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"WHERE THE BLAZED TRAIL CROSSES THE BOULEVARD": GEAR, FASHION, AND OUTFITTING IN EARLY RECREATIONAL WILDERNESS CAMPING, 1880-1920

An Abstract of a Thesis

Submitted

in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

Brian Beauvais

University of Northern Iowa

July 2012

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ABSTRACT

During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, American culture experienced a profound fascination with primitivism, wilderness, and raw nature. Numerous outdoor activities became increasingly popular as Americans sought to revitalize the national vigor they envisioned as inextricably connected to a life close to nature. One of these activities was woodcraft camping; that is, a minimalistic form of wilderness recreation that valued simplicity and self-sufficiency as opposed to luxuriant idleness. Woodcraft campers expressed a deep dissatisfaction with what they considered to be the mind-numbing, spirit-crushing emptiness of modern life. In the wilderness, they beheld one of the remaining vestiges of reality and authenticity.

This thesis examines the literature of woodcraft camping in an effort to understand how and why early campers formulated alternative identities as outdoorsmen and women to counteract their perceived detachment from the reality of the natural world. It also considers the relationship between outdoor recreation and consumer culture, specifically exploring the trajectory of the renowned outfitting firm Abercrombie and Fitch. The values campers expressed through their material consumption exhibited a stance towards materialism incongruous with that of mainstream culture. Principles of simplicity, practicality, and authenticity were infused within the gear and fashion of wilderness camping. The result was an aesthetic sensibility that ultimately enshrined vernacular authenticity as one of the hallmarks of American consumer taste.

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This Study by: Brian Beauvais

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INTRODUCTION

Only a few pages into *The Forest*, Stewart Edward White's 1903 book on wilderness travel and primitive camping, White recounted an experience where he, his fellow woods-rat Dick, and their "true woodsman" of a setter Deuce, found themselves in a nameless, faceless settlement on the periphery of civilization. This, as White explained, was their "jumping-off place." They had reached the place where civilization ended and the wilderness began, where the primitive and the civilized rub elbows for but a spell. Beyond this nominal community White, Dick, and Deuce would enter a world entirely different from the one they were escaping. And as such, it held a special significance in the scope of their journey.

As White and his companions roamed the settlement in preparation for jumping-off, they perceived the distinctive qualities of life lived on the cusp civilization. "In the dress of the inhabitants is a dash of color, a carelessness of port," White observed. "Here the faint forest flavor, the subtle invisible breath of freedom, stirs faintly across men's conventions." In their language, White related, "one hears strange, suggestive words and phrases – arapajo, capote, arroyo, the diamond hitch, cache, butte, coule, muskegs, portage, and a dozen others coined into the tender of daily use."[1] Clearly, in these parts White felt the strictures of civilization loosening their grasp. Life was different in such a unique environment. One can deduce from White's description that he felt it was more down to earth and realistic. As opposed to the unbearably mannered existence found among the professional drones and affected society women of modern urban civilization, the inhabitants of this provincial hamlet had some basis in reality as White perceived it.

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[1] Stewart Edward White, *The Forest* (New York: The Outlook Company, 1903), 24.

Such was the charm of the "jumping-off place." It was the place where the all-important transformation occurred. "In the symbol of this little town you loose your hold on the world of made things," White explained, "and shift for yourself among the unchanging conditions of nature."[2] In a sense, the change to which White referred was strictly a matter of self-identification. It was a question of whether one would persist to identify with the malleable world of the civilized, with all its pejorative baggage, or pursue a deeper understanding of reality through closer contact with the untainted natural world. Obviously, the point of such outdoor excursions for White and his friends was to grasp the latter. "You glide as gently from the artificial to the natural life as do the forest shadows from night to day," White suggested elsewhere, shedding light on the attitude towards this switch to the natural.[3] Metamorphosis complete, White and his fellow travelers were seemingly ready to disembark. But there was one thing these primed woodsmen had to do before they hit the trail into the backcountry. They needed to go shopping.

In bustling frontier hamlets like the one in which White, Dick, and Deuce found themselves, there almost always existed a firm dedicated to outdoor supplies and familiar with outfitting "logging-camps as well as sportsmen."[4] While these businesses where seemingly crude and quotidian in many respects, it is noteworthy that their enthusiastic customers often regarded them with a special reverence. As White described the particular establishment his clique patronized on that day: "You enter through a narrow

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[2] Ibid.
[3] Stewart Edward White, *The Mountains* (New York: McClure, Phillips & Co., 1904), 264.
[4] George Bird Grinnell, *Harper's Camping and Scouting: An Outdoor Guide for American Boys* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1911), 165.

door, and find yourself facing two dusky aisles separated by a narrow division of goods, and flanked by wooden counters...in the dimness of these two aisles lurks the spirit of the wilds."[5] In some way, White's heightened faculties of observation were able to discern the aura of the great outdoors in the utilitarian merchandise of the outfitter's shop.

While perusing the various gear and supplies sold by the establishment, camp-life all of a sudden became tangible. The men could sense the spirit of the wilds in the array of products the shop exhibited. "The reek of the camp-fires is in its buckskin, of the woods in its birch bark, of the muskegs in its sweet grass, of the open spaces in its peltries, of the evening meal in its coffees and bacons, of the portage trail in the leather of the trump-lines," White mused.[6] In the minds of the camping party, these inanimate objects took on meanings beyond their recognized utilitarian uses. In some sense, the products acted as surrogates for the wilderness experience itself.

The ability of the outfitter's products to evoke in White's mind the spirit of life in the wilds is revealing. It brings to the fore serious questions about the role of consumerism in how people have related to the natural world – and as it applies to this study, the wilderness experience of early camping enthusiasts.

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In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, or as the historical nomenclature would say, the Gilded Age and Progressive Era, Americans turned towards nature as never before; as a place of play and re-creation. Interest in the outdoors and the

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[5] White, *The Forest,* 25.
[6] White, *The Forest,* 26; Quick definition: "muskeg" is an acidic bog-like soil found in Artic and Sub-Artic regions.

natural world exploded among a diverse cross-section of the American populace. One of the more extreme branches of this nature craze entailed making prolonged sojourns into wild country for the sake of recreation, health, and/or pleasure. Today we would label this pastime "backcountry camping." At that time, it did not yet possess an easily identifiable moniker. This primitive form of camping, as opposed to that performed near civilization or with a superfluity of civilized luxuries, was intended as a means by which men and women with the proper pluck and fortitude could engage nature on nature's terms. It was an avenue by which they could escape the adulterations of urban life, or the sphere of civilization altogether, and experience reality as it pertained to both their own identities and the world around them. Untainted nature was the refuge of truth in the minds of many Americans. Getting close to nature – whatever that meant – functioned as a form of pilgrimage towards the real.

Americans had always been on close terms with the natural world, or so the national myth went, but prior to the turn of the twentieth century American's relationship with nature was characterized largely by the experiences of pioneers, frontiersmen, miners, and trappers. These men and women sought to domesticate nature and bring it under the yoke of civilization. For them wild, untamed nature was anathema to everything they set out to achieve. Ironically, their progress at the expense of nature brought about their ultimate demise.

When the U.S. Census of 1890 was no longer able to locate a discernable frontier, the era of the spirited American pioneer seemed at its conclusion. But many Americans were not ready for the wilderness experience to cease to be available to them as a way of

life. "With a considerable sense of shock," historian Roderick Nash contends, "Americans of the late nineteenth century realized that many of the forces which had shaped their national character were disappearing."[7] Multitudes of those hungry for exploration and spiritual stimulation were behooved to recreate the frontier experience in new forms. Being that the occupational wilderness life seemed to be on the wane, many men and women spent their leisure time in the woods instead. As this recreational orientation towards nature increased in popularity, the wilderness camper emerged as a distinct breed of outdoorsman.

At a superficial glance, frontiersman and wilderness campers might be hard for the senses to distinguish. They primarily performed the same activities. Both their habits involved going into the wilds with few of the luxuries of civilization, spending significant amounts of time in isolation from the civilized world, and using nature as the primary resource for their survival. But if both the frontiersman and the primitive camper largely performed the same motions, the dispositions they carried onto the wilderness stage were worlds apart. Whereas the hardy frontiersman largely knew nature as an occupational setting, and as something of an opponent, the wilderness camper understood nature entirely through the lens of leisure. In addition, the camper witnessed nature as a consecrated earth-space which needed to be engaged on the correct terms for a true and authentic communion to take place.

Without getting too detailed too soon, at this point it should suffice to say that campers valued simplicity over excess, austerity over ornamentation, and poise over the

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[7] Roderick Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind, 4th ed.* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), 145.

ungainly. "The true way for the man in the woods to attain the elusive best in his wilderness experience is to go as light as possible," Stewart Edward White preached to his congregation of fellow woodsmen.[8] There was nothing more offensive to the true outdoorsmen than some inept tenderfoot who relied on gear rather than skill and know-how, who wore the wrong clothes and violated the codes of simplicity. In correlation, campers placed a great deal of emphasis on a familiarity with woodcraft, or, that is, as author Edward Breck explained, "the faculty of being at home in the wilderness; of living on intimate terms with nature; not only knowing her inmost secrets but also how to use those secrets for the forest-dweller's comfort and safety."[9] Woodcraft was the code of the camper. It dictated how he or she went about their time in the wilderness. Moreover, woodcraft was often framed in nationalistic terms, as an "American inheritance" as one author put it.[10] For a camper to tote around a piece of paraphernalia when nature could easily be utilized, or mishandle a task such as building a fire in the proper, most expedient fashion was a pure mark of shame. A gaffe in the woods was liable to cause the likes of Jim Bridger, Daniel Boone, and Davy Crockett to roll in the grave. Given such serious prohibitions, a big part of going about the thing correctly undoubtedly meant having the right stuff and possessing the necessary knowledge to radiate the qualities of a true woodsman. To do otherwise would be to violate a taboo of the American wilderness experience.

Although wilderness campers – through their stern emphasis on simplicity and minimalism – meant their outdoor voyages to act as symbolic refutations of the

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[8] White, *The Forest,* 5.
[9] Edward Breck, *The Way of the Woods* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1908), 163.
[10] Grinnell, xvi.

consumer society with which they were growing increasingly disillusioned, proper habits of consumption still weighed heavily upon their minds. But expressions of cultural dissatisfaction, whatever form they happened to take, are revealing. In the case of primitive campers, the importance they placed on utility over appearance and simplicity over extravagance articulated a different orientation towards consumption than the one dominant among most Americans engaged in the consumer culture.

There was clearly a fascinating dynamic between material consumption and wilderness recreation. On one hand, campers loathed the crass commercialism and "conspicuous consumption" they witnessed in their daily lives.[11] On the other, they could use that same culture of material goods to formulate alternative identities and refute the false Victorian culture they found so intolerable. In other words, when the consumption of goods was performed correctly, it could express ideological positions in profound opposition to society at-large.

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Recently, historians have disseminated a wealth of information on the commercialization of outdoor recreation and how it was related to the budding environmental movement. These have mainly focused on the growing industry of nature-tourism, the reviled but constructive role of the railroads, and the preponderance of wilderness resorts and hotels accommodating American's desires to experience nature, even if it be from arms length. Lost in the fog of this growing scholarship on

[11] Thorstein Veblen coined the term "conspicuous consumption" in his sardonic work, *The Theory of the Leisure Class*.

environmental consumption have been the various outfitting firms and their relation to environmental thought.[12]

In a world dominated by consumer products, understanding how people have used their consumption habits to define themselves and their relation to the natural world can reveal interesting details on how nature has surreptitiously enmeshed itself, often indistinguishably, within a modern world outwardly devoid of anything natural. Anyone taking on this task is undoubtedly indebted to the work of historian Jennifer Price.[13] While a lot of historical scholarship comes off as irrelevant, uninspired pedantry that takes itself way too seriously, Jennifer Price has produced a culturally hip rainbow of a read amidst what is otherwise a largely monochromatic genre of literature. While I admire both her accessible and stylish mode of presentation, I must admit I am utterly devoid of the linguistic skill and logical grace necessary to replicate it. But what I can do is take a cue from Price's work and attempt to explain nature's place in the consumer society of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era, and vise versa.

Gilded Age and Progressive Era camping has allowed those bound to the historical discipline to explore issues of identity, anti-modernism, class, race, gender, as well as how Americans have related to the environment. Of particular pertinence to this

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[12] Matthew W. Klingle, "Spaces of Consumption in Environmental History," *History and Theory* 42 (December 2003), 94-110; David Strauss, "Towards a Consumer Culture: 'Adirondack Murray' and the Wilderness Vacation," *American Quarterly* 39, no.2 (Summer 1987), 270-286; Kevin Michael DeLuca, "Trains in the Wilderness: The Corporate Roots of Environmentalism," *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 4, no.4 (Winter 2001), 633-652; Peter J. Schmitt, *Back To Nature: The Arcadian Myth in Urban America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1969); Marguerite S. Shaffer, *See America First: Tourism and National Identity, 1880-1940* (Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2001); Paul S. Sutter, *Driven Wild: How the Fight against Automobiles Launched the modern Wilderness Movement* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2002); Cindy S. Aron, *Working At Play* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).

[13] Jennifer Price, *Flight Maps: Adventures With Nature in Modern America* (New York: Basic Books, 1999)

study is how historians have characterized early camping and woodcraft as it related to the modern culture of consumption. Some have represented the reorientation towards nature perceptible around the turn of the twentieth century as a rejection of modernism and a sincere attempt to find concrete meaning in a world quickly eroding under the juggernaut of commercialism.[14] Others have characterized it as merely another complicit branch of the ever-growing consumer society. According to this latter view, camping was just a form of recreation with no larger cultural meanings beyond novel amusement and leisure-time consumption.[15]

Where the interpretation of camping as a hollow, consumer-driven amusement falters rests in its failure to take seriously the genuine expressions of dissatisfaction with modernism that wilderness camping and all of its accompanying acts of consumption expressed. While the study of consumption has often been maligned or treated with contemptuous scorn, I cannot articulate enough that how consumers choose to express themselves via consumption is not ersatz and depthless, as some would maintain. The choices early campers made in selecting the gear, clothing, and supplies for their outfits were culturally meaningful behaviors that expressed profound anxieties and desires. Such actions – however petty and superficial they often seem – demand respect from

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[14] Roderick Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind, 4th ed.* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001); James Morton Turner, "From Woodcraft to 'Leave No Trace': Wilderness, Consumerism, and Environmentalism in Twentieth-Century America," *Environmental History* 7, no.3 (July 2002), 462-484; David E. Shi, *The Simple Life: Plain Living and High Thinking in American Culture.* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985); Sutter, Paul S. *Driven Wild: How the Fight against Automobiles Launched the Modern Wilderness Movement.* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2002).

[15] David Strauss, "Toward a Consumer Culture: 'Adirondack Murray' and the Wilderness Vacation," *American Quarterly* 39, no.2 (Summer 1987), 270-286; Phoebe Kropp, "Wilderness Wives and Dishwashing Husbands: Comfort and the Domestic Arts of Camping in America, 1880-1910," *Journal of Social History* 43, no.1 (Fall 2009), 5-30; Cindy S. Aron, *Working At Play: A History of Vacations in the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999); Peter J. Schmitt, *Back To Nature: The Arcadian Myth in Urban America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1969); Marguerite S. Shaffer, *See America First: Tourism and National Identity, 1880-1940* (Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2001).

those who wish to better understand the tension between indulgence and frugality in the culture of early wilderness camping.

Furthermore, these issues of consumption are also pertinent to the natural world within which these early wilderness enthusiasts so fervently sought to immerse themselves. Given the juxtaposition of nature and commercialism this study so humbly offers its gracious readers, I am obligated to address the issue of why, how, and to what degree people have come to know the natural world through their materialistic pursuits. Again, I turn with great pleasure to the work of Jennifer Price. She has demonstrated that Americans have often failed to understand the connections between their habits of consumption and the larger world of nature.[16] However, as Price displayed in her chapter on the fashion of bird-infused millinery, sometimes people do come to appreciate their connection to the natural world via their material possessions. When these associations are realized, consumption can become a very important tool to further the cause of environmentalism.[17]

Given Price's assessment, although the materialistic world of pre-packaged synthetics and rampant commercialism often seems detached from the ostensibly real world of nature, the potential for meaningful connections are still at hand. However much it may seem otherwise, florescent lighting and digital audio cannot separate people from their environment. Nature is still present, and it is still as natural as ever. While modern technology and consumerism so often seem to distort reality for those who rely upon them most, at the end of the day it is all just prestidigitation. Not even the most

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[16] Price, *Flight Maps.* With specific reference to chapters 1 & 4 about the Passenger Pigeon and The Nature Company, respectively.
[17] Price, 57-109.

skilled slight-of-hand can separate a person from the air they breathe or the ground on which they live their lives.

The tendency of campers to treat their gear as objects of fetishization, as substitutes for real, substantial experience in nature is troubling for it represents an area where these important connections sometimes break down and dissolve, or at least become faint and indiscernible. Moreover, the fetishization of the material culture of the outdoors is even more distressing in the context of public history. When circumspect contemplation and thorough understanding are replaced by blind object worship in the museum setting, important connections between objects and larger meanings and ideas go unarticulated and are lost amidst the din of thoughtless adulation.

So much of the language surrounding early camping was filled with the grievance that people had become disconnected from all that was wild and natural. It seems that during the second half of the nineteenth century Americans first began to collectively perceive their relationships with nature and reality deteriorating. Drawing upon what writers like Thoreau so singularly expressed earlier in the century, people sought out a connection with the natural to maintain a grasp on what they perceived to be reality. What is of importance to this study in terms of these discontinuous connections is how those with a penchant for the outdoors utilized the growing culture of consumption to express their affinity for and association with the natural world. In this context, materialism was not and is not antithetical to environmentalism. It was a legitimate expression of the yearning many Americans felt to preserve their traditional relationship

to all that was wild, natural, and real. Because they utilized consumption to articulate these attitudes in no way discounts their integrity.

The apparent connections campers made to nature through their habits of consumption were articulated through multiple avenues and took diverse forms. This study ventures to look at this relationship through the material culture, sartorial, and retail-side of the camping experience. Through this framework, it becomes apparent that the desire of Americans to connect with the natural world, and by association all that they perceived as real and authentic, has produced a distinctive strain of taste that is a powerful, if often overlooked force in American popular culture. While in contemporary society this code may be so pervasive to be nearly imperceptible, it was not always the case. Although its origins are diverse and drawn from many parts of society, early camping clearly played an important role in introducing it to the culture at large. In their demand for all that was practical, if not proudly unsophisticated, campers produced a genre of commodities that were at once shamelessly functional, frighteningly sober, and distinctively American. While such products were well entrenched in certain areas of American life, prior to their adoption by campers, they tended to be on the fringes of society and certainly not amidst mainstream culture. It took the espousal of legions of outdoor enthusiasts to enshrine them in the canons of acceptable, or dare I say fashionable taste.

From its original habitat among the diverse peoples on the fringes of American society, or those professed to be closest to nature, this "aesthetic of authenticity" came a long way to eventually become one of the foundations of mainstream American taste.

Perhaps it would be propitious at this point to lay out some of the factors that attracted middle-class Americans to what was essentially vulgar, unrefined, and expressly utilitarian.

Let us begin with the frustratingly vague concept of simplicity. In a Victorian world where "ornateness and a certain heaviness of style prevailed," campers emphasized the exact opposite.[18] Simplicity, minimalism, and utility at the expense of style were the desired characteristics in both manner and aesthetics. Obviously, wilderness travel demanded simplicity and minimalism; campers were not just throwing out demands to simplify without reason. It was a matter of practicality. But it is apparent that this factor of practicality was a major reason why many campers chose the exact form of outdoor recreation they did.

Camping took many forms in the late nineteenth century, as it still does today. But of particular importance to this study are the forms of itinerant wilderness travel, as opposed to more sedentary, luxurious affairs. The fact that many campers chose to peregrinate an untracked wilderness when they had the option to lounge around in a hammock in the forest somewhere is important. Wilderness enthusiasts chose the primitive alternative for a reason. "The true way for the man in the woods to attain the elusive best of his wilderness experience is to go as light as possible," Stewart Edward White declared in 1903. "To go light is to play the game fairly," he went on to write, "the man in the woods matches himself against the forces of nature." This belief in the fairness of the encounter with wilderness is important because what campers deemed

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[18] John Higham, "The Reorientation of American Culture in the 1890's." In *The Origins of Modern Consciousness,* edited by John Weiss, 25-48 (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1965), 34.

unfair was any of the impedimenta of civilization the camper brought to the table. Again, White said it best:

> In just so far as he substitutes the ready-made of civilization for the wit-made of the forest, the pneumatic bed for the balsam boughs, in just so far is he relying on other men and other men's labor to take care of him. To exactly that extent is the test invalidated. He has not proved a courteous antagonist, for he has not stripped to the contest.[19]

To introduce into the wilderness some synthetic contrivance was in a sense a form of cheating, in addition to being an outright affront of the purity of nature. It devalued all that going into the wilderness meant in the first place.

So while simplicity in nomadic camping was a necessity given the circumstances, it was part of a broader ethos of which primitive camping was merely one expression.[20] While Americans during the Gilded Age and Progressive Era witnessed the intricacies of everyday life swell to what for many was an unbearable level, what with the onerous social codes, and the increasing complexity of business and politics, their existed a perceptible undercurrent "standing outside the mainstream of American popular culture as it flowed through the marketplace."[21] Rebelling against the culture of abundance, a certain type of American sought out something else in the bleak commercial landscape of modernity. "Certain it is that every sensitive soul feels this longing for something simple and elemental in the midst of the voluminous and intricate," nature-writer Liberty Hyde Bailey opined in 1905, "something free and natural that shall lie close to the heart and

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[19] Stewart Edward White, *The Forest* (New York: Outlook, 1903), 5.
[20] On all that is simple in American history, see: David E. Shi's, *The Simple Life: Plain Living and High Thinking in American Culture.*
[21] Miles Orvell, *The Real Thing: Imitation and Authenticity in American Culture, 1880-1940* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989), 155.

really satisfy our best desires."[22] Especially in the face of what many identified as the gaudy, insincere ornamentation of Victorian culture, simplicity in its diverse forms represented something more real and elemental than mainstream culture had to offer.

Camping was a great platform by which many Americans expressed their support for the more natural and "down-to-earth." This did not mean rejecting all of the recent developments in better equipment and quality clothing out-right, but the culture of wilderness camping clearly placed great importance on reflecting upon what these consumer products symbolized. Iowan Emerson Hough's advice is characteristic of such deliberations:

> A manly and workmanlike efficiency ought to characterize any sportsman's outfit, and for the most part he should be aware of fads and fashions which come and go. It is the business of the professional outfitter to make you think you want a lot of things, the most descriptive adjective regarding which would be 'cute.' You ought not, however, too much despise the modern tendency toward lightness and compactness. The main thing is to be sincere and simple, and to beware of affectation, whether that shall mean overmodernity or a blind clinging to the past.[23]

The correlation between simplicity and sincerity is important. To some degree, they went hand-in-hand in much of the language of early camping. Not to be overlooked is the extent to which campers would go to impress upon others their own authentic relation to the natural world.

Another expression of this taste for the authentic lay in the elevation of the vernacular in both aesthetics and performance. Campers seeking to connect with their natural selves in a natural setting did not look to the Victorian culture of imitation and luxury to provide the basis for making such connections. What emerged as an alternative

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[22] Liberty Hyde Bailey, *The Outlook to Nature* New York: Macmillan Co., 1905), 5-6.
[23] Emerson Hough, *Out of Doors* (New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1915), 42.

to mainstream culture was, as authentician Miles Orvell described it, "a functionalist ethos that sought to elevate the vernacular into the realm of high culture."[24] This is especially apparent in the realm of camping apparel. As later chapters on camp clothing and the Abercrombie and Fitch outfitting firm will illustrate, a vernacular style of clothing specially produced for outdoor wear went from a position of being socially shocking and offensive to being revered as a pillar of the American fashion industry, especially as it undercut the imported fashions from Europe, and specifically, France.

This elevation of the vernacular in American culture is significant in that it challenges much of the accepted cultural theory that professes the dynamics of style and taste to operate in a trickle down model. Thorstein Veblen, who first applied this theory to America's W.A.S.P. culture in his bitter 1899 *Theory of the Leisure Class,* explained that members of each social stratum "accept as their ideal of decency the scheme of life in vogue in the next higher stratum, and bend their energies to live up to that ideal."[25] While Veblen's theory holds up in the chic boutiques of wealthy urbanites, its fails to address why many Americans in the Gilded Age and Progressive Era dedicated so much time and effort to wearing dull, coarse woolen clothing and emulating the lifestyles of seedy, yellow-bearded hermits.

This bottom-up movement of taste broaches one last facet of the culture of authenticity. Whereas established middle-class taste was based upon the replication of upper-class taste, and upper-class taste was based upon the replication of European culture with all its "heavily ornate surfaces" and "aristocratic connotations," there existed

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[24] Orvell, xvi.
[25] Thorstein Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (New York: MacMillan Co., 1912), 84.

a growing undercurrent of tastes that ran away from the influence of all the was European.[26] This sentiment was probably best articulated by historian Frederick Jackson Turner when he conceived of the entire swath of American history as a progression away from Europe.[27] For Turner and many of his like-minded compatriots, including President Theodore Roosevelt, Europe represented all the "constraint and decrepitude they abhorred," as opposed to America, which signified the "freshness and openness they sought to revive."[28]

As Emerson Hough commented in one of his works, "A peculiar phase of life in Europe seems to be that it is all indoors...The camp in the wilderness seems to be unknown there."[29] For many Americans European culture was clearly out of touch with the natural world. As a result, some Americans perceived it to be flaccid and overwrought. While many Americans during the Gilded Age and Progressive Era idealized the ruggedness and virility they felt made America an exceptional nation, European culture was anathema to all things healthy within American culture. Consequently, instead of looking up the social strata and towards Europe in matters of taste, the culture of primitive camping looked down and towards the American wilderness. From this perspective campers formulated an "aesthetic of authenticity" that was in part a reaction against the over-civilized culture of consumption and materialism they found so stilted and unsatisfying.

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[26] Orvell, 59.
[27] Frederick Jackson Turner, "The Significance of the Frontier in American History" (1893).
[28] Higham, 45.
[29] Hough, *Out of Doors,* 143.

At the intersection of simplicity, the vernacular, and the myth of the rugged American individual, primitive campers patched together alternative identities in opposition to the banal world of bourgeois commercialism. Campers framed the identities they assumed within the real world of nature to be the elusive manifestations of something authentic. But this authenticity could not just be felt or experienced; it also had to be displayed and advertised. In opposition to the culture of hollow materialism, campers advocated a brand of discriminating consumption through which they sought out the last vestiges of authenticity in a rapidly modernizing society. Having the correct gear, wearing the proper clothes, and going about the wilderness with confidence and aplomb meant walking a fine line between being an overly equipment-dependent, inauthentic, sybarite on one extreme and being an unpolished, inauthentic, poser on another. While engaging nature at the proper level was important to early campers for their own personal self-worth, displaying their legitimacy and authenticity to fellow campers was a simultaneous consideration that few were wont to ignore.

CHAPTER 1

WOODCRAFT CAMPING

Strange things happen to those who penetrate too deep into the woods: exhilarating things, dangerous things, crazy things. For many people, these things are reason enough to keep their distance. No need to stick your neck out just for a cheap thrill they argue. But for others, the precariousness of it all is the best part of the game. Such was the case with Leonidas Hubbard and his ill-fated jaunt into the boondocks of Labrador. Although Hubbard and crew apparently wanted to experience nature in its unpredictable entirety, his story illustrates what happens when nature stops being polite...and starts being real.

In the summer of 1903, Hubbard, the assistant editor of the popular sporting periodical *Outing*, along with his friend Dillon Wallace, a New York lawyer, and George Eleson, a "half-breed" Cree Indian, jumped off from the North River trading post of the Hudson Bay Company on the coast of Labrador. Their aim was to canoe and portage into the interior and meet up with the Nascaupee Indians for their early autumn caribou hunt. From the start of the trip, Hubbard kept a journal detailing notable thoughts and incidents. *Outing* published the journal in its entirety in 1905.

Hubbard only vaguely knew the land they planned to cover. And unfortunately, the map he carried turned out to be erroneous in certain important details.
Despite the many unknowns the party expected to encounter, they possessed confidence in their skills and abilities as experienced woodsmen to persevere through whatever nature threw at them. After all, they were not a gaggle of impotent tenderfeet. They

knew how to handle themselves in the wilderness. A few days before jumping off Hubbard thumped his chest, writing, "Could carry 135 lbs. easily. Did not try more, but am sure I can handle 150."[30]

As the trip got underway, the party realized they had committed the cardinal sin of packing too much duffle. The dilemma was exacerbated by the fact that the waterways they were using to penetrate the interior were at exceptionally low levels. Such conditions made travel slow and taxing. The party was having a terrible time lugging the canoe around shallow rapids that normally would have been navigable at the easiest level. To assuage the problem they started dumping small increments of excess provisions along the trail in hopes of alleviating their burden and thereby quickening their pace. While this strategy solved one problem, it created others. "Need fish now—grub not so heavy as it was," Hubbard wrote only about fourteen days into the trip. Although supplementing their rations with nourishment taken from the land had been part of the plan to begin with, the party had not planned to need so much food so soon. Things quickly turned serious. "*Must get grub*," Hubbard scrawled on August 11th, "Need fish and caribou. Think plenty of trout here, but this blamed east wind and cold keeps them from biting[emphasis original]."[31] What had seemed like a sportsman's paradise to the campers when they set out quickly took on a new light.

Contributing to the atmosphere of disenchantment was the continuous assault the men suffered from the insect community. "Sand-flies awful—nasty, vindictive; bite out chunks and streak our hands and faces with blood. Mosquitoes positively friendly by

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[30] Leonidas Hubbard, "The Leonidas Hubbard , Jun., Expedition into Labrador," *Outing* 45, no.6 (March 1906), 649.
[31] Ibid, 663.

contrast," Hubbard commented in a diary entry.[32] Annoying as they may have been, the bugs were expected and were a harmless nuisance at their worst. But the party soon experienced other issues not so easily wiped away. "Diarrhea got me—too much water-drinking yesterday, I guess" scrawled Hubbard despairingly.[33] The bugs were one thing, but Hubbard's bowel trouble was a much nastier matter. It afflicted him for days, all the while rendering him near –if not sometimes completely –incapacitated.

