

# Frontiersman Camping Fellowship

Wilderness Study Handbook



## THE FRONTIERSMAN ERA

The time period for the frontiersman began when the first Europeans set foot in the new world and continued into the late 1800's. The time period for the purpose of the Frontiersmen Camping Fellowship is from the mid 1700's through approximately 1840, just after the last great Rendezvous.

The frontiersman was a hearty, loyal individual who did not rely on someone else or chance. The frontiersman would probably have with him a few days' supply of food. This would consist of jerky, made from beef or venison, some rice, or maybe some dried beans, some corn meal and some tea. His cooking gear would be a tin cup or tin corn boiler and maybe a tin skillet if he carried a slab of salt pork. He may have had a canteen for water, however, mountain man Joe Meek said "no mountain man worth his salt carried a canteen", but Joe Meek trapped the Rocky Mountains and rode a horse or mule and went thirsty a lot of times. His shelter would probably be a piece of canvas, his wool blanket or just made from natural materials. The frontiersman was an able-bodied man that planned for his survival.

During advancement to Buckskin, the candidate should have already decided the type of frontiersman and the time period that he will portray. His outfit and equipment would reflect what was appropriate for the selected character such as; mountain man, long hunter, settler, voyageur, Courier des Bois, professional, soldier or others authentic to the period. He should also be able to describe the daily life of his character. This should include what his occupation was, who he would interact with, how he traveled and other related historical background. The persona of his chosen character should be developed and assumed with as much accuracy as possible.

## REQUIREMENTS TO BE PERFORMED

1. Set up a primitive shelter using only natural materials found at the Vigil site. Two working snares, traps or deadfalls must be constructed.
2. The proficiency of a hawk will include: How to care for and sharpen a hawk. Tell why the hawk was a valuable tool to the frontiersmen. Try to stick the hawk 10 times.
3. The proficiency of a knife will include: How to care for and sharpen a knife. (Sharp enough to shave hair.) Tell why the knife was a valuable tool to the frontiersmen. Tell about different kinds of knives that were used on the frontier. (Butcher, skinning, patch, bowie, etc.) Try to stick the knife 10 times.
4. Demonstrate proficiency in loading, firing and safety of a muzzle loader including:
  - a. Recite the FCF black powder safety rules from memory.  
Safely load a black powder muzzle loader rifle.  
Archery can be substituted for this level of testing. Archers must still recite the FCF black powder safety rules from memory. All bow shots must be taken from 15 yards using the same target and scoring as the muzzle loader.

5. Build a fire using charred cloth and flint steel. (No steel matches, steel wool, or prepared fire starters.) This fire will be used for cooking the meal and for the all-night Vigil. This fire will be located at the shelter site.
6. Cook and eat a frontier style meal consisting of the items given to him using primitive methods and limited utensils.
7. Keep a campfire burning through the night
8. Blow a hunter's horn hourly at pre-set intervals.

Each of the requirements is scored as part of a 100 point system. It is necessary for the Wilderness candidate to score at least 80% in order to successfully complete the skills portion of the Vigil. The scoring details are discussed more thoroughly in the "Conducting the Vigil" section. It is the design of the Wilderness Vigil for a man to discover his weaknesses.

With the proper administration of this very unique experience, the candidate will also realize that his greatest strength is in the power of the Holy Spirit. During the Vigil, the Holy Spirit very often will affect a life changing experience in the candidate.

There is no failing in the wilderness concept, although some may need to brush up on skills, develop some new expertise, and try again at a later date.

In all this, including an unsuccessful attempt at passing the Wilderness Vigil, God is well able to perform the good work he has begun. There is no letting down of the standards, compromises or exceptions. For in so doing, a precious brotherhood is defiled, and an avenue of holy unction change is closed.

## WILDERNESS GEAR CHECKLIST

A thorough inspection will be made of the gear brought by the candidate. Candidates are only permitted the following items on the Vigil:

1. Complete Outfit. This may include a capote, robe or coat like that which would have been used by a frontiersman. No modern camping gear, plastic poncho or other non-period gear is permitted. The Vigil must be kept authentic to the period of the American frontier.
2. Flint, steel and charred cloth. No matches, metal match or any form of lighters is allowed.
3. Black powder rifle and complete shooting pouch. If bow is used Long/or/primitive, laminated is approved with archery equipment.
4. Hunter's blowing horn with the metal mouthpiece removed.
5. Analog pocket watch. Watches with alarms, hourly chimes, or beepers are not allowed.
6. Knives; primitive throwing, general purpose or skinning
7. Tomahawk
8. Wilderness pouch
9. Small trek fire iron set
10. Tin cup / Billy cup
11. Period canteen and fork
12. Bedroll. No tents, plastic sheeting, nylon tarps or sleeping bags
13. Haversack or Knapsack or Wicker-type pack basket to carry all supplies in list.



# Wilderness

## How to Section

## PREPARING YOUR KNIFE

Your knives must be properly sharpened, clean and of good quality and workmanship. Modern styled knives that are not representative of the frontiersman era are not acceptable. This includes all knives with plastic handles, double-edged blades, military survival blades or inferior quality knives that may pose a safety risk to others. At least one of the knives that is part of your outfit must be sharp enough to shave hair (your hair). Any knife on your person must be properly sheathed to prevent injury to yourself or others. It is suggested that a throwing knife, a small bowie or butcher knife, and a small patch knife be included in your wilderness gear. However, one sharp throwing knife would be sufficient if it can meet the sharpness test.

