

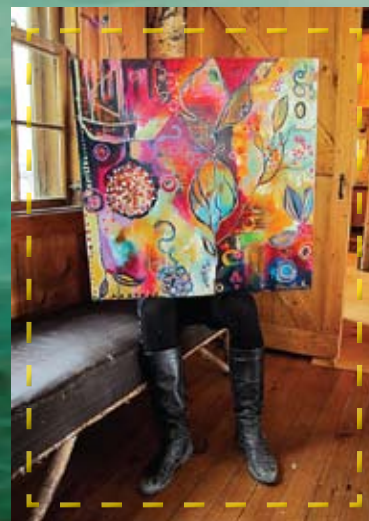


Summer Camp

for Adults

By Joyce Wagner

Empowering Magical Spiritual Awakenings



LAKE PHOTO BY MELANIE FORD WILSON
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Magic

The word “magic” is used a lot. “Empowering” pops up frequently. “Spiritual awakenings” abound. Former and repeat students at Squam Art Workshops (SAW or just “Squam”) tend to gush about their experiences there — and with good reason. Its effect is almost otherworldly, bringing out unexplored talents in newbies, polishing existing talents to a high gleam, boosting career artists up their ladders and creating and nourishing life-long friendships.

Sleep-away retreats are nothing new. Since the days when gods and goddesses left the routine of Mount Olympus to hang out in earthbound temples, adults, as well as children, have found ways of recharging their spirit by leaving home for different experiences.

We work at jobs, we tend to our

children, we keep our homes — all of it with a certain amount of joy. But it can be taxing and overwhelming. We get a reprieve every so often in the form of a vacation, but usually the kids are with us and we have to behave. We are ever the grownups, leaving the magic to the children. If we’re lucky, we can send the tots off to camp and we can escape our own routines at cushy resorts or sleep-away workshops.

New Hampshire has long been a favorite spot for such endeavors. The mountains, lakes, streams and caves have, for more than 100 years, provided idyllic respite for those seeking to escape the sterile steel and concrete of the cities. Winter gives us Alpine vistas, skiing, snowshoeing and evenings by the fire. Autumn provides a dazzling patchwork treat for eyes jaded by the gray of office cubicles. In spring, the music of snow-fed brooks, wind through the trees and newly

returning birds relieve ears assaulted by car horns and sirens. And summer — ah, summer. The traditional time to hike, swim and recharge in our gorgeous mountains and sun-glittered lakes.

For those who seek brain-food, busy-fingers or deeper spirituality from their refuge, there is no lack of things to learn and master. Less than five minutes on the Internet reveals sleep-away courses in everything from archery to plein air painting, Bible studies to Zen Buddhism, acting to organic gardening, photography to fencing, creative writing to chair caning — all in the beautiful retreats of the Granite State. Many of them provide new skills and spiritual rebooting that can be dipped into long past the end of daylight savings time.

Premier among these is Squam Art Workshops, a relatively new baby. Only in its fifth year, it sits on the banks of Squam Lake in Holderness.

PHOTO BY THEA COUGHLIN

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“The artist that she’d always dreamed of being was there all along.”

Squam was founded by Elizabeth MacCrellich (now Duvivier) in 2008. The popular three-day retreats (plus welcome dinner and farewell breakfast) have become an exciting experience for new campers and repeat learners since its inception.

Elizabeth, the heart, soul and spirit of “Squam,” founded it out of her own sense of need. Successful but unhappy in the corporate world, she longed for her own creative outlet and found it in a sleep-away workshop in Washington State. She’d discovered that the artist that she’d always dreamed of being was there all along. She quit her job and began working toward her vision of providing the same opportunity for creative and spiritual growth to others.

The first question was “Where?”

Elizabeth encountered her venue practically in her own back yard. Just down the road from where she lived were historic conjoined retreats — Rockywold-Deephaven Camps. It seemed perfect. Defined as “champagne in a tin cup,” RDC is rustic cabins (each with its own porch, dock and fireplace) with down beds and old-timey ice-boxes (with ice cut every winter from

PHOTO BY THEA COUGHLIN



From the Top

Elizabeth Duvivier (left) is the founder of Squam and her original vision continues to inspire campers. Here are a few of her sage-like comments from the camp blog:

“Alas. That is also a truth of travel — there is only the one moment. So soak it in, breathe as deeply into it as possible, because it is indeed fleeting ... sometimes — it doesn’t matter what the language — there are no words enough.”

“There are many stories within stories about the Squam experience, but one lesser known tale is that quietly woven through the wild weekend gatherings are the mamas who have come with babies (in their arms or in their bellies).”

“And the truth is, I may not achieve exactly what I set out to do — but I always find that I gain more of what I want most in my life as I set these small, attainable desires out to float on the community pond for all to see.”



Empowering

the lake). They sit on a body of water so beautiful that the movie "On Golden Pond" was filmed there. Campers wake to lush, healthy breakfasts and the plaintive songs of loons, the aroma of pines and sun sparkling on the ripples of the lake.

The history of the camps alone — founded by two very spunky ladies — is enough to inspire a technology-weary camper.