Given the food situation, malicious insects, repeated bouts of crippling diarrhea, and moccasins that were "all rotten and full of holes," the men of the party found a renewed appreciation for their quotidian lives insolated from the harsher realities of nature. "Wallace and I talk of restaurants, and what we would do if we were in New York," Hubbard related in one entry.[34] And then in another, "Dreamed of being home last night, and hated to wake."[35] Apparently, at this point it is safe to say the magical veneer of the natural world had worn off for Hubbard and friends. The ideal of crystal clear water, pristine forests, and abundant wildlife had yielded to a reality of debilitating intestinal afflictions, onerous pests, and game that did not acquiesce to drawn firearms. "I'm not aching for more trips like this just now," Hubbard would later divulge, "Heretofore I have reveled in strenuous trips, trying to make them the real thing—getting down to the essentials. Now I've had a good taste of essentials, I want pleasant, easy trips."[36] Coming from someone who had originally planned to dive hundreds of miles into the unknown expanse of the Labrador interior, such a revelation revealed that the

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[32] Ibid, 658.
[33] Ibid, 659
[34] Ibid, 663.
[35] Ibid, 668.
[36] Ibid, 678.

wilderness truly had profoundly changed Hubbard, only probably not in the manner he had expected.

If Hubbard was already questioning the nature of his time away from work and the city with regret and bitterness, little did he know his trial was only beginning. Things were going to get much worse for the men. But before their story can be continued, a little contextualization is in order. To understand why Hubbard and his companions were drawn to the wilderness in the first place, it is important to consider the character of their outdoor ambitions and the meaning they ascribed their activities in relation to both the civilized world they left behind and the natural world they wished to more fully engage. The natural world undoubtedly held important meanings to the men of the trip. Why else would they go to so much trouble, exert so much effort, and endure such unthinkable hardships? Hubbard would come to realize in the months ahead that nature could be both good and bad, it could rescue as well as destroy, represent heaven as well as hell. These meanings were never clear-cut and explicit. Nature is a lot of things, but it is not unambiguous. How early wilderness campers like Hubbard engaged these vague and seemingly incompatible meanings is important because it provides important insights into the values underlying the modern attraction to untamed nature.

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Considering the intensity of their wilderness ambitions, as well as the fierce self-sufficiency and asceticism with which they went about their perambulations, Hubbard, Wallace, and Eleson could be classed among an elite group of early recreational campers

whose love of the outdoors manifest itself in a desire for an intense immersion in the natural world. This exclusive cadre of like-minded outdoorsmen and women seemingly derived satisfaction from carrying out demanding excursions into the wildest parts of the continent they could access. Although undertaken as pleasure pursuits, these performances of frontier ruggedness resembled more work than play. But the blood, sweat, mud, and toil all contributed to the deep meanings these campers inscribed to their time in nature. Their idealized relationship to the wilderness was not one of passivity and insulated security. Hubbard and those campers who shared his outlook towards nature wanted to survive at the most primitive level in order to experience an elusive sensation that their banal modern lives proved incapable of providing them.

Some time ago historian Roderick Nash referred to this edgy group of turn of the twentieth-century outdoorsmen as the "Cult of the Primitive," or the "Wilderness Cult." In his characterization, the particularly severe mode of recreation exercised by the "wilderness cult" comes off as a reaction to a modern America perceived to be disintegrating under the plague of unhealthy urbanism, polluting immigration, and the decadent values of crass commercialism. In addition, campers such as Hubbard embodied a "growing tendency to associate wilderness with America's frontier and pioneer past that was thought responsible for many desirable national characteristics."[37] In this sense they can be seen as products of the same cultural forces that spurred Frederick Jackson Turner to bemoan the loss of the American frontier and prompted

[37] Roderick Nash, "The American Cult of the Primitive," *American Quarterly* 18, no.3 (Autumn 1966), 521.

Theodore Roosevelt to rouse his fellow countrymen to take up "the strenuous life."[38] In fact, considering his publicized romps in the American wilderness, the African Safari, and the Amazonian rainforests, Theodore Roosevelt himself was a member of the "wilderness cult." Turner, however, was a bookish academic, and thus, a pathetic pansy who personified the very cultural impotence he decried.

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth-century America, this disenchantment with the modern state of civilized life was expressed in a multiplicity of forms, one of which was primitive woodcraft camping. Although early camping took on multiple forms, some hardly even demanding time outdoors, woodcraft camping demanded the skills to get along in the woods by utilizing what could be gleaned from nature instead of bought from civilization. Woodcraft was not so much a thing as an ethos. It articulated a "coherent recreational ethic" that, as James Morton Turner described, expressed an "independent masculine ideal rooted in the frontier" while concurrently exhibiting "strong misgivings for the abundance of consumer goods available to the outdoorsman."[39] More than anything, woodcraft celebrated simplicity. A camper's ability to do without was a badge of pride and authenticity for it signified they possessed enough skill and proficiency to disqualify carrying a bunch of frilly paraphernalia. As one article on primitive camping advised its readers: "The smaller the burden you carry in your pack the more must be your knowledge of how to live comfortably with simple equipment & how to employ the artifices of woodcraft in utilizing Nature's primitive

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[38] Frederick Jackson Turner, "The Significance of the Frontier in American History," American Historical Association, *Annual Report,* 1893 (Washington D.C.: 1893) & Theodore Roosevelt, *The Strenuous Life: Essays and Addresses* (New York: The Century Co., 1902).

[39] James Morton Turner, "From Woodcraft to 'Leave No Trace': Wilderness, Consumerism, and Environmentalism in Twentieth-Century America," *Environmental History* 7, no.3 (July 2002), 464.

stores."[40] Through this emphasis on simplicity and self-sufficiency, woodcraft entailed a rejection of the immoderation of vulgar Victorian materialism, as well as the enervating strictures of what was perceived to be the unbearable alienation of civilized life.[41]

Woodcraft was present in many forms in American culture throughout the Gilded Age and Progressive Era. Perhaps one of its more notable forms lived in the youth movements of such men as Ernest Thompson Seton and Daniel Carter Beard. Both Seton and Beard posited contact with nature and the primitive as a means of saving a generation of children, and thus, the nation as a whole, from the ill-effects of over-civilization. In light of such aspirations, for outdoorsmen like Seton and Beard camping and outdoor life were no mere leisurely diversions. "Rugged outdoor recreation," David Shi contends, "would provide a much-needed balm for urban children caught up in the dizzying whirl of metropolitan life."[42] As the saviors of a people, they possessed significance beyond the fun and excitement they provided their devotees.

In his influential manual of all things outdoorsy written for adolescent boys Ernest Thompson Seton proclaimed to his restless readers that "woodcraft [was] the first of all the sciences. It was Woodcraft that made man out of brutish material, and Woodcraft in its highest form may save him from decay."[43] Seton was plainly ridden with apprehension over what he thought to be the deleterious effects of modern urban industrialism on American youth, especially boys. His apprehension was the product of a

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[40] "Choosing the Light-Weight Mess Kit," *Outing* 63, no.3 (1913-1914), 352.
[41] T.J. Jackson Lears, *No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture, 1880-1920* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 4-58; David E. Shi, *The Simple Life: Plain Living and High Thinking in American Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 175-214.
[42] David Shi, *The Simple Life: Plain Living and High Thinking in American Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 209.
[43] Ernest Thompson Seton, *The Book of Woodcraft and Indian Lore* (New York: Doubleday, Page & Co., 1912), v.

larger set of cultural anxieties that "feared overcivilization was endangering American manhood."[44] Seton's proposed solution to the problem of deteriorating American manhood involved instilling the character and behavior of the iconic Native American upon the impressionable constitutions of youngsters. The Woodcraft Indians, the organization that he founded and directed, heavily derived its disposition from the myth and lore of a highly idealized conception of the noble savage as an embodiment of all things natural and authentic, everything modern industrial life thwarted. For many Americans discontented with the apparent emptiness of their modern existence, the model of the noble savage and the ideas of rugged virility and freedom it connoted presented an important reference point by which they could formulate their own identities. Accordingly, Seton's placement of genuine, wholesome civilization in the sphere of the primitive aligned him with broader anti-modern sentiments being articulated by his contemporaries in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.[45]

The scheme of Seton's brand of woodcraft was largely drawn from a theory of human development referred to as "recapitulation." The premise of the theory was that as children aged they passed through the various stages of human evolutionary development, starting out as vile, greedy savages and eventually evolving up to the level of sophisticated modern individuals capable of etiquette, refinement, and cultured duplicity. Each stage needed to be nurtured and children allowed to channel their

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[44] Gail Bederman, *Manliness & Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 77.

[45] Lears, *No Place of Grace*; Phillip J. Deloria, *Playing Indian* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998); Brian Morris, "Ernest Thompson Seton and the Origins of the Woodcraft Movement," *Journal of Contemporary History* 5, no.2 (1970), 183-194; Linda Lizut Helstern, "Indians, Woodcraft, and the Construction of White Masculinity: The Boyhood of Nick Adams," *The Hemingway Review* 20, no.1 (Fall 2000), 61-78.

instincts towards meaningful ends. To this end Seton promoted nature study, arts and crafts projects , and woodcraft camping in his organization. Bringing young boys into contact with nature and getting them to apply their knowledge of woodcraft and the outdoors was better than letting them atrophy in congested urban environments. Such urban atmospheres were not conductive to producing the able, hearty men society needed. As many like Seton thought, "civilized society perverted human instincts, leaving only those in a natural state able to pursue the authentic life according to nature."[46] Exposing young boys to nature and woodcraft thus was meant as an antidote to the degeneracy of a modern society so obsessed with efficiency, progress, and propriety that it obstructed the personal realization of the true self, instead leaving individuals dejected and disoriented in a haze of unfulfilling commercial values. Wilderness, woodcraft, and the primitive, conversely, fostered all that was authentic in the individual.

Like Seton, Daniel Carter Beard also preached the gospel of the outdoors to the American youth of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. But while Seton claimed the savior of over-civilized Americans rested in hands of the noble savage, Beard bestowed that responsibility upon the shoulders of the intrepid Anglo-Saxon pioneers and frontiersmen from whom he believed America derived its penchant for all things exceptional. "Daniel Boone is, as doubtless he will always remain," Beard asserted, "the American boy's chosen hero."[47] In this respect, Beard was a textbook Turnerian. Through participating in his organization for young boys, The Sons of Daniel Boone, the

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[46] Kevin C. Armitage, "'The Child Is Born a Naturalist': Nature Study, Woodcraft Indians, and the Theory of Recapitulation," *Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era* 6, no.1 (January 2007), 55.
[47] Daniel Carter Beard, *The Boy Pioneers: Sons of Daniel Boone* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1909), v.

restive striplings of America were to become healthy, productive citizens "by recreating the lives of the pioneer scouts who had tamed the wild American frontier."[48]

In content, Beard's and Seton's respective organizations were quite similar. Beard also sponsored the study of natural history, handmade crafts, and woodcraft endeavors. But in Beard's Sons of the Pioneer's the Native American-derived semiotics and pageantry of Seton's Woodcraft Indians was discarded in favor of that of the trailblazers of the American frontier. This lionization of the "American Knights of Buckskin," as Beard often called them, was a sentiment laced with racial undertones. Looking back to the legendary Anglo-Saxon heroes who had brought the wild continent under the sway of the American race allowed early campers to assuage whatever anxieties they harbored about the deleterious effects of immigration and racial degeneration.[49] It was also an attitude echoed by such high profile contemporaries of Daniel Beard as Theodore Roosevelt. "If we[old-stock Anglo-Americans] stand idly by," Roosevelt preached, "if we shrink from the hard contests where men must win at the hazards of their lives and at the risk of all they hold dear, then the bolder and stronger peoples will pass us by, and will win for themselves the domination of the world."[50] For Roosevelt and like-minded outdoorsmen, going camping and being proficient in woodcraft was fun for sure, but such activities also possessed important consequences for the welfare of the American race.

The woodcraft espoused by Beard was noticeably more heavy-handed and antagonistic towards untamed nature than Seton's brand of primitive harmony. This is

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[48] Deloria, 97.
[49] Nell Irvin Painter, *The History of White People* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2010), 245-255.
[50] Theodore Roosevelt, *The Strenuous Life: Essays and Addresses* (New York: Century Co., 1902), 20.

not to claim that Beard and the woodcraft he represented lacked an appreciation for wilderness. While Seton and the Woodcraft Indians looked to nature as a sanctuary from the ills of modern civilization, Beard and his boy frontiersmen witnessed wilderness as something to be overcome and brought under the sway of mankind. Obviously, this stance towards nature was the product of positing the American pioneer as the model of national virtue. Beard had no qualms about the effects of progress and technological advancement. He merely wished to sustain the frontier spirit as the vital force behind American greatness.

While the woodcraft of both Seton and Beard overlapped in their agreement that America "had experienced a radical break with history" and was in an identity crisis of sorts brought on by commercial values and the consumer culture, the two men looked in different directions in their efforts to recover the identity America had lost in its modernization.[51] However dissimilar their approaches may have been, they essentially embodied two sides of the same coin. Both men were chasing the same objective. The objective being the realization of a real, solid foundation upon which they could build the framework for national greatness.[52] "Indeed, for Seton, Beard, and many others," observes one historian, "American identity was increasingly tied to a search for an authentic social identity, one that had real meaning in the face of the anxious displacements of modernity."[53]

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[51] Deloria, 100.
[52] David I. Macleod, *Building Character in the American Boy: The Boy Scouts, YMCA, and Their Forerunners, 1870-1920* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1983); Michael B. Smith, "'The Ego Ideal of the Good Camper': And the Nature of Summer Camp," *Environmental History* 11, no.1 (January 2006), 70-101.
[53] Deloria, 101.

Woodcraft and primitivism were in no way confined to the little people of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era. American adults were also swept up in the rising tide of anti-modern sentiments around the turn of the twentieth century. While many a wilderness camper preached of the profits of primitivism, perhaps Elmer Kreps, a professional trapper turned author said it best:

> Ages ago man was a savage, and though he has been under the restraining influences of civilization for centuries, the spirit of the savage is still strong within, therefore, when he hears the "call of the wild" as one of the popular writers has so aptly expressed it, I would advise packing up the kit and hieing[sic] off to some secluded spot to spend a few weeks in close communion with Mother Nature.[54]

The desire to get in touch with one's primitive side undoubtedly sent many a weary and flabby businessman into the wilderness. "We declare ourselves aborigines, barbarians, savages, & rejoice in our decivilization" one woodswoman wrote of her experiences camping.[55] But before the actual performance of wilderness camping can be addressed, a quick glance at the literature surrounding camping and primitivism might be in order.

The "call of the wild" to which Kreps referred was obviously a reference to Jack London's popular 1903 novel in which a giant but placid dog, "Buck," is kidnapped from his home on a California ranch and sold into a dogsled team in the Klondike where he is subsequently transformed into the leader of the pack. The popularity of London's *The Call of the Wild* speaks to the cultural fascination with primitivism around the turn of the twentieth century and the general belief that nurturing primal instincts ultimately served as a form of personal and social empowerment.

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[54] Elmer Harry Kreps, *Camp and Trail Methods: Interesting Information for all Lovers of Nature. What to Take and What to Do* (Columbus, OH: A.R. Harding Pub. Co., 1910), 19.
[55] Helen S. Clark, "Camping in the Woods," *Outing* 18, no.5 (1891), 415.

An additional popular expression of literary primitivism took the form of Edgar Rice Burrough's Tarzan stories, the first of which, titled *Tarzan of the Apes,* was published in 1912 to great acclaim. Like London's dog Buck, Burrough's Tarzan seemingly gained superhuman strength and abilities from his close contact with the primitive.[56] Tarzan's freedom, capability, and ripped physique were his most appealing characteristics, and his white fans read his stories to realize a little Tarzan in themselves. As one scholar observes, "The man in the lion skin [Tarzan] was a fantasy-projection of the [white]man in the pinstripe suit or on the assembly line, caught in a system he had not created and could not control."[57] Tarzan sure exerted his will upon his surroundings and the hairy situations in which he involved himself. In doing so, he embodied everything the enervated, over-civilized modern man was not.

While the rugged Darwinian primitivism of London and Burroughs was used to counteract the flaccidity of modern American culture, at the end of the day it was all fantasy. Reading about Buck and Tarzan was as good as primitivism could come secondhand, but if someone really wanted to go experience the primitive firsthand, they might need some practical advice about how exactly to go about such an endeavor. This was the basis for a genre of woodcraft camping manuals aimed at instructing outdoorsmen and women in the correct modes and practices of primitive camping. Emerson Hough, a contributor to the genre, observed that "there are volumes, and very

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[56] If you've seem the 1999 Disney movie you know that Tarzan can sprint through the air like a gymnast and surf on tress. He can basically fly. And he spends his days flying around the jungle, shirtless, seducing British women to a tasteless soundtrack of Phil Collins songs. If you've seen the 1932 Tarzan movie you know how homoerotic it is. You probably also know how funny a bunch of midgets in blackface are.

[57] Marianna Torgovnick, *Gone Primitive: Savage Intellects, Modern Lives* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 43.

good ones too, interesting and useful, written in the way of advice, hints and suggestions to the outdoor man going into camp."[58] Works on woodcraft provided campers with a helpful discourse on the ups and downs of camping and outfitting from recognized, genuine authorities in all things outdoors.

Many authors contributed to the genre of woodcraft advice manuals, but the acknowledged literary pioneer who created the model other writers looked to for inspiration was George Washington Sear, or "Nessmuk" as he was known to his readers. One author described Nessmuk as "an ingenious old, solitary woods-rat...who was the founder and forerunner of the modern school of camping life."[59] A native of Massachusetts, Sears allegedly acquired his cognomen from running "with them dirty Injuns" as his aunt was want to say.[60] Nessmuk apparently means Wood-duck in the Narragansett tongue. Anyway, Nessmuk was by all accounts a pretty weird but lovable guy. He carried his time period's inclination towards nature and primitivism to its logical extreme. As Nessmuk himself explained of his lifestyle:

> [In] ignoring the weary, devious roads by which men attain to wealth and position, I became a devotee of nature in her wildest and roughest aspects – a lover of field sports – a hunter, angler, trapper, and canoeist – an uneducated man, withal, save the education that comes of long and close communion with nature.[61]

Nessmuk was the archetype for outdoorsmen wishing to establish a firmer grasp upon what they perceived to be the empowering qualities of nature and primitivism.

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[58] Emerson Hough, *Out of Doors* (New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1915), 26.
[59] Hough, *Out of Doors,* 18.
[60] George Washington Sears, *Forest Runes* (New York: Forest and Stream Pub. Co., 1887), ix.
[61] Sears, *Forest Runes,* x.

Nessmuk's seminal contribution to the culture of wilderness camping, published in 1884 and simply entitled *Woodcraft,* was the first and best explanation of the many facts, tricks, and detailed particulars any camper needed to know before they outfitted and hit the trail. He dedicated *Woodcraft* the "the Grand Army of 'Outers,' as a pocket volume of reference on – woodcraft."[62] While preceding authors like "Adirondack Murray" had addressed wilderness camping to some degree in their respective works, Nussmuk really got down to the nitty-gritty of camping and life in the outdoors that other authors simply glossed over. For example, he provided an oft quoted recipe for homemade bug dope, he detailed the lengthy ordeal by which he acquired the perfect knife and hatchet, and he created what was arguable an early predecessor of the modern backpack. In addition to his much-admired book on the finer points of woodcraft, he also published a work of genuinely unreadable poetry entitled *Forest Runes.* Unfortunately, his poetry was one area where his lack of formal education might have handicapped his abilities.[63]

Yet Nessmuk proved an enduring figure in the culture of early wilderness camping for many years. Numerous subsequent authors of camping and woodcraft manuals reproduced the model he constructed and reiterated much of his advice. Along with a few sporting periodicals like *Outing* and *Forest and Stream* that became popular in the late nineteenth century, books on camping and woodcraft developed into a veritable genre of self-referential literature. Authors such as Emerson Hough, Stewart Edward White, George Shields, and Elmer Kreps, among many other members of "the great

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[62] George Washington Sears, *Woodcraft* (New York: Forest and Stream Pub. Co., 1884), preface.
[63] Seriously, don't read it. It's horrible.

outdoor brotherhood" produced a plentitude of works on camping and the outdoors.[64] While many successive authors added their own personal twists to their works, for the most part the content, and more importantly, the philosophy behind woodcraft remained unchanged.

While a great deal could be said about structure and content of woodcraft literature, for purposes of brevity and readability I will highlight a few points throughout the rest of the chapter that exhibit important themes in the culture of primitive wilderness camping. First off, campers expressed a deep-seated resentment for modern American life, especially as it existed in urban centers of congestion and commerce. "I confess to a liking for all these reminders of a bye-gone and more gracious Republic than the hustling, roaring empire that is now America," one author admitted.[65] Many Americans saw urbanization as a scourge upon the future of the country, ruining the ideal American life of self-sufficient rusticity. "The city masses men. The out-of-doors makes individuals of them, men of them," Emerson Hough declared. "It is much to be doubted if the moving-picture show, the tango and the colored comic Sunday supplement will do more to building us up as a race of useful, thinking men than would a course of study not in the ways of the city, but in the ways of the outdoor world."[66] It seems that in all the progress and increased efficiency of modern life many Americans still felt as if their civilized lives left them feeling insubstantial as human beings, with a massive void where a concrete identity should have been. In primitive woodcraft camping, those discontent with

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[64] Warren Hastings Miller, *Camp Craft: Modern Practice and Equipment* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1915), 102.
[65] Warren Hastings Miller, *Camping Out* (New York: George H. Doran Co., 1918), 152.
[66] Emerson Hough, *Out of Doors* (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1915), 300.

modern existence could exercise what has been termed a "hard" or "active" form of antimodernism. This "desire to test oneself physically by confronting the reality of the natural world" was in essence a particularly strenuous means of engaging all that was real in nature, as opposed to artificial in civilization.[67]

The inclination for doing and "intense experience," as opposed to passively observing and contemplating, was a characteristic of a culture tired of perceiving the passionate magnitudes of life from a safe distance. When Leonidas Hubbard set out into the wilderness of Labrador, the exhilaration of survival and rugged endurance at the hands of an unrelenting environment was surely part of the appeal. If it was not, he would have stayed home and read a book. Wilderness campers wanted to experience the harsh realities of existence their urban lives insulated them from.[68]

Woodcraft literature also expressed dissatisfaction with what it perceived to be the many ills of modernism. To alleviate these shortcomings campers looked to the primitive for spiritual inspiration and regeneration. At some point civilization had become so onerous many Americans sought refuge from it in much cruder forms of existence. "The primitive man is one who owes more to nature than to the forces of civilization," Charles Dudley Warner editorialized. "What we seek in him are the primal and original traits, unmixed with the sophistications of society, and unimpaired by the refinements of an artificial culture."[69] One of the greatest benefits of wilderness camping was the chance it offered campers to shirk civilization and kindle within themselves

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[67] Lears, 305.
[68] Lears, 48.
[69] Charles Dudley Warner, *In the Wilderness* (London: Sampson Low, Marston, Searle, & Rivington, 1878), 84.

latent spiritual and physical energies lost amidst their empty but busy daily lives. "One of the delights of camp life is in estranging one's self from the fastidious customs of civilization and living off the country where you camp," Claude Fordyce enlightened his readers.[70] The professed advantages of primitivism were manifold. It bestowed upon campers a vigorous disposition their priggish and over-polished neighbors back in civilization would be sufficiently intimidated by and incapable of competing against amid the cutthroat world of modern social advancement. But Americans also treasured the "innocence, purity, cleanliness, and morality which seemed on the verge of succumbing to utilitarianism and the surge of progress."[71]

Many believed primitivism revitalized minds and bodies atrophied from disuse in civilization. "We must constantly return to the native and the indigenous in order to correct our civilization and to direct it," advanced nature promoter Liberty Hyde Bailey. "We are in danger of over-refining: we need to go to the primitive for strength and renewal."[72] According to Bailey and others, nature and primitivism could provide much needed invigoration to a society that was experiencing a collective breakdown. Truly, it seems one could not swing a dead cat in late nineteenth-century America without hitting some person suffering from a form of nerve exhaustion. When George Miller Beard published *American Nervousness* in 1880, he was addressing a widespread phenomenon in American mental health he called "neurasthenia." Common opinion held that over-civilization was the cause of this plague of the American middle-class. Daniel Boone,

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[70] Claude Powell Fordyce, *Touring Afoot* (New York: Outing Pub. Co., 1916), 137.
[71] Roderick Nash, "The American Cult of the Primitive," *American Quarterly* 18, no.3 (Autumn 1966), 517-537.
[72] Liberty Hyde Bailey, *The Outlook to Nature* (New York: MacMillan Co., 1905), 141.

Davy Crockett, and Jim Bridger never had neurasthenia. As Jackson Lears explains, "tortured by indecision and doubt, the neurasthenic seemed a pathetic descendent of the iron-willed Americans who had cleared forests, drained swamps, and subdued a continent."[73] A nation of spiritually impotent, bedridden, wet-noodle, loonies was a disgrace to the professed exceptionalism of the American people.[74]

For woodcraft campers the cure for this mental health epidemic was obvious. Emerson Hough observed that "neurasthenia, nerve exhaustion, mental collapse, are becoming more and more common in American business and social life. We work entirely too hard, speed up entirely too much. No amount of drugs, no amount of stimulants will ever cure that sort of thing."[75] What did all the social improvements and scientific accomplishments of modern man mean if he lacked the essential ability to alleviate himself from the byproducts of his own progress? And yet an apparent remedy was said to exist. But it was no product of the hand of humankind. It resided in the great outdoors. "If some of these generally tired chaps, some of these generally harassed women could get out in camp in the wilderness somewhere for a few weeks, they would get a better run for their money than perhaps they could in any other way" offered Hough as the solution for the malaise of his time.[76]

In addition to alleviating the strains of excessive civilization from the minds of tired Americans, camping in rugged country also built up bodies. For the growing number of Americans performing dull, sedentary brain-work in stuffy offices and

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[73] Lears, 50.
[74] See also: Harvey Green, *Fit For America: Health, Fitness, Sport and American Society* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1986), 137-166.
[75] Emerson Hough, *Out of Doors* (New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1915), 27-28.
[76] Hough, *Out of Doors,* 28.

increasingly becoming slaves to modern technological conveniences, simple exercise out of doors all of a sudden seemed so appealingly human. "In this age of mechanical transportation we have almost forgotten that we were endowed with a pair of legs, given us for the sole purpose of walking – an essential exercise in the building up of healthy bodies and minds," declared Claude Fordyce.[77] While Americans around the turn of the century were becoming steadily more cognizant about the ramifications of their physical abilities, corporal endeavors of all kinds rapidly grew in popularity. Wilderness camping offered an opportunity to endure physical hardships and bodily exercise amidst the splendor of the outdoors. Perfunctory workouts in dank gyms next to big furry middle-aged men simply could not compare.[78]

Accompanying this talk hard-bodied fitness, much of the language of woodcraft literature was also steeped in a distinctive rhetoric of masculine self-reliance.[79] Echoing the desired recovery of masculine traits expressed by Seton and Beard, and reaffirming the Darwinian violence of London and the hunky sexuality of Tarzan, primitive campers envisioned their time spent in the wilderness as a means to reclaim an identity as rugged, self-sufficient individuals, characteristics that had atrophied amidst the urban,

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[77] Fordyce, *Touring Afoot,* 11.

[78] Green, *Fit For America*; Mark Dyreson, "Nature by Design: Modern American Ideas About Sport, Energy, Evolution, and Republics, 1865-1920," *Journal of Sport History* 26, no.3 (Fall 1999), 447-469; Jeanne Abrams, "On the Road Again: Consumptives Traveling for Health in the American West, 1840-1925," *Great Plains Quarterly* 30, no.4 (Fall 2010), 271-285. For a primary source on wilderness and health, consult: Marc Cook, *The Wilderness Cure* (New York: William Wood & Co., 1881).

[79] To learn about how issues of masculinity, the outdoors, and camping have intersected, check out: Bederman, *Manliness & Civilization;* E. Anthony Rotundo, "Body And Soul: Changing Ideals of American Middle-class Manhood, 1770-1920," *Journal of Social History* 16, no.4 (Summer 1983), 23-38; Michael Kimmel, *Manhood in America: A Cultural History* (New York: Free Press, 1996).

commercial world of propriety and feminized sentimentalization. In this sense, camping was an expression of discontent with a culture perceived to be too passive and soft.[80]

For many men of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, nature and wilderness "represented that masculine hardiness and power that suddenly seemed an absolutely indispensable remedy for the artificiality and effeteness" they had to put up with in their daily lives.[81] Nature made men out of limp, shriveled shells of human beings. As one historian has noted, "woodcraft promised to return the enervated city-dweller to the mythical frontier, allowing him to play out in leisure Theodore Roosevelt's 'wilderness hunter,' reaffirming both his masculinity and his Americanness."[82] Roosevelt was not quiet about the stance he took towards the conservation of what he conceived to be the ideal for the American male:

> The old iron days have gone, the days when the weakling died as the penalty of inability to hold his own in the rough warfare against his surroundings. We live in softer times. Let us see to it that, while we take advantage of every gentler and more humanizing tendency of the age, we yet preserve the iron quality which made our forefathers and predecessors fit to do the deeds they did. [83]

This "iron quality" of which Roosevelt spoke was undoubtedly that of the rugged frontiersman, out in the thick of the wilderness waging "rough warfare against his surroundings."

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[80] Ann Douglas, *The Feminization of American Culture* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1977); for a little contextualization on the contemporary crisis of masculinity, read this, seriously, it's worth your time: Lynn M. Ta, "Hurt So Good: *Fight Club*, Masculine Violence, and the Crisis of Capitalism," *Journal of American Culture* 29, no.1 (September 2006), 265-277.

[81] John Higham, "The Reorientation of American Culture in the 1890's," in John Weiss ed. *The Origins of Modern Consciousness* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1965), 29.

[82] James Morton Turner, "From Woodcraft to 'Leave No Trace': Wilderness, Consumerism, and Environmentalism in Twentieth-Century America," *Environmental History* 7, no.3 (July 2002), 466.

[83] Theodore Roosevelt, "Manhood and Statehood," in *The Strenuous Life: Essays and Addresses,* 255.

