

Fascism on the Homefront: Remembering the Nazi Youth Camps of 1930s New Jersey

Source Project | Mapping American Prejudice | Faculty Advisor: Professor Wendy Wall

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The German-American Bund

Fritz Julius Kuhn, an American citizen from Germany, established the German-American Bund in 1936. It tried to present itself as a patriotic American organization; however, it favored Nazi Germany and mirrored the Nazi Party's actions.

The Bund tried to influence youth through the establishment of summer camps all over the country; these camps served as ideological training grounds, intending to spread fascist propaganda to new generations. The U.S. government kept a close watch on the organization and its leaders, which ultimately led to the dissolution of the Bund after top officials were arrested. As a result the camps were closed.

Today, the Bund is remembered as an example of extremism and fascism on the American homefront, where the organization's activities were aimed at ideological indoctrination.

Research Questions

How did the presence of the Bund and their camps affect local communities?

How have the camps been remembered and is there a lasting impact on the local population?

Methodology

We conducted our research using historical newspaper articles, court/federal agency documents, historical images/videos, and oral history interviews with Sussex County locals. We obtained newspapers using newspapers.com and the Sussex County Library System.

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CAMP NORLAND 1930s and 21st CENTURY



CAMP BERGWALD 1930s



CAMP WILLE UND MACHT 1930s



A special thanks to Kylie DePalma, Mary Houghtaling, and Andy Martin for allowing us to interview them and their insight into the Sussex County local community.

CAMP NORDLAND

Camp Nordland was established in 1937 by the German American Bund. This camp was located in Andover Township in Sussex County, New Jersey. This camp was run by August Klapprott who was the leader of the New Jersey District of the Bund. The local community was not supportive of the camp and in 1939 Andover Township revoked their liquor license. In 1940 there was a rally at Camp Nordland, a collaboration between the Bund and Ku Klux Klan, which had a presence in the area. The camp was open for four years until it was raided on April 30, 1941 by the Sussex County Sheriff, Denton Quick. The property that was once Camp Nordland, is now a town park and venue used for events such as banquets and weddings.

CAMP BERGWALD

After purchasing "180 acres with Nazi Coin," the German American Vocational League opened Camp Bergwald in 1938. The GAVL was a group that, while inspired by the German American Bund, was distinct from them. The GAVL consisted of significantly more German aliens (Germans who were not US citizens) than the Bund, prompting more intense FBI scrutiny. The group succeeded at creating a Hitler Youth initiative in the United States for 4 summers, modeling the camps after Hitler's Jugend (Youth Corps). The FBI raided the camp in 1941, arresting 158 German aliens. In their trial, witnesses testified that the GAVL entered into a contract with the German-American Bund. The contract made it possible for the GAVL to conceal the embezzlement of Bund funds being sent back to Germany.

CAMP WILLE UND MACHT

In 1934, the Friends of New Germany, a predecessor to the German American Bund established Camp Wille und Macht (Will and Might) in Franklin Park Township in Somerset County, New Jersey. Although it was only open for one summer, 120 young boys ranging from 8 to 14 years old from all over the tri-state area enrolled. The Friends of New Germany closed the camp after it received letters threatening to blow up the camp and the House Un-American Activities Committee started an investigation surrounding the camps leaders.