

# How summer vacations took hold in the U.S.

By Stephen Mihm, Bloomberg

Planning a trip to the beach, a lake, or some other spot in the great outdoors in the next month or so? Please take a few moments to thank a small but influential group of reformers, idealists, and busybodies who created an enduring American institution: the summer vacation.

Prior to the late 19th century, few Americans took breaks from work. The ethic of hard work and deferred gratification popular among the Puritans – never mind the simple fact that few people could afford to get away from tending farms – limited leisure.

Well into the 19th century, summer vacations remained restricted to elites: wealthy slave-owners who fled to cooler climes in the summer, or elite merchants who could afford to leave their businesses in the hands of trusted subordinates. But most adult Americans, by choice or by necessity, simply toiled away during the summer months. As always.

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