

# Urban Man Confronts the Wilderness: The Nineteenth-Century Sportsman in the Adirondacks

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In the nineteenth century American sportsmen discovered the wilderness and found there what seemed to be boundless opportunities for recreation as well as a source of spiritual regeneration.<sup>1</sup> During this period the Adirondack wilderness of northern New York enjoyed extraordinary popularity among men from eastern cities who came to the region's mountains and lakes to camp, hunt, and fish. The record of recreational camping in the Adirondacks begins roughly in the 1830's, when the field explorations of the New York Natural History Survey were bringing the first significant public attention to the existence of a huge, virtually untouched wilderness north of the Mohawk River.<sup>2</sup> Throughout the rest of the century (and right up to the present), as hundreds of books and journal articles told of the physical, intellectual, and spiritual joys of the sporting life in the Adirondacks, the region attracted increasing numbers of sportsmen.<sup>3</sup> The sporting narratives, circulated in a cultural atmosphere already thick with the Romantic trust in the beneficence and bounty of nature, created a public perception of the region as an immense wilderness resort where eastern men could spend their summer vacations hunting, fishing, and revivifying body and soul amid the unspoiled glories of sublime natural scenery.<sup>4</sup>

Yet most accounts of nineteenth-century camping trips in the Adirondacks show that the men who hunted and fished there for recreation, though eager to experience first-hand the adventure of intimacy with the wilderness and stirred by the Romantic impulse to find God in Nature, were nonetheless products of an urban and comfort-oriented society. These sophisticated New Yorkers and Bostonians, fresh from the drawing rooms of Washington Square and Beacon Hill, were unfamiliar with

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the wilderness and its ways. They fit the description given by Henry Adams in his *Education* of young men growing up along the eastern seaboard in the middle decades of the nineteenth century:

As a rule boys could skate and swim and were sent to dancing school; they played a rudimentary game of baseball, football, and hockey; a few could sail a boat: still fewer had been out with a gun to shoot yellowlegs or a stray wild duck; one or two may have learned something of natural history if they came from the neighborhood of Concord: none could ride across country, or knew what shooting with dogs meant.<sup>5</sup>

In other words Adams and men of his time and general social stratum got plenty of exercise but for the most part in a civilized though unorganized way. Hunting, fishing, and wilderness camping were as foreign to urban man of the nineteenth century as they are to most twentieth-century men—perhaps even more so. To make his stay in the wilderness tolerable the Adirondack camper depended on the woodcraft and hard work of locally hired guides, on huge quantities of imported civilized amenities in the form of camping gear and potables, and on the continuing capacity of the forest to withstand abusive exploitation. The city-bred sportsman came to the Adirondacks to rough it for a few weeks, but he made sure his experience was not too rough; he came to get close to nature, but he avoided getting too close.

Despite their lack of familiarity with wilderness and their reliance on guides and an abundance of gear, the sportsmen nevertheless depended on their Adirondack camping trip to help alleviate the anxieties caused by a society even then becoming commercial, fast-paced, and full of the stresses that we associate with contemporary life. Shooting an Adirondack deer, even from point-blank range, or catching an Adirondack trout, even where the trout would jump at any lure cast their way, or just relaxing on the shore of some placid Adirondack lake or drifting with the current down an Adirondack river provided a catharsis these men apparently sorely needed. As one Adirondack enthusiast put it, “I have generally gone into the woods weakened in body and depressed in mind. I have always come out of them with renewed health and strength, a perfect digestion, and a buoyant and cheerful spirit.”<sup>6</sup>

Not only did Adirondack campers trust nature to restore their faltering emotional stability, but they also packed with them an unbounded faith in the capacity of nature to take care of their physical needs as well—in the form of venison and trout for food and pleasure and in the Adirondack shanty or lean-to constructed out of the living timber of the forest itself. Although there were explicit state laws concerning how the Adirondack sportsman could hunt the white-tailed deer and how many he

could kill, it was not unusual for a hunter to kill, by legally prohibited means, a dozen deer in a few weeks, only a fraction of which were used for food. Even though the Adirondack moose became extirpated around the time of the beginning of the Civil War, one of the dominant themes in accounts of Adirondack camping trips is of the infinitude of nature's resources.