Around the turn of the twentieth century, as the whole of the outdoors was reinvented as being an incarnation of the fabled frontier wilderness, contact with untamed nature was envisioned as a method of recapturing the primal impulses and testicular fortitude that had once made American men great. With this in consideration, recreational wilderness camping can easily be interpreted as an elaborate role-playing game with campers taking on the guises of mythical frontiersmen penetrating a virgin wilderness.[84] While this role-playing dynamic was undoubtedly all in the mind, that did not stop campers from making the necessary connections. "First, and above all, be plain in the woods," Horace Kephart informed his readers, "you are emulating those grim heroes of the past who made the white man's trail across this continent."[85] In playing the part of the rugged pioneer, campers could acquire a whole other identity. But they had to play the part correctly. As it pertained to camping and woodcraft, one historian pithily notes that "identity was not so much imagined as it was performed, materialized through one's body and through the witness and recognition of others."[86]

Sure enough, campers did express enjoyment over others witnessing their rugged wilderness alter egos. Upon returning to civilization from an extended sojourn in the wilderness, one camper recalled pridefully that "the smartly-dressed guests at the hotel greeted our appearances with smiles of amusement. Our hats were battered, out boots were strange of shape, & our faces were brown as any berry."[87] In drawing a contrast between the "smartly-dressed" hotel guests and their own unkempt appearances, the party

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[84] Roger Caillois, *Man, Play, and Games,* translated by Meyer Barash (New York: Schocken, 1979).
[85] Horace Kephart, *Camping and Woodcraft: A Handbook for Vacation Campers and for Travelers in the Wilderness* (New York: MacMillan Co., 1919), 109.
[86] Deloria, 184.
[87] Helen S. Clark, "Camping in the Woods," *Outing* 18, no.5 (1891), 417.

of campers was differentiating the prissy muffs at the hotel from the true wilderness adventurers.

A pressing issue for early campers was the distressing fact that their stage for performing these identities was rapidly disappearing. This is perhaps an important angle from which to view the conservation movement of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Outdoorsmen of all kinds played an important role in publicizing and promoting the importance of wild lands to receptive Americans. "The camper should... be filled with a wholesome respect for his forest-home," Edward Breck instructed his readers. Breck carried on, encouraging campers to assist their outdoor brothers "to save for posterity our forests and our fauna."[88] In the eyes of many outdoorsmen, the vanishing wilderness corresponded to the vanishing sense of personal identity they were witnessing within themselves and the culture at-large.[89]

Despite the prevalence of man-talk in woodcraft literature, women were present too. Many women enjoyed wilderness excursions and primitive camping like their like-minded male counter-parts. But that is not to say there were not issues.[90] When outdoorswoman Helen Clark informed her lady friends of her plans to perform some

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[88] Edward Breck, *The Way of the Woods* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1908), 186.

[89] Thomas R. Dunlap, "Sport Hunting and Conservation, 1880-1920," *Environmental Review* 12, no.1 (Spring 1988), 51-60; John F. Reiger, *American Sportsmen and the Origins of Conservation, 3rd ed.* (Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 2001); Paul S. Sutter, *Driven Wild: How the Fight against Automobiles Launched the Modern Wilderness Movement* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2002); James M. Glover, *A Wilderness Original: The Life of Bob Marshall* (Seattle: The Mountaineers, 1986) & "Romance, Recreation, and Wilderness: Influences on the Life and Work of Bob Marshall," *Environmental History Review* 14, no.4 (Winter 1990), 22-39; Marybeth Lorbiecki, *Aldo Leopold: A Fierce Green Fire* (Helena, MT: Falcon, 1996).

[90] Andrea L. Smalley, "'Our Lady Sportsmen': Gender Class, and Conservation in Sport Hunting Magazines, 1873-1920," *Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era* 4, no.4 (October 2005), 355-380; Phoebe Kropp, "Wilderness Wives and Dishwashing Husbands: Comfort and the Domestic Arts of Camping in America, 1880-1910." *Journal of Social History* 43, no.1 (Fall 2009), 5-30; Cindy S. Aron, *Working at Play: A History of Vacations in the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 156-177.

wilderness exploration, they implored her to consider the consequences. "You will get freckled," said one. "You will get fish hooks in your hands and shoot yourself with somebody's gun," chimed a particularly wary woman. Another informed Clark that she would surely "die of loneliness." But the most circumspect of all condemned camping as "unconventional and unladylike."[91] Clearly, some women were hesitant to participate in activities so associated with mannish uncouthity. Perhaps they simply were not experiencing the call of the wild as many others were, or perhaps they just needed some reassurance. "There are no better sports afield than the outdoor girls – heaven bless 'em!," exclaimed Warren Miller, "but they have to be convinced first of all, that they lose no caste by going camping, but rather acquire merit."[92]

Regardless of whatever hang-ups some women had about camping, that did not stop many others from going to the wilderness. Those who did make the trip were apparently as proficient and graceful as their male counterparts. "Camping parties of ladies now penetrate the wilderness, where a few years ago men would scarcely have ventured," observed Emily Thackray in 1889.[93] Yet even as early as 1869 consummate wilderness promoter "Adirondack Murray" felt it was "safe to say, that, of all who go into the woods, none enjoy the experiences more than ladies."[94] Women were going to the woods in greater numbers and evidently enjoying it heartily, but for many outdoorsmen the question of whether or not women belonged in the wilderness was an interesting subject of debate.

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[91] Helen S. Clark, "Camping in the Woods," *Outing* 18, no.5 (1891), 415.
[92] Warren Hastings Miller, *Camp Craft* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1915), 186.
[93] Emily A. Thackray, "Camps & Tramps for Women," *Outing* 14, no.5 (1889), 333.
[94] William H. H. Murray, *Adventures in the Wilderness; or, Camp-life in the Adirondacks* (Boston: De Wolfe, Fiske & Co., 1869), 19.

Opinions among outdoorsmen varied regarding the proper place of outdoorswomen. Attitudes ranged from complete support to outright opposition, with a middle ground tempered by a stance of conditional approval. Fortunately, the majority of the opinions expressed in woodcraft literature were accommodating, if not encouraging. "I think that most outdoorsmen who have observed keenly are agreed that, given the same completeness of equipment and the same real wilderness conditions, the girl is as keen a sport as the man," observed Warren Miller.[95] Elsewhere he advised his readers, "if you want the finest of chums on a trip...train up your little wife to be a real outdoor girl and take her along!"[96] While some outdoorswomen may have cringed at being characterized as "chums," at least the hearts of their male companions were in the right place. "The women who have enjoyed the freedom and pleasure of this most healthful of pastimes[camping] are fast increasing," remarked outdoorswoman Mary Barr, "and the men, far from opposing, are encouraging and teaching them the many secrets and delights connected with outdoor life and sport."[97] While it seems the majority of outdoorsmen gladly accepted he presence of women in their wilderness pursuits, all were not so up on female campers.

Reservations about the capacity of women to gracefully handle unpleasant conditions and extreme physical exertion clouded the minds of more cynical outdoorsmen. They observed that the wilderness sometimes intensified the female predilection for moodiness. Consequently, women could be a burden to a camping party both emotionally, in bringing down morale, and also physically, in hindering the pace of

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[95] Miller, *Camp Craft,* 182.
[96] Miller, *Camping Out,* 130.
[97] Mary A. Barr, "Camping For Women," *Outing* 6, no.1 (1885), 233.

movement. Some outdoorsmen conceded that perhaps if women restrained themselves from being a nuisance, as they were apparently so often wont to do, their presence might be a bit more tolerable. Emerson Hough divulged, "truth forces one to state that women do sometimes render themselves unpleasant in camp. Sometimes it is because they carry into the woods that insistence on recognition of the privileges of sex which sometimes marks the American woman."[98] While Hough did not want women to unsex themselves completely during their time in the woods, he evidently extended no welcome to ladies querulous and needy who failed to let civilized standards of gender differentiation slide but a little. If women could curb their irritabilities and foster a more easygoing bearing along with their campmates, perhaps their presence might be sufferable. "The important thing is to cultivate independence," Eddie Breck informed his womanly readership. He continued:

> Let the men of the party once discover that the lady does not require to be mollicoddled or waited on all day long and that she is a 'good sport,' which is another way of saying that she takes everything as it comes, and her path will be easy, as well as that of her male companions. But from the nervous woman, or the petulant one, or her who screams at sight of a mouse or an innocent daddy-longlegs – good Lord deliver us![99]

In asking lady campers to suck it up and mark their own stride, Breck hoped they might mitigate the rougher edges of their feminine natures. Only then could outdoorswomen cultivate the transcendent qualities of a "Modern Diana."[100] The wilderness offered campers a place to cool their nerves in the tranquility of

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[98] Hough, *Out of Doors,* 109.
[99] Breck, *The Way of the Woods,* 60.
[100] Breck, *The Way of the Woods,* 60-photo insert.

Mother Nature. The presence of a shrieking harpy spitting venomous invectives towards the rest of her party was not conductive to such an environment.

Because of the masculine connotations associated with wilderness camping, as well as the perceived ineptness for women to the outdoors, a few outdoorsmen went so far as to discourage women from the more primitive forms of camping. "Men are used to taking the initiative, – and that goes for a good deal in primitive modes of living," Dan O'Hara commented while describing the finer points of camp cookery. He continued: "Woman is conservative. She is rarely at her best in complete freedom."[101] Apparently, the latitude camping allowed women crippled them in the eyes of some male campers. Others were not so concerned with the freedom as the obnoxious disturbances they felt women were likely to cause. T.C. Yard counseled his camping brothers to let no reason ever "induce you to take a woman. There may be bright and shining exceptions, but the average 'girl' is afraid to sleep in a tent, afraid to be in the woods at night, she sees snakes in all directions and even mentions bears." Even if female campers failed to ruin the experience for others with their anxiety induced petulance, there simply was nothing a woman could conceivably do with her time in the outdoors but work, and there was not enough of that to fill up twelve hours of sunlight. Again, T.C. Yard warned that "there should not be work enough to keep her [the terror stricken female camper] busy all day; and when she has done her work you do not know what on earth to do with her, and she is abjectly miserable."[102] Clearly, it was best to leave the women at home, for their own sake.

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[101] Dan O'Hara, "Camp Cooks," *Outing* 6, no.1 (1885), 207.
[102] T.C. Yard, "Practical Camping-Out Near Home," *Outing* 34, no. 3 (1899), 273.

Women had their opinions about how they fit into the picture of wilderness camping as well. Perhaps they just were not provided the means to express their opinions of the outdoors as readily as men were. While numerous outdoorswomen published periodical articles about various aspects of primitive camping, Kathrene Pinkerton's singular knowledge of the outdoors made her the published author of a work devoted exclusively to camping from the woman's perspective. Entitled *Woodcraft for Women,* Pinkerton provided a refreshing feminine perspective on a topic addressed predominantly by men. Her take on the inclusion of women in wilderness recreation is worth noting:

> When a passion for hunting and uninhabited regions led Daniel Boone from his Yadkin farm to his adventurous life as hunter and trapper, he did not take his wife with him. And when the out of door man first began his two-weeks' emulation of the Kentuckian, true to history, he did not take woman with him in his back-to-the-wilderness movement. Somehow, out of the neglect, arose the impression that woods joys were for men alone. Gradually a few women discovered that the lazy drifting down a pine and rock-bound stream calms feminine as well as masculine nerves and that the dimly blazed trail into an unknown country arouses the pioneering instinct in them as truly as it does in man.[103]

Pinkerton recognized her sex had been slighted and that history was not on her side. Consequently, those women who characterized camping as "unladylike" undoubtedly found Pinkerton's conclusion that the appreciation of nature was not found in higher concentrations in men than in women to be off-base and wrongheaded. Yet these women probably envisioned primitive camping as wandering about the woods, club in hand, tearing raw meat from bones and sleeping on beds of rocks. Little did they understand the importance campers placed on achieving a degree of comfort in their wilderness outings.

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[103] Kathrene Pinkerton, *Woodcraft for Women* (New York: Outing Pub. Co., 1916), 9.

While the literature of woodcraft camping discussed issues from health, fitness, and masculinity to the frontier, conservation, and whether or not women were capable of doing things, at its basest level woodcraft literature was an endless dialogue on the interplay between material indulgence and material abstinence in camping. While campers wanted to engage the primitive in a meaningful way, they stopped well short of renaming themselves "Ug" and "Zog" and fashioning crude tools out of obsidian. The term "roughing it" was readily used in referring to primitive camping, but even old "Nessmuk" had a serious gripe with the expression. "We do not go to the green woods and crystal waters to rough it, we go to smooth it. We get it rough enough at home."[104] Just because the wilderness was not civilization did not mean that all refinements, comforts, and relaxation were prohibited. They certainly had their place, although a practical camper was cautious not to indulge them too readily.

Indeed, the spirit of woodcraft was in the winning of a comfortable existence from the iniquities of nature. Its expressed aim was to carve out a bit of wilderness luxury from the resources the natural world provided. Kathrene Pinkerton explained woodcraft camping in terms of a game:

> Resolved to its essentials, woodcraft is a game, and, like all games, becomes most fascinating when we win. Nature is our opponent. To force from her comfort and pleasure means victory. The greater our ease and skill and power of adaptation, the quicker and the sweeter the rewards. There is more joy in one single trick that defeats discomfort than an army of guides and expensive equipment can give.[105]

Apparently, success in woodcraft camping meant securing refuge and repose while depending as little as possible on the material products of civilization. "To be sure the art

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[104] Sears, 18.
[105] Pinkerton, 13.

of going light and yet be comfortable is the very essence of woodcraft," chimed Eddie Breck.[106] In using the resources of nature, outdoorsmen and women exhibited a knowledge and self-reliance lost to modern existence. It also correlated to their status amongst the outdoor community. Woodcraft was one way to distinguish oneself from other, less woodcraft conversant campers. "One of the hall-marks of the veteran woodsman is the way he contrives to make himself comfortable in camp, mainly by utilization of the forest materials ready to[sic] hand," Warren Miller related.[107] However, campers could also go too far in striving for the objective of woodcraft. In the wilderness it was important to keep one's head. Not everything needed to be derived from nature. "Don't try to make your own dishes out of bark and such stuff in camp," Emerson Hough counseled, "you can do it, but it is not necessary."[108] Both simplicity and comfort were important considerations for early campers wanting to get the most out of their wilderness experience. And one should not have to eclipse the other.

In reconciling the demands for both simplicity and comfort, campers sought a middle-ground between pointless asceticism and effete luxury. This idealized balance marked the carriage of the genuine woodsmen and women just like their ability to utilize natural resources. Stewart Edward White wrote, "comfort means minimum equipment; comfort means bodily ease. The task is to balance, to reconcile these apparently opposing ideas. A man is skillful at woodcraft just in proportion as he approaches this balance."[109] To hug whichever polarity was bad form in camping. It could signify an inexperience or

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[106] Breck, 11.
[107] Warren Hastings Miller, *Camp Craft,* 235.
[108] Emerson Hough, *Out of Doors,* 89.
[109] Stewart Edward White, *Camp and Trail* (New York: Outing Pub. Co., 1906), 30.

affectation at which other campers were all too eager to launch a volley of slings and arrows.

However, this principle of balance had more to do with how campers perceived the nature of wilderness rather than their own abilities to survive detached from civilized luxuries. In squaring up the antagonist wilderness posed, campers came to very different conclusions as to the ideal form camping should take.

For years people have disseminated overly-romantic versions of the outdoors, sometimes for commercial benefit, other times out of sheer quixotic ignorance. For example, in 1869 when "Adirondack Murray' published his seminal *Adventures in the Wilderness*, a popular book credited with spurring early camping in the Adirondacks, Murray explicitly laid out all the potential hazards that extended stays in the wilderness might entail. "I wish all to take the statement as in every sense true," he wrote, "when I declare that there is absolutely no danger, nor indeed the lest approach to danger, in camping in the wilderness."[110] White-washing the natural world was a contentious issue among outdoorsmen of the era. It not only mischaracterized nature, but by association it also gave a false impression of their own exploits in that nature.[111]

Some campers even went so far as to call out nature for being completely phony. In a memorable passage from *In the Wilderness,* Charles Dudley Warner pondered the reality of nature as he trudged on, anticipating his return to civilization:

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[110] William H.H. Murray, 61.

[111] Consider the vitriol surrounding the Nature Fakers controversy where authors such as Ernest Thompson Seton, Sir Charles G.D. Roberts, and Reverend William J. Long were accused by John Burroughs and Theodore Roosevelt of grossly sentimentalizing and misrepresenting nature. The criticism was warranted given that some of the literature in question posited incidents of beavers raising otter cubs as slaves and such. *The Wind in the Willows* is one thing, nature writing is quite another. For more commentary of the Nature Fakers debate, see: Peter J. Schmitt, *Back to Nature: The Arcadian Myth in Urban America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1969), 45-55.

> Nature is so pitiless, so unresponsive, to a person in trouble! I had read of the soothing companionship of the forest, the pleasure of the pathless woods. But I thought, as I stumbled along in the dismal actuality, that, if I ever got out of it, I would write a letter to the newspapers, exposing the whole thing. There is an impassive, stolid brutality about the woods, that has never been enough insisted upon...It's a hollow sham, this pantheism, I said; being 'one with nature' is all humbug.[112]

And Warner was not the only author to admit that the natural world was not all sunshine and "Big Rock Candy Mountains," even Stewart Edward White found it in himself to confess that camping was not all it was always chalked up to be. In one particularly blunt passage, White put in words what many a troubled woodsmen must have silently cursed under their breath. "You are a fool. This is not fun. There is no real reason why you should do this," White wrote, "If you ever get out if here, you will stick right home where common sense flourishes."[113] The ability of nature to irritate even the hardiest of woodsmen is a phenomenon of both humor and importance. It seems that however hard campers tried the veneer of innocuous leisure and recreation did occasionally slip off their exploits in the wilderness to reveal some harsher subsurface truths that were not so anticipated or welcome.

This is not to say that bad experiences turned campers away from nature altogether. Often these negative feelings were purely evanescent. A sleepless night spent on the cold hard ground, uncooperative weather, or unwanted encounters with wildlife inspired vitriol, yes, but they rarely inspired lasting resentment. Even the perpetual scourge of the outdoors, the mosquito and her blood-sucking compatriots, loathed by campers everywhere and the basis of unending complaints among the outdoor-set were

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[112]Warner, *In the Wilderness*, 36-37.
[113] Stewart Edward White, *The Mountains* (New York: McClure, Phillips, & Co., 1904), 280-281.

unable to spoil nature in its entirety. Besides, mosquitoes, midges, fleas, ticks, chiggers, and all the other bloodsucking pests offered the men of the outdoors, in particular, a convenient justification to vent their pent-up frustrations with the female sex. As Horace Kephart explained, "the male mosquito is a gentleman, who sips daintily of nectar and minds his own business, while madame his spouse is a whining, peevish, venomous virago, that goes about seeking whose nerves she may unstring and whose blood she may devour."[114] Perhaps dealing with the many infinitesimal bloodsuckers of the woods was preferable to dealing with their more aggressive counterparts back in civilization.

In all, the rougher edges of life in the wilderness were all part of the experience, something to add color to what was otherwise a dull existence. While they may have made campers question their choice of recreational pursuit, when all was said and done those same campers could "look back on the day with a certain fondness of recollection."[115] For only through such strife and hardship could campers attain that elusive sense of identity they so longed to possess. After a person had proved himself or herself against the natural world, after they had rolled with every punch nature had thrown their way, then and only then could they look themselves straight into their own eyes and proudly proclaim as Stewart Edward White had done:

> You are no tenderfoot. You have had too long an experience to admit of any glamour of indefiniteness about this thing. No use bluffing. You know exactly how hard you will have to work, and how much tribulation you are going to get into, and how hungry and wet and cold and tired and generally frazzled out you are going to be. You've been there enough times so it's pretty clearly impressed on you. You go into the thing with your eyes open. You know what you're in for.[116]

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[114] Kephart, 241.
[115] White, *the Mountains,* 281.
[116] White, *the Mountains,* 282.

The sheer gratification of such a disposition was all any serious wilderness camper could ask for. Therefore, it is no surprise that while many regularly complained about the iniquities of camp-life, their grumblings were often tempered with tacit satisfaction of having experienced life in its most primitive state, close to nature and devoid of the luxuries of civilization. As Charles Warner explained: "The real enjoyment of camping and tramping in the woods lies in a return to primitive conditions of lodging, dress, and food, in as total an escape from as may be from the requirements of civilization."[117]

In the world of outdoor recreation there have always been those who derive satisfaction from getting down to the nitty-gritty of it all in order to make their experience, as Leonidas Hubbard termed it, "the real thing." The outdoorsmen and women who favored minimalism over superfluity and rugged poise over effete luxury went to ever increasing lengths to pioneer a variety of wilderness recreation that in form more closely resembled actual life in the woods than a leisurely diversion. These campers also found it necessary to distinguish themselves from all the sportsmen who were merely content to glance at wilderness from afar without ever getting their clothes dirty. "If you are of the class that cannot have a good time unless everything is right with it, stay out of the woods," urged Stewart Edward White, betraying a suggestion of wilderness elitism. "When you have gained the faculty of ignoring the one disagreeable thing and concentrating your powers on the compensations," he went on to say, "then you will have become a true woodsman, and to your desires the forest will always be

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[117] Warner, *In The Wilderness*, 126-127.

calling."[118] The self-imposed exclusivity of this more strenuous branch of camping created a cult-like circle of hardcore wilderness enthusiasts who scorned the lesser forms of outdoor recreation as unworthy of true communion with nature.

Given the range of choices open to campers of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, it is telling that a significant number chose the most trying option. But their camping practices mean little if not juxtaposed against the other forms of wilderness recreation popular at the time. Perhaps it might be appropriate to consider the array of outdoor options available to the outdoorsmen and women of the turn of the twentieth century. Primitive wilderness camping takes on further meaning when it is understood as a manifestation of a deep dissatisfaction with the more passive and materialistic forms of engagement with the natural world.

Primitive campers found most to rail against in the presence of the many wilderness resorts that dotted the landscape of their beloved hinterland retreats. The resorts apparently disgraced the very land they were built on, for they committed the cardinal sin of bringing civilization at its most repugnant to the sacred wilderness. As the all-American popularizer of woodcraft, Daniel C. Beard, explained when he clarified what exactly he meant when he referred to camping:

> 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.[119]

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[118] Stewart Edward White, *The Forest* (New York: The Outlook Co., 1903), 116-117.
[119] Daniel C. Beard, *New Ideas for Out of Doors: The Field and Forest Handy Book* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1906), 235.

For primitive campers, being out in the wilderness was a means of escaping the unhealthy codes of Victorian conduct. Civilization was onerous and miserable enough when it was contained in urban environments, introducing it into wilderness settings was intolerable and somewhat offensive.[120]

The bucolic resorts, or "fools paradise[s]" as Robert Dunn referred to them, were antithetical to all that untamed nature meant for those who considered themselves to be true woodsmen and women. "The summer hotel makes a fool of nature," Dunn declared, "those are clowns in flannels on the tennis courts."[121] Dunn apparently felt the wilderness kitsch peddled by the resorts had a degrading effect upon what was otherwise a sacred ideal, and he could not restrain his disappointment with the "suckers" who made degradation possible.

As a further example of the resentment visited upon wilderness resorts, the explorer, hunter-extraordinaire, and most-interesting-man-in-the-world candidate George O. Shields wrote disparagingly that the patrons of these "fashionable summer resorts" resided in "hotels or boarding-houses, hampered by strict rules of etiquette, and dressed in the height of fashion." Meanwhile those in the know understood that "velvet carpets, richly upholstered furniture, cut-glass, and plate are not essential to happiness, but that

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[120] To learn more about the proliferation of posh wilderness resorts, consult: Cindy S. Aron, *Working at Play: A History of Vacations in the United States* (New York: Oxford university Press, 1999); Marguerite S. Shaffer, *See America First: Tourism and National Identity, 1880-1940* (Washington D.C., Smithsonian Institution Press, 2001); Eric Purchase, *Out of Nowhere: Disaster and Tourism in the White Mountains* (Baltimore; Johns Hopkins university Press, 1999); David M. Wrobel & Patrick T. Long, eds., *Seeing and Being Seen: Tourism in the American West* (Lawrence, KS; University Press of Kansas, 2001); & Suzanne Barta Julin, *A Marvelous Hundred Square Miles: Black Hills Tourism, 1880-1941* (Pierre, SD; South Dakota State Historical Society Press, 2009).

[121] Robert Dunn, "The Fallacies of 'Roughing it,'" *Outing* 46, no. 6 (September 1905), 652 & 643.

perfect happiness and perfect rest are found where there is least conventionality."[122] Those sybarites residing in their luxurious resorts could have their fun insulated from the real outdoors, but primitive campers reserved the right to scoff at the philistines for their crass materialism.

A rung up from wilderness resorts on the legitimacy scale imposed by primitive campers were the cabin or cottage camps of the northern woodlands. While these arrangements were typically referred to as "camps," especially in northeast, real woodsmen were not deceived by the inaccurate nomenclature. "There are camps, and camps" old Nessmuk told his readers suggestively.[123] In his discussion of the Adirondack wilderness, Warren H. Miller went as far to label the "cottage or permanent 'camp'" as the "curse" of the region.[124] This condemnation meant a lot coming from the editor of the popular sporting periodical *Field and Stream.* While these cabins and cottage camps were unquestionably less objectionable than sprawling resort communities, they still lacked an essential ingredient essential to the authentic wilderness experience. Horace Kephart said it all quite nicely:

> There are "camps" so-called that are not camps at all. A rustic cottage furnished with tables and chairs and beds brought from town, with rugs on the floor and pictures on the walls, with a stove in the kitchen and crockery in the pantry, an ice-house hard by, and daily delivery of groceries, farm products, and mails, may be a pleasant place in which to spend the summer with one's family and friends; but it is not a camp.[125]

According to Kephart, what cottage camps lacked was the lack of impedimenta characteristic of the true camp of a bona fide woodsman. They simply allowed for too

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[122] George O. Shields, *Camping and Camp Outfits* (Chicago: Rand, McNally & Co., 1890), 10.
[123] George Washington Sears, *Woodcraft,* 25.
[124] Warren Hastings Miller, *Camping Out,* 111.
[125] Kephart, 20.

much stuff and did not require of their inhabitants any meaningful interaction with the nature around them. Cabin campers could get along knowing next to nothing about woodcraft or wilderness survival. "Few people who camp out really know their business," opined one prospector turned outdoor-author, "In fact, with most individuals, camping is not a business, but a diversion, all too lightly entered into."[126] The nonchalance of these outdoor newbs was evidently a bit obnoxious to those who actually took their outdoor pursuits seriously, or at least it provided them with a easy justification to feel satisfied in the knowledge that there camping trips were the "real thing."

Yet another rung up the ladder from resorts and cabins were sedentary camps. These were arrangements where campers pitched an often quite elaborate camp space of greater or lesser complexity, sometimes deep in the wilderness, sometimes directly adjacent to civilization. What differentiated sedentary camps from cottage camps was the lack of any permanent structures and the resulting closer contact with the outdoors the absence of such boundaries encouraged. Although sedentary campers were often known for being just as addicted to civilized luxuries as their cabin dwelling counterparts, they were the recipients of more respect simply for their willingness to go without the security of four solid walls and a roof over their heads.

Resorts, cabins, cottages, and sedentary camps were undeniably popular with the American public at-large during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. I am merely presenting how they were viewed from the vantage point of a particular set of outdoor enthusiasts who aspired to access the natural world on a higher plane than did their more sybaritic counterparts. For the outdoorsmen and women who identified

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[126] Arthur Chapman, "The Prospector goes Camping," *Outing* 70, no.6 (1917), 799.

themselves among the elite class of Americans who knew how to commune with nature properly, there was only one way to go into the wilderness.

Anyone who knew how to do the thing right knew that the only true and proper way to engage the wilderness was to be itinerant, to let loose of any geographic restraints and move about the world freely with the minimum amount of restricting impedimenta. "A camp proper is a nomad's biding-place," wrote Kephart, finally defining what in his vocabulary constituted the only correct use of the word "camp."[127] The importance campers placed on the freedom to be rootless in the natural world was one of their main gripes with the other forms of recreation in nature. Sure, gear, food, and disposition were important too, but they were all subject to the amount of latitude the camper wished to experience. "This nomadage is the ideal way if you want to 'do' the trick of getting close to nature properly," an article appearing in *Outing* read.[128]

There were still many options open to the camper who wished to move about the woods instead of stay in a fixed location. Itinerant camping took many forms. Often different means of transportation were required for travel in different geographic localities. For example, the canoe was the favored transport for those wishing to penetrate deep into the north woods of the United States or Canada. If one was going to venture beyond the Missouri they might find it necessary to participate in "that great Western division of camp life, horse packing."[129] Obviously, canoes on the plains were too restricted to the few waterways and totally out of their element in mountainous localities. While canoeing and horse packing served the various needs to wilderness

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[127] Kephart, 20.
[128] "Choosing the Light-Weight Mess Kit," *Outing* 63, no.3 (1913-1914), 352.
[129] Miller, *Camping Out,* 34.

travelers for much of the continent, hoofing it was also a viable option, although it severely limited the amount of duffle a camper could conceivably transport. But then again, that was kind of the point. Perambulating around the wilderness was perhaps one of the most pure, clean, and authentic forms of wilderness recreation in which one could participate. Campers reveled in the sensation of carrying all their possessions in their carefully prepared backpack. The self-sufficiency it engendered apparently being an end in itself. "Back-packing requires a high degree of organization," Warren H. Miller informed his readers, "of making wilderness supply one's comforts, of carrying the essentials and them only."[130] To be peripatetic necessitated campers to also be knowledgeable about the natural world surrounding them. Lugging around a bunch of gear and supplies was one thing, but possessing the skills and abilities to derive comfort and nourishment from the raw hand of nature was something else altogether. This is where woodcraft came in.

Perhaps it might be useful to recall Leonidas Hubbard and his assumption that a large proportion of his party's rations would be gotten directly from the land itself. Although it did not work out too well for Hubbard and friends, they were not at all aberrant in the way they went about their expedition. They were simply devout observers of the veritable ethic of woodcraft camping. Unfortunately, their extreme dedication had dire consequences.

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[130] Miller, *Camping Out, 80.*

Starving, freezing, and making excruciatingly slow progress, Leonidas Hubbard, Dillon Wallace, and George Wallace were stuck in the Labradorian interior with few prospects. Their goal to reach the Nascaupee Indians for the annual caribou hunt had gone horribly wrong and now they found themselves in an extremely perilous condition. However, interestingly, and revealingly, the campers still found grounds to carry on. "Lack of grub depressing and exhilarating by turns," Hubbard wrote, "former to be hungry; latter to rely on self and country for grub."[131] Apparently, the harder their ordeal became the more authentic and rugged they saw themselves to be. This may help to explain why they did not turn back as they probably should have once their food ran out, clothing turned to tatters, and toe-nails started falling off. As Hubbard recorded in the journal, "no one hints at turning back...the boys are game."[132] While the situation Hubbard's party found themselves in certainly made playing the explorer all the more authentic, one has to question their apparent refusal to give up the game and head for safety.

