



Working At Play: A History of Vacations in the United States

Cindy S. Aron

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In *Working at Play*, Cindy Aron offers the first full length history of how Americans have vacationed--from eighteenth-century planters who summered in Newport to twentieth-century urban workers who headed for camps in the hills. In the early nineteenth century, vacations were taken for health more than for fun, as the wealthy traveled to watering places, seeking cures for everything from consumption to rheumatism. But starting in the 1850s, the growth of a white-collar middle class and the expansion of railroads made vacationing a mainstream activity. Aron charts this growth with grace and insight, tracing the rise of new vacation spots as the nation and the middle class blossomed. She shows how late nineteenth-century resorts became centers of competitive sports--bowling, tennis, golf, hiking, swimming, and boating absorbed the hours. But as vacationing grew, she writes, fears of the dangers of idleness grew with it. Religious camp grounds, where gambling, drinking, and bathing on Sundays were prohibited, became established resorts. At the same time 'self improvement' vacations began to flourish, allowing a middle class still uncomfortable with the notion of leisure to feel productive while at play. With vivid detail and much insight, *Working at Play* offers a lively history of the vacation, throwing new light on the place of work and rest in American culture.

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