

**Spiritual Work, Memory Work:
Revival and Recollection at Salem Camp Meeting**

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History has been described, probably too simply, as man's effort to make a home for himself in the world. It might better be described as an extension of those urges that impel man to find antecedents for his acts and his dilemmas, to find a prologue for his posture toward the future. The writing of history and the quest for identity share a paradox. A society's grasp of its history and a man's sense of his identity, when fully achieved, are final acts. But a community washed by the currents of growth does not easily come to a sharing of its conceptions of origins of the meaning of events. And no man answers easily the questions: "Who am I, where do I belong, and of what am I capable?" Jerome Bruner (Bruner 1962/1973:43)

Every summer throughout the United States and Canada, religious retreats known as "camp meetings" draw Protestants of many denominations from out of their usual churches to gather under the trees for common prayer and spiritual renewal.¹ One of the oldest and best known camp meetings in Georgia takes place every summer at Salem campground in Newton County, about 40 miles east of Atlanta. With the exception of two years during the Civil War, Salem has been a beloved pilgrimage site every year since 1828 for dozens of families who trace their roots to Newton and Rockdale Counties in Georgia. In 2003 Salem celebrates its 175th anniversary.

Though it has its roots in Methodism, Salem today has a distinctly interdenominational flavor and its devoted followers include Methodists, Presbyterians, and Baptists. Each year two ministers are invited to preach at Salem. One is always Methodist, but the second preacher generally alternates between Baptist and Presbyterian. Salem Camp meeting has generally started each year on the last Friday in July, and the encampment continues for one week. The daily schedule is generally the same for each day of the encampment, but "Big Sunday" is generally thought of as the high point of the week. On Big Sunday the camp meeting swells from several hundred to over a thousand visitors as family, friends, and local community members join the campers for prayer, preaching, and some good Southern cooking.

Walking onto the campground unexpected and unannounced, as I did for the first time in the summer of 2000, was like stepping into a kind of dreamscape. In its calm rhythms Salem felt a world apart from the bustle and busyness of the heavily trafficked state road that borders the camp. Rounding the front corner of the first small house I came to, I found myself face-to-face with a dozen people of all ages sitting on the front porch. This turned out to be one of the larger of the two-dozen small cottages that form an outer ring circling the large wooden tabernacle at the center of the campground. "Not cottages!" I would later be corrected. "We call them 'tents.'" The sign over the door of this tent indicated that it belonged to the Jenkins family. The Jenkins tent, my first encounter with Salem life, turned out to house the single largest contingent of Salem "tenters."

My discomfort at wandering unexpectedly into a domestic scene quickly melted away as I was greeted by a beaming middle-aged woman sitting on a rocking chair thumbing through the pages of a large notebook that sat in her lap. "Please join us," she urged. "Would you like to come sit and have some tea?" The invitation seemed reassuringly genuine and so within minutes of entering the grounds, I found myself sitting with members of the Jenkins clan, a glass of sweet iced tea in hand, introducing myself and getting the first of many local history lessons about Salem. The day was hot and the pace was genial. People talked easily, almost always beginning with a kind of

“Salem script” I was to hear so often, the story of how their family first came to Salem, how many years running they had been attending camp meeting, and what the place meant to them. The fat notebook turned out to be a family cookbook that Ann (my host) had been putting together, a collection of family recipes – mostly the “plain cooking type” of dishes – that clan members had been preparing for years at Camp Meeting. The book was called “A Taste of Salem.” It was a kind of family memory book in which families – particularly the women of the family – were commemorated through their distinctive contributions to the dinner table. After an hour or so of chatting I got up to leave, but not before I was handed a copy of the cookbook as a memento of my visit.

Moved by these simple gestures of hospitality and trust, I could sense a different pace of talk and engagement here, a rhythm shaped by the many years these people had been doing just this in the heat of late August afternoon on their porch at Salem. This was my introduction to Salem Camp Meeting, and it made me want to return. As I was interested in the role of religious ritual in the lives of southern families, I did return to Salem, coming back with a research team for the next two summers. I had become curious about Salem. Why were these people so attached to this place? What did it mean to them and their families?

I gradually came to understand the claims that camp meeting at Salem had over the hearts and minds of its faithful followers, who never tired of telling me how many years running they had been coming “home” to Salem. I must admit that despite its obvious pleasantness, it was not immediately obvious to me what this passion for Salem was all about. True enough, the campground is a pretty spot. Salem occupies a lovely clearing in the woods, a grassy field dotted with huge old oaks that spread their limbs in a leafy canopy over the grounds that surround the tabernacle. Still, the activities I saw seemed at first glance to be ordinary enough. Small kids rode their bikes around the field. A softball game was underway in front of the Jenkins tent. Folks sat and rocked away the afternoon on their porches, talking, laughing and consuming endless glasses of sweet tea. Every few hours someone would ring an old bell to summon the campers to the tabernacle for an hour of prayers, songs, and sermons. But I was still very much on the fringes of the place, and had a lot to learn about how this deceptively simple arrangement of place, people, and activities added up to something that was, for the regulars, life-changing.

Over the three years that I attended Salem camp meeting, talking, watching, and listening, I began to realize that the power of the camp meeting was tied to its distinctive capacity to orchestrate memory. “Spirit” was the way that Salem folks would describe it, of course. But I began to see that it was through a kind of systematic shaping of memory that spiritual revival and family revival were so effectively brought together at the campground. To understand how this happens, we need a cognitively oriented description of Salem, understood as a kind of theater of memory. Salem seems to work for most of the people I spoke with there, and it seems to work because of the way in which its forms have evolved in relation to very specific kinds of memory. A week at Salem for many of the campers is a week of deep spiritual work. It is equally, I think, a week filled with intense memory work.

RELIGIOUS REVIVAL AND FAMILY RENEWAL

Salem is hardly an isolated event. It is an authentically and distinctively American institution, which, in its modern form, seems to wed spiritual revival to family renewal. Similar camp meetings are found throughout the country. They have been part of the American landscape since the end of the eighteenth century, emerging in the wake of the American Revolution. Before we can understand Salem in particular, it is important to understand something of the history of the camp meeting and the social, political, and religious contexts in which it was born.

The coming together of religious revivalism and family reunion that marks the modern camp meeting is no chance encounter. The roots of camp meeting spring from a soil almost four centuries old, and were nourished by the peculiar mix of evangelical and political passions that gave birth to “The City on The Hill,” the American experiment in starting over. America began its independent life by an explicit declaration of independence from its motherland. That we were as a nation born in an act of filial rebellion is a fact as familiar to us as it is revelatory. Its profound significance for understanding America has not been lost on anthropologists seeking to define an authentic American national character (Gorer 1948).

A strong orientation to evangelical revivalism predated the birth of the American republic and has been a persistent feature of American life. Along with a spirit of political independence, a rejection of parental authority, and a resulting distrust of government, America has shown an unquenchable thirst for spiritual renewal. The connections are complex, but hardly fortuitous. The War of Independence took place just at the close of The Great Awakening, a period of intense religious ferment that swept over the colonies between the 1730s and the 1770s. The peculiar combination of religious and political fervor which gave rise to the utopian vision of “The City on the Hill” by framers of the American Revolution would shape the American landscape for the next three centuries. The colonists’ original break with the motherland was not simply political. The American “declaration of independence” was a vision of autonomy that was at once political, religious, and familistic.

The early history of the American experiment cannot be understood apart from its origins in these three domains in which the colonists declared their independence: politics (King), religion (Bishop), and family (Parent). Their nexus has profoundly shaped the continuing themes of loss and quest for renewal in American life, linking political exceptionalism, evangelical revivalism, and a distinctly American vision of family values. America was born through multiple acts of separation: independence from England, religious autonomy from the Anglican church, a federalist conception of political aggregation, and a strong sense of the legitimate claims of individual and family autonomy over against the claims of the State. That these atomistic trends produced a characteristic American taste for independence is hardly news. What is far more interesting is that they also produced in Americans an equally characteristic counter-passion for social re-aggregation and spiritual renewal. The metaphorical parallels linking family, state, and church initially allowed Americans to imagine them as instances of the same act of independence. And these same analogies also suggested, though somewhat paradoxically, that the three domains might in fact be deeply related. The separations of church from state and of state from family are venerable national commitments. The former separation is guaranteed constitutionally in a governmental system that is virtually defined by its numerous separations of powers and government

institutions. But even in the face of a strong national suspicion of institutional authority, be it political, religious, or social, there is an equally powerful counter-trend in American life, a trend valorizing the search for deep links among familistic, political, and religious values. The resulting tensions between these alternate visions of American life power many of the perennial debates in our contemporary political and social life.

The American drive for political independence was commonly framed by writers of the time as a rejection by the child of the claims of authority of the parent. This is clear in the rhetoric that fueled the American War of Independence. The most influential rhetorical flame that helped ignite American revolutionary fervor was Thomas Paine's wildly popular treatise, *Common Sense*, published in January of 1776. His little pamphlet left no doubt as to Paine's understanding of the revolutionary cause:

I have heard it asserted by some, that as America hath flourished under her former connection with Great Britain, that the same connection is necessary towards her future happiness, and will always have the same effect. Nothing can be more fallacious than this kind of argument. *We may as well assert, that because a child has thrived upon milk, that it is never to have meat; or that the first twenty years of our lives is to become a precedent for the next twenty.* But even this is admitting more than is true, for I answer roundly, that America would have flourished as much, and probably much more, had no European power had any thing to do with her. The commerce by which she hath enriched herself are the necessaries of life, and will always have a market while eating is the custom of Europe . . .

Alas, we have been long led away by ancient prejudices and made large sacrifices to superstition. We have boasted the protection of Great Britain, without considering, *that her motive was interest not attachment; that she did not protect us from our enemies on our account, but from her enemies on her own account,* from those who had no quarrel with us on any other account, and who will always be our enemies on the same account. Let Britain wave her pretensions to the continent, or the continent throw off the dependence, and we should be at peace with France and Spain were they at war with Britain. The miseries of Hanover last war Ought to warn us against connections.