Instead, they paddled and portaged on, picking off a ptarmigan here, catching a few trout there, and all the while watching their rations get smaller and smaller. On one occasion the party managed to down a caribou, a propitious omen that provided welcome red meat. But one caribou could only feed three hungry men for so long, and it was not as if they could travel with much of the venison anyway.

Adding to the escalating severity of their predicament, they soon realized they did not know where they were. Somewhere their map had led them astray. They found

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[131] Leonidas Hubbard, "The Leonidas Hubbard , Jun., Expedition into Labrador," *Outing* 45, no.6 (March 1906), 674.
[132] Ibid, 674.

themselves up a creek they had no business being on. Regardless of their disorientation and the perennial food problem, the three men had traveled a great distance inland. Having reached a large lake, they were forced to camp on its shores for two weeks because high winds made the water far too rough for their modest canoe. During this agonizing layover, Hubbard climbed a nearby promontory and actually spotted the lake they needed to reach to get back on path and moving towards the caribou hunt. But the winds kept them off the water and immobile.

With morale low and prospects bleak, when the weather finally did permit the men to get back on the water, they all agreed they had experienced their fill of the great outdoors. The men concurred that going back was the right path to take.

Although retracing their steps and traveling downstream should have made the return trip a walk in the park, early freezes and waterways at their autumn lows made progress slow and difficult. The food situation was no better. Finally reduced to boiling and knawing the maggoty hoofs of a caribou carcass, Hubbard physically broke down and could no longer muster the strength to continue. On October 18th the men decided that Wallace and Eleson should leave Hubbard in the protection of an abandoned cabin they had come across while they continued on to find a cache of flour they had ditched on their way in. Having gotten the flour, Wallace was to return to Hubbard with some of it in tow while Eleson would continue on to find and send help.

Wallace and Elseon did find the flour. And Eleson did find and send help at a nearby woodsmen's outpost some nine days after originally departing from Hubbard. The three men charged with rescuing the two remaining campers found Wallace at the

point of collapse very near where he and Eleson had found the flour cache. Apparently, having been lost in a continuous snowstorm for nearly two weeks, Wallace was as close to the doorstep of death as a person can get. Hubbard, unfortunately, had already crossed the threshold. He had died cold, alone, and in Canada.[133] His rescuers found him in the cabin rolled in a blanket, his diary close at hand. The last entry read:

> To-night or to-morrow, perhaps, the weather will improve so I can build a fire, eat the rest of my moccasins, and have some more bone broth. Then I can boil my belt and oil-tanned moccasins and a pair of cowhide mittens. They ought to help some. I am not suffering. The acute pangs of hunger have given way to indifference. I'm sleepy. I think death from starvation is not so bad. But let no one suppose I expect it. I am prepared—that is all. I think the boys will be able, with the Lord's help, to save me.[134]

Given the harsh winter conditions, carrying Hubbard's body out was not an option. Instead, he was wrapped in furs and left to cool. When in March of the next year a party came to recover his body, they "found it under eight feet of pure white undisturbed snow –as fitting sepulcher as man ever had."[135]

Hubbard, Wallace, and Eleson were all accomplished outdoorsmen well versed in the practice of woodcraft and wilderness survival. In fact, a few years following his scrape with death up in Labrador Wallace would join the cadre of outdoorsmen publishing advice manuals in reverence to the life lived in nature. Interestingly, nowhere in Wallace's book did he reference his good friend Leonidas Hubbard or his own personal close call. Perhaps he did not wish to tarnish the pristine reputation of wilderness for other passionate outdoorsmen hoping to experience "the real thing" on their next excursion.

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[133] Dying cold and alone is not so bad...but in Canada? Such a tragedy.
[134] Ibid, 689.
[135] Ibid, 647.

The party's wish to go simple, practical, and unencumbered with the superfluities of civilization allowed them to witness aspects of the natural world they undoubtedly had never experienced before. Going as light as possible did lend a great deal of legitimacy to their endeavor. They truly did know what it was like to live close to nature, depending on the land for their every need. And by all accounts, that is exactly what they wanted. They hoped their time spent away from civilization, away from all the scramble of modern life and the shameless commercialism of a culture so absorbed with surfaces and affectation that it had no basis in reality, would provide them with an understanding of life at its most primal. Discarding the oppressive vestiges of the loathed and enfeebling consumer culture from which they wished break away, Hubbard and crew took up the identities of frontiersmen, wilderness sojourners who relied on their own wits for survival instead of being hopelessly dependent upon others, like a child to its mother.

The story of the Hubbard expedition provides a clear illustration of why wilderness travel was more than leisure, more than play, and more than a game. There were serious consequences when things went wrong. But testing the boundaries of what can and cannot be done in nature was often part of the appeal. While some campers were satisfied to merely observe the precipice from afar, content at keeping some distance between themselves and the place where they may begin to loose footing, others relished the feeling of getting as close to the edge as possible. Hubbard and company clearly derived some manner of satisfaction from glaring into the abyss of their own mortality. Why else would they have continued on for as long as they did under such dicey conditions?

CHAPTER 2

REALITY, AUTHENTICITY, RITUAL, AND FETISH

The wilderness expedition of Leonidas Hubbard provides a telling example of the lengths some campers were willing to go and the hardships they were willing to endure in pursuit of those elusive and all too ephemeral sensations of reality and authenticity. Apparently, only in the heart of nature and under the right conditions were such sensations realizable. When Hubbard divulged that he "reveled in strenuous trips, trying to make them the real thing [by] getting down to the essentials," he betrayed the primitivist's belief that life in its pure, real form was accessible only in the stark severity of nature.[136]

Hubbard was in no way singular in his wish for some sort of vague realness in his time spent camping. Many of his fellow outdoorsmen and women shared his passion for simplicity and self-sufficiency. In discarding all superfluities and getting down to the fundamentals of existence, woodcraft campers sought out substantive experiences that their insipid civilized lives were incapable of supplying. And these substantive experiences were ostensibly more genuine if they were acquired through the prescribed means. Communing with the realities of nature was often demanding, but that was the point. The challenge of contacting nature amidst what could be extreme conditions separated the wheat from the chaff. It provided a way for the righteous and worthy to differentiate themselves as authentic outdoorsmen from the undeserving tyro.

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[136] Leonidas Hubbard, "The Leonidas Hubbard , Jun., Expedition into Labrador," *Outing* 45, no.6 (March 1906), 678.

The reality of nature could not be engaged from all angles. To approach the wilderness humbly, with an understanding of its ways and customs, was to enter a sacred space uncorrupted by the defiling hand of mankind. But to approach nature with a brazen disregard, in the garb of civilization and with a surfeit of handy contrivances was shameful. It was an affront to the very purity nature symbolized. Those who took their time in the wilderness seriously were not wont to disrespect their host. Campers placed a great deal of importance upon engaging the wilderness in a way that was modest, and, of course, genuine. Nature was the last bastion of the sacred authentic. Its seeming divinity in the minds of many Americans mandated the prescribed rites and customs so often conferred upon abstract holy entities of human belief.

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"The outlook to nature is the outlook to what is real, hearty, and spontaneous," Liberty Hyde Bailey wrote in 1905.[137] If nature was "real, hearty, and spontaneous," attributes Bailey found praiseworthy, nature's antithesis – civilization – was stilted, frail, and wooden. Moreover, civilization separated human beings from the reality of their existence. As Bailey observed, "the currents of civilization tend always to take us out of our environment rather than to fit us into it."[138] Citizens of civilization, or perhaps its victims, were in a state of spiritual and physical detachment from all that was enduring

[137] Liberty Hyde Bailey, *The Outlook to Nature* (New York: MacMillan Co., 1905), 9.
[138] Bailey, *The Outlook to Nature,* 9.

and definite. Instead, they were trapped in a noxiously mannered culture of "syrupy sentimentalism" and diluted experiences.[139]

Henry Van Dyke observed the state of American culture in a passage that said it all, and more:

> The people who always live in houses, and sleep on beds. And walk on pavements, and buy their food from butchers and bakers and grocers, are not the most blessed inhabitants of this wide and various earth. The circumstances of their existence are too mathematical and secure for perfect contentment. They live at second or third hand. They are boarders in the world. Everything is done for them by somebody else.
>
> It is almost impossible for anything very interesting to happen to them. They must get their excitement out of the newspapers, reading of the hairbreadth escapes and moving accidents that befall people in real life. What to these tame ducks [!?] really know of the adventure of living? If the weather is bad, they are snugly housed. If it is cold, there is a furnace in the cellar. If they are hungry, the shops are near at hand, It is all as dull, flat, stale, and unprofitable as adding up a column of figures. They might as well be brought up in an incubator.
>
> But when man abides in tents, after the manner of the early patriarchs, the face of the world is renewed.

Van Dyke was not only railing against the ineptitude civilization inflicted upon modern humanity, he also thought it disturbing how civilization disconnected people from the realities of nature. If people were impervious to the rougher edges of life as it was subject to the uncertainties of weather and hunger, degeneration would surely follow. Civilized men and women would lack the necessary incentives to stay up on their game and not fall into a collective evolutionary slump.[140] They would be "tame ducks" idly waddling about with no particular purpose.

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[139] David, E. Shi, *Facing Facts: Realism in American Thought and Culture, 1850-1920* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 9; For further and more entertaining discussions on the sensation of reality amidst an oppressive modernity, watch the films *My Dinner With Andre* and *Fight Club.*

[140] Recall H.G. Wells' vision in *The Time Machine* of a deteriorated species of future humans – the Eloi – made physically and intellectually slight by the eradication of all toil and tribulations from their idle lives.

If life in civilization made a quack out of mankind, nature heightened the senses and brought some semblance of reality back into existence. In a discussion on the essence of life closer to nature, Charles Stedman Hanks informed his readers "in this primeval world there are other little details which you think about – details so insignificant that nowhere else would they attract even a passing thought, but which absorb you now because nothing is marred by man's embellishments or tarnished by the daily duties of life."[141] Time spent in the wilderness had the tendency to enliven the facilities of men and women. Whereas too much time in civilization only atrophied them. Moreover, civilized men and women were not their true selves. They were incased in a crusty shell of propriety and refinement that kept their true nature's obscure and ambiguous. But a dip in the surging realties of unsullied wilderness could dissolve the crusty shell and allow the authentic self to become manifest.

Camping especially offered a vital opportunity to realize the true character of oneself or others or deeper truths embedded throughout the world. Nature could bring out those latent qualities that went either unexpressed or unacknowledged in modern civilization. For those campers who understood the transformative effects nature enjoyed, penetrating the wilderness possessed connotations beyond mere recreation. Writing for the sporting periodical *Outing* in 1905, Robert Dunn, in the style of a woods-

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"We are kept keen on the grindstone of pain and necessity," his time traveling character says at one point. Later, he observes that "only those animals partake of intelligence that have to meet a huge variety of needs and dangers."

[141] Charles Stedman Hanks, *Camp Kits and Camp Life* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1906), 55; Note: Hanks went by the embarrassing nickname "Niblick", perhaps in a vain attempt to imitate "Nessmuk," the acknowledged model all woodcraft authors idealized. Unfortunately for Hanks, "Niblick" was not a cognomen that prompted much respect.

sage, discussed the powerful effects the mystery and wonder of nature could have on the wilderness sojourner:

> The most unexpected persons constantly bob up and hit the long trail to the wilds alright. Heresies and insincerities never corrupt them. They know the exquisite monotony of covering great distances in the wilds. Step after step, hour after hour, day after day; a few miles – only a few miles on the long trail. Its long strange thoughts linger and leave you more and more alone in the world. One by one the spruces wheel solemnly backward toward civilization...[]...You ache in the saddle, and do not understand why you should be living, or should ever die; and time and distance become queer, arbitrary notions, while in one thought you are both old and young. You know nothing about it at all; only the trail knows, the trail – wisely crawling out upon this ledge, looping back across that swamp, plunging into the river. It knows, it knows. Not to have had such faith, not to have been so baffled – is not to have lived.[142]

The elusive sensation of clarity that the monotony of wilderness travel fostered was profound. As Dunn observed, the chance to lose oneself completely to the enormity of the trail was an experience liable to put one's existence in proper perspective. Years in civilization distorted reality. Wilderness could correct these mutilations of truth.

Charles Stedman Hanks also waxed philosophical on the reality of nature. During a camper's time in the wilderness "he looks his feelings squarely in the face, his inner self better shows itself" Hanks contended. He continued:

> ...he learns that it is the touch of danger which brings out the joys of life, and that it is better to desire the things which one has than to have the things which one desires. Here [wilderness] it is just as respectable to be idling away the time along the side of a brook, or with your pipe in your mouth to be lying against the trunk of a tree, dreaming of the chances of the future by the changes of the past, as to be pegging along for a larger bank account, which no matter how honestly done, carries a taint with it, for it has somewhere in it the elements of horse trading, because what one has gained has been at the expense of another. Here, because the woods are so full of mystery, and so full of peace, wild horses are ridden and the plain, practical, everyday virtues and the best and deepest feelings come

[142] Robert Dunn, "The Fallacies of 'Roughing it,'" *Outing* 46, no. 6 (September 1905), 652.

> surging up. As you think over the struggles and the turmoils of your life you perhaps recall some trivial circumstance, which, drifting against the cog wheels of your life, turned it into other channels – how new hopes, new ambitions, new plans sprang into being, and that the unnoticed incident, changing but for a moment the daily environment, crushed forever all old ambitions and long-cherished plans, and then there come up queries of the whys and the wherefores of it all and the strange paradoxes of human existence. [143]

This promotion of deep contemplation by time spent close to nature is telling. Early woodcraft outdoorsmen and women envisioned their time spent camping as a means to an enlightenment their quotidian lives in civilization stifled. Communion with nature offered the opportunity to truly know and understand the reality of one's existence, one's true identity, apart from all the smoke and mirrors of civilized propriety and commercial values.

In addition to allowing campers the prospect of realizing and attuning themselves to their own authentic selves, camping was also an occasion to better know one's fellow campers. Given that nature was inclined to bring out the authentic, there was no better place than the wilderness to witness a companion's true colors. "You never know people until you have camped with them," wrote Kathrene Pinkerton.[144] While a friend might be a friend in civilization, in no way did that relationship translate to the reality of the wilderness. "Remember that there is no place which brings out the sharp edges of a man like the woods," warned Hanks (a.k.a. "Niblick"), "until the veneer of civilization has been stripped off your real disposition will not show itself."[145] Another author offered a similar exposition: "The camp is the great leveler—the crucible for the melting down and

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[143] Hanks, *Camp Kits and Camp Life,* 57-58.
[144] Kathrene Pinkerton, *Woodcraft For Women* (New York: Outing Pub. Co., 1916), 159.
[145] Hanks, *Camp Kits and Camp Life,* 60.

proving the genuine qualities of who ever enters it. Three days in camp will reveal the good and bad sides of human character better than any other test I know of."[146]

No wonder woodcraft authors devoted ample verbiage to the choice of fellow campers. "A mistake here may be a kill-joy," informed one author.[147] A good camping trip depended not only on what was packed and on where one went; it was also highly subject to the character of the company. The subject even inspired a little playful poetry:

> Reader, if you your tears would save,
> And would avoid an early grace;
> To shun that bed so cold and damp –
> Be mighty careful *with whom* you camp![italics original][148]

But in all seriousness, the people who made up the camping party mattered. One's camping companions could mean the difference between a relaxing outing with friends or a week of hell stuffed with bitterness and resentment.[149]

Woodcraft authors warned their readers well about the tendency of wilderness to bring out the unpleasant qualities in people. "In the woods all the bad qualities of a man or woman come to the surface," Emerson Hough cautioned.[150] A man might be mild-mannered and agreeable in civilization, but make him hike twenty miles under the hot sun amidst an assault of insects, or in the cold rain in soggy, stinky boots; take him away from his easy, comfortable existence and he will likely display a very different disposition. "Look well to the choice of your bunkie for nowhere else do weak and strong characteristics come to the surface so forcibly as when men are thrown together in

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[146] Ed W. Sandys, "Camps & Camping," *Outing* 30, no. 4 (1897), 375.
[147] Bayard Henderson Christy, *Going Afoot: A Book on Waling* (New York: Association Press, 1920), 37.
[148] Sandys, "Camps & Camping," 375.
[149] Or to put it in a more culturally relevant way, it could mean the difference between strengthening the bonds of friendship, as in *City Slickers,* or murder and gay anal rape, as in *Deliverance.*
[150] Emerson Hough, *Out Of Doors* (New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1915), 109.

camp, " advised Claude Fordyce, "As a matter of fact a wilderness pal of proper qualifications is really hard to find. He may be a jolly comrade in town but that does not qualify him as a first rate camp mate."[151] Anyone who has been on a serious hike or camping trip knows that a companion with a tendency towards "breakin' down" can truly ruin an otherwise pleasurable experience. But just as easily as friendships can be dissolved in the wilderness, they can also be strengthened. As Roger Toll wrote:

> In the open, one learns the character of his companions with more rapidity and certainty than in the more conventional life of cities. A friend is defined as one with whom you would like to go camping again. Strong and weak characteristics rapidly develop. Selfishness can not be hidden. True and lasting friendship is often built up in a short time.[152]

Evidently, friendships formed in camping were stronger than the fair-weather friendships of civilization.

Whether it was discovering one's true identity, getting closer to a friend, or looking up at the stars and pondering the mystery of the cosmos, wilderness camping was a situation where people could shirk the usual baggage of civilization and get down to the essentials of their existence. In this sense, primitive camping was an expression of a profound dissatisfaction with the emptiness and incoherence of a society perceived by some to be too sophisticated and superficial. The wilderness offered a sanctuary of the real to those yearning for a purpose beyond "pegging along for a larger bank account."[153]

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[151] Claude Powell Fordyce, *Touring Afoot* (New York: Outing Pub. Co., 1916), 16-17.
[152] Roger W. Toll and the National Park Service, *Mountaineering in the Rocky Mountain National Park* (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1919), 10.

[153] Hanks, *Camp Kits and Camp Life,* 58.

While wilderness camping evidently brought reality to the fore, campers still felt compelled to try and radiate an aura of authenticity. Although the reality of nature should have theoretically fostered a genuineness that precluded any semblance of artifice, campers were still concerned with the authenticity of themselves and others. It seems one of the more egregious offensives a camper could violate was the taboo of spurious woodsmenship. Amidst a culture of men and women seeking to acquire an authentic identity close to nature, such an infringement could destabilize the whole operation. But campers were quick to call others out as phonies because doing so somehow validated their own status' as authentic woodsmen and women.

Furthermore, affectation was antithetical to all that the wilderness represented. It was a space of authenticity where campers could escape the mannered postures of civilization. It then is no surprise campers stressed authenticity and came down hard on those who seemed to tarnish the validity of woodcraft camping.

Real outdoorsmen and women knew their way around a wilderness camping trip. They knew the best way to traverse any geographic feature they encountered. They knew what to bring and how much of it they would need. They knew their woodcraft like Jesus knew the little children. They could even catch fish in lifeless waters and pack a fifty pound load over a rugged portage with little else to show for it besides some bloody fingernails and a stern disposition, or so campers idealized. They were models of woodsmenship and to meet one was like meeting a buddha or a saint. Although such figures as Nussmuk were undoubtedly bestowed with such a status, the real outdoorsman was largely a fantasy. It was an abstract ideal towards which campers strived.

"Any one can go light," Warren Miller exhorted, "but to go light, and right is one of the arts, requiring the utmost knowledge and study of conditions."[154] The ability to do the thing correctly and right was the hallmark of the authentic woodman. When amateurs dithered, the woodsmen acted. When tyros over-packed, the woodsmen had pared his equipment down to the essentials. His skill and practice differentiated him from the lay-camper, yet he was there for their emulation. Emerson Hough informed his readers that "experience on your own part will teach you to leave most of the light stuff at home and to come to like the practical, simple outfit of the real old-timer."[155] Furthermore, Kathrene Pinkerton avowed that in the woods the camper "will be distinguished for the simplicity of his equipment and the absence of all unnecessary duffle."[156] In the culture of woodcraft camping, gear could serve as a good indicator of just how genuine a camper's outdoorsmenship truly was.

For example, a superfluity of gear was the distinguishing mark of a wilderness charlatan. "Many of our great sportsmen, so called, are not sportsmen at all," alleged Emerson Hough, "They buy with money the remedy for their own lack of skill, their own lack of observation."[157] These "pretended sportsmen," as another author called them, were the scourge of the outdoor fellowship.[158] "Gear sluts," as one contemporary camping author has termed them, sought to make up for their shortcomings in woodcraft and practical experience through an abundance of paraphernalia.[159] It was an attempt to

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[154] Warren Hastings Miller, *Camping Out* (New York: George H. Doran Co., 1918), 41.
[155] Hough, *Out of Doors,* 148.
[156] Pinkerton, *Woodcraft For Women,* 55.
[157] Hough, *Out of Doors,* 293.
[158] George O. Shields, *Cruisings in the Cascades* (Chicago: Rand, McNally & Co., 1889), 55.
[159] Hap Wilson, *Trails and Tribulations: Confessions of a Wilderness Pathfinder* (Toronto: Natural Heritage Books, 2009), 32.

become a real camper by acquiring the materials real campers possessed. But campers could not chameleonerate themselves to the authentic so easily. Putting up a façade of material products was one thing, but authenticity was much more than having the right stuff.

Some campers had all the right gear but still lacked that crucial element which separated the true woodmen from the phony. The true woodsmen knew what he was and did not need to strive, but the phony tried too hard, and in doing so exposed himself as a sham. Stewart Edward White described this kind of camper for which he had a thorough disdain. The phony "professes an inordinate scorn for comforts of all sorts" and "has a vast pride in being able to sleep on cobblestones," White steamed. "He stands, – or perhaps I should say poses – indifferent to a downpour when everyone else has sought shelter."[160] Such a camper was reviled because in trying so hard to be an authentic woodsman he exposed himself a pathetic fake. As another author explained: "There are persons inexperienced in camping who imagine that hardship is a necessary incident of camp life. They want to 'rough it," and if they are not uncomfortable they fancy they are not getting the genuine thing."[161] Authenticity was not something to the strutted around and enacted, it was supposed to be something innate that needed no accentuation.

Although woodcraft campers placed a great deal of importance on simplicity and the utility of the stores of nature, apparently a camper could go too far in that direction as well. "There are all sorts of fads and poses in sport, as in everything else," wrote Emerson Hough. "Some of us like to affect the D. Boone and S. Kenton simplicity stunt

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[160] Stewart Edward White, *Camp and Trail* (New York: Outing Pub. Co., 1906), 28-29.
[161] H.A. Hill, "Camping in Comfort," *Outing* 32, no.5 (1898), 505.

and scorn to use anything modern."[162] Horace Kephart had a similar observation in discussing wilderness foodstuffs: "There is an old school of campers who affect to scorn such things [variety in food]. 'We take nothing with us,' they say, 'but salt pork, flour, baking powder, salt, sugar, and coffee – our guns and rods furnish us variety.' This sounds sturdy, but there is a deal of humbug in it."[163] Kephart and Hough's characterization of frontier primitivism and pioneer simplicity as an affected "stunt" or "humbug" is certainly worth mulling over. Here were a pair of woodcraft campers disclosing that the precepts of woodcraft camping was often nothing more than a performance. While their reflections might have been closer to the truth than not, it is most surprising that they even recognized the posing dynamic in what were seemingly such veteran woodsmen.

Perceiving that there was often a trace of forgery in the pursuits of the woodcraft camper, Hough charged his readers to get real. "Avoid the crime of insincerity or pose in your pleasures," Hough commanded on one instance.[164] "Don't pretend to be what you are not," he pleaded in another.[165] The fact Hough felt compelled to make such explicit implorations to his readers suggests that the crime of posing was either prevalent, consequential, or both.

Campers with a bunch of deluxe gear were certainly liable to be slammed with the label of inauthenticity, but so were those who scorned comforts too readily. It seemed that no matter what campers did a negative judgment was bound to be thrown their way.

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[162] Hough, *Out of Doors,* 262.
[163] Horace Kephart, *Camping And Woodcraft: A Handbook for Vacation Campers and for Travelers in the Wilderness* (New York: MacMillan Co., 1919), 180.
[164] Hough, *Out of Doors,* 145.
[165] Hough, *Out of Doors,* 156.

Robert Dunn picked up on this ostensibly incongruous dynamic when he described the grumbles of two fictional campers as they emerged from the wilderness. The first camper, apparently tired and dejected from having to deal with raw nature, had a few interesting insights on "roughing it":

> No more roughing it...Next trip, I take along every comfort I can afford, and lots of guides; all the tents, folding-chairs, cot-beds they can carry. No more back-packing, no amateur cooking, no sleeping wet. What's the use of a civilized man going out of his way to suffer like a savage? Some people think that just because they're in the woods they've got to be uncomfortable...Their roughing it is all a pose.[166]

Clearly, this poor man's experience did not live up to whatever expectations he may have had. However, unlike the first man, a subsequent camper had an altogether different assessment of who was actually doing the posing:

> No more tents or rubber blankets or any of that foolish truck. When I go to the woods, I want to live close to Nature, struggling for existence just as our primitive forefathers did. I want work. I want to pack. I don't mind sleeping wet. I can eat anything as long as it's nourishing. I can sleep on a stump. These Percy-and-Harold campers, with guides and folding bath-tubs don't really care for the woods. Their roughing it is all a pose.[167]

What was a camper to do in such an atmosphere of rampant gratuitous appraisal? Dunn's juxtaposition revealed that no matter which trail campers followed, they were undoubtedly going to wind up posing in someone's opinion. It seemed that in throwing out the charge of posing so ubiquitously, campers were perhaps expressing their own personal anxieties about not meeting the ideal of authenticity themselves.

The cousin of the poser was the tenderfoot. While posers and tenderfeet had a lot in common, such as a penchant for trying too hard or failing to grasp the reality of their

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[166] Robert Dunn, "The Fallacies of 'Roughing it,'" 646.
[167] Robert Dunn, "The Fallacies of 'Roughing it,'" 646.

situations, what separated the poser from the tenderfoot were intentions. The poser was trying to be something he was not. The tenderfoot, on the other hand, was simply a benighted fool in camping garb. Tenderfootism did include some posing, but being a tenderfoot carried connotations of ignorance and inexperience that was pitied more than reviled.

"The tenderfoot is a queer beast," Stewart Edward White mused:

> He makes more trouble than ants at a picnic, more work than a trespassing goat; he never sees anything, knows where anything is, remembers accurately your instructions, follows them if remembered, or is able to handle without awkwardness his large and pathetic hands and feet; he is always lost, always *falling off or into things, always in difficulties; his* articles of necessity are constantly being burned up or washed away or mislaid; he looks at you beamingly through great innocent eyes in the most chuckle-headed of manners; he exasperates you to within an inch of explosion, – and yet you love him.[168]

There was no affectation in the tenderfoot. He was genuinely maladroit in matters of woodcraft and little more. But despite all his redeeming qualities, the tenderfoot was not an authentic woodsman and was therefore shunned to the margins of camping culture as unworthy.

Through all the inconsistencies and contradictions in the cacophonous debate over what exactly it meant to be authentic in the culture of woodcraft camping, the figure of the genuine outdoorsman and woman remained firmly attached to the possession of practical knowledge. Posers and tenderfoots could ape their way into the woods, but the real thing understood the appropriate manner of course from tested experience. "A practical knowledge of woodcraft [is] essential – not book knowledge" wrote Warren Miller. The true woodsman was defined by "the knowledge that comes from experience,

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[168] Stewart Edward White, *The Mountains* (New York: McClure, Phillips & Co., 1904), 131.

of having done it before, again and again."[169] While gear and a sensible wardrobe could throw up a veneer of authenticity, real outdoorsmen simply knew how to get things done without all the panache and theatrics.

In reading woodcraft literature it is apparent that in all things related to camp-life the fire had the greatest potential to separate the authentic camper from the amateur. "Getting a fire started easily and well is the mark of a woodsman," commented one author.[170] Another claimed that "in no way does the camping tyro proclaim his greenness more than when he attempts to make fire."[171] Fires required skills and knowledge that a camper could not get from a book. Furthermore, the quality of a fire was also telling. Anyone could set a raging conflagration, but a woodsman knew how to build a tidy, efficient, clean burning fire. As Horace Kephart observed: "one glance at a camper's fire tells what kind of a woodsman he is."[172] A fire could potentially serve as a means of evaluating the value and integrity of a woodcraft camper more than anything else he possessed. It was through such "intangible knowledge" as fire-making that established "one's rating as either a guest or a member of the out of door clan."[173]

In considering all the talk of posers, tenderfeet, and authentic woodsmen in early wilderness camping, one cannot help but detect an undertone of competition in it all. Of course, the contest was not outright and acknowledged by its participants, but like so many other things of the American middle-class, it was purely tacit and largely

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[169] Warren Hastings Miller, *Camp Craft: Modern Practice and Equipment* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1915), 8.
[170] Warwick Carpenter, *Winter Camping* (New York: Outing Pub. Co., 1913), 93.
[171] Fordyce, *Touring Afoot,* 93.
[172] Kephart, *Camping and Woodcraft,* 225.
[173] Pinkerton, *Woodcraft For Women,* 173.

disavowed. The competition revolved not around the most, best, or newest gear and clothing, wilderness campers were far too uncomfortable with needless materialism for that. Besides, all these people could buy plenty of that stuff anyway. Instead, campers were engaged in a competition of authenticity, something far more formless and ethereal than mere crass materialism. Let the people of philistine tastes throw around egregious amounts of money buying the newest car or the biggest house, they were blinded to the reality of their own existence anyway.

While camping gear and clothing played into this competition of authenticity, they were merely a means to an end. The paraphernalia of camping were tools that allowed the camper to assume a specter of authenticity through their wilderness recreation. And through this use, camping gear could seemingly take on abstract connotations of its own, wholly separate from its actual use. Gear possessed the ability to imply certain messages that campers readily utilized in their efforts to outdo those they met on the long trail into the wilderness.

The competitive dynamic in the culture of wilderness camping can perhaps best be understood through the lens of social theorist Thorstein Veblen's notion of "invidious comparison," whereby valuations of worth provide some semblance of certainty within a culture where status and class are largely irrelevant and inconsistent. Veblen explained that the term "invidious comparison" described:

> ...a comparison of persons with a view to rating and grading them in respect of relative worth or value – in an aesthetic or moral sense – and so awarding and defining the relative degrees of complacency with which they may legitimately be contemplated by themselves and by others. [174]

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[174] Thorstein Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class: An Economic Study of Institutions* (New York: MacMillan Co., 1912), 34.

In a wilderness setting that campers thought of as sacred and vital, the perceived authenticity of campers was directly proportional to their worthiness of entering such hallowed ground as pristine nature. A camper who failed to adhere to the prescribed rituals merited by the sanctity of wilderness was perhaps equivalent to a churchgoer who wore a baseball cap during communion. There were simply some things not allowed within the presence of such a holy entity.