To examine further the motives and responses of the nineteenth-century Adirondack camper, we should take a close look at a typical camping expedition. The descriptions of these trips number in the hundreds, and it is easy to recognize the elements common to most. Of these many accounts none is so eloquent as that of Ralph Waldo Emerson, whose poem, "The Adirondacks: A Journal Dedicated to My Fellow Travellers in August, 1858," commemorated a trip taken to the Adirondack wilderness by a group of Concord-Cambridge notables including, besides Emerson, the scientist Louis Agassiz, James Russell Lowell, and the artist and journalist William James Stillman.<sup>7</sup> Having arrived by wagon at Martin's Hotel on Lower Saranac Lake, the party hired guides and guideboats—one of each for each sportsman, except that Stillman acted as Agassiz's guide—and set out for the wilderness.<sup>8</sup>

The sportsman brought with him all his personal gear, including clothing, blankets, gun—either a rifle or a shotgun—and a fishing rod and flies. Nearly every author of a book on the Adirondacks felt obligated to provide a detailed list of necessary gear as well as the usually ignored warning against packing too much.<sup>9</sup> Since everything had to be stowed in each man's guideboat and since it all had to be transported over the carries (in the Adirondacks one never says *portage*) which connected the hundreds of miles of interlocking lakes and rivers, one was wise not to include too much gear in his duffel. But the sportsman, expecting his guide to do the carrying, seldom denied himself any extra comfort or convenience.

At a general store on the edge of the wilderness, with his guide's instructions, the sportsman made his final purchases—pork, flour and meal for dredging trout and for making primitive breads and cakes, crackers or some other hard bread, coffee, tea, and condiments. The guides prepared all the food once the trip began; the forest was expected to provide most of the fare, in the form of venison and trout. The guide furnished cooking gear, eating utensils, and, most important, the guideboat.<sup>10</sup>

The only piece of indigenous craftsmanship produced by the Adirondacks, the guideboat was designed to provide efficient transportation over the area's many lakes and rivers; to be light enough for one man to

carry; to be sturdy enough to hold two men, their gear, and often a 200-pound buck; and to be powered by one man rowing. Building a guideboat required—and still does for the few remaining guideboat craftsmen—many weeks of time-consuming, laborious attention, involving tiny cedar planks and thousands of tacks and screws. The stem and stern are made from the natural curve of the spruce knee, that is, from the part of the trunk where the roots join the base of the stump. The twenty or so ribs are also fashioned from spruce knees. Thus one important distinction between the guideboat and the canoe is that the ribs of the canvas or wooden canoe are steamed and then bent to form the necessary curve, while the guideboat's ribs are naturally curved and therefore stronger. The thin, quarter-inch planks of the hull, usually white cedar or pine, are fastened with tacks and screws to the frame formed by the ribs and keel.

A further difference between the canoe and the guideboat is that while the canoe is paddled, a guideboat is rowed, from either of two positions. If only one man was in the boat, he rowed from the middle, facing the stern as in any rowboat. When a guide was rowing a client, he rowed from the bow, still facing the stern, with the sportsman in the stem facing forward. Thus the guide provided all the locomotive power. His client did handle a paddle, but it was only for steering. He was thus free to admire the scenery and take the odd potshot at unlucky loons and ducks. Guideboats were also equipped with wooden yokes to fit over the shoulders of the guide at the carries; these looked very much like the yokes used by farmers to carry pails of maple sap at sugaring time and may have developed from them.<sup>11</sup>

Emerson's party of ten sportsmen and their guides set out from Lower Saranac and rowed their way to the point where the outlet of Follensby Pond enters the Raquette River. They then rowed up the outlet, and, according to Emerson's poem,

Northward the length of Follansbee [sic] we rowed,  
Under the low mountains, whose unbroken ridge  
Ponderous with beechen forest sloped the shore.  
A pause and council: then where near the head  
Due east a bay makes inward to the land  
Between two rocky arms, we climb the bank,  
And in the twilight of the forest noon  
Wield the first axe these echoes ever heard.  
We cut young trees to make our poles and thwarts,  
Barked the white spruce to weatherfend the roof,  
Then struck a light and kindled the camp-fire.

