designs and feel. Some have hardly any statuary or structures. Others have benches, stumps to sit on, statues, plantings, and more. Some, like Lincoln Park, are large while others, like Natalie's Garden, are small. Some are designed, orderly, and stocked with flowers. Others are large, open, and ideal for people to picnic or wander through. There are so many parks in Lily Dale, it can be difficult to tell when you've left one, entered another, or which you're currently standing in. Community activities often take place within the gardens. For example, every year the community does a butterfly release in the Butterfly Habitat. Friendship Park has stumps to sit on and oftentimes group meditations are held there. The parks and greenspaces within Lily Dale are crucial towards the character of the camp. They make the camp walkable, aesthetically pleasing, refreshing, and connect visitors with the

outside world. This is partly the goal of any camp meeting. Many of these parks are historic and have been there since the camp opened which also contributes to the historic character of the camp.

The spatial organization of Lily Dale reflects a traditional camp meeting form and the Spiritualist reverence for nature. It is a simple organization, but one loaded with practicality and tradition. Furthermore, the number of parks and greenspace in such a small area also demonstrates the Spiritualist desire to connect with nature and host their camp meetings in a bucolic setting. The reflection of Spiritualist ideals built into the landscape and the fact that it is a well-preserved camp meeting ground both lend to the camp's significance and integrity.

Circulation

Most of the circulation patterns in Lily Dale remain unchanged since the 1880s with one major exception. The Fairy Trail was added in the 2000s and significantly altered circulation patterns within the camp. This detracts from the integrity of the circulation pattern. Therefore, there is a mixture of historic and modern circulation patterns in the camp. The entrance to Lily Dale, located in the southwest corner of the camp, is at the confluence of Glasgow Road and Dale Drive. Dale Drive heads southeast towards the Village of Cassadaga. Glasgow Road runs east-west until it reaches the western shore of Upper Cassadaga Lake then it runs north-south. Glasgow Road terminates into Highway 610 which leads to the Town of Fredonia.

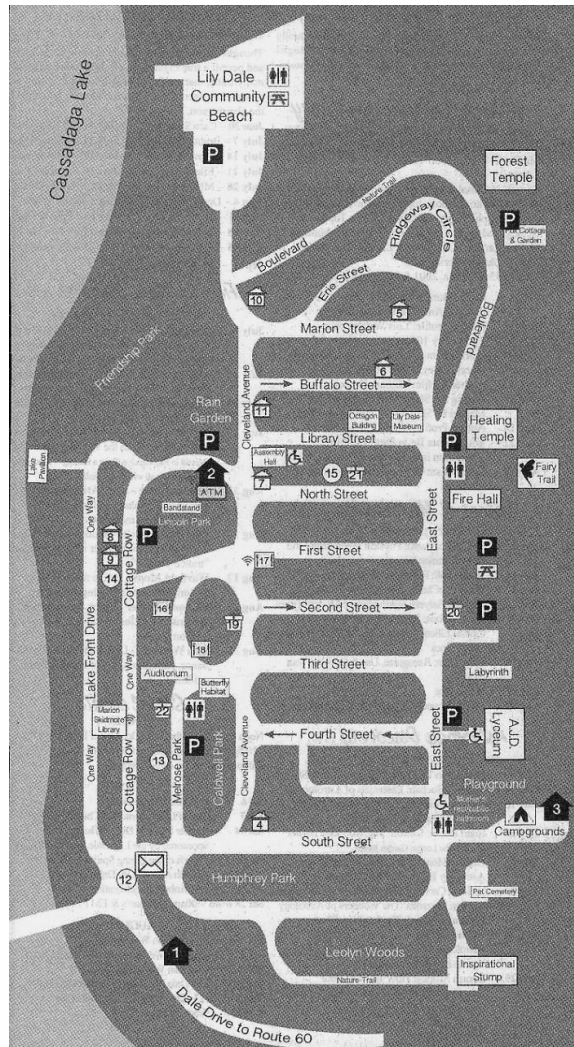


Figure 5.26. Streets and Parking of Lily Dale (Source: Ron Nagy)

Once inside the gate there is a three-way intersection. To the left is Lake Front Boulevard, straight ahead is Cottage Row, and to the right is South Street. Lake Front Boulevard eventually curves to the east when it reaches the shore of Upper Cassadaga Lake. Cottage Row terminates into Lake Front Boulevard when the latter curves east. South Street runs the entire course of the camp on an east-west trajectory. Many ancillary streets terminate or begin on South Street. The first street that juts off South Street to the north is Melrose Drive which is followed

by Cleveland Avenue and lastly, East Street. These three streets run in a north-south parallel direction.



Figure 5.27. 2nd Street looking east (Source: Ruth Marentette)

Between Cleveland Avenue and East Street are numerous east-west running horizontal streets. These streets connect Cleveland Avenue and East Streets to each other therefore forming a grid. From south to north these streets are 4th Street, 3rd Street, 2nd Street, 1st Street, North Street, Library Street, Buffalo Street, and Marion Street. Another street, Erie Street, breaks off to the north from Marion Street and loops around to East Street. Yet another street, curves off from Erie Street and then also loops back to East Street. This street is Ridgeway Circle. Fox Cottage Path also breaks to the east of East Street then loops back onto it around the Fox Sister Memorial Garden.

Woodland trails surround the camp on all sides except the eastern (where Upper Cassadaga Lake sits) and are considered part of the circulation pattern. To the south is the Leolyn Woods. There are two entrances to Leolyn Woods, both of which are located off an

access road south of South Street. The trail through Leolyn Woods meanders in a semi-circular direction. The Mud Lake trail is only about a half-mile long and winds through the forest east of the camp. Just north of the Mud Lake trail is the Fairy Trail. This trail meanders in a rough circle with one exit and entrance. Residents and visitors are encouraged to build miniature structures and shrines along the Fairy Trail for the fairies and gnomes that supposedly reside there (fig. 5.28.). Oftentimes tinsel, beads, coins, photographs, sparkles, and more can be found along the trail path- offerings left by believers. The Fairy Trail is a more recent addition to the camp having been first constructed in the twenty-first century. Some parts of the trail have signs that denote their name such as “Firefly Circle” or “Fairy Wing Way.” The Fairy Trail is not historic and detracts from the integrity of the circulation patterns.



Figure 5.28. Fairy house on fairy trail (Source: author)

The last major trail in Lily Dale is the Boulevard Nature Trail (fig. 5.29.) located on the northern side of the camp. This trail has two exits or entrances both on the north side and forms another “L” shape. The eastern entrance is near the Forest Temple and the Fox Sister Memorial

Garden. The trail ends when it connects with Beach Access Road near the lake. The notable sites on this trail are the natural elements. Signs denote Beech trees, Burls, Black Willows, Japanese Knotweeds, Red Twig Dogwoods, nesting trees, and a one on how to count tree-rings. This trail also serves as a useful shortcut to get from the eastern side of the camp to the lake.



Figure 5.29. Boulevard Nature Trail (Source: Ruth Marentette)

The circulation patterns of the western side of the camp contribute to the overall significance of Lily Dale. On the western side of the camp there are ample opportunities to forge your own circulation pattern throughout the camp. There are a variety of parks and greenspaces on the western side of the camp that hardly ever have trails or paths through them. Residents and visitors can meander through this side of the camp in their own way as the parks often touch or are connected. It is ideal for pleasant strolling and exploration therefore contributing greatly to the overall relaxed feel of the camp or like one is walking amongst nature.



Figure 5.30. Circulation map. Red represents paved roads, green is trails.

A historic change in the circulation pattern is also how people arrived at Lily Dale. Originally, steamships brought people to Fern Island. The railroad was the major impetus that allowed the development of Lily Dale, however. These railroads required depots which were to the southwest of the camp on the other side of Upper Cassadaga Lake. These railroad depots are now gone (fig. 5.31. and 5.32.). Their footprints remain on the landscape, however. A clearing through the woods along the road west of Upper Cassadaga Lake, signifies where the railroad once was. The depots are now a vacant lot near the intersection of Dale Drive and Glasgow Road. This is located on the western side of the bridge across the Cassadaga Lakes. These areas are not owned by Lily Dale but are a part of the Lily Dale cultural landscape as they were once closely associated with the Assembly and how, historically, visitors would have arrived.



Figures 5.31. and 5.32. Location of Historic Railroad and Depots (Source: author)

Cluster Arrangement

The cluster arrangement of Lily Dale reflects the circulation patterns, use, and design of the camp. Lily Dale has a number of building and greenspace clusters throughout its camp. The far western side of the camp, near the shore of Upper Cassadaga Lake, has a series of cottages and the Marion Skidmore Library all in a row. The Maplewood Hotel, the pagoda, and the auditorium are both relatively isolated and not in a cluster. A cluster of buildings, including some of Lily Dale's most iconic cottages, the Lily Dale gift shop, and the Lily Dale main office are located near the main gate on Melrose Avenue. These buildings are clustered together via the direction in which they're situated on the landscape, in a northwest-southeast direction. The Morris Pratt Building, the Crystal Cove gift shop, and the cafeteria are all clustered together based on the fact that they're public buildings within close proximity. There are also a number of parks on the western side of the camp that are all interconnected.

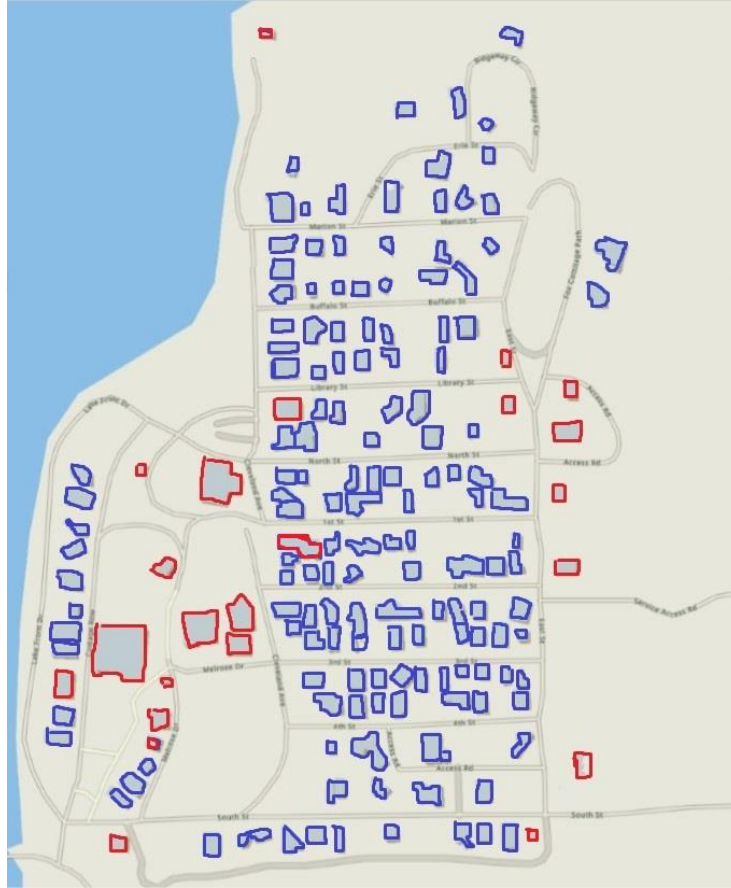


Figure 5.33. Blue represents private buildings (including guest houses and medium parlors), red represents public buildings.

On the eastern side of the camp, from South Street in the south to Marion Street in the north, the cluster arrangement is a grid with rows of cottages which mostly face the north or the south with the exception of the ones on the flanks of the grid that face either Cleveland or East Street. These cottages are clustered in rows and are together based on their use, private-residence status, and location on the grid. The buildings east of East Street revert back to being public and are some of the most spaced-out buildings within the camp. These buildings are also newer than the nineteenth-century cottages. On the southern side of South Street are another row of private

residences that face north. North of Marion Street are a cluster of residences that are squeezed between Erie Street and Marion with further residences north of Erie Street that face south.



Figure 5.34. Aerial picture of Lily Dale (Source: Chautauqua County GIS)

Buildings and Structures

One of the largest elements of landscape features in Lily Dale are the buildings and structures. Situated amongst the rolling Chautauqua hills along narrow streets, these buildings characterize the quiet and religious Lily Dale. Set in a town plan, Lily Dale has around 250 structures and buildings, nearly 160 of which are private residences. There are also five or so stores/souvenir shops, three churches, two hotels, two eateries, two office buildings, one coffee shop, one fire station, one post office, one library, one museum, and one auditorium. All of the buildings in Lily Dale were constructed from the 1870s-1980s, with the bulk being built before 1920. The collection of over century-old wood-frame dwellings blends sensitively with several larger buildings scattered throughout the camp.

Lily Dale reflects the socioeconomics of its residents and guests as well. As architectural historian Sidney P Johnston wrote in *Cassadaga: The South's Oldest Spiritualist Community*, describing Camp Cassadaga's progenitor, Lily Dale, "it beckons architectural historians to investigate its social history through its architecture, which reflects the culture of mainstream American middle-class residents who happened to be Spiritualists."²⁶⁹ Lily Dale was built by and for the middle class. The occupants and visitors were mostly well-off enough financially to afford a small seasonal vacation cottage in the camp. What makes these residential buildings unique is that they largely follow conventional house plans with extra rooms added for religious activities such as seances. These religious rooms, used by Spiritualist circles, are what differentiates Lily Dale's cottages from other homes from the same time period.²⁷⁰

The architecture reflects the personalities and forces behind the founding of the community. The town's historic buildings, largely developed between 1879 and 1920, primarily reflect the whims of their developers and leaseholders. Carpenters assembled houses using plans developed with owners, usually derived from guidebooks. Most carpenters employed the balloon framing technique to assemble the dwellings, a method of construction resulting in an informal array of Victorian Vernacular buildings that are often festooned with decorative fascia, spindles, turned posts, and more. These close-packed cottages, primarily wood frame and two stories with wood shingle and clapboard exterior wall fabric, provide an intimacy that contrasts itself against the larger hotels, churches, and parks of the camp. The buildings, more than mere Victorian

²⁶⁹ Sidney P. Johnston, "'No Palaces Among Us': Cassadaga's Historic Architecture" from John J. Guthrie Jr., Phillip Charles Lucas, and Gary Monroe's, *Cassadaga: The South's Oldest Spiritualist Community* (Gainesville, Florida: University Press of Florida, 2000).

²⁷⁰ John J. Guthrie Jr., Phillip Charles Lucas, and Gary Monroe, *Cassadaga: The South's Oldest Spiritualist Community* (Gainesville, Florida: University Press of Florida, 2000).

Vernacular cottages, also reflect the social and belief systems of the community's members. The inclusion of Spiritualist symbology and religious rooms make these buildings unique.

These cottages are largely Vernacular, with a few high-style ones scattered throughout. The term "vernacular" refers not to inferior or low-quality architecture but to a building form associated with a particular region of the country (as opposed to a particular genre of formal architecture). "For many," asserts University of Florida professor of architecture Ronald Haase, "the word applies to things of the distant past, dead and gone and interesting only as seen through the dusty perspective of history." But referring to "the native language or dialect of a particular region or place," Haase believes, "gives life and energy and contemporary qualities to all things vernacular."²⁷¹ Therefore, in Lily Dale, the term "Victorian Vernacular" denotes that the style of a building with this label contains elements of high-style Victorian, regional elements from western New York state, and the leaser's personal taste.

Common Houses in America's Small Towns, an analysis of American Vernacular architecture published in 1989, argues that vernacular houses are too, "readily taken for granted in the American landscape," while "buildings of 'grand design' built to impress either the populace with the power and good taste of the patron, or the peer group," often receive undue attention.²⁷² One social historian, Gwendolyn Wright, described Vernacular dwellings, such as the ones in Lily Dale, as being lauded by many nineteenth-century Americans as the "ideal home [for] an independent homestead, attractive enough to encourage family pride yet unpretentious and economical."²⁷³

²⁷¹ Guthrie, Lucas, and Monroe, *Cassadaga*, 112.

²⁷² Guthrie, Lucas, and Monroe, *Cassadaga*, 112.

²⁷³ Guthrie, Lucas, and Monroe, *Cassadaga*, 113.

The most common dwelling types in Lily Dale are the gable-front and upright-and-wing types. These types are common throughout the camp because most of the structures built in the camp during the 1870s and 1880s were uniformed gable-front cottages. Adding a wing or enlarging these structures were the easiest expansions for leaseholders resulting in many upright-and-wing style buildings. The upright-and-wing house is representative of architectural traditions developed in Upstate New York as well rendering them particularly special in Lily Dale. These buildings are usually Vernacular Victorian in style. There are also examples of the Gingerbread Victorian, Gothic Victorian, Queen Anne, and Second Empire styles in the camp.²⁷⁴

Double-pile dwellings, houses with two or more rooms deep, account for another significant number of Lily Dale homes. The Double-pile has its roots in Renaissance ideas of symmetry and is common in the Northeastern United States, Pennsylvania, and western New York. The gable-front and upright-and-wing variants, facing the street with a slender profile, are well suited for the narrow lots of towns like Lily Dale. There are hardly any single-pile dwellings in Lily Dale because almost all the cottages that were initially constructed were double-pile thus setting the trend for the camp. The double-pile dwelling was inexpensive to build and easily adapted as an affordable seasonal cottage.²⁷⁵

The architecture of Lily Dale also reflects the seasonal nature of the camp meeting. Most houses were built as seasonal cottages, occupied for several months each year, their residents migrating between Lily Dale and their winter homes. Cottages frequently changed hands, as residents regularly moved into and out of the religious center. The frequency in which people leased, sold, and moved into the different cottages caused constant change to the physical

²⁷⁴ Guthrie, Lucas, and Monroe, *Cassadaga*, 116.

²⁷⁵ Guthrie, Lucas, and Monroe, *Cassadaga*, 116.

structures. Different leaseholders were always changing their buildings to suit their needs and tastes. The result is that most buildings in Lily Dale contain elements from a variety of styles and time-periods.

There are several historic structures and buildings that have lost almost all of their historic integrity. From South Street to North Street, all the residences were built before 1885. North Street was the original northern boundary of the camp. The houses north of North Street were built from 1885-1910. Many of these original structures throughout the camp were demolished, lost to fire, or so severely altered that none of their original fabric remains. One of the most common changes to these homes is the installation of asbestos, asphalt, vinyl, or aluminum siding over the original wood boards. Furthermore, original Victorian features were removed during renovations. Clipped windowsills and wooden siding often left small openings through which insects could erode building material. Porches enclosed with glass or plywood diminished the original harmony and texture of some dwellings. Much of the character and charm of Lily Dale's homes disappeared through these processes.

An interesting paradox arises due to the remodeling and changes of many homes in Lily Dale, however. Depending on what the determined period of significance is, many of the alterations to Lily Dale's cottages could also be considered historic, even if they are from a later date than the original structure. If the period of significance is until 1970, for example, any additions made before that would be considered historic. Especially since these alterations reflect the recreational and seasonal character of the camp. Determining the period of significance will greatly impact what is considered historic and what value is placed upon different architectural features.

The following photographs of buildings will be a small sampling of the nearly 250 buildings in Lily Dale. As aforementioned in chapter one, a comprehensive survey of every structure and building in Lily Dale far exceeds the scope of this thesis. In order to accurately convey the architecture of Lily Dale, a list was taken of every building type and style found in the camp. Once this was done, examples of each style and type were photographed. The list and some of these examples are listed below. The goal of the following architectural descriptions is to provide an understanding of the main types and styles of architecture found in Lily Dale.