It hath lately been asserted in parliament, that the colonies have no relation to each other but through the parent country, i.e. that Pennsylvania and the Jerseys, and so on for the rest, are sister colonies by the way of England; this is certainly a very roundabout way of proving relationship, but it is the nearest and only true way of proving enemyship, if I may so call it. France and Spain never were, nor perhaps ever will be our enemies as Americans, but as our being the subjects of Great Britain.

But Britain is the parent country, say some. Then the more shame upon her conduct. Even brutes do not devour their young; nor savages make war upon their families; wherefore the assertion, if true, turns to her reproach, but it happens not to be true, or only partly so, and the phrase Parent or mother country hath been jesuitically adopted by the king and

his parasites, with a low papistical design of gaining an unfair bias on the credulous weakness of our minds. Europe, and not England, is the parent country of America. This new world hath been the asylum for the persecuted lovers of civil and religious liberty from every Part of Europe. Hither have they fled, not from the tender embraces of the mother, but from the cruelty of the monster; and it is so far true of England, that the same tyranny which drove the first emigrants from home pursues their descendants still. (Paine 1993: 34, emphasis added)

In Paine's vision, England is framed as the "bad parent," a parasitical mother who, rather than feeding her young, feeds off of them, and thereby forfeits all rights to the claims of filial affection, authority, and obedience. The claims for political independence trace a powerful new vision of family dynamics, one based on the legitimacy of generational disconnect.

Political renewal meant a kind of reconstitution of the family. In the minds of many of the revolutionary thinkers, these forms of social and political renewal were intimately tied to religious revivalism. In the revolutionary context of the late eighteenth century, political regeneration was inseparably linked to religious freedom and to a recurring American taste for evangelical revivalism.ⁱⁱ The Puritan settlers in colonial America generally understood themselves as breaking away from the authority of the Bishops of the Church of England. Ministers of the Church of England were bound by oath to support the King.

Concerns for the spiritual health of the settlers in the New World were related to worries about their loyalty to the Church of England. Starting in the late Seventeenth Century, non-Puritan orthodox clergy were dispatched from England to America to ensure the proper administration of the sacraments in the New World. By the 1760s and 70s the Anglicans were campaigning hard to bring their bishops to America to enforce the authority of the Church fathers. While the Puritans generally recognized the legitimacy of the Church of England, their aim was to reformulate the relationship between themselves and the founding Church, to transform the relationship from that of parents and offspring to that of relatively autonomous equals.

ORIGINS OF CAMP MEETING

Though the American impulse for spiritual renewal is as old as America, it has tended to come in waves. America's Second Great Awakening began some three decades after the fervor of the first had died down in the 1770s. By 1800, a spiritual fever began to heat up once again, this time igniting the religious passions of settlers in the newly settled frontier regions of Kentucky and Tennessee.ⁱⁱⁱ The renewed religious fervor quickly spread throughout the southern states before ebbing around 1840. The Great Revival that began in Kentucky at the turn-of-the-century was in many ways simply a continuation of Presbyterian revivalism that the settlers had brought with them from their Scots-Irish heritage. The camp meeting took its basic inspiration from the summer outdoor sacramental gatherings of Scottish Presbyterians (Eslinger 1999: 187; Neville 1987).

It is hard to pinpoint the exact date of the first camp meeting. In addition to the

Scottish Presbyterian forerunners, there were many forms of local revivalism that began to take hold on the western fringes of the United States at the end of the eighteenth century. Indeed, one can point eastward to the beginnings of religious revivalism in Virginia. In 1787, a student named Cary Allen started a revival at the Presbyterian Hampden-Sydney College after having experienced a spiritual rebirth through the inspiration of a Methodist preacher named Hope Hull (Eslinger 1989:189).

The figure most commonly associated with the origins of Kentucky camp meetings is James McGready. Born in 1758 in western Pennsylvania, McGready became a New Light Presbyterian, emphasizing in his preaching spiritual regeneration (ibid.). Presbyterianism is oriented towards sacramental religious practice, a Calvinist theology stressing predestination rather than spiritual conversion, and a certain intellectualism and emotional restraint. Nonetheless, McGready's preaching stressed spiritual renewal, although regenerated individuals might still go through a long period of trial before receiving a sign of God's grace. In 1797, McGready joined a group of friends who had settled in Logan County, a relatively unsettled area of southern Kentucky. He took on pastoral responsibilities for three communities: Gaspar River, Muddy River, and Red River. Between 1797 and 1799 McGready held prayer services aimed at the conversion of sinners.

These meetings continue to grow both in numbers and in emotional fervor. By 1800 McGready's three congregations joined together at Red River for a common sacramental occasion (Eslinger 1999:189; Brown 1992: 10). Present for this revival meeting was a Methodist minister named John McGee whom McGready invited to address his congregations. So powerful was McGee's preaching, that congregants began to fall over as if dead (Eslinger 1999:195; Brown 1992: 11-22). Word spread quickly about the unusual religious fervor of the Red River gathering and McGready found himself preaching to increasing numbers of people who would come long distances in their wagons to his meetinghouse. So was born the early model for camp meetings. Within a few years similar revival meetings took place at Cane Ridge, Concord, and Indian River, all in Kentucky. The Indian River Meeting was reported to have attracted 10,000 congregants. Hundreds of worshipers were said to have been literally knocked to the ground by the spiritual and emotional power of the service.^{iv}

Although the first recognizable camp meetings were organized under the auspices of the Presbyterians, it was ultimately the influence of the Methodist circuit riders, with their emotionally charged style of preaching, that ignited the spiritual fire that caused camp meetings to spread quickly on the frontier. Even the early Presbyterian meetings had Methodists as guest preachers.^v Not only was the emotional emphasis of the camp meeting consistent with Methodism, but the founder of American Methodism, Francis Asbury, supported camp meetings as an important but unofficial means of spreading Methodism.^{vi} The combination of camp meetings and the tradition of Methodist circuit riders contributed to the rapid spread of Methodism on the American frontier. The Methodist roles swelled from 65,000 in 1800 to 274,000 in 1820 and over 1.5 million by 1850, at which time it was the largest Christian denomination in America.

Early on, the Presbyterians grew wary of the unbridled emotionalism that camp meetings produced, and the meetings were increasingly dominated by Methodist preachers whose theology and practice were more attuned to the emotionalism of camp meeting and to the notion of the sudden conversion and salvation of sinners. By the end

of Second Great Awakening there were hundreds of camp meetings throughout the South, the northwest territories of Illinois, Ohio and Indiana, and further east in New England, New York, and New Jersey.^{vii}

MODERN CAMP MEETINGS

The founding era of the camp meeting came to an end in the 1830s when the number of congregants attending camp meetings began to dwindle, and the emotionalism and ecstatic conversions which had characterized the early meetings began to give way to a more routinized and less spontaneous form of religious worship. Over two thousand camp meeting and other Protestant religious retreat sites survive today throughout the world, almost all of them in North America.^{viii} Many are associated with the Methodist church, although many others remain interdenominational. While they all have their roots in the open-air gatherings under the “brush arbor” that served as a church in the forest, modern camp meetings generally take place on a permanent site with a large variety of wooden buildings, including a circle or square of family cottages, and a central tabernacle which is the site of most religious services. They generally take place for a period of a week or ten days in late summer.

The accounts of early camp meetings all stress personal spiritual regeneration as the central focus of the meeting (Johnson 1955/1985; Brown 1992; Eslinger 1999). These accounts also suggest the importance of the early meetings in bringing isolated families and individuals in rural settings together where they formed a temporary spiritual community for the duration of the meeting.^{ix} What is notably absent in these early accounts, however, is the emphasis on family reunion that is so important to the functioning of contemporary camp meetings. In modern meetings, spiritual renewal is closely wedded to family reunion, the two forms of regeneration lending significant power to each other.

Given the lack of detailed data on these early camp meetings, it is impossible to know for certain whether this emphasis on family renewal is a relatively recent addition to the camp meeting experience. It is conceivable, of course, that the religious orientation of the majority of historians who have written about early camp meeting life meant that they simply did not see its more secular function in the life of families, or that this function was simply not considered important enough to comment on. A more likely explanation, however, is that the modern focus in camp meetings on family reunion is the product of the geographic dispersal of the family that accompanied the development of middle-class family life since the end of World War II.^x

The rest of this paper will take up in detail the complex interrelations between spiritual revival and family renewal that is the heart of the modern camp meeting. To understand how the modern camp meeting works in the dual context of religious revival and family renewal we need to turn from history to a cognitively framed ethnography of Salem Camp Meeting. The aim is to examine the distinctive memory effects that are produced by the institutional forms and practices that make up a camp meeting.

SPATIAL ORGANIZATION: THE CAMPGROUND^{xi}

Salem Church, which adjoins the campground, was founded by the Methodists in 1824, and a summer revival meeting was first held in the church in that same year. After two years of holding the summer revival in the church the camp meeting was moved to Honey Creek, and later to the town of Covington where it was held for two or three years. Then the camp meeting was shifted to Ebenezer, now in Rockdale County. In 1835 however they camp meeting was returned to the land adjacent to Salem Church, where it has remained ever since (Lawrence 1990: 123). One of the oldest camp meeting sites in all of Georgia, Salem is a well-known place among Methodists. Here's how an article published in 1890 in the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* described Salem:

In the olden times before the war, Salem Camp Meeting was an institution of great renown and fame all over Georgia, and it numbers among its converts many men prominent in the state today in church, commerce, and state. Along in the forties and fifties people went to Salem's yearly meeting from all parts of Georgia, and the gatherings were truly immense. The seventy-five tents accommodating from twenty to thirty each were filled, and many who came from long distances camped out in the wagons in which they came. Besides, the neighboring towns and country around were crowded, and many hundred attended the meeting in wagons and buggies. Every Methodist in Georgia who had any relatives in Newton, Henry, DeKalb, and Walton counties made it convenient to visit [their relatives] about camp meeting time, and the old-fashioned hospitality and the old-fashioned preaching and church services render it an occasion remembered with great pleasure even now among the those who attended (from an *Atlanta Journal* article from 1890, in Lawrence 1990:126).

