

A Reworking of History

Camping is...

Compiled by David Wescott, 2005

Every genre of outdoor sport has its own heroes, literature and culture – everyone but camping. Before *Camping In The Old Style* was published in 2000, if there was a mention of the history of camping at all, it was a chapter or a few paragraphs in an obscure publication – *Working At Play*, *Americans On The Road*, etc. Now there are half a dozen excellent histories (De Abaitua, Hailey, Kropp, Young, Snyder, White), and even more *Youtube* channels as well as equipment manufacturers dedicated to the subject. DW

One recent note on a reference page – *Camping remains largely unexplored as an American cultural phenomenon, but authors have begun to look into its history, permutations, and elements in recent years.....*

CAMPING

camp·ing is.....

camp (kamp) - 1. A place where a body of men, such as soldiers, miners, or sportsmen, are temporarily lodged in tents, huts, or other makeshift shelters. 2. A place consisting of more or less permanent cabins or other shelters, used for vacationing or other recreational purposes...Having the qualities or style of camp.

noun: camping - the activity of spending a vacation living in a camp, tent, or camper. To spend time with nature, leaving behind much of the technological advances and "roughing it."

The act of encamping and living in tents in a camp

A place where tents, huts, or other temporary shelters are set up, as by soldiers, nomads, or travelers.

A cabin or shelter or group of such buildings: A collection of buildings, huts or tents in which people stay temporarily for a certain purpose.

*Camping is an outdoor recreational activity. The participants leave urban areas, their home region, or civilization and enjoy nature while spending one or several nights outdoors, usually at a campsite. Camping may involve the use of a tent, caravan, motorhome, cabin, a primitive structure, or no shelter at all. **Camping as a recreational activity became popular in the early 20th century.** Campers frequent national or state parks, other publicly owned natural areas, and privately owned campgrounds.*

WIKI - There is no universally held definition of what is and what is not camping. Camping is an outdoor activity involving overnight stays away from home in a shelter, such as a tent. Typically participants leave developed areas to spend time outdoors in more natural ones in pursuit of activities providing them enjoyment. To be regarded as "camping" a minimum of one night is spent outdoors, distinguishing

it from day-tripping, picnicking, and other similarly short-term recreational activities. Camping can be enjoyed through all four seasons. Luxury may be an element, as in early 20th century African safaris, but including accommodations in fully equipped fixed structures such as high-end sporting camps under the banner of "camping" blurs the line. Camping as a recreational activity became popular among elites in the early 20th century. With time, it grew more democratic, and varied. Modern campers frequent publicly owned natural resources such as national and state parks, wilderness areas, and commercial campgrounds. Camping is a key part of many youth organizations around the world, such as Scouting, which use it to teach both self-reliance and teamwork.

Camping is an escape from routine, restrictions of urban life, returning physically and spiritually rewarded. It is a pilgrimage to a sacred space...

Terence Young, *Heading Out: A History of American Camping* 2017

Camping is the simple life reduced to actual practice, as well as the culmination of the outdoor life.

Ernest Thompson Seton

Camp as if camping mattered. Camp for skill – how to do it well. Camp for style – do it the best way. Traditional camping creates impact, but is closer to being a sustainable activity than modern forms.

Adapted from Yvon Chouinard – *Let My People Go Surfing*

Camping and wilderness are not synonymous. We need to teach people that camping and its associated gear and ethics don't require wilderness. It can be done just beyond your doorstep.

David Wescott

Traditional camping in our modern era means mastering skills within acceptable limits of change.

David Wescott

Camping out may well be classed as one of the liberal arts, so wide is its application. Once the bulwarks of civilization are removed, veteran and tyro alike come under the same skies, and must conform to the same principles governing life in the open. Whether one hits the far trail, by canoe, pack train or back pack, or whether one camps within easy distance of team transportation, the same actualities of weather, insect life, camp cookery, and shelter confront one, and their successful solution must be achieved to make the camp an enjoyable memory.

Warren H. Miller, *Camping Out* 1918

Camping - for parties who go well equipped and guided by a native of the country, and who have adequate means of transportation, or for those who go into fixed camps and stay there until the vacation is over.

Horace Kephart, *Woodcraft and Camping* 1917

The word camp has of late been prostituted so that one is often at a loss to know what it means: but when I refer to a camp, the reader may understand that it is the real thing; and not one of those grotesque palaces in the woods, veneered with logs, and filled with an army of missing links dressed in livery. Such things are profane and a sacrilege to nature. Not only are they all of that, but their very presence is degrading to the real forester and hunter; they sap his manhood and transform a self-reliant, manly sort of fellow into a cringing, tip-taking degenerate. But, it was not of this that I intended to write; this story has naught to do with the effete luxury of degenerates, but is written for all those wholesome beings who love to sleep on sweet-smelling balsam, hear the music of the sizzling bacon and watch the gymnastics of the acrobatic flapjack.