Emerson's facility with iambic pentameter was more reliable than his sense of direction: a glance at the USGS Long Lake quadrangle, on

which Follensby Pond lies, shows that the only direction one can row from the outlet is south.<sup>12</sup>

Otherwise his description of the establishment of an Adirondack camp is accurate, though brief. Arriving at a likely spot, the sports sat around while their guides constructed a shanty or lean-to facing the site selected for the campfire. They built a frame out of whatever saplings were handy and thatched the sides, back, and roof with fir, spruce, or hemlock boughs or with sheets of spruce or hemlock bark. The bark shelters were no doubt the better. To obtain the bark the guides cut a circle around the base of a tree and then another as high as they could reach. A vertical cut was then made joining these two horizontal incisions. Next a knife or axe blade was forced into the long vertical cut, and the bark was peeled away from the tree. Needless to say, stripping the bark like this killed the tree; by 1895 it was illegal to bark any tree on state land.<sup>13</sup>

Inside the lean-to, or tent in case the party was carrying one, beds were made of piles of balsam or hemlock boughs, on which were stretched blankets or shawls. Fishing rods, creels, rifles, kitchen gear, and other pieces of equipment were scattered about inside the shelter or hung from the branches of the surrounding trees. With a base camp thus established, the sportsmen were free to spend their time hunting and fishing—as long, that is, as it was not raining. And as anyone who has camped in the Adirondacks knows, rain is more than common. During storms the sportsmen expected their guides to entertain them with songs and stories about adventures with wolves and mountain lions, both of which, at that time, still inhabited the Adirondacks. The sportsmen had a special need, sensed by the guides, to be told that the Adirondacks were full of dangers. They wanted to believe that their camping trips, in addition to their recreational side, involved an element of peril. These were city men, whose daily lives were anything but physically dangerous, and tales of encounters with savage carnivores, in the very forest surrounding them, added a dash, however apocryphal, of adventure to their Adirondack vacation.<sup>14</sup> The guides knew better than to tell their clients what they undoubtedly knew—that wolves and mountain lions absolutely never attack men.

But the rain does stop falling occasionally in the Adirondacks, and on sunny days the sportsmen occupied themselves with a regimen of fishing and hunting. During most of the nineteenth century, sport fishing meant one thing—fishing for brook trout with wet flies. Although anglers occasionally trolled for lake trout at marked buoys where the guides scattered bits of food to guarantee the presence of fish, the true goal of the avid sportsman was the brook trout, caught with a wet fly. Developed by gentleman fishermen in England in the Middle Ages and designed to sink in

the water when cast, the wet fly was becoming popular with sport fishermen in the United States at just the time when the Adirondacks were starting to attract anglers. When American fishermen began using artificial flies, they naturally adopted English patterns, usually “hackles,” or flies without wings and generally without tails. Later, when American flies started to evolve away from English patterns, they became “fancy flies,” or flies bearing no resemblance to any American insect but being instead the product of the creator’s imagination and his estimation of what might look like an attractive tidbit to an American trout. As one would guess, there were endless debates among fishermen over the relative merits of various flies. Many Adirondack anglers carried a wide assortment of fancies, even though Joel T. Headley, author of a popular mid-century book on camping in the Adirondacks, recommended carrying only red and brown hackles. Dry flies, designed to skip over the water’s surface, were not invented until late in the century.<sup>15</sup>

The hunters were after white-tailed deer—the animal that came to symbolize in the minds of most sportsmen the wildlife of the Adirondacks. Actually, however, the original Adirondack wilderness supported a relatively small deer population. The closed canopy of the mature, primordial forest allowed little sunlight to penetrate to near the ground, and thus the growth of new buds and shoots—essential for deer—was negligible. But when logging operations began to reach the central Adirondacks in the second half of the century, the character of the forest changed. In those days lumberjacks took out only the big logs, leaving on the ground highly inflammable piles of brush and branches. Forest fires often succeeded logging operations, and thus promoted a sudden increase in available new growth and a consequent explosion in the deer population—all this just as hunters were beginning to come to the Adirondacks for sport.<sup>16</sup>

There were two main methods, with variations, of bagging the white-tailed deer—hounding and jacklighting. The former involved setting hounds out into the woods, hounds trained to pick up the scent of deer and drive them to water, where the guides and their clients were waiting in boats. After the deer had swum well into a lake, the guides would row to within shooting distance and keep close until the hunter had killed the deer. Once in the water, the deer had little chance of survival: a well-rowed boat can always catch a swimming deer. If the hunter was a wretched shot, as many apparently were, the guide could grab the deer’s tail and hold on while his client blasted away.<sup>17</sup> When the shooter was unable to achieve even this degree of marksmanship, the guide could beat the deer over the head with an oar and then cut its throat with his knife.<sup>18</sup> For obvious reasons, hunting deer with hounds was not every-

one's idea of fair play. As Charles Dudley Warner, who camped often in the Adirondacks, put it, "The dogs do the hunting, the men the killing."<sup>19</sup>