Today the campground sits on just over 100 acres of forested land, and is legally located on land belonging to the town of Covington, Georgia. Salem campground is located some five miles south of I-20, the East/West interstate highway that connects Columbus and Atlanta. The state highway that leads from the interstate to Salem was clearly at one time a rural road running through forest and farmland in north central Georgia. Old-timers claim to remember it as a dirt road. But what was once a piece of rural Georgia is rapidly becoming part of the expanding Atlanta metropolitan area. The road to Salem is today beginning to sprout modern subdivisions; and at morning and evening rush hours the highway can often be congested with traffic. The dramatic increase in traffic at the entrance to the campground is frequently commented on by Salem campers. The road appears to represent for many campers an increasingly unwelcome intrusion of noise and pollution into their peaceful routine on the camp grounds. It is also a kind of ever-present reminder of the irritants of the modern world from which camp meeting is supposed to provide a refuge.

Lying just off the highway, Salem campground comprises a circle of 27 small cottages and one medium-size wooden hotel all surrounding a large and impressive wooden tabernacle which was built in the mid-1850s. Several imposing oak trees surround the tabernacle and their branches tower over the campgrounds providing a

reminder of the long-gone camp meetings that were held under the trees in what were termed “brush-arbors.” The immediate sense one gets upon entering the campground is one of tranquility and the distinct sense of standing in a place where generations of people have stood before.

There is a spatial structure to Salem whose significance becomes apparent when one has stayed there for a while and participated in the activities of camp meeting. It is best described as a series of concentric circles radiating out from the tabernacle. At the center of the campground is the tabernacle, the spiritual and physical heart of the community.^{xii} The tabernacle is a large wooden building with wooden pews that can hold over 500 congregants. The sides of the ancient wooden structure are all open, so that people attending prayer services can see the campground and the surrounding tents. At the front of the tabernacle is a kind of stage on which the visiting church choirs stand, and on which is placed two grand pianos facing each other on opposite sides of the stage. At the front of the stage is the pulpit from which the daily sermons are given. Just in front of the pulpit is a kind of wooden-trellis fence, and on the ground are placed kneeling pillows so that worshipers wishing to come up for special prayer and consolation from the preachers during the services have a place to kneel and pray. Just to the left and right of the pulpit is a small area of close-in pews at which special guests and particularly important members of the community sit during prayer services. During camp meeting services the floor of the tabernacle is covered with wood shavings. At night lighting is provided by fluorescent lights which hang from the ceiling rafters.

The tabernacle is the main site of the three daily prayer services during camp meeting, but it also serves during the day as a meetinghouse for the children’s program, and once during the week as the site of the annual board meeting of the Salem Trustees. Prayer services as well as Sunday school classes are announced by the ringing of a bell which sits just outside the tabernacle behind the stage area.

The grassy field surrounding the Tabernacle defines the second concentric zone, and in an important sense it extends to the line of porches that define the front of both the tents and the hotel. The grassy field serves as a kind of play area for the young people and the kids who ride their bikes during the day around the field. The northern end of the grassy field is also the site of an ongoing baseball game in which the kids and some of their parents participate during the afternoon. The front porches, most of which are lined with rocking chairs or swings, are generally covered by an overhang. In the porches are important sites of family relaxation and of neighborly visits among families and friends on the campground. During the afternoons of camp meeting between morning services and dinnertime, campers can often be seen chatting together on the porches, often sipping tea or lemonade and sometimes fanning themselves in the heat of the afternoon. The porches are also frequently used late at night after evening services and just before bed.

The third zone that defines the spatial organization of Salem is the outer ring defined by the interiors of the tents. The oldest of the tents dates back to 1840, while the newest was built just a few years ago. The old tents look a bit like stables inside, and generally are laid out as a series of small sleeping rooms on both sides of the central hall. There’s usually a kitchen and dining area at the rear of the tent. There are of course numerous variations on this theme, and several of the more modern tents come with real living rooms at the front of the tent. Several cottages have two stories with an extra set of bedrooms upstairs. A number of the older tents maintain the traditional sawdust-covered

wooden floors, although in recent years wood shavings have come to replace the finer sawdust that is increasingly difficult to obtain. The walls of the bedrooms in these older buildings do not quite reach to the ceiling, providing for ventilation between the rooms, but relatively little privacy. Newer tents can be considerably more comfortable, and in their design and furnishings are more like ordinary houses than rustic cottages. Some of the families use these more modern tents year-round, as weekend retreats or for family reunions.

One of the most striking characteristics linking all of the tents is the fact that the interiors are quite closed off from the outside. What goes on inside is not generally open to public view. This relative isolation of the interiors of the tents is guaranteed by relatively small windows and by the general presence of curtains covering the windows. This closed off feeling of the tents is especially striking in light of the heat and humidity of the typical Georgia late summer when camp meetings take place. A number of the tents are air-conditioned or at least have window units for cooling several of the main interior spaces. The presence of air-conditioning at camp meeting has become a matter of considerable controversy and public discussion on the campground. While today the tents are virtually all strung in a single circle surrounding the tabernacle, before 1920 there were apparently two concentric rows of tents, an inner row and an outer one. Today there are only about a third the number of tents that there were at the turn of the century.

Behind the tents, in an area where chickens used to be kept, there is now a dirt road skirting the campground. This is an area where campers park their cars, and there is a section of this back area where some campers park RVs which become their mobile tents for camp meeting. In recent years a playground for young children was built in this back area. And a few years ago a new tent was built in this area, beginning a second row of tents which will probably develop over the next decade.

The three major zones of the campground distinguish the tabernacle epicenter from the public areas, and finally, the private family areas inside the tents. Each of the zones has a distinct function at Salem. The tabernacle is a kind of spiritual community center, and defines what might be called “the spiritual family” of Salem. All are welcome, including outsiders, and the spirit of the services that take place in the tabernacle is quite inclusive, consistent with the evangelical nature of camp meetings. The intermediate zone, defined by the grassy field and the linked porches that surround it, defines an area of community life that is both secular and religious. This area is a self-conscious attempt to re-create a kind of idealized small town with its neighborhoods and its emphasis on neighborly hospitality. These open areas invite the mingling of friends, family, and even strangers visiting the campground. While the porches are technically a part of the private family residences, tenters are quick to emphasize that everyone is welcome onto their porch. This intermediate zone defines what might be called “the Salem family,” people who by virtue of coming together every year feel like they are members of a very special community, whether or not they are kin.

Finally there is the zone of private family life, bounded by the walls of the tents. In this area family is defined not so much by ties of neighborliness or common faith, but by traditional criteria of kinship and marriage, and sometimes by a kind of fictive kinship among very close friends who are invited year after year to join families in the tents for camp meeting. The family defined by the tent is distinct from the nuclear families in which tenters live most of the year. It is closer to the anthropological notion of a clan, or

a lineage, often defined by a founding ancestor after whom the tent is named. Over the years as siblings grow up they may continue to bring their children, and the numerous kids that occupy the tents are as likely to be cousins as a siblings. In several instances, as families increase in size, siblings and their children may divide between two tents, and the tents and then become known as related units.

The family unity of the tent has a number of distinct symbolic manifestations at Salem. Most of the tents have signs on them with names of founding ancestors. In a number of cases the tents have two names on them, the family name of a founding ancestor and the name of a married daughter whose descendants have continued the family line through repeated attendance at camp meeting.^{xiii} All the tents also have distinctive flags which are periodically put out for public display. The flags generally include the name of the tent, sometimes a distinctive icon representing the family, and very often the year that the family began tenting at Salem. Several of the families publicly display roughly drawn genealogies of their families on the porch of their tent.

Perhaps the most interesting way in which tenters symbolize family unity is through meals. Dining areas are generally at the rear of the tent, in an area furthest from public access. Common meals are not generally public events at Salem, but are the business of each individual tent and its family. When we inquired of campers whether they ever ate in someone else's tent, the answer was generally that people ate with their own families, and that when families visited for meals between tents this generally was an indication that the families were closely related. In part, this exclusiveness of eating arrangements is a consequence of the practical limits of the size of dining tables. There simply is not enough room on a regular basis to invite another family for dinner. On the other hand, these are the same people that commonly attend church suppers and picnics, and they certainly know well the tradition of forming larger communities through eating together. It would appear that food is the most important symbolic means of defining boundaries at Salem between the spiritual and community bonds, and those of individual family life.^{xiv}

The spatial organization of the campground, and the associated organization of activities, defines three distinct kinds of relationships that are structured by camp meeting. What I have called *the spiritual family* is defined by ties of common worship and common belief, and is centered in the tabernacle. *The Salem family* represents a kind of model old-time village defined by ties of neighborliness and hospitality. These ties most often are forged in the public areas of the campground, most importantly on the porches where people exchange talk and drink in the late afternoon and evening. While for many families spiritual matters are never far from their conversation, the Salem family is distinct from the spiritual family in that it is defined largely by ties of friendship, common history together, and general familiarity. By contrast, *the local family* represents a much more exclusive vision of family, one that emphasizes distinct family lines and clan-like groupings. Community in this context has to do with private and exclusive relations among close kin, or in some cases between family members and close friends who become "like family" through repeatedly staying together at Salem.^{xv}

TEMPORAL ORGANIZATION: THE SCHEDULE

For regular campers, camp meeting is not only a special place, but also a special

time. Since as far back as people can remember camp meeting at Salem has been confined to a period of one week, starting usually on the last Friday evening in July and running through the first week in August. Most families who attend regularly set aside this week every year in their calendars. For many working people, this is how they take their annual vacation.^{xvi} It is hard to overstate the degree to which camp meeting week has a very special importance in the lives of many of the campers. For many it takes on the character of a kind of ritual reversal of ordinary life and ordinary time that characterizes the rest of the year. In the language made famous by anthropologist Victor Turner, camp meeting represents a kind of liminal time conducive to an experience of *communitas*:

The new style of sacramental occasion exerted such extraordinary power over individuals in part because it offered them something painfully lacking in normal social life, a sense of connection and belonging. Many types of public assembly served to integrate participants, but camp meeting revivalism was particularly effective — and never more so than during its first full season of existence, through the event at Cane Ridge.

