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## The changing cultural geography of the frontier: national parks and wilderness as frontier remnant

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## **Chapter 15**

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### **The Changing Cultural Geography of the Frontier: National Parks and Wilderness As Frontier Remnant**

**C. Michael Hall**

The notion of frontier is an integral part of the New World cultures of Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the United States. The frontier was the boundary between wilderness and civilized nature. However, with the “closing of the frontier” in 1890s America and other New World settler societies, the following cultural crisis led to a desire to retain the frontier as a cultural artifact, which became transformed into a recreational and tourism commodity in the form of national parks.

Therefore, this chapter examines the concept of frontier from a cultural perspective and focuses on the manner in which national parks were initially created and have continued to be maintained as a way of saving elements of the frontier for recreational consumption. The chapter first discusses the concept of frontier with reference to the role of the Turner thesis for national

cultural identity. The chapter then examines the creation of national parks in New World countries and the role played by tourism and the need to maintain a frontier with nature. The chapter concludes by noting the contemporary cultural symbolism as frontier lands for recreationists and tourists seeking adventure and relationships with commodified nature.

The frontier is the boundary between civilization and wild nature and in the frontier societies of the New World, the frontier was a moving boundary which symbolized the dominance of mankind over nature. Wilderness is the land beyond the frontier. However, while for much of the history of western civilization, wilderness has constituted a landscape of fear and loathing, in recent years it has become something not only to be preserved but even an important tourism resource. The national park which conserves wild nature may therefore be interpreted not only as a physical boundary between civilization and wild nature, but may also serve as a symbolic reference point to the central role of the frontier in Western society.

To set aside an area of land as wilderness is as representative of cultural values as is the conversion of land to agriculture. Understanding the values of wilderness and its preservation may therefore provide insights into the manner in which national parks constitute representations of the frontier through their use and management. The value of wilderness is not static. The value of a resource alters over time in accordance with changes in the needs and attitudes of society. Ideas of the values of primitive and wild land and the frontier itself have shifted in relation to the changing perceptions of Western culture. Thus, the purpose of this chapter is to examine the role of the frontier as an element in the attractiveness, or otherwise, of wilderness and the role that this may play in contemporary nature-based tourism. The discussion focuses primarily on the American experience of wilderness and the frontier and the contribution this has made to the establishment of national parks and certain outdoor recreation activities, but also relates these developments to other colonial societies' experiences of wilderness.

### **“The Howling Wilderness”**

The early European settlers in North America found themselves confronted by a harsh, forested environment, reminiscent of that of *Beowulf* (Wright, 1957). The forests were regarded as being a haven not for the settlers but for “primitive” Indians, wild animals and beasts. Michael Wigglesworth (1662 in Adams, 1966:1), a Puritan pioneer of New England, described the New World before him as

A waste and howling wilderness,  
Where none inhabited  
But hellish fiends, and brutish men  
That Devils worshipped

The Puritan attitude towards the forest wilderness set the tone for North American attitudes towards wilderness for the next century, while the biblical notion of a “howling wilderness” is also to be found in early nineteenth century Australian and New Zealand colonist descriptions of their antipodean new worlds (Hall, 1992). To the Puritans and other early settlers, the “howling wilderness” was as much a state of mind as a state of fact. Although the discovery of the New World had initially raised expectations that an earthly paradise did exist, it was soon recognized that any anticipation of a second Eden was unrealistic. The American wilderness was not a paradise. The wilderness was something to be “conquered,” “subdued,” or “vanquished.” If the settlers expected to enjoy an idyllic environment then it would only be created through their own toil. The pioneers were aware that transforming the wilderness into a pastoral idyll had biblical precedents. To many of the settlers, the conquering of the wilderness was as much a religious as a practical consideration. However, both spiritual and utilitarian attitudes were directed towards similar ends; the creation of a cultivated, well ordered landscape. As Count Buffon decreed, “wild nature is hideous and dying; it is I, I alone, who can make it agreeable and living” (in Glacken, 1967:663).