In jacklighting the sport and his guide set off in their boat after dark and coursed along the shore of a lake or pond, looking for deer drinking or feeding on the littoral aquatic vegetation. The key to this brand of hunting was the jacklight or torch, placed on a stick standing in the bow of the boat. Behind the light was a piece of bark or a reflector to prevent the light from shining on the occupants of the boat. Thus any deer seeing the light could not see the men behind it. A deer, spotting a bright light after dark, moreover, is mesmerized by it and unless startled will stand perfectly still, entranced by the inexplicable light. The only trick for the guide and sport was to remain as quiet as possible while rowing up close to the deer and for the hunter to fell the beast with his first shot: in jacklighting there was no second chance.<sup>20</sup>

Among the respective adherents of jacklighting and hounding there raged a bitter and long-lasting debate over the relative sportsmanship and humaneness of each style of hunting. Each side accused the other of viciousness and waste and of being unable to hunt without the unfair advantage of either a jacklight or dogs. One anti-jacker asserted that jacklighting was like "carrying a lantern, any dark night, through a frontier pasture, and shooting the first unlucky cow that chances to stand in the path."<sup>21</sup> Anti-jackers further complained that many deer were wounded by jacklighters who, because of the darkness, were unable to pursue their prey into the woods; these wounded deer, maintained the anti-jackers, died in the forest and were never found by their killers. The anti-hounders in turn, painted a bloody picture of frantic deer harried by snarling dogs and blown to smithereens by hunters holding shotguns a few inches from the deer's head. And each side accused the other of killing too many does and thus condemning to starvation any unweaned fawns. In general, it is easy to agree with Warner: "Hunting the deer in the Adirondacks is conducted in the most manly fashion. There are several methods, and in none of them is a fair chance to the deer considered."<sup>22</sup>

In the attitudes of the Adirondack hunter toward deer—anthropomorphic, sentimental, exploitative—we can see all the ambiguities and confusions of the nineteenth-century urbanite's attitudes toward nature and his place in nature. The hunters continually spoke of noble bucks, attributing to them all sorts of human characteristics and describing them as monarchs of a wilderness domain, yet the same sportsmen spilled the blood of noble bucks and does with appalling energy. Hunters saw the exploitation of the deer as a gentleman's right and exercised this

right with abandon seldom encumbered with concern for the law, yet some hunters feared lest the Adirondack deer herd suffer from hunting pressure too great for its numbers. And the ridiculous advantage—jacklight or dogs—which most Adirondack hunters required to bag a deer illustrates their incompetence in the woods and their willingness to employ whatever technological or other leverage they could dream up in their efforts to make their stay in the wilderness comfortable and entertaining.

The Adirondack deer symbolized the goodness of nature as well as its bounty. It appeared to be a gentle, intelligent, harmless creature, whose life in the wilderness, so far as the hunters knew, was easy and untroubled. Its bovine brown eyes, delicate form, and vegetable diet contributed to an image of the deer as one of God's perfect creatures living in the natural paradise of an untouched wilderness where God had established a timeless balance among all His beasts. The sportsman detested the carnivorous animals like wolves and panthers because these species appeared to be vicious and out of place in the paradise that nature was supposed to be, but the deer, herbivorous, apparently at peace with its fellow creatures, appealed to the nineteenth-century mind as typical of the goodness inherent in the natural world.<sup>23</sup> The anthropomorphic, sentimental view of the deer, of course, is still with us.