Many scholars of ritual follow anthropologist Victor Turner's use of the term *communitas* to note the quality of intense, ritually generated, and usually brief human interconnection. Turner described *communitas* as "full, unmediated, communication, even Communion." When the structure's that ordinarily separate, categorize, and organize people succumbed to rapid social change, all fall together into one undifferentiated mass. Feelings of isolation and alienation, which may have existed before hand, are replaced by integration and a profound sense of the shared human condition... Significantly, camp meeting revivalism evolved not from regular Sunday worship but from a special church occasion, when the religious community reassembled as completely as possible, reaffirming its bonds by worshipping together and especially by sharing the holy Sacrament together. A special degree of *communitas* of was therefore already present. (Eslinger 1999:225-6).

The special quality of camp meeting time is readily commented on by campers. Talking of the special qualities of the place slides naturally into reflections on the special character of the time:

This is like a sacred place. You feel it. But, more than that, you've got the week. You can have a sacred space and not have the time to use it together. But, the fact that everybody carves a week out . . . when does that exist in the world today? Where's there a week? That's what I think is really special. And, you probably couldn't do it for more than a week for practical reasons, but for one week. It's like one week in the year you go back to time zero, you know. A very powerful ritual thing.

Socially coordinated "sacred time" is, of course, the original impulse for holidays (holy

days), and for keeping the Sabbath on a sacred day of the week. But in an age of fragmented and poorly coordinated personal schedules, the fact that campers carve out a “sacred” week every year to come together at Salem represents a significant accomplishment and a notable contrast to the temporal character of family relations in contemporary everyday life.

The regularity and predictability of camp meeting as an annual event makes it a key marker in the annual ritual cycle of family life for Salem families, along with the major holidays of Christmas, Thanksgiving, and Easter. For Salem families, camp meeting ritually marks the summer season of family reunion, in the way that Christmas does for the winter, Thanksgiving for the fall, and Easter marks the spring. In this sense camp meeting completes the family ritual cycle of the year.

Well, I moved away, and then, when I went to nursing school in Atlanta I would come down for the weekend and everything, but, what I was going to say with the younger generation, all three of my children, this is the highlight of their summer just like it was the highlight of my summer and when we go back my kids have a southern accent for about a week because they're talking hickey as they can and they actually pine for camp meeting, you know, the first couple of weeks when we get back they're really yelling out and you can just see that pining.

For older participants who have spent many summers at Salem, this image of ritual cycles is very real, and provides a shape for long-term autobiographical memory:

And always you think about the way this thing keeps on. You know it's just like a big circle, it just keeps on, keeps on, keeps on and we try to maintain the integrity of that wheel I guess you'd say and then you know you can't help but think about the older ones that have, you know come and gone and served and they've passed away, but then that makes you sad but then the hope is you see their kids now taking leadership roles in it, you know and so you just see it continue to, I guess perpetuate itself.

* * *

See, things like that kids will remember. And they'll remember here. They'll remember things happened. I can remember back to the little old country church that I got saved in. And I'm 81 years old and that was 1934. See I can remember back things back in that church. I can remember one time I, in church, I wanted to get out and play, my britches got dusted. Mama dusted my britches for getting out there doing, walking on the cemetery wall. See that's what these kids can remember little things that happen . . . they get old and have children, then they can tell their children what happened.

The cyclicity of the meeting, particularly for older campers who have many summers at Salem to remember, appears to have a very distinctive effect on their memory,

simultaneously structuring their sense of continuity, and their capacity to collapse time altogether and bring back the past.^{xvii}

And I think for me, too, is I've gotten older and, you know, we started to lose different people in the family. I mean, to me, when I come out to Salem, I feel like our whole family is still here, like my dad, I feel like he is still out on the front porch with us at night and everything. So I think as you grow older, [you get that] that sense of connection.

Repetition is an important aspect of camp meeting both as an experience of events, and as a value in itself. Perhaps the most predictable aspect of my interviews with campers was their insistence on telling me how many years they had been coming to Salem, often with the assurance that they had never missed a year. Many of the campers claimed to have come every year of their lives, and this included many middle-aged and elderly people. What was clear in this repetition script was the sense that there was a certain kind of merit accrued by campers on the basis of regular attendance.

The stress on the intrinsic value of repetition is a good example of a more general theme that what we might call *hyper-ritualization*. In this society in which regularity and repetition are not always encouraged, hyper-ritualization supports an alternative conceptualization of time that marks camp meeting as a sacred time and space. Perfect attendance at Bible classes at Salem, along with prayer services, is a marked value for campers. Good attendance is rewarded at the end of camp meeting by ribbons and Bibles that are publicly awarded for the faithful attendance. The value of repeated attendance might seem to be self-evident. To all the obvious reasons why campers would emphasize their repeated attendance at camp meeting, I would suggest that it has distinct memory value for the ongoing construction of a personal identity and the shaping of autobiographical memory. Not missing a meeting provides the experiential basis of an important thread of continuity in a life that for most people is defined by continual change and disruption. Extending the unbroken string of summers at Salem is in some important ways a useful tactic with which Salem campers make their lives whole.

The regularity and predictability of camp meeting is underscored by the fact that the schedule remains pretty much identical from day-to-day, and that the general shape of the program has not changed over the years in any significant way. Campers take pleasure in showing all the old programs from Salem dating back to the 1930s, and will frequently comment that both the general design of the program and the schedule of activities have hardly changed over the years.

The schedule of daily activities is relatively straightforward. Just before 7 a.m. the bell rings to summon campers to Morning Devotion, an early morning prayer service that starts at 7:30. Following Morning Devotion the bell once again rings, calling campers young and old to Bible classes which take place in the classrooms of Salem church next door to the campground.

Following the Bible class, the bell rings once again for the morning service which begins at 11 a.m. The service is about an hour long and includes prayers, hymn singing, often by a visiting choir, and finally a sermon from one of the two preachers. After the morning service lets out, campers returned to their tents or to the hotel for lunch. The rest of the afternoon is free of organized activities for adults, though there is a very active youth

program that involves organized sports, arts and crafts, and special events such as rehearsals for the annual talent show. The adults generally spend the afternoon relaxing on the porches, swapping stories, catching up on gossip, or, in the case of women staying in the tents, doing some preparations for dinner. Dinnertime is generally around 6 p.m., and at this time the campground is usually relatively empty as families gather in the tents, or in the dining room of the hotel for dinner. At around 7:30 p.m. the bell rings summoning campers to the evening service which starts at around 8 p.m. This service is sometimes slightly longer than the morning service, but the basic elements are the same. The two visiting preachers take turns giving the sermons, though I have seen no strict order. After the service lets out, between nine and 9:30 p.m., the campground becomes relatively tranquil, as people talk quietly on their porches or in their cabins before going to sleep.

This identical pattern of a relatively relaxed day broken up by periodic Bible classes and church services, alternating with family time on the porches, defines the daily temporal rhythms of camp meeting. The very simplicity of the daily schedule at Salem is one of the secrets to its effectiveness. The schedule at Salem requires no choices to be made between activities, and organizes all activities in simple sequences. Because all activities are sequential, generally most people participate in activities together. There is only one focal activity at any given time. This kind of simple coordination of daily schedule provides both clear rhythm and the sense of direct common participation in a set of valued activities.

If one compares this kind of scheduling with the trends of modern life, significant contrasts emerge. Much of the coordination of activity in everyday life is no longer face-to-face, but rather is negotiated through forms of indirect communication such as calendars, pagers, telephones, voicemail, cell phones, e-mail messages, and the like. These forms of event coordination do not require people to actually be together physically, and most do not even require genuine synchronicity in that messages can be left to be picked up at a later time. *By contrast, scheduling at Salem is face-to-face and fully synchronous.* Secondly, *Salem permits virtually no multitasking, with the important exception of taking care of young children.* For most of Salem's events, it's one thing after another, with plenty of breaks in between. Finally, though the Salem schedule keeps people reasonably busy, *there is plenty of downtime.* In fact, about eight waking hours of each day are unscheduled, providing time for people to simply be together. Much of this time is spent in what appears to be casual chitchat, but sitting with people for hours on end on their porches makes one aware of how much of the time is spent in storytelling, much of which involves family and reminiscences of time spent at Salem. *The combination of simple sequencing of events, of rhythmic repetition of events, of the slow and deliberate pacing of events together with the extraordinary elaboration of unscheduled time provide a temporal framework that contrasts vividly with the temporal rhythms of ordinary life. This provides a basis for meaning making.*

In addition to the important general memory of the slow and sequential pacing of events at camp meeting, there is an additional aspect of event scheduling at Salem that is crucial to understanding the power of camp meeting to reframe people's experiences of both family and religion. The daily schedule at camp meeting is organized as a kind of systematic alternation of religious experience and familial experience. Essentially, the day at Salem is spent walking back and forth between the Tabernacle or the church, and

the family tents. An emphasis on spiritual community in common worship alternates with an equally intense experience of family togetherness. While these two kinds of experiences are clearly brought together in an important way through this alternation, they are not simply mixed. Both spatially and temporally, the church is clearly distinguished from the family. Love of Christ is not confused with love of family, but in the back-and-forth movement these two kinds of relationship appear to overlap and in some important sense support one another. *The congregation becomes experienced as a kind of family, while the family unit is experienced with a deeply spiritual dimension.* It is in this way that spiritual revival and family reunion become ineffably linked at camp meeting.