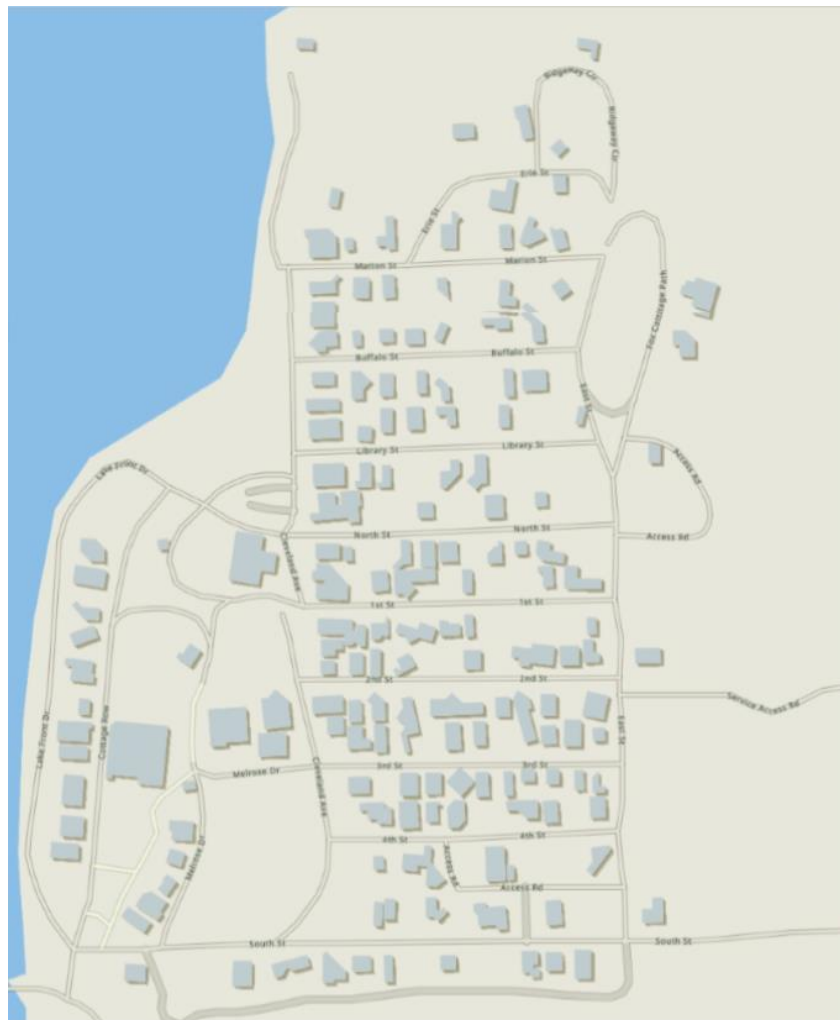


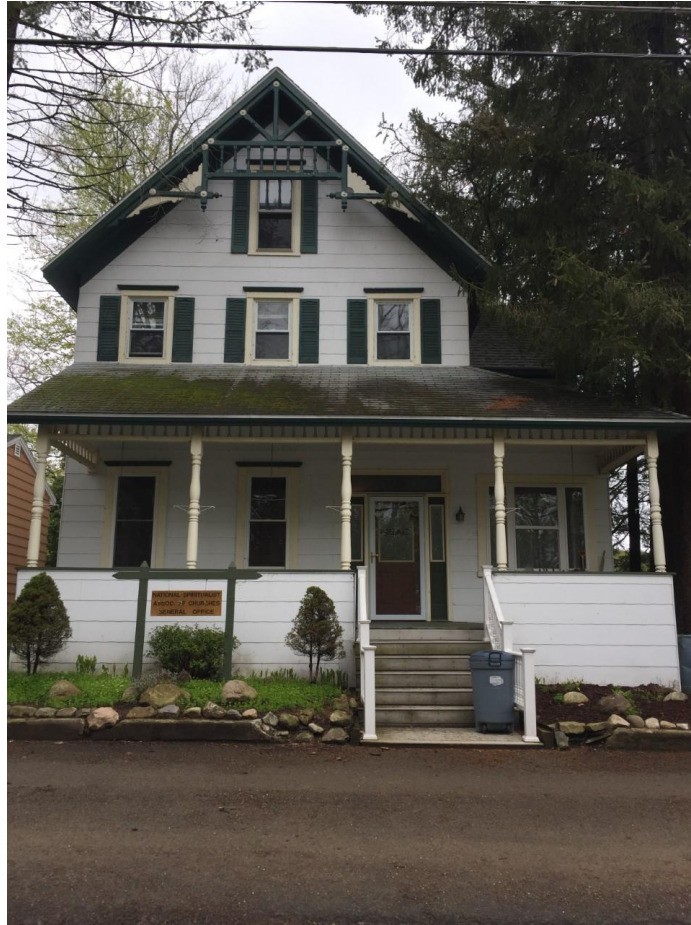
Figure 5.35. Structural Map of Lily Dale (Source: Chautauqua County GIS)

1. Gable-Front



Figure 5.36. Gable-Front Cottage, 7 2nd Street (Source: author)

This cottage is an excellent example of historic restoration as it has been immaculately restored to how the original 1870s/1880s cottages appeared when they were initially constructed. It is a simple gable-front symmetrical Vernacular Victorian cottage. It has minimal decorative features but does have overhanging eaves, spindles, and vertical members along the facades adding rhythm and texture. It is painted a simple white and blue. Many of the cottages initially looked like this when they were first constructed in Lily Dale.



*Figure 5.37. Gable-Front, 13 Cottage Row (circa. 1887)*_(Source: author)

This gable-front Victorian Vernacular structure was built in 1887 and today houses the offices of the National Spiritualist Association of Churches. Due to the use of this building, it has a religious tax exemption placed upon it. It has elements of the Gingerbread Victorian style. It has a front gabled roof made of asphalt shingles. Decorative elements on this structure include dentals, spindles, and wooden millwork. The door has a transom and sidelights. The siding is comprised of asbestos shingles.



Figure 5.38. Gable-Front, South Street (1880s) (Source: author)

This is an example of the type of remodeling in Lily Dale that often can be viewed as seriously damaging historic integrity. The main culprit is the cheap embossed faux-stone asphalt veneer. However, it is possible that this asphalt veneer was added in the 1950s or 1960s, perhaps even earlier, and may now be considered historic based upon the fifty-year guideline for historic structures that the National Park utilizes. This demonstrates why period of significance matters. If the period of significance is from 1879-1900, for example, then this building would be non-contributing because so much of the historic integrity from that period has been lost. If the period

of significance is from 1879-1970 then this building could still be considered a contributing structure.

2. Upright-and-Wing



Figure 5.39. Upright-and-Wing, 14 Cottage Row (circa. 1886) (Source: author)

This once private residence is now a guest house known as the Jewel of the Lake and is a good example of the upright-and-wing type. The term derives from the usually tall or parallel gable on one side and shorter or set-back addition next to it. This type is one of the most common in Lily Dale. Lily Dale has several guest houses that accommodate visitors to the camp similar to this one. In 1922 the porch was enclosed and in 2012 renovations were done to the

structure. The lot it sits on is 48 feet by 109 feet. It is a brick structure with vinyl siding over it. It was originally wooden siding. The roof is made of asphalt shingles and the building has hanging gutters. There is a legend that Sir Arthur Conan Doyle stayed in this building when he came to Lily Dale although there is absolutely no evidence that he ever visited the camp.



Figure 5.40. Upright-and-Wing (1880s) (Source: author)

This is an example of an upright-and-wing style building that has gone through many changes. The right side of this building, the front gable, is likely the original gable-front cottage. The rest of this building on the left side was likely added over time. The left side is peculiar because it has elements of the Craftsman style with its elongated overhanging eaves and wooden brackets. The asbestos siding that is uniform and runs the length of the building provides a nice uniformity and even mimics wood clapboard. Another interesting detail is the Mid-Century tin or fiberglass stone foundation. This building is representative of the life cycle of many structures in

Lily Dale in which aspects of the original structure and type are visible, yet the materials of the structures have vastly changed.



Figures 5.41. Upright-and-Wing, 6 Cleveland Avenue_ (Source: author)

This upright-and-wing building is Lucy's Coffeeshop and it is an excellent example of historic rehabilitation. Once a residence, it now houses a coffeeshop. Much of the historic fabric has been restored including the wooden siding, the decorative spindles, the brackets, and more. The original cottage layout has also been preserved and can be clearly seen. The high-pitched gable, the verandah, the decorative spindled posts, and the wooden milled balustrade are all common in Victorian architecture.



Figure 5.42. Upright-and-Wing, South Street (1880s) (Source: author)

This upright-and-wing cottage is an example of one of the most common alterations to many historic buildings in Lily Dale, an enclosed porch. The concrete-enclosed porch was likely done at some point in the early twentieth-century and could detract from the integrity of the Victorian structure behind it. However, the enclosure is now likely over fifty-years old thus rendering it possibly historic itself. Enclosed porches usually denote that someone was living there fulltime and not just seasonally at some point in the building's history.

3. Neoclassical



*Figure 5.43. Neoclassical, 5-6 Cottage Row (circa. 1923)*_(Source: author)

This Neoclassical brick building is the Marion Skidmore Library. Built in 1923, this building replaced Assembly Hall as the library in Lily Dale. The eastern façade, overlooking Cottage Row, has a classical portico with fluted Corinthian columns, a pediment on top, and decorative swags. There are three lunettes on the eastern façade, one over the door and two over the windows. The windows on the front of this building are done in the Romanesque style with decorative brickwork above them. The windows have sidelights that are 1x1. It has an asphalt-shingled hipped roof. This building is one of the most important in the camp because the Marion

Skidmore Library is the largest collection of Spiritualist related literature in the entire world. The collection contains 6,127 volumes.²⁷⁶

4. Queen Anne



Figure 5.44. Queen Anne (circa. 1870s), 6, 7, and 8 Melrose Dr. (Source: author)

These three eclectic Queen-Anne double-pile Victorian buildings are the most famous and picturesque buildings in Lily Dale. They represent some of the the most distinct and high-style architecture in the camp. All three lot sizes are around thirty by sixty feet. The houses are double-piled Queen Anne buildings with milled-wood balustrades, steep gables, oculus

²⁷⁶ "Lily Dale Assembly, Inc." Western New York Library Resources Council, accessed 1/15/20, <http://www.iisonline.org/membership/member/46>

windows, brackets, stained glass, second-story porches, and more milled-wood trim between the gables. 7 Melrose Park has a distinct oriel window and 8 Melrose Park has a tower. Today they are private residences and are often referred to as “the Three Sisters” since they share the same architectural style and are neighbors. Historically, they were never called “the Three Sisters.” A modern Lily Dale resident named Glen Ford recently gave them that moniker and it has stuck. These dwellings are also the best representations of buildings with rooms for Spiritualist practices. Most buildings in Lily Dale have special rooms added to them for religious uses. 7 Melrose Park, for example, has octagonal rooms on its first floor which were used for séances in the nineteenth century. 8 Melrose Park, once the home of Abby Pettingill, also has séance rooms near the front of the house.

In the 1980s, these buildings were extensively restored to their original appearance. They were then renovated with non-historic materials in the 1990s. During the 2000s and 2010s, they were restored once more to their current appearance. The Three Sisters are also some of the best examples of historic restoration in the camp since they not only retain their historic architectural styles, but they also still utilize historic materials and any modern additions have been removed from them.



Figure 5.45. Appearance before renovation (Source: Ruth Marentette)

5. Utilitarian



Figure 5.46. Post office (circa. 1888) (Source: author)

Lily Dale is home to several utilitarian structures with little architectural style and no discernable type. This utilitarianism illustrates the socioeconomics of the residents who may not have had the funds or desire to build a grand post office when a cheaper utilitarian version would suit their needs. The Lily Dale Post Office was established in 1888 and the original building was a double-pile gable-front type. The Post Office was moved thirty feet to its contemporary site in 1903 which is the same year the verandah was added to it. In the 1940s, additions were constructed to this building so it could house a beauty salon. More additions were made in the in the 1950s when part of it was used by the Lily Dale Athletic Club. There is a board located on the side of the building that lists all of the mediums operating in Lily Dale.



Figure 5.47. Church of the Living Spirit, 4 Cleveland Avenue (circa. 1888) (Source: author)

This building was constructed in 1888 and originally had held a school and Marion Skidmore's library. It is another example of a utilitarian building probably value engineered to be as inexpensive as possible. The broad gable, the symmetry, and the white paint do lend a

Neoclassical or Greek Revival flair to it, however. Remarkably, little has changed to the exterior structure of this building as it still retains wooden siding, its original design, and its original fenestration. Today it is now the Church of the Living Spirit, the largest single Spiritualist congregation in the world and is unaffiliated with the NSAC.



Figure 5.48. Lily Dale Volunteer Fire Department Depot, 17 East Street (circa. 1963) (Source: author)

This building is an interesting addition to the cultural landscape of Lily Dale. It is a utilitarian building, like the Assembly Hall and the Post Office, but was constructed out of modern materials. It is the only modern utilitarian building in Lily Dale and is the only building in Lily Dale from the 1960s. This building is also now well over fifty-years old which could render it historic. It symbolizes the needs, wants, and practical desires of Lily Dale in the early 1960s.



Figure 5.49. Maplewood Hotel, 11 Cottage Row (circa. 1880) (Source: author)

The historic Maplewood Hotel is one of the most unique hotels on the eastern seaboard, if not all of America. The utilitarian design of the structure derives from the fact that it was originally a barn that was converted into a hotel. Since it was a pre-existing structure, the hotel was constructed using the hung suspension building technique. On August 7th, 1880 the “Grand Hotel” was opened for business. A year later a third story and ten more rooms were added to the hotel. In 1890, The Grand Hotel received an eastern addition which added to the rear of the building. Due to this addition, the building does resemble a large-scale version of the upright-and-wing type. In 1902, The Grand Hotel received a new roof, a few of its dormers were removed, and it received a fresh coat of paint. In the early 1940s the dining room was renovated

and could now seat 250 people. In 1967, the Maplewood Hotel received another large renovation. Aluminum siding was added to it, the second-floor balcony was removed, and the rest of the dormers were also removed.



Figure 5.50. Lobby of the Maplewood (Source: author)

Today the Maplewood truly is a historic treasure. There are few large hotels done in this style left in America, especially ones that have been operating since the 1880s. The bathrooms are communal, there are no TV's in the rooms, the upper floors do not have HVAC, the rooms are decorated in an antiquated style, and the porch is stocked with rocking chairs. It is probably one of the only hotels in America with a sign in the lobby that reads, "no Seances, readings or healings allowed."



Figure 5.51. The Auditorium (circa. 1883) (Source: Lily Dale Assembly)

The auditorium was constructed in 1883 and was expanded in the 1890s. It is also utilitarian like many of the other public structures in Lily Dale. It does have some architectural décor, however. It has two large pediments on the north and south sides of the structure. These pediments are surrounded by classical cornices. The inclusion of these pediments and cornices does lend a slight Neoclassical flair to the building. The building also has slight overhanging eaves and unadorned brackets holding them up. There is a stringcourse that runs the course of the building. This building retains its wooden siding and its original 1880s design, appearance, and style.

6. Double-Pile



Figure 5.52. Double-Pile House, 2 ½ South Street (circa. 1860s-1872) (Source: author)

A “pile” is a row of rooms. A “double-pile” indicates a building that is two rooms deep. This building is a double-pile building with a central hall. The central hall bisects the building. On the exterior, the central hall is denoted by a large three-story tower. This building is known as the Angel House and is another guest house in Lily Dale. When it was built remains a mystery. In 1865, a deed states that a building was located on this site. It is unclear whether it was the same building that exists today. The current building dates to at least 1872 and one of the most notable occupants was Esther Humphrey, a wealthy Spiritualist from Pittsburgh and former Lily Dale president. This building has plenty of Victorian elements including the wrap-around porch, the milled-woodwork trim, the spindles, and decorative brackets. There are some modern additions that detract from the pure double-pile type.



Figure 5.53. Lily Dale Residence (Source: author)

This building was originally a double-piled structure but has had a rear and western addition added to it. These additions detract from the historical integrity of the building. It does have some unique Vernacular Victorian flourishing's however including decorative clapboard, a second-story porch, a steep pitched gable, unadorned posts, and wooden siding.

7. Victorian Vernacular



Figure 5.54. Vernacular Victorian (Source: author)

This building is a prime example of the Victorian Vernacular style in Lily Dale. The layout of the house seems to be original to the 1880s but the second-story windows were likely replaced in order to make room for the star-shaped window. It is likely the garage was added in the post-WWII era. The Victorian detailing such as the dentals on the fascia, the milled panels, the spindles, and the extremely unusual star-shaped window all contribute to the historic character.

8. Bungalow



Figure 5.55. Bungalow, Fox Cottage Path, (circa. 1987) (Source: author)

This building is the only example of the Bungalow style in any Lily Dale dwelling. The building is balanced, well-proportioned, has a low roof with over hanging eaves, and the exterior is clad with fieldstone. There are mirrors on the garage door panels that truly make this house stand out. Although not historic by any metric, due to it being a Bungalow and the only dwelling in Lily Dale built in the 1980s, it is unique.



*Figure 5.56. The Bough House Restaurant, Melrose Dr. (1920)*_(Source: author)

This building is the only Craftsman Bungalow style public building in Lily Dale. Built in 1920, it reflects the popularity of that style during that time. Craftsman elements include a low-pitched pyramidal roof with large overhanging eaves. It also has a large screened-in verandah around it. When it was initially constructed, it had dormers which have since been removed. Originally built to be the cafeteria, it then became a restaurant known as the Sunflower Café, and it is now a different restaurant called the Bough House.

9. Second Empire



Figure 5.57. Second Empire, Cleveland Avenue (circa 1880s) (Source: author)

This building is one of the few private residences that is done in the high-style Second Empire style. The Second Empire style is characterized by the Mansard roof style, a square plan, and dormers. It is likely that whoever funded the construction of this cottage was wealthier than most other residents. It also contains original building materials including a metal roof and wooden shingles. The layout, design and fenestration appear to be original.

10. Greek Revival



Figure 5.58. Lily Dale Spiritualist Church, East Street (circa. 1955) (Source: author)

This Greek-Revival structure was funded by former Lily Dale president Louis Vosburgh, who had this structure built as a “healing temple” for the medium Jack White to use in 1955. Today it houses the Lily Dale Spiritualist Church, the NSAC affiliated Spiritualist church in Lily Dale. This building is the best example of the Greek Revival in Lily Dale. The Greek Revival style is characterized by columns, porticos, symmetry, and pediments. Constructed out of concrete blocks, it retains much of its original exterior fabric. The lunette near the top of the low-pitched gable and the stained-glass windows are character defining features of this building. The columns are wooden, and the wood is covered in plaster. This building underwent a major interior renovation in 2019. It is also one of the few concrete buildings in Lily Dale and is one of the few structures done in a high-style, the Greek-Revival, which is characterized by the Doric columns, portico, and Classical cornice.

11. Victorian Gothic



Figure 5.59. Victorian Gothic, 16-18 Library St. (circa. 1889) (Source: author)

This Victorian Gothic building is currently the Lily Dale Museum but was once Pomfret School #6, a school in Lily Dale. Built in 1889, this structure has undergone a recent restoration and has been restored to its original appearance. The asbestos siding, that had been added sometime during the twentieth-century, was stripped away and replaced with wooden siding, the original material. This building has a Gothic flavor to it due to its steep-pitched gables, narrow and elongated windows, the center entrance protruding from the façade like a tower, and its emphasis on parallel lines.



