

Case Study #2

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.



Case Study Resources

- *From Woodcraft to 'Leave No Trace': Wilderness, Consumerism, and Environmentalism in Twentieth-Century America* -
By James Morton Turner
- 1964 Wilderness Act
- *The Closing of the Frontier and The Significance of the Frontier in American History* - By Frederick Jackson Turner
- *The Evolution of Modern Camping Skills, Attitudes, and Techniques*
By Paul Van Horn *
- *Leaving LNT Behind: Toward a Holistic Land Use Ethic*
By David Moskowitz and Darcy Ottey
- *Classic Camping: The Frontier Connection* - By Steve Watts

* Text Questions to Consider:

1. What are the 3 goals/Ideals of Woodcraft as listed by Turner?
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?
3. How would you explain the "repackaging of nature?"
4. What 3 justifications created the foundation of the modern wilderness movement? Are there tensions created among the 3?
5. What is the Paradox of Wilderness?
6. Why was woodcraft lost in the battle over wilderness?
7. What accompanied the minimal-impact ethic?
8. What were the resulting changes to the wilderness constituency?

* Context Questions:

1. Who are Aldo Leopold, Bob Marshal and Benton Mackaye and how did they influence the argument for Wilderness?
2. What were the 3 main ways in which they envisioned wilderness?
3. How does the Wilderness Act define "wilderness"?
4. What was Harvey Manning's thesis in 1972?
5. What are the 3 limitations of LNT cited by Moskowitz & Ottey in *Leaving LNT Behind*?

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?