The relatively unchanging schedule of daily events at camp meeting has another interesting implication for memory. The high degree of repetition that characterizes camp meeting means that much of the memory of camp meeting will be integrated into a kind of generalized schematic memory that is not fully conscious, what Paul Connerton has called “habit memory” (Connerton 1989). Cognitive psychologists have proposed that there are three kinds of autobiographical memory and that these are linked hierarchically (Conway 1992, Conway and Bekerian 1987, Conway and Rubin 1993, Schacter 1996, chap. 3). At the top of the hierarchy is a memory for *lifetime periods*, extensive chunks of a life that are measured in years or decades. These are generally framed by developmental stages (e.g., my childhood), distinctive activities (e.g., during college) or places where one lived for an extensive period of time (our years in New York). The second level of autobiographical memory is framed by *general events*, extended episodes that lasted for days, weeks, or months. A memorable vacation, a period in the hospital, freshman year of college, and other similar events to make up this intermediate level of autobiographical memory. Finally at the bottom of the hierarchy is *event specific knowledge*, highly specific episodes that are measured in minutes, hours, or days. These are salient particular events that stand out in memory and mark particular memorable occasions.

What is striking here is that Salem as an event does not fit neatly in any of these categories, but rather spans them all in some interesting ways. As a memory site, Salem suggests the generality of lifetime memories, but it is distinctive in that for campers who continually attend it is a lifetime memory that has no specific place in the past, for it is being continually updated. There are not many activities in our lives that collapse in this way the generality of lifetime memories and that particularity of event memories. This paradoxical quality is, of course, the distinctive cognitive characteristic of ritual.

Secondly, each year of attendance at Salem is a general event, equivalent to a particular year at camp. And yet because the structure of events is so predictable and unchanging, it is probable that each year is not easily recalled as a distinct event.

Finally, one may ask if there are any significant memories in any given year that form event specific memories. For individuals, of course, there are always event specific memories that mark particular years: the year of a particular romance, the year the water tank broke and water leaked all over the floor, the year it was so hot that you couldn't sleep indoors. But there is also an aspect to Salem that is structurally designed to be a distinctive event memory, and that is the presence of particular preachers. While some preachers may be invited back to Salem several times, each year represents a unique and memorable configuration of particular preachers with particular voices and distinctive

perspectives.

More than once, campers indicated to me that they remembered a particular year by the preacher that was present at that particular camp meeting. From a cognitive point of view, this constant rotation of preachers means that the sermons at Salem will necessarily stand out in memory as distinctive moments in the life of a camp meeting. It is a general principle of schema theory in cognitive psychology that when you have a relatively stable schema, such as the daily schedule at Salem, anything which is different will become particularly salient in memory. It stands out as salient “information” rather than as background. In this way, the set of the sermons that are delivered at camp meeting are guaranteed a special place in memory, standing out as they do against the predictable ground of the daily schedule.

While the daily pattern of events is relatively unchanging throughout the week of camp meeting, there is a kind of subtle shaping that characterizes the week. In the days preceding the opening of camp meeting, one can find people arriving at the campground to clean out their tents and get them prepared for camp meeting. The first official activity of camp meeting occurs on Friday evening with a church service. Friday and Saturday night be characterized as a kind of preparatory phase in which the patterns of camp meeting slowly come to life and campers begin to decompress and find the familiar rhythm of Salem. By Sunday – “Big Sunday” – the temporal rhythms are fully in place and camp meeting is in its full bloom. This is the day when family members and friends who don’t stay at the camp all week will come and join their families in prayer and food around the table. The population of Salem campground swells from several hundred to over 1000 or more. For some of the larger families additional eating space is made possible by the addition of tents, or tables are set up outside. Baptisms are performed on this day, as is the sacrament of Communion. Otherwise the schedule of events is not different from any other day, only more intense. Monday and Tuesday represent the camp in midstream but by Wednesday there is already talk of packing up and of how people will miss each other when camp meeting is over. Thursday sees things winding down as people began to pack up their tents, and a kind of melancholy creeps over the campground as people realize that camp meeting time is coming to an end. By Friday the pulse and energy have gone out of Salem. The day is filled with packing up cars cleaning up the tents and closing them up. The end of camp meeting is signaled on Friday night by a candlelight March of all the children in the campground carrying homemade crosses with candles tied to them. The children circle the campground singing hymns and then gather for a final prayer. Late Friday night the campground becomes very quiet, some people become teary-eyed as they begin to bid farewell to friends and relatives whom they may not see for another year. By Saturday the campground is virtually deserted, and the tents which had been filled with family members are closed up tight. An eerie quiet comes over the campground, which becomes dormant until the following summer.^{xviii}

MEMORY OBJECTS

Thinking of camp meeting as a kind of theater of memory does not require a big conceptual leap from the everyday experiences of the place. It doesn’t take long after visiting the campground to realize that campers are generally very aware of Salem’s role as a storehouse and theater of family memory. The place is in many ways a treasure

trove of memory objects as well as commemorative events. There are a number of distinct kinds of memory objects that are especially important at Salem, and we will look at each of these in turn.

Probably the most obvious memory object at the campground is the photograph. From the walls of the hotel dining room, which are lined with photographs of the patriarchs who organized and ran camp meeting in years past, to the sometimes very elaborate display of family photos on the walls and tables of the tents, Salem is a kind of reflexive showcase, with ubiquitous images of campers from years past, almost always set at camp meeting. Many are of people now dead. But the majority of pictures show current campers individually or in family groupings, either in their tents or on the campground, but in former years. So campers have constant visual reminders that they are part of a long history of people coming to Salem. Sometimes these photos encourage people to link themselves to their parents or more distant ancestors, and it is common for kids to be shown pictures of their great-grandparents, their grandparents, or their parents (or aunts and uncles) and asked whether they see resemblances to themselves. The other kind of common comparison occurs when people hold up old pictures of themselves at Salem and get a sense of their own continuity and development as individuals. Particularly poignant are the cases when elderly or middle-aged campers will deliberately hold up pictures of themselves at Salem when they were children.

In the year we did our research, there was a slide show one night late in the week. Many of the campers are avid amateur photographers and one is a very gifted professional, so there is no shortage of excellent slides of camp meetings past and present. What was most striking about the slide show was the way in which it mixed very old pictures of Salem featuring many campers now deceased, with pictures taken over the last decade, with pictures just back from the photo lab showing scenes from this year's meeting. The effect of this constant shifting between distant past, recent past, and present is to provide a sense of historical change and, at the same time, a blurring of time and a continuity of place. Through the slide show Salem projects a picture of Salem as a continuous thread of people and activities, both in time and outside of time, enfolding campers' current picture of themselves into pictures of themselves from past years, and images of their ancestors. These effects were heightened by the non-linear sequencing of photos, moving back and forth between past and present rather than using a chronological order.

Of course looking at family photos is hardly unique to Salem. What makes these pictures especially powerful as memory objects is a kind of figure-ground effect. The background, which is always the campground, is remarkable in that it does not appear to change dramatically over time. So one gets to see oneself and once ancestors in what looks like the exact same space at the same time, or else to see one's current self and one's earlier image in an apparently unchanged setting. This use of photography in the context of a constant setting is an important part of a more general process, *identity updating*, which will be discussed below.

All of the buildings at Salem are themselves memory objects. The Tabernacle is very old, having been built in 1854. It is a registered national historic landmark. Although electric lighting has been added, there are very few other changes to the Tabernacle over the years. In other words one can imagine that campers around the time of the Civil War worshipped in an almost identical environment to current campers. The

hotel was built only in the 1930s, and has been renovated several times. Yet it is architecturally coherent with the other simple wooden buildings on the campground, and its walls are filled with old photographs and framed programs from camp meetings long ago.

Important as these large common buildings are as memory objects, they pale in comparison to the commemorative power of the tents. It is not an exaggeration to say that the function of the tent as a memory site rivals its practical functions in housing campers for camp meeting. The oldest of the tents, the Ramsey/Cunningham tent, was built in 1840. Like the other very old tents on the campground it has self-consciously maintained its historical look. The floors continue to be covered with wood shavings, just as they were covered with sawdust in the early years. Mary Ramsey, the current matriarch of the Ramsey clan, has maintained this tent as both a kind of summer home for her large family during camp meeting, and as a self-conscious museum celebrating the history of the Ramsey/Cunningham family. The front sitting room of the tent is a virtual picture gallery of ancestors. An ancient wooden telephone adorns one of the walls. The dining room table at which the family feeds is exactly the same table that the Ramseys ate at in 1840. A tour of the tent is accompanied by stories that are associated with every beam of the house, with each room of the house and with every object on display, all of which embody specific memories of people and events from the family's past.

So it's not just the house itself that is a memory object but virtually every part of the house, each of which trigger stories of how they got to be the way they are. Both continuity and the history of changes contribute to memory discourse:

The main thing is like I mean everybody knows where you are and certain people you know if they are not at a certain place, then they are probably at another one. And meals are a big huge deal. Because there is so many people. See I'm having all the Cooks down here for dinner on Monday night. It started out with fifteen and they subtracted a couple of people, but that was where it started. Some of the men are not there, so. And see my father built this table. The most fun thing to do up here is we put little kids up there. All the little kids. When they are that age. As a matter of fact, Ramsey needs to get up there. I don't know if she's done it. And notice the ... here. I don't know if you can see it. It's higher than the others. And it's a long one. And that's for little kids. One of the special features, well for me the special feature obviously is that daddy built it and it's just daddy all over. I mean it reminds you of something about him.