Daniel Carter Beard, 1906

Go Camping!
Real Camping!
Steve Watts

Camping has two purposes: to make us acquainted with our own souls, and to renew our acquaintance with each other. To camp badly is to frustrate both.

Frank Chelley

camping - n. Formerly, a pastime involving tents, open fires, blanket rolls, and other appurtenances of the outdoor life. Presently, a pastime involving a motorized vehicle providing all the comforts of home but small enough so that nothing is quite as comfortable as it would be at home.

instinct - n. That mental quality which enables the lower animals to act without thinking. Man generally does the same, but without benefit of instinct.

tourist n. An individual armed with a camera, who goes about oohing and ahhing over the beauty of the sights he will see when his pictures come back from processing. Many tourists are possessed of a strong sense of history, and so make sure to leave a record of their passing.

From *The Curmudgeon's Dictionary* <http://www.virtualcrate.com/Curmudgeon>

Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson went on a camping trip. After a good meal, they lay down for the night and went to sleep. Some hours later, Holmes awoke and nudged his faithful friend. **Holmes said:** "Watson, look up and tell me what you see".

Watson said: "I see a fantastic panorama of countless stars".

Holmes: "And what does that tell you?"

Watson pondered for a moment: "Astronomically, it tells me that there are millions of galaxies and potentially billions of planets. Astrologically, I observe that Saturn is in Leo. Horologically, I deduce that the time is approximately a quarter past three. Theologically, I can see that God is all powerful and that we are small and insignificant. Meteorologically, I suspect that we will have a beautiful day tomorrow."

"Why? – What does it tell you, Holmes?"

Holmes was silent for a moment then spoke: "Someone has stolen our tent."

Like other elements of American society, camping was not beyond the reach of this modern process, which has *slowly altered the practice and material culture of camping*. In particular, modernization shaped camping in terms of *comfort and convenience*. As mentioned, camping was pilgrimage away from routine modern life and into a timeless nature where someone who "roughed it" could be transformed before returning to his or her permanent home. Nevertheless, offered manufacturers and retailers who provided camping equipment, and administrators who managed camping areas, a camper need not be completely bereft of modern devices and techniques in order to achieve transformation. If a camper chose to use a particular appliance, convenience, time- or effort-saving procedure or the like, then she could have a more efficient, calculable, predictable, or controlled experience that would eliminate the "unnecessary" roughness. Some of these innovations were aimed at increasing a camper's *safety or health* in the wild. Horace Kephart, for example, dedicated a chapter in 1917's *Camping and Woodcraft* to "*Accidents and Emergencies: Their Backwoods Treatment*." Along with the latest techniques for treating unconsciousness, convulsions, and poisoning, he dictated the components of a modern first aid kit. Most new technologies, however, were directed toward a camper's comfort. Sleeping on the ground was wonderful, for example, but an inflatable-mattress manufacturer would suggest that when a camper used its product, sleeping on the ground would be reliably restful.

Almost as soon as camping appeared as a popular recreation, some equipment manufacturers and retailers started to develop new camping products, while others adapted existing ones to camping. Nearly all began to advertise how their "gear" reduced bulk, prolonged food freshness, kept campers drier, warmer, cooler, bite-free, and more. The authors of new camping manuals similarly informed their readers how to avoid discomforts by purchasing particular products, by the use of special techniques, and by selecting the best locations. And, in the same vein, early twentieth-century campground managers modernized their areas by installing infrastructure, for example piped water, and by instituting such regulations as designated campsites. In each instance, these efforts included the inducement of reducing camping's challenges. By the 1920s, modernization had so impacted camping that one of the era's best-known authors, Elon Jessup, avoided any ambiguity by titling his how-to-camp manual *Roughing It Smoothly; How to Avoid Vacation Pitfalls*.

Terrance Young,

Heading Out: A History of American Camping 2017

PERMANENT CAMP

When camp is made in a certain locality with no intention of moving it until the party is ready to go home, it is usually called a 'permanent camp.'

This is a misuse of terms; for a camp of any kind is only a temporary biding place. '*The camp and not the soil,*' says Gibbon, '*is the native country of the genuine Tartar.*' When speaking of a camp in one place for a considerable time I shall call it a fixed camp. It differs from a shifting camp . . . in permitting . . . more comforts of home.

Horace Kephart, *Camping and Woodcraft*