Deephaven came first. Miss Alice Mable Bacon was the daughter of a cleric, writer and abolitionist. As a child, she was exposed to many interesting people and she developed a life-long passion for learning. As an adult she taught at Hampton Institute, one of the first colleges for blacks and Native Americans. In 1896 she stayed at Pinehurst, a summer camp on Squam Lake. It is said that while canoeing, she happened upon a cove and instantly recognized it as a peaceful sanctuary. She decided on the spot that this is where she would build her own camp. At the end of the summer she purchased the property that is now Deephaven. In June of 1897 she opened her camp.

With Miss Bacon at Pinehurst was Mary Alice Armstrong, the widow of General Samuel Chapman Armstrong, Civil War hero and founder of Hampton Institute. She was born Mary Alice Ford in Lisbon, NH. She too grew up to be a teacher, graduating from Plymouth Normal School in the early 1880s. She developed an interest in the plight of the newly freed slaves and joined the teaching staff at Hampton in 1884. She married General Armstrong in 1890. He died in 1893.

In 1900 Mary Alice took over the management of Deephaven while Miss Bacon took two years sabbatical in Japan. In very little time Mary Alice decided that this would be her own vocation. In 1901 she bought 27 acres abutting Deephaven. The following year she opened Rockywold with a dining room, two cottages and some tents on the shore.

In 2008 the current proprietors of RDC allowed Elizabeth to open Squam Art Workshops on a trial basis. She found upbeat artists to teach with a philosophy of "process, not product." A variety of workshops would be offered. She would

people her camps with learners at all levels, providing a safe, non-judgmental haven where trying something new and stumbling toward mastery was not only allowed but encouraged. To all those people who were told all their lives, "You can't do that," she'd transmit her attitude of "Why not? Give it a try!"

The first year was wildly successful and the camp's popularity grew from there with new people every year as well as repeaters. Now, there are two sessions at RDC per year, plus "Squam by the Sea" at Outer Banks, NC, and, new this year, "Squamitalia," in Abruzzo, a beautiful medieval village near the Adriatic.

While the classes originally tended toward textile crafts, now the assortment of classes taught is only limited by space and time. This September, courses include painting, sewing, photography, writing, food styling, jewelry making and screen-printing. Around and in between they feature yoga, dining, bonfires, free time, a lodge and an art fair.

The most important feature of Squam, however, remains the atmosphere of

PHOTO BY THEA COUGHLIN

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creative safety that Elizabeth provides. Many call it life-changing. A brief foray through the "My Story" section of Squam's website (squamartworkshops.com) reveals tales of synchronistic discoveries of the camps, initial reluctance to sign on and wary arrivals, followed by a lot of welcoming hugs and amazing creative breakthroughs. People leave the camp with new friends and outlooks on their lives.

Maya Donenfeld, a regular teacher from the beginning and author of "Reinvention: Sewing with Rescued Materials," explains: "Elizabeth and I speak the same language ... creativity needs to be nurtured, not forced. Her ability to create a space where adults can freely explore their hidden potential is a true gift that has transformed hundreds and hundreds of lives."

People talk about post-farewell changes in their day-to-days that they attribute directly to their experiences at the camp.

For Natalie Selles, her first year at Squam was as a babysitter for one of the teachers and she was only able to peek into the different classes. Her second year was as a student. Then she was a teacher. Now she sells her own knitting designs. "Each time I have taken a big next step in my design life it has been at SAW," she says.

Linda Esterley, from Syracuse, is another reluctant camper who became a repeat attendee at Squam. She felt so empowered by her multiple experiences there that she was eventually able to quit her day job and dedicate herself full time to jewelry design and mixed media art. "Whenever I confront a difficult situation," she explains, "I remember how hard it was to make it to that first year of SAW, and know I can pretty much do anything now. My artwork

PHOTO BY THEA COUGHLIN



Sample Project:



SUPPLIES

- 2 or 3 contrasting colors of thick wool (blanket and/or suiting)
- Contrasting thread
- Pins
- Circle template
- Tailor's chalk

WOOL TRIVET

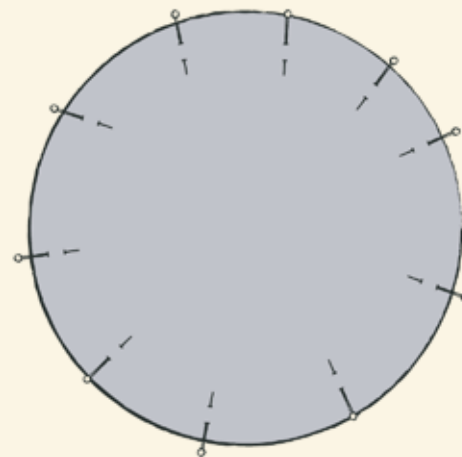
Finished dimensions: trivet – 8" diameter; coasters – 4" diameter

Many sewers shy away from circular sewing in favor of simpler straight stitching. This round trivet enables you to practice circular stitching with the added benefit of producing a beautiful woolen pad that welcomes your hot dishes with its subtle bullseye pattern. Quilted concentric circles add a striking element to any design. Try making smaller versions of this trivet to use as coasters or make a large one to use as a seat pad. This is a very simple project that will beckon you to make multiples to give as gifts.