Pre-nineteenth century North Americans perceived the wilderness mainly in terms of two images—the religious and the utilitarian. The religious image of the wilderness was that of a desolate forest, inhabited by wild beasts and savages. A wild land that provided a challenge for the religious and a land in which God’s kingdom on earth could be created. The utilitarian image of wilderness conveyed the perception of wilderness as wasteland, a land that needed to be cultivated and ordered by civilized man in order to become bountiful and productive. These two images were not mutually exclusive, rather, they evolved and blended into a theme still present in contemporary Western perceptions and use of wilderness (e.g., Simmons, 1966; Short, 1991; Hall, 1992) and which laid the foundations for the development of Romantic visions of the land beyond the frontier.

### **The Romantic Vision**

In the intellectual climate created by the Romantic movement, wilderness, and untamed nature, lost much of their repugnance. “It was not that wilder-

ness was any less solitary, mysterious, and chaotic, but rather in the new intellectual context these qualities were coveted” (Nash, 1967:44). Mountains and wilderness which once were landscapes of fear now became panoramas of awe and admiration (Nicholson, 1959; Tuan, 1979; Honour, 1981). As an aesthetic category, the sublime dispelled the notion that beauty in nature was to be found only in the comfortable and well-ordered. Although some of the romantic landscapes, such as the Lake District in England, were actually human-modified, they symbolized the spiritual value of wild nature. Nature’s roughness and ability to inspire terror and horror came to be seen as a positive value (Pepper, 1984). The association of nature with religion reemerged as an important social and cultural force. The wilderness was pre-lapsarian and within the natural theology of this period it was assumed that through the spiritual vision of nature, man could draw closer to God. To the Romantics, the New World was perceived as a new Eden in which man could draw close to wild nature. A cult of the primitive developed in which native peoples and the frontiersman, untouched by the civilized hand of European man, became archetypal Romantic heroes. For instance, in the poem *Don Juan*, Lord Byron perceived Daniel Boone as a Romantic hero, not as a conquering pioneer. Contact with wilderness was believed to give man great strength and hardiness and an innate moral superiority over his more civilized counterparts (Honour, 1975), while the wilderness man’s erotic prowess allegedly made that of civilized man pale in comparison (Nash, 1967).

The European Romantic’s perception of nature and of the New World was exported to America where it became adopted by the intelligensia of the eastern seaboard. A Romantic attitude toward the wilderness gradually began to emerge. However, it was a perception held by those who already lived a comfortable, urban existence, rather than by the pioneer. A general appreciation of the positive virtues of nature and of the wilderness could only be developed after the conversion of some of the wild lands into a cultivated or semi-cultivated landscape and until this stage was reached, the pioneer was more concerned with survival than with appreciation (Tuan, 1974).

Nature became a manifesto for the transcendental movement and helped to inspire a generation of American artists and men of literature. Emerson’s treatise on nature provided a literary counterpart for the paintings of artists like Thomas Cole, Jasper Francis Cropsey, and Frederic Edwin Church, in which a distinctively American appreciation of nature and wilderness began to develop. As Talbot (1969:14) expressed it, “American landscape painting of the mid-nineteenth century was unique.” The virgin frontier that the American wilderness offered the artistic imagination became a subject matter in which the American artist could distinguish himself from his European

colleagues. The primeval quality of the landscape was far removed both in space and time from the European landscape in whose vision eighteenth-century American artists had sought to paint. The supposed moral superiority of the frontier primitive and virgin land provided an allegorical setting in which to cast the American landscape, newly set free from the bonds of colonialism. The importance of the early nineteenth century allegorical setting of wilderness cannot be overstated, as it was within this newly emergent set of attitudes that the first desires to preserve wilderness began. Wilderness came to be increasingly recognized as an essential part of the American cultural identity. As the landscape painter, Thomas Cole (1836 in Nash, 1970:727, 728) observed, "though American scenery is destitute of many of those circumstances that give value to the European, still it has features, and glorious ones unknown to Europe... the most distinctive, and perhaps the most impressive, characteristic of American scenery is its wildness." It is therefore perhaps of no great surprise that the first callings for the preservation of American nature came from an artist.