* * *

Well, the shelves over there. I was looking at where all the food and dishes and stuff are. They are so sturdy and the wood — and I was trying to think yesterday if it was oak that they are made out of. It's like stuff now that you get is like, you know, it's just built to last a couple of years and stuff is not built to last. And this stuff was built to last. It was built to

last maintenance free. I have never swept the place. And one of the things that I just love — my brother-in-law has been very, very, helpful even though he is not fond of camp meeting at all. But he is real nice about helping us do things. We needed a new sink. You see that our bathroom is like — the bathroom sink there is behind the refrigerator and that's not the original sink there. The original sink that was in there was about this far off the ground and it was a little sink and it was about this far off the ground. Daddy put that down low like that because we were little. Then eventually it ended up you were practically standing on your head to brush your teeth, but for years all the little kids, especially I remember the girls next door, they would all come over when they were about two or three years old and say, "Can we wash our hands?" And they would want to come in and wash their hands. And of course when they left they were soaking wet, completely and totally soaked. So they would come and play at that sink and my mother would say "Aaron why don't you put in [a new sink]," and he would not do it. He did not want to put another sink there. He wanted that one. He was very sentimental. We needed a new sink and they routed some plumbing around and I said okay you can put another sink there, but I don't like it. And you will have to see before you go, don't forget, you have to look at the shower. When the shower was built daddy did all kinds of things, he used to lay bathroom tile, that's one of the things he used to do. He would have samples. They would have samples of different colors and they would have them strung together. That's what is in our shower, all different colors. And the kids loved that. Some of the little cousins would come and spend the night with us and they would say, "I'm going to take a shower now."

Another interesting way in which tents incorporate memory is that campers sometimes inscribe memory traces of themselves into the very woodwork of the house. For instance, height markers next to bedroom doors record the growth of kids and in some of the tents these are retained so that adults can now see a representation of themselves as children, a representation which at one in the same time freezes the past and records growth. Similar in effect is the graffiti that decorates the walls of some of the bedrooms. Generally these are simply names and sometimes drawings of flowers that are allowed to stay on the walls years after they were made. A particularly interesting kind of graffiti was shown to me in one of the tents when a woman pointed to drawings of handprints, and then, placing her own hand over the print, told me that she had made this herself when she was a kid.

Finally there is sawdust. While this might seem like an odd candidate for a memory object, it turns out to be one of the most significant ways in which campers prime the memory of Salem. Sawdust figures prominently in a surprising number of reminiscences by Campers:

And at that time it was all sawdust out here all the way through, except for the shower, there was one shower, and that was cemented, but everything else it was a wood fire, wood-burning oven you know. . .

* * *

And it's funny because Salem is sawdust floors and cedar beams and old pews that we've carved out names in. You know, like it's not pretty, but you walk in there and it's that same awe...it hits me with that same sense of awe, just being in there.

There is no single meaning for sawdust at Salem. For some, sawdust triggers specifically religious associations:

You know I think that the most important thing you can tell anybody is that Jesus loves you and that this is the place where you can find Him as well as other places. And, I think you've heard it said about the sawdust trail, walking the sawdust trail. And, a lot of people don't know what that means, in that there is a sawdust trail down there.

It means you've walked to the altar; you've walked down to the altar to meet Jesus. And, you know you can meet him anywhere, but that's that sawdust trail that people talk about. And, for some people this is all the religious feeding they get. I mean when they leave this place, they may not go back to church for six months. So, if you can get these little children right now and get that sawdust in their shoes and socks and in their bed, then they will want to come back, because it might be all that they have.

What is special about sawdust is that it is one of the few direct reminders of Salem that can be carried out of the campground and brought back home. Sometimes this is intentional, as when people take some sawdust from Salem to mail to relatives who have missed camp meeting, both as an actual piece of Salem for people to enjoy, and as a kind of reminder of what they had missed. One woman I spoke with claimed that her intention was that upon her death she wanted to have her ashes mixed with Salem sawdust. More common for those that stay in rooms with sawdust floors is the way in which bits of sawdust get tangled up in one's clothes, serving as an unintentional (and perhaps slightly irritating) reminder throughout the year of the last camp meeting.

Are you staying with the Kemps? Ohhhhhh, how you making out with the sawdust? It's amazing isn't it? [I]t is difficult to get it out of your shoes. Well, you just, finally you just get used to it and it doesn't bother you. You just know. But, anyway...

* * *

I love the after-effects of camp meeting. I love the fact that my suitcase and the creases of my shoes have sawdust in there, for weeks and weeks on end. In my house I have a little glass jar full of sawdust that I keep on the mantle. My bible, ever year I turn to Jeremiah and sprinkle sawdust in it so that throughout the year, whatever church I'm in, wherever I'm in the world, open that up, and instantly connect it here.

SALEM FOODS

It was Proust who developed most profoundly the familiar insight that the taste and smell of food has a special role in memory. Psychologists and anthropologists alike have studied the power of food memories as aspects of autobiographical memory as well as powerful memory primers, creating strong associations with particular people, places, and periods of life (Sutton 2001, Avakian 1997, Goody 1982, Classen 1997, Corbin 1986, Engen 1991, Feeley-Hartnick 1994, Howes 1991, Mintz 1996). It is hardly surprising that many of the most powerful memories of Salem are triggered by the foods that are associated with camp meeting. What are sometimes called "Salem foods" are really traditional Southern dishes especially fried foods like fried chicken, country fried steak, and fried okra. The food is simple, tasty, and plentiful. Everyday the dining room at Salem hotel serves up such traditional Southern fare at both dinner and lunch. In the tents the situation is a bit more complex. While everybody speaks about Salem foods, in fact a wide variety of food appears on Salem tables. Increasingly, tenters will admit to bringing lots of frozen foods, and even fast food to Salem for meals during the week. Sunday is a different story. "Big Sunday" at Salem is the day when many visitors join Salem families for large family dinners. And on this day the more traditional foods associated with Salem do in fact appear. For many families, Sunday dinner is effectively a potluck, as different members of the family contribute to the common meal. A number of families hire cooks, often African-American women who have worked for their family for many years. We have already mentioned the role that family cookbooks play in some Salem families. The family is represented as a collection of distinctive recipes associated with particular family members. One characteristic of Salem cooking is that it is rarely fancy fare. Gourmet cooking is out of place that camp meeting, even though most of the campers are upper middle-class urbanites, and many are clearly quite capable of producing fine cooking. The prevalence of down-home cooking betrays the populist and rural roots of the Southern camp meeting.

Food tends to trigger strong memories for campers. Sometimes it is the memories of how food used to be prepared at Salem:

So we had chicken coops out in the back, wire coops up on legs and they kept the chickens out there. After breakfast was over, the help would go out and pull two or three chickens or however many they thought they'd need for lunch. They'd ring their necks and dress them and cut them up and then we'd eat them at lunch, fried. There was no ice and sometimes if you had something that you really didn't want to get warm, they'd put it in a container of some sort and take it down to the spring and put it down there in the spring water to keep cool. Then they had a brigade, you might

say, of people going down to the spring every morning with buckets and toting our water back from the spring. But nobody minded. That was just everyday doings. We were happy for cool water. And so I've had many, many good meals in there and many happy memories. I always have.

* * *

They'd be up bright and early and the dining room is across from the grandparents' room. So then there was a kitchen that had a wooden stove...you burned wood in it and it put out a lot of heat. You'd have to start the fire early so the oven would be hot enough to cook biscuits. And there wasn't any such thing as toast then. I used to fuss. I'd say, "Mama, what we got for breakfast?" "Biscuit and ham." I'd think, "Oh, why do I have to have biscuits every morning?" Now, I've repented, repented, repented of all that complaint about biscuits

And other times, particular kinds of food serve as memory primers:

Yes. Fried chicken, of course, on a Sunday. Maybe during the week a time or two. We all look forward to the fried chicken. Course, now ham has entered the picture through the years. Back then, we had country ham. Well, it was [when] people butchered the hogs on the farm, and would take the hams and pack them in salt. They would pack the hams down in the salt and that would cure them, and then take them out and get the salt off of it, slice them up. Sometimes they would be pretty salty, but you could soak it in water before you cook it. And then strycaline, fat back. You raise on the farm 90 percent of what you had up here. Cause people didn't have grocery stores and they didn't have the money to go pick up all these things, so the menu then was planned around what was in season on the farm. Always wanted to have fresh corn, and watermelons were a big item. And, used to, every night after church we'd go out in the back of the tents and have watermelon cuttings. And then sometimes, we'd have two or three freezers of homemade ice cream going. But, we're not that smart anymore.

The third kind of memory associated with food is the particular relative whose distinctive dish becomes emblematic of her personality:

Would y'all like a cookie? These are special cookies. These are my grandmother's icebox cookies that my aunt made. And she said she stopped counting at 24 dozen. That was very sweet of Ann to make — and it was very deliberate that she made Mom's icebox cookies. Mom meaning my grandmother, too. People don't understand that we are talking about our grandmother when we say "Momma." She was "Momma" to everybody.

SENSORY MEMORIES

The final aspect of the memory work at Salem has to do with the commemorative power of bodily sensations. We already noted the power of smell, as well as the importance of the feel of sawdust under one's feet to the life of memory as it is orchestrated at Salem Camp Meeting. One of the most compelling aspects of camp meeting is the role that music and especially singing play at camp meeting. Music may not at first glance seem to be a kind of sensory memory, but its special commemorative power is tied to the special way in which memory encodes rhythm, rhyme, and melody. Every prayer service is full of music. Dual pianos sit on the front stage, played by very talented twin sisters who have been providing musical accompaniment and special performances at prayer services for decades. Visiting church choirs also perform at most of the services. But the most experientially powerful use of music at camp meeting is clearly the singing of familiar hymns that punctuate every service, led by a very animated director of music who makes sure the singing is done with energy and feeling.