Figure 5.60. Gothic Victorian, 2 Melrose Avenue (Source: author)

This former residence is now home to the Lily Dale gift shop. Its architectural style is the Gothic Victorian. This is due to the incredibly steep pitch of the gables on the second story and the emphasis on parallel lines. Although this building has an enclosed porch, it retains much of its original layout and design.

12. Modern



Figure 5.61. Modern (Source: author)

This residence is an example of a residence that has lost almost all its historic integrity and does not contribute in any way to the historic character of Lily Dale. This building is, however, a fine example of the evolution of a structure. The pitch of the roof on the right side of the second floor shows where the original cottage gable once was. At some point the skylight and room (or loft) in the Post-Modern tower were added. This ruined the layout, fenestration, and design of the original cottage. The siding is modern vinyl and the front door has been removed. The main point of access into the building is up a staircase and a through door that leads onto the second floor. Although unique, the destruction of this building's historical design, layout, and materials renders it essentially a Modern-styled structure and not historically significant.

13. Gingerbread Gothic



*Figure 5.62. Gingerbread Victorian (circa 1880s)*_(Source: author)

These two Gingerbread Victorian buildings are unique because they're the only ones in Lily Dale that are identical to each other in terms of design, fenestration, construction, layout, and material. They were likely built by the same person. The pitch of the front gables is steep, there are decorative milled-woodwork between the gables, the porch roofs are flat, there are brackets, window casings, and spindles. They are two of the best examples of the Gingerbread Victorian style in Lily Dale.

14. Commercial



Figure 5.63. Commercial, 21 Cleveland Avenue (1880s) (Source: author)

This building is Lily Dale's version of commercial architecture. The enclosed second-story porch is an addition that was added after the building was constructed. This building is an eclectic mixture of styles and is an example of different owners adding a variety of elements to suit their tastes. It has plastic Ionic columns, plastic Doric pilasters, a Mid-Century enclosed porch, shop windows, a transom, and sidelights. There used to be more commercial buildings in Lily Dale, but this is the last one remaining. It now houses the Crystal Cove gift shop.

15. Other



Figure 5.64. The Pagoda, (circa. 1898) (Source: author)

This structure is pure Lily Dale vernacularism. Built in 1898 and originally called the Sunflower Pagoda, this structure was originally a newspaper and literature stand. Eventually, the Sunflower Pagoda dropped the “Sunflower” portion of its name and became known simply as the Pagoda. The structure was given to Lily Dale in 1951 and still stands today. It is now a café called Monika’s Delites (sic.). The Pagoda has a 360-degree octagonal porch roof around it. The main stand where food is served is located in the center. The southeastern quarter of the octagon is enclosed to serve as a kitchen. Outdoor seating is available under the rest of the Pagoda’s porch roof. Due to its distinct shape, it is a landmark in the camp.



Figure 5.65. Octagon Building (circa. 1892) (Source: author)

The Octagon Building in Lily Dale is one of the most unique buildings in the camp. Orson Squire Fowler, a prominent New York phrenologist popularized octagon architecture with his 1857 book: *A Home for All: The Gravel Wall and Octagon Mode of Building*. In his book, Fowler argued that circular and octagonal architectural forms reflected natural shapes and were therefore more efficient, insulated, and larger than square buildings. Fowler's book created substantial interest in the style. The release of the book coincided with the Spiritualist movement and many Spiritualists latched on to Fowler's ideas. Octagonal and circular shapes were common motifs in Spiritualist "circles" anyway since the shapes represented the continuity of life after death. Octagonal buildings were also built in the On-I-Set Spiritualist Camp in Onset, Massachusetts and in Camp Cassadaga. At one point the Octagon Building was the home of the Lily Dale Assembly Mediums' League, a psychic school, and the Political Equality Club.

Aluminum siding was added to it in the 1950s which it still has. Today it is still a place of meeting within the community.²⁷⁷

Small-Scale Features

Lily Dale has a variety of small-scale features throughout its landscape as well. These small-scale features contribute much to the character of Lily Dale. Some are iconic and unique to Lily Dale such as medium signage while others are as banal as benches and lampposts. Small-scale features are some of the most overlooked aspects of any landscape. Taken as a whole, however, small-scale features are a key element to the cultural landscape of Lily Dale. The small-scale features presented in this thesis are examples of the hundreds of them found in Lily Dale. Many of the small-scale features in Lily Dale are the same object but are of a different material, color, design, etc. It would be far outside the scope of this thesis and the ability of one person to document every small-scale feature in Lily Dale. The purpose of what follows is to give the reader a sense of the types of small-scale features found in Lily Dale.

Classifying small-scale features can be difficult. The National Park Service has five general categories for property types. The first are “buildings,” which are defined as “structures intended to shelter some sort of human activity.”²⁷⁸ The second are “historic districts.” These are defined as “a geographically definable area, urban or rural, possessing a significant concentration, linkage, or continuity of sites, buildings, structures, or objects united by past events or aesthetically by plan or physical development.”²⁷⁹ The third are “objects.” These are small-scale, sometimes mobile, can be manmade or naturally occurring, and can be artistic. The

²⁷⁷ Guthrie, Lucas, and Monroe, Cassadaga, 102.

²⁷⁸ “How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation,” Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1990, accessed: 3/4/20, https://www.nps.gov/subjects/nationalregister/upload/NRB-15_web508.pdf, 4.

²⁷⁹ “How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation,” 5.

fourth are sites. These are “areas significant for the activities in that location in the past.”²⁸⁰ Sites are often naturally occurring and not manmade. The last one is “structures” which are “functional constructions meant to be used for purposes other than sheltering human activity.”²⁸¹ The vast majority of small-scale features, especially in Lily Dale, are objects although there are a few structures.

1. Medium Signs



Figure 5.66. Medium signs (Source: author)

There are a number of signs in Lily Dale standing outside the homes and businesses of mediums. They are all different as they’re designed by the mediums themselves. These have

²⁸⁰ “How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation,” 5.

²⁸¹ “How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation,” 5.

historical precedents as well. Since the beginning of Lily Dale, mediums have advertised themselves through signage. One visitor to Lily Dale in the 1900s recorded, “Strolling about the grounds one is confronted by numerous signs before the doors such as: ‘Bangs Sisters, phenomenal mediums, Spirit Portraits a specialty,’ ‘Campbell brothers- Celebrated Psychics- Slate Writing- Spirit Portraits.’”²⁸²

2. The Sunflower Motif



Figure.5.67. (Source: author)

The sunflower has represented Spiritualism since the nineteenth-century. The origin of how it came to be the symbol or who decided that it should be is unclear. Many Spiritualist churches claim that the motto of Spiritualism is, “the sunflower turns its face toward the light of

²⁸² Ron Nagy, *The Spirits of Lily Dale* (Lakeville, Minnesota: Galde Press Inc., 2017), 70.

the sun, so Spiritualism turns the face of humanity toward the light of truth.”²⁸³ The sunflower is also the symbol of the feminist movement and there is a possibility the Spiritualists coopted the symbol from them.

3. The Forest Temple



Figure 5.68. The Forest Temple, 1894 (Source: author)

The Forest Temple, constructed in 1894, is described on the Lily Dale website as “an area of spiritual, emotional and mental upliftment.”²⁸⁴ Messages are delivered here via medium to

²⁸³ “About Spiritualism” Church of Eternal Life, accessed: 3/15/20, https://thechurchofeternallife.org/wp/?page_id=99.

²⁸⁴ “Forest Temple,” Lily Dale Assembly, accessed: 1/20/19, <https://lilydaleassembly.org/place-to-see-points-of-interest/forest-temple/>

crowds that gather around it. It represents the yearning amongst Spiritualists to be near nature and to derive their proclaimed powers from the forest around them. The structure is a small stage which the mediums may sit or stand on to address the visitors sitting on the benches in front of them.

4. Historical Interpretative Signage



Figure 5.69. Historical signage (Source: author)

Lily Dale has plenty of historical signage throughout the camp such as this. These signs usually stand outside of individual buildings and display a historic photo of the building along with textual information. These signs further evidence the fact that Lily Dale is a community that seeks to commemorate, celebrate, and honor its past. These signs raise an interesting question of interpretation because they tell a certain historical narrative. Expanding that narrative could be a

project for the Assembly and open the possibility for more public signage with a wider array of stories on them.

5. Ecological Interpretative Signage



Figure 5.70. Ecological signage (Source: author)

Lily Dale also has interpretative signage that convey information about the environment and ecology of the camp. These signs are usually in parks or near trails. The signs are another manifestation of the environmental conservation theme that is prevalent in Lily Dale. These signs are much different than the history signs throughout the camp. The history signs follow the same format while these vary in design, shape, and size.

6. Trellises



Figure 5.71. There are trellises throughout the trails of Lily Dale, especially the Fairy Trail.

(Source: author)

7. Statuary



Figure 5.72. There is a wide array of statuary throughout the camp. Some of the statuary is public and was put up by the Assembly while some of it is private and was placed by residents in their yards. The statuary includes obelisks, UFO's, angels, plants, vases, and more. (Source: author)

8. Parking and Directional Signage



Figure 5.73. Lily Dale has a number of designated parking spaces and lots for its inhabitants and visitors. (Source: author)

9. Gazebos



Figure 5.74. Lily Dale has several gazebos. They can often be unusual designs such as the one above.. (Source: author)

10. The Main Gate



Figure 5.75. The iconic Lily Dale sign as it now stands on the intersection of Dale Drive and Glasgow Road. (Source: author)

11. Benches



Figure 5.76. Lily Dale Bench (Source: author)

Vegetation

Originally, most of Chautauqua County was covered in timber forest. The Native Americans had cleared out a few places but most of it was still virgin. Lily Dale's modern landscape is surrounded and comprised of a large amount of indigenous vegetation. Hardwoods such as Black Cherry, Maple, Beech, and Birch trees can be found throughout the camp and in the woods around it. Softwoods such as White Pine can also be found. Basswood, Cucumber Magnolia, Red Oak, Hemlock, Maple, Beech, Birch, Black Willow, Red Twig Dogwood, and Black Cherry also exist within the confines of Lily Dale. Plants in the camp include Golden Rods, Cardinal Flowers, Blue Flag Iris, Ostrich Ferns, Hydrangeas, Wild Trilliums, Chestnuts, and more.²⁸⁵

²⁸⁵ Connie Dutcher, interview by author, over the phone, 1/24/2020.

The Leolyn Woods has a diverse array of trees and plants. Interestingly, the undergrowth is relatively barren due to the canopy of trees blocking the sun's rays from reaching the ground. People have introduced invasive species into the forest, as well. This is mainly caused by the decorative plantings around Inspiration Stump. To combat this, the Assembly has started to only plant non-native species around Inspiration Stump. Still, people also leave their own plants on it as a sort of offering which causes invasive issues. New England Ivy is one of these invasive species that now resides in the Leolyn Woods. Other plants found in the woods are Jack in the Pulpit, Black Eyed Susan, Solomon Seal, False Solomon Seal, Bleeding Hearts, and Wood Sorrels.²⁸⁶

The Butterfly Habitat has a wide array of flowers and vegetation in it. The Butterfly Habitat was created in order to restore the Monarch Butterfly to the camp. Lily Dale was gifted a grant by an environmental group to help fund the project. Plants found in the Butterfly Habitat include New England Aster, Common Milkweed, Butterfly Weed, Rhododendrons, Orange Coneflower, Columbine, Wild Bergamot, River Oats, St. John's Wart, False Aster, Fringe Loosestrife, Golden Alexander, Indian Grass, Spice Bush, Nine-Bark, Bottled Rush Grass, Wild Ginger, Lead Plant, Brown Eyed Susan, Blue False Indigo, Big Blue Stem, Little Blue Stem, Side Oats Gamma, Wisteria, and Joe Pye Weed.²⁸⁷

Lily Dale is one of two communities certified with the National Wildlife Federation. Part of this certification means that Lily Dale is taking active measures to combat invasive species such as Grapevines, English Ivy, and Japanese Knotweed. In 2019, Lily Dale received an Arbor Day grant of \$1,000 from the New York State Urban Forestry Council. This grant was to help

²⁸⁶ Connie Dutcher, interview by author

²⁸⁷ Connie Dutcher, interview by author

preserve and protect trees within Lily Dale. In celebration on receiving the grant, Lily Dale planted two black willow trees. Lily Dale is also working towards a “green” dump where residents can dump leaves and yard debris which will then be turned into compost and mulch.²⁸⁸

Since Lily Dale is in a valley, the ground can get saturated and muddy very quickly. Near the shore of Upper Cassadaga Lake, a small wetland buffer zone exists between the lake and land. This buffer zone helps mitigate lake water rise and holds a wetland ecosystem. This wetland area is where most of the Grapevine in Lily Dale can be found. The camp has gone to great lengths to remove the Grapevine. The Lakeside Rain Garden, which helps manage storm water, is also near the shore and can attract Grapevine. Many of the parks flood regularly during storm events.

One of the largest vegetation concerns in Lily Dale today is the use of road-salts during the winter. Excessive salt use on the roads has resulted in Lily Dale losing about one to two feet of park space a year. Lily Dale also has had to postpone plans to plant more trees because the salt kills the trees as saplings. In the spring and summer, the greenery has little chance of being restored as cars often park on these spaces and trample saplings. Salt use, its pros and cons, continues to be an issue in Lily Dale.²⁸⁹

²⁸⁸ National Wildlife Federation, “Lily Dale,” National Wildlife Federation, accessed: 1/15/20, <https://www.nwf.org/CommunityWildlifeHabitat/Communities/Community/276>; Woodland Heritage Institute to Alpha Husted, 07/08/2004; “Cassadaga and Lily Dale Receive Arbor Day Grant,” *The Post-Journal*, 05/25/19, accessed: 1/15/20, <https://www.post-journal.com/news/community/2019/05/cassadaga-and-lily-dale-receive-arbor-day-grant/>.

²⁸⁹ Woodland Heritage Institute to Alpha Husted, 07/08/2004.



Figure 5.77. Flowers of Lily Dale (source: author)

Land Use

The land use at Lily Dale centers around the purpose of the camp. As a religious camp meeting ground, the goal of Lily Dale is to provide religious enlightenment, aesthetic enjoyment, recreation, and to promote the religion of Spiritualism. Since there are only Spiritualists living in the camp, the land use reflects the priorities and beliefs of their religion. The land use ranges from residential uses in the form of houses, guest houses, and hotels along with buildings that serve essential functions, like the fire department and Post Office. Beyond those, however several buildings and defined portions of the landscape are dedicated to more general or specialized activities. These include leisure, religious purposes, and other purposes.

The area around the main entrance is where most of the public buildings are. This includes the Post Office, the Assembly office, the gift shop, a restaurant, the Auditorium, and more. This portion of the camp also has large parks and greenspaces including Lincoln Park, Melrose Park, Natalie's Garden, the butterfly habitat, and more. These parks have been cleared

of much of their trees but many still remain. These greenspaces are found in the natural valley that forms from the elevated ground along Cottage Row and Cleveland Avenue. Cottage Row, Cleveland Avenue, and Melrose Avenue are about the only streets that follow the natural elevation of the ground.

Residences are throughout the camp but the largest portion of them are on the eastern side of the camp farther from the gate. The southern portion of the camp has been reserved as an Old Growth Forest in the form of the Leolyn Woods. The eastern side of the camp has been cleared to a certain degree. This was done in order to make room for the athletic fields, picnic shelter, community garden, and the Andrew Jackson Davis Memorial Lyceum building. Beyond that, farther east, is the Fairy Trail and the Mud Lake trail. The northern side of the camp also is Boulevard Nature Trail. These natural areas form a buffer around the camp helping to isolate it and make it feel distinct.

The Spiritualist reverence for nature is evidenced in the amount of parks, and gardens within Lily Dale. The community prides itself on its maintenance and care for these open outdoor spaces. All of them are open to the public for free during the off-season or are included in the gate admission during the season. The greenspaces of Lily Dale provide the community with a true “camp” feeling and are some of the most prominent features on the cultural landscape.

Intangible Cultural Heritage and Traditions

The intangible cultural heritage and traditions of Lily Dale derive from two main groups: the visitor and the resident. As a Spiritualist community, it is steeped in tradition, a sense of pride, religious belief, and a reverence for its past. This is exhibited in their annual events,

traditions, community standards. Residents are often fiercely proud of living in Lily Dale due to it only housing Spiritualists and its unique sense of community. Visitors, with various viewpoints, come to the camp to experience this culture for themselves. Visitors are often attracted to the community either to explore their spirituality, visit with a medium, sneer in their disbelief, spook themselves in a “haunted” location, learn about Spiritualism, or are just generally curious. The twin experiences of the residents and the visitors form the crux of Lily Dale’s unique intangible cultural heritage and traditions.

The elephant in the room when discussing Lily Dale’s intangible cultural heritage is that of its “hauntings.” Spiritualists do not use the term “haunting” and do not refer to spirits as “ghosts.” Spirits, to Spiritualists, are an extension of their cosmology and do not constitute anything abnormal. Outsiders and visitors do, however, refer to Lily Dale as “haunted.” Lily Dale is featured on hauntedamericatours.com, is listed on the New York State Haunted History Trail, is described as “the Most Haunted Town Near Buffalo” according to *Only In Your State* magazine (a periodical devoted to New York state), and as a “Maybe Haunted New York Hamlet” by the *Washington Post*. The reports of hauntings are what brings many visitors to Lily Dale. The Spiritualists, however, with their unique views on death, do not see spirits as anything “haunting” or “ghostly” but rather as alive and natural, just with their own consciousness. To Spiritualists, not just Lily Dale is infested with spirits (although many believe it as a special area that is conducive to spiritual energy) but the whole world is.

Certain areas in the camp are notorious for having more hauntings or supposedly have a more focused spiritual energy. The Maplewood Hotel has the most paranormal tales associated with it out of any building in Lily Dale. Tales of mysterious footsteps, full-bodied apparitions, orbs, objects moving on their own, and more proliferate amongst guests and staff at the hotel.

The Leolyn Woods is also another popular place for tales of the supernatural. The Haunted History Trail of New York State offers guided “Ghost Walks” of Lily Dale and the highlight is often walking through the Leolyn Woods at night. Many believers point to the fact that the Leolyn Woods is an old growth forest as the rationale behind why it’s so “active” with the paranormal. The Maplewood Hotel and the Leolyn Woods are apparently the two most active locations in Lily Dale but there is hardly a building or structure in the camp that does not have some sort of claimed supernatural activity associated with it. People have reported seeing unearthly figures in the guest houses, glimpsing into the past at the gazebo, seeing orbs on the street, and more.

In order to contact the spirit world, visitors can visit one of the many mediums in Lily Dale. Mediums reside in the camp year-round and often have signs outside their homes. Some mediums are open to visitors simply knocking on their doors and asking for readings while others prefer visitors to call ahead and schedule. Either way, the mediums are truly what make Lily Dale famous. Visitors see mediums out of curiosity or to seek affirmation, wisdom, and advice. Many visitors to Lily Dale are grieving over dead loved ones. Some go to judge and even challenge the mediums. A usual reading involves entering the mediums home or studio, going into a special séance room, sitting across from them, praying or meditating, then receiving the reading from the medium. Mediums usually charge by the half-hour or hour.

The uniting force in Lily Dale is Spiritualism. In order to live in the community, you have to meet certain requirements dictated by the board of directors. One must be a proven Spiritualist and a member of a Lily Dale Spiritualist church for over a year, for example. These standards have ensured that everyone living in Lily Dale is a Spiritualist. That does not mean, however, that Lily Dale residents all believe the same thing. There are various churches in Lily Dale with

slightly different beliefs that residents may attend. As a community originally established to Freethought, residents may have differing opinions on spiritual matters even if they attend the same church as well.

