

Case Study #2 - Notes

Woodcraft to LNT - How Did We Get Here and Why?

In 1991 Leave No Trace became the official ethic for environmentally-conscious outdoor recreation on the nation's public land. That announcement brought to a close a long transition in the place of recreation in the American wilderness James Morton Turner, 2002

Tom Lynn had been a Scoutmaster for 10 years when he was finally able to attend what Scouting calls it's highest level of training for Scoutmasters – *Woodbadge*. Tom had heard of the training for years and was anxious to finally be able to attend and learn all the great skills like dutch oven cooking, pioneering, and campcraft that he had heard about from all of his friends. They would rave about the quality of skills instruction and how the training made them a better resource for their boy leaders. They also talked warmly about the traditions of Scouting and how this training hearkened back to its early days (1912) on the grounds of Gilwell Training Center in the UK.

Tom entered the course with an open mind, ready to be bathed in the 100-year old traditions of this famous outdoor movement for boys and men. It started out with a first-person reading from old *Uncle Dan Beard*, one of the founding fathers of Scouting in America. Dan talked about the spirit of Scouting and the work of founder Sir Robert Baden-Powell, he showed the beads a Zulu warrior that everyone could earn by attending the course, and finally blew a traditional Kudu horn trumpet that set the tone of the course.

But as the course progressed, Tom learned that Scouting was in the midst of some big changes, many of them required since land management practices and outdoor ethics had changed, making many skills an “anachronism”. They also felt that boys had become more *sophisticated*, and Scouting had to change with the times. Skills like fire building were replaced by stove management, and traditions like tower building and other lashing projects were no longer a part of the training. Skills now favored the mobile style of camping common to backpacking, and the heavier fixed camp techniques were no longer appropriate for the interests of boys. Skills like axe and knifecraft were considered risks that needed to be managed for care and safety, and proper adult supervision was the solution to this plan.

It was a good training, and the leaders were well prepared to present the topics they were assigned. But to Tom, hoping for something he didn't get, it was a real disappointment. He heard the traditions referred to a lot, but the practice of the skills needed to breathe life into the traditions, were no longer there.

This case looks at how the outdoor industry made a conscious shift from an ethic of Woodcraft to LNT and why. Turner's paper is perhaps the most insightful and objective of the many that have been written on the subject. Read the information contained in *Case Study #2* and the Preface in *Camping In The Old Style* and complete the *Text* and *Context* questions listed below. Be prepared to discuss them in class.

* Text Questions to Consider:

1. What are the 3 goals/Ideals of Woodcraft as listed by Turner?
 - Achieve self-reliance frontier (Seton)
 - Embrace masculine rhetoric (Beard)



- Maintain a discomfort with modernity (Kephart, Nessmuk, Kreps)

2. Turner lists 3 characteristics/Ideals for modern camping that can be compared to the 3 characteristics/Ideals of Woodcraft.

How are they similar/different?

- Embrace consumer culture (The 300 pound gorilla)
- Aesthetic Appreciation (look, don't touch)
- Primacy of Wilderness as a resource (as opposed to anywhere else)

...heavy-handed practices of woodcraft vs. the light-handed techniques of LNT...
(see Boundary Waters poster)ΣΣ

- consumer oriented wilderness recreation industry
- loosening of gender strictures
- New is good – no anti-modern sentiment wilderness politics
- Giving wilderness primacy as a recreational resource vs doorstep camp
- Emphasizing aesthetic appreciation vs look don't touch
- Embracing consumer culture

3. How would you explain the "repackaging of nature?" Consumer culture's power to refashion **wilderness as an accessible and desirable tourist destination.**
(Wilderness Act – 1964)

4. What 3 justifications created the foundation of the modern wilderness movement? Are there tensions created among the 3?

- recreational resource unfettered access
- scientific reserve strict limitations
- moral needs to be done

After World War II, however, the threats to wilderness appeared on additional fronts.

- Resource extraction
- Facilities development
- Visitation = constituency - new tension

5. What is the Paradox of Wilderness?

- A recreational resource for backpackers
- A pristine ecological reserve for scientists

LNT provided a pragmatic balance for the wilderness movement.

6. Why was woodcraft lost in the battle over wilderness?

By the mid-1970s, it became clear that the wilderness advocacy community, along with a growing number of hikers, had chosen the latter path... Because many wilderness advocates believed that maintaining popular support for wilderness meant supporting liberal access for wilderness recreationists, the movement sought a pragmatic balance between use, political support, and preservation in the early 1970s. **Central to that strategy was a new wilderness recreation ethic.**

WOODCRAFT IS DEAD!

CHICHACOS, DUFFERS AND CHUMPS become the poster children to sink woodcraft.

(see Boundary Waters Poster)

...the wilderness system could no longer tolerate an “old-style pioneer encampment” like the one his wilderness survey trip discovered in 1972 with “felled trees, a couple of shelters built of boughs cut green and, lying in the middle of it all, a *Boy Scout Fieldbook*.” Rather, the wilderness advocacy community began to promote a new wilderness recreation ethic—minimal-impact camping—that promised to prop the doors to wilderness wide open for a better-educated wilderness visitor.

Broad-brush generalizations created by those who never knew woodcraft in its pristine state. Never read the masters. Driven by the manufacturers.

