

The continuing growth in the popularity of camping has been accompanied by the appearance in the market place and in the campgrounds of many new varieties of camping equipment used by park visitors for overnight shelter. The campground can no longer be looked upon as the preserve of the tent and, to a lesser extent, of the house trailer. These traditional denizens of the campgrounds have been joined by tent trailers, campers, camping vans, car top sleepers, station wagon attachments and others. The rapid increase in the variety of shelter types has been accompanied by some remarkable changes in form and size of the tent itself.

Park planners and administrators have been aware of the varying nature of camping equipment for some time. They have realized that the changes will have profound effects upon the design of campgrounds and upon the services required by camp visitors. As a first step towards understanding the extent of any shifts in the use of camping equipment in Canada, a sample survey of all campgrounds in 15 of the 17 National Parks of Canada was carried out during July and August of 1963. The sample consisted of a count taken sixth day of all overnight equipment in all campgrounds.

In general, the study revealed that while the tent is still the favorite type of overnight accommodation it is used, however, by only 60% of the overnight visitors. One quarter of the campground patrons used house trailers, seven per cent had tent trailers and the remainder had a variety of other equipment. It should also be noted that nearly one quarter of the tents exceed 9 feet by 12 feet in dimension. Detailed figures illustrate the diversity of overnight accommodation used in National Parks campgrounds.

CAMPING EQUIPMENT TRENDS in the NATIONAL PARKS of CANADA ~ A STUDY

by GORDON D. TAYLOR •

photo: Canadian Govt. Travel Bureau



Campgrounds at Black Brook Cove, Cape Breton Highlands NP, Nova Scotia

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Table No. 1

Camping Equipment Counted - 1963
Fifteen National Parks

| Type of Equipment | No. of Units | Percentage |
|---------------------|---------------|-------------|
| Tents | | |
| 9'x12' or smaller | 21,385 | 44.2 |
| Larger than 9'x12' | 7,837 | 16.2 |
| | <u>29,222</u> | <u>60.4</u> |
| Cabin Trailers | | |
| Less than 16' | 7,451 | 15.4 |
| 16'x20' | 3,458 | 7.2 |
| More than 20' | 1,445 | 2.9 |
| | <u>12,354</u> | <u>25.5</u> |
| Other Types | | |
| Tent trailers | 3,568 | 7.4 |
| Camping vans | 1,103 | 2.3 |
| Piggy back campers | 1,110 | 2.3 |
| Car top sleepers | 171 | 0.4 |
| Station wagon tents | 332 | 0.7 |
| All others | 501 | 1.0 |
| | <u>6,785</u> | <u>14.1</u> |
| Total | 48,361 | 100.0 |

Although the tent is the most common form of accommodation, it is of greater importance in the parks located in the Atlantic Provinces (1) than it is in those situated elsewhere in Canada. In the seven National Parks in the Western Cordillera, tents made up 54.7% of campground equipment. Contrast this figure with the 72.3% recorded in the Atlantic region and the 58.2% at the three parks (2) in the Prairie Provinces. At Point Pelee National Park in Ontario tents accounted for 69.3% of the shelter units. These figures indicate that the tent increases in importance from west to east.

Another tendency in campgrounds that requires further study is that of campers to provide their own shelter and

facilities for cooking and eating. In counts of 502 campsites this summer at Fundy National Park, 50 per cent of the occupants had provided themselves with adequate shelter. In another study at Banff National Park in 1963 just over 82 per cent of the campers stated that they had a portable stove of some type with them, seven per cent stated that they did not have such a stove, and the remaining 11 per cent did not answer the question.

There are, then, regional differences in the popularity of types of camping equipment. Why these differences exist is not explained in the data available. Two possible explanations occur and are offered as conjectures only at this time. One thought is that the difference may be due to climatic and topographic reasons. More protection is needed against harsh climatic elements in the high mountains of the west than it is in Central or Eastern Canada. Or, it may be that the modern revival of camping and outdoor travel has its home on the west coast and that the fads and fancies of camping spread out in a wavelike manner from a western cultural centre. It is obvious that much more knowledge is needed before a full explanation can be offered.

Camping is apparently no longer the time honoured preserve of the tent. Trailers have been popular for many years and it is evident they are still on the increase. A major change is taking place in the growing use of a variety



*Camping at Cape Breton Highlands NP, Canada
photo: Canadian Govt. Travel Bureau*

of other shelter types. There is as yet no indication of how rapidly the relative balance between equipment types is changing. There is, however, an awareness that changes are taking place. Further study will be required before the nature of the changes can be fully appreciated. In addition a full study of the nature of the regional differences will be needed. As part of that study the permanency of these differences and the relative rates of change within regions will require answers.

In our initial study we attempted to determine if the style of campground, as determined by site density, utility services and location had any influence on the type of equipment used. Other than certain obvious differences that occurred where road conditions or campgrounds design did not allow house trailers, the results were inconclusive. In some cases the small size of the sample prevented meaningful comparisons, in others the differences between campgrounds may not have been great enough to have any significant influence.

The purpose of these studies is to assist in the design of campground facilities that will accommodate the variety

of shelter types used by the travelling public. Campground design should reflect the present relationships between tents, trailers and other types, and the regional differences in this balance. When some indications of the trends over time can be shown, it will then be possible to give greater assistance to the designers than can be done at the present time.

Even with present knowledge, imperfect and sketchy as it is, certain guide lines for the future can be set out. First of all, if the tent continues to decrease in relative popularity and indications are that it well may do so, the basic campsite consisting of a parking space for a vehicle and a designated area for a tent may join the Model T Ford in the vintage class. Much more consideration will have to be given to sites based on a "drive-through" access pattern. Secondly, with the increasing variety of shelter types, sites should be able to accommodate most forms of camping equipment and hence will have to be more adaptable to changing conditions than are some of the currently popular designs. Thirdly, the increasing use of personal shelter for cooking and eating means that more than one piece of equipment is being put up in the campsites. The cleared area devoted to camping may have to be made larger in order to accommodate larger tents and the additional shelter and to protect the site itself from excessive wear and tear. In addition the provision of kitchen shelters in camp-



*Camping in Fundy National Park, New Brunswick, Canada
photo: Canadian Govt. Travel Bureau*

grounds will have to be reconsidered in light of any trend towards greater self-sufficiency on the part of campers. And finally the popularity and versatility of portable stoves may allow us to do away with outdoor fireplaces for cooking purposes.

The social function of a campfire as a meeting place and as an integral part of the camping experiences cannot be met by a liquid fuel burner. One or more central fire pits within the campground would fulfil these social needs and at the same time probably effect a saving in fuel costs.

Camping is by no means a stable phenomena but is one that appears to be in a state of constant change. Park administrators must have an awareness of the nature of these changes and a willingness to adopt new design and new methods in the provision of campground facilities.

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- (1) New Brunswick, Newfoundland, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island.
 - (2) Elk Island, Prince Albert, Riding Mountain.
 - (3) House trailers and piggy back campers were not included in these counts.
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