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History Of Nudism in North America

KISSIMMEE, Fla. -- Early New England settlers -- 16th century Puritans -- with their non-pleasure, morality-enforcing ways were so afraid of nudity, and the lust it could foster, that they refrained from bathing. Long forgotten were the robust ways of the ancient Greeks, who performed feats of strength and skill during the first Olympics, which of course was the earliest documented form of nude recreation.

However, as the colonial era gave way to a free and independent United States of America, "radical thinkers," including Benjamin Franklin, John Quincy Adams, and Henry David Thoreau, publicity lauded the benefits in daily naked walks, or as they were called, "air baths." Other nudists of note included President John Quincy Adams, who regularly bathed nude in the Potomac, as did the much beloved fictional characters of Tom Sawyer and Huck Finn who skinny dipped with joy and abandon.

But these so-called radicals continued to remain a very small minority of the population until the dawn of the 20th century brought more formal nudism to America.

Kurt Barthel, acknowledged as the founder of American nudism, was acquainted with other German nudists late in the 1920s and had allowed his name to be used as a local New York contact. On Labor Day of 1929, Kurt led a small group of individuals to a picnic in the buff in the Hudson Mountains near Peekskill, New York, and organized nude recreation in America was born with his dues-paying club, called the "American League for Physical Culture" (ALPC).

The first official nudist club opened soon after on June 21, 1930, near Spring Valley in Rockland County, New York. By 1931, ALPC had welcomed over 200 new members and moved to an area near Dover, New Jersey.

In October of 1931, Ilsley Boone, the ALPC's Executive Secretary replaced Barthel as leader of the ALPC, in the newly renamed American Sunbathing Association. The ASA grew to nearly 50,000 members throughout the U.S., Canada, Mexico and the Caribbean. One last name change occurred in 1995 when the ASA became the American Association for Nude Recreation (AANR) – to better reflect the activities of its membership.

Boone's concept of the nudist lifestyle was that "a nudist is one who believes and practices that one may freely go without clothes unless for some specific reason -- such as bodily

comfort or social requirements -- it is essential to wear them. This definition contemplates that there is nothing shameful in nakedness per se; that there is no need for discrimination between the several parts of the body as regards their respectability and acceptability; that for many forms of outdoor and indoor work, for outdoor sports, for swimming, possibly for life within the home, nudism offers a much more wholesome and healthy way of life than does clothed society. Nudists do not advocate a clothesless social order in the twentieth century, though such an eventuality is not inconceivable."

After 80+ years, nude recreation continues to grow as more people choose clothes-free and clothing optional Nakations™.

For 86 years, AANR has been a strong voice and the leading authority in North America on protecting the freedoms and rights of those who participate in wholesome, family-style nude recreation. Members of AANR recognize the intrinsic wholesomeness of the human body and believe that life is enhanced by the naturalness of social nudity. From exercise to relaxation, a person's physical, spiritual, and mental health is enriched through social nude recreation. AANR supports over 200 chartered clubs, resorts, and campgrounds, and serves more than 52 million individuals who enjoy skinny-dipping and non-sexual and non-exploitive clothing optional recreation throughout the U.S., Canada, Mexico, and the Caribbean. For more information about AANR and for facts related to nude recreation, visit www.aanr.com or call 1-800-TRY-NUDE (879-6833). To receive information on upcoming news and events, sign up for our newsletter [here](#).