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In Roderick Nash's seminal work, *Wilderness and the American Mind,* he devoted a chapter to the early wilderness advocates of the late ninetieth and early twentieth centuries to which he refers to as "the wilderness cult."[175] Nash was not claiming that early wilderness enthusiasts were those kool-aid kind of people, but the religious connotations were in no way accidental.

Other scholars have made the connection between wilderness and religion as well.[176] And rightly so. Truly, the devotion paid to wilderness by many early campers, sportsmen, and outdoorswomen resembled more a secular faith than a passive spectatorship. While some of the glorification of pristine nature, as in the writing of John Muir, was steeped in Christian theology, much other of it was not. While this secular

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[175] Roderick Frazier Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind* 4th ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), 141.

[176] Thomas R. Dunlap, *Faith In Nature: Environmentalism as Religious Quest* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2004); Dennis C. Williams, *God's Wilds: John Muir's Vision of Nature* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2002).

portion was not religious in the conventional, mainstream sense, it was no less devout in its worship of nature.

Religious life manifests itself in many forms. While many outdoorsmen like Muir envisioned the purest depictions of God to be found in the wilderness, others segregated nature as sacred space for other reasons; for no one – no matter how secular – ever completely discards the mantle of religious behavior completely.[177]

In the case of nature, wilderness was classified as sacred for its transcendental qualities. As discussed previously, wilderness conjured reality where civilization invoked artifice and duplicity. Wilderness was a vestige of authenticity in a world becoming increasingly detached from all things real. It was a sanctuary from the profane world of civilization where campers could escape to when they wished to experience a reality other than that which dominated their daily lives. Nash has commented that in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries "an increasing number of Americans invested wild places with aesthetic and ethical values, emphasizing the opportunity they afforded for contemplation and worship."[178] The reification and mystification early outdoorsmen and women afforded wilderness constituted a religious outlook in its most basic terms.

In this sense, when Eddie Breck characterized wilderness enthusiasts as "apostles of the 'Nearer to Nature' faith," he was not being at all sarcastic or ironic in his choice of

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[177] Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion.* Translated by Willard R. Trask (New York: Harvest Books, 1959), 23. Also see: Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary forms of Religious Life.* Translated by Carol Cosman (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001).
[178] Nash, 145.

words.[179] In an age when Americans were growing ever more disengaged from religion and traditional values were seemingly disintegrating in the face of a contrived commercial morality and a cold modernist devotion to science, it seems understandable that many Americans sought out new forms of enduring meaning in "the outdoor church of American civil religion."[180] When civilization seemed to be falling in upon itself and civilized existence appeared empty and unfulfilling, nature – with all its permanency and ethical solidity – seemed an attractive alternative. Thus the reverence and devotion for wilderness was, as one scholar has put it, "one of the most sustained and creative efforts over the past two centuries to translate core religious values so as to demonstrate their continuing relevance to a modern age that often seems relentlessly secular, materialist, and irreligious."[181]

It is no contentious claim that wilderness has been revered as a "sacred symbol" in the collective American psyche.[182] As Frederick Jackson Turner and others professed, wild, raw nature was the source of the American character and a distinguishing feature of the history of the American people. In this sense, the sanctity of wilderness was related to the national myth of the American pioneer in an untamed frontier. Nowhere could an American experience freedom and liberty in such an unadulterated state as in the wilderness. As Emerson Hough wrote of woodcraft camping, "the main charm of it is its

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[179] Breck, *The Way of the Woods*, xv.
[180] Deborah Epstein Popper, Robert E. Lang, and Frank J. Popper, "From Maps to Myth: The Census, Turner, and the Idea of the Frontier," *Journal of American & Comparative Cultures* 23, no.1 (Spring 2000), 98; For context on the American estrangement from conventional morality, see: T.J. Jackson Lears, *No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture, 1880-1920* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1981).
[181] William Cronon, forward to: Thomas Dunlap, *Faith in Nature,* xiv-xv.
[182] William E. Grant, "The Inalienable Land: American Wilderness as Sacred Symbol," *Journal of American Culture* 17, no.1 (Spring 1994), 79-86.

absolute independence, the feeling that you have cut loose from civilization with its comforts and all its complications, and that at last you have gone into a country sacred to the hermit, the hunter, the prospector, the recluse, [and] the trapper."[183] The characters in the American pantheon of heroes were directly connected to wild nature, and to early wilderness campers wild nature remained a space of devout reverence.[184]

In addition to its sanctity in the national myth of exceptionalism, wilderness also provided the purest representation of god available to mortal man. The writings of John Muir and Henry David Thoreau before him clearly exhibit a stance towards wilderness as sacred space because it existed unaltered by the corrupting hand of mankind. Wilderness was a place where a camper could readily perceive the face of god and transcend the quotidian reality of everyday life. "Adirondack Murray," a minister by trade and wilderness camper and author by hobby, told his readers that nature was perhaps the best place a man could "hold communion with his Maker." Murray continued: "You feel as if the very air was God, and you had passed into that land where written revelation is not needed; for you see the Infinite as eye to eye, and feel him in you and above you and on all sides."[185] If American culture was becoming increasingly profane and irreverent to traditional morality, at least nature was consistent in its divine mystery.

The sanctity of nature and the profanity of civilization is a relationship that has not gone unheeded. Religious thinkers have provided interesting insights into the sanctity of nature. Mircea Eliade contends that wilderness, by merit of being remote

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[183] Hough, *Out of Doors,* 144-145.
[184] Terence Young, "On Camping and its Equipment," *Environmental History* 15, no.1 (January 2010), 122.
[185] William H.H. Murray, *Adventures in the Wilderness; or, Camp-Life in the Adirondacks* (Boston: De Wolfe, Fiske & Co., 1869), 194-195.

from civilization, has the tendency to "acquire the momentousness of the transcendent, of absolute reality, of eternity. There dwell the gods; there a few privileged mortals make their way by rites of ascent."[186] In being a world apart, in opposition to the profane, sacred wilderness must be treated in appropriate, prescribed ways. This in where the "rites" or rituals of wilderness come into play.

Something sacred must be approached and experienced in a manner that is consistent with its sacred qualities. From such principles come the rituals of all religious thought. This ritual dynamic can be readily perceived in the culture of wilderness camping. As environmental historian Thomas Dunlap explains it, many Americans have understood wilderness as a "place for a spiritual journey," a place where "the veil between human society and the world's realities thinned, [and] those who abandoned modern technology and immersed themselves in the land could come to an emotional understanding of the intellectual truths of our ties to nature."[187] In this sense, wilderness possessed alembic qualities that campers could only appreciate through a sacred quest, or pilgrimage towards reality and authenticity.

In this sense, the outfitting choices of campers can be viewed as what Thorstein Veblen refered to as "devout consumption," or the necessary possession of "ceremonial paraphernalia" put towards sacred purposes.[188] When camping gear used in the context of the wilderness setting, it symbolized less a profane piece of equipment than a sacrament idolized for its propinquity to nature.

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[186] Eliade, 118.
[187] Dunlap, 68.
[188] Vebeln, *The Theory of the Leisure Class,* 307.

The ritual dynamic of wilderness camping also explains the various taboos against inauthenticity and excessive reliance upon contrivances consistently voiced by woodcraft campers. These taboos were meant to foster a relationship between the camper and the wilderness and differentiate the activity from any mere recreation or leisure. As the sociologist of religion Emile Durkheim notes, "because of the barrier that separates the sacred from the profane, man can enter into intimate relations with sacred things only by ridding himself of what is profane in him."[189] Hence, the stigma campers attached to excess gear and perceived inauthenticity had profound implications. To respect the prescribed rituals of engagement was not only to show reverence for the sanctity of wilderness; it was also a means to rightfully claim an identity as a genuine woodsman or woman. Again, Durkheim observes that "rituals are ways of acting that are generated only within assembled groups and are meant to stimulate and sustain or recreate certain mental states in these groups."[190] As ritual related to the culture of wilderness camping, it provided a means by which true woodsmen and women could access that elusive sensation of reality and authenticity that only pristine nature could provide. To disrespect the rites of wilderness camping was to desecrate nature in its purest and most sacred form, in addition to being rejected from the ranks of the true woodsmen, or the "wilderness cult."

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[189] Durkheim, 230.
[190] Durkheim, 11. It also might be profitable to consult: Victor W. Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (Chicago: Aldine Pub. Co., 1969).

The sanctity of wilderness has deeper ramifications than the prescribed rites associated with the act of camping; it also has had an effect on the material culture of camping as well. Objects used in the outdoors, or simply objects evocative of outdoor qualities, have had a tendency to be adored and coddled by those engrossed with the perceived connections between some objects and larger abstract ideals. For many in the culture of wilderness camping, there gear represented more than its expressed utility. Gear could embody important meanings and values even while completely removed from the context of the wilderness.

Such was the powerful influence gear wielded over many campers. They were in some sense beholden to its potent symbolism as a surrogate to the natural world. Through associations with wilderness, simplicity, the vernacular, and utility, gear was a veritable object of worship among those Americans whose values were aligned with such suggestive associations.

Given the deep reverence many lovers of the outdoors bestowed upon their gear and wilderness supplies, the relationship between campers and gear might be characterized as a fetishization of sacred objects. If wilderness was the ultimate sacred symbol for many early recreational wilderness campers, then it can be easily understood that the gear and accoutrements necessary to access the wilderness were deemed sacred as well. By their association with something as real and enduring as nature they could transcend their quotidian qualities as mere products of a consumer culture and represent a set of cultural values entirely at odds with the system that produced them in the first place.

While this tendency towards object worship is prevalent in a culture dominated by a overabundance of consumer objects and mass-produced symbols, it becomes increasingly problematic and troubling when the important associations between objects and their allied values are dissolved or go neglected. When these important links break down, objects no longer possess the power to express vital meanings. They become mere fetishes, worshipped and revered out of any context and without any reference to larger values. Devoid of any meaningful perspective, these fetishes lacked the important associations to truly have any relevance apart from their own mollycoddled existence.

There was a tendency in the culture of camping to fetishize gear. Sometimes campers were so caught up in their own collection of gear they ostensibly lost touch with what attracted them to camping in the first place. When campers divorced gear from its expressed utility and acquired it merely as a means to convey a vicarious devotion to the outdoors, they were still articulating cultural attitudes in opposition to the society at-large, but their message lost much of its circumspection, coherence, and cogency. It just involved a dynamic of object worship with no understanding of larger ramifications.

This tendency towards object fetishization becomes more apparently problematic when it is infused into the processes of historical appreciation and the culture of public history. The material culture of early wilderness camping is important in the public history context because such objects "frequently embody or represent time-specific attitudes toward nature."[191] Gear can be particularly effective in broaching issues of the commoditization of nature, or even the control exercised upon the natural world for the

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[191] Christopher Clarke, "Museums, The Environment, and Public History," in Matrin V. Melosi and Philip V. Scarpino eds., *Public History and the Environment* (Malabar, FL: Krieger Pub. Co., 2004), 127.

sake of human comfort and enjoyment. Additionally, through such a historical framework the ideological content of camping gear can even speak to cultural constructions of nature and the changing relationship between mankind and his natural environment. But in order for the potential of historical camping artifacts to be realized in a public history setting, they must be explicitly framed as representations of important connections to nature and not as objects of fetishization.[192]

Too often public history displays a propensity for fetishization, valuing a particular object solely for some arbitrary connection it had to a particular person or event, without as much as a hint of larger contexts in which to understand the larger meaning of the object. As David Lowenthal explains of the process of fetishization: "Valued at first because of the ideals they projected, such relics then became objects of devotion and worth in their own right. They were treasured not as representative features of the past, however, but as spectacular objects precious for their cost and rarity."[193] The devaluing of historical understanding in exchange for what is often sensational exhibition and display cheapens the potential for learning and increased historical literacy among institutions of public history.

One area of museum exhibition that is often obliquely related to camping and the outdoors is the display of guns and firearms in the public history setting. There certainly exist wonderfully crafted displays of firearms that provide excellent contextualization and explanation of larger historical meanings, but more often than not exhibits of firearms can

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[192] Jeffrey K. Stine, "Placing Environmental History on Display," *Environmental History* 7, no.4 (October 2002), 566-588; Sherry Turkle, *Evocative Objects: Things We Think With* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2007).
[193] David Lowenthal , "Introduction," in *Out Past Before Us: Why Do We Save It?*, ed. by David Lowenthal and Marcus Binney (London: Temple Smith, 11.

best be characterized as rooms stuffed with a bunch of guns. For example, the Museum of the Fur Trade in Chadron, Nebraska houses the largest collection of firearms made for Native Americans in the country. But to view the exhibit is to learn little about the complex relationship between Native Americans and whites into which the presence of guns undoubtedly played an important role. Nor is there much in the way of explaining how the introduction of the firearm among North America's native inhabitants profoundly changed their traditional relationship with the land and animals with which they interacted. To view the exhibit of firearms at the Museum of the Fur Trade is simply to look at a staggering number of guns behind glass cases with little elucidation to how such objects related to larger historical forces or themes. In such cases public history is giving way to fetishization. It would be much more intellectually profitable to visitors if the connections and associations between the material culture of the outdoors and the natural world were illuminated more enthusiastically.

Objects of "museal" display should be used as means to expressing larger historical ideas and experiences, rather than as ends in themselves. An exhibit on camping utilizing the numerous array of gear available to the camper should highlight issues of consumerism, commoditization, and how these themes have historically affected the changing relationship between Americans and their natural environment. Museums would do well to redirect their energies towards utilizing the material culture of camping to evoke experiences and genuine emotional and intellectual reactions among their visitors in the hope that these responses would provide people with a better understanding

of how they have shaped and been shaped by their culturally constructed relationships with nature.[194]

[194] Hilde S. Hein, *The Museum in Transition: A Philosophical Perspective* (Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Books, 2004), 69-87.

CHAPTER 3

ABERCROMBIE AND FITCH

In the spring of 1912, the already reputable outfitting firm of Abercrombie and Fitch was in transition. Moving from its former location at 57 Reade St. in downtown Manhattan to a more spacious commercial campsite at 57 West 36th St., the company was in the process of transforming from its humble origins as an outfitter for professional woodsmen to a superstore of all things out-of-doors. The changed not only entailed a physical change of space, but also a larger refashioning of the substance of Abercrombie and Fitch's outdoor product.

On May 23rd, 1912, an advertisement for Abercrombie and Fitch ran in the *New York Times* encouraging all those who loved the out of doors to hike on over and peruse their new location. "We have broadened our business," it remarked. Going on to boast, "we have the finest store of its kind in the world." In a swashbuckling display of immodesty that would become a distinguishing characteristic of the firm in its heyday, the advertisement informed its readers in no uncertain terms:

> We have been known the world over not only as the one place where the big Nimrods, Explorers, Hunters, Trappers, and Fisherman, – the whole Out-of-Door Brotherhood were outfitted, but as a sort of informal clearing house of information for them. We outfitted Col. Roosevelt for his trip into Africa – Stewart Edward White speaks of our outfits in his textbooks – our peculiar specialty of having the RIGHT thing, the CORRECT thing and finally the EXCLUSIVE thing was recognized by the adept many years ago.[195]

Clearly, Abercrombie and Fitch as a business possessed some megalomaniacal tendencies. Shortly following its move to the new location, the company began touting

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[195] "Opening," *New York Times*, May 23, 1912.

itself not only as the "largest," but also as "The *Greatest* Sporting Goods Store in the World," a phrase it would plug for years to come. However, Abercrombie and Fitch did have reason to be proud. By 1912 it had ostensibly established itself as the go-to outfitter for a growing cadre of fervent outdoorsmen. Given that only a few years prior the business was known to few outside of those grizzled and gruffly men who made their living in the wilds, the fact that it now found itself riding high on a wave of enthusiasm for everything out-of-doors was propitious to say the least.

Ezra H. Fitch, current president and head guide of the Abercrombie and Fitch organization in 1912 and throughout its years of expansion, was somewhat of a visionary in terms of the model he created for the sporting goods industry. Handily perceiving the growing enthusiasm for outdoor recreation, Fitch anticipated a clientele far more extensive than those few who went to the wilderness in the course of earning a living. At a time when occupational outdoor pursuits were on the wane, Fitch recognized that supplying professional explorers, trappers, miners, and prospectors was an outmoded business strategy.[196] The real cash-money was in recreation. Americans were spending more and more of their leisure time in nature, and Fitch took it upon himself and his already nature-oriented business to furnish their every desire.

In 1917, Fitch again packed up his business and moved to a specially constructed eleven story building on Madison Avenue. There is no doubt that Fitch, an avid outdoorsman himself, knew precisely what his customers wanted. Whereas shopping in a plush department store was synthetic and contrived, Fitch remedied this apparent

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[196] Jay P. Pederson, ed., *International Directory of Company Histories, Vol. 75* (New York: St. James Press, 2001), 7.

quandary by introducing the spirit of the outdoors into his retail interior. In the Abercrombie and Fitch store, avid campers were permitted contact with nature in the heart of an urban environment. They might get a taste of the outdoors from the indoor campfires the store "guides" continuously kindled. There were also the array of stately, often imposing animal trophies staring at them with an unblinking solemnity as they meandered through the vast selection of firearms, the very same instruments used to end the lives of their onlookers. Customers with itchy trigger fingers could even test their preferred weaponry in the basement gun range, conceivably imagining what it might feel like to down that big bull moose upstairs. Perhaps in trying on a pair of hiking boots appetites were whetted for long arduous treks over steep jagged trails. Even the sensation derived from palming the cork grip of a well-balanced fishing rod and making a few angling gesticulations on the rooftop casting pool might bring to the surface desires and longings Abercrombie and Fitch was more than willing to satiate.

By perceptively synthesizing the sensibility of the rugged outdoors with a very hands-on, unfettered shopping experience, Fitch assuaged whatever apprehensions about consumption or commercial spaces his customers brought into the store. Through engagement and spectacle, Abercrombie and Fitch soon became a familiar name among those outdoorsmen and women who sought the best not only in their supplies, but also in their outfitting experience.

The genius of Fitch's operation lay in his perspicacious understanding of what those who loved the outdoors wanted from their outfitting experience. He oriented his business as much around promoting intangible sensations and romantic recollections as

the material products outdoorsmen and women associated with them. Accordingly, outside of the new Madison Avenue superstore a piece of signage appeared. It read: "Abercrombie and Fitch: Where the Blazed Trail Crosses the Boulevard."

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Prior to its commercial success as an outdoor superstore, Abercrombie and Fitch was one of many modest outfitting establishments. What made it distinct was its thoroughly urban locale. Whereas most firms that made a business out of supplying wilderness travelers with their needed equipment were located near or adjacent to the American hinterlands, Abercrombie and Fitch was in the heart of an urban jungle. Considering the setting, it is understandable that Abercrombie and Fitch evolved to meet different needs than their more bucolic counterparts on the very edges of civilization. But such developments were not a given. A number of external forces had to work their ways upon the business before it was conceivable that an inconspicuous outfitting firm could transform itself into all that was flashy and stylish about early American outdoor recreation.

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In 1892, David T. Abercrombie, a former trapper, prospector, and railroad surveyor started a little shop at 3 ½ South St. in New York City. As a lover of the outdoors himself, and as a tinkerer who apparently had a knack for inventing and designing his own outdoor equipment – especially tents – wilderness outfitting was a

good fit for Abercrombie and his interests. Not only did he sell equipment, he also developed and manufactured much of it as part of his operation. Providing quality gear to genuine outdoorsmen seems to have been Abercrombie's aim in operating his little unsophisticated outfitting operation. And outdoorsmen took note, quickly garnering Abercrombie a select but loyal clientele dependant upon his quaint little company for their outfitting needs.

Among Abercrombie's early coterie of devoted customers was Ezra H. Fitch, a successful lawyer from Kingston, New York. Although Fitch was obligated to practice law in order to make a living, he was apparently restless and bored with his deskbound profession. His real passion lay in the outdoors and he spent much of his free time trekking the slopes of the Adirondacks and sniffing out fecund trout streams amongst the Catskills. In his hunt for outstanding gear, he came to rely upon Abercrombie's business as a dependable source for all things outdoors.

Fitch's passion for the outdoors and the material culture of outdoor recreation led him closer and closer to Abercrombie's little shop. In 1900, Fitch and Abercrombie were apparently on close enough terms with one another that Abercrombie allowed Fitch to buy into a partnership. Whether Fitch provided a valuable source of capital for the business or Abercrombie merely admired his intense zeal for outdoor recreation is unknown, but it soon became apparent that the enterprise would take on a new life with the addition of this ambitious new business partner in the mix.[197]

With the inclusion of Ezra Fitch, the company changed its name to "Abercrombie and Fitch"(A&F) to reflect the new ownership. Other changes would soon follow. One

[197] Pederson, 7.

of the first developments was the initiation of advertising promotions in local newspapers and topical periodicals. Frequently very visual in nature and sometimes taking up entire pages of print, A&F often conveyed their appeals to nature lovers with lavish language and illustrations.[198] In a 1902 edition of *Country Life in America,* A&F ran an ad promoting their outfitting capabilities to a growing throng of recreational campers:

> Everything to Make the Camper Comfortable and Happy.
> We can advise you where and how to go.
> We have had twenty years' experience in camping out.
> We can furnish you with complete outfits.
> We are practical campers and have personally tested all our goods
> We guarantee everything we make to be the very best procurable.
>
> We manufacture
> Tents, Sleeping Bags, Packs and Pack Harness, Clothing and Provision Bags, Canvas Folding Buckets, Tump Lines, Pneumatic Beds and Cushions, Canvas Wash Basins, Camp Furniture, Folding Stoves, Bakers, Clothing, Moccasins, Aluminum Cooking Outfits, Aluminum Lanterns and Everything Else Used by the Camper.[199]

Clearly, A&F were promoting themselves as the real deal and no two-bit imposters. The emphasis they placed upon their own camping experience and their connection to the products they sold is significant. It speaks to the important place of authenticity in the culture of outdoor recreation. Reassuring their customers that they were themselves "practical campers" – as opposed to determined posers – added a sum of legitimacy to their operation that separated them from the department stores and other retailers wholly ignorant of life in the outdoors.[200] "First-class outfitters are usually practical out-of-door man and camping experts," journalist and amateur explorer Dillon Wallace observed.

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[198] For an analysis of the rise of print advertising see: William Leach, *Land of Desire: Merchants, Power, and the Rise of a New American Culture* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1993), 42-43.
[199] "Campers' Outfits," *Country Life in America* 2, no.3 (July 1902), lxi.
[200] This is a strategy still used to great effect by modern sporting goods dealers.

"They have made an extended study of the subject, for it is part of their business to do so. Therefore, in selecting outfit, it is both safe and wise to rely upon the advice of any responsible outfitter."[201] Given their predisposition towards skepticism and outright cynicism of all things commercial, gaining the confidence and trust of outdoorsmen was no easy task. In A&F's case, it helped that they truly were passionate outdoorsmen, a fact they never hesitated to publicize.

The year of 1903 saw A&F move to a new location at 314-316 Broadway. While not yet falling within the genre of a "superstore," the move provided a better location and more retail space. The move also involved separating the retail space from the manufacturing-side of the business. While A&F enticed their customers on Broadway, they centered their factory operations at 553-555 Pearl St.

In a 1903 advertisement for fishing-tackle appearing in *Country Life in America*, A&F touted itself as the "World's Headquarters for Fishing Tackle," and the place in New York City where "Complete Outfits for Explorers, Campers and Prospectors" may be acquired.[202] This "Explorers, Campers and Prospectors" talk would be a recurring theme within A&F's promotional material for a few more years, until it was replaced by more haughty slogans of commercial identity. But for the mean time, A&F played upon the novel strategy of explicitly defining who was, or should have been, patronizing their establishment. Perhaps it might have been sensible to make anyone interested in the outdoors feel welcome, but through such a strategy they might have distanced themselves from the important identification they held with real, serious outdoorsmen. Appealing to

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[201] Dillon Wallace, *Packing and Portaging* (New York: Outing Publishing Company, 1912),30.
[202] "A 3 Cent Bait," *Country Life in America* 4, no.3 (July 1903), 222.

the amateur camper was undoubtedly a path A&F wanted to take, but ads exhibiting weekend campers as the primary customer base failed to provide that all important cachet. Besides no recreational part-time camper wanted to frequent an establishment known to be where the amateurs go. They preferred to go where the experts went, where the true outdoorsmen procured his gear. By frequenting the same store as authentic woodsmen, leisure campers could feel guilty by association and thus legitimate the identities they created for themselves apart from their day jobs. .

1903 also saw the publication of A&F's first product catalogue. Upon its cover is an illustration of a robbery about to take place. What appear to be two walrus-mustached highwaymen wait –guns drawn – behind a stand of trees, watching with excitement as a handsomely clad lone rider unknowingly approaches their position with a second pack-horse in tow. One of the vandals asks his partner, "What's he got? Gold!" The other replies, "Better than gold – an Abercrombie & Fitch Outfit!"[203] A worthy reason to be robbed indeed.

Inside, the catalogue was not merely a collection of products, the volume essentially doubled as a manual to the outdoors itself. With informative sections on areas of equipment and directions to proper outdoor exploits, the catalogue did more than sell products. It also explained how and in what context they were to be used. Abercrombie and Fitch addressed their customers at the beginning of the catalogue, explaining that "We propose in the following pages to offer to explorers, campers, and prospectors a great variety of articles for supplying the needs of living out of doors, and to show that

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[203] *Abercrombie & Fitch 1903 Catalogue of Complete Outfits for Explorers, Campers, and Prospectors* (New York: Abercrombie & Fitch, 1903), cover.

comforts and even luxuries in equipment may be had with no sacrifice to convenience and practicality."[204] Assuaging customer's doubts as to the necessity of this or that piece of equipment would become an incessant part of the A&F operation. But as far as business went, things were apparently going swimmingly.

A&F was gaining great renown amongst high-profile members of the outdoor community as a valuable contributor to the world of wilderness recreation. For example, in 1906 when composing *Camp & Trail*, his comprehensive guide to wilderness camping, nature-author Stewart Edward White made countless references to the products and innovations of A&F, even going as far to remark:

> I realize that I seem to be recommending this firm rather extensively, but it cannot be helped. It is not because I know no others, for naturally I have been purchasing sporting goods and supplies in a great many places and for a good many years. Nor do I recommend everything they make. Only along some lines they have carried practical ideas to their logical conclusion.[205]

Such words meant a great deal coming from an outdoorsman with a tendency to refer to much of the equipment marketed by sporting goods dealers as "absolutely worthless" and "bogus."[206] The wilderness cult was a hard crowd to please, but A&F seemed to be fairing nicely.

However, all was not well between the business partners and their respective visions of what the soul of their joint establishment was to be. It seems that Abercrombie wished to keep the operation humble and down-to-earth. Content to manufacture and sell quality equipment to a small but creditable band of genuine outdoorsmen, Abercrombie

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[204] *Abercrombie & Fitch 1903 Catalogue,* 3.
[205] Stewart Edward White, *Camp & Trail* (New York: Outing Publishing Company, 1907), 104.
[206] White, 54.

simply wanted to carry on what he had been doing since he opened the store back in 1892. Fitch, on the other hand, possessed ambitions. He was the visionary of the two. Not content to circumscribe his business's potential, Fitch wished to expand the scope of his operation and take advantage of the general populace's booming fascination with all things related to the great outdoors.[207] Although both were passionate about the outdoors, Abercrombie's conservatism and Fitch's exoteric aspirations made them, in the parlance camping, ill-suited tent-mates.

While the partners mulled over taking separate trails, in 1907 the company again moved to a new retail location at 57 Reade St. In that year's catalogue, the company's president, Abercrombie, noted that "we took the step of greatly enlarging our facilities by moving into and occupying a whole building...one result is seen in the steady increase in the size of our catalogue and the greater variety of our stock for meeting every need."[208] One has to wonder, given Abercrombie's modest objectives for his company, if he was even happy about these developments. Clearly, Fitch's lofty goals were edging out his own views.

Ultimately, such divergent visions for the future of the company proved to be irreconcilable. Following the move and the publication of the 1907 catalogue, Abercrombie sold his remaining share of the business to Fitch and got out of the operation altogether. Suffice it to say he was not a happy camper. But he was not soured to the business of sporting goods and outdoor equipment altogether. Abercrombie went on to be a competitor of the same business that he founded and was his namesake. The

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[207] Pederson, 7.

[208] *Abercrombie & Fitch 1907 Catalogue and Price List of Complete Outfits for Explorers, Campers, Prospectors, and Hunters* (New York: Abercrombie & Fitch, 1907), 3.

new company Abercrombie eventually established– appropriately named the David T. Abercrombie Co., to differentiate it from the other sellout Abercrombie across town – was headquartered at 311 Broadway. Although Abercrombie's new operation never achieved the recognition and status that A&F went on to acquire, that was probably want he wanted anyway.

Meanwhile, free from the conservative shackles of Abercrombie's nay-saying, Fitch whateverishly brushed away the split and continued down the craggy trail towards success. Curiously, he retained his ex-partner's name in the title of the business. With Abercrombie out of the picture, Fitch took the reins and became the company's new president. Under his direction, A&F was on its way to becoming the self-proclaimed "Mecca of Sportsmen throughout the world."[209]

Fitch made his store in downtown New York City an informal fraternity of sorts. It was the place outdoorsmen went to be around other outdoorsmen. It was a setting in which they could exchange ideas, memories, and plans about wilderness outings past, present, and future. Its seems the next best thing to sitting around a wilderness campfire with a group of woods-chums was going downtown to A&F, perusing their products, exchanging some wilderness banter, and perhaps walking away from the experience with a little good advice or some new piece of equipment that could hold a camper over until he or she could escape from civilization once again. As Fitch explained to his customers in the 1910 catalogue:

> You see, we are just a Clearing House for information which the great Goodfellowship of Sportsmen, Travelers and Explorers are only too glad to pass on to others. Most of these gentlemen are personal friends of ours

[209] *Abercrombie & Fitch 1910 Catalogue* (New York: Abercrombie & Fitch, 1910), 5.

