

National Congress Of Old West Shootists

Period Camping Resources

Containing:

Period Camp Rules

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by Mike Tatham

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NCOWS Period Camping Resources

As the Period Correct (PC) camping area is a major part of the NCOWS Nation Match experience, the Authenticity Committee has established the following rules:

1. All structures in the PC camping area must be appropriate to the era 1865-1899
2. All residents of the PC camping area must be attired as if they were on the firing line (NCOWS level one or better).
3. All non-PC items must be kept out of sight and/or well covered.

A Period Handbook for Overland Expeditions

[The Prairie Traveler by Randolph Barnes Marcy](#)

Primitive Camping – NCOWS Style

by Mike Tatham

The term “Primitive Camping” is really a bit of misnomer. It is usually used to describe the “Period Correct” camping area of an event. This area is separate from the “Modern Camping” area. The modern camping area is for RVs and nylon tents.



The “primitive” area, when done correctly, will resemble a 1880s boom-town. These tent cities popped up at the end of the tracks as the railroads pushed west (or south, north or even east from the Pacific coast). They also sprang up at every new mining discovery.

I was asked to coordinate the primitive camp for the 2008 NCOWS National Shoot. I accepted the challenge/responsibility. I and my partners from the Kansas Vigilance Committee (KVC) arrived on site at the West Side Sportsman’s Club Monday evening. [The KVC contingent to the ’08 Nationals has over 150 years combined experience primitive camping. This covers the mountain man/fur trade 1820-1840, military encampments 1812-1850, as well as the boom towns of the post civil war era.] Like most boom towns, the personal residence tents went up first; followed closely by a saloon. [At its peak the 2008 Nationals boom town reached nearly twenty structures.]

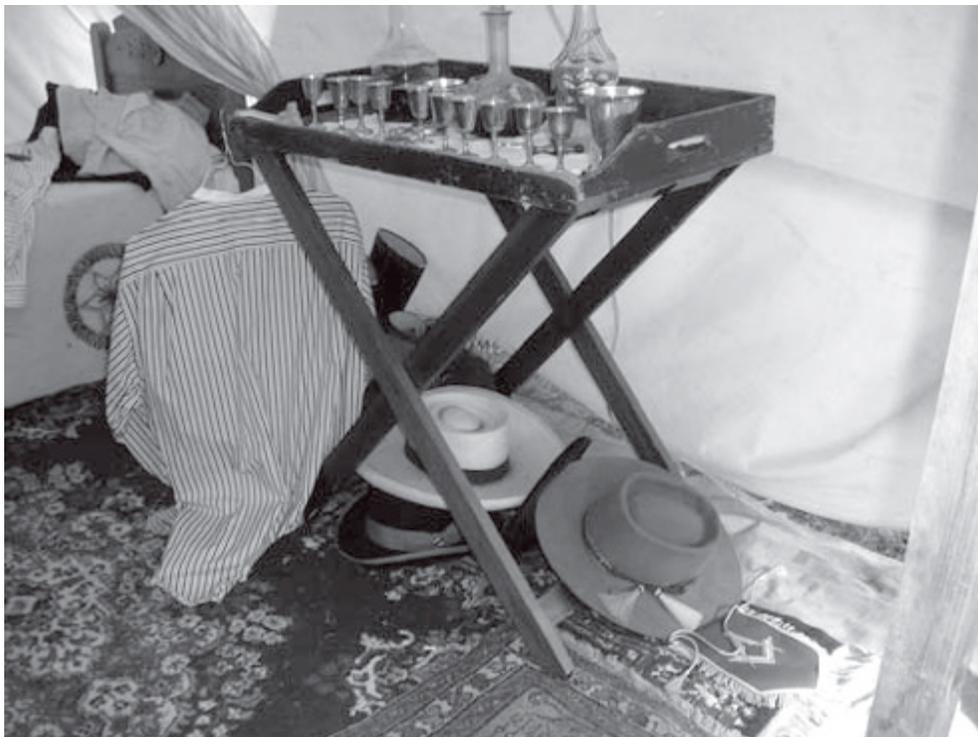


The personal tents reflect the occupation (persona) of the owners. The Doctor has a wall tent with a partition separating his sleeping area from his office-examining room-parlor. Being a man of means his tent is well furnished with a bed, tables, chairs, even a well stocked field bar with the floor covered with a Persian rug. [Now you understand what I mean when I say The term "Primitive Camping" is really a bit of misnomer.]