Freethought still plays a role in the camp during the Thought Exchanges that take place. During the season, the Thought Exchange is held every Wednesday and Saturday. They are described as meetings that permit, “a free expression of ideas concerning the many truths that are found in Spiritualism as well as many other interesting subjects under the guidance of the chairperson.” The Marion Skidmore Library also holds weekly short lectures which are casual, informal, and often involve discussions with the audience. The range and variety of philosophical offerings, especially during the season, at Lily Dale speak to the open and accepting Freethinking nature of the camp as well. Freethought still is one of the most prominent forces in the camp.

There are other seasonal events held in Lily Dale as well that also contribute to the intangible cultural heritage. The season begins in June every year and includes a variety of workshops, events, religious services, and more. Yoga, drum-circles, vibrational baths, Native American healing circles, ghost walks, and more are all activities visitors and residents can participate in. Classes and workshops on mediumship, chakras, religious history, spirit art, auras, guardian angels, spirit guides, spoon bending, astral travel, magic, etc. are also offered. There is also a touch of self-help during the season with exercises in positivity, mindfulness, empathy, and career advice. The 2019 season highlights, for example, included lectures on the making of the Mandala, séances, prophecy, and crystal skulls. Spirit artists, authors, famous mediums, and a Native American recording artist named John Two Hawks were also highlighted in 2019. These are just a few of Lily Dale’s seasonal offerings as their roster is usually quite expansive. The

restaurants such as the Bough House, Lucy's Coffeeshop, and the Pagoda are all only opened seasonally as are the shops such as the bookstore and the Crystal Cove. The season ends in August.

There are non-seasonal events that also contribute to the intangible cultural heritage of Lily Dale. Seances, guided meditations, Reiki sessions, past-life regressions, Spiritualist church services, yoga, and more are offered year-round. There are also a few events that happen only once or sporadically. In 2019, there was a Victorian-themed soiree, a Ukulele Jamboree Day, a masquerade ball, weddings, a murder mystery play, and more that happened during the off-season. During the Fall, Lily Dale hosts an annual Fall Festival which includes a movie, a ghost walk, a 5k run, vendors, food, message services, a drum circle, meditation, and healing services. On Halloween, Lily Dale hosts an extra "spooky" ghost walk, a Halloween costume parade, games, face painting, a pumpkin patch, a special "spooky" tour of the Leolyn Hotel, an adult costume party, and a movie.

The most famous and popular event is the annual Woman's Day. This day, held during the season, consists of residents and guests donning sunflowers, wearing suffrage sashes, some dress in nineteenth-century garb to mimic the suffragettes of old, lectures are given, and events are held. 2019's lectures included "The Rest of the Story of the Suffrage Movement," "This is Our Story: the Role of African-American Women in Modern American Spiritualism," "YWCA: From Suffrage to Seat at the Table," "The Only Real Solution: Embracing Feminine Values," and "An Indigenous Lense on Equality." Events included a breakfast, a Victorian hat making workshop, a Her-Story Walk, an ice cream social, a parade, and a women's rights religious service.

Teenagers and Children are not forgotten either. Each year there is a Children's and Teen's Week. The offerings of this week include painting sacred rocks, mediumship classes for youths, a talent show, the making of medicine bags, healing classes, classes in Qi Gong, karaoke mediumship, a beach party, and a philosophy class. During the off-season, the Andrew Jackson Davis Memorial Lyceum offers Spiritualist Sunday School to children aged six and up.

The feeling of Lily Dale is unique and has been described in a number of ways. One seasonal resident described it as "Lily Dale-itis" which he said was "similar to jetlag." He continued by saying, "the energy is so powerful here that I need about a week readjustment, whenever I come back, where all I do is sleep."²⁹⁰ Another resident described the feeling of Lily Dale as a "feeling of peace" evidenced by the fact that "people come here (Lily Dale) just to walk the grounds. They don't even want to participate in anything. They just want to sit in the boathouse and watch the geese or the one swan. I have one cat that lives here who is a different person when he is here. He goes outside. He greets people, let's them pet him. Then he comes back in and is cranky again. It's that feeling of peace and coming home. When we have people, who want to become a member of Lily Dale, we ask them, 'why?' and they always respond with, 'because it feels like I'm coming home.'"²⁹¹ The serenity and place of belonging experienced by many are probably felt due to it being a safe-haven of Free-Thought, Spiritualism, and open-mindedness. It is place where adherents of these ideologies can feel secure. The physical cultural landscape also, as has been explored, contributes to Lily Dale's unique sense of place.

²⁹⁰ Anonymous, "Interview with Anonymous Lily Dale Resident by Maxwell Nosbisch." In-person interview, Lily Dale, New York, 05/18/19.

²⁹¹ Bobbie Caswell, "Interview with Bobbie Caswell by Maxwell Nosbisch," Lily Dale, New York, 05/17/19.

There are metaphysical theories behind what makes Lily Dale unique, however. One resident said it was “the Sedona, Arizona, of western New York.”²⁹² Sedona, Arizona, is a town famous for its supposed “vortexes.” The town’s tourism board has leaned into the vortex craze surrounding the town and now distributes fliers explaining what they are to visitors. According to these fliers, vortexes are, “whirling centers of energy that are conducive to healing, meditation and self-exploration. These are places where the earth seems especially alive with energy. Many people feel inspired, recharged or uplifted after visiting a vortex.”²⁹³ According to author Patricia Price, Lily Dale is full of these vortexes. Others have postulated that Lily Dale sits under ley lines which are supposed energy lines that were popularized by the Earth Mysteries Movement during the twentieth-century. Ley lines supposedly traverse the earth, are made out of spiritual energy, and connect special places. Adherents to ley line ideology claim that Lily Dale receives its unique feeling from being under such a line.

The leadership in Lily Dale has enacted certain policies and rules to ensure the feeling and character of the camp is preserved. Motorcycles and other motorized bikes are not permitted, dogs must be on leashes, children under 18 must always be attended by a supervisor, and no street parking is allowed. Lily Dale also has a strict curfew for people under the age of 21. Likewise, alcohol is also banned from public spaces and buildings meaning that the restaurants cannot serve it in the camp.

These policies are meant to reflect the new marketing motto for the camp: connect, renew, and refresh. The homepage of the Lily Dale website offers this:

²⁹² Bobbie Caswell, “Interview with Bobbie Caswell by Maxwell Nosbisch.”

²⁹³ Roger Naylor, “What is a Vortex?” Visit Sedona, Arizona, accessed: 3/11/20, <https://visitsedona.com/spiritual-wellness/what-is-a-vortex/>.

“If a world increasingly tied together by technology has left you feeling adrift, let us help you connect to Spirit in a very meaningful and personal way. Let your mind and spirit relax and shed the stresses of modern life as you renew your connection with nature in Leolyn Woods, our certified old-growth forest. Refresh your outlook on life during one of our special events, or take classes in meditation, healing, mediumship and personal growth.”

This blurb sums up the aim of the camp, what their goal is, and what it offers. Lily Dale views itself as an alternative to “the stresses of modern life” and “a world increasingly tied together by technology.” This attitude inherently looks to the past in order to offer an antidote to modernity. With an outlook such as this, historic preservation, interpretation, and landscape conservation can and should play a prominent role within the camp.

Conclusion

The physical landscape of Lily Dale is a prime example of a Spiritualist camp meeting. There are elements of Lily Dale that fit a traditional camp meeting mold such as the bucolic setting, placing buildings on the landscape, and even a grid pattern. There are also elements that make it more unique than other religious camp meetings such as the number of parks and the Victorian Vernacular architecture. The intangible cultural heritage is truly what makes Lily Dale special, however. Since there are only a handful of Spiritualist camps left, the practices and customs within Lily Dale hold special meaning to adherents and believers.

Lily Dale is a cultural landscape comprised of several tangible and intangible characteristics that work together to create a sense of place that has been enjoyed by visitors and residents since the 1870s. All these characteristics are significant in the perpetuation of the original and contemporary goals and ideals of Lily Dale. Therefore, the entire landscape must be considered when thinking about the camp’s historical significance and integrity which is discussed in the following chapter.

CHAPTER SIX: ANALYSIS AND EVALUATION

Introduction

This chapter aims to identify the significance of Lily Dale and to determine its historic integrity. Significance and integrity, or the ability of a site to convey significance, are essential in determining the eligibility of a property for listing in the National Register of Historic Places or for determining its importance as a cultural landscape. Although Lily Dale is not listed in the National Register, this chapter will determine its elements of significance according to National Park Service standards. This will help determine its significance as a cultural landscape. This chapter will also further analyze the integrity of interconnected landscape characteristics to determine the amount of historical integrity Lily Dale retains.

Analysis of Significance

The National Register of Historic Places has identified four criteria for evaluation of the significance of historic sites, buildings, structures, objects, and districts. There are also three levels of significance: local, state, and national. The broader the scope, the harder it can be to justify. The following section will be an analysis of Lily Dale under the four National Register criteria and speculation about their levels of significance. The criteria apply to places:

- A. That are associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history; or
- B. That are associated with the lives of persons significant in our past; or
- C. That embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction,

or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values, or that represent a significant distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction; or

D. That have yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in prehistory or History.²⁹⁴

Themes

The National Park Service also has several historical themes that can be taken into account when identifying significance. Oftentimes, these themes can be used to convey the complexity of a site's history that may contain elements of different themes in its history but not enough to be considered exclusively significant. These themes are agriculture, architecture, art, commemoration, commerce, communications, community, economics, education, entertainment/performing arts, environmental conservation, ethnic heritage, exploration, government, health/medicine, immigration, industry, intellectual philosophy, labor, landscape architecture, literature, maritime, military, recreation, religion, science, settlement, social/humanitarian movements, technology/engineering, tourism, transportation, and women. Determining which of these themes are applicable to Lily Dale will reinforce claims about the camp's significance.

Special Criteria Considerations

Lily Dale is a registered non-profit 501(c)3 Religious Organization in New York State. According to the National Park Service, "ordinarily ... properties owned by religious institutions or used for religious purposes ... shall not be considered eligible for the National Register."

²⁹⁴ United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service, National Register of Historic Places, *National Register Bulletin 15: How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation* (Washington: U.S. DOI, National Park Service, 1995), 2, <https://www.nps.gov/Nr/publications/bulletins/pdfs/nrb15.pdf>.

There are exceptions to this rule, however. If a religious institution falls under any of the following categories it may still be eligible for listing in the National Register:

- A. A religious property deriving primary significance from architectural or artistic distinction or historical importance; or
- B. A building or structure removed from its original location but which is primarily significant for architectural value, or which is the surviving structure most importantly associated with a historic person or event; or
- C. A birthplace or grave of a historical figure of outstanding importance if there is no appropriate site or building associated with his or her productive life; or
- D. A cemetery that derives its primary importance from graves of persons of transcendent importance, from age, from distinctive design features, or from association with historic events; or
- E. A reconstructed building when accurately executed in a suitable environment and presented in a dignified manner as part of a restoration master plan, and when no other building or structure with the same association has survived; or
- F. A property primarily commemorative in intent if design, age, tradition, or symbolic value has invested it with its own exceptional significance; or
- G. A property achieving significance within the past 50 years if it is of exceptional importance.²⁹⁵

Using these categories, Lily Dale may still be eligible for consideration in the National Register. Categories A, F, and G are the most pertinent to Lily Dale. In order to be considered significant by the standards of the National Register, Lily Dale must prove that it is important due to larger historical patterns, its design, or its symbolic value. Each argument for significance will alter the categories of integrity and period of significance.

Period of Significance

The city of Georgetown, Virginia provides one of the most concise definitions of ‘period of significance:’ “the time span during which (something) gained architectural, historical, or

²⁹⁵ United States Department of the Interior, *Bulletin 15*.

geographical importance.”²⁹⁶ In layman’s terms, the period of significant is just when something became historic, noteworthy, or important. Periods of significance can range from a single date to a span of time. Depending on the argument for significance, the period of significance could greatly differ. For example, if the argument that Lily Dale is significant because it is an intact example of the camp meeting form then the period of significance would be 1879-1890, or the years Lily Dale was designed, planned, and constructed. Other arguments for significance would produce different dates. The historical periods used in the history of Lily Dale could also help formulate arguments for significance.

Arguments for Significance: Criteria A: Historical Importance

It could be argued that Lily Dale derives its significance from its historical importance. There are multiple arguments that could be made to support Lily Dale’s historical significance. The first is that Lily Dale’s importance to the Spiritualist movement. The second historical argument is that Lily Dale reflects the socioeconomics of middle-class Americans throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The third is that Lily Dale is a product of the camp meeting movement which was popular in the nineteenth-century. The fourth is that Lily Dale is significant as a bastion of the philosophy of Freethought. The last is that Lily Dale played an important role in Chautauqua County during the suffrage movement. These arguments will be presented, and one will be decided as the main argument for significance. The other arguments would be considered under the significant ancillary historical themes present in the camp.

²⁹⁶ “Principles for Historic Preservation,” City of Georgetown, Virginia, accessed: 1/28/2020, <https://historic.georgetown.org/files/2009/02/Chapter-3-Principles-for-Historic-Preservation.pdf>.

Spiritualism

Although the National Park Service explicitly states that properties owned by and for religious institutions will not be considered for the National Register unless it's for some other merit than religious, Camp Chesterfield and Camp Cassadaga have been added to the National Register for their roles in Spiritualism's history. This opens the possibility of Lily Dale being added to the National Register for the same reason. Chesterfield lists itself with statewide significance since it's the only Spiritualist camp in Indiana while Cassadaga is listed with local significance. Lily Dale is both older and larger than both Chesterfield and Cassadaga while also being the only Spiritualist camp left in New York state, the home of the Spiritualist movement. Chesterfield and Cassadaga also have much of the same amenities as Lily Dale including cafeterias, hotels, cottages, bookstores, lyceums, auditoriums, churches, and even their own forest temples. On the statewide and local levels at least, Chesterfield and Cassadaga set a precedent for Lily Dale's own importance to the Spiritualist movement.

Middle-Class Leisure

Lily Dale is also representative of white middle-class leisure during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Lily Dale is roughly between Buffalo, New York and Erie, Pennsylvania. Open seasonally, Lily Dale offered escape from the industrial city in a bucolic and pastoral setting that was within a day's commute via railroad from the city. Middle-class white Americans, who usually could afford some sort of vacation even if it wasn't extravagant, could rent a cottage, stay in a hotel, row on the lake, fish, hike, dance, ride the Ferris wheel, bowl, play billiards, swim, and more. The landscape is a reflection of Victorian middle-class sensibilities and priorities since that is who the camp was designed by and for. This can be seen in the utilitarian nature of many of the public buildings and the Vernacular architecture of the cottages.

It is no coincidence that Lily Dale, and many other religious camps at the time, were founded during a time of extreme industrialization in the United States when the white middle-class was burgeoning. In many ways, Lily Dale is as much a reflection of the Industrial Revolution as it is Spiritualism. The period of significance for this would likely be 1879-1920. It was around 1920 that the automobile became the dominant form of transportation to Lily Dale and the rationale behind its geographic location faded in importance.

Camp Meeting Movement

Lily Dale is a product of the camp meeting movement. The camp meeting movement began amongst Protestantism but spread to other religious groups throughout the nineteenth century. Unlike the nearby Chautauqua Institute, Lily Dale began specifically as a camp meeting therefore making it the only camp meeting space originally constructed for that purpose in Chautauqua County. It is the only operating Spiritualist camp meeting left in New York state as well. The camp meeting provided a safe-space and communion for likeminded individuals. What makes Lily Dale a unique camp meeting is its openness to different religious ideologies and viewpoints. This was not common amongst Protestant camps during the same time period. Lily Dale is a reflection of both the camp meeting movement and American religious tolerance. Since Lily Dale is still operating today, it could be argued that this is a case where the period of significance lasts from 1879-1970. Bolstering this argument for significance is the fact that other camp meetings have been added to the National Register for this reason. Wesleyan Grove Camp Meeting Association in Massachusetts is listed under criteria A “because of its historic

connection with the great religious ‘camp meeting’ movement of the early nineteenth century.”²⁹⁷

Philosophy

Lily Dale was founded by adherents to the philosophy of Freethought. In fact, the organization that founded Lily Dale, the Cassadaga Lake Free Association, was one explicitly devoted to Freethought that just happened to also be mostly comprised of Spiritualists. Lily Dale is perhaps one of the only religious camps not founded by an explicitly religious organization. Freethought is still emphasized today in the camp via the Thought Exchange events and others like it. Freethought is an important historical philosophical and epistemological viewpoint that first gained traction in the seventeenth-century. In 1957, philosopher Bertrand Russell described Freethought as:

“What makes a freethinker is not his beliefs but the way in which he holds them. If he holds them because his elders told him they were true when he was young, or if he holds them because if he did not he would be unhappy, his thought is not free; but if he holds them because, after careful thought he finds a balance of evidence in their favor, then his thought is free, however odd his conclusions may seem.”

Lily Dale is one of the only communities that has been dedicated to Freethought in the United States that is still operating today. A famous example of another Freethought community, that didn’t last, was Robert Owen’s infamous New Harmony in Indiana. It’s this culture of Freethought that Lily Dale cultivated which allowed a variety of speakers, many considered radical in their day and who may have even disagreed with Spiritualist principles, to speak at Lily Dale. Even today, the Lily Dale website describes Freethought as, “the very atmosphere upon which Lily Dale was founded.” Since Freethought continues today in the camp, if Lily Dale

²⁹⁷ Russell Dagnall, Sally Dagnall, and Ellen Weiss, “Wesleyan Grove Historic District,” National Register of Historic Places Inventory/Nomination Form, Department of the Interior, National Park Service, MVCMA, <https://npgallery.nps.gov/GetAsset/3fe829b3-8b64-462c-8da1-fbd61f70aa36>.

is deemed significant under the theme of philosophy, listed by the National Register, the period of significance would be 1879-1970. Lily Dale's philosophical importance is one of the strongest historical themes present in the camp.

The Suffrage Movement

Lily Dale was a hotbed of suffrage activity during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It housed local chapters of the Political Equality Club and the Women's Temperance Union. It also served as a meeting spot for prominent suffragettes including Susan B. Anthony, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Anna Chaw, Isabella Beecher Hooker, and Carrie Chapman Catt. These women were welcomed in Lily Dale at a time when other institutions, such as the Chautauqua Institution, battled contentiously over whether to let women speak at all and often greeted the small number of women that did with cold "tolerance" as Elnora Barrett put it when she spoke at Lily Dale in 1892. Lily Dale was also an organization that allowed female leadership. Many females served as Lily Dale's president or director in a time period when women were granted little sovereignty or power. Many of these same women, such as Marion Skidmore and Abby Pettingill, were prominent feminists within the local community. Lily Dale has also been celebrating womanhood since 1892 when the first Woman's Day was celebrated. Lily Dale's connections to the suffrage movement, at least on a local level, is strong enough to warrant it as significant. The period of significance of this would be from 1879-1920, when women received the right to vote.

Lily Dale Criterion C: Distinctive Characteristics of a Type, Period, and Represent a Significant Distinguishable Entity Whose Components May Lack Individual Distinction

Lily Dale is significant due to it being a completely intact camp meeting design. Lily Dale was not influenced by the City Beautiful movement due to it being completed by the 1893 Chicago World's Fair when that movement began. Lily Dale is the best example of the typical Northern camp meeting form in western New York state. Camp meetings that have the same design principles as Lily Dale can be found in the Onset Grove Spiritualist Camp in Massachusetts and the Wesleyan Grove Methodist Camp, also in Massachusetts. These camps usually have a gridded section for cottages and then another section that follows the topography of the landscape. As aforementioned, the section that followed topographical changes was usually designed that way to promote bucolic aestheticism and to provide open space for congregating. Lily Dale follows this form explicitly.

