

The Crafts - Campcraft & Woodcraft

Compiled by David Wescott, 2015-2025

For the purposes of our discussion, craft will be defined here as a “skill or ability in something.” When one dissects and studies its parts, it could become a science. And when one applies skills that go beyond simple function, it becomes an artform. One might also include trailcraft in this section. The distinction would be that some skills are used when getting to camp and others are used once you decide to stay put for a while. Navigation, route-finding, observation, or skills related to your choice of travel – canoe, horse, bicycle or foot - may be defined as trail skills – Trailcraft.

Campsite and shelters, hearth management and cooking, health and sanitation – skills that pertain to managing your home in the woods – may be called camp skills – Campcraft. Then there are the many skills - first aid, ropecraft, weather, toolcraft – that are used in camp and on the trail, so that the line of demarcation between the two is anything but clear.

In general, campcraft is the catch-all term because it implies a broader perspective. It also crosses disciplines – backpacking, canoe camping, horse packing, etc – the skills needed to live comfortably in the woods are collectively known as Campcraft.

WHAT IS CAMPCRAFT ?

Campcraft is the skill needed in camp and on trail to live safely and comfortably in the outdoors. Campcraft is one of the 4 Pillars of Traditional Camping. DW

*“The open air, the preparation of food, the tending of fires—
these are the great soothers.”*

Harry Roberts, *The Tramps Handbook*

Radical Campcraft

rad' i kel 1. **of or pertaining to roots or origins**; fundamental. Radical emphasizes the idea of going to the root of a matter, and this often *seems* immoderate in its thoroughness or completeness: *radical ideas; radical changes or reforms.*

Random House Collegiate Dictionary

*Years ago, we heard camp craft defined as “the ability to take care of one’s self and others in the outdoors and get joy and inspiration from it...mush is implied from this definition – first, that the camper possess the necessary skills and knowledge necessary for **comfort, safety and health**; and secondly, that by possessing these abilities, he is made free to take advantage of the aesthetic enjoyment and spiritual uplift which the outdoors always brings to those properly versed in woods ways.*

American Camping Association, *Campcraft*, 1955

The art of creating a camp that is safe, comfortable, beautifully simple, harmonious with your surroundings and sustainable requires craftsmanship. To do it well requires mastery. To achieve mastery, one must recognize the importance of history and tradition in one’s practice, and commit to a goal of mastery not status as the skills become a part of who you are. DW

The problem of camping is not to test the endurance of our bodies, but rather to find how nearly comfortable and safe our wits, backed by a knowledge of woodcraft, can make us, and for comfort we depend mainly upon two things – food and shelter.

Then if the emergency arise, the prospect of staying overnight away from the home camp has no terrors. Your woodsman simply proceeds to gather from material about him the means of making shelter and goes about the building of it in a manner that is calculated to give utmost comfort, beginning early enough in the day to assure this.
Camp Contentment, All Outdoors, July 1919

WHAT IS WOODCRAFT ?

Woodcraft skills and knowledge apply to living simply and harmoniously with the outdoors. Woodcraft is a working knowledge of the land.

**The one thing that “woodcraft” has going for it is longevity.
It has an international following, but hails from purely North American roots.
Woodcraft skills are the foundation of modern Bushcraft.**

Among those who prefer the traditional camping approach to living on the land, woodcraft has been associated with such skills for many years – mostly as it applies to working with youth. However, in the U.S., the term woodcraft has been usurped by the many woodworkers who use power tools and wood to pursue their hobby, thus confusing further an already confusing situation. It also limits the definition of skills to those used in the woods. In fact, most woodcraft manuals pay little attention to anything other than those materials and resources found in our woodlands. So do we also recognize desertcraft, plainscraft, mountaincraft, etc.?

Woodcraft is experiencing a renaissance in the U.S. It appears to be a direct reaction to the heavy-handed tactics of the technological sector of the modern outdoor field.