Yet nature was there to be exploited, and while the sportsman may occasionally have been aware of the paradox in his sentimental attitude toward the deer and his simultaneous impulse to eat it for dinner, this perception seldom kept him from hunting. Thus Joel T. Headley experienced some regret over having killed a buck driven to a lake by dogs but justified his sport by invoking a primitive form of the doctrine of the survival of the fittest: after the deer was dead, Headley

raised him by the horns, and towed him slowly along toward the shore. The excitement of the chase was over, and as I gazed on the wild, yet mild and gentle eye of the noble creature, now glazing in death, a feeling of remorse arose in my heart. I could have moralized an hour over the beautiful form as it floated on the water. The velvet antlers . . . gave a more harmless aspect to the head than the stubborn horn, and I almost wished to recall him to life. It seemed impossible that, a few minutes before, that delicate limbed creature was treading in all the joy of freedom his forest home. How wild had been his terror, as the fierce cry of the hound first opened on his track!—how free and daring his plunge from the rock into the wave! How noble his struggles for life. But the bold swimmer had been environed by foes too strong for him, and he fell at last, where he could not even turn at bay. The delicate nostril was relaxed in death. and the slender limbs stiff and cold.<sup>24</sup>

Nor did the hunter feel that his use of dogs or a jacklight to secure his wilderness supper made his hunting anything less than sporting. Every

hunter assumed that his method was fair and humane but that whatever appealed to someone else might, if not legally regulated, kill off the Adirondack deer herd. Thus we see the further paradox that most hunters believed in the infinite capacity of nature to supply their own needs but also in the imminent danger of the herd's extinction if other hunters were allowed to go on wasting deer. It was true that deer were being wastefully hunted: many deer shot by nighttime jacklighters did limp off to die in the woods. But as long as the lumbering operations continued, the deer population increased.

Nature was not always able, however, to keep up with the demands that sportsmen placed on her. The seven men who formed the Piseco Trout Club in 1842, for example, in only nine summers, fishing for an average of less than nine days each year, took from Lake Piseco, in southern Hamilton County, over 6000 pounds of trout. In one twenty-four hour period in 1844 one man caught over forty-four pounds of brook trout at a single hole. Even if we allow for a certain amount of fish-story exaggeration in these figures, they tell a tale of horrible waste. Little wonder that when the club disbanded in 1852 one of the reasons for dissolution was the indication of an incipient scarcity of trout.<sup>25</sup> The attitude of sportsmen toward the natural resources of the region was essentially proprietary, founded on an innate faith in their infinitude. The deer, the fish, and the timber were there to be used by man, and little lasting concern was evinced by the average sportsman over the possibility that nature might run out. Throughout the second half of the nineteenth century deer were being slaughtered by the hundreds by summer jacklighters and left to rot on the shores of Adirondack lakes. The bark was stripped from spruce and hemlock trees to build temporary shelters with no thought given to the consequent death of the trees. In nearly every account of hunting and fishing expeditions to the Adirondacks in the nineteenth century is an implicit, yet pervasive assumption of the inexhaustibility of nature.

But the sportsman never really felt at home in the wilderness. Although nature was bountiful and benign, the sportsman depended on an insulating barrier of technology and civilized comforts to make his camping trip pleasant. He felt constrained to set up a little island of civilization in the wilderness to keep himself from being overwhelmed by the vastness of nature, by an environment in which he perceived himself to be somehow out of place. Thus although the Romantic temperament encouraged him to seek spiritual satisfaction in the wilderness, his experience as a city-dweller made it virtually impossible for him to feel psychologically comfortable in the setting to which the cultural atmosphere of the age sent him.

To try to reconcile the conflict inherent in the impulse to seek spiritual regeneration in the wilderness and the sense of alienness which the nineteenth-century sportsman almost inevitably felt in the Adirondacks, he brought with him both real and psychological mementos of the civilized world he pretended to leave behind. These were important both to keep him physically comfortable and, more important, to prevent his feeling that his connections to home life were severed. He brought with him civilized artifacts like neckties and champagne to keep up appearances, and he applied a civilized vocabulary to his wilderness campsite and activities to make them seem less hostile. Ordinary pursuits, like eating a meal, were described in elevated language, and special civilized amenities were kept on hand to avoid the sense of living in an uncouth or barbarous way. Thus one wilderness meal was described as

a royal dinner—venison broiled, roasted and fried, pork and beans, a course of finer game consisting of frogs' hind legs, capped off with a dessert of pancake and rice pudding, coffee, cigars, whiskey, brandy, and a delicious glass of West India Shrub, the recollection of which still makes the teeth water. We finish up the day with a game of whist.<sup>26</sup>

Another chronicler of an Adirondack camping trip noted that his party referred to its bark shanty as the "hotel" and to their eating area as the "dining saloon."<sup>27</sup> Of course, there is an element of humor here, but beneath it is an indication of the importance of maintaining civilized forms.