Practice regularly with your throwing knife during your time before Vigil. Increase your practice sessions especially during the week of your Wilderness Vigil. Proficiency is a must.

## PREPARING YOUR HAWK

Tomahawks used in FCF must be sharpened to tool grade sharpness. Nicks, low spots and uneven surfaces must be removed from the blade portion of the tomahawk. The blade should be honed with a stone to provide a finished edge. Tomahawks must have a sheath that covers the blade.

Decorating the handle can bring additional uniqueness to your outfit. Trimming with leather fringe, tacking and spiral burning can also bring attention to your outfit.

Practice throwing at a 15-24" round. Try to stick your tomahawk consistently without missing.

## PREPARING YOUR SHOOTING GEAR

Each candidate must have their own shooting gear and muzzleloading rifle. Sharing shooting gear or muzzleloaders will not be permitted. Protective eye and hearing gear must also be in your shooting bag.

Shooters must have their own cleaning gear, ball remover or other tools necessary to shoot successfully without aid from any other candidate.

It is advisable to go to a shooting range in your area to sight in your muzzleloader well in advance. Practice off-hand shots at a target from 25 yards away. Your proficiency level must be adequate enough to hit near center of a 3" circle from this distance.

If bow is used Long/or/primitive, laminated is approved with archery equipment. Practice at 15 yards away.

## SHELTER BUILDING TECHNIQUES

Building a shelter from natural materials that are available from the Vigil site requires considerable knowledge of shelter building techniques. Protecting you and your gear from the elements takes work and planning. Green bows from evergreen trees laid over an A-frame tripod will stop rain, wind and snow. Large pieces of bark also work well over any framework. Large clefts in rock formations provide natural shelters. Tightly stacked limbs against a rock face or A-frame can provide adequate shelter from the elements. Crawling into depressions under large evergreen bows that are low to the ground is a way to gain quick shelter. Twine is a good item to carry with you on your Vigil for lashing up a tripod and A-frame. A sharp tomahawk will help your efforts tremendously.

## TRAPS SNARES AND DEADFALLS

Preparing trigger mechanisms before arriving at the Vigil site will permit you to get your required traps, snares or deadfalls set up quickly before nightfall. Simple hooks whittled from hardwood and drilled with an eyelet make great trigger devices. Sharpened hardwood dowels can be used as balance triggers for simple stone deadfalls. Studying a survival handbook available from the Library and give you other ideas for trigger devices. Piano wire makes a great snare slip loop. Twine is a necessary item for attaching most trigger devices to limbs or small trees.

## WILDERNESS COOKING TECHNIQUES

Roasting game over a fire requires a good bed of coals for even cooking. Controlled heat from coals prevents the meat from burning and avoids much of the smoke taste from a smoldering log. Baking meats or vegetables takes too much time and is not a good idea for the Vigil meal.

Many methods can be used to support game over a fire pit as it is cooking. Shoving a large limb into the cavity of the game is a very simple method. Leveraging the limb against a large rock and anchoring the end with another large rock works but can be a little hard to adjust to the proper height.

Outside layers or skins of fruits or vegetables can be used as insulators from direct fire. Items can be cooking within or on top of the skins like cooking in a small pot.

Natural edible items can include pine needle tea, mint tea, dandelion tea or greens, wild onion, miners lettuce, berries or pine nuts. Study reference guides for your area that provide detailed information about seasonal and common locations of growth. Be careful not to mistake poisonous varieties from the edible ones. Some wild edibles are toxic during certain times of the year.

## FIREBUILDING

Keep fires small enough to conserve fuel. A fire that must burn all night will consume large quantities of wood. Start gathering your firewood early before nightfall. Burning the ends of long limbs and continuing to feed them into the fire is a good strategy. Having sufficient quantities of char cloth is an absolute. Test your char cloth before packing it in with your gear and keep it dry. Practice using differing types of natural tinder. Dead pine needles gathered from the base of pine trees makes good tinder for your birds nest. Safely pack your flint and steel where you can find it in the dark.

## RECOMMENDED READING

Voices from the Wilderness - by *Thomas Froncek*

The Book of Buckskinning I - by *Rebel Publishing Co.*

The Book of Buckskinning II - by *Rebel Publishing Co.*

The Book of Buckskinning III - by *Rebel Publishing Co.*

The Book of Buckskinning IV - by *Rebel Publishing Co.*

The Book of Buckskinning V - by *Rebel Publishing Co.*

The Book of Buckskinning VI - by *Rebel Publishing Co.*

The Book of Buckskinning VII - by *Rebel Publishing Co.*

Wilderness Rider - The Story of Noah Fidler - by *Leonard T. & Carolyn E. Wolcott*

Mountainman Sketch Book - Vol. I - by *James A. Hanson & Kathryn J. Wilson*

Mountainman Sketch Book - Vol. II - by *James A. Hanson & Kathryn J. Wilson*

The Longhunter's Sketchbook - by *Dr. James A. Hanson*

The Frontier Scout and Buffalo Hunter's Sketchbook - by *James A. Hanson*

The Trade Rifle Sketchbook - by *Charles E. Hanson III*

Voyager's Sketchbook - by *James A. Hanson*

Fur Trade Cutlery Sketchbook - by *James A. Hanson*

### Contact Information:

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Phone