Traditional camping (Woodcraft) will act as a remedy for many of today’s maladies if we recapture its potential. (Read Nessmuk and Seton for familiar threads) DW

Traditional woodcraft has particular importance in American folklore, especially that relating to the early American frontier. Wikipedia

Woodcraft as Skill

When working with materials found in nature, we call it woodcraft.
Dan Beard

Woodcraft is something to do with what you have.
Ernest Thompson Seton, 1937

A working knowledge of woodcraft, campcraft and nature will materially increase the enjoyment and worthwhileness of the outing, no matter what the variety....
Frank Cheley, *Woodcraft and Campcraft* 1904

*Crafting is where our hands meet the natural world...
learn to make useful items from forest materials.*
Tim Smith, Jack Mountain Bushcraft

The myriad jingle-jangle of some of our modern outdoorsmen would make our ancestral buckskin men turn in their graves. Their packs were light and their

equipment meager, for these adventurous and picturesque men depended upon their skill and ingenuity in woodcraft rather than upon a lot of "things."

Ellsworth Jaeger, 1945

"Woodcraft may be defined as the art of finding one's way in the wilderness and getting along well by utilizing Nature's storehouse. *When we say that Daniel Boone, for example, was a master woodsman, we mean that he could confidently enter an unmapped wilderness, with no outfit but what was carried by his horse, his canoe, or on his own back, and with the intention of a protracted stay; that he could find his way through the dense forest without man-made marks to guide him; that he knew the habits and properties of trees and plants, and the ways of fish and game; that he was a good trailer and a good shot; that he could dress games and cure peltry, cook wholesome meals over an open fire, build adequate shelter against wind and rain, and keep himself warm through the bitter nights of winter—in short, that he knew how to utilize the gifts of Nature, and could hide comfortably in the wilderness without help from the outside."*

Horace Kephart, *Camping and Woodcraft*, 1917

The enjoyment of a vacation really begins with the first preparation in which the participant makes free use of his own skill and ingenuity... Wilderness handicraft defines one's ingenuity displayed in making with his own hands devices which render the vacation less irksome... The fewer the items in your kit, the more must you have knowledge of how to live comfortably outdoors and how to employ the artifices of the camping art and how to utilize Nature's primitive stores.

Claude P. Fordyce – *Trail Craft*, 1922

Woodcraft Style

Perhaps no other camping style brings us as close to Kephart's ideal of "a free life in the open air" as does the woodcraft camp. It is a style that best connects us to our pioneer forbears, those American woods runners of the 18th-century frontier, the wandering linen- and leather-clad backwoods scouts—the master woodsmen. SW

Craft and Authentic Experience – "Some may dismiss the handcrafted object as a nostalgic throwback to an earlier and supposedly simpler and happier time. But for many more, the handcrafted object is an authentic experience that is personalized, individualized and humanized." *Craft In America*

Craft is an act of worship

Spiritual transcendence through harmony with nature -Ruskin

Simplicity, utility, order, permanence, versatility, clean lines, and unadorned surfaces – Shaker

"A man's life and work should be integrated and not separated" – Chop Wood, Carry Water

Woodcraft as A Pedagogy – Interpersonal – Intrapersonal

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, 1933

Craft is self-reliance

Problem solving

Sustenance

Born of necessity craft provided a crucial link to human creativity

Read *Craftsmen of Necessity*

Craft is a noble pursuit

The curative value of craft-dignity of work

When two or three young people campout, they can live as a sort of family, especially if a grown-up be with them; but when a dozen or more are of the party, it is necessary to organize.....

With the fire came the grouping of several families around a common center. He learned that several men hunting, working, or fighting together had greater strength and ability than the same number of men singly. Thus he came to see the value of team play.

*To him the ways of the woods and how to live in them constituted the science of living. It was woodcraft. Woodcraft is lifecraft. **Ernest Thompson Seton 1912***

*When we were writing this book, sometimes we would ask each other, “**What does woodcraft mean?**” And then there would be a silence while we looked at one another, and tried to think of an explanation, until presently one would say, “Never mind - let us write another chapter.” So we went on writing about woodcraft till the book was finished. **We have done our best to tell of what we know about woodcraft; as to what it is, we leave it to our book to answer.***

But we know this about it - there is no subject more fascinating. The better you understand it, the more you rejoice in being alive, the more you long to go on living, and the more you desire to know of life. And though you may know only a little of woodcraft, yet that little will add such a sweetness and interest to life that you will never be dull or without something to think about, provided the open sky is above your head and the wind blows, the sun shines, or the rain beats on face.

We know that woodcraft is the most important of any field of study for the scout. All good scouts must be trained in woodcraft, and by woodcraft all their best qualities as scouts will be developed.