The efforts of the sportsman to accommodate himself to the wilderness are strikingly portrayed by Arthur Fitzwilliam Tait, an English artist who camped and worked in the Adirondacks during the Civil War and for many years thereafter.<sup>28</sup> In "A Good Time Coming" (1862), we see the sportsman wearing a necktie and well-cut clothes easily distinguishable from the rough shirts and trousers of the guides. The campsite represents an isolated pocket of civilization surrounded by an untouched wilderness. Behind the sport is the typical bark shelter, jagged pieces of bark drooping over its front. At his feet lie all sorts of civilized paraphernalia: pots and pans, jugs, baskets, and eating utensils. While the sport peacefully watches a guide frying a mess of trout, he pours himself a cup of champagne. That the champagne is to be drunk from a tin cup rather than from crystal measures the extent to which the sport is willing to sacrifice the comforts of civilization during his stay in the wilderness.

But although the sportsmen were unable to leave behind them their reliance on civilized comforts, in the wilderness they clearly perceived something unavailable in their native cities.<sup>29</sup> The rising popularity of camping in the Adirondacks can largely be attributed to the Romantic



“A Good Time Coming” (1862), Arthur Fitzwilliam Tait. Reproduced by courtesy of the Adirondack Museum, Blue Mountain Lake, New York.

faith in the redemptive powers of nature to restore the vigor of the weary mind and body of urban man. The hymns sung to the recreative powers of the Adirondacks seem endless. The Reverend William Henry Harrison Murray, author of one of the most popular books on camping in the Adirondacks, recounted a dubious story about a young man dying of tuberculosis who was taken to the Adirondacks, laid in a guideboat, and rowed into the wilderness. A month or two later, after breathing the healthy Adirondack air, he emerged from the forest sixty-five pounds heavier, robust, bearing on his own shoulders the boat that had carried him into the wilderness.<sup>30</sup>

Not only did the Adirondacks offer a cure for man’s physical ills, but they were a source of spiritual regeneration as well. In language reminiscent of the natural pantheism of Wordsworth or Emerson, the author of an 1860 book on an Adirondack camping trip speaks of finding God in nature:

The wilderness is one great tongue, speaking constantly to our hearts; inciting to knowledge of ourselves and to love of the Supreme Maker, Benefactor, Father. Here, with the grand forest for our worshipping temple, our hearts expanding, our thoughts rising unfettered, we behold Him, face to face.<sup>31</sup>

Finally, the Adirondack camper saw the wilderness as a place where he could relax. Although he may have felt uncomfortable in the wilderness, he nonetheless recognized that he was away from the strictures and restraints of civilized society—a society he often described as sinister and repressive—from which the Adirondack camping trip provided a therapeutic escape. Camping on the shores of Upper Saranac Lake, one Adirondack writer observed,

Far away was the world with all its darkening sorrows and corroding cares. Here, I thought, would I abide and forget that world, that torturing, maddening world—here close to the heart of nature.<sup>32</sup>

Complementary to the notion that the urban world was sinister was the concomitant perception of the wilderness as innocent and unsophisticated. In the wilderness the sportsman had the opportunity to be like a child again. Thus descriptions of the joys of shedding the responsibilities and burdens of adulthood appear often in Adirondack sporting narratives. At Emerson's Follensby Pond campsite the sportsmen

fancied the light air  
That circled freshly in their forest dress  
Made them to boys again.

And another Adirondack writer saw the wilderness as a place where “the soul rejoices in its liberty and again becomes a child in action.”<sup>33</sup> As Warner noted, “All this virginal freshness invites the primitive instincts of play and disorder.”<sup>34</sup>