The mule packer and the horse trader opted for pyramid or "miners" tents. These tents are easy to set up and are nearly storm proof. The pyramids come in various sizes and all but the smallest have room for 2 or more people and their gear.

A German explorer/sportsman resided in a 6' X 9' X 6'2" common tent. (This tent is also referred to as a wedge or A tent.) In this small structure he managed to fit a cot, his personal gear and a small arsenal.



My quarters consisted of a 9' X 9' wall tent, a "Marcy bed" (1859), a "Galton table" (1856), a "Directors chair" (1863), a "Marcy table" (1859), a field bar (circa 1830), a couple of trunks, a couple of brass oil lamps and a cooler cleverly hidden in a rough hewn wood crate.

The cooler box brings me to the most important aspect of primitive camping. If you have an item that is not appropriate for the time period; Keep It Out of Sight. This is extremely easy to do: Cover it with a blanket or tarp or stash it in your tent.

Most primitive campers use modern camp cots &/or sleeping bags. This is perfectly acceptable: Just keep your tent flaps closed.

Probably the most important piece of gear, after acquiring a tent, is a bed/cot. Besides providing a comfortable and restorative sleep, a cot gives the camper more room by allowing gear to be stashed underneath. This is the best place to hide modern gear. By throwing a blanket over the bed and allowing it to hang over, nylon luggage and hard rifle cases become invisible. This technique can even hide a nylon and aluminum cot and a sleeping bag.

After the cot/bed, put together a cowboy bedroll. This is just a couple blankets, with an optional sheet, wrapped in a piece of canvas. [For the truly authentic and adventurous you only need a cowboy bedroll. In moderate temperatures and dry weather, this is a great way to go.]



Two additional items that really set off a primitive camp are authentic chairs and lighting. By the time a man reaches his thirties, sitting on the ground has lost its charm and a chair becomes an important piece of camp furniture. For the NCOWS era, it is hard to beat a "director's chair." They were patented in 1863 and show up in many Civil War photographs. Bow backed Windsors and "ladder-backs" are certainly boom town appropriate, though they are a challenge to pack.

After sundown, period lighting really makes a dramatic impression. [See The Shootist cover, Nov.-Dec. 2007.] Old style kerosene lanterns are readily available at your neighborhood big box discount store. These run about \$ 5.00 and old ones are still around for a modest price. A lantern does more than just add to the camp's atmosphere. It helps you find your way home after dark; either as a PC flashlight or as a porch light for your tent.

So if you want to maximize your old west / NCOWS experience; get yourself a tent, cot, chair, lantern and a cowboy bedroll and join us "die-hards." A complete kit will cost less than a week's stay at a decent hotel. That means your second stay at the Nationals Primitive Camp will save you more than your kit cost. [A good tent will last you a lifetime. I have one that I've been using for twenty years.] We hope to make the "Primitive Camp" at next year's National Shoot even bigger and better

Ten Commandments of Primitive Camping

1) Thou shall not:

Have loaded fi rearms in camp.

2) Thou shall not:

Leave any non-period correct item out and observable [Especially vehicles.]

3) Thou shall not:

Wear non-period correct clothing in camp.

4) Thou shall not:

Leave the lid up/open on any pit-toilet, out house or Porta- Potty [They are designed and built with a vent pipe to allow the fumes (smell) to go up and out. This will only work with the lid closed.]

5) Thou shall not:

Drink beverages from a modern container.

6) Thou shall not:

Sit in someone else's chair (unless invited to do so).