Even a little knowledge of woodcraft will help you far in life to find your way through unknown country; to steer a true course with or without aid from compass, sun, moon, or stars; to pick up and follow a trail; to read messages of good news or bad in the movements of birds or animals; to solve mysteries and read riddles by clues of bent grasses or stray feathers; to foretell weather: by the look of the clouds and the feel of the winds: and to find water and food. And then, apart from all this, from all the knowledge woodcraft gives you of birds, beasts, reptiles, or insects - of sun, moon, and stars - of winds, rains, and frosts – apart from wild nature, woodcraft teaches you about human nature, how to judge actions from causes, and from actions to judge effects. For the student of woodcraft, however humble, brings to bear on human nature a mind trained to precise observation and shrewd

reasoning. And it may be that he will learn what we have learnt who were born to woodcraft: to find his greatest contentment and truest happiness in the woods and fields, by the old English hedgerows, the quiet streams, and on the rolling downs; to know there is no music like the songs of birds, and no such thing of beauty as a wild rose of the wayside.

**Owen Jones and Marcus Woodward
Woodcraft for Scouts and Others 1911**

Woodcraft as Earth Connection

**Camping out may well be classed as one of the liberal arts*,
so wide is its application. Warren H. Miller, 1918**

To him who learns its meaning comes the joy of living, the ability to achieve, and the desire to serve.

The glory of the sunrise, the message of the pine trees, the sunlight on the rippling mountain lake, the story of the noise in the thicket, the call of the bird, the joy of handicraft, the sense of power in working with others - these are but part of the Woodcrafter's life. To him the trees at a distance shout their names and part of a bird melody tells all of the song.

The wise man said in the long ago: "There - is no royal road to learning" - no short cut. The one and only way is to use your eyes, your ears, your hands, your minds.: What you see or hear - seek till you find the answer.

Phillip D. Fagans The Boys Book of Woodcraft 1933

Woodcraft is lifecraft...the glory of the sunrise, the message of the pine trees, the sunlight on the rippling mountain lake, the story of the noise in the thicket, the call of the bird, the joy of handicraft, the sense of power in working with others - these are but part of the Woodcrafter's life. To him the trees at a distance shout their names and part of a bird melody tells all of the song.

The wise man said long ago: "There is no royal road to learning" - no short cut. The one and only way is to use your eyes, your ears, your hands, your minds. What you see or hear - seek till you find the answer.

This is the real meaning of woodcraft. Its message to the boys of to-day is that the road to fun and health and happiness is woodcraft.

Phillip D. Fagan Woodcraft 1904

Defining The Craft

David Wescott, 2020

"Its a tragedy of the first magnitude that millions of people have ceased to use their hands as hands. Nature has bestowed upon us this great gift which is our hands. If the craze for machinery methods continues, it is highly likely that a time will come when we shall be so incapacitated and weak that we shall begin to curse ourselves for having forgotten the use of the living machines given to us by God." **Mahatma Gandhi**

**There is an inherent pleasure in "making"
"Making is not the same as manufacturing"**

Skilled manual labor entails a systematic encounter with the material world, precisely the kind of encounter that gives rise to natural science. From its earliest practice, craft knowledge has entailed knowledge of the "ways" of one's materials - that is, knowledge of their nature, acquired through disciplined perception. At the beginning of the Western tradition, *Sophia* (wisdom) meant skill.
Shop Class As Soul Craft

With our contemporary renaissance of interest in traditional camping skills comes an attempt for leaders in the field to define what is that they do. This is done to inform customers, focus their vision, to attach oneself through historic context, or to benefit from the momentum of an already existing sub-field. We did this when we were trying to get a grip on how to bring primitive "survival" skills to the public.

Some were already calling them earth or ancestral skills. For others they were aboriginal living or wilderness living skills. It was when a few of us agreed on the use of "primitive technology" that things started coming together. The word "primitive" was an embattled term that came with lots of baggage. But, by defining and defending it, there is now a common ground where all of us who share an interest in this level of skill may gather. Prior to 1990 "primitive technology" was a rarely used term. Now it is a rallying point. Professionally, we need to do the same for Traditional/Classic/Heritage camping skills – may I suggest we reclaim the use of "Woodcraft" as our common ground.

How do we define campcraft, woodcraft, woodslore, bushcraft or any of the other terms used today to describe traditional camping skills and lore? What exactly are camping and woodcraft, and how do they relate to one another? The words are often used interchangeably, but they have very distinct meanings.

