

Case Study #3 - Notes

Camping As Commodity

Sporting Goods and the Shaping of Leisure

Through the first half of the [20th] century, consumers who could read about sports in specialty publications tended to play sports with goods furnished through homecrafting, merchant importers, or local artisans. Not until the mid-century would they enjoy the products of large-scale, integrated manufacture from American specialty firms [catalog salers].

Homecrafting was the most traditional form of production, for which many nineteenth-century books provided instructions...Homecrafting continued as a popular and necessary art throughout the century, though the mention of "shops" indicates that wealthier sportsmen might opt to buy custom or ready-made equipment. In a sample of Maryland estate inventories, Nancy Struna found that the ratios of sporting goods to total inventories rose from under 6 percent in 1770 to over 26 percent in 1810. While the lists do not distinguish homemade from finished goods, they probably do reflect a movement toward the latter, as well as wider sporting interests among wealthy and middling well-to-do Marylanders. Stephen Hardy, 1990

Jeb loved his grandfather very much. He used to go and visit him on the farm in the summer. Jeb's greatest memories were exploring through the old sheds looking for treasures. When he found something that looked interesting, he'd take it into Pops and have him tell what it was and the story behind how it wound up being in the shop. Jeb got a first hand lesson in old tools and technologies that were used to make the farm run before motor-driven technology replaced real man and horse power – what Pops called the “Five Mile An Hour Economy”.

In those days, farm families followed the adage: *Use it up, Wear it out, Make do, or Do without*. People had to rely on their own skills and understanding or those of local specialists. But it wasn't long before mail order catalogs made affordable consumer goods available even to remote farm families, and the days of making do or repairing broken items became a thing of the past. As a matter of fact, when Jeb asked Pops about certain things, and how to maintain and repair them, Pops was always quick with an answer and solution. But when he asked his dad about some of the same things, his remembrance was sort of blurred, and many times those old things just didn't matter anymore.

When Pops finally was gone, Jeb asked if he could get from the barn one special tool that he had always had his eye on, and keep as something to remember Pops. It was an old axe; one that he had seen years of use and was one of Pop's favorites. It was well-balanced, made of fine materials that had been sharpened many times, and oozed with the traditions of the old days.



However, Jeb wanted to use the axe, not just look at it, but the head needed cleaning and sharpening, and the handle needed to be replaced. The problem became that no matter how hard he looked, he couldn't find a source for a handle that had the same shape as Pop's old axe handle. This was a straight handle, not a curved one. All the replacement handles in the stores were either curved, or straight, but the ends of the straight handles were shaped for other tools, not axes. Jeb had to either forego the use of the axe, find someone who could make a handle for him, or locate a mentor who could teach him the magic *do-it-yourself*.

Case Study Resources

- **The Axemaker's Gift**
- ***Adopted By All the Leading Clubs: Sporting Goods and the Shaping of Leisure, 1800-1900* By Stephen Hardy - From *For Fun and Profit: The Transformation of Leisure into Consumption***
- ***United by Practice* By Jasper Hunt**
- ***Consuming Nature: The Uneasy Relationship Between Technology, Outdoor Recreation and Protected Areas* By John Shultis**
- ***The Tent Dweller* By Bannerman Brown From *Pathways*, August 1998**
- **ASAP - As Sustainable As Possible A Working Model to Assess and Improve the Sustainability of Outdoor Education and Recreation**
By Paul Van Horn

*** Text Questions to Consider:**

1. What would you identify as the major trends in the development of the sporting goods industry?

1800-1860 - Foundation Years

1860-1880 - Market Recognition

1880-1900 - Competition

1900-1915 - Golden Age

Market Expansion

1915-1930 - Inter-War years

1930-1950 - Renaissance

1950-1960 - Modern Age Market Explosion

1869 Murray, 1877 Gould,

1878 Ms Parloa, 1884 Nessmuk,

1885,95 Seneca, 1890 Coquina

When did the manufacturing of sporting goods emerge as an industry ?