> – and warm friends – customers sometimes – but friends always. They give us no end of valuable data. We give them what we can when they come to us for data on new places. Will you not do the same?...We may be able to give you the name of a man who is almost a neighbor of yours – lives practically next door – who has been just where you are going and wants to tell you all about it.[210]

A&F was not merely a sporting goods store. It was a setting where lovers of the outdoors could associate with others of their own kind. It provided a sanctuary from the busy, unhealthy urban world outside where wilderness enthusiasts could reminisce about good times spent in nature without having to leave the concrete jungle. There is no doubt A&F coddled these gatherings of outers within their walls. Their presence provided access to the vast network of nature lovers that with a good word and a little encouragement would make up the loyal customer-base any specialized business depends upon.[211]

These congregations of outdoorsmen and women did not go unheeded by those with a penchant for putting their passion for the outdoors onto the page. As Kathrene Pinkerton recalled about her down time spent away from her wilderness abode:

> One of the most delightful memories of a winter in town is of the late afternoon gatherings in a sportsman's store of a score of woods lovers. There was no prearrangement in these meetings. It was only the accidental assembling of outing enthusiasts who expressed their longing for the woods in the handling of woods equipment.[212]

Sometimes just inspecting flies, trying out fishing rods, or shouldering a gun or two was all the woods-lover needed to launch him or her into a wonderful daydream of times spent far away from civilization. Again, I yield to the words of Mrs. Pinkerton:

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[210] *Abercrombie & Fitch 1910 Catalogue,* 6.
[211] Susan Porter Benson, *Counter Cultures: Saleswomen, Managers, and Customers in American Department Stores, 1890-1940* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1986), 75.
[212] Kathrene G. Pinkerton, *Woodcraft For Women* (New York: Outing Publishing Co., 1916), 54.

> Under the spell of the enchanting stock, which made vivid all the memories of past woods adventures, many a bit of equipment was purchased which could be used only in the collection of woods duffle which town woodsmen keep to dream over. But the impracticable purchase brings here none of the bitterness of other fields, and I firmly believe that many an ingenious, visionary woods trifle justifies its existence solely in its imagination arousing power.[213]

Given the fierce emphasis outdoor lovers, and especially woodcrafters, placed on practicality and the elimination of all things superfluous, Mrs. Pinkerton's words seem incongruent with the whole philosophy of simplicity and thrift she and her fellow woodcrafters preached. Especially in light of the fact that on the very next page Pinkerton wrote that a camper "will be distinguished for the simplicity of his equipment and the absence of all unnecessary duffle."[214] Alas, it seems even those professing a denial of all things extraneous in their wilderness adventures could not resist the "imagination arousing power" of camping products once back in the clutches of civilization.

Fitch understood the powerful influence his products exerted upon his customers. It is no surprise he tailored patron's shopping experiences to best exploit their weaknesses as consumers. When in 1912 A&F again moved to a new location, this time at 57 West 36th St., Fitch created what he advertised as "A Wonderland for Grown-ups."[215] This apparently involved bringing the spectacle of nature into the retail environment. Pretend campsites were struck in the store, complete with campfires and all. Although open fires within doors were a blatant fire hazard, and it appears that they

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[213] Ibid.
[214] Pinkerton, 55.
[215] *New York Times*, Nov. 16, 1912.

did cause trouble on a few occasions, the ambiance they imparted to delighted shoppers made them worth the risk.[216]

Furthermore, unlike other retailers, A&F did not hide their merchandise behind counters or within glass cabinets to be passively observed. To shop at A&F was to touch, feel, test, and interact. It was a form of recreation itself in which campers and outdoor lovers could partake to hold themselves over until their next outing. After all, spending day after day in a city was hard for the man or woman whose true heart lay in the wilderness. A&F provided a setting to appreciate the nature vicariously, with the pleasurable prospect of the outdoors in every purchase. "Anticipation of the nearby season – preparing in thorough fashion at the Abercrombie & Fitch Store – is hardly less in enjoyment than the actual moment when the cry rings out, 'Dead bird!", a newspaper spread related. "It is the sportsman's own store, with the scent of Autumn leaves pervading every nook and aisle."[217] Another ad ordered its readers to "visit this fascinating store before you start on your hunting trip. Merely to breathe its reviving atmosphere of the great outdoors is a treat."[218] A&F was not just a retail store. It was a portal into the exhilarating, but often distant world of the great outdoors.

Woodcraft author Emerson Hough correctly observed "there is no purchaser on earth whose needs and notions are better studied or better supplied than are those of the American sportsman."[219] Outfitters knew what their customers wanted from their outfitting experience and they utilized those desires to get outdoorsmen and women in the

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[216] "Yesterday's Fires," *New York Times,* March 17,1906.
[217] *New York Times*, Sept 22, 1914.
[218] *New York Times*, Aug. 1, 1912.
[219] Emerson Hough, *Out of Doors* (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1915), 31.

door. At A&F, a city sportsman might enjoy a contrived wilderness playground just a few blocks away from work. "This is a big Boy's store," one advertisement entitled "Prematurely Young!" informed its readers. A&F enticed its customers with the appeal of more, More, MORE:

> More Fishing things
> More Guns –
> More Tents and Pots
> And camp tricks…
> More things that make your blood jump just to *look* at—
> Than ever you saw in any store before.
> Talking over sport and sporting things is half the fun.
> And, thank goodness, *part* of why we are in business
> is the fun we get out of it[emphasis original].[220]

Positing itself as an adult toy store of sorts,[221] A&F constructed a retail environment that transcended the materialism it promoted. Inspecting the latest fishing rod, shouldering the newest gun, of playing around with some innovative tent design resembled shopping less than it did a sportsmanlike diversion. William Leach notes in his work on the logistics of consumerism that businesses like A&F provided their customers "not simply selling places but fantasy places, juvenile dream worlds."[222] As a subsequent ad enticed, "A hundred new camp conveniences – *camp dreams come true* – await you at the Abercrombie & Fitch store[emphasis original]."[223]

While in residence on West 36th St., A&F also took it upon themselves to provide the curious public with an exhibition of "Indian Relics." "This is the largest and most

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[220] *New York Times*, May 28, 1913.
[221] That sounds kinda dirty!
[222] Leach, 87.
[223] *New York Times*, July 7, 1914.

complete private collection in existence," claimed one announcement.[224] Displaying everything from pipes, weapons, clothing, and authentic war bonnets to human scalps and hieroglyphic pictures of the Custer massacre, the exhibition was promoted as a last chance to witness the artifacts "belonging to the Vanishing Race."[225]

The exhibit was to be on display for a month, and while it was paired next to a sprawling sportsman's show, the display of Native American artifacts associated well with the themes Fitch and his company were trying to impart to their customers. "This is a very old collection. There's nothing modern in it," a notice read. Playing into anti-modern longings and a fascination with primitivism, A&F aligned itself with, or perhaps acted itself as an expression of cultural attitudes its clientele presumably found very relatable.[226]

If A&F customers valued that which was old and pre-modern, they also appreciated the authenticity with which A&F was none too hesitant to associate itself. "These remarkable relics were gathered together by an old Indian fighter who followed the trail when the West was 'dark and bloody' ground. Every article in this collection breathes of the plains, the council fire, the buffalo hunt."[227] Because Americans of European descent perceived everything Native American to be inextricably linked to nature, it only makes sense that A&F would accentuate this connection to solidify the implication that all the splendor and mystery of the natural world could be contained

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[224] *New York Times*, February 27, 1913.
[225] Ibid.
[226] T.J. Jackson Lears, *No Place of Grace* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981).
[227] *New York Times*, March 2, 1913.

within the doors of its establishment. Besides, what better claim to authenticity could Fitch make than to associate his company with the original American outdoorsman?

The Indian artifact exhibit also provides yet another example of how retailers like A&F could disassociate the transactions taking place within its doors from the crass commercialism so detested by much of its clientele. By taking on the role of the museum, Fitch and company obtained further validation in the eyes of many outdoor lovers who longed for an easily accessible gateway to the spirit of the wilds. In doubling as a space for specious learning, A&F was effectively informing all who visited the attraction "that shopping was not just purchasing but an agreeable and leisurely diversion in luxurious surroundings, laced with exciting events to relieve the daily tedium" of urban life.[228] Attracting consumers to their realm of commercial nature, Fitch and company hoped they might be as absorbed by their tantalizing reproductions as they were with the real thing.

After only four years at the West 36th St. location, Fitch again felt it was time for an upgrade. In the spring of 1916 plans were drawn-up to erect an eleven story building on the northwest corner of Madison Avenue and Forty-fifth St. The estimated cost hovered around five-hundred thousand dollars, but as this would be a building all their own, the hefty investment was undoubtedly well worth it.[229]

The following spring of 1917 saw A&F remove to its new site. When it published the updated product catalogue a short time later, President Fitch summonsed his worthy customers to visit the alter of his shrine to the great outdoors:

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[228] Benson, 21; also see: Leach, 136-137.
[229] "The Real Estate Field," *New York Times,* April 22, 1916.

> We cordially invite every sportsman and sportswoman...to visit what we believe to be the real 'home camp' of all sportsmen and sportswomen. This is a building 'built for all outdoors.' This new trading post, rearing its roof in the famous cluster of the world's greatest hotels, and appropriately opposite the Grant Central Station, where the sleepers go and come, to and from the big playgrounds of the red-blooded Americans, in reality brings the blazed trail to the boulevard. Its keynote throughout is the song of the lonesome pine. Its vista is the blue haze of the Rockies. Its atmosphere is the bracing breath of balsam. We want you to try the fly-casting tank on the roof, twelve stories above the street; to pattern your shotgun or sight your rifle in the armored ranges under the street; to meet your companions of field and stream in the log cabin guides' room.[230]

While the company had relied upon spectacle prior to this, the move to the Madison Avenue location took things to a whole other level. Eleven other levels to be precise; with a cabin on top for good measure. Truly, A&F could claim to be the headquarters, or, to use the parlance of the outdoors as Fitch did, the "home camp" of all those on intimate terms with the natural world.

Fitch's language in the 1917 catalogue explicitly reveals how he envisioned the modern sportsman's and woman's relationship with the wilderness. His characterization of that which was apart from the urban center of New York City as "the big playground of the red-blooded Americans" betrays a consumer's stance towards the outdoors, where nature embodies a landscape of pleasure and entertainment, not labor and life-giving resources. A&F's expressed orientation towards the outdoors as strictly a locale of leisure illustrates the growing marginalization of the outdoors in the lives of many Americans of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era. As some previous historical works

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[230] *Abercrombie & Fitch 1917 Catalogue* (New York: Abercrombie & Fitch, 1917), 1.

have addressed, reduced to a mere novelty to be enjoyed on vacation or holiday, nature was becoming a consumer product like any other.[231]

Additionally, Fitch's characterization of the outdoors as being a place for "red-blooded Americans" speaks to the cultural prominence of vigorous health and vitality in American society around the turn of the twentieth century. For many outdoorsmen and women, nature's greatest attribute lay in its capacity to conjure up some latent vim and spirit lost amongst the unwholesomeness of their lives in civilization. "The whole American people are on their summer playgrounds – rejuvenating – rekindling the sportsman's spirit which is the nation's saving grace," one A&F advertisement informed its readers. "Rising at dawn to face a day of sport – your thoughts quicken – your blood tingling – you are putting back in your veins the life-giving element."[232] In the world of outdoor recreation, play and health went hand in hand, and Fitch did well to appeal to both sentiments.[233]

While some of Fitch's language was simply an illuminating expression of the cultural attitudes of his time, other of it was more idiosyncratic to the connections A&F was trying to make within the heads of its customers. In using phrases like "the song o

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[231] David, Strauss, "Toward a Consumer Culture: 'Adirondack Murray' and the Wilderness Vacation," *American Quarterly* 39, no.2 (Summer 1987), 270-286; Rachel Snow, "Tourism and American Identity: Kodak's Conspicuous Consumers Abroad," *Journal of American Culture* 31, no.1 (March 2008), 7-19; Jennifer Price, *Flight Maps: Adventures with Nature in Modern America* (New York: Basic Books, 1999); Dona Brown, *Inventing New England: Regional Tourism in the Nineteenth Century* (Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1995), 4-6.

[232] *New York Times,* July 7, 1915.

[233] To learn more about how health, national vitality, and the outdoors intersected in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, read Theodore Roosevelt's *The Strenuous Life,* then after you are done with that check out some of these: Harvey Green, *Fit For America: Health, Fitness, Sport, and American Society* (New York: Pantheon, 1986); Jeanne Abrams, "On the Road Again: Consumptives Traveling for Health in the American West, 1840-1925," *Great Plains Quarterly* 30 (Fall 2010), 271-285; Mark Dyreson, "Nature by Design: Modern American Ideas About Sport, Energy, Evolution, and Republics, 1865-1920," *Journal of Sport History* 26, no.3 (Fall 1999), 447-469; Donald J. Mrozek, *Sport and American Mentality, 1880-1910* (Knoxville, University of Tennessee Press, 1983), 161-188.

the lonesome pine," "the blue haze of the Rockies," and "the bracing breath of balsam" to describe the impressions transmitted by the new store on Madison Avenue, Fitch was using his customer's affinity for nature to better take advantage of their weaknesses as consumers. The mere sight of A&F's assortment of merchandise with the associations to nature so explicitly articulated by Fitch indubitably evoked in many outdoorsmen and women vivid memories or fantasies of time spent in the wilds with a perfectly assembled A&F outfit.

The swagger and panache with which Fitch sold his merchandise is fascinating. The Madison Avenue store was worlds apart from the grubby outfitter on the edge of civilization or the Hudson's Bay Company trading post lost in the vastness of the north woods. But that did mean the more upscale vendor in the heart of the urban metropolis could not design his space to provide the same earthy ambiance as his more bucolic counterparts. After all, Fitch did still refer to his swanky new store as a "trading post." Although in no way crude or grubby, A&F's design scheme perhaps could best be described as a sophisticated, cosmopolitan rusticity. Not elegant, but still classy, A&F appealed to the anti-urban sentiments of many discontented city dwellers without offending their sense of propriety and decency. Essentially operating as a sanctuary to nature in the midst of one of the largest cities in the world, A&F gave New Yorkers a sanitized taste of the wilderness that sold heartily. The sheer otherworldly nature of the Madison Avenue space made it a unique shopping experience any outdoor lover was not likely to forget.[234]

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[234] Leach, 81.

The A&F store, like many of the other mega-retailers of its time, became a legitimate destination in and of itself. "Explore the most unusual building in America," encouraged an announcement promoting the "Canoeing in the Clouds" on the structure's rooftop casting pool. The attraction and public appeal of the nature-spectacle within its doors made A&F a place to visit for sheer enjoyment.[235] "The trail of adventure, starting at the Abercrombie & Fitch store, leads the New Yorker quickly to the haunts of sport," another ad entitled "The Wild East" related. "And it continues to the very ends of the earth –last week we outfitted parties for the upper Amazon, India, and Siberia."[236] With a trip to A&F, who knew what one might encounter or experience.

Of particular importance was the veritable menagerie of stuffed trophy animals on display throughout A&F's wild and vast interior. Obviously, hunters in particular value such trophies for the conquest they represent. But the animals represented something larger than simple proof of a successful hunting trip. As many scholars have acknowledged, wilderness has been an essential feature of American identify and historical consciousness and was without doubt an extremely potent force in the world of early outdoor recreation.[237] In exhibiting such an exorbitant array of mounted wildlife to its customers, A&F was essentially trying to display the mythical sportsmen's Eden of American fantasy. During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, when the first conservation movement was really hitting its stride and Americans were mourning

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[235] Benson, 19-20.
[236] *New York Times*, May 6, 1919.
[237] Frederick Jackson Turner, "The Significance of the Frontier in American History," American Historical Association, *Annual Report,* 1893 (Washington D.C.: 1893); Perry Miller, *Errand Into the Wilderness* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1956); & Roderick Frazier Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind, 4th ed.* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001).

the loss of the frontier, there was a general sense that the country's once spectacular flora and fauna were on the decline. Those who wished to experience the splendor of nature as it had once been could make the long and expensive trek to a National Park or wilderness area. Or, if a person was in between camping trips and needed a quick wilderness fix they could simply walk down the street to A&F and experience the next best thing. The profuse displays of nature exhibited by A&F truly did embody "the last vestiges of the utopian American dream of a virgin wilderness with its abundance of wildlife and stupendous natural scenery."[238] The animals doubled as both hunting trophies and representations of a mythical nature of which outdoorsmen and women could only dream.[239]

Meanwhile, as A&F scaled up its business, it gained a reputation as the nucleus of the outdoor elite. Anyone who was anyone in the upper crust of sporting culture frequented the only firm with such notorious swank that it could boast of having supplied the Prince of Monaco himself with the gear and haberdashery necessary for "his big game hunt in the Rockies."[240] But coddled aristocrats were not the only customers Fitch and company could proudly profess to have equipped. Theodore Roosevelt procured supplies for his African safari at New York's outdoor clearing house. Roald Amundsen and Admiral Richard Byrd both acquired outfits for their polar expeditions from the firm with

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[238] Karen Wonders, *Habitat Dioramas: Illustrations of Wilderness in Museums of Natural History* (Stockholm: Uppsala, 1993),160.

239 For an interesting look into the culture of preserving the exteriors of dead animals and propping them up in positions to make it seem as if they were still alive, take a look at: Wonders, *Habitat Dioramas*; & Dave Madden, *The Authentic Animal: Inside the Odd and Obsessive World of Taxidermy* (New York; St. Martin's Press, 2011).

[240] *New York Times*, September 16, 1913.

the best reputation for quality and all that was choice. Furthermore, A&F even furnished the respective flights of Charles Lindbergh and Amelia Earhart.[241]

Having established itself as the purveyor of the world's outdoor elite, A&F had little to do but sit back and warm its feet at the fire. Finally content with the fact that no one had ever quite managed to sell the outdoors with as much proficiently as he had, Ezra Fitch retired in 1928. Initially, his business continued to prosper. A&F became a hot-spot for the mah-jongg craze of the 1920's and new stores were opened in Chicago and San Francisco among other cities. But as the first half of the century yielded to the second, A&F failed to sustain its relevance and profitability. Apparently incapable of making the transition from supplying the "fat-cat sportsmen of the old school to the skiers, bikers, and backpackers of the 1970's," A&F filed for bankruptcy in 1976.[242]

Following a quick stint under the ownership of Oshman's Sporting Goods, in 1988 The Limited, Inc. bought the A&F name. The Limited is the same company that operates the attention-grabbing and decidedly indoor Victoria's Secret line of clothing.[243] Anyway, following the exchange the new proprietor dropped all sporting goods from the inventory and, instead, focused solely on uber-sexified youth attire. Thus emerged upon the consumer marketplace the retail embodiment of Western Civilization at its most horrifying.

Although it is not my objective in this study to discuss the present condition of A&F at any great length, as a concerned individual wishing to shield all that is beautiful and good in this world from the likes of contemporary A&F, I cannot help but

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[241] Pederson, 7.
[242] Pederson, 9.
[243] Is "clothing" the right word?

editorialize. In its current state, A&F embodies the character of American consumer culture as it narcissistically masturbates to its own reflection in the mirror of a mall fitting-room. The retailer is infamous for its advertisements featuring scantily-clad pieces of perfectly sculpted succulent Caucasian sex-meat. Store employees are required to comply with the "look policy," which basically boils down to being white, impeccably clothed, and physically perfect. With such exclusionary hiring practices, it is no surprise A&F is the recipient of a perpetual volley of lawsuits. As if all this is not enough, perhaps the retailer's lowest point came in 2009 when employees at A&F's Mall of America location prohibited an autistic woman from trying on clothes because it did not conform with the "look" the store wished to promote.[244] But enough about hell on earth. The point is that the A&F mall shoppers know today is a vastly dissimilar company than the one which sportsmen and women around the turn of the twentieth century were familiar.

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The trajectory of A&F's nature as a wilderness outfitter reflects the changing relationship Americans had with the natural environment. The products A&F sold, and more importantly, the ideas of nature that were connected to the products they sold

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[244] James Eli Shiffer & Jane Friedmann, "Treated like a 'misfit' at Abercrombie & Fitch," *Minneapolis Star Tribune,* September 9, 2009; For supplementary material on lawsuits and racially discriminatory practices, see: Dwight A. McBride, *Why I Hate Abercrombie & Fitch: Essays on Race & Sexuality* (New York: New York University Press, 2005); Bob Egelko, "Feds Sue Abercrombie & Fitch over Applicant's Scarf," *San Francisco Chronicle,* September 2, 2010; Mary-Kathryn Zachary, "Labor Law for Supervisors Clothing and Religious Discrimination Issues," *Supervision* 72, no.11 (November 2011), 19-22; As of late, the company has gone tit for tat with "The Situation" from MTV's *Jersey Shore,* even offering him and the rest of the cast a sizable sum of money to abstain from wearing their clothes or displaying their logo (which is still a moose, by the way).

evolved as Americans ceased to engage the outdoors through vocation and increasingly came to know the natural world wholly in terms of leisure. Although many Americans still venerated the ascetic wilderness trailblazers as the national heroes of a bygone era, often reproducing their endeavors as hobbies and recreational activities, the new breed of outdoorsmen readily exploited innovations in equipment and practice that were suited to the idea of nature as a setting for leisure pursuits.[245]

Although, all this is not to suggest that wilderness recreation was devoid of any deeper meanings beyond the novelty of a holiday in the woods. It was not all unadulterated relaxation and idle consumption. Outdoor recreation in general and wilderness camping in particular provided Americans with an exceptionally vigorous means of expressing their personal identities. To relate all this back to A&F and its contribution to these performances, it is essential to understand that the paraphernalia required to act out these exhibitions of identity possessed important connotations in and of themselves. In order to partake in this odd dance of self-definition, campers had to navigate a continuously shifting assortment of gear, fashion, and information. Making sense out of the sheer amount of stuff outfitters like A&F offered them was a surmountable task in itself. In order to understand the variety of ways campers

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[245] For some commentary on the ever evolving relationship between Americans and the environment, consult: William Cronon, "The Trouble with Wilderness; or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature," & Richard White, "'Are You an Environmentalist or Do You Work for a Living?': Work and Nature," both in *Uncommon Ground: Toward Reinventing Nature,* Cronon ed. (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1995); Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind*; Jennifer Price, *Flight Maps*; James Morton Turner, "From Woodcraft to 'Leave No Trace': Wilderness, Consumerism, and Environmentalism in Twentieth-Century America, *Environmental History* 7, no.3 (July 2002), 462-484; & David Strauss, "Toward a Consumer Culture: 'Adirondack Murray' and the Wilderness Vacation," *American Quarterly* 39, no.2 (Summer 1987), 270-286.

approached this endeavor, it would be fitting to consider the products sold by outfitters such as A&F and how they were integrated into the culture of wilderness recreation.

The annual catalogues published by A&F provide a splendid yearly snapshot of their evolving line of products. The company first began distributing catalogues in 1903 and they became increasingly popular and a major contributor to the company's success. Upon sequential examination it is clear that A&F's line of products experienced profound expansion and diversification in the early years of the twentieth century. Where the initial 1903 catalogue consisted of a measly hundred and sixty pages, by 1910 it contained 456. It became so bulky that a few years later the text, illustrations, and overall design had to be shrunk and more tightly integrated to make what had become a veritable tome manageable for the customer. Although increasingly scrunched, the catalogues allowed customers to clearly see and examine the items they were ordering. Though unable to provide the physical stimulation of handling a fishing rod or trying on a hunting vest, A&F catalogues provided the next best thing to a visit to the actual store.[246]

From the start, A&F catalogues were not just pictures of products with prices and ordering information, they also doubled as veritable manuals to the outdoors. A 1907 notice informed interested parties that the new edition was "practically a 'hand-book' for lovers of outdoor life."[247] And indeed, the catalogues did contain a plethora of useful information. They provided detailed instructions on preparing for canoe voyages, pack trips, tramping, and as early as 1910, automobile camping; not to mention all the material describing the various products.

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[246] Leach, 44-45; Miles Orvell, *The Real Thing: Imitation and Authenticity in American Culture, 1880-1940* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989), 43-44.
[247] *New York Times,* April 14, 1907.

Given their utility, it should come as no surprise that outdoorsmen and women routinely lauded sporting goods catalogues as valuable reading material. While the information they provided was appreciated in some respect, their most cherished quality was their implicit encouragement of "solitary contemplation and unencumbered dreaming."[248] As a major author of the outdoors and notable Iowan Emerson Hough professed:

> The most interesting reading in the world is that which tells us about ourselves as we would like to be, or about things we would like to do, or about how to get things we want to get. For my own part, I always thought the wholly impractical pages of a sporting goods catalog were, in light of a true philosophy, the finest reading in the world. In that literature lies at least the anticipation of true happiness, and the ayes always have it.[249]

Evidently, the catalogues of such firms as A&F provided the gratification Hough and his fellow outdoor enthusiasts desired when away from their wilderness haunts. Lusting over the merchandise splayed out before them provided sportsmen a convenient and enjoyable means of getting off on their wildest wilderness fantasies.[250]

Although campers reveled in the pages of outfitter's catalogs, that is not to say their ecstasy was not tempered by a little ambivalence. Many outdoorsmen expressed a modicum of contempt for what they perceived to be the proliferation of the "patent dingbat" among the pages of their reading material. The exact definition of what constituted a "patent dingbat" these intransigent traditionalists failed to provide. But one can presume it was the newly introduced technological advancements in camping equipment that were the culprits. In this group one might include, among other things,

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[248] Orvell, 43.
[249] Emerson Hough, *Let Us Go Afield* (New York: D. Appleton & Company, 1916), 3-4.
[250] Please recall the scene from the movie *Fight Club* where Edward Norton is sitting on the toilet, ordering products over the phone from his Ikea catalog.

the Ferrostat Vacuum Bottle, or thermos, which was referred to in the A&F catalog as "one of the greatest inventions of modern times.[251] Or the portable hand-held heater that utilized prepared coal-bricks to keep shivering fingers devoid of an open fire warm and toasty. And lastly, a transportable head-lamp which consisted of a light that was somehow attached to the cranium powered by a battery pack strapped to the waist. The battery was connected to the lamp by a cord that must have been an unbearable hindrance.

Such articles were sometimes convenient – yes – but they lacked both practicality and necessity. "The sporting catalogues are full of very handy kinks," Stewart Edward White warned his readers, "they are good to fool with and think about...but when you pack your duffle bag you'd better put them on a shelf."[252] Although camping paraphernalia provided an obvious fixation for many campers, they were evidently still skeptical of the value it ultimately possessed when actually camping.

Much of the language of camping literature advocated a judicious moderation concerning the growing variety of options campers confronted in their outfitting endeavors. Edward Breck, one of the more cogent contributors to the genre of camping manuals provided this counsel:

> My advice is to send for the catalogues of the manufacturers of and dealers in camping and sporting articles, whose advertisements are found in the sporting periodicals, and to study them closely. While they contain many things that are unnecessary and sometimes bad, they also offer the latest and best, and are inspiring as well as instructive.[253]

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[251] Perhaps an overstatement; *Abercrombie & Fitch 1917 Catalogue,* 22.
[252] White, 27.
[253] Edward Breck, *The Way of the Woods* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1908), 12.

Improvements in the quality and reliability of the camping products sold by outfitters were not outright harmful, but they were to be indulged with caution. To entertain one's obsession with gear and equipment too heartily was easy to do, but bad form nonetheless, for it displayed a dependence on civilized luxuries uncharacteristic of an authentic woodsman.

One can understand why sportsmen and women approached outfitting with a simultaneous giddy excitement and a guarded reservation. Within the pages of A&F's catalogues alone it is evident that year after year the camper was assaulted with more and more gear than they could ever know what to do with. The rapid expansion in the quantity and diversity of A&F's product line is extraordinary. Such developments indicate that not only was camping quickly gaining popularity throughout turn of the century American culture, it was also growing more commercialized and commoditized.

To give an idea of what this deluge of camping products looked like, perhaps it might be germane to mull over the mounting line of tents A&F carried in their catalogues. When A&F initially began printing catalogues in 1903 they carried only five different styles of tents: the wall tent, baker(shelter) tent, "A" tent, miner's(pyramid) tent, & the sibley(conical) tent. These different models were available in various sizes and materials and they could undoubtedly accomplish any and every duty a camper required a tent to fulfill. By the end of the decade A&F's stock of tents had grown exponentially, including a number of speciously activity-specific models, including not only the old wall, baker, "A", miner's, and sibley tents, but also Amazon tents, Hudson Bay tents, Lean-to tents, mastogouche trappers' tents, forester's tents, automobile tents, and four

varieties of canoe tents (standard, palmetto, Frazer, and Yalden). The abundance of tenting options provided by A&F reflected less the growing diversity of wilderness recreation—for surely a variety of five models of varying sizes and materials could get any job done—than it did the efforts of outfitters to acquire products that were more highly sensitive to the nuanced tastes of an increasingly sophisticated assemblage of consumers.

As camping supplies saturated the market to meet the growing demand from the booming numbers of recreational outers, A&F tailored its line of products to better allow its customers the opportunity to individualize their outfits, and thus differentiate themselves from those whose paths they might cross while tramping through the woods. "If you are looking for unusual things," an ad entitled "A Half Thousand Foreign and American Specialties" told, "you will receive more helpful suggestions here in a few minutes than in a day's shopping elsewhere."[254] A&F readily promoted those products that were exclusive or unique, the kind of things that outdoorsmen and women could procured nowhere else.

The tendency of outfitters like A&F to promote the development of new paraphernalia is reasonable. Attentive to the changing relationship of American's to the natural environment, astute outdoorsmen like Ezra Fitch understood that the gold was in the recreational outdoors, not the occupational. While equipment at its most basic perhaps served the pragmatic needs of miners, trappers, and explorers who were secure in their identities as true outdoorsmen, recreational campers needed something more to differentiate themselves from the masses of weekend outers, of which they were a part

[254] *New York Times,* November 20, 1912.

but were loath to admit. The change in the orientation of A&F's merchandising can be readily observed in their selection of clothing for outdoorsmen and women. In 1915 the company introduced a new fabric to the market. "Thorntweed" as it was called, was "an exclusive A. & F. specialty...unobtainable in any other establishment."[255] Even in camping and outdoor recreation it was advisable to stay ahead of the fashion curve for fear of being caught with an outfit already diluted of its authenticity.

The importance A&F's customers placed upon the quality and individuality of their sporting goods was characteristic of a growing cultural undercurrent of discontent with what was perceived to be the inherent phoniness and decay of a society revolving around mass production. As consumerism drove industry to spew out more products more cheaply, what resulted was a "modern life...full of artificial imitations."[256] This was apparently fine for those of philistine tastes, wallowing in their corrupt pit of tepid, uninspiring materialism, but others strove to reclaim a sense of personal identity the culture of imitation explicitly denied them.

