CAMP GANNETT

On the south shore of Lake Massapoag in Sharon, Massachusetts, a twenty-one acre camp, Camp Gannett, has catered to the children of the Peabody House since 1916. The camp offers the perfect location for a summer away from the city with land donated to the Peabody House in 1915 by Boston hotelier Sarah Boyce. The Camp was named after Sharon’s favorite daughter Deborah Sampson Gannet who was one of the first women to fight in the American Revolution. Gannet disguised herself as a man in order to fight for the Continental Army and served for 17 months as ‘Robert Shurtleiff’ before being honorably discharged in 1783 after being wounded.

Prior to the camp’s establishment, there were few opportunities for the children of the West End to escape their crowded neighborhood. The lack of fresh air was a concern for the settlement workers, and their concerns were well founded. Illnesses such as tuberculosis were a tremendous scourge in the early twentieth century and many fresh air camps sprung up outside of Boston. Camp Gannett provided for positive forms of recreation that could reinforce what was taught in the classroom as well as a good deal of fun. There were opportunities to camp out, go swimming, boating, fishing, take nature walks, and more.

The camp started as a collection of tents when it was first opened in 1916, a true wilderness experience. Over the years additions were made to the camp grounds, wooden platforms for tents were built in the 1920s to be replaced later by wooden structures. And in 1938 the camp facilities were rebuilt after being destroyed by a hurricane. Camp Gannett is still open today, providing lots of summer fun for the children of the Elizabeth Peabody House.