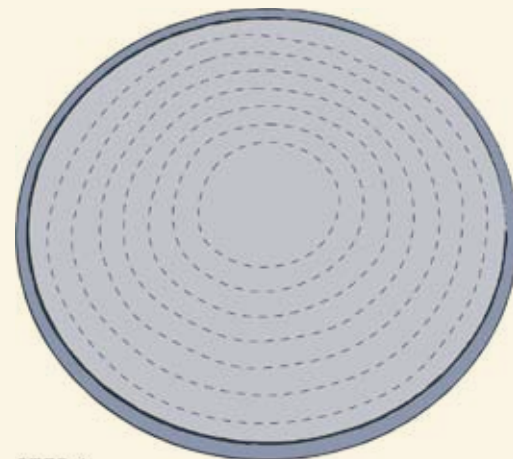
NOTE: Make sure to wash and dry all wool blankets and suiting before working with them to ensure extra felting.

Make the Trivet

- 1 Create a template on card stock. Make an 8" diameter circle with a 2½" circle directly in the center. Use it to cut out three 8" circles.
- 2 Layer all three circles directly on top of one another. If you're not using all the same color wool, think about how you want to arrange the layers. The center layer is visible and a contrasting color shows up nicely. Pin the three layers together around the perimeter of the stack.
- 3 Place the template with the hole cut out of the center on the top of your stack of circles. Draw the small center circle with tailor's chalk.
- 4 Stitch directly on the line of the center circle. Backstitch when the circle is complete.
- 5 Place the edge of your presser foot on the edge of the center circle and go around again.
- 6 Keep repeating Step 5 until the circles are ½" from the outer edge. Trim off any uneven pieces of the layers that occurred during the quilting process. Press.
- 7 Try this same process for coasters using a 4½" circular template.



STEP 2



STEP 6

RIGHT PHOTO BY JEN GRAY

PHOTO BY CHRISTINE CHITNIS



OTHER ADULT SUMMER CAMPS

NEW HAMPSHIRE ADVENTURE BOOT CAMP FOR WOMEN

May-November, Bristol and Plymouth. Each session is a four-week outdoor program aimed at helping women of all skill and health levels achieve their fitness goals. Camps typically meet three times a week. From \$112. Visit nhbootcamp.com or call (603) 254-8654 for information and registration.

APPALACHIAN MOUNTAIN CLUB ADVENTURE CAMPS

Through July, New Hampshire and Maine. These five-night adventure camps include hiking, outdoor skill instructions and guided activities for adults and families. From \$360. Visit outdoors.org or call (603) 466-2727 for information and registration.

CURRIER MUSEUM OF ART

July 19-August 17, Manchester. These one-week intensive sessions either meet Monday through Friday from 9 a.m.-noon or 1 p.m.-4 p.m. A variety of subjects are offered, including drawing, pottery, painting, sculpting and more. Classes are approximately \$200. Visit currier.org/ac/programs.aspx or call (603) 669-6144 for information and registration.

SWING OUT NEW HAMPSHIRE

August 29-September 3, on the shores at Camp Wicosuta, is a 4-day, 5-night camp experience that will have you dancing! Swing Out New Hampshire is a place to learn from many of the best dance teachers in the world. Find out more at swingoutnh.com or call (415) 419-3536 for more information.

WRITE/ACT ON GOLDEN POND

Whitebridge Farm Productions runs a couple of weekend-long workshops each year taught by Oscar-winner Ernest Thompson in New Hampton. With workshops and classes offered in a variety of genres spanning from writing and acting to post-production, there's something for every aspiring movie lover. For more information, visit whitebridgefarmproductions.com or call (603) 744-3652.

WRITELINES STAR ISLAND

September 3-7 and September 14-17, Star Island. On the Isles of Shoals lies Star Island, where writers come to relax, practice their craft and find inspiration. For more information visit writelines.net or call Director Dale Slongwhite at (781) 910-3386.



“Squam is light and dreams come true.”

has grown by leaps and bounds — gallery shows, private sales and inclusion in the Made in NY exhibit (which is a big deal in this state). None of this would have happened without my sisters from SAW holding me up.”

The enchantment continues. Jennifer Belthoff, a soul lost and buffeted by life, was so shy at her first venture into the Squam experience that, at first, she was paralyzed into silence. “I did the only thing I knew how to do; listen and observe,” she recalls. “What I saw was pure beauty.”

And now? “When I arrived home,” Jennifer remembers, “I had many moments where I struggled and was filled with doubt and uncertainty. But with each step I took I was headed in a new direction in life. I was armed with new tools to carve my own path.”

“Squam is light and dreams come true,” she adds.

And what of the founder? Elizabeth Duvivier, the enchantress that plies her alchemy and morphs shy, leaden creatures into golden, confident artists? What does she get from the camp? More magic — in the form of eternal youth. “Something I continue to learn over and over,” she says, “is that when we connect to pure creativity, years fall away. The vitality and brightness and buoyancy of youth surfaces — no matter what your physical age is.” **NH**