Lily Dale is one of the last Spiritualist camps, and the only in New York State, still operating that has an original camp meeting design as well. Camp Chesterfield and Camp Cassadaga both are more influenced by the City Beautiful movement than anything else. Furthering this argument for significance is the fact that Lily Dale's original design is intact. The circulation patterns, cluster arrangement, and spatial organization all remain unchanged since the 1870s and 1880s. When visitors and residents move through the camp, they move through the same spaces and locations that their historical antecedents did as well. The parks are historic and still there and much of the buildings, although altered, remain on their original footprints.

Criterion D: That have yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in prehistory or History

Surprisingly, Lily Dale could possibly be considered significant under this criterion. No major or official archaeological excavation has ever been conducted in Lily Dale. Since the layout and spatial arrangement of the camp has been essentially untouched since the late nineteenth-century, the potential for historical artifacts buried under the surface of the camp is high. The region has been inhabited for thousands of years and Fern Island was a popular picnicking destination before the founding of Lily Dale so the artifacts buried under the subsurface of the camp could be from a variety of time periods and people.

Summary of Significance

The best argument for significance is that Lily Dale has statewide significance due to its role in the historical Spiritualist movement and its importance to the philosophy of Freethought. The other arguments for significance would fall under the ancillary historical themes present in the camp such as architecture, community, economics, environmental conservation, recreation, tourism, and women. Camp Cassadaga and Chesterfield demonstrate that Spiritualist camps can be added to the National Register for their significance in the history of the Spiritualist movement. Lily Dale is more important than both those camps since it is larger, older, and played a larger role in both social reform movements and intellectual philosophical movements. Lily Dale hosted a greater variety of speakers than both camps, had a larger audience base, and drew more religious adherents. Cassadaga wouldn't even exist without Lily Dale.

Lily Dale is important to the historical Spiritualist movement in New York state. New York is the home of the Spiritualist movement which has impacted parts of American society, especially pop culture with things like the Ouija Board and the séance, from the 1840s until today. Lily Dale is the largest and remains the only camp meeting for Spiritualists in the state. It was home to New York state Spiritualist leaders like Jeremiah Carter, Marion Skidmore, Abby

Pettingill, Cora Hatch, and more. These figures were not only prominent amongst New York Spiritualist associations, but many were involved with the NSAC. Lily Dale was and remains the epicenter for Spiritualist activity in the state. This is exemplified by the symbolic value of moving the famous Fox Sister cottage to the camp from Hydesville, the New York State Spiritualist Conference being founded in Lily Dale and being the location of the NSAC headquarters. Without Lily Dale, the Spiritualist movement, especially in New York state, after the 1870s would perhaps be much different.

Lily Dale is important to the intellectual philosophical movement of Freethought as well. Founded by a society devoted to Freethinking, Lily Dale represents a physical manifestation of those disaffected with much of mainstream nineteenth-century thought. Spiritualism was a natural ally of Freethought due to both ideologies propagating ideas of radical independence of mind, body, and spirit. It seems natural that the founders of Lily Dale would simultaneously be Freethinkers and Spiritualists. There is and has been a culture of Freethought in the camp that has encouraged debate, a variety of speakers from different backgrounds, and independence of thought. This Freethought culture has welcomed suffragists, atheists, agnostics, Theosophists, Hindus, Buddhists, and more. This makes the camp significant since most religious camps don't and haven't offered this variety of content. Freethought, along with Spiritualism, is what makes Lily Dale important and helps separate it from other camps in New York state such as Christian organizations like the Chautauqua Institution (which notoriously guarded itself from anti-Christian or contrarian ideas).

Many historical themes are also displayed in Lily Dale. The architecture contains great examples of the upright-and-wing and double-pile types. The upright-and-wing type is particularly relevant to the significance because that is a type developed in upstate New York. It

also contains excellent examples of the Vernacular Victorian and nineteenth-century utilitarian styles. As an intact Spiritualist camp meeting, designed originally for those purposes, with the original road, park, and building layout, the camp is significant under the theme of community. Lily Dale is also a reflection of middle-class economics, recreation, and tourism in the nineteenth-century especially. The camp was an ideal location for middle-class residents from nearby cities to vacation to. It represented affordability and ease of access via the railroad. The theme of environmental conservation is also in Lily Dale since it houses the second oldest growth forest in New York state. This forest has been rigorously preserved and maintained by the camp since the nineteenth-century. Lastly, because Lily Dale was a center of suffrage activity in Chautauqua County, it has the theme of women.

The period of significance for Lily Dale is from 1879 to 1970. The National Park Service has a “fifty-year rule” which is more of a guideline that states districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects must be over fifty years old to be considered “historic.” 1970 was picked as the end date for the period of significance since that was fifty years before this thesis was written. 1879 was picked since that is when Lily Dale was formally established as a camp meeting. Since Lily Dale has always had a significant role in the history of Spiritualism in New York state and has propagated the philosophy of Freethought since its founding. Therefore period of significance must encompass as much of the camp’s lifespan as possible. Some of the historical themes, specifically leisure, recreation, and community, have always been particularly relevant throughout the camp’s history. Lily Dale has often been a destination and place of vacation for Spiritualists and non-Spiritualists alike for a variety of reason. One theme that does have an end date before 1970 is Women. This is because after women were granted voting rights

in 1920, the suffrage force in Lily Dale ceased to exist. Women's Day also ceased during the period of significance and wasn't revived until after the period of significance.

The Spiritualist movement and religion, along with ideas of Freethought, are not a relic of a bygone era. There are still Spiritualists and Freethinkers in the United States today. To relegate their role in our society to the past discredits their beliefs. Lily Dale has always attracted thousands of people each year, believer and not, since it was established in 1879. Lily Dale attracted Spiritualists and Freethinkers to the camp throughout the twentieth-century and still does today. To end the period of significance before 1970 is to invalidate the experiences of people who came to Lily Dale to seek religious experience or to judge a philosophical viewpoint for themselves. Lily Dale also developed in many ways throughout the twentieth-century. New Age influences in the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s altered the character and nature of the Spiritualist religion and the camp in ways that reflect the broader historical pattern of the New Age movement. Lily Dale's intangible cultural heritage and its physical landscape evolved throughout the twentieth-century reflecting changes in the Spiritualist movement. For these reasons, the latest possible date for the period of significance, 1970, should be applied to Lily Dale.

Analysis of Integrity

The National Park Service defines integrity simply as, "the ability of a property to convey its significance."²⁹⁸ In the National Register Bulletin *How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation*, the Park Service identifies seven aspects of integrity in an attempt to provide a framework to standardize integrity assessments. Since integrity is subjective, this framework serves more as a guide than a rulebook. In order to retain the highest-degree of

²⁹⁸ United States Department of the Interior, *Bulletin 15*, 44.

integrity, a property should retain as many aspects of integrity listed as possible, although retaining all of them is not necessary. The relative importance of certain aspects of integrity typically depends on the type of property. For example, materials are often of less consequence than design in a landscape, as vegetation dies, metals rust, wood rots, stone crumbles, etc. The seven aspects of integrity are:

1. Location: “Location is the place where the historic property was constructed or the place where the historic event occurred.”
2. Design: “Design is the combination of elements that create the form, plan, space, structure, and style of a property.”
3. Setting: “Setting is the physical environment of a historic property.”
4. Materials: “Materials are the physical elements that were combined or deposited during a particular period of time and in a particular pattern or configuration to form a historic property.”
5. Workmanship: “Workmanship is the physical evidence of the crafts of a particular culture or people during any given period in history or prehistory.”
6. Feeling: “Feeling is a property’s expression of the aesthetic or historic sense of a particular period of time.”
7. Association: “Association is the direct link between an important historic event or person and a historic property.”²⁹⁹

These aspects of integrity are applicable to districts, buildings, structures, objects, and sites. With cultural landscapes, one must also account for landscape characteristics. Not all landscape characteristics are of equal value in terms of illustrating historical significance. For example, the Fairy Trial, although significant in other ways, is not historic because it was developed in the past twenty years. What follows will be a documentation of integrity for each landscape feature, the cultural landscape as a whole will be evaluated using the seven aspects of

²⁹⁹ United States Department of the Interior, *National Register*, 44-45

integrity listed above. A high level of integrity indicates that the landscape characteristic remains largely unchanged; a moderate level of integrity indicates some alterations that are compatible with the historic character of the camp; a low level of integrity indicates complete reconstruction or heavy alterations that are compatible with the historic character of the camp; and no integrity indicates a reconstruction or heavy alteration that is not compatible with the historic character of the camp.

Natural Systems and Features

Natural systems and features, topography, and vegetation are inherently important elements of a Spiritualist camp because they relate to the Spiritualist movement's aim to connect people with nature, Spiritualist belief about nature, and they provides a bucolic recreational setting. These goals of camp design relate to the main area of significance of Spiritualist history and the historical themes of recreation, environmental conservation, and leisure. Camp organizers sought campsites that were located on or near bodies of water for aesthetic, religious, and recreational reasons and that were blanketed with wooded vegetation. Natural water features like Upper Cassadaga Lake have been preserved, adding to the integrity of the camp landscape. The natural systems and features of Lily Dale, including the Leolyn Woods, the topography, and the varying plant communities work together to reinforce the distinct and unique nature of Lily Dale's setting. The greenspaces around the camp create a physical barrier around the camp. The lake, and the fact that Lily Dale is committed to the preservation of its greenspace, makes it difficult for any development to encroach onto or even near the camp landscape. These landscape characteristics, therefore, provide the camp with a feeling that is unlike the surrounding communities which helps explain why Lily Dale feels so different. The retention of

integrity of these systems and features will help to ensure the continuity of the unique feeling Lily Dale provides.

Integrity Summary for Natural Systems and Features

1. Design: Not applicable.
2. Setting: The historical setting is intact.
3. Materials: The same kinds of plant communities and natural systems that existed during the period of significance are still prevalent today.
4. Workmanship: The natural features and systems continue to perform the same functions that they performed historically.
5. Feeling: The integrity of location, setting, materials, and workmanship lends to integrity of feeling, as the natural setting continues to express the feeling of the historic character and purpose of the camp.
6. Association: The integrity of location, setting, materials, and workmanship also lends to integrity of feeling, as the natural setting provides an association with the areas of significance.

Integrity of Natural Systems and Features: High

Topography

The topography of Lily Dale, especially the rolling hills of Chautauqua County, viewed from Lily Dale across Upper Cassadaga Lake, add to the beauty of the surroundings. On the western side of the camp, the construction pattern follows the same topography of the landscape. This has not changed since the camp was organized. There has only been one change to the topography of the camp since it was founded. This was the flattening of the landscape on the eastern side of the camp to construct the athletic fields. This was done in 1908, however, which is during the period of significance and reflects the historical themes of recreation and community.

Integrity Summary for Topography:

1. Location: Topographical features remain in their historic location.
2. Design: Not applicable
3. Setting: The historical setting is intact.

4. Materials: Topographical materials remain intact.
5. Workmanship: Topography still shows signs of the geological forces that created it.
6. Feeling: The integrity of location, setting, materials, and workmanship lends to integrity of feeling, as the topography continues to express the feeling of the historic character and purpose of the camp.
7. Association: The integrity of location, setting, materials, and workmanship also lends to integrity of feeling, as the topography provides association with the areas of significance.

Integrity of Topography: High

Spatial Organization

Spatial organization is essential in conveying the significance of Lily Dale as a typical nineteenth-century religious camp landscape. Lily Dale's current landscape still expresses the original layout dictated by the founders. The organic form that works with the landscape can be seen distinctly in the western portion of the camp while the grid on the eastern side remains as well. Parks and greenspaces are all in their original locations.

Additions in the forms of new buildings retain the spatial organization of the camps original plan. The public buildings added during the twentieth-century such as the cafeteria, added in 1920, are near the original public buildings like the Auditorium. The Healing Temple, added during the 1950s, is near the fire department and the Andrew Jackson Davis Memorial Lyceum on the eastern side of the camp. These public buildings are spaced together and do not disturb the original spatial organization. Even the new buildings outside the period of significance are within the original spatial organization. Cottages added after 1970 are on original cottage plots and the Bargain Shoppe gift shop is near the group of public buildings on the eastern side of the camp. The spatial organization reflects the main argument for significance

in that it reflects the same spatial organization that historic camp meeting attendees and Spiritualists would have found.

Integrity Summary for Spatial Organization:

1. Location: The historic location of buildings and overall spatial organization has been retained.
2. Design: The design of spatial organization has been retained.
3. Setting: The historical setting is intact.
4. Materials: Many of the buildings materials have changed but the spatial layout has not.
5. Workmanship: The workmanship of spatial organization is intact.
6. Feeling: The spatial organization continues to express the feeling of a nineteenth-century religious camp.
7. Association: The retained spatial organization continues to convey association with all areas of significance.

Integrity for Spatial Organization: High

Circulation

The main circulation network at Lily Dale consists of the paved roads throughout camp, dirt roads in the camp, the trails through and around the camp in the parks, and the random circulation patterns caused by people meandering throughout the camp. The paved roads accommodate cars, but also serve pedestrians during the camp season and function to connect buildings throughout the camp landscape. The mixture of paved and dirt roads relates to the historical themes of recreation, transportation, and community. Roads were paved to accommodate the modern cars that were now the predominant form of transportation to Lily Dale by the 1940s. This was also done to stay viable as an easily accessible recreational community. What truly detracts from the historical integrity was the addition of the Fairy Trail during the 2000s. There was no trail in that patch of eastern woods throughout the period of

significance. The addition of the Fairy Trail constitutes a major ahistorical change to the circulation patterns of Lily Dale.

Integrity Summary for Circulation:

1. Location: The roads and trails are largely in the same places as they were historically.
2. Design: The design also largely remains the same for the circulation networks except for the addition of the Fairy Trail.
3. Setting: The historical setting is intact.
4. Materials: The main roads have been paved over but this was done during the period of significance and there are still a few dirt roads in the camp.
5. Workmanship: Like materials, workmanship has been added in the form of paving the roads.
6. Feeling: Overall the circulation patterns, except for the Fairy Trail, are original and contribute to the historic camp meeting feeling.
7. Association: The association is intact as the circulation patterns serve the purpose of moving people and things around the camp.

Integrity of Circulation: Moderate

Cluster Arrangement

Like spatial organization, cluster arrangement is essential to conveying Lily Dale's significance as a typical religious camp landscape. What makes the cluster arrangement of Lily Dale so significant is the fact that it is almost entirely intact. The original platting and structural positioning remain. Activity areas and public buildings that were historically clustered together remain so. The cafeteria is right next to the Pagoda (former Sunflower Café), the Auditorium is near the Maplewood, the Marion Skidmore library is near the post office, the cottages are together, and the public buildings on the eastern side of the camp are together. Activities geared towards children and teenagers like the Andrew Jackson Davis Memorial Lyceum building and the athletic fields are also together on the far eastern side of the camp. As with spatial organization, the buildings, structures, and other features that have been added to and

reconstructed on the camp landscape have minimally impacted the integrity of cluster arrangement since they follow the historic pattern. For example, new buildings, like the 1980s residence and the Bargain Shoppe, have been clustered with other buildings of their type. Therefore, the relationship between buildings and their clustering on the landscape has remained intact. Lily Dale still expresses typical religious camp construction in terms of cluster arrangement and is one of the only Spiritualist camps to do so.

Integrity Summary for Cluster Arrangement:

1. Location: Locations of clustered buildings and activity areas remains intact.
2. Design: The Spiritualist design that has led to clusters of buildings and activity areas remains intact.
3. Setting: The historical setting remains intact.
4. Materials: As with spatial organization, some materials have changed, but usage remains intact.
5. Workmanship: As in with materials, the workmanship of some of the buildings that make up the cluster arrangements have diminished.
6. Feeling: The cluster arrangement on the landscape still evokes the feeling of a historic religious camp.
7. Association: The cluster arrangement on the landscape still expresses association with the religious camp movement.

Integrity of Cluster Arrangement: High

Buildings and Structures

The buildings and structures of Lily Dale are the most obvious aspects of the camp landscape. The residents of Lily Dale sensitively combined monumental public buildings, utilitarian buildings, and private cottages. These cottages, more than any other buildings or structures in the camp, reflect the changing nature of the camp over the time, the tastes of different residents, and the largely seasonal/recreational nature of the camp. Due to Lily Dale being a seasonal recreation and vacation destination with cottages often having lease-holders

come and go, these changes in the architecture reflect the themes of community, recreation, and tourism. These cottages were usually summer homes for long-term vacation or seasonal living during the summer. It is easy to see these additions and changes as damaging to the historic fabric, but these physical alterations convey a narrative of recreation, leisure, and community that reflects the tastes and desires of the ever-changing occupants these cottages housed and the camp over time. The cottages and utilitarian structures also convey the socioeconomics of their mostly middle-class residents. Many could only afford a few changes to their cottages which often resulted in a further mixing of unusual architectural features, types, and styles. This would be a reflection of the economics theme the camp conveys, however, and therefore part of the significance of the camp.



Figures 6.1. Historic photo of Lily Dale cottage compared with modern view (Source: Lily Dale Museum (left) and author (right)).



Figure 6.2. Historic image of the Pagoda versus modern view (Source: Lily Dale Assembly (top), author (bottom)).



Figures 6.3. Historic image of the Maplewood Hotel today versus the modern view. (Source: author (right), Ruth Marentette (left)).



Figures 6.4. Historical image of Andrew Jackson Davis Memorial Lyceum versus modern image (Source: Ruth Marentette (right), author (left)).



Figures 6.5. Historical image of Lily Dale post office versus modern image (Source: Alpha Husted Collection (right), author (left)).

Integrity Summary for Buildings and Structures:

1. Location: The locations of buildings and structures are intact, as most haven't been moved since the period of significance.
2. Design: Many of the buildings and structures reflect the design preferences of their seasonal occupants over time thus highlighting the historical themes of community, leisure, and recreation.
3. Setting: The historical setting is intact.
4. Materials: The materials reflect the ever-changing demand and tastes of seasonal occupants throughout the camp's history. The eclectic mixing of materials can only be achieved in a seasonal community like Lily Dale in which different leaseholders come and go while on vacation. This would reflect the leisure and recreation historical themes.

5. Workmanship: In most of the structures, the original workmanship from the period of significance is evidenced.
6. Feeling: Most of the buildings convey the feeling of both a camp meeting and a seasonal community that also serves as a vacation destination.
7. Association: Because the buildings reflect the changing nature of the camp, they are still associated with the significance.

Integrity of Buildings and Structures: High

Small-Scale Features

The small-scale features vary. Some are historical or have historic precedents while others are modern and use contemporary materials. For example, many of the benches are no longer wooden but are now modern materials. The medium signs, although long a fixture in the camp, are often modern and utilize computer software to design. This represents a mixed-bag in terms of the historic integrity of these small-scale features.

Like buildings and structures, many small-scale features have been added, altered, or removed over the course of Lily Dale's history. Many of the features have become such a fixture on the landscape, such as the gazebos, that nobody seems to remember when they were built. One gazebo, near the Maplewood, is done in a classic Victorian style. The other mushroom gazebo is modern. The small-scale feature that is the most historically significant is the Forest Temple which remains in its historic location with its original appearance. Another small-scale feature with high-historic value is Inspiration Stump. The only change made to it, filling it with concrete during the 1950s, was done in the period of significance. It still serves its original purpose and the location of the benches around it has been unaltered as well. The entrance gate sign has been reconstructed and changed multiple times, especially since the period of significance, and should not be considered integral to the historic character of the camp. The

current main gate sign dates from post-2000. Hardly any of the small-scale features date to the period of significance and although they may have historic precedents, thus preserving a certain form of heritage, they are too drastically different and new to be considered significant in their own right.