The focus is camping...but what does it have to do with woodcraft, lore and the other terms listed above? You will find that trying to come to consensus about how best to describe them is a "chicken and egg" quandary and some may find it as a purely academic exercise that doesn't matter at all. But, in order to learn woodcraft, one must spend time outdoors, - in order to spend extended periods of time outdoors comfortably, one must learn to camp well – and in order to camp well, one must have a working knowledge of the vast field of woodslore that affects the campers experience....and so it

goes.

This may be a ridiculous exercise but right now a variety of complementary and contrasting terms are used to describe one topic. Personally, I'd like a bit more precision to the topic, so here we go. DW

*Mastering tradition is honorable
If you don't keep up with changing times, you can't maintain tradition
Japanese Saying*

*When you get to a cliff, turn around and take a giant step forward.
David Brower*

craft (kraft) - 1. Skill or ability in something. Especially in handwork or the arts; proficiency; expertness. 2. An occupation or trade, especially one requiring manual dexterity. 3. To make by hand. 4. Indicates work, art or practice: for example woodcraft.

A nod must go to Mors Kochanski (and ultimately Mears) for maintaining the importance of craft in the woodsmans skillset. When properly defined, it is perhaps the single most important part of coming to an understanding of the importance of maintaining these traditions (refer to Hahn's "Declines")

Viewed in this way it is easy to see the importance of maintaining traditions such as the Sami *duodji*, northern birchcrafts, or Great Basin wetland traditions. Crafting brings one to a sense of self and a sense of place – both are insights critical to today's society, culturally and environmentally. (Henderson, Stegner, Berry).

Craft is the realm of the "savage boy inventor."

CRAFTING

Craft is a skill

Craft is learned from a master craftsman – apprentice, journeyman, master – The Guild
Craft can be handicraft, studio craft, applied craft, tradecraft (rural craft-lost arts)

Craft is freedom of expression

American Frontier Pluralism-Freedom

Craft can be folk art – outside of the mainstream

Uniformity as a status symbol – turn this concept on its head

Craft is legacy – it is timeless Crafts our rooted in our heritage and reverence for the "the living link" handmade - a living archive of our lifestyle

"if you hopped into your time machine, you'd find craft everywhere"

"There is nothing like American craft as a powerful reflection of our history, our culture, our society, and our common purpose. It is a much a part of our collective DNA as our imagination."

Craft is an act of worship

spiritual transcendence through harmony with nature - Ruskin

Simplicity, utility, order, permanence, versatility, clean lines, and unadorned surfaces – Shaker

“A man’s life and work should be integrated and not separated” – *Chop Wood, Carry Water*

Craft is Living Tradition

*In this vein, Alexandra Bennett passed on her knowledge to Holt and Martinelli at no cost. When Bennett tells this story, she refers to Martinelli as “young Sam.” Her tone is imbued with fondness, yet there’s also a hint of something else, perhaps reverence, even deference. **This passing of a time-honored cultural tool between craftspeople is partly a personal exchange, but it’s also a cultural one. What she has cared for lives on.***

CRAFT AS ART

Craft as art - Craft is functional beauty

Applied art

It has both functional and aesthetic beauty

utility will always be on the side of the beautiful thing – Oscar Wilde - 1908

It is applied to practical arts

Crafts are place-based – relates to the land

indigenous materials

Craft is “materials-based” – exposed structural elements – canoe, snowshoe

It uses base materials – the art and science

Craft has a mind-body connection

Self-expression unity of heart, hand and mind – John Ruskin

Creates a transformative state - *Every man is poor who cannot create* –

Oscar Wilde 1908

“Learn from our hands in ways that are not possible with our minds alone.”

Jimmy Carter

Arts & Crafts Movement – a return to hand made objects and the simple life would provide an antidote to the ills of society...

Where an artist seeks to express his individuality and creativity, a shokunin concentrates on a quality of execution. Where an artist can be selective in undertaking work, a shokunin prides himself on his ability to take on any and all jobs – a shokunin is always busy. He does not wait for inspiration: he concentrates on doing the work quickly and professionally. Shokunin tend to speak disparagingly of artists: originality, in their view, is no substitute for skill. By the same reasoning, shokunin are not embarrassed to copy what they admire; to them utility and quality far outweigh originality. Only shokunin of consummate skill and long experience dare sign their work, and such signatures are more a certification of quality than an assertion of originality.