7. What accompanied the minimal-impact ethic?

Fulfilled the warnings of the woodcraft ethic. Open-arms adoption without question or realization and now even defend it – LNT Trainers unite.

The minimal-impact recreation ethic arrived along with a wave of literature, consumer goods, and marketing campaigns aimed directly at the growing backpacking market in the 1970s. The old woodcrafter’s criticism of the consumer economy seemed to disappear in the face of an industry that commanded a \$400 million market by the mid-1970s.

...many modern backpackers were becoming increasingly fluent and comfortable with a powerful language of consumerism....

8. What were the resulting changes to the wilderness constituency?

- | | |
|----------------------------------|------------------|
| • LANGUAGE | CHALLENGE |
| • GENDER – expanded constituency | SELF-REALIZATION |
| • VALUES / ETHICS - WHO’S | ESCAPE |

Where has adventure gone? Nanny Nation – Consumer protection - Risk Management

The new hiking guides not only abandoned the skills of woodcraft, they also abandoned its masculine rhetoric, supplanting it with language and metaphors that appealed to women and men alike. In part, this reflected a demographic shift, as more women ventured into wilderness in the 1970s...

For many Americans, particularly those involved in the 1960s social movements, the domineering language of the woodsman no longer offered solace. The changed language of the wilderness experience recast the promise of wilderness—for challenge, self-realization, and escape—in ways that emphasized minimizing one’s impact on wilderness, and by analogy, the environment as a whole. MISINFORMATION RULES

* Context Questions:

1. Who are Aldo Leopold, Bob Marshal and Benton Mackaye and how did they influence the argument for Wilderness? Early conservationist (1920s), wrote *A Sand County Almanac, Round River*. He was a “woodcrafter.” (photo)

Read A Fierce Green Fire.

In the 1920s, Aldo Leopold first described wilderness areas as a “means for allowing the more virile and primitive forms of outdoor recreation to survive.” Leopold envisioned wilderness as a refuge from modernity, where a working knowledge of nature would reconnect people and the land. (SEE Louv – *Last Child In The Woods*)

2. What were the 3 main ways in which they envisioned wilderness?

- a refuge from modernity
- a working knowledge of nature was required – self-reliance
- it would reconnect people and the land SOURCE?

3. How does the Wilderness Act define “wilderness”?

4. What was Harvey Manning’s thesis in 1972?

WOODCRAFT IS DEAD!

CHICHACOS, DUFFERS AND CHUMPS become the poster children to sink woodcraft.

5. What are the 3 limitations of LNT cited by Moskowitz & Ottey in *Leaving LNT Behind?*

1 ...we teach as much about the natural world and environmental ethics by what we do not say as by what we do say (Orr, 1994). Through the omission of basic eco-logical principles and limitations in scope, LNT breeds an inaccurate, disconnected worldview.

2. LNT also perpetuates disconnection between humans and the natural world.

3. LNT is silent and blind in regards to systemic environmental issues. It focuses mainly on the visual and immediate impacts land use behaviors have on the landscape.

Really Test Yourself: Extra Credit

1. What happened once a “codified ethic” was adopted by our field?
2. Who are the ultimate winners/losers in this battle?
3. Can this paradox be resolved without the elimination of woodcraft ideals?
4. Are woodcraft ideals an anachronism or do they still have a place in our modern lives? Can they coexist with LNT?
5. If we assume that the values of traditional woodcraft are as viable today, and in many ways more realistic than modern approaches, could we use these ideals as a foundation for a post-modern outdoor ethic?
6. Van Horn lists 3 obvious shifts in the world camping. List them.
 1. the **most important factors behind the dramatic changes in gear and technique is the fact that outdoor recreation mirrors the rest of our culture.** It, like so many aspects of western culture, has come to place a *strong emphasis on comfort, convenience, “newness”, reliance on technology, reduced personal responsibility, and continued consumption of goods.*
 2. *recreational campers have copied the gear and techniques of extreme outdoorsmen, such as mountain climbers.*

3. there has been a *dramatic shift away from the woodcraft techniques* of earlier days simply due to perception (real or not), that it was necessary.

Finally, *outdoor recreation has moved into so many play sports that the wilderness is no longer the reason in and of itself for camping, but rather it has become the stage for some other goal.*

7. Van Horn lists 3 major changes to each of the first 2 shifts. They are?

READ/View: Optional Reads in your Resources File

The Evolution of Modern Camping Skills, Attitudes, and Techniques by Paul Van Horn

From Woodcraft to 'Leave No Trace': Wilderness, Consumerism, and Environmentalism in Twentieth-Century America

Download the Turner PDF file -

<http://faculty.washington.edu/timbillo/Readings%20and%20documents/Wilderness/Turner%20%20Woodcraft%20to%20LNT.pdf>

Other Resources: Check your Case #2 Resources file for additional optional reads.

• Contact the instructor or search on -line to review the latest reports from KOA and the Coleman Company concerning camping statistics.

Elders Of The Tribe:

- Philosopher's Camp - Who was there? • W.H.H. Murray
- TR • Emerson Hough • Gifford Pinchot / John Muir
- Archibald Belaney • Bob Marshall / Benton Makaye / Aldo Leopold
- Smokey Bear
- Robert Baden-Powell • Daniel Carter Beard
- Camp-Fire Club of America and Boone and Crockett Club
- Harvey Manning