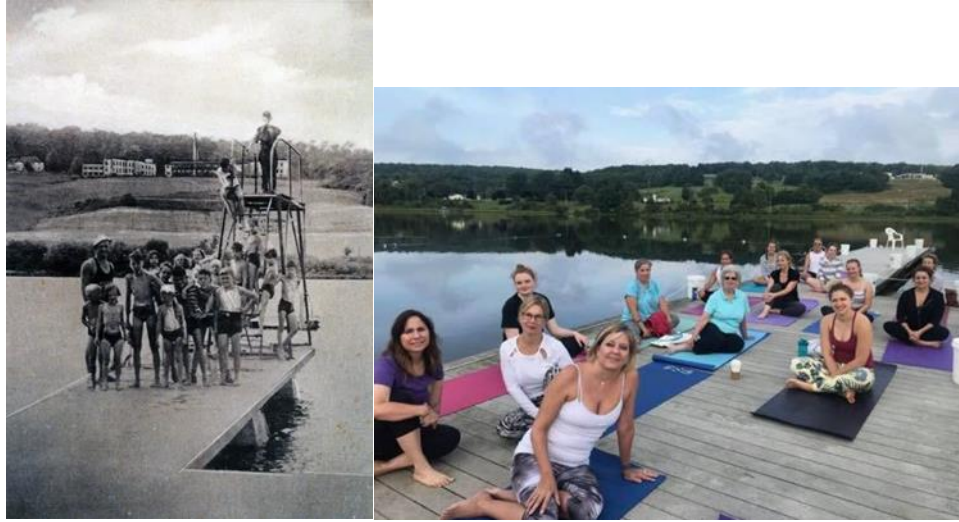
Integrity Summary for Small Scale Features:

1. Location: Unclear where the historical location of many small-scale features were. It seems unlikely that the current small-scale features are in any historic location except for the Forest Temple and Inspiration Stump.
2. Design: The design of the small-scale features has changed much. The Lily Dale entrance sign is modern, the benches throughout camp are not historic, and much of the statuary is modern. The lack of historical integrity holds true for most of the small-scale features in Lily Dale except for one gazebo, Inspiration Stump, and the Forest Temple.
3. Setting: Sometimes new small-scale features alter the historical setting. For example, there is a Buddah statue outside the Three Sisters.
4. Materials: Most small-scale features are not comprised of historic materials except for Forest Temple and Inspiration Stump.
5. Workmanship: No historic workmanship present in the small-scale features except for Forest Temple.
6. Feeling: The small-scale features of Lily Dale still evoke feelings associated with the religion of Spiritualism and the aesthetics of the camp but not in any historical sense.
7. Association: The small-scale features are not associated with the period of significance except for the Forest Temple and Inspiration Stump.

Integrity of Small-Scale Features: Low



Figure 6.6. A brief evolution of the Lily Dale sign (Source: Lily Dale Assembly).



Figures 6.7. Historical view versus contemporary view of Lily Dale docks (Source: Alpha Husted Collection (right), Lily Dale Assembly (left)).



Figure 6.8. Historical view of the Forest Temple versus the view of the Forest Temple today (Source: Lily Dale Museum (right), author (left)).



Figure 6.9. Historical view of Inspiration Stump versus Inspiration Stump today (Source: Lily Dale Museum (right), author (left)).

Views and Vistas

The vistas and views in Lily Dale are largely unchanged. The most important views in the camp are across Upper Cassadaga Lake, to the rolling hills beyond its shores. Many early visitors to Lily Dale wrote about the beauty of the lake and the views from being its shores. People were drawn to the pastoral and aesthetically pleasing Lily Dale. It also emphasized the Spiritualist yearning to be amongst nature. The retention of views and vistas at Lily Dale is thus paramount in order to retain integrity relating to the main historical significance of Spiritualist history and the ancillary historical themes of environmental conservation, recreation, and leisure.

The major views and vistas are mostly intact but are under threat. The rolling hills, trees, and many of the structures across the lake are relatively unchanged except for the addition of a few modern houses. These houses are very minor, however, as they are often small or sometimes even hidden behind the trees. A more substantial issue is that some modern vegetation within the camp now currently obscures historic views. Also problematic is that the land across Upper Cassadaga Lake is private and could be developed further. This problem is already present near the Leolyn Woods where modern houses have been developed right up to the periphery of the woods therefore detracting it of some of its integrity. These homes would not have been there during the period of significance and therefore constitute a change in integrity. If Lily Dale's neighbors change and they choose to develop the area around the camp, the vistas and views of the community would be dramatically altered along with the integrity of the camp. Lily Dale's views and vistas are some of the most in danger aspects of its integrity.

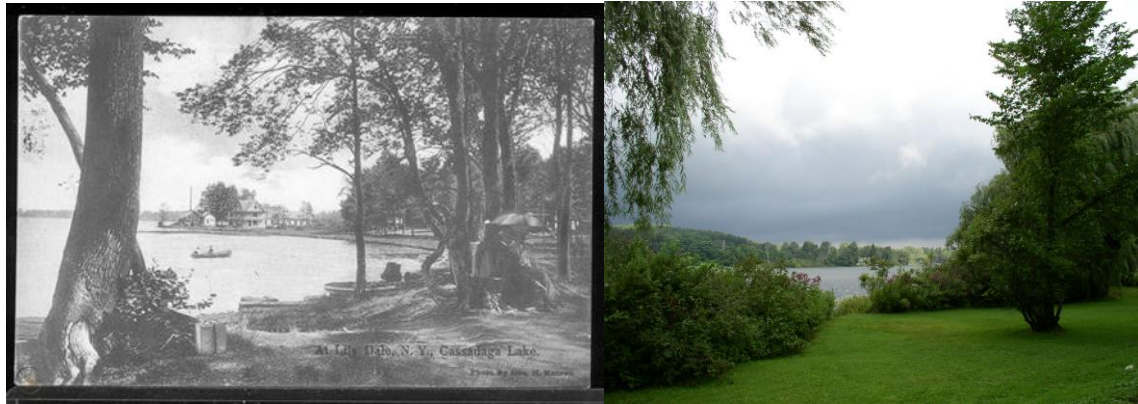


Figure 6.10. Historical view of Upper Cassadaga Lake versus the view today (Source: Alpha Husted Collection (left), author (right)).



Figure 6.11. Historical view of Upper Cassadaga Lake versus the view today (Source: Lily Dale Museum (left), author (right)).

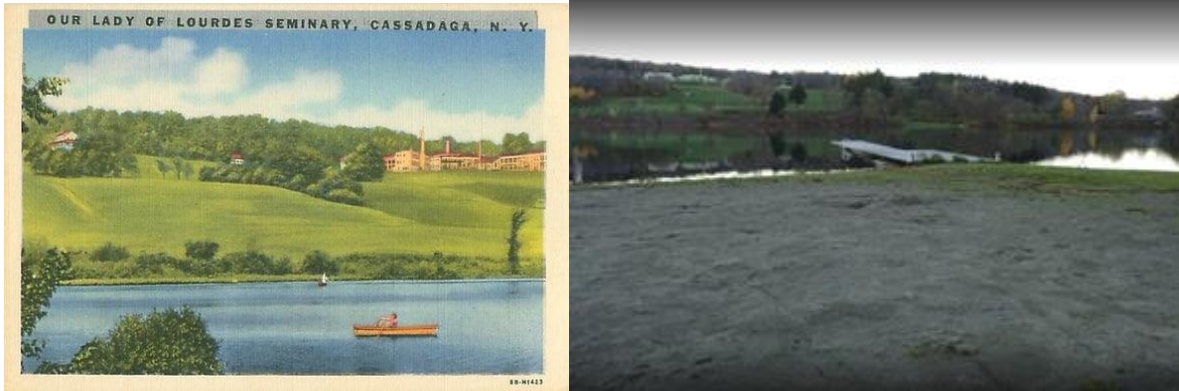


Figure 6.12. Historical view of Upper Cassadaga Lake versus the view today (Source: Ruth Marentette (left), Google Earth (right)).

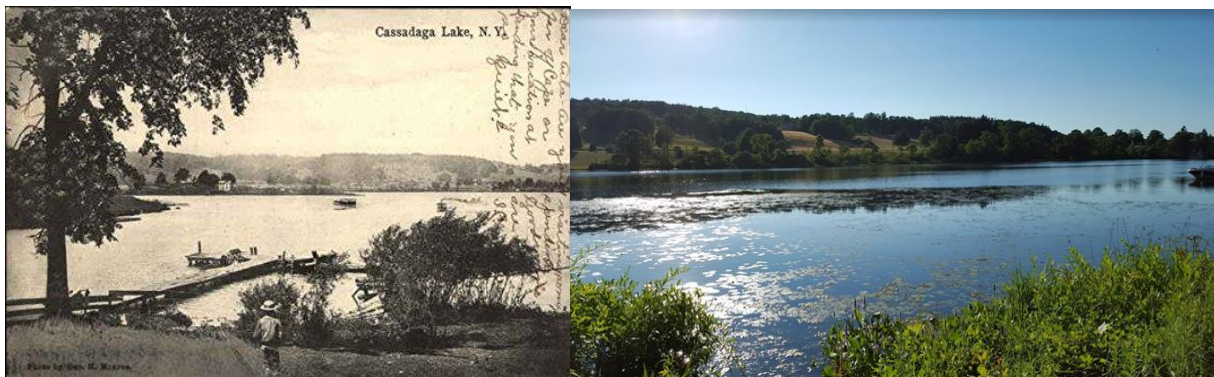


Figure 6.13. Historical view of Upper Cassadaga Lake versus the view today (Source: Ruth Marenttette (right), Google Earth (left))



Figure 6.14. Historical view of the Leolyn Woods versus the view today

(Source:hippopostcards.com (left), author (right)).



Figures 6.15. Historical view of what is now Glasgow Drive versus the modern view

(Source: Lily Dale Assembly (left), Google Earth (right)).

Integrity Summary for Views and Vistas:

1. Location: The views and vistas retain their historic location.
2. Design: The design of the Leolyn Woods is threatened by modern development to Lily Dale's south.
3. Setting: The historical setting is intact.

4. Materials: Vegetation is still used to frame many of the constructed views and vistas. The vegetation has grown since the period of significance and does obscure some of the historic views and vistas.

5. Workmanship: N/A

6. Feeling: Views and vistas continue to evoke feeling related to the areas of significance.

7. Association: Views and vistas similarly continue to express association with the areas of significance.

Integrity of Views and Vistas: Moderate to High

Vegetation

The vegetation in Lily Dale has been altered due to the introduction of invasive species and changes to the landscape. The gardeners of the camp and the Environmental Committee have both recognized the need to eradicate invasive plant species and monitor what plants are introduced into the camp, however. Lily Dale has also taken active steps to preserve the old growth forest of the camp which serves a variety of reasons including connecting residents and visitors with the camp's history. It could be argued that these steps constitute attempts to restore the historic integrity of the vegetation of Lily Dale thus raising the historic integrity. Lily Dale still contains original vegetation as well. The tree and plant species that existed during the period of significance remain to a wide degree.

More complicated, however, is something like the Butterfly Habitat, which works to restore and destroy different aspects of integrity. The Butterfly Habitat is modern having been constructed in Caldwell Park during the 2010s. This compromised the historic layout and integrity of Caldwell Park to a certain degree. The purpose of the Butterfly Habitat, however, is to reintroduce a species that would have existed in Lily Dale during some parts of the period of significance. The Butterfly Habitat presents an interesting historic preservation conundrum within Lily Dale.

Integrity Summary for Vegetation

1. Location: The parks, forests, and greenspace retain their historic locations.
2. Design: Besides a few additions such as the Butterfly Habitat, most of the gardens and parks retain their original vegetation.
3. Setting: The historical setting is intact.
4. Materials: The same kinds of plant communities and vegetative species still populate the landscape with the exceptions of invasives.
5. Workmanship: The gardeners of Lily Dale continue to protect, enhance, and monitor Lily Dale's greenspaces.
6. Feeling: The vegetation of Lily Dale continues to contribute to an environment that evokes feeling related to the areas of significance.
7. Association: The vegetation of Lily Dale continues to contribute to an environment that expresses association to the areas of significance

Integrity of Vegetation: High



Figure 6.16. Historical view of Inspiration Stump versus the view today. (Source: Alpha Husted Collection (left), The Beauty Around Us Blog (right))

Land Use

Lily Dale's land use has been inextricably tied to event programming, recreation, religious experience, shopping, leisure, and housing. Land use represents the broad history of the

religious camp meeting and the effects of Spiritualist belief on the camp landscape. Land use characteristics are also deeply linked to spatial organization, cluster arrangement, and the evolving needs of Lily Dale overtime. The land use especially conveys the main argument for Lily Dale's importance to Spiritualist history in New York State. The Spiritualists decided to conserve the Leolyn Woods, build the parks, create recreational spaces, and include a variety of religious offerings.

The offerings in Lily Dale are common amongst Spiritualist camps but are unique in the overall context of the religious camp movement. Historically, many Protestant camps did not have dance halls, bowling alleys, a Ferris wheel, etc. The Freethinking nature of Lily Dale allowed for such secular amusements which heightened Lily Dale's appeal as a destination for vacation. Certainly, Protestant camps did and do not offer things such as seances, mediumship, acupuncture, past-life regression, and more. These activities were and are reflected in the land use of Lily Dale. Unfortunately, as tastes in recreation and religion changed, so did the land use. Gone are most of the recreational structures such as the Ferris wheel or the Beach House. What remains, however, is historic. The Auditorium, Forest Temple, and Inspiration Stump are still places of congregation. The parks are still utilized and the greenspace is still conserved. Shops are still open, the Pagoda and cafeteria still serve food, cottages are still lived in etc.

An interesting historic preservation issue involving land use involves the Fox Sister Memorial Garden. Historically, the Fox Sister cabin resided there but unfortunately burnt down by accident during the 1950s. A garden with interpretative and commemorative signage now exists there. The land use still attempts to interpret and conserve that relic of Spiritualist history, just without the cabin. The land use therefore hasn't changed that much, just what is on it (or isn't on it) has. During the 1970s, Lily Dale considered building a replica of the Fox Sister

cottage. This never came into fruition but would constitute an interesting historical reconstruction if it ever is attempted.

Integrity Summary for Land Use:

1. Location: The land-uses are almost completely unaltered from the period of significance.
2. Design: The design of programming has changed over time with new trends and beliefs. However, the nature of land use has remained intact.
3. Setting: The historical setting of land use retains integrity.
4. Materials: N/A
5. Workmanship: N/A
6. Feeling: The current land uses are largely the same as the historic uses, leading to integrity of feeling associated with the religious camp movement and Spiritualism.
7. Association: The current land uses are largely the same as the historic uses, leading to the continued association with the religious camp movement and Spiritualism.

Integrity of Land Use: High

Intangible Cultural Heritage and Traditions

The intangible cultural heritage and traditions of Lily Dale have evolved and changed since its founding in the 1870s. With the ever-changing nature of Spiritualism, the religious fare of the camp has changed with it. The table below provides an example:

TABLE ONE:

Year	Slate Writing	Yoga	Ectoplasm	Seance	Phrenology	Healing	Trumpet Mediums	Palm Readings	Mental Mediumship
1900	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
2020	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N	N	Y

“Y” symbolizes “yes” as in yes you could find that in Lily Dale. “N” stands for “no” as in “not offered.”

As the table above demonstrates, even in the past 120 years much has changed in what is offered at the camp. It also reveals that much has stayed the same. These differences reflect the continuous evolution of Spiritualism and the camp over time lending credence to the argument that the period of significance should be all the way until 1970. The religious fare in the camp did not stop changing in 1900 and it continues to change today. The principles of Spiritualism and many of its manifestations can still be experienced at Lily Dale as they were when it was founded, nonetheless.

The two largest trends that have altered the intangible cultural heritage of Lily Dale are the New Age Movement and the decline of physical mediumship. The latter was a gradual trend that began in earnest in the second-half of the nineteenth-century and continued into the 1920s. Physical mediumship was and is problematic because it is so easy to fake. The exposing of fraudulent displays of mediumship by crafty investigators has helped lead to the decline of Spiritualism throughout its history. It has also been criticized on a philosophical level as well usually with begging the question of how does moving objects or phantasmagorical lights even constitute any meaningful revelation from the spirit world. Because of this, most mediums in Lily Dale rely on mental mediumship even though some physical mediumship is still conducted, just on a much smaller basis.

The New Age Movement also manifested itself in Lily Dale during the 1950s, 60s, and 70s. The New Age ushered in practices such as yoga, angelology, past-life regression, eastern philosophies, New Thought, herbalism, chakras, and more into the camp. Today, the camp offers a wider variety of content than it ever has before. The classical Spiritualists still retain some sway over the camp as there are plenty of Lily Dale residents who hold little New Age beliefs and follow older definitions of mediumship.

The decline of physical mediumship and the rise of the New Age Movement has added and detracted much to the intangible cultural heritage from the period of significance but the historical practices remain in the camp. Mental mediumship, spirit art, healings, and séances, i.e. typical Spiritualist fare, are still offered in the camp. There are even still classes on table-turning and other older examples of physical mediumship. Within the private homes of many Lily Dale residents, the old practices are still observed as well. Ouija Boards, trumpet séances, and rappings are still purported to occur behind closed doors and amongst friends in Lily Dale.

Integrity Summary for Intangible Cultural Heritage and Traditions:

1. Location: The location of has not changed.
2. Design: The design of cultural traditions has changed due to shifting trends in Spiritualism and the influence of new movements. The original practices remain, however.
3. Setting: The setting has not changed.
4. Materials: The physical elements of the cultural traditions at Lily Dale remain largely the same.
5. Workmanship: N/A
6. Feeling: The cultural traditions continue to express the feeling associated with the areas of significance.
7. Association: The cultural traditions continue to express association with the areas of significance.

Integrity Summary for Intangible Cultural Heritage and Traditions: High

Summary of Integrity Evaluation

The various landscape elements in Lily Dale display differing levels of integrity. Natural systems and features, spatial organization, cluster arrangement, vegetation, buildings and structures, land use, topography, and intangible cultural heritage all retain a high degree of integrity. The circulation of the camp and the views and vistas have moderate integrity. The small-scale features have lower integrity. Lily Dale is still an active religious camp and much of the integrity of the landscape is bound to change in the future.

Conclusion

Lily Dale's contributions to the history of Spiritualism in New York state is exemplified through the landscape elements and their integrity. The landscape elements work together to create a unique sense of place that encourages religious revelation, recreation, and connection. It provides space for events, classes, workshops, living, gathering, services, and more. The intact camp meeting form is an example of value engineering the landscape design to maximize the religious economy in conformity with middle-class sensibilities, cost, and taste. The Spiritualists of Lily Dale have simultaneously shaped, altered, conserved, and restored elements of their camp to reflect the ever-evolving nature of the religion itself. The historical significance, themes, and period of significance all work together to tell the major historical narratives that exist within the tangible and intangible landscape of Lily Dale.

CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSION

Introduction

This thesis examined the significance and integrity of Lily Dale through the first part of a cultural landscape report. Religious camps are complex cultural landscapes and their characteristics illustrate the human impetus to design a landscape built around spirituality, ideology, recreation, and community. Founded and built by self-proclaimed Freethinkers and Spiritualists, Lily Dale, through its key landscape characteristics, continues to reflect the desires, priorities, and goals of these groups. This chapter will summarize the previous chapters in order to succinctly answer the research question presented in chapter one. It will also issue the concluding thoughts of this thesis.