Camping in the Adirondacks in the nineteenth century was an escape from the commercial, urban life even then coming to typify American society. For many people from the eastern cities, the Adirondacks represented their only hope for a few weeks of relaxation away from the demands of their quotidian lives. Although they were unable to leave behind them their dependence on the civilized amenities and forms to which they had grown accustomed and although they abused the wilderness and wasted its resources, they found in the Adirondacks a temporary escape from a society they increasingly perceived as sinister and spiritually empty. But their enjoyment of the wilderness was often measured by the extent to which they could control it, to which they could apply a limited technology without being aware of the pressures of a truly technological society. Thus their importation of civilized ways and tools, as part of their efforts to reject briefly the society which produced them, contains a certain irony. Even while these sportsmen extolled the virtues of primitive life in the wilderness, their reliance on the benefits of technology, along with their ignorance of woodcraft and their abuse of

nature, marked them as products of an urban, sophisticated society. This irony, however, is apparent only to twentieth-century hindsight; the sportsman in Tait's "A Good Time Coming" may have surrounded himself with civilized comforts and he may have spent the day killing deer chased by dogs, but he is clearly having—and expecting to continue having—a good time.

## Notes

1. The standard account of the birth of the American appreciation of wilderness is Roderick Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967), see especially pp. 44-83. See also Hans Huth, *Nature and the American* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1957), pp. 54-57.
2. In 1837 a group of scientists associated with the Natural History Survey led the first recorded ascent of Mount Marcy, the highest mountain in New York. News of this accomplishment drew Charles Fenno Hoffman—poet, journalist, and novelist—to the Adirondacks to see this wilderness for himself. His letters to the *New York Mirror* constitute the earliest response of a sportsman-tourist to the central Adirondacks. On the Marcy climb see Russell M. L. Carson, *Peaks and People of the Adirondacks*, ed. Philip G. Terrie (reprint; Glens Falls, New York: Adirondack Mountain Club, 1973), pp. xliii-li, 53-60. Hoffman's letters to the *New York Mirror* are in the issues for Sept. 23, 30; Oct. 7, 14, 21, 28; and Dec. 16, 1837. These later became part of Hoffman's *Wild Scenes in the Forest and Prairie* (London: Richard Bentley, 1839; and New York: Colyer, 1843), pp. 1-122.
3. For a comprehensive listing of Adirondack literature, including that which shows the popularity of the region in the nineteenth century, see Dorothy A. Plum, comp., *Adirondack Bibliography* (Gabriels, New York: Adirondack Mountain Club, 1958), and Dorothy A. Plum, comp., *Adirondack Bibliography Supplement, 1956-1965* (Blue Mountain Lake, New York: Adirondack Museum, 1973).
4. Nash, pp. 61, 103, 116; Huth, pp. 81, 96-98, 110.
5. Henry Adams, *The Education of Henry Adams*, ed. Ernest Samuels (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1973), p. 38. This passage was brought to my attention by Professor Bernard Mergen, to whom I am grateful for many helpful suggestions offered during the preparation of this article.
6. S. H. Hammond, *Wild Northern Scenes; or, Sporting Adventures with the Rifle and the Rod* (New York: Derby and Jackson, 1857), p. x.
7. Ralph Waldo Emerson, "The Adirondacs (sic): A Journal Dedicated to My Fellow Travellers in August, 1858," *May-Day and Other Poems* (Boston: Ticknor & Fields, 1867), pp. 41-62. Subsequent quotations from Emerson are from this poem. On this camping trip see also William James Stillman, *The Autobiography of a Journalist*, 2 Vols. (Cambridge: Riverside Press, 1901), 1, pp. 239-281.
8. William F. Martin began building his hotel on Lower Saranac in 1849; it soon became one of the best known hostelrys in the Adirondacks: Alfred Lee Donaldson, *A History of the Adirondacks*, 2 Vols. (New York: Century Co., 1921), 1, pp. 292-304. On the allocation of guides in Emerson's party see Stillman, 1, pp. 246, 250.
9. See E. R. Wallace, *Descriptive Guide to the Adirondacks*, appended to H. Perry Smith, *The Modern Babes in the Woods; Or, Summerings in the Adirondacks* (Hartford: Columbian Book Co., 1872), p. 432.
10. For example, see F. S. Stallknecht and Charles E. Whitehead, "Sporting Tour in August, 1858," *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Weekly Newspaper*, 6 (Nov., 1858), 378: "Our outfit consists of a small tent, two guns, three fishing rods, a good supply of pork, biscuit, tea, sugar and condiments suited to our particular fancies, tin cooking utensils and dishes." Or see Hammond, pp. 256-57: "We had tin plates, knives, and forks, with us, also a tea kettle, tin cups, and tea of the choicest quality, sugar, pepper, salt, and pork."
11. Kenneth Durant, ed., *Guide-Boat Days and Ways* (Blue Mountain Lake, New York: Adirondack Museum, 1963), *passim*; "Adirondack Guideboat a Work of Art," *New York Times*, Feb. 2, 1975.
12. For further examples of Emerson's disorientation in the Adirondacks as well as a scholarly analysis of his poem see Paul F. Jamieson, "Emerson in the Adirondacks," *New York History*, 39 (July, 1958), 215-37.