The Ido Craftsmen

THE CRAFTSMAN

*Craftsmanship is a way of thinking and doing where humanity is in tune with nature, not working against it.... Craftsmanship—in the fullest sense of the word—is a way of life. It is about **fully engaging our heads, hands, and hearts** in our labors. It is about adhering to a set of values and principles that produce objects that are not only functional and beautiful but also make for a sustainable lifestyle.*

The Craftsmanship Initiative

The craftsman style is one of participator, not spectator – Moore

The craftsman of yesterday might look like a poorly informed man only before we take a linger and better look. His tools might appear pathetically poor, but his ways were honest and lasting and beautiful to an extent that is today deemed over and above requirements. How poor and dishonest and ugly and temporary are the results of so many modern workers whose constant aim is more to make the most money from their profession instead of producing the most honest and beautiful and lasting things. I feel that a good way of studying the conscience and personality of the anonymous pioneer American - so that I may emulate some of his ways - is by collecting and analyzing the tools with which he worked.....recapture what I believe to be the good things of the past...It seems that they put so much of themselves into these implements that just being with them is like being with the people who created them. Closing your hand around a worn wooden hammer handle is very much like reaching back into the years and feeling the very hand that wore it smooth.

Eric Sloane, *Diary of an Early American Boy*

Behind making your own stuff there's another level: making your own tools to make your own stuff...Whistle while you work and revel in nostalgia. Tell the twentieth century to go jump.

The Last Whole Earth Catalog

In the future the role of craftsmen will be more important than ever before...
a craftsperson's life is not a career, it's a calling.

David Pye – *The Workmanship of Certainty vs The Workmanship of Risk*
Japanese saying - *Your hands are your second brain.*

8 Characteristics of a Craftsman – Nebo Agency

1. They are motivated by mastery rather than attaining a status.
2. They are willing to make sacrifices in finances, free time and relationships.
3. They believe in the end-value of what they are making.
4. They balance a passion for history and tradition with a drive to innovate.
5. They plan and think things through first.
6. They immerse themselves and can maintain focus on their work.
7. They put in the hours for their craft to become a habit of daily life.
8. They know that you've never really "made it".

Nine Important Principles of Woodcraft

[see also: The Indian's Creed]

This is a time when the whole nation is turning toward the Outdoor Life, seeking in it the physical regeneration so needful for continued national existence -- is waking to the fact long known to thoughtful men, that those live longest who live nearest to the ground -- that is, who live the simple life of primitive times, divested, however, of the evils that ignorance in those times begot.

Consumption, the white man's plague since he has become a house race, is vanquished by the sun and air, and many ills of the mind also are forgotten when the sufferer boldly takes to the life in tents.

Half our diseases are in our minds and half in our houses. We can safely leave the rest to the physicians for treatment.

Sport is the great incentive to Outdoor Life: Nature Study is the intellectual side of sport.

I should like to lead this whole nation into the way of living outdoors for at least a month each year, reviving and expanding a custom that as far back as Moses was deemed essential to the national well-being.

Not long ago a benevolent rich man, impressed with this idea, chartered a steamer and took some hundreds of slum boys up to the Catskills for a day in the woods. They were duly landed and told to "go in now and have a glorious time." It was like gathering up a net full of catfish and throwing them into the woods, saying, "Go and have a glorious time."

The boys sulked around and sullenly disappeared. An hour later, on being looked up, they were found in groups under the bushes, smoking cigarettes, shooting "craps," and playing cards -- the only things they knew.

Thus the well-meaning rich man learned that it is not enough to take men out of doors. We must also teach them to enjoy it.

The purpose of this book is to show how Outdoor Life may be followed to advantage.

Nine leading principles are kept in view:

(1) This movement is essentially for recreation.

(2) Camp-life. Camping is the simple life reduced to actual practice, as well as the culmination of the outdoor life.

Camping has no great popularity to-day, because men have the idea that it is possible only after an expensive journey to the wilderness; and women that it is inconvenient, dirty, and dangerous.

These are errors. they have arisen because camping as an art is not understood. When intelligently followed, camp-life must take its place as a cheap and delightful way of living, as well as a mental and physical savior of those strained or broken by the grind of the over-busy world.