Question

“What is the history, physical conditions, significance, and integrity of Lily Dale?”

Chapter Two

The literature review revealed the evolution, status, and nature of Spiritualist histories. It provided background of how Spiritualism is and has been viewed, discussed, and thought-of amongst academia and historians. Early Spiritualist histories were thinly veiled attempts at proving or disproving the truth behind the religion. After the women’s liberation movement, Civil Rights movement, and New Age Movement, religious minorities such as Spiritualists received proper study through academic, historical, religious, and sociological lenses. Today

there is a wealth of scholarly historical texts on the Spiritualist movement. These texts, and understanding the progression of Spiritualist historiography, help contextualize Lily Dale and discover how the camp views its own past and significance.

Chapter Three

Understanding the history of the religious camp movement, Spiritualist belief, and their history is essential for understanding Lily Dale. Nothing exists in a vacuum, including Lily Dale. Understanding the birth and development of the religious camp is important for placing Lily Dale in its historical context. The tradition of the religious camp had been established long before Lily Dale. Because of this, Lily Dale simultaneously has traditional camp qualities such as its design but also unique aspects such as the emphasis on environmental conservation and social reform. In order to understand these unique aspects, one must understand the religion of Spiritualism. Spiritualists have a myriad of complex beliefs. These beliefs play an integral part in Lily Dale in a variety of ways. Lily Dale is also intrinsically connected with the history of Spiritualism. The true significance of Lily Dale cannot be understood without a familiarization with the history of the religion itself. This includes understanding the precedents of Spiritualism, the context of how it was born, its spread throughout the Western world, its major players, its connection with other contemporary movements, its significant events, its decline, and its continuing evolution.

Chapter Four

Lily Dale has a remarkable history. It is a community founded by philosophical Freethinkers that has become the largest Spiritualist camp in the United States still attracting 20,000+ visitors a year. The history of the community is multifaceted and can be approached through a variety of

ways. Broad themes of American history are present in the camp, these include the women's rights movement, nineteenth-century economics, religious history, historical recreational practices, and more. The proud history of the camp partly lends to why people value the past so much in it.

The perception in Lily Dale is that Spiritualists have often been on the so-called "right side" of history and therefore the past is something to celebrate. An example of this is how many Lily Dale residents claim Susan B. Anthony was not allowed to speak at the nearby Chautauqua Institute but could speak at the more open-minded Lily Dale. This is not true and derives from confusing a statement made by a different speaker, Mrs. Elnora M. Barrett, about the cold "tolerance" of suffragettes at the Chautauqua Institute versus the warm and "cordial support" received at Lily Dale. This anecdote, and there are many more like them, however untrue it may be, serves as a case-study of how Lily Dale residents see their own history.

The pride in Lily Dale's past has a darker undercurrent, however. The dark points in Spiritualism's or the community's past are hardly ever acknowledged. For example, there are hardly any black Americans live in Lily Dale. This is likely due to a variety of reasons but most especially the fact that black people were removed from the NSAC in the 1920s. Similarly, although Spiritualists were oftentimes strong advocates for Native rights, the appropriation, commodification, and objectification of Native culture is still commonplace in the camp. In an age where this sort of behavior is becoming less tolerated, Lily Dale may have to learn how to walk a finer line with its relationship to Native Americans. These darker chapters in the past offer unwelcome truths to many Spiritualists who may not have heard of or thought of such events. The largest criticism lobbed at Lily Dale, however, is that it is full of charlatans and fakes. Some have even branded it, "Silly Dale." It is undeniable that Spiritualism has had its

share of mountebanks but so has every religion. These accusations are simply not enough to discredit Lily Dale as an important historical cultural landscape.

Chapter Five

The cultural landscape of Lily Dale is comprised of a variety of existing conditions. The architecture, cluster arrangement, natural features and systems, circulation, vegetation, topography, intangible cultural heritage, land use, and spatial organization all work together to create the larger cultural landscape. It is the harmony between these elements that creates the unique feeling in the camp. Without even one of them, the character and feeling of Lily Dale significantly changes. As Lily Dale is still a functioning religious camp, it will face a number of preservation problems in the future. One of the biggest dilemmas facing the camp, with extreme ramifications on the cultural landscape, is whether Lily Dale should expand. The Assembly owns property all the way out to Route 60 in the east. This is all woodland and forest. Some Lily Dale members wish to clear cut parts of the forest and build a new section of the camp on this land. Others are against this measure and wish to see the forest preserved. Issues like this raise enormous questions and raise debate over the character of Lily Dale.³⁰⁰

Chapter Six

Lily Dale is significant to New York state due to its role in the history of the Spiritualist movement and the philosophy of Freethought along with reflecting historical themes such as women, leisure, recreation, economics, and environmental conservation. The period of significance for the historical themes and its significance is 1879-1970. This period of significance is large enough to reflect the multi-faceted and continuously changing character of

³⁰⁰ Bobbie Caswell, "Interview with Bobbie Caswell by Maxwell Nosbisch."

the camp. Without Lily Dale, the Spiritualist and Freethought movements in New York state would not have been what it was. Because of this significance, the integrity and preservation of Lily Dale's cultural landscape is essential to enshrine the community's sense of place. The mission of Lily Dale, more than most places, is in harmony with the goals of historic preservation.

Lily Dale has various levels of integrity. Some elements of its landscape have a high level of integrity such as its natural systems and features, spatial organization, topography, vegetation, buildings and structures, land use, intangible cultural heritage, and the cluster arrangement have a high level of integrity. The circulation of the camp and the views and vistas have moderate integrity. The small-scale features have lower integrity. Lily Dale is still an active religious camp and the integrity of its landscape elements is always under pressure. In the future, Lily Dale will face threats from both the inside and outside to its historical cultural landscape.

Preservation Practices in Lily Dale Today

Lily Dale's current preservation practices are slipshod at best, to rectify this, Lily Dale should implement a codified preservation with standards and goals. There are no standards, ethics, or preservation goals dictated by the Assembly itself. The board tells builders, leaseholders, and remodelers that they want things to look "Victorian." This demonstrates Lily Dale's care for the past and its emphasis on conveying a historical feeling. One Lily Dale board member explained the rationale for things looking Victorian as, "its who we are. Its where we came from. I guess it gives us a connection to our beginnings."³⁰¹ The preservation of this aesthetic and feeling would be greatly enhanced by a preservation plan or preservation codes within the camp.

³⁰¹ Bobbie Caswell, "Interview with Bobbie Caswell by Maxwell Nosbisch," in-person, Lily Dale, New York, 5/17/19.

Currently, however, some members of the board have described Lily Dale's preservation practices as "greatly lacking in structure."³⁰² The board does have final say over what is built in Lily Dale and can reject remodeling or building plans brought before it. The problem with this is that there is no codified standard that lets lease-holders know what is and isn't allowed. It is totally at the whim of whoever is on the Lily Dale board of directors. This ambiguity causes headaches and tension between residents and the board. A set of published rules, standards, and codes would greatly diminish unclarity.

The governmental structure of Lily Dale can also arouse division over preservation issues. There are currently seven board members, a director, and a president. They all have distinct responsibilities but their power can often intersect. This can lead to volatile situations such as in March of 2019 when the president of Lily Dale approved a renovation of the Healing Temple without getting board approval.³⁰³ In protest, two board members resigned claiming the renovation was overbudget and that it was outside of the president's power to commission it. In fact, the renovation was overbudget and the president was forced to pay out of pocket in order to cover the expenses of the project. Problems like this would be mitigated with a preservation plan, preservation budget, and even preservation bylaws.

Maintenance on historic features in Lily Dale is currently done on an as needed basis. The board gets reports of, or simply sees buildings, that need repairs and then funds to fix them. This is a retroactive preservation policy and Lily Dale has taken no steps to implement a proactive preservation agenda. The town of Pomfret does have certain zoning regulations placed on Lily Dale, however. If a house in Pomfret is torn down, it will not be allowed to be rebuilt

³⁰² Bobbie Caswell, "Interview with Bobbie Caswell by Maxwell Nosbisch."

³⁰³ J.M. Lesinski, "Lily Dale Board Resignations Raise Questions," *The Observer*, 03/10/19, accessed: 2/4/20, <https://www.observertoday.com/news/page-one/2019/03/lily-dale-board-resignations-raise-questions/>.

unless it uses the floorplan of the original structure. This zoning ordinance was passed due to the small size of most lots in Lily Dale which are mostly either fifty-by-sixty feet or forty-by-fifty feet. A side-effect of this ordinance is that it also forces historic preservation, restoration, and reconstruction to be the most viable option for lease-holders wishing to work on their property.

Concluding Thoughts- The Future of Lily Dale

When I visited Lily Dale in the spring of 2019, my third visit to the camp, residents talked more than ever of Lily Dale being at a “crossroads” or a “pivotal moment.” Many residents think that the 2020s will be an important juncture in the camp’s history because a variety of issues are coming to a head. It should come as no surprise to anybody familiar with the history of Lily Dale that there are many debates over the camp’s future taking place today. These debates and their outcomes will decide how Lily Dale looks, feels, and operates in the twenty-first century. However, this thesis does not attempt to provide any input into these debates or argue for any either way. This thesis is a simple attempt to document the unique cultural landscape that is Lily Dale, New York. It is the hope of the author that this document can be used to inform the residents and decision-makers in Lily Dale on what makes their camp so special.

Further Study

Lastly, this thesis leaves plenty of options for further study. This thesis is the first part of a cultural landscape report. The second part of any CLR is a treatment plan. A treatment plan for Lily Dale would require extensive research, input from people with a variety of skillsets, communication with residents, the cooperation of the Lily Dale board of directors, and more. Therefore, no treatment plan will be provided in this thesis since it would truly be a thesis unto

itself. Lily Dale is a community that could also be studied sociologically, legally, financially, anthropologically, archaeologically, ecologically and more. All of these could also be the basis for further research since this thesis simply scratches the surface on many of these topics.

Finally, since Lily Dale has so many cottages and residences, a more extensive survey of its architecture and property history alone could be conducted. There are many avenues to explore the lessons that can be gleaned from studying Lily Dale.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

1860 U.S. Census, web.

Abbott, Karen, “‘A Very Common Delusion’: Spiritualism and the Fox Sisters”, Smithsonian Institution, 10/29/12, accessed 10/13/19, <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/a-very-common-delusion>.

“About Spiritualism” Church of Eternal Life, accessed: 3/15/20, https://thechurchofeternallife.org/wp/?page_id=99.

Abingdon Spiritualist Church, “What is Christian Spiritualism?” [abingdonspiritualistchurch.co.uk](http://www.abingdonspiritualistchurch.co.uk), accessed: 2/23/20, <http://www.abingdonspiritualistchurch.co.uk/home/what-is-christian-spiritualism>.

“About the Author,” Deborah Blum, accessed: 2/25/20, <https://deborahblum.com/.-spiritualism-and-the-fox-sisters-97825064/>, web.

“A Day in Lily Dale: Photo Essay of People, Places in Upstate NY Hamlet,” NYUp, accessed: 11/16/20, https://www.newyorkupstate.com/western-ny/2017/07/a_day_in_lily_dale_photo_essay_of_people_places_in_upstate_ny_hamlet.html.

Address to Lily Dale Assembly from President Esther C. Humphrey, Lily Dale, New York, August 11, 1930.

Alpha Husted, “Personal notes and research into the history of Lily Dale” (unpublished notes, n.d.).

“Ann D. Braude,” Harvard Divinity School, accessed: 2/2/5/20,
<https://hds.harvard.edu/people/ann-d-braude>.

Anonymous, “Interview with Anonymous Lily Dale Resident by Maxwell Nosbisch.” In-person interview, Lily Dale, New York, 05/18/19.

Anthony, Carl. “First Ladies & The Occult: Seances and Spiritualists.” FirstLadies.Org, 10/27/14, accessed: 10/16/19, <http://www.firstladies.org/blog/first-ladies-the-occult-seances-and-spiritualists-part-1/>

“Ascended Masters”, Crystalinks, accessed: 10/30/19,
<https://www.crystalinks.com/ascendedmasters.html>.

“Author” Ruth Brandon, accessed: 3/14/20, http://www.ruthbrandon.co.uk/?page_id=2.

Barnard, Guy Christian, *The Supernormal: A Critical Introduction to Psychic Science*, (London: Rider and Co., 1933)

Barrett, H.D. and McCoy, A.W. Cassadaga: It’s History and Teachings, (Meadville, Pennsylvania: The Gazette Printing Company, 1891)

BBC Staff, “Spiritualist Beliefs”, BBC,
https://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/spiritualism/beliefs/beliefs_1.shtml, 09/09/2009,
accessed 10/9/2019.

Bernstein, Peter, *Wedding of the Waters: The Erie Canal and the Making of a Great Nation*, (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2005)

Birnbaum, Charles, U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, *Preservation Brief 36: Protecting Cultural Landscapes: Planning Treatment and Management of Historic Landscapes*, September, 1994, <https://www.nps.gov/tps/how-to-preserve/briefs/36-cultural-landscapes.htm>

Blinn, Henry Clay, *The Manifestation of Spiritualism Among the Shakers, 1837-1847*, (East Canterbury, New Hampshire: 1899).

Blum, Deborah, *Ghost Hunters: Williams James and the Search for Scientific Proof of Life After Death*, (New York: The Penguin Press, 2006).

Boles, John, *The Great Revival: 1787-1805*, (Lexington, Kentucky: University of Kentucky Press, 1972).

Boston Daily Evening Transcript, April 8, 1862.

Bond, Francesca, "Lily Dale Attracts Visitors Looking for Spiritual Answers, Comfort," *Gusto*, 07/12/19, accessed: 3/16/20, <https://buffalonews.com/2019/07/12/lily-dale-attracts-visitors-looking-for-spiritual-answers-comfort/>.

Braude, Ann, *Radical Spirits: Spiritualism and Women's Rights in Nineteenth-century America*, (Bloomington, Indiana: University of Indiana Press, 2nd edit. 2001).

Brandon, Ruth, "Author," Ruth Brandon, accessed: 2/25/20, <http://www.ruthbrandon.co.uk/>.

Brandon, Ruth, *The Spiritualists* (London: Knopf Publishers, 1983).

Britten, Emma Hardinge, *Modern American Spiritualism*, (New York: 1870).

By-Laws of the Lily Dale Assembly, 1944, article XXIV.

Carroll, Bret, *Spiritualism in Antebellum America*, (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1997).

Carwardine, Richard, *Trans-Atlantic Revivalism: Popular Evangelicalism in Britain and America, 1790-1865*, (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1978).

“Cassadaga and Lily Dale Receive Arbor Day Grant,” The Post-Journal, 05/25/19, accessed: 1/15/20, <https://www.post-journal.com/news/community/2019/05/cassadaga-and-lily-dale-receive-arbor-day-grant/>.

Caswell, Bobbie, “Interview with Bobbie Caswell by Maxwell Nosbisch.” In-person interview, Lily Dale, New York, 05/17/19.

Chase, Victoria, *We Called it Culture- The Story of Chautauqua* (Orange, California: Chapman University Press, 2013).

Church of the Living Spirit, “Mission and Principles,” Church of the Living Spirit, accessed: 2/23/20, <http://www.livingspiritlilydale.org/mission--principles.html>.

Church, W.H., *Many Happy Returns: The Lives of Edgar Cayce*, (San Francisco: Harper and Row Publishers, 1984).

“Climate in Chautauqua County, New York,” Best Places, accessed: 1/13/20, https://www.bestplaces.net/climate/county/new_york/chautauqua.

Conan Doyle, Sir Arthur, *The History of Spiritualism*, (London: Cassell and Company, 1926).

Cooke, Bill, *A Rebel to His Last Breath: Joseph McCabe and Rationalism* (New York: Prometheus Books, 2001).

Cowen v. Lily Dale Assembly, 1974, 44 A.D.2d 772, casetext.com.

Cox, Robert, *Body and Soul: A Sympathetic History of American Spiritualism*, (Charlottesville, Virginia: University of Virginia Press, 2003).

Cutler, Lelia, "Infinite Possibilities with Infinite Intelligence," National Spiritualist Association of Churches, accessed: 2/23/20, <https://nsac.org/infinite-possibilities-with-infinite-intelligence/>.

Daggett, Melissa, *Spiritualism in Nineteenth-Century New Orleans*, (Oxford, Mississippi: University Press of Mississippi, 2016).

Danielson, Lindsey, "Using GIS to Analyze Relationships to Explore Paranormal Occurrences in the Continental United States," Department of Resource Analysis, Saint Mary's University of Minnesota, 2014. Accessed: 1/13/2020, <http://www.gis.smumn.edu/GradProjects/DanielsonL.pdf>.

"Darryl Catherine," Le Moyne College, accessed: 2/23/20, <https://www.lemoyne.edu/Academics/Our-Faculty/Religious-Studies/Darryl-Catherine>.

David Ruggles Center for History and Education Staff, "Sojourner Truth (1797-1883)", davidrugglescenter.org, 2018, <https://davidrugglescenter.org/sojourner-truth/>, accessed 10/9/2019.

Davis, Andrew Jackson, *The Principles of Nature, Her Divine Revelations, and a Voice to Mankind*, (Boston: Adamant Media Corporation, 2005).

Dean, Nichols, "Legislators Cite North-South Discrepancies," The Post-Journal, 08/3/2009, accessed: 1/13/20.

“Dr. Molly McGarry,” University of California Riverside, accessed: 2/25/20,
<https://history.ucr.edu/people/molly-mcgarry>.

National Spiritualist Association of Churches, “Declaration of Principles,” National Spiritualist Association of Churches, accessed: 2/23/20, <https://nsac.org/what-we-believe/principles/>.

Deveney, John, *Paschal Beverly Randolph: A Nineteenth-Century Black American Spiritualist, Rosicrucian, and Sex Magician*, (Albany, NY: State University Press, 1997).

Dorn, W.L.; Thomas Jr., Kenneth, “National Register of Historic Places Registration: Salem Camp Ground/ Salem Camp Meeting”, National Park Service, 01/22/1998,
https://npgallery.nps.gov/NRHP/GetAsset/NRHP/98000175_text, (accessed: 9/24/2019).

Doyle, Sir Arthur Conan, *The History of Spiritualism* (London: Cassell and Company, 1926).

“Dr. Molly McGarry,” University of California Riverside, accessed: 2/25/20,
<https://history.ucr.edu/people/molly-mcgarry>.

Duncan, Patricia, “National Register 101: Seven Aspects of Integrity,” Louisiana State Historic Preservation Office, 03/11, accessed: 3/4/20,
https://www.crt.state.la.us/Assets/OCD/hp/nationalregister/nationalregistry101/101_-_Seven_Aspects_of_Integrity.pdf.

Dunning, Brian, “Harry Houdini and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle,” Skeptoid, 11/2/14, accessed: 11/26/19, <https://skeptoid.com/episodes/4430>.

Ellis, R.J. and Louis Gates Jr., Henry, “*Grievances at the Treatment She Received*”: *Harriet E. Wilson’s Spiritualist Career in Boston, 1868-1900* from *American Literary History*, (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 2012)

“First Spiritualist Mass Camp Meeting; Announcement and Proceedings.” *The Banner of Light*.
August 25th, 1866.

“Fire at the Leolyn Hotel,” Chautauqua County, accessed: 1/16/2020,
http://app.chautauquacounty.com/hist_struct/Pomfret/LeolynHotelFire1983.html.