The emphasis is not on novel songs, but rather on familiar hymns, so there is a lot of repetition of familiar songs. In fact, Salem has a kind of emblematic theme hymn, "There's a Sweet, Sweet Spirit in This Place," which is sung at most services. These simple but effecting hymns become so inscribed in memory that they are hard to get out of your head, and one often finds oneself singing or humming the hymns even when not in the Tabernacle. From a memory perspective music has a very special place in its capacity to evoke powerful memory associations. Along with the sawdust, campers carry home with them after camp meeting potent memory traces of the meeting embodied in the words and melodies of the hymns which reverberate in memory long after camp meeting is over.

Perhaps the most commonly evoked sensory characteristic of Salem is heat. Georgia in midsummer is very hot and humid. Temperatures often climb into the high nineties, with humidity to match. Until recently, none of tents was air-conditioned, and the relatively small and confined interiors of the tents meant that they could get very hot in the middle of the day. Today air-conditioned rooms in the tents are becoming increasingly common. But this is a source of considerable irritation to more traditional campers for whom air-conditioning is a sign of the loss of a kind of sense of community that came from people who were forced to spend a good part of the day on the front porches cooling off.

The frequency with which campers associate Salem with heat, sweat, and crowding suggests that these embodied experiences are very important memory triggers.

I think Annie must have been about six that summer when we came out. It was 105 and 100 percent humidity and he says, Mom, he says I have to work to bring up a sweat in California. He says all I do is just stand here and sweat.

* * *

That's really funny. I think that part of being hot all the time or just fanning yourself and sitting on the porch, probably has an effect that people are not quite aware of; like slowing you down and making you sit and talk for a while rather than running around. Of course the thing is, in the beginning you see, it was this way every place. But since there's air-conditioning now every place else in the world, people just prepare for it and I guess they think of it as something they're giving up in order to have this experience.

* * *

It was very crowded and very hot and we had cold showers. And, you know, but it was fun.

* * *

If we all got air conditioning all the people would stay inside more and I think it would take away the, take a little more of the community out of it.

* * *

Just come out here and these houses like, they're so hot. You've been in some of them, just hot. You think how in the world do they stand these houses. They're so hot. And, uh, they want to come so bad, so, but it is a wonderful place. It's like going back in time, to . . . I guess, an easier, simpler time, when you could sit around and play and swing and visit.

I suspect that one of the reasons that heat has such a powerful evocative affect for campers is that all of them live in air-conditioned settings outside of Salem. For older folks the heat not only marks Salem as distinctive, but also evokes a sensory environment that they associate with their youth. For younger campers, the heat simply marks Salem as a unique sensory environment. Air-conditioning has effectively neutralized the environment of distinctive smells and aspects of touch (such as feel of the wind against the skin). This kind of sensory reduction is more significant than most people realize, since it is through the senses such a smell and touch that we effectively authenticate the environment and have a sense of being in the distinctive place (Mander 1978). Salem re-creates in its primitive evocation of the senses not only a particular felt environment but also a whole class of sensorial rich experiences that have been largely lost in modern life. To the extent that campers intuitively feel that Salem is particularly "authentic" kind of place, it is its rich sensory palette that contributes as much as anything to that experience.

CONCLUSION: CAMP MEETING AND IDENTITY UPDATING

Each of us has a complex identity, a kind of overall sense of who we are now that

is a combination of our histories, our social roles, and our current stage of life. Maintaining a coherent identity is an important challenge in life. One of the basic problems in identity maintenance is the fact that our sense of who we are often changes at a slower rate than other people's sense of us. Our private sense of who we are tends to lag behind our own physical and social aging, so that others are always seeing us as a somewhat different and older person than we might feel inside. As we get older, the person that we see every morning in the mirror is in some senses a stranger to us, albeit a familiar one. The attempt to bring forward our sense of who we are to match more closely physical and social changes that affect how others see us is a process of *identity updating*. Identity updating is not purely an internal process, but is generally dependent on social supports. Birthday parties and celebrations, anniversaries, and all life-stage rites of passage help scaffold internal identity updating, reconciling a person's private sense of self with the person that others see.

In a society where people move frequently and do not always have stable long-term communities, family gatherings are important moments when we not only update our sense of who our relatives have become, but people's reaction to us provides us with a kind of mirror of who we have become. Identity updating is therefore a major function of reunions of all kinds, and this tacit function underlies both the attraction of reunions as well as people's discomfort with them. Camp meeting is a particularly effective site for identity updating, and many of its practices appear to have evolved with tacit acknowledgment of this function. The relatively unchanging organization of place, people, and activity schedule of camp meeting provides a very stable ground on which people can simultaneously trace the continuities and the discontinuities of their lives and catch up with changes of many kinds.

Identity is not about continuity or discontinuity but rather about their relationship. A good deal of Salem story telling is about the stability and continuity that the place provides people as they grow up. But there is also a significant evaluation of change. Returning to Salem annually every year of one's life allows one to continually update one's position and status in the campground and in one's larger family while at the same time experiencing that this is going on in an unchanging place. Change and stability are experienced simultaneously, and in a harmonious way.

Over time at Salem children become young adults, who become newlyweds, who become young parents, who become middle-aged parents, who become grandparents. Salem provides clear roles and public acknowledgment of each of these life stages, so that one can measure oneself and one's changing relationship to the campground at a place that itself does not change. This is using the stability of the campground to frame one's own discontinuities in identity.

Identity updating also involves using the campground as a frame for experiencing continuities through identification and memory. Campers can watch their children and their grandchildren doing the same kinds of things that they did when they were that age in that place. These identifications produce a kind of blurring of past and present, and of self and offspring. This blurring is made possible by the fact that the current campground in any given year is not significantly different from the remembered campground from years past.

I was just talking to another person, about my age, whose family has been

coming out here for generations. Of course so many of them just go way back. We were just saying that this is the way that life was in small communities. This is the way an afternoon would be with people sitting on their porches and other people coming around and visit.

* * *

And it's funny because when you're young, you don't ever think about that. I mean these kids out here now, anybody below the age of like 20 is flat out playing, having fun and milking it for all it's worth. You know, but when you get older you begin to see that and you know it, especially if you're prone to notice that kind of thing, which I am. You can't help but notice it. That it's like you think: "is that so and so or is that their son?" You know, that kind of thing. Especially when you're as old as I am because you know kids that I watched growing up have children now. I mean, you know. That's the way it works. And it has always been striking to me. Look at that picture. I've got all these little girls and my cousins; I've got pictures of all of them doing exactly the same thing that I was doing then. That is the thing about camp meeting. There is nothing like it. I can't think of anything like it.

How does the campground produce this kind of blurring? This has to do with the complex relations at camp meeting between doing and viewing. Young people at the campground are busy with all kinds of activities, ranging from Bible classes to sports to arts and crafts. Middle-aged people (especially women) are busy tending to children and cooking chores. But older campers spend a lot of time watching the younger ones. The change in age status entails an important shift in memory. Since the work of Freud, psychologists have distinguished between two sorts of memory in relation to point of view. *Field memories* are kinetic memories of doing things framed in the first person. *Observer memories* are more distanced memories framed from an overhead view of the action, looking down on it from a distance (Schacter 1996:21, Nigro and Neisser 1983).^{xix} Over time at camp meeting, people come to watch their kids doing exactly what they did. This effects not so much of a change from field to observer memories, but a systematic alternation between both kinds of memory and a kind of confusion or blurring effect that allows campers to "participate" in the lives of their own offspring at the same moment as they gain reflexive distance.

Sometimes, I have to just get myself out of a daze almost. I can see things, you know, that I did, and how they are doing them. I think probably it means the meaning of Salem changes as you get older. Like it's probably real different for the kids, in some way, than it is for the parents.

For people living in stable communities, who bring up their children in the same community in which they grew up, the conditions are there for a similar conflation of observer and field memory as we have observed for Salem. But most of the Campers are from highly mobile middle-class families, and their lives have not provided this stability of setting that supports identity updating. Salem provides a kind of stable "home" base to

which campers return repeatedly. In its subtle orchestration of memories of doing and of watching over time, Salem provides perfect conditions for the fusion of observer and field memory that create a powerful sense of identification between the generations.

Notes

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ii The most influential argument connecting American revolutionary fervor with the Great Awakening can be found in Alan Heimert's *Religion and the American Mind* (Heimert 1966). While Heimert's claim that the most ardent revolutionaries in New England were also ardent evangelicals has been criticized by historians as a somewhat simplistic overstatement (Heyrman 2000), it is generally accepted by historians of the revolutionary period that there was a strong link in the second half of the eighteenth century between political and evangelical visions of reform (Bloch 1985, Bonomi 1986, Hatch 1977, Heyrman 1984, 1997).

iii In an well-known and influential thesis, the historian Frederick Jackson Turner proposed that the American experience at the time of the Second Great Awakening was directly understandable in relation to American expansionism and the consequent unsettled conditions of the frontier, a zone that Turner called "the outer edge of the wave—the meeting point between savagery and civilization" (Jackson 1996: 60). Earlier accounts of the origins of the camp meeting movement draw heavily on Turner's frontier thesis (Johnson 1955/1985), stressing the functions of camp meeting in filling the voids of both spiritual and community life at the unstable margins of America. More recent scholarship, however, suggests a somewhat more complex picture of the social, economic, and political conditions within which the camp meeting movement developed, proposing that much of the development of camp meetings took place in areas that were relatively well settled.