The wilderness affords the ideal camping, but many of the benefits can be got by living in a tent on a town lot, a piazza, or even a housetop.

(3) Self-government with Adult Guidance. Control from without is a poor thing when you can get control from within. As far as possible, then, we make these camps self-governing. Each full member has a vote in affairs.

(4) The Magic of the Campfire. What is a camp without a campfire? -- no camp at all, but a chilly place in a landscape, where some people happen to have some things.

When first the brutal anthropoid stood up and walked erect -- was man, the great event was symbolized and marked by the lighting of the first campfire.

For millions of years our race has seen in this blessed fire, the means and emblem of light, warmth, protection, friendly gathering, council. All the hallow of the ancient thoughts, hearth, fireside, home is centered in its glow, and the home-tie itself is weakened with the waning of the home-fire. Not in the steam radiator can we find the spell; not in the water coil; not even in the gas log; they do not reach the heart. Only the ancient sacred fire of wood has the power to touch and thrill the chords of primitive remembrance. When men sit together at the campfire they seem to shed all modern form and poise, and hark back to the primitive -- to meet as man and man -- to show the naked soul. Your campfire partner wins your love, or hate, mostly your love; and having camped in peace together, is a lasting bond of union -- however wide your worlds may be apart.

The campfire, then, is the focal center of all primitive brotherhood. We shall not fail to use its magic powers.

(5) Woodcraft Pursuits. Realizing that manhood, not scholarship, is the first aim of education, we have sought out those pursuits which develop the finest character, the finest physique, and which may be followed out of doors, which in a word, make for manhood.

By nearly every process of logic we are led primarily to Woodcraft -- that is, Woodcraft in a large sense -- meaning every accomplishment of an all-round Woodman -- Riding, Hunting, Camper-craft, Scouting, Mountaineering, Indian-craft, First aid, Star-craft, Signaling, and Boating. To this we add all good outdoor Athletics and Sports, including Sailing and Motoring, and Nature Study, of which Wild Animal Photography is an important branch; but above all, Heroism.

Over three hundred deeds or exploits are recognized in these various departments, and the members are given decorations that show what they achieved. (See Woodcraft Manual.)

(6) Honors by Standards. The competitive principle is responsible for much that is evil. We see it rampant in our colleges to-day, where every effort is made to discover and develop a champion, while the great body of students is neglected. That is, the ones who are in need of physical development do not get it, and those who do not need it are over-developed. The result is much unsoundness of many kinds. A great deal of this would be avoided if we strove to bring all the individuals up to a certain standard. In our non-competitive tests the enemies are not "the other fellows," but time and space, the forces of Nature. We try not to down the others, but to raise ourselves. Although application of this principle would end many of the evils now demoralizing college

athletics. Therefore, all our honors are bestowed according to world-wide standards. (Prizes are not honors.) (See Woodcraft Manual.)

(7) Personal Decoration for Personal Achievements. The love of glory is the strongest motive in a savage. Civilized man is supposed to find in high principle his master impulse. But those who believe that the men of our race, not to mention boys, are civilized in this highest sense, would be greatly surprised if confronted with figures. Nevertheless, a human weakness may be good material to work with, I face the facts as they are. All have a chance for glory through the standards, and we blazon it forth in personal decorations that all can see, have, and desire.

(8) A Heroic Ideal, The boy from ten to fifteen, like the savage, is purely physical in his ideals. I do not know that I ever met a boy that would not rather be John L. Sullivan than Darwin or Tolstoi. Therefore, I accept the fact and seek to keep in view an ideal that is physical, but also clean, manly, heroic, already familiar, and leading with certainty to higher things.

(9) Picturesqueness in Everything, Very great importance should be attached to this. The effect of the picturesque is magical, and all the more subtle and irresistible because it is not on the face of it reasonable. The charm of titles and gay costumes, of the beautiful in ceremony, phrase, dance, and song, are utilized in all ways.