The next twenty years [1860-1880] saw the clear emergence of a sporting goods industry. The conditions - social, economic, and cultural - were ripe for it, despite or perhaps because of the Civil War. The expansion of rail lines, improvements in printing, and advances in production technology combined with anxieties about social dissolution, exhaustion, and degeneracy to provide a most opportune moment for marketing products linked to wholesome recreation. ...It was one thing to write an article or book promoting the value of a new activity; it was quite another to risk capital and credit in the production or sale of sports equipment...During this period two types of entrepreneurs emerged, both in manufacturing and in retail. The first were

those who diversified into the "new" sports, either from field sports or from a non-sports product. The second, often athletes or former athletes, opened businesses solely devoted to sports. Their combined activities meant that Americans could for the first time enjoy a steady and increasing supply of finished sporting goods.

Guiding/Roads/Rails/ Print/Production

2. If footballs and baseballs were meant for youth, what sport was used to address the older audience? Does it have a relationship to camping?

The Boy's Own Book an often praised "bible" for middle-class youth — noted that footballs should be made of "light materials a blown bladder, cased with leather, is the best." It also advised that the easiest method of making fishing line lay in the use of a "little machine which may be bought at most of the shops where also you purchase your lines, if you think fit." **The American Anglers Book (1865), aimed at an older audience**, contained a chapter on rodmaking that listed the equipment a nineteenth-century do-it-yourselfer would need — bench, vise, knife, jack plane and fore plane, files, paper — and included a picture of a steel template of notches and gauged holes of various diameters. One can imagine that many anglers found the instructions simpler on paper than in practice.

3. What shift took place in 1880 that made it possible for more people to acquire manufactured goods?

*Improved economic conditions doubtless had an encouraging effect. So did the nation's stronger embrace of physical activity. The calls had been issued by reformers for over forty years; the 1880s, however, brought **peace, relative prosperity, and expanded public space** to go along with a heightened consciousness of the benefits of sport and exercise. Equally important, increased numbers of sporting goods manufacturers and retailers expanded their efforts to attract consumers*

*** Context Questions:**

1. Look up the definition of these words - *Commodification, Hegemony, Institutionalization, Democratization*

a. Commodification - A commodity is anything which can be bought and sold, usually within capitalist relations; commodification and the idea of commodity fetishism are terms used, often in Marxist theory, to draw attention to what is argued as the undue spread and valuation of services, items, values...The extent to which a market value is assigned to previously non-commercial goods or services...Commodification is a theoretical idea in Marxian theory that captures the process through which material and nonmaterial goods are turned into products for sale. From this point of view, nothing is by its nature a product for sale; goods must be placed in markets in order to be commodities. ... The transformation of non-commercial relationships into commercial relationships.

"the major forms of organized leisure were outside the control of those who enjoyed them"; and though controlling bodies could not ignore their consumers — whether in football, "Adopted

by model building, music, or dance — "the essential relationship was that of provider and customer."

These "new providers" determined much of the leisure revolution that turned informal pastimes into commodities. But their importance goes well beyond the issue of commercializing football or music or art."

b. Hegemony - The theory that those in power maintain domination through cultural influence rather than force. Cultural agencies such as the media privilege dominant ideologies (that serve to disguise the realities of social injustice) which prevail over other competing or alternative ideas through becoming ... A concept of Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937) which refers to the way that the political and social domination of the bourgeois class...

"These "new providers" determined much of the leisure revolution that turned informal pastimes into commodities. But their importance goes well beyond the issue of commercializing football or music or art. They raise an issue about the nature of leisure itself. Leisure is typically thought of as self-determined, creative, and fulfilling. But if an industry of "providers" selects the goods, facilities, and services we use in our leisure, then is it still leisure? This question is philosophical. The question of institutionalization and control, however, is historical.

Scholars considering the institutionalization of American sport have correctly focused on the growth of bureaucracies voluntary associations, corporate businesses, state agencies—and the struggles among them."

c. Democratization - Democratization is the transition from an authoritarian or a semi-authoritarian political system to a democratic political system...the action of making something democratic.

