

## Case Study #3

### Camping As Commodity

#### Sporting Goods and the Shaping of Leisure

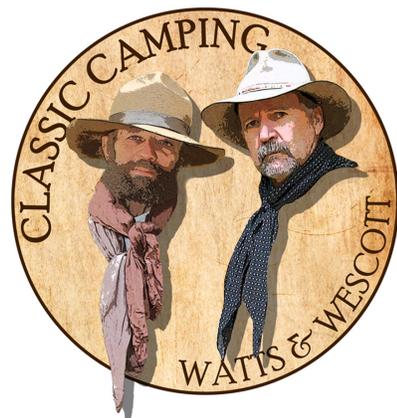
*Through the first half of the [20<sup>th</sup>] century, consumers who could read about sports in specialty publications tended to play sports with goods furnished through homecrafting, merchant importers, or local artisans. Not until the mid-century would they enjoy the products of large-scale, integrated 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?
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?
3. What shift took place in 1880 that made it possible for more people to acquire manufactured goods?

### **\* Context Questions:**

1. Look up the definition of these words - *Commodification, Hegemony, Institutionalization, Democratization*
2. How do goods shape practice in our field?
3. How have those who control hegemony in the outdoor industry

codified the field? Are there "rules" to our game?

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

**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 Resouces 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