First Spiritual Temple, “What is Mediumship/Channeling?” First Spiritual Temple, 1996,
accessed: 10/7/2019, <https://www.fst.org/mediumship.htm>.

“Forest Temple,” Lily Dale Assembly, accessed: 1/20/19, <https://lilydaleassembly.org/place-to-see-points-of-interest/forest-temple/>

FredK, “The Sounds of Princess Whitecloud,” Blogspot, 8/22/08, accessed: 1/10/19,
<https://princesswhitecloud.blogspot.com/>.

Gabriel, Mary Catherine, “Ordinary Spirits in an Extraordinary Town: Finding Identity in
Personal Images and Resurrected Memories in Lily Dale, New York,” Master’s thesis,
Utah State University, 2010.

Gaia Staff, “What is a Spirit Guide?” Gaia.com, 04/4/2017, accessed: 2/23/20,
<https://www.gaia.com/article/what-is-a-spirit-guide>.

Garland, Hamlin, *Forty Years of Psychic Research: A Plain Narrative of Fact*, (London: Ayer
Co. Publishing, 1936).

Global Healing Exchange, “Understanding Spiritual Vibrations,” Global Healing Exchange,
6/05/13, accessed: 2/23/20, <https://www.globalhealingexchange.com/understanding-spiritual-vibrations-part-1-energy/>.

Grant, Tobin, “Why 1940s America Wasn’t as Religious as You Think,” Religious News Service, 12/11/14, accessed: 9/23/19, <https://religionnews.com/2014/12/11/1940s-america-wasnt-religious-think-rise-fall-american-religion/>.

Christopher Grasso, *Skepticism and American Faith* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).

Guthrie Jr., John J.; Lucas, Phillip Charles; and Monroe, Gary eds., *Cassadaga: The South’s Oldest Spiritualist Community*, (Gainesville, Florida: University of Florida Press, 1997).

Hankins, Barry, *The Second Great Awakening and the Transcendentalists*, (Westport, Connecticut: Westport Press, 2004).

Hawthorne, Nathaniel, *The Centenary Edition of the Works of Nathaniel Hawthorne, The Letters: 1813-1843* (Columbus, Ohio: Ohio State University Press, 1965).

Hazelgrove, Jenny, *Spiritualism and British Society Between the Wars*, (Manchester, England: Manchester University Press, 2000).

Hersey, Merle, *75th Anniversary of the Lily Dale Assembly: 1879-1954* (Lily Dale, NY: The Lily Dale Book Shop, 1954).

Historic American Buildings Survey/Historic American Engineering Record. “HABS: Newton Memorial Hospital (Cassadaga Jobs Corps Center).” Philadelphia, PA.: U.S. Dept. of the Interior, National Park Service, Cultural Resources, HABS No. NY-6338

“History of the Edgar Cayce Hospital,” Edgar Cayce’s A.R.E., accessed: 11/27/19, <https://www.edgarcayce.org/about-us/virginia-beach-hq/historic-cayce-hospital/>.

Horowitz, Mitch, *Occult America: White House Seances, Ouija Circles, Masons, and the Secret Mystic History of Our Nation*, (New York: Random House Publishing Group, 2010).

“How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation,” Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1990, accessed: 3/4/20, https://www.nps.gov/subjects/nationalregister/upload/NRB-15_web508.pdf.

Howe, Lisa, “Spirited Pioneer: The Life of Emma Hardinge Britten,” (PhD diss. Florida International University, 2015).

Hull, Moses and Jamieson, W.F., *The Greatest Debate within a Half Century Upon Modern Spiritualism*, (Chicago: The Progressive Thinker Publishing House, 1904).

Husted, Alpha, “The Founder of Lily Dale,” Lily Dale Mediums League, accessed: 3/13/20, <https://themediumsleague.org/lily-dale>;

Imbler, Sabrina, “How Victorian Mediums Gave Shy Ghosts a Megaphone,” Atlas Obscura, 10/23/19, accessed: 10/27/19, <https://www.atlasobscura.com/articles/spirit-trumpets-dead-speak>.

Jacobs, Claude, *The Spiritual Churches of New Orleans: Origins, Beliefs, and Rituals of an African-American Religion*, (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 1991)

Jennings, Chris, *Paradise Now: The Story of American Utopianism*, (New York: Random House Publishing Group, 2016).

Jones, Jeffrey Owen, “The Man Who Wrote the Pledge of Allegiance,” Smithsonian, 11/03, accessed 9/23/19, <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/the-man-who-wrote-the-pledge-of-allegiance-93907224/>

Jones, Josh, “Arthur Conan Doyle & the Cottingley Fairies: How Two Young Girls Fooled Sherlock Holmes’ Creator,” Open Culture, 1/23/13, accessed: 11/5/19,

http://www.openculture.com/2013/01/arthur_conan_doyle_the_cottingley_fairies_how_tvo_young_girls_fooled_the_creator_of_sherlock_holmes.html.

Kalush, W. and Sloman, L, *The Secret Life of Houdini: The Making of America's First Superhero*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2006), 510-515.

Kirkpatrick, Sidney, *Edgar Cayce: An American Prophet*, (New York: Penguin Group, 2001).

Kuzmeskus, Elaine, *Connecticut in the Golden Age of Spiritualism*, (Charleston, South Carolina: The History Press, 2016).

LaJudice, Joyce, *Lily Dale: History as it Happened, Book One: 1800-1883*.

Lause, Mark, *Free Spirits: Spiritualism, Republicanism, and Radicalism in the Civil War Era*, (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2016).

Lesinski, J.M. "Lily Dale Board Resignations Raise Questions," *The Observer*, 03/10/19, accessed: 2/4/20, <https://www.observertoday.com/news/page-one/2019/03/lily-dale-board-resignations-raise-questions/>.

Letter from Lily Dale Assembly to the National Association of Spiritualist Churches, 06/15/1987.

Letter from Assistant Secretary of Lily Dale to Mr. B.F. Bartlett, 06/21/1926.

"Letter from N. Frank White", *Herald of Progress*, August 15, 1863.

Letter to Lily Dale Residents titled "Plain Facts for Fair Minds," signed by Lily Dale Board members: F.W. Constantine, Jean Reed, C.A. Burgess, John Witherel, and Mary Gross, 8/9/1930. Letter to F.W. Constantine from Buffalo lawyer (name illegible), 08/5/1925.

Lily Dale Assembly, “Healing Temple,” Lily Dale Assembly, accessed: 2/23/20,
<https://lilydaleassembly.org/venue/healing-temple/>.

Lily Dale Assembly, “Reincarnation Intensive: Meet Past Life Guides and Discover Your Own
Hidden Histories,” Lily Dale Assembly, accessed: 2/23/20,
<https://lilydaleassembly.org/events/reincarnation-intensive/>.

Lily Dale Historical Society pamphlet, *Historical Maplewood Hotel: Continuous Use Since
1880*.

“Lily Dale,” National Wildlife Federation, accessed: 1/15/20,
<https://www.nwf.org/CommunityWildlifeHabitat/Communities/Community/276>.

Lily Dale 1956 Seasonal Program.

Love, Robert, “Houdini’s Greatest Trick: Debunking Medium Mina Crandon,” MentalFloss,
10/31/13, accessed: 11/5/19, [https://www.mentalfloss.com/article/53424/houdinis-
greatest-trick-debunking-medium-mina-crandon](https://www.mentalfloss.com/article/53424/houdinis-greatest-trick-debunking-medium-mina-crandon).

Lovejoy, Bess, “Waiting for Houdini to Escape from Death,” Atlas Obscura, 10/28/13, accessed:
11/5/19, <https://www.atlasobscura.com/articles/31-days-of-halloween-houdini>.

Madrigal, Cregg, T. “‘A Good Deal of an Archaeological Romance:’ A History of the Discovery
and Excavation of the Lamoka Lake Site,” LamokaLedger, 2017.

Malley, Clara, “Meet the Spiritual Healers and Mediums of Cassadaga Florida- ‘The Psychic
Capitol of the World,’” Document Journal, 11/25/19, accessed: 2/23/20,
[https://www.documentjournal.com/2019/11/meet-the-spiritual-healers-and-mediums-of-
cassadaga-florida-the-psychic-capitol-of-the-world/](https://www.documentjournal.com/2019/11/meet-the-spiritual-healers-and-mediums-of-cassadaga-florida-the-psychic-capitol-of-the-world/).

McCabe, Joseph, *Spiritualism: A Popular History from 1847*, (New York: Dodd, Mead, and Company, 1920).

McGarry, Molly, *Ghosts of Futures Past: Spiritualism and the Cultural Politics of Nineteenth-Century America*, (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 2008).

McRobbie, Linda “The Strange and Mysterious History of the Ouija Board”, *Smithsonian*, 10/27/2013, accessed: 10/7/2019, <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/the-strange-and-mysterious-history-of-the-ouija-board-5860627/>.

Melton, J. Gordon, *Encyclopedia of American Religions*, (Detroit: Gale, 2009).

Moore, R. Laurence, *In Search of Crows: Spiritualism, Parapsychology, and American Culture*, (New York: Oxford University Press: 1977).

Moore, William D., *Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture Vol. 7*, (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 1997).

Muirhead, Brian. “A Brief Geological History of Chautauqua County.” *Earth Science Field Trips for High School Students*.

Murphy, Gardner, *William James on Psychical Research*, (New York: Viking Press (now Penguin Group), 1960).

Myers, Arthur and Foote, Helen, “Historical Reflections,” *Sign of the Dove News*, 04/15/1977.

Myers, Arthur, *Fox Cottage Burns*, pamphlet from the Lily Dale Historical Society.

N.A. “Sabbathday Lake Shaker Village”, *The Trust for Public Land*, 01/2006, https://web.archive.org/web/20070901143920/http://www.tpl.org/tier3_cd.cfm?content_item_id=19855&folder_id=259 (accessed: 9/24/2019).

Nagy, Ron “Chief Os-Ke-Non-Ton.” Ron Nagy’s Blog. 8/4/12, accessed: 1/9/20,
<http://ronnagy.net/ronsblog/2012/08/chief-os-ke-non-ton/>.

Nagy, Ron, “Jack Kelly, Mr. Vosburgh, Mae West- Healing Temple Dedication Lily Dale,” Ron Nagy’s Blog, 10/19/11, accessed: 1/9/2020, <http://ronnagy.net/ronsblog/2011/10/jack-kellymr-vosburgh-mae-west-healing-temple-dedication-lily-dale/>

Nagy, Ron, *Precipitated Spirit Paintings*, (Lakeville, Minnesota: Galde Press Inc, 2006)

Nagy, Ron; w. LaJudice, Joyce, *The Spirits of Lily Dale*, (Lakeville, Minnesota: Galde Press Inc., 2017).

“National Colored Spiritualists Association,” [encyclopedia.com](https://www.encyclopedia.com/science/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/national-colored-spiritualist-association-churches), 11/8/19, accessed: 12/17/19,
<https://www.encyclopedia.com/science/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/national-colored-spiritualist-association-churches>, web.

National Park Service Staff, “Research”, National Park Service, 06/29/19,
<https://www.nps.gov/subjects/culturallandscapes/research.htm>, (accessed 10/1/19).

Natural Resources Conservation Service, Soil Data Explorer,
<https://websoilsurvey.nrcs.usda.gov/app/WebSoilSurvey.aspx>.

National Spiritualist Association of Churches, “Declaration of Principles,” National Spiritualist Association of Churches, accessed: 2/23/20, <https://nsac.org/what-we-believe/principles/>.

Nelson, Geoffrey, *Spiritualism and Society*, (New York: Schocken Books, 1969).

O’Brien, Cormac, *Secret Lives of the First Ladies*, (Philadelphia: Quirk Books, 2005).

Oppenheim, Janet, *The Other World: Spiritualism and Psychical Research in England, 1850-1914*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

- Painter, Sally, "Spirit Orb Types and Theories," LovetoKnow.com, accessed: 2/23/20,
https://paranormal.lovetoknow.com/Spirit_Orbs.
- Page, Robert, Gilbert, Cathy and Dolan, Susan, *A Guide to Cultural Landscape Reports: Contents, Process, and Techniques* (U.S. Department of the Interior: Washington D.C., 1998).
- Pendleton, Linda, *Emma Hardinge Britten: Famous Spiritual Medium* (Nook Books: 2011).
- Prendergast, Emma, et al., *Spirit Painting: Azur, 1898*, (Lily Dale, N.Y.: Lily Dale Historical Society) n.d.
- "Principles for Historic Preservation," City of Georgetown, Virginia, accessed: 1/28/2020,
<https://historic.georgetown.org/files/2009/02/Chapter-3-Principles-for-Historic-Preservation.pdf>.
- Podmore, Frank, *Modern Spiritualism: A History and Criticism*, (London: Methuen & Co., 1902).
- Poh, Carol Ann; Post, Robert C, "National Register Places Inventory-Nomination: Shaker Village/United Society of Believers", National Park Service, 01/07/1974,
https://npgallery.nps.gov/NRHP/GetAsset/NHLS/74000318_text, (accessed 9/24/2019).
- Polidoro, Massimo, *Secrets of the Psychics: Investigating Paranormal Claims*, (New York: Prometheus Books, 2003).
- Posnanski, Joe, "The Trial of Harry Houdini," LitHub, 10/22/19, accessed: 11/26/19,
<https://lithub.com/the-trial-of-harry-houdini/>.

“Posts and Bio: Mark Lause,” Labor and Working-class History Association, accessed: 2/25/20,
<http://www.lawcha.org/author/mlause/>.

Potts, Dianca, “Holy Spirits: The Power and Legacy of America’s Female Spiritualists”,
Shondaland.com, Oct. 10, 2018, accessed Sept. 3, 2019,
<https://www.shondaland.com/live/a23652668/legacy-of-spiritualists/>

Price, Patricia, *Lily Dale: The Major Vortexes* (CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform:
2017).

Puglionesi, Alicia, “Perfect Medium”, The Point Magazine, 4/8/17, accessed Sept. 4, 2019,
<https://thepointmag.com/2017/politics/perfect-medium>.

Richmond, Thomas, *God Dealing with Slavery: God’s Instrumentalities in Emancipating the
African Slave in America. Spirit Messages from Franklin, Lincoln, Adams, Jackson, and
others*, (Chicago: Religio-Philosophical Publishing House, 1870).

Russell, Bertrand, *Free Thought and Official Propaganda* (London: Watts & Co., 1922).

Sandlin, Lee. *Wicked River: The Mississippi When It Last Ran Wild*, (New York: Pantheon
Books, 2010).

Sanitary Sewer Easement, 1987, Town of Pomfret.

Schwarcz, Joe, “The Strange Friendship Between Harry Houdini and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle,”
McGill: Office for Science and Society, 03/20/17, accessed: 11/5/2019,
<https://mcgill.ca/oss/article/history-you-asked/how-did-sir-arthur-conan-doyle-trick-houdini>.

- Shiver, Carl, "National Register of Historic Places Registration: Southern Cassadaga Spiritualist Camp Historic District," National Park Service, 02/04/1991, accessed: 11/26/2019
<https://npgallery.nps.gov/GetAsset/2fc1fca3-b02b-475e-90c1-e321209a1423>.
- Simanek, Donald, "Arthur Conan Doyle, Spiritualism, and Fairies," lockhaven.edu, 1/2009, accessed: 11/5/2019.
- Singett, Matt, *Conan Doyle and the Mysterious World of Light, 1887-1920*, (Portsmouth, UK: Life is Amazing Publishers, 2016).
- Smith, Kato and Scheweikert, Ann, "National Register of Historic Places Registration: Camp Chesterfield Historic District," National Park Service, 02/6/2002, accessed: 11/26/2019
<https://npgallery.nps.gov/pdfhost/docs/NRHP/Text/02000192.pdf>.
- Smith, Timothy, *Revivalism and Social Reform*, (Nashville, Tennessee: Abingdon Press, 1955).
- Smith, William Warren, *Revivalism in America: It's Origin, Growth and Decline* (Gloucester, Massachusetts: Peter Smith, 1965).
- Society for Religious Tolerance, "New Age Spirituality," ReligiousTolerance.org, accessed: 2/23/20, <http://www.religioustolerance.org/newage.htm>.
- "Society in the 1950s," Shmoop, accessed: 11/26/2019, <https://www.shmoop.com/1950s/society.html>.
- Special to the New York Times, "Eviction Dispute Splits Community of Mediums," the New York Times, 10/6/1985, accessed: 1/21/2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/1985/10/06/nyregion/eviction-dispute-splits-community-of-mediums.html>

Spence, Lewis, *Encyclopedia of Occultism and Parapsychology*, (Whitefish, Montana: Kessinger Publishing, 2003)

Sweet, William Warren, *Revivalism in America: It's Origin, Growth and Decline*, (Gloucester, Massachusetts: P

The Aetherius Society, "Spiritual Energy" The Aetherius Society, accessed: 2/23/20,
<https://www.aetherius.org/spiritual-energy/eter> Smith, 1965).

"The Earliest New Yorkers," Genessee Country Magazine, accessed: 12/15/19,
<http://westernny.com/history1.html>.

"The Religion, Philosophy, and Science of Spiritualism," Spiritual Path Spiritualist Church,
04/17/2016, accessed: 1/27/2020, <http://www.spiritualpathspiritualistchurch.org/the-religion-philosophy-and-science-of-spiritualism/>.

"Thought Exchange," Lily Dale Assembly, accessed: 1/28/2020,
<https://lilydaleassembly.org/schedule-of-events/thought-exchange/>.

Thurston, Mark, ed. *The Essential Edgar Cayce*, (New York: Penguin Group, 2004).

Timberlake, Howard. "The Intriguing History of Ghost Photography." BBC, 06/30/15, accessed:
10/21/19, <https://www.bbc.com/future/article/20150629-the-intriguing-history-of-ghost-photography>.

Todd, Gerald, "The Great Days at Lily Dale," *The Evening Observer*, Dunkirk, NY, 07/12/1951.

Trombly, Ken, "Houdini and the Spiritualists," Lecture, National Capital Area Skeptics,
Washington, D.C., 2019. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b-iE09us7zA>.

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service, National Register of Historic Places, National Register Bulletin 15: How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation (Washington: U.S. DOI, National Park Service, 1995), <https://www.nps.gov/Nr/publications/bulletins/pdfs/nrb15.pdf>.

University of Michigan, Lydia Maria Child Papers (1835-1894), repository: William L. Clements Library, University of Michigan, accessed: 10/17/2019
<https://quod.lib.umich.edu/c/clementsead/umich-wcl-M-1497chi?view=text>.

Unknown author, from the collection of Alpha Husted, Lily Dale promotional pamphlet from the 1920s or 1930s.

Weisburg, Barbara, *Talking to the Dead: Kate and Maggie Fox and the Rise of Spiritualism*, (New York: HarperCollins Books, 2004), 16-22.

Wellman, Judith, *Grassroots Reform in the Burned-Over District of Upstate New York: Religion, Abolitionism and Democracy*, (London: Routledge Publishers, 2000)

Wingett, Matt, *Conan Doyle and the Mysterious World of Light, 1887-1920*, (Portsmouth, UK: Life is Amazing Publishers, 2016).

Wingington, Patti, "What is the Summerland?" LearnReligions.com, 03/19/18, accessed: 2/23/20, <https://www.learnreligions.com/what-is-the-summerland-2562874>.

Woodland Heritage Institute to Alpha Husted, 07/08/2004.

Yanes, Javier, "Houdini, the Hunter of Fake Ghosts," OpenMind, 03/24/18, accessed: 11/5/19, <https://www.bbvaopenmind.com/en/science/leading-figures/houdini-the-hunter-of-fake-ghosts/>.