The remedy to this seemingly inescapable replication was to get a good grasp on something real and authentic. The authentic was inextricably linked to nature and all that was not urban. When A&F advertised its clothing as exhibiting a "smartness that is not city made," it was deliberately playing to these tastes.[257] By promoting its products as superior in quality and unique in make, A&F was articulating that its products were not discounted mass produced replicas, but were in fact the real thing. The company was in

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[255] *New York Times,* September 7, 1915.
[256] T.J. Jackson Lears, "From Salvation to Self-Realization: Advertising and the Therapeutic Roots of the Consumer Culture, 1880-1930," in Richard Wightman Fox and T.J. Jackson Lears, eds. *The Culture of Consumption: Critical Essays in American History, 1880-1980* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1983), 23.
[257] *New York Times*, October 3, 1916.

essence taking the stance that its retail environment provided an atmosphere of "*better* consumption" than the crass materialism found elsewhere.[258]

Camping and outdoor recreation were themselves expressions of a desire to experience reality untainted by modern life. To best experience this reality, campers were hyper-selective in their choice of gear and supplies. And rightly so, for an unfit article in an outfit could stain any semblance of authenticity a camper had spent a great deal to achieve. As mentioned previously, campers even exhibited symptoms of what Thorstein Veblen termed "invidious comparison," or as he explained, that "which prompts us to outdo those with whom we are in the habit of classing ourselves."[259] Authenticity thus became a veiled competition amongst campers, a dynamic A&F was all too happy to indulge.

Clothing was perhaps the easiest means a camper had to exhibit his or her authentic identity as an outdoorsmen or women. The clothes a camper wore said a great deal. What distinguished outdoor clothing from the garments campers would have worn in their daily urban existence was the necessary fusion of utility and style. Whereas much of the conventional clothing of the time was characterized by its ornamentation at the expense of practicality, camping attire required practicality at the expense of ornamentation. The clothing of the dwindling numbers of occupational outdoorsmen was indeed practical to an extreme. Although in looking at the evidence, it is clear that recreational campers refused to sacrifice either value of practicality or fashion completely. They did not want to reflect the vulgarity and grime of a yellow-bearded

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[258] Price, *Flight Maps,* 198.
[259] Thorstein Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (New York: MacMillan Co., 1912), 103.

miner, but at the same time wished to not give off too soft of an image for fear of being labeled inauthentic, a poser of sorts. "Combining the swing with the serviceability," one ad commented on a new line of women's clothing, "the thoroughbred thing that the sports woman recognizes at sight."[260] Another stated that a summer sports coat "differs from all others in its genuineness." Campers strove to unite both ideals to realize a wilderness costume that was practical but also conformed to the conventions of style and good taste.

A 1912 advertisement typical of those A&F consistently issued claimed that they were "the only Specialists who build the striking intangibility of Style, the exact, undeviating requirements of good form into out-of-doors garments." If one was going to go into the great wide world of nature, it was best to "look well, look RIGHT, in every pose, in every position."[261] Such blatant appeals to superficial appearance seem incongruous with the seemingly rugged disposition of wilderness campers, but the brilliance of A&F lay in the understanding that even the most seemingly austere outdoorsmen still wanted to look as if they were "comfortably dressed for the part."[262]

Of all the contributions A&F made to the world of outfitting, it was vastly ahead of it time in providing outdoor clothing to the women-folk. The late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries found women wishing to go properly clad into the wilderness with few options. "In the selection of clothes the woodswoman is at some disadvantage," Kathrene Pinkerton decried. "In few cities have her needs been met with the same generosity that has characterized the attitude of sportsmen's outfitters towards men

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[260] *New York Times*, March 28, 1916.
[261] *New York Times*, May 28, 1912.
[262] *New York Times*, July 22, 1913.

campers."[263] A&F was an exception to this void in the options of women's clothing. As early as 1903 it provided skirts, caps, and knickerbockers to female outers wishing to maintain their appearance in the outdoors. In 1904, A&F began providing a number of shoes specifically tailored to their female clientele, admitting that acquiring the correct footwear "for ladies has heretofore always been a serious difficulty to overcome in outfitting."[264] Taking on the responsibility of supplying outdoorswomen with suitable apparel paid handsomely for A&F. Given the sheer amount of advertising material specifically addressing women's clothing, it is safe to deduce it was one of the most successful of the business' departments. A&F women's apparel even broke into the world of high fashion with ads in Vanity Fair and exclusive features in Harper's Bazaar in 1913 and 1914 respectively. Indeed, the inclusion of A&F's sporting clothes amongst prim evening gowns and posh French negligees marked a profound change in the direction of American sartorial practices.[265] When straightforward, shamelessly serviceable attire derived from the practical necessities of the outdoors became accepted as a distinctly American alternative to what was otherwise a European hegemony in fashion, surely it was a sign that American tastes were taking a profound turn in a unique direction.

Although the scope of A&F's business expanded exponentially throughout the early decades of the twentieth century, and while it greatly expanded its variety and diversity of products throughout those years, a common feature of A&F throughout was

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[263] Pinkerton, 15.
[264] *Abercrombie & Fitch 1904 Catalogue,* 101.
[265] For some context on the incorporation of sportswear into the American wardrobe, see: Deirdre Clemente, "Made in Miami: The Development of the Sportswear Industry in South Florida, 1900-1960," *Journal of Social History* 41, no.1 (Fall 2007), 127-148.

its association with quality and authenticity. The traits often went hand-in-hand. In a line of business where excessive innovation and creativity were not always met with enthusiastic endorsements, A&F could always claim to produce the best, most superior piece of equipment among a sea of phony competitors. Abercrombie and Fitch wrote in their 1903 catalogue:

> Our experience has been that the best materials are none too good to meet the severe strain of the life of an explorers, camper or prospector, a fact which apparently has not been realized before, so that everything we provide may be relied upon to be the best possible for the purpose. So thoroughly have we realized the need for superior quality that many of the materials we use are made especially for us, to manufacture according to our original designs and methods.[266]

In a growing commercial environment of mediocre, pre-packaged duplicates, A&F claimed to represent all that was still worthy of respect among those whose exploits required the utmost in distinction and reliability.[267]

The connection A&F made between their products and the people and activities of the outdoors lent them a degree of authenticity that was itself very valuable in the eyes of customers desperate to escape from the hackneyed commercialism of modern society. The manner in which A&F framed their merchandise, both in the physical store and in catalogues, was meant to conjure feelings of adventure, escape, and the splendor of nature in the eyes of the beholden spectator.[268] The tactic, as one commentator eloquently explained, involved "making banal consumer products intensely desirable by

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[266] *Abercrombie & Fitch 1903 Catalogue*, 3.
[267] Benson, 110.
[268] Leach, 66.

aligning them with complex ideals, experiences, and values that most people deeply care about but find extremely hard to achieve or securely possess."[269]

A&F catalogues were rife with this strategy of adding discernible identities to inanimate products. For example, a catalogue entry for the mastigouche trappers' tent explained that the piece of equipment was "designed for Trappers and fire rangers who move camp constantly, and must carry light shelter."[270] A tent designed for and used by genuine men of the woods holds much more credence than its nonexistent counterpart built for the bumbling tenderfoot. In the world of camping equipment, gear and supplies possessed the ability to transform the amateur outer in to the authentic woodsman. And nowhere is this more apparent then as it pertained to costume.

Establishing a practice still used today by sporting goods dealers, A&F was highly proficient in putting authentic outdoorsmen into their clothes for all to see, or at least imagine. One entry described the material Loden as that "used exclusively in the Alps by guides," and mackinaw as used "for clothing by rivermen and 'lumber-jacks' of the North and Northwest."[271] Elsewhere was explained that moleskin "makes excellent clothing for miners, explorers, and prospectors."[272] Not content to leave their materials un-peopled, A&F used allegorical mannequins to communicate to their customers the latent nature of given fabrics.

Not only did A&F figuratively array its clothing on genuine outdoorsmen, what is arguably more interesting are the behaviors it manipulated its models to perform. In the

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[269] Rachel Snow, "Tourism and American Identity," 9.
[270] *Abercrombie and Fitch 1920 Catalogue*, 7.
[271] *Abercrombie and Fitch 1907 Catalogue*, 111.
[272] *Abercrombie and Fitch 1907 Catalogue*, 112.

clothing section of the 1910 catalogue, outfits were given activity-specific designations. For example, next to small blurbs about the "Blooming Grove" and the "Muskoka," men and women's "hunting coats" respectively, were situated plates depicting the outfits being put towards their intended purpose. On one a man and woman stand impeccably clad, guns in hand, with self-assured countenances radiating a swagger rarely seen in the woods. Other illustrations depict an exquisitely dressed couple wearing the "Nepigon" and the "Castalia" going through the motions of fly-fishing, and yet another portrayed a man bundled in the "Dakota" cross-country skiing and a woman mountain-climber sporting the "Banff."[273]

By communicating to readers the intended functions of particular products, A&F could bestow upon its merchandise the measure of authenticity that came with being inextricably linked to hunters, fishermen, skiers, or mountain-climbers. Not content to leave them flaccid and numb in void of time and space, A&F made it products invoke images of fresh mountain air and crystal clear trout streams. Names like "Dakota," "Banff," and "Blooming Grove" were obviously meant to bring to mind pictures of wild, pristine landscapes waiting to be explored and played in. Clearly, for many outdoor enthusiasts sporting goods were not just the impedimenta of camping, they embodied all that was magical about time spent close to nature. Camping gear had the ability to cast a spell upon its admirers and provide them with the means to engage nature even in the midst of an eleven story superstore.

Although the clothing, gear, and outdoor supplies marketed by A&F all had an expressed utility with regard to actually using them in recreational wilderness settings, as

[273] *Abercrombie and Fitch 1907 Catalogue,* 161-163.

I hope this chapter has alluded to, they also served more abstract functions. "In an urban society of comparative anonymity," Jennifer Price comments, "we use the things we buy to create ourselves."[274] A&F's customers were shopping for physical products, sure. That is pretty clear. But they were also after something more elusive and intangible than, say, just a sturdy pair of hiking boots. A&F customers wanted their choices as consumers to reflect their affinity for the natural world and the identity they strove to embody as authentic outdoorsmen and women. By appealing to desires for quality, practicality, and uniqueness, A&F offered a sense of integrity to the outdoor consumer who valued that which was simple and down-to-earth.[275] When an outdoorsmen or woman purchased clothing, gear, or supplies from an outfitter like A&F, they were obtaining something real, nonreplicated, and authentic, just like the nature to which they were planning to escape. Thus, A&F's merchandise provided a "palliative for modern materialism."[276] A means by which consumers could acquire a sense of "authenticity that was separate from the social and personal distortions of business and commercial values."[277] As observant businessmen conversant in the language of outdoor recreation, David Abercrombie and Ezra Fitch surely understood this set of circumstances on some level. As one of their ads read: "Everywhere the trail leads straight back to this storehouse of sport, where the lore of the woodland and the lure of the wild are understood."[278] Besides, if they failed to recognize it as businessmen their perceptive

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[274] Price, 196.
[275] Stephan A. Cole, "The Vernacular Group of L.L.Bean: Toward a New Definition in American Material Culture," *Journal of American Culture* 2, no.2 (Summer 1979), 193-209.
[276] Price, 197.
[277] Orvell, 154.
[278] *New York Times*, Sept. 25, 1917.

faculties as outdoorsmen surely allowed them to identify the true nature of their enterprise.

CHAPTER 4

CAMP GEAR AND CAMP FASHION

Camping gear and clothing were extremely important components in the culture of wilderness recreation. Though campers stressed an ethos of simplicity and frugality, these principles in no way dampened their enthusiasm for correct camping materials. Besides, the minimalism endorsed by many woodcraft campers only meant that they would rely on some types of gear more than others. But even those campers who scorned the luxuries and gadgetry of camping equipment possessed a good familiarity with the plethora of gear displayed in sporting goods stores. All gear held certain connotations that campers engaged to formulate their own identities as Americans on close terms with nature and wilderness.

This chapter will explore the role of camping gear and fashion within the culture of early wilderness camping. The first part of the chapter will address gear generally, while the second part will consider camp clothing specifically. The reason behind this demarcation is that the clothing and fashion of camp held implications unique from that of gear.

It might be appropriate to begin by stating that the whole world of things is pregnant with meanings and values that really only exist in the mind.[279] As it pertains to the camping gear of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, campers habitually

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[279] For some context on the study of material meanings, look at some of this stuff: Daniel Miller, *Stuff* (Malden, MA: Polity, 2010); Daniel Miller, *A Theory of Shopping* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998); Ian Woodward, *Understanding Material Culture* (Los Angles: Sage, 2007); Karen Harvey, ed., *History and Material Culture: A Student's Guide to Approaching Alternative Sources* (New York: Routledge, 2009); & Grant McCracken, *Culture and Consumption: New Approaches to the Symbolic Character of Consumer Goods and Activities* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988).

conferred meanings to their gear beyond the gear's expressed utility. Yes, a tent was useful in keeping out wind, rain, and bugs, but it also possessed less tangible functions. Often camper's ideals and aspirations were transferred to pieces of gear and equipment. In order to express their own ideas about the value of wilderness camping, to both others and to themselves, campers attached those ideas to material things that in turn functioned as conveyors of abstract meanings. While a tent certainly provided protection from the elements, it also signified an independence, freedom from sedentary civilized life, and intimacy with nature that campers valued deeply.

The meanings campers engaged through their gear and equipment says a lot about their relationship with the dominant culture of the time. Ideals of simplicity and practicality, as opposed to ostentation and ineffectual flamboyance, were values campers eagerly responded to in their exploration for acceptable and fitting gear. Quality was another big issue. Campers were apparently very uncomfortable with all that was modern and mass-produced. They wanted their selection of gear to reflect their taste for enduring quality rather then cheap replication. Likewise, campers sought out that which denoted the vernacular or the distinctly American. Their desired connection to nature was predicated upon a simplicity, quality, and reliability that they perceived the modern culture of conspicuous material consumption as unable to provide. In promoting a "funtionalist ethos" of material consumption, woodcraft campers were expressing a larger cultural sentiment, yet still an alternative view, that "sought to elevate the vernacular" into mainstream culture.[280] By ascribing such values to the material products they used

[280] Miles Orvell, *The Real Thing: Imitation and Authenticity in American Culture, 1880-1940* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989), xvi.

in their wilderness activities and promoting those values as desirable and attractive in camping, campers were in some sense furthering a distinctive aesthetic of vernacular authenticity that many Americans in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century found extremely appealing.[281]

Furthermore, camping equipment created campers as much as campers created camping equipment. Because of the connotations it possessed, gear often wielded great influence within the culture of wilderness camping. Campers used their gear in a variety of settings and pretexts, but the relationship between camper and gear was not a one way street. Gear clearly exhibited a perceptible hold on the men and women who employed it in their wilderness escapades. Gear possessed the ability to create and make the camper. In this sense, the equipment of camping ceased to be external to the actual camper. The gear of a camper was a manifestation or embodiment of their identity as a camper. Without the gear and equipment, a camper was not a true camper. Someone devoid of the proper accruements of camping was merely someone out wandering around in the woods. Camping devoid of the necessary gear was not camping at all. There was no identity attached to such an activity. Only through the collection of the appropriate materials could someone wandering around in the woods become a genuine camper, as opposed to someone who camps. The right "look," clothes, gear, and equipment were all passports into the desired social and cultural spheres of wilderness camping.[282]

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[281] Stephen A. Cole, "The Vernacular Group of L.L. Bean: Towards a New Definition of American Material Culture," *The Journal of American Culture* 2, no.2 (Summer 1979), 193-209; Orvell, *The Real Thing*.

[282] Although he in no way connects anything to camping, look at: Woodward, 171-175.

For the woodcraft camper looking to strike out into the untamed American wilderness, the question of what gear to bring was of the utmost import. Not only did the choice of gear impact the manner of camping, it also said a lot about the quality, experience, and worth of the camper. "The party that covets the experience of the camp comes down to primitive conditions of dress and equipment," Charles Warner editorialized, suggesting that the authentic camping experience was highly predicated on the style of outfitting the camper carried out.[283] Given these considerations, a number of outfitting options were open to the wilderness traveler, all with accompanying baggage with which the experienced camper was all too aware.

On one extreme was the do-it-yourself/make-it-yourself ethos that involved a stanch and unyielding devotion to the principles of woodcraft and frontier resourcefulness. This philosophy involved using the least amount of store-bought, civilized paraphernalia as possible, and in its place, substituting tools and supplies fashioned and garnered from the giving hand of nature. This manner of camping appealed particularly to the harder set of outers who sought to differentiate themselves from the rest of the pack. Daniel Carter Beard, one of the most vocal advocates of do-it-yourselfism commented that "there are few, if any, real 'outdoor' men who are not capable of using the material wild nature affords, to construct for themselves a comfortable camp."[284] Clearly, the facility do without was a laudable quality for it signified a respect for nature that denoted authenticity. "It is an interesting, a meritorious

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[283] Charles Dudley Warner, *In The Wilderness* (London: Sampson Low, Marston, Searle, & Rivington, 1878), 129.
[284] Daniel Carter Beard, "Making Difficult Camps," *Outing* 43, no.2 (1903-1904), 116.

task to live comfortably in the woods with the very least possible help from civilised appliances, and if the object of your outing is principally to do that," opined Eddie Breck, "then the cant phrase 'playing the game fairly' would be appropriate."[285] This approach offered campers the opportunity to produce of themselves the necessities for their own survival and get away from the disgraceful dependence that characterized their over-civilized lives.[286]

Camping authors often touted the expedience and practicality of the do-it-yourself mode of camping over that of the store-bought method. "Never carry anything into the woods that you can easily make with the materials ready to[at?] hand," suggested Warren Miller.[287] Stewart White informed his readers that "when the woods offer you a thing ready made, it is the merest foolishness to transport that same thing an hundred miles for the sake of the manufacturer's trademark."[288] Manufactured equipment was no better than the woods-made. It was a contrivance of civilization that devalued the very premise of going to the wilderness. Camping was a way to re-imagine a simpler, more authentic life. "It is one of the blessings of wilderness life that it shows us how few things we need in order to be perfectly happy," wrote Horace Kephart.[289] Besides, how could campers really know and experience the reality of nature if they possessed a bunch of advanced gadgetry that easily mitigated the difficulties life in the woods posed.

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[285] Edward Breck , *The Way of the Woods* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1908), 54.
[286] Terence Young, "On Camping and its Equipment," *Environmental History* 15, no.1 (January 2010), 121-122.
[287] Warren Hastings Miller, *Camp Craft* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1915), 37.
[288] Stewart Edward White, *The Forest* (New York: Outlook Co., 1903), 6.
[289] Horace Kephart, *Camping and Woodcraft: A Handbook for Vacation Campers and for Travelers in the Wilderness* (New York: MacMillan Co., 1919), 110.

While some articles of equipment presented a specious utility, more often than not they were a hindrance to the camper rather than a help. These were the "patent dingbat[s]" and the "handy kinks" of the retail outfitting businesses, the scourge of the true camper who wished to engage nature on a meaningful level.[290] Such articles proved an impediment to really understanding nature on nature's own terms. They kept the camper at arm-length from the real thing, never allowing him or her to truly taste the genuine experience of the wilderness. For example, Edward Breck recommended that when his readers went camping they should discard "a totally unnecessary piece of baggage" that they otherwise carried around with them every day. The wrist watch, Breck declared, represented "perhaps more than any other single article, our dependence upon artificial helps."[291] After all, minutes and hours exercised no authority over the wilderness. They were merely another invention of civilization that separated mankind from the perpetuity of nature. "Leave your ticker at home," entreated Breck, "and note how quickly you will take to scanning the heavens with a new interest. Sundown and high noon will acquire a new significance and you are nearer to nature at once."[292] The technologies and apparati of modern life only dulled the sensibilities and enslaved its users to a banal existence where all experience was standardized and unbearably uniform. Woodcraft camping done simply and close to nature offered an escape from this increasingly tedious, mechanized world of homogonous experience.[293]

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[290] Stewart Edward White, *Camp and Trail* (New York: Outing Pub. Co., 1906), 27.
[291] Breck, *The Way of the Woods,* 28.
[292] Breck, *The Way of the Woods,* 29
[293] For more on American anxieties with technology, reference: John F. Kasson, *Civilizing the Machine: Technology and Republican Values in America, 1776-1900* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1999).

Woodcraft literature offered boundless examples of areas where the camper could shirk the store-bought for the woods-made. Every facet of camping could potentially be whittled down to the barest of essentials, but for the sake of expedience, it might be beneficial to take the issue of tents and camp shelters as an exemplarily case. While a vast array of tents and shelters were sold to crowds of outdoorsmen and women who eagerly accepted them as legitimate pieces of gear, the subject of tents was still very much moot. As Warren Miller explained:

> Many experienced campers, mailmen, timber-cruisers and woodsmen that I know scorn a tent except as a shelter to keep off dew and rain, and their caterpillar-like forms are apt to be stumbled on in almost any hollow in the leaves about camp after retiring hours, each in his fur or wool sleeping-bag, just as close to nature as he can get.[294]

Clearly, even something as widely accepted in the culture of camping as tents had detractors who sought to avoid the barrier they represented with nature. But if a camper was to lug a tent into the wilderness, there were always ways to scrimp on the superfluities. Charles Hanks commanded his readers to "never take tent poles or tent pins" on a trip into the big woods where they "only mean a clip of the axe to obtain."[295] Regardless of the make of the tent, campers even derided the potential contents of the thing. In a discussion of canoe voyaging Emerson Hough went even so far as to condemn the presence of pillows. "A pillow, of course," Hough remarked, "is hardly allowable in a tent occupied by really rugged canoeists."[296] The anxieties about excess and intemperance campers expressed in this discourses on gear revealed a meaningful

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[294] Warren Hastings Miller, *Camping Out* (New York: George H. Doran Co., 1918), 52.
[295] Charles Stedman Hanks, *Camp Kits and Camp Life* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1906), 30.
[296] Emerson Hough, *Out Of Doors* (New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1915), 175.

disquietude with the abundance of contrivances thrown on campers by those who seemed to value material convenience over adroit woodsmenship.

For those campers who really wanted to live on the wild side, they could even eliminate their mess kit. Obviously, nature could provide it all. "The log or birchbark bowl with hot stones is the best boiling medium," claimed Warren Miller. "I have boiled soup and tea in a birchbark bowl with a fire of live coals under it, but prefer the hot stones as surer and easier." It may be safe to assume most campers did not wish to eat and drink out of filthy, bug-infested tree bark, but the fact that it was even suggested to them as a suitable option says a lot about how far some campers were willing to go to evade the sin of having a bunch of contrived gear.

The simplicity of an outfit was a very real issue among serious wilderness campers. To go light was to go right, as the truism went. The choice of gear was important, especially the choice of taking as little as possible. As Dillon Wallace(survivor of the Leonidas Hubbard expedition) urged his readers: "It is not necessary to enjoyment and comfort that one be provided with a large and expensive outfit. I have always found the simplest the best. Too much of the paraphernalia of civilization robs a camp of much of its charm."[297] Campers evidently understood their love of the outdoors was often expressed through the accumulation of an extensive collection of gear and whatnot. But they were also noticeably uncomfortable with the connotations of such flagrant materialism. Even old Nessmuk observed in the nascent years of recreational wilderness camping that "the temptation to buy this or that bit of

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[297] Dillon Wallace, "Camping Suggestions for the Novice," *Outing* 54, no.4 (1909), 505; These comments of Wallace's were made only a few years after his unfortunate outing in Labrador with Hubbard. Make of that what you will.

indispensable camp-kit has been too strong, and we have gone to the blessed woods handicapped with a load fit for a pack-mule. This is not how to do it."[298] Although gear was obviously an important part of any camping experience, many campers sought to keep its civilizing tendencies in close check. Knowing what gear was needed and what could be considered extraneous baggage was an important branch of woodcraft knowledge with which the real camper was proficient. Considering all that, vast uncharted grey areas still existed in the world of camping gear.

Complementing all the talk of minimalism and frugality, campers also expressed a clear and passionate devotion to gear. Evaluating and judging the various pros and cons of gear was a veritable pastime wholly apart from the actual act of camping. "If some misguided genius should invent a [piece of] camping equipment that nobody could find fault with, half our pleasure in life would be swept away," lamented Horace Kephart.[299] This is not to say that all the verbiage in woodcraft literature about simplicity and minimalism was just obligatory lip service. Campers truly did care about those matters, and questioning their sincerity seems a bit unfounded. But their gushing love of the outdoors was also important, and for a camper who may only have gotten the opportunity to hit the trail but once a year, obsessing over gear in the off-season was the closest they may have gotten to the mystique of the wilderness for a long while.

There were basically two options in outfitting for the camper who wished to go into the big woods. They could leave all their outfitting decisions in the hands of a professional outfitter like Abercrombie & Fitch, who would in turn go to the trouble of

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[298] George Washington Sears, *Woodcraft* (New York: Forest and Stream Pub. Co., 1884), 4.
[299] Kephart, *Camping and Woodcraft*, 26.

making sure the camper's every need was met. "Lay your case before us," one A&F ad implored, "whether it is a single article to be added to your outfit, or your entire hunting trip to be planned."[300] While this may have been the quickest and most efficient way to outfit, it should be obvious that serious campers who identified as genuine outdoorsmen refused to have any part in such a scheme. As Nessmuk said of the camper who had all his outfitting done for him, "he has no need to study the questions of lightness and economy in a forest and stream outing."[301] Part of knowing how to camp correctly was tied to knowing how to outfit correctly. Disentangling the two was not a path the camper was advised to travel.

One of the major principles of woodcraft camping was that "the outdoors should and could be enjoyed in gear you already owned."[302] This possession was what separated the "person who camped" from the "camper." The former designation merely connoted participation in an activity; the later embodied an active identity. Given the gravity of gear, campers took their choices very seriously. A camper's outfit reflected not only their taste in camping; it also expressed their knowledge of gear and how well they could separate the phony contrivance from the genuine, practical thing.

For the camper looking to outfit, a vast selection of gear was available for their every whim and desire. Sporting goods stores offered "so much to pick and choose from" one author wrote.[303] Another commented that the eager camper "has to choose

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[300] *New York Times,* Oct. 19, 1920.
[301] Sears, *Woodcraft,* 3.
[302] Ben Fogelberg, "From 'Go Light' To GoLite: A Brief History of Hiking and Camping Gear in Colorado," *Colorado Heritage* (December 2008), 17.
[303] Horace Kephart, *Camping and Woodcraft: A Handbook for Vacation Campers and for Travelers in the Wilderness* (New York: MacMillan Co., 1919), 28.

from a multitudinous and confusing array of impedimenta offered by well meaning and alluring advertisements."[304] As was discussed in the previous chapter, outfitters like A&F provided their customers with a selection of gear and supplies that could satiate their every conceivable need and more. In turn, campers seemingly appreciated the choices, but spurned any undue indulgence.

Given that campers were veritably assaulted by options when it came to acquiring gear, and being that the culture of woodcraft camping stressed simplicity and minimalism in wilderness possessions, campers navigated the world of consumer goods with a very discriminating attitude towards material consumption. "He who adventures into the big timber must look...with exactitude to the choice of an outfit," one outdoor author opined.[305] The culture of camping loathed needless indulgence. Instead, true outdoorsmen and women strode the path of reserved consumption, shirking the superfluities in favor of an honest plainness. Warren Miller told his readers that "there are at least a million other things that you would like to take, or are convinced that you would not be happy without, but go light on them."[306] The reality of untarnished wilderness was impossible to experience if one spoiled it with the introduction of a bunch of technical gadgets that only separated campers from thoroughly understanding the workings of nature.

An important principle underlying the philosophy of wilderness camping was in seeing just how few civilized luxuries one truly needed in order to survive. "Wise campers prefer to go light," Horace Kephart said, "doing without most of the appliances

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[304] Claude Powell Fordyce, *Touring Afoot* (New York: Outing Pub. Co., 1916), 117.
[305] Fordyce, *Touring Afoot,* 17.
[306] Miller, *Camping Out,* 145.

of domestic life."[307] Elsewhere he explained the reasoning behind the prohibition on superfluous gear: "The less a man carries in his pack, the more he carries in his head....The simpler the outfit, the more skill it takes to manage it."[308] Many campers felt the state of perpetual dependence in which civilization kept its victims was both mentally and physically unhealthy. They wished to exercise a proficient independence and self-sufficiency that would loosen them from the chains of dependence and keep their primal skills from atrophying. Kathrene Pinkerton explained that the woodswoman who indulged to heartily in the luxuries of camping supplies soon found that "she has sold her freedom for a mess of equipment. It is as true of camp life as of anywhere else that the multiplication of possessions means the diminution of freedom."[309] Considering such language, woodcraft camping was a means by which those uncomfortable with the intemperate consumption of modern society could find a haven from such conspicuous waste and experiment with a minimalism more conductive to reality.

With such heavy ramifications weighing on outfitting choices, campers were wont to take their selection of gear personally. Besides, a camper's outfit was essentially a statement of camping identity; a physically manifestation of an intangible affiliation for the untamed American wilderness. "A man's outfit is a matter which seems to touch his private honor," observed Horace Kephart.[310] Campers took pride in their personal outfits and would defend their choices in gear vehemently. "On a campaign you may attack a man's courage, the flag he serves, the newspaper for which he works, his intelligence, or

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[307] Horace Kephart, *Camp Cookery* New York: MacMillan Co., 1910), 1.
[308] Kephart, *Camp Cookery,* vii.
[309] Kathrene Pinkerton, *Woodcraft For Women* New York: Outing Pub. Co., 1916), 78.
[310] Kephart, *Camping and Woodcraft,* 7.

his camp manners, and he will ignore you," Kephart divulged, "but if you criticize his patent water-bottle he will fall upon you with both fists."[311] Clearly, to call into question another camper's outfit was comparable to having a death-wish. While the language of camping promoted values of simplicity and minimalism, this did not mean campers were not adamantly devoted to the gear they did own. While acquisitive consumers reveled in needless abundance and a wealth of material possessions, the campers who favored depreciative consumption only loved the few items of gear they did own all the more.

Indeed, much of the enjoyment outdoorsmen and women derived from camping came not from the act of camping itself, but in the "pleasure of anticipation" back at home.[312] This was where a significant portion of the fun of camping was derived. "It is a joy to make plans and to gather one's belongings; to pack and repack mentally – and at last actually – one's duffle bags," one outdoorsman disclosed in a special camping feature in *Vanity Fair* magazine.[313] While they may not have been able to be in the woods all the time, they could certainly think of the woods all the time. In this sense, campers used their gear and outfits to recall the pleasant sensations of camping while away from the actual wilderness. They used the associations provoked by gear to get their wilderness fix. Campers literally experienced outdoor reminisces through the material objects of camping. This was the great power gear exerted over campers. It explains why they displayed such strange devotional tendencies towards their gear. For the obsessed camper, gear was not simply dull, unresponsive matter; it was full of life, nature, and the spirit of the wilds.