"The marketing efforts of sporting goods firms clearly expanded opportunity and interest in active play among a wide range of Americans; Spalding, Reach, Wright, Dimick, Rawlings, and the rest had a serious interest in democratizing leisure activities. But democratizing should entail more than just the opportunity to participate; it should include an opportunity to determine the nature of participation—and here the industry tended to part company with democracy. Success in the marketplace depended on packaging and selling preformed games and goods. Manufacturers and dealers had an interest in innovation, but they had a greater stake in the stable growth of widely understood products. To achieve it, they established ties with other specialists who had similar interests, particularly coaches, players, journalists, and the administrators of leagues and associations. They all shared a vision: to be providers of particular forms of activity, which they would sell to the public. Their alliances resulted in mutual legitimacy and market influence, the foundations of a larger sport industry. Every successful partnership inside the industry, however, established firmer boundaries on the range and styles of sports offered to consumers on the outside. This was how some games became the games."

d. Institutionalization - The term institutionalization is widely used in social theory to denote the process of making something (for example a concept, a social role, particular values and norms, or modes of behaviour) become embedded within an organization, social system, or society as an established custom or norm.

"Further, through their involvement with such nascent governing bodies as the National League, the Intercollegiate Football Association, and the United States National Lawn Tennis Association, sporting goods firms helped turn informal activities into commodities of fun and spectacle. This collaboration set the foundation for an even larger sports industry: an

interlocking network of the rules committees, trade associations, manufacturers, and professional groups that have heavily influenced both the range and styles of sports in America.

Sociologists refer to this process as "institutionalization." Richard Gruneau, Alan Ingham, and John Loy have emphasized its importance to the world of sport by posing the question, "How does a way of playing become the way of playing?" Think of football. Of the many styles of play available in 1873, why did one style conquer America to become an institution, taken for granted on New Year's Day and Super Bowl Sunday? To seek the answer is to uncover the bones of rival leagues and rival game forms strewn across a vast cultural battlefield."

2. How do goods shape practice in our field?

"Not only do certain game forms dominate interest, but certain clusters of organizations begin to control the practices surrounding those games. The National Football League, the National Collegiate Athletic Association, the United States Golf Association, and the United States Tennis Association are examples of dominant groups that manage dominant game forms. They supervise the playing and the players; moreover, they exercise extraordinary influence on the career plans of young Americans who base educational and life-style choices on regulations governing eligibility and competition.

John Clarke and Chas Critcher note that a similar process has occurred over the last two centuries throughout much of the leisure domain: though informal pastimes remained a central part of most people's life styles, "the major forms of organized leisure were outside the control of those who enjoyed them";

3. How have those who control hegemony in the outdoor industry codified the field? Are there "rules" to our game?

Standardization

Rules and Regulations

Supervision

Exclusion

Marketing behaviors

MORE

Really Test Yourself: Extra Credit

- 1. Review the overhead *History of Leisure Practices* (found in the case study). What happened during each era? How might these occurrences have influenced the early days of the camping movement?**

Pre-Industrial – Work and Leisure

Industrial Revolution – Work vs Leisure

Post-Industrial – Work for Leisure - Class Development

Information Age – Experience

- 2. Can an historical timeline be created for the development of the camping movement that reflects history in general?**

The Pathfinders

Exploration/Conquest
Literature
Magazines
Clubs and Organizations
Enactments and Laws
Manufacturers/Purveyors
Guides/Outfitters

READ - Minimum Or Displaced Impact - About Leaving No Trace

By Tim Smith

<http://blog.jackmtn.com/minimum-or-displaced-impact-about-leaving-no-trace/>

Other Resources: If you would like to read the entire chapter of -
Adopted By All The Leading Clubs: Sporting Goods and the Shaping of Leisure, 1800-1900, By Stephen Hardy

or

The Tent Dwellers by Bannerman Brown, 1998

refer to the Case #3 Resources file.

Elders Of The Tribe:

- The Vagabonds • Frank E. Brimmer • David Abercrombie
- Webster Marble • L.L. Bean • W. C. Coleman
- Phillip Goodwin - Illustrator • Tap Tapley - Outward Bound
- Straight Arrow