Rustic Elegance

Watts & Wescott, 2014

The Woodcraft Camp style is defined not so much by a collection of hard-and-fast rules, but rather by a set of woodsy principles and preferences that lead us naturally to make certain choices in our gear and practices:

- **The woodcraft camper tends to prefer an open-face shelter over the closed-in environment of a wall tent, a wedge tent or pyramid.**

“It admits of a bright fire in front, without which a forest camp is just no camp at all to me. I have suffered enough in close, dark, cheerless, damp tents... This is why I discard all close, canvas tents.”
Nessmuk, Woodcraft

The masters of Classic Camping in the Golden Age were comfortable and experienced with a variety of tents used in a variety of camping styles from tramping to campaigning. Yet, when camping in the Woodcraft Style they all had their favorite open-faced shelters: Nessmuk and his Shanty Tent, Warren Miller and his Forrester, Townsend Whelen and his Hunter’s Lean-to, Dan Beard and his Campfire Tent, and Horace Kephart with his George/Tarp Tent. Even Henry David Thoreau, the sage of Walden Pond, preferred “a shed-shaped tent...like a Yankee-baker” designed to “catch and reflect the heat” allowing “you to be drying while you are sleeping”.

- **The woodcraft camper looks to the open fire not only to warm his shelter, but prefers it to the camp stove for cooking.**

“No matter where the old camper may be, no matter how long a time may have elapsed since last he slept in the open, no matter how high or low a social or official position he may now occupy, it takes but one whiff of the smoke of an open fire, or one whiff of the aroma of frying bacon, to send him back again to the lone trail... There is no use talking about it, there is no use arguing about it, there is witchcraft in the smell of the open fire, and all the mysteries and magic of the Arabian Nights dwell in the odor of frying bacon.” **Dan Beard , *Camplore and Woodcraft***

He is the master of fire lays—the trapper’s fire, the reflector, the tipi, and the council fire. He can build a fire in the rain, the snow or the wind. He can start it with one match—or to draw himself more closely to the fires of the pioneer past, he might choose to light it with flint-and-steel .

- **The woodcraft camper’s kit might be lightweight if tramping, or middleweight if travelling by other means-- but never cumbersome or overbearing. There is a “just enough” and a “just right” quality about his gear—making for an efficient and comfortable, if somewhat Spartan, camp.**

“An old campaigner is known by the simplicity and fitness of his equipment. He carries few ‘fixings’, but every article has been well tested and it is the best that his purse can afford. He has learned by hard experience how steep are the mountain trails and how tangled the undergrowth and downwood in the primitive forest. He has learned too how to fashion on the spot many substitutes for ‘boughten’ things that we consider necessary at home...Ideal outfitting is to have what we want, when we want it, and not to be bothered with anything else.”

Horace Kephart, *Camping and Woodcraft*

He might carry a pot chain or a wire hook or two, but more often prefers to suspend his few simple tin or aluminum pots over the fire with handcrafted cranes, wooden hooks and dingle sticks. Leaving his cast iron at home, he prefers his bannock cooked in a frying pan and his biscuits baked in a folding reflector oven. Packs, pack baskets and a few wooden boxes carry his gear. Camp furniture may include a folding piece or two—or maybe just a handy log or stump. Camp light is by candle or kerosene, and the bed is most often at ground level—a browse bed, a stretcher bed or a couple of sheepskins.

- **The woodcraft camper’s tool kit harkens back to pioneer days. The tomahawk, belt knife and clasp knife of the frontier scout are present in the hatchets, sheath knives and pocket folders commonly used by the masters of Classic Camping. To this kit the woodcraft camper might add a folding saw, a camp spade and a handful of tacks, nails and copper wire.**

“The axe is the one necessary tool of the woodsmen; the axe occupies the same position to the wilderness man that the chest of tools does to the carpenter...the axe is almost a sacred tool...”

Dan Beard, *The Book of Camp-Lore and Woodcraft*

With these simple tools the woodcraft camper can build and furnish a camp, cook his food and warm both body and soul. Demonstration of the proper use and maintenance of these tools is required for full initiation into the fraternity of the Woodcraft Camp.

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“So from generations of wilderness men and women came the outdoor lore and wildwood wisdom of today...The jingle-jangle gadgets of some of our modern outdoorsmen would make our ancestral buckskin men turn in their graves. Their packs were light and their equipment meager, for these adventurous and picturesque wilderness men depended upon their skill and ingenuity in woodcraft rather than upon a lot of ‘things’....Let us, then conjure up these wilderness men of the past...Let us ask them to sit with us in council around the campfire. And in the shifting ghostlike wreaths of the smoke we may catch glimpses of them in fringed buckskins with tomahawk and long rifle.”

Ellsworth Jaeger, *Wildwood Wisdom*

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Welcome to the Woodcraft Camp