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[311] Kephart, *Camping and Woodcraft,* 8.
[312] Robert Dunn, "The Fallacies of 'Roughing It,'" *Outing* 46, no. 6 (Sept. 1905), 650.
[313] Robert Lloyd Trevon, "For the Well Dressed Man," *Vanity Fair* 8, no.6 (August 1917), 67.

In an article appearing in *Outing,* Robert Pinkerton explained that during a woodsman's time spent away from the wilderness "he dreams, thinks, talks of the woods, of next year's trip, of this new piece of equipment. The discovery of a new waterproof tent material is an event....Weekly visits are paid to his favorite sporting goods store."[314] Elsewhere, Robert Dunn described a camping devotee, who, having composed a fine collection of camping gear, mulled over his treasures like a child over his toys:

> he spreads them all out in his back yard, till it seems he has bought up a young hardware store and a tent-factory, with a depot for testing compressed foods thrown in. All day he clicks clever but frail mechanisms, rigs up this device and demolishes that, voluble as to how neatly we are going to do everything in the woods this time....this person gets more fun out of the woods – not directly, of course – than you could ever imagine.[315]

Clearly, gear possessed a special significance in the culture of woodcraft camping. While earlier campers expressed extreme disapproval of the vain indulgence of needless contrivances, later campers loved gear and acquired much enjoyment from musing over whether or not this or that article would fit well into their outfits. As Emerson Hough drolly observed, "A sportsman's outfit is like the Oxford dictionary – they never get done with the compilation."[316]

Sometimes this dedication to gear took on strange connotations that went beyond the practical utility of equipage and took on bizarre fixations divorced from any expressed functions. Stewart White related an instance where his camping party met up with an outdoorsman with a peculiar attachment to his parka. "He, like most woodsmen," White explained, "was wedded to a single utterly foolish article of personal

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[314] Robert E. Pinkerton, "The City Woodsman," *Outing* 61, no. 4 (1912-1913), 480.
[315] Dunn, "The Fallacies of 'Roughing It,'" 650.
[316] Hough, *Out of Doors,* 31.

belonging, which he worshiped as a fetish, and without which he was unhappy. In his case it was a huge winter overcoat that must have weighed fifteen pounds."[317] Such instances of object devotion demonstrate that campers were drawn to gear for more than its expressed utility in the camp setting.

Through its association with wilderness, camping gear denoted values of authenticity and integrity that woodcraft campers found extremely appealing. Objects of camping equipment were perceived to be genuine and real, not just in the forensic sense, but also in the emotional sense. A good piece of camping gear was uunabashedly practical, but because of the practical ends towards which it could be put it possessed an intrinsic honor campers found lacking in the morally empty mass-production of consumer culture. Authenticity in camping equipment was the equivalent of an honest, lifelong friendship between people. In a culture where social duplicity and strategic fraudulence were perceived to be smothering the honesty and fair dealings of the past, campers could always turn to their adored pieces of sturdy, practical, quality gear to mitigate their dissatisfaction with what was otherwise a morally corrupt world of cheap imitations.

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Looking at camp fashion further elucidates a point that camp gear only suggests. Through their clothing choices, campers betrayed a tendency towards the practical and the comfortable, as opposed to the stringently restricting clothing that dominated respectable fashions of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The demand created by campers for uncomplicated, sensible clothing that could meet the necessities

[317] White, *The Forest,* 172-173.

of the wilderness generated an aesthetic sensibility that was as distinctly American as it was culturally innovative. Much of the practical sportswear of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries would become the basis for mainstream dress as the century progressed and American fashion moved away from the Victorian styles and designs derived from the European fashion establishment.[318]

The aim in looking at camp fashion is to better understand how the "aesthetic of authenticity" came to life and to national prominence. Studying clothing provides a unique manner of examining social and cultural change that is often overlooked in favor of sources that are more traditional. Although fashion is consistently denigrated as frivolous and superficial, sartorial trends take on great meaning when considered within the contexts that created them. They illuminate cultural forces and sensibilities that often go unspoken and remain frustratingly elusive.[319]

Much of the literature on clothing goes into great detail on proposed theoretical social mechanisms behind how fashion works, but its has largely disregarded the actual meanings underlying clothing choices. For the purpose of understanding the dress of early wilderness camping, it is important to recognize that people can use dress to

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[318] Patricia Campbell Warner, *When the Girls Came Out to Play: The Birth of American Sportswear* (Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2006).

[319] For some insights into the larger meanings of clothing choices, consult some of these authors: Warner, *When the Girls Came Out to Play*; Fred Davis, *Fashion, Culture, and Identity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992); Diana Crane, *Fashion and Its Social Agendas: Class, Gender, and Identity in Clothing* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000); Joanne Entwistle, *The Fashioned Body: Fashion, Dress and Modern Social Theory* (Maiden, MA: Polity, 2000); Elizabeth Wilson: *Adorned in Dreams: Fashion and Modernity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985); Roland Barthes, *The Language of Fashion,* translated and edited by Andy Stafford. Edited by Michael Carter (New York: Berg, 1995); Malcolm Barnard, ed. *Fashion Theory* (New York: Routledge, 2007); McCracken, *Culture and Consumption,* 57-70.

articulate ideas and messages, and that clothing allows the wearer to try on new identities.[320]

Upon the application of these deductions to the fashion of the outdoors it becomes apparent that those Americans who took their outdoor pastimes seriously enough to dress appropriately were often going against the grain of the mainstream fashions of the time. While the established, respectable dress of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was characterized by a heaviness of ornamentation and a superfluity of style, all at the expense of practicality, campers approached the question of clothing with different values and standards of judgment. "The most suitable clothing is that which is simplest," asserted Edward Breck unequivocally, then later demanding that campers should "reject all ornamented work" in outdoor attire.[321] In valuing simple practicality over garish elaboration, outdoorsmen and women established a "fashion of the fields and the open air" that posited the dominance of function as the basis for aesthetic merit.[322] Within the scheme of camp fashion, something was fashionable in direct relation to the very extent it was functional. Through this weight allocated to utility, campers were expressing a distasteful reaction to the perceived detachment of high fashion from reality. In this sense, the practical clothing of the outdoors was a mild form of oppositional dress, or

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[320] Furthermore, the history of dress serves as an appropriate topic for environmental scholarship because it explains how people have related to nature through their bodies. Perhaps this understanding is not exactly what Christopher Sellers had in mind in "Thoreau's Body," but it is my loose interpretation and I'm sticking to it. For more on the relationship between the human body, nature, and fashion check out: Christopher Sellers, "Thoreau's Body: Towards an Embodied Environmental History," *Environmental History* 4, no.4 (October 1999), 486-514; Entwistle, 6-39; Marguerite S. Shaffer, "On the Environmental Nude," *Environmental History* 13, no.1 (January 2008), 126-139; Ellen E. Woodall, "The American Nudist Movement: From Cooperative to Capital, the Song Remains the Same," *Journal of Popular Culture* 36, no.2 (Fall 2002), 264-284.

[321] Breck, *The Way of the Woods,* 15 & 22.

[322] A&F ad, *New York Times,* May 4, 1915.

anti-fashion, meant to counteract the intolerably mannered poses of mainstream clothing. But as is often the case with anti-fashion, the authentic, practical clothing of the outdoors was steadily absorbed into the canons of fashionable taste itself where it was disseminated to the culture at-large.

However, before the utilitarian dress of the outdoors managed to infiltrate the haunts of tasteful fashion, outdoorsmen and women had to work out all the kinks in their clothing through a regimen of thorough wilderness assessments. Chameleonorating oneself to the atmosphere of the natural setting was of primary importance to campers who wanted to get the real experience and not stand out as ignorant, incongruous posers. Warren Miller informed his readers of the importance of suitable clothing lest the backcountry yeomanry ridicule them for wilderness impropriety:

> You will desire, to begin with, to look well and properly dressed when taking your outing; to look the part, so to speak, so that you will command respect in place of derision wherever you may be. Good camping clothes are becoming both for the male and female of the species, and your backwoods yokel recognizes them at sight and tips his hat to you instead of visiting contumely upon you as he surely will if you appear before him in a gipsy assortment of odds and ends.[323]

Apparently, it was essential for the camper to mesh well with the aesthetic of the wilderness. A camper's very identity as an apt outdoorsmen or women depended upon the image they reflected in their outdoor garb. "When you seek a guide in the mountains he looks first at your eyes and then at your feet," Horace Kephart disclosed, "If both are right, you are right."[324] Assimilating to the aesthetic of wilderness authenticity was an

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[323] Miller, *Camping Out,* 133.
[324] Kephart, *Camping and Woodcraft,* 138.

important concern that campers were always desperately trying to address for fear of not being taken seriously.

The basis for wilderness clothing was based on a few different, but related, principles. Practicality and serviceability were obviously important factors. As a few A&F ads put it, camp clothing was "characterized by the omission of the superfluous;" a distinctive manner of dress "with all the frivolity left out."[325] Unneeded ornamentation and excessive style were not values with which woodcraft campers sought to associate themselves. Those campers whose clothing rendered them unfit for woods-life stuck out like sore thumbs and were readily castigated for their distasteful, if not outright offensive attire. Clothing needed to be functional above all else. Any subservience of function to arbitrary notions of fashion was as out of place in the wilderness as coin-operated toilets would be in a dysentery ward. Claude Fordyce informed his readers that in "choosing clothing for a wilderness hike, style plays no important part: comfort and service are the main requirements."[326] Another camping author further clarified that "in camp the more comfortable you are the more fashionable you are considered."[327] Kathrene Pinkerton even went so far as to explain to her readers that while women's camp clothing was not flashy and elegant, it did hold less apparent meanings that penetrated beyond the shallow considerations of style:

> The watchwords of women's woods clothing, practicality, durability, simplicity, and compactness, do not sound so alluring, perhaps, as the latest cry from the fashion magazine, but they contain a fascination for more subtle, far more lasting. And when one has gone forth logically and efficiently clad, and has seen her clothes meet the tests of the wilderness,

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[325] *New York Times,* Oct. 7, 1919; *New York Times,* Sept. 9, 1914.
[326] Fordyce, *Touring Afoot,* 21.
[327] Alfred Balch, "Camp Lore: With Notes on Outfit and Equipment," *Outing* 14, no.5 (1889), 372.

> has come warm, dry, unbitten and untorn through days of cold, rain, mosquitoes, and snags, she feels at the sight of her woods clothing that same warm glow of affection that one feels for any tested friend who, too, has been a chum in adventure.[328]

Clearly, the practicality and serviceability of clothing held very deep meanings for campers beyond the obvious advantages it provided for rugged wilderness travel. These abstract qualities could become tangible objects of devotion with which campers formed profound connections.

Although campers genuinely valued functionality and simplicity in their outdoors clothing, they did not go as far as to explicitly embrace the homely. They still wanted to look good. But looking good in camp was based on a different set of criteria than looking good according to mainstream tastes. Looking good in camp did not necessarily mean looking beautiful or attractive; it meant giving off a desired impression. There were different standards of sartorial judgment in the wilderness more closely aligned with values of authenticity than contrived notions of elegance or modishness.

As models for the "aesthetic of authenticity" in outdoor dress campers looked towards the people who inhabited the wild places they merely sought to visit. Occupational outdoorsmen exemplified the rugged life close to nature that campers wished to engage. As a result, their clothing choices were often lauded as both the wisest and the most genuine. Emerson Hough directed campers to "go simply. Dress the way professional woodsmen do, or the outdoor people of the country where you are spending your vacation."[329] Kathrene Pinkerton provided the same advice, recounting that an English globetrotting engineer whose work habitually exposed him to primitive living

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[328] Pinkerton, *Woodcraft For Women,* 51-52.
[329] Hough, *Out of Doors,* 47.

conditions told her "he always bought that worn by the natives of the country into which he was going."[330] In emulating the dress of what were often extremely provincial populations and cultures, campers could in some sense acquire an identity through which they could connect with the values of nature.

This dynamic where campers envisioned the clothing of people on the bottom rungs of society as favorable to more refined, sophisticated, and stylish alternatives flies directly in the face of the traditional trickle-down theory of fashion which contends that all definitions of style originate in high culture and are subsequently adopted by lower orders.[331] The fact that the crude, vernacular clothing of the outdoors was adopted by many people and eventually incorporated into the mainstream culture illustrates that fashion is not a one way street. Trends can move in both directions, especially in an American culture that often aspires to the vulgar and authentically earthy.

Notwithstanding all the talk of utility and function that ruled the discussion of wilderness clothing, campers still wanted to appear presentable. Copying the dress of professional outdoorsmen was an important consideration, but apparently, few campers wanted to look shabby and ragged in their wilderness attire. Giving off a respectable impression was still an essential undertaking. To this end campers sought to "combine picturesqueness with utility."[332] They wanted something unabashedly practical, but not something that would prove shocking to the sensibilities.

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[330] Pinkerton, *Woodcraft For Women,* 19.
[331] This theory was first propagated by Thorstein Veblen in *The Theory of the Leisure Class* and has remained the basis for most fashion theory ever since.
[332] Daniel Carter Beard, "The Art of Camping," *The World Works* 6, no.2 (June 1903), 3547.

Taking up the cause of sportsmen and women who wished to look good in the outdoors, outfitters like A&F developed a unique strain of "chic outdoor apparel" from principles entirely derived from the world of outdoor recreation.[333] "Go correctly outfitted, comfortably and smartly appareled," an A&F ad told campers, "for there is a thoroughbred code in the woods."[334] Not any piece of clothing would do in the wilderness setting, even if it did provide a measure of serviceability. "The best clothes really are those made for camp life," chimed Emerson Hough, suggesting that clothing manufactured without due respect to the stanch standards of the outdoors was best left at home when camping.[335] An A&F ad further clarified the substance of the style of the outdoors: "There is a fashion of the fields – a style among sportsmen...It passes from one sportsman to another, and is approved by men and women who feel instinctively the correctness of the thing."[336] The "fashion of the fields" did not follow vacillating, arbitrary trends. It endured in pure form, disassociated from the capriciousness of fashionable dress. Moreover, it was not dictated by some aloof designer. Instead, it emerged organically from among those who possessed an intuitive understanding of the practical and serviceable.

But the development of a distinctive outdoor style was more complex for some than others. While men could easily acquire the proper garments for their outing needs, women frequently had a difficult time navigating the hazy and often conflicting necessities of wilderness practicality and sartorial decency. Bound to what many

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[333] *New York Times,* December 8, 1912.
[334] *New York Times,* July 20, 1915.
[335] Hough, *Out of Doors,* 46.
[336] *New York Times,* October 3, 1916.

outdoorswomen felt was the "unreasoning convention" of feminine modesty, the question of wilderness clothing for women was not as straightforward as it was for their fathers, husbands, and brothers.[337]

For some women, the prospect of donning the "obligatory male attire" of camping was apparently a source of perpetual frustration, if it did not keep them home altogether.[338] "Women especially dislike the clumsy look and feel of good sporting wear," observed Emerson Hough, also noting that outdoorswomen "sometimes are afraid their costumes are not going to be becoming."[339] To wear fashionable women's clothing into the wilderness was wholly impractical and was more a hindrance and a nuisance than anything. Furthermore, it was simply out of the question to the woodswoman who aspired to experience the wilderness as her male counterparts had the freedom to do. But women did not wish to sacrifice their femininity outright and dress like men. What resulted from this sartorial impasse was a handy redefinition of what acceptable clothing meant for women who required more freedom than their physically restricting civilized garments allowed.

Kathrene Pinkerton explained to female campers that wilderness fashion was based on different principles than the ones they were likely used to in their urban environments:

> The question of adornment must yield precedence to those of efficiency and durability. This does not mean that unbecoming woods garments must be the rule. There are any number of attractive costumes for the out of door woman. But unpractical features which serve only for ornamentation

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[337] Kathrene Pinkerton, "Clothes For Woodswomen," *Outing* 62, no.4 (1913), 460.
[338] Grace Olney Mitchell, "Two Women Outdoors in Idaho," *Country Life* 10, no.2 (June 1906), 199.
[339] Hough, *Out of Doors,* 66 & 116.

> should be sacrificed by the woman who does not wish to be handicapped by her clothing.[340]

While assuaging the doubts of woodswomen as to their homely appearances in the woods, Pinkerton told them in no uncertain terms that their clothing had to change to accommodate the requirements of their more rugged surroundings.

Other woodcraft authors were more specific in the fashion advice they provided their feminine readership. Emerson Hough told outdoorswomen in a rather blunt manner to "avoid freakishness or coquetry in camp dress. Be simple and sincere and useful, and do not spend too much time in wondering how you look."[341] This practicality in women's dress was a strict departure from the mainstream fashions of the day that accentuated the woman's conspicuous idleness and inability to perform any task remotely physical. Through camp clothing, women could attain a degree of freedom their usual garments curtailed. "No lady should ever wear a corset into camp," George Shields exclaimed. "Women are becoming too practical to much longer tolerate such an impractical, nonsensical piece of furniture as a corset."[342] Apparently, the wilderness offered women a space for alternative dress where they could experience the liberation that came with discarding the strictures of civilized fashion.

The acceptance of pants by women in the outdoors was perhaps the most diffident trend, but the one that ultimately had the greatest ramifications. Although rugged wilderness conditions often required women to discard their long skirts that snagged and restricted movement, they did take up wearing pants with unrestrained gusto. There was

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[340] Pinkerton, *Woodcraft For Women,* 14.
[341] Hough, *Out of Doors,* 119
[342] George O. Shields, *Camping And Camp Outfits: A Manual of Instruction for Young and Old Sportsmen* (New York: Rand, McNally & Co., 1890), 24.

apparently still some hesitancy on the part of some women who felt uncomfortable going against such obvious standards of feminine propriety. "It would be wise for women to overcome their objection to this unconventional way of dressing when away from civilization," pleaded outdoorswoman Sara Baxter, "a well-made pair of knickerbockers is not at all bad looking on most women, and as for the rest, the aesthetic side is soon forgotten in the added freedom."[343] In an attempt to partially mollify their anxieties about donning male attire, many women devised custom-made outfits where a skirt could quickly and easily be secured around the waist when the situation required. But on the other hand, more iconoclastic women wore their pants for all to see and owned their unconventional attire. As one author rationalized: "Woman 'outers' are not so common, but that somebody, somewhere, will stare at those knickerbockers. But men who are much in the open gain a wonderful sincerity of judgment; and if you are truly doing your bit, the momentary stare will quickly give place to hones good-fellowship."[344] Apparently, some women were restless to discard the constraints imposed upon them by their usual dress and camping provided them with a propitious means to articulate this new "sturdy womanhood."[345] The conventional, impractical clothing of society women only served to hinder their true potential, and, as Kathrene Pinkerton asserted, "in this age of woman's progress we may overcome the effects of this folly as we have so many others."[346]

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[343] Sara Stokes Baxter, "A Woman's Camping Outfit," *Outing* 54, no. 5 (1909), 635.
[344] Laura B. Miller, "Duffel for Women," *Outing* 68, no.6 (1916), 593-594.
[345] A&F ad, *New York Times,* September 3, 1918.
[346] Pinkerton, *Woodcraft For Women,* 42.

But, alas, even when many women embraced this new style of feminine attire and hoped to personify the "modern Diana of the woodland trail," outdoor clothing made explicitly for women was exasperatingly hard to obtain, at least initially.[347] Outdoorswomen Rena Phillips fumed that "the manufacturers of out-door clothing have apparently overlooked the fact that women might possibly enjoy going into the wilderness as well as their husbands and brothers; therefore there is nothing practicable on the market that is especially designed for women to wear in the woods."[348] Given the evident scarcity of women's outdoor wear on the clothing market, outfitters who did incorporate women's clothing into their products lines were all the more appreciated. As was noted in the previous chapter, one of A&F's greatest assets as a business was its policy of relentlessly accommodating the outfitting needs of women. While other outfitting establishments undoubtedly came to value the participation of outdoorswomen in time, A&F's inclusive attitude towards outfitting made them a progressive aberration in the early outfitting industry. Through their persistent promotion of women's outdoor apparel, A&F helped thrust respectable wilderness fashion into an imposing position in American culture. Even the smug fashionistas at *Vanity Fair* – the literary haunt of all things in-style – took notice of the eminence of outdoor attire when they claimed "every smart woman knows the awe-inspiring importance of correct sports apparel. The wardrobe which lacks it is never complete; it is the hallmark of chic."[349] Indeed, outdoor clothing came along way from its vernacular roots as the practical, utilitarian dress of outdoorsmen to its canonization as a defining characteristic of American taste.

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[347] Miller, Camp Craft, 190.
[348] Rena A. Phillips, "The Woman in the Woods," *Outing* 46, no.4 (1905), 473.
[349] "Sports Clothes for Active Service," *Vanity Fair* 10, no.5 (July 1918), 62.

"Fancy clothing is one of the greatest obstacles to a knowledge of nature" asserted Liberty Hyde Bailey.[350] To go clad simply and practically was to experience nature on its terms, authentically and in the realm of reality. For a nation become increasingly disconnected from the rugged nature that had defined its past, and the same nature from which the national myth claimed the citizenry had derived their characteristic vitality and national potency, cultivating the means to stay connected to nature amidst all the prestidigitation of modernity was a matter of great national import. To succumb to the mannered styles and artificial culture exemplified by European civilization was surely to invite national ruin. "A peculiar phase of life in Europe seems to be that it is all in doors," observed Emerson Hough. He continued, noting, "the camp in the wilderness seems unknown there."[351] Wilderness life, it seemed, was a distinctly American form of existence, and from this existence developed an idiosyncratically American taste for the simple, practical, and authentic. As an A&F ad professed: "For the rare combination of taste and practical utility in outdoor clothes, which in reality constitutes smartness, one must look to America."[352] Clearly, outdoorsmen and women used their serviceable fashion of the outdoors paired with a sensibility of authenticity to distinguish their vibrant, genuine culture from the contrived, over-civilized culture of Europe.[353]

This wholesale rejection of all things European obviously included what many Americans regarded as the priggish standards of fashion hegemonically dictated by

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[350] Liberty Hyde Bailey, *The Outlook to Nature* (New York: MacMillan Co., 1905), 43.
[351] Hough, *Out of Doors,* 143.
[352] *New York Times,* March 29, 1920.
[353] John Higham, "The Reorientation of American Culture in the 1890's," in *The Origins of Modern Consciousness,* edited by John Weiss (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1965), 25-48; Miles Orvell, *The Real Thing.*

Europe's decrepit and out-of-touch upper-crusts. In response, Americans posited democratically formulated principles of aesthetic taste that acted, as what Charles Warner called, a cultural "revolt against the everlasting dress-parade of our civilization."[354]

[354] Warner, *In The Wilderness,* 131.

CONCLUSION

In a modern reality seemingly detached from nature and dominated by a plethora of banal consumer products, understanding how people have used their habits as consumers to define themselves and their relation to the natural world can reveal enlightening details on the varied expressions of nature in the modern world. As this piece of writing has clumsily demonstrated, the choices early wilderness campers made in selecting gear, clothing, and supplies for their outfits were meaningful behaviors that expressed profound cultural anxieties and desires. Those hoping to better understand the intersections of environmentalism and consumerism would do well to take seriously the historical literature on camp outfitting. Taken together with the cultural positions of early outfitting firms, such evidence suggests that values favoring a highly conscientious style of consumerism have existed in American culture in spite of all the visible unthinking indulgence that implies otherwise.

Through all the outfitting involved with wilderness camping, those with a penchant for the outdoors utilized the growing culture of consumption to express their affinity for and association with what they perceived to be the sacred reality of nature. In this context, materialism was in no way antithetical to environmentalism. If done responsibly and with an attitude of circumspection, it was a legitimate expression of the yearning many Americans felt to preserve their traditional relationship to all that was wild, natural, and real. Just because campers utilized the consumer culture to articulate their attitudes towards nature in no way discounts the integrity of their beliefs. Indeed,

when the consumption of goods was performed correctly, it could express ideological positions acutely divergent from those of the status quo.

Through their demand for all that was simple, practical, and authentic, campers produced a genre of commodities that were at once audaciously serviceable, offensively sober, and idiosyncratically American. This distinctive strain of taste was imbued into the larger culture as it rose in prominence and Americans became increasingly receptive to its connotations of authenticity and reality. Outfitting operations like Abercrombie and Fitch(A&F) helped foster the taste for the vernacular when it was still in its nascent form on the margins of acceptable society. By promoting objects and styles derived explicitly from outdoors use, A&F promoted an aesthetic of authenticity that eventually crystallized as a hallmark of American taste.

The progeny of what A&F pioneered around the turn-of-the nineteenth century have become veritable icons of the American outdoors. Not only are they effectively just as much a part of the wilderness experience as actually being in the wilderness, they have come to personify American's existing relationship with the natural world in a unique way. Their presence is as vital a component to the American outdoors as the outdoors itself. Selling everything from camping gear, guns, and fishing equipment to high-end clothing and decorations for the outdoorsman's indoors, these warehouses of pseudo-nature have purveyed a distinctive outdoor aesthetic that has been so infused within the culture at-large that it is often indistinguishable from other strains of materialism.

In order to honestly address the evident vitality of these outfitting firms within the culture of the outdoors, I must take a cue from Stewart Edward White(S.E.W.?) when he

wrote in the preface to *Camp and Trail* that "after considerable weighing of the pros and cons I have decided to include the names of firms where certain supplies may be bought."[355] Wishing not to simply name-drop for the sake of name-dropping, I must emulate White in his acknowledgment that "this sort of free advertisement in eminently unjust."[356] Oh, what injustices are committed in the name of education! Let me assure you, the name-dropping in which I partake is wholly an effort to produce passable/readable writing and not a seedy attempt to promote those establishments of which I personally hold a favorable opinion. Therefore, allow me to articulate, as White did, that I "have received no especial favors from them."[357]

All that having been said, a number of contemporary businesses currently play to the consumer marketplace's outdoor recreation niche. Every one of them, in one way or another, are derivatives of the model A&F(among others) pioneered at the beginning of the twentieth century. Cabealas, L.L. Bean, and Bass Pro Shop fit the bill most accurately. Although they certainly enjoy stark contrasts, these firms are notable for the spectacle of nature in which they utilize to market their products. Stepping into one of these stores, one is immediately struck at the amusement park/zoo-like quality they possess. Within their doors, spaces of material consumption and nature appreciation seemingly overlap. In truth, for all practical purposes the two become indistinguishable. Cabealas, L.L. Bean, and Bass Pro peddle their wares in an environment tailored to those

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[355] Stewart Edward White, *Camp and Trail* (New York: Outing, 1907), vii.
[356] Ibid.
[357] White, viii; But I would totally accept any "especial" favors if they were to be offered.

who would rather be out enjoying nature than in some cheap, pre-fabricated superstore buying equipment they will rarely, if ever, actually use.[358]

It is an interesting phenomenon that the majority of outdoor-oriented products sold today are only rarely used in the context of outdoor recreation. Sporting goods dealers do not necessarily market them as such and consumers do not necessarily purchase them with that purpose in mind. Products historically developed to fulfill a specific out-of-door function have permeated the material culture of everyday American life. This holds true particularly in regards to outdoor clothing and fashion.

While Cabealas, L.L.Bean, and Bass Pro sell products relating to a wide swath of outdoor recreation, other establishments have focused their business operations solely on outdoor apparel. Although they do not possess the same scope of the major outfitting firms, they still owe a debt to A&F in bringing outdoor apparel to the forefront of American fashion. Eddie Bauer, Columbia, the North Face, Patagonia, & Carhartt, to name just a few, were enterprises originally intended to fill very specific niches for practical outdoor clothing but have moved far beyond their original scope as consumers took notice of their quality products.[359] The above mentioned companys, among others,

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[358] For commentary on the advertising strategy of L.L.Bean in particular, check out Lisa Hickley's *Design Secrets: Advertising* (Gloucester, MA: Rockport Publishers, 2002), 70-73. It is also interesting to note that a major component of these firm's marketing consists of sponsoring outdoor-related television programs where their products are plugged and displayed incessantly, but often surreptitiously. This amalgamation of entertainment and advertisement is not new or unique to the world of commercial outdoor recreation, but hunting and fishing shows would probably not exist without the heavy-handed sponsorship of outfitting firms.

[359] Eddie Bauer began manufacturing sporting goods and outdoor apparel in the 1920's out of Seattle. During WWII he was commissioned by the U.S. Army to supply parkas and other gear to U.S. troops. Today you can buy the Eddie Bauer Edition of the Ford Explorer to let everyone know you both love the outdoors, and enjoy polluting it. The North Face and Patagonia originated as suppliers of mountaineering equipment and clothing in the 1960's and 70's, but have seen their popularity encroach on mainstream fashion as of late. Although now marketing to a wider clientele, Patagonia in particular has stuck to its ideological guns, largely thanks to its mountain-climbing, babe-magnet, and all-round badass of a CEO,

have purveyed a distinctive strain of taste in clothing best described as "wilderness chic." The "look" basically consists of employing the clothing and equipment of hiking, climbing, and mountaineering. While it may not be the dominate form of dress for most people, aspects of "wilderness chic" have seeped into the material culture of daily life.[360]

The widespread popularity of outdoor apparel and equipment speaks to the tremendous love Americans feel for both the environment and consumerism. What is especially interesting about outdoor retailers is the sheer amount of loyalty and affection their customers often feel for them. This affection seems to verge on worship in some cases. Customers of such companies as Patagonia and the North Face have no qualms about commercial logos appearing on their outdoor equipment; they wear it as a badge of identity of sorts. Owning wilderness equipment and wearing outdoor apparel is an important marker of identity for consumers wishing to affiliate themselves with a certain type of culture and a particular type of consumption. People use such materials as visible endorsements for an environmentally conscious lifestyle that they use to define themselves. Judicious in material consumption and mindful of the natural world, these consumers found a way to express their convictions through a form of consumption that emphasizes quality over quantity and responsibility over waste.

Yvon Chouinard. Check out his book: *Let My People Go Surfing: The Education of a Reluctant Businessman.* Although largely beyond reproach in their business operations, it is a shame that so many people who wear the North Face and Patagonia brands either do not know what the north face is or cannot find Patagonia on a map. Carhartt began as a manufacturer of work clothes back in 1889. Today it is still family owned and continues to produce some of the best quality clothing available. Interestingly, many people who have never worked a day outdoors in their life are firm disciples of the Carhartt brand. The label even became popular among inner-city "gangstas."

[360] From Nalgene water bottles, carabiner key-chains, hiking boots, and brand-name Parkas, the taste for products of practical outdoor use is ubiquitous. I do not even want to go into all the trucks, backpacks, and tuxedos manufactured in camouflage patterns. That would be opening up a pandora's box better left closed.

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