7) Thou shall not:

Mooch. [Self reliance is the Cowboy Way. If you are in need, someone will offer assistance.]

8) Thou shall not:

Over stay your welcome. [When your host turns in, do like wise or move the party.]

9) Thou shall not:

Leave your trash in someone else's camp.

10) Thou shall not:

Leave the camp area in any condition except better than you found it.

An Authentic & Compact Camp with Style

by Mike Tatham

Last April, the Kansas Vigilance Committee (K.V.C.) hosted the “Two Gun” Regional Shoot. For this event I set up my well appointed tent and lived out of it quite comfortably for four days. My friend Dr. Bob (Robert Dorian) set up his very impressive camp next to mine. Between the two of us, we could have opened a small furniture store. A new acquaintance, Richard Gimbert (aka Major Matt Lewis) was suitably impressed with our style of camping. However, when he assisted Bob in breaking camp and loading the truck and trailer, he was daunted by the task. He was left with some doubts about the effort put into living in such luxury in the field. (Between the two camps were, two beds, half a dozen tables, nearly a dozen chairs and even a bath tub.)



The K.V.C. contingent to the Nationals consisted of 8 people, two dogs, seven tents and an RV. Bob and I again lived very comfortably in our “Taj-Ma” tents for a week. But I was still thinking about the mixed impression that we gave to Richard. So I decided to do an experiment.

In October the K.V.C. had its annual fall shoot at Duck Creek Dave’s Spread (Dave Sielert). For this event I decided to see how much of my normal well appointed camp would fit in to my Honda. (The reader should keep in mind that my Honda is a 1988 CRX. Read sub-compact. Small.)



My wall tent was out of the question because of the nine foot ridge-pole. So I went with my 10 x 10 pyramid, which only requires an eight foot center pole. Adding two 6 foot poles for the awning, ten tent stakes and a hammer, my lodging was set. By the way the earliest mention of a pyramid tent is the 1841 book Rocky Mountain

Adventure by Rufus Sage, and they are still available in the 1897 Sears Catalog.

For my bed I opted for the Gold Medal Folding Bed, patented in 1890. (Known by most people as an army cot and mentioned by Richard Harding Davis in his Notes of a War Correspondent.) Upon the cot I laid my tick and two sheep skins. Then I topped it off with my bedroll of canvas, linen sheet, one cotton Mexican blanket and one wool blanket.

To make my tent a home required table and chairs. The most compact table that I have is one made from a description in The Art of Travel by Francis Galton. (This neat little book was originally published in 1856.) The table is comprised of a set a legs like a common camp stool, only a little taller. The top is two boards 1 x 10 x 24 inches, that are attached along the long edge with two small brass hinges. When folded up the table takes up just a little more room that a T.V. Tray.

My camp chairs for this outing were one camp stool and a canvas and wood folding contraption known the



world over as a director's chair. (This sit-upon device was patented in 1863.)

The living quarters were now complete. Now I set about putting the rest of the weekend kit together. Two small trunks for shooting supplies and a small brass lamp, a carpet bag for clothes and pistols, saddle bags containing cooking/mess gear and a canteen. Additional space was taken by three long guns and a small brass lantern (thanks Kayleen).

Not only did all of this fit in to the Honda, I could still see out of the back. The moral of the story is that a person can go to an N.C.O.W.S. shoot, set up a camp that is as documented as an "Originals" outfit, live comfortably, and get all your gear in a small car.



Cowboy Lullaby

The coyotes sing a lullaby
The wind carries the tune
The stars are the only light
On a moonless night
For a lonely cowboy
A bedroll, six gun, and saddle
Are all he owns
The wild creatures
Are the only friends
For a lonely cowboy
Wind, rain, and time
Have etched a portrait on his face
A portrait of pain and
loneliness
The world passes him by
His lifestyle will soon die
But on he rides
Rides for the brand
And rides for his pride
Till he dies
To be buried
Somewhere on the prairie
Where the coyotes can sing
His final lullaby

By Matthew Bohach