In 1800, after a quarter-century of settlement, Kentucky was in several ways primed for religious revival. Most inhabitants were nominal Christians but not connected to any particular congregation. Moreover, many were young adults and at a traditional point in the life cycle for spiritual transformation. Religious institutions in Kentucky were not only present but had had time to take root. Some congregations were already a decade old by the time of the Great Revival, and nearly all belonged to regional governing bodies that provided valuable stability and support. Furthermore, and in contrast to Kentucky's parent state of Virginia, each of the three main Kentucky denominations had a strong evangelical character. By 1800, Kentucky also had an energetic ministry, one grown anxious about stagnant membership levels. The combined effect made a revival of religion a real possibility as the century came to a close (Eslinger 1999:187).

iv The extant accounts of these early camp meetings all underscored the charismatic fervor of the congregants, and their susceptibility to what became known as “the falling exercise.” The following passage, drawn from an account by George Baxter of his experiences at Cane Ridge camp meeting in 1801, is typical:

Thoughtless infidels have fallen as suddenly as if struck by lightning . . . sometimes at the very moment they are uttering blasphemies against the work. Immediately after they become totally powerless, they are seized with a general tremor, and sometimes, though not often, they offer one or two piercing shrieks in the moment of falling. Persons in this situation are affected in different degrees . . . Sometimes when unable to stand or sit, they have the use of their hands and can converse with perfect composure. In other cases, they are unable to speak, the pulse becomes weak, and they draw a difficult breath about once a minute, in some instances their extremities become cold, and pulsation, breathing, and all the signs of life, forsake them for nearly an hour. Persons who have been in this situation have uniformly avowed that they felt no bodily pain; that they had the entire use of their reason and reflection, and when recovered they could relate everything that had been said or done near them. From this it appears, that their falling is neither common fainting, nor a nervous reflection. (Johnson 1955/1985:257)

v Despite the denominational orientation of many modern camp meetings, the ecumenical tradition of inviting preachers from different Protestant denominations continues today in many of the meetings.

vi Camp meetings are not considered an official part of Methodism, but rather are treated as “an extra occasion in the economy of Methodism” (Thomas A. Morris, cited in Johnson 1955/1985:6). Not only were there never official Methodist guidelines governing the conducting of camp meetings as part of the Methodist *Discipline*, but this official silence meant that detailed records of the early meetings were not kept, making it difficult to document the history of the meetings in any detail (*Ibid.*)

vii The camp meeting tradition has a quite distinct history in the eastern United States. For interesting contrast to the populist Southern camp meeting, see Ellen Weiss’s interesting study of the Wesleyan Grove camp meeting on Martha’s Vineyard in Massachusetts, which produced a very large settlement of tiny but elegantly intricate cottages that, Weiss argues, became a kind of prototype for the modern suburban (Weiss 1987).

viii An extensive compilation of modern camp meeting sites throughout the world is found in an appendix in Brown 1992. Of the more than 2,000 meetings that Brown documents worldwide, only 67 take place outside the United States, and of these all but six are in Canada. Camp meetings are overwhelmingly an American institution. The majority are listed as denominational, with the largest number of denominational camps affiliated with the United

Methodist, Free Methodist, Wesleyan Church, the Pentecostal Church and the various branches of the Church of God (Holiness Church). Many camps and retreat centers are associated with smaller Protestant sects. Interestingly, despite the Presbyterian origins of camp meeting, not one of the modern camps in Brown's compilation is affiliated with the Presbyterian Church.

ix The new style of sacramental occasion exerted such extraordinary power over individuals in part because it offered them something painfully lacking in normal social life, a sense of connection and belonging. Many types of public assemblies serve to integrate participants, the camp meeting revivalism was particularly effective – and never more so than during its first full season of existence, through the event at Cane Ridge (Eslinger 1999:225).

x While a detailed analysis of the contemporary middle-class American family is beyond the scope of the present paper, it is important to stress that one cannot understand the importance of the modern camp meeting without taking into account the particular character of the American middle-class family. The world's families fall into many structural types. Most analyses of American family stress the importance of variants of the nuclear family, with its genealogical shallowness, its emphasis on lineal rather than collateral relatives, and its geographic mobility. However, perhaps the most significant feature of the American middle-class family becomes evident only when we shift from a static, structural perspective to a dynamic, developmental one, and consider what anthropologists call "the developmental cycle" of the American family. Viewing family structure in this way allows us to see that many of the key characteristics of family life become evident only over the developmental history of a particular family.

Unlike most kinship systems worldwide, the modern American middle-class family does not aim at continuity, but rather at its own undoing. Like the founding of the American republic itself, the American family is perpetually breaking away and reforming itself anew each generation. By modern middle-class standards, a family which kept its offspring within its fold, thereby continuing itself, would be an example of an unsuccessful family, having failed to prepare its offspring to move off to found their own families.

This important fact about middle-class American families not only replicates the founding of the American polity itself, but also reproduces the ambivalence associated with dependency and autonomy that were at the heart of the American founding experience. The perpetual disintegration and reconstitution of American families underlies the American emphasis on rituals of homecoming such as Thanksgiving, Christmas, Passover, or school homecomings. And as this essay suggests, it is not surprising to find that camp meetings have become centrally engaged with reconciling spiritual salvation and family renewal.

xi The following analysis is an elaboration of an earlier published treatment of the same material (Kendall-Taylor and Shore 2002).

xii Built in 1854 in the style typical of Southern Tabernacles, the Salem Tabernacle is now

registered as a national historic landmark.

xiii An interesting example of a tent in transition is the Jenkins tent, the first tent I encountered in my initial visit to Salem. Though it is generally known as the Jenkins tent, and still bears the name Jenkins, the dominant personality of the current generation living there appears to be at a woman named Ann Milton, who is a direct descendent of the original tent founder. Interestingly, a number of people at Salem are beginning in casual conversation to refer to the tent as the Milton tent.

xiv An important exception is the function of mealtime at the hotel. Many families including a number of “old-timers” at Salem stay at the hotel rather than in tents. Some do this because they want to be at Salem but do not own tents, others perhaps because the hotel provides a degree of privacy and comfort (the rooms are air-conditioned) not possible in the tents. The visiting preachers stay in specially reserved rooms at the hotel, and they take most of their meals at the hotel rather than in the tents. This marks them in an important sense as “outsiders” rather than “insiders” of Salem. Meals at the hotel take place in a large dining room set up with long communal tables. The food is simple, plentiful, and generally emphasizes traditional Southern cooking. Because the hotel does not provide any way for individual families to distinguish themselves in the way that tents do, meals have a very different function for hotel residence than they do for tenters. Meals bring together individual families into larger family like communities of common eating, so that in the hotel food serves as a way to create family-like relations among strangers, rather than defining the differences between families as it does for tenters.

xv The ability of the tent to not simply reflect family ties but to actually create them is underscored in the case of one of the Salem tents which is currently jointly owned by two non-related families. These two family groups came together to jointly purchase the tent and have for number of years shared the tent and meals in the tent during camp meeting season. Interestingly, the tent is now known by the hyphenated name of both families, and, like other tenants, they have created a flag which represents the union of the two families. In interviews, residents of this tent expressed the strong feeling that they had become like family to living together at Salem. It may not be coincidental that the families sharing this particular tent are devout evangelicals, with a particular interest in youth conversion. And so they model for the rest of the campground the idea of a new kind of family created by a common religious spirit rather than ties of blood or marriage.

xvi Regular attendance at Salem appears to be more of a women’s commitment than it is for many men. For women who “marry into Salem,” regular attendance becomes a way in which they gradually “grow into” positions of importance in their husband’s family. In some cases, working women take vacation time for their week at Salem, but their husbands continue to work, sometimes coming in the evenings if they are close by or, in some cases, attending only on big Sunday.

There are a lot of working women here. They take this week off. But the men

don't?

Well, no. . . . I think that women feel the responsibility of the children. I mean, why would you bring a nanny down here with your children? And basically, the men — if the women went back to work and the men stayed here — the men couldn't do. We wouldn't necessarily trust the men to do it all. The men take care of the business end of the campground. And the women take care of the nurturing of the campground.

What this suggests is that while camp meeting provides significant support for the continuity of extended families and family lineages, it can sometimes drive a wedge within the nuclear family, forcing couples to take essentially separate vacations. We have collected detailed genealogical data from families on both who attend and who don't attend camp meeting regularly, and are currently analyzing this data to better understand some of the complex affects of camp meeting on nuclear as opposed to extended families. While there is considerable variation among families in these patterns, there is a general sense that Salem is in some sense "a women's thing." Here is how one of the informants put it:

[My husband will] come up for Sunday dinner. So, that is the contrast. It's like complete and total opposites. And then there are men that — it's like the men thing is weird. It's like usually they don't take off work. So they have to go into work. And then they are just here in the evenings. They are not here all day. So, that's another issue too that women that marry into camp meeting usually become much more involved in it.

They move into the center of it?

Right. They become very attached to it more so than their husbands, who grew up here. Because they are here all week. They are here all day and that makes a big difference.

xvii This conception of time in which particular events are at once acknowledged and absorbed, and in which the ability to overcome time is linked to sacred ground, shows some remarkable similarities to the Australian aboriginal conception of "the dreaming" (Stanner 1966, 1976; Shore 1996, chaps. 9-10). As we shall see, the particular orchestration of memory at Salem is in several important ways linked to the creation of what we might call "mythic consciousness."

18 Strictly speaking, the campground is not actually closed up after camp meeting. The hotel remains open and is looked after by a groundskeeper and his family who live in a house on the campground. Moreover the campground comes to life now and then when various groups hold reunions and other kinds of meetings at Salem. But for the campers, Salem is like an annual flower that is dormant for all but one week of the year and then opens for eight days of bloom. One of the campers commented that Salem reminded him of Brigadoon, the mythical village that came alive only once every thousand years.

19 A similar distinction in point of view has been made between ego-centric and socio-centric cultural models (Shore 1996: Chap. 2).

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