13. E. R. Wallace, *Descriptive Guide to the Adirondacks: Revised and Enlarged* (Syracuse: Watson Gill, 1895), pp. 476-77.
14. For example see Thomas Bangs Thorpe, "A Visit to John Brown's Tract," *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, 19 (June-Nov., 1859), 174-75.
15. Joel T. Headley, *The Adirondack; Or Life in the Woods* (New York: Baker and Scribner, 1849), p. 25; see also Charles Eliot Goodspeed, *Angling in America* (Boston: Houghton, 1939), p. 119; Kenneth M. Cameron, "Adirondack Fancies," *Adirondack Life*, 3 (Spring, 1972), 12.
16. C. W. Severinghaus and C. P. Brown, "History of the White-Tailed Deer in New York," *New York Fish and Game Journal*, 3 (July, 1956), 136.
17. Alfred B. Street, *Woods and Waters: Or, the Saranacs and Racket* (New York: M. Doolady, 1860), p. 190.
18. T. Addison Richards, "A Forest Story," *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, 19 (June-Nov., 1859), 318.
19. Charles Dudley Warner, "The Adirondacks Verified: A-Hunting of the Deer," *The Atlantic Monthly*, 41 (April, 1878), 524.
20. For typical descriptions of jacklighting see Thorpe, p. 175; Hammond, pp. 92-93; Headley, pp. 184-89; or Street, pp. 82-93.
21. C. Hart Merriam, *The Mammals of the Adirondack Region* (New York: Press of L. S. Foster, 1884), p. 134; see also William F. Fox, "Report of the Superintendent of Forests on the Adirondack Deer," *First Annual Report of the Commissioners of Fisheries, Game and Forests* (Albany, 1896), pp. 172-73.
22. Warner, p. 523. The debate over the proper way to hunt deer in the Adirondacks can be followed in the pages of *Forest and Stream*, one of the most widely circulated sporting journals of the late nineteenth century. Almost any volume of this journal from the last three decades of the century will provide several editorials on Adirondack deer. For example, see Vol. 24 (1885), 2, 21, 41, 81, 101, 162, 181, 221, 266, 305, 365, 405, 425, 445, 485.
23. For a particularly maudlin example of the anthropomorphic attitude, see Warner, pp. 525-29, wherein this otherwise rather cynical observer of the Gilded Age describes tearfully how a doe sacrificed herself to save her fawn from hounds and hunters.
24. Headley, pp. 140-41.
25. Henry L. Ziegenfuss, "Piseco and T Lake Falls," *Forest and Stream*, 18 (Feb. 16, 1882), 44-45.
26. Stallknecht and Whitehead, p. 394.
27. Thorpe, pp. 170-71.
28. Warder H. Cadbury, "Biographical Sketch" in A. F. Tait: *Artist in the Adirondacks* (Blue Mountain Lake, New York: Adirondack Museum, 1974), pp. 9-10.
29. On the growing perception of the American city as repressive and sinister, see Morton and Lucia White, *The Intellectual Versus the City* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1962), especially chapters 3 and 4.
30. William Henry Harrison Murray, *Adventures in the Wilderness* (Boston: Fields, Osgood and Co., 1869), pp. 13-14. Because of this and other stories Murray's book set off a rush for the wilderness in the summer of 1869. Murray is generally credited with doing more to popularize camping in the Adirondacks than any other single person; see Donaldson, 1, pp. 190-201; see also Warder H. Cadbury, "Introduction" to the Adirondack Museum's reprint of *Adventures in the Wilderness*, ed. W. K. Verner (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1970), pp. 11-75 [sc, pagination italicized]; and Nash, p. 116.
31. Street, pp. 95-96.
32. *Ibid.*, p. 12.
33. Headley, pp. ii-iii
34. Warner, "The Adirondacks Verified: Camping Out," *The Atlantic Monthly*, 41 (June, 1878), 756.