In May 1832, George Catlin, a student and painter of the American Indian, arrived at Fort Pierre in what is now South Dakota. Catlin "wanted to capture with brush and pen the grace and beauty of Nature before it was obliterated by the advance of civilization" (Nash, 1970:728). However, at Fort Pierre, he was shocked to discover that only a few days before his arrival a large party of Sioux Indians had traded fourteen hundred fresh buffalo tongues for a few gallons of whisky. "This profligate waste of lives of these noble and useful animals... fully supports me in the seemingly extravagant predictions that I have made as to their extinction, which I am certain is near at hand" (Catlin, 1968 (1832):7). Yet Catlin was convinced that "even in the overwhelming march of civilized improvements and refinements do we love to cherish their existence, and laud our efforts to preserve them in their primitive rudeness." The romantic and transcendental influences on Catlin's thought are revealed when he noted: "Such of nature's works are always worthy of our preservation and protection; and the further we become separated... from that pristine wildness and beauty, the more pleasure does the mind of enlightened man feel in recurring to these scenes, when he can have them preserved for his eyes and his mind to dwell upon" (1968 (1832):7).

Catlin found the waste of animals and humankind to be a "melancholy contemplation"; but he found it "splendid" when he imagined that there might be in the future "[by some great protecting policy of government]... a magnificent park", which preserved the Animal and the Indian "in their pristine beauty and wildness." "What a beautiful and thrilling specimen for America to preserve and hold up to the view of her refined citizens and the

world, in future ages! A nation's Park, containing man and beast, in all the wild and freshness of their nature's beauty!" Catlin's seminal call for "a nation's park" highlighted the new mood in America towards wilderness. Almost exactly forty years after Catlin's journal entry, President Ulysses S. Grant signed an Act establishing Yellowstone Park, creating the institution of which Catlin desired "the reputation of having been the founder" (Catlin, 1968 (1832):8, 9).

Catlin and the work of other artists helped to change the American perception of the value of wilderness. Indeed, it was in the field of literature that the biggest changes of attitude were occurring—a point of special importance, as the opinions conveyed in the books, journals and newspapers of the time by writers such as Emerson and Thoreau, would have the greatest impact on wilderness appreciation. For example, Emerson was significant in that he influenced American literature and culture to the point whereby the "history of nature" was "speaking through man, not men shaping nature" (Ziff, 1982:12), and therefore helped install wilderness as an integral part of American popular culture. Emerson's *Address Delivered Before the Senior Class in Divinity College, Cambridge* (1838, in Emerson, 1982) was regarded by Oliver Wendell Holmes as the American "intellectual declaration of independence" (in Ziff, 1982:12). Through Emerson and his followers, America developed its own appreciation of primitive frontier lands, distinct from that of Europe, that would result in the creation of an intellectual climate in which wilderness preservation and recreational use could be received with some sympathy by the public.

If Emerson provided the kindling for the establishment of an American wilderness preservation movement, then it was Henry David Thoreau who provided the spark. Inspired by the writings of Emerson, Thoreau continued to expound the transcendental viewpoint of nature in his writings and attracted an even wider audience. Although perhaps better known for his writings in *Walden* (1968a (1854)), some of the clearest indications of Thoreau's attitude to wilderness and nature are contained in the lecture *Walking* first composed in 1851. As Nash (1968:10) noted, *Walking* "is crowded with ideas about the significance of the American environment for patriotism, character, and culture." The opening sentence of the address highlighted the new ecological thinking of Thoreau: "I wish to speak a word for nature, for absolute freedom and wildness, as contrasted with a freedom and culture merely civil, to regard man as an inhabitant, or a part and parcel of nature, rather than a member of society" (1968b:10).

In this new intellectual climate wilderness, the land beyond the frontier, became more and more important, the workings of wild nature, rather than

the works of man, came to be seen as perfection. Wilderness, according to Thoreau, provided the spiritual home for the American people, towards which they should draw themselves and away from the gross materialism of the time. Wilderness therefore came to be regarded as much an intellectual experience as a physical entity. The spiritual values of wilderness, identified by Thoreau and the transcendentalists, led to the growth of demands to preserve the wilderness. To Thoreau, “wildness and refinement were not fatal extremes but equally beneficent influences Americans would do well to blend” (Nash, 1967:95). America’s future, Thoreau believed, lay in the physical and metaphorical wilderness frontier of the west. “The West of which I speak is but another name for the Wild; and what I have been preparing to say is, that in Wildness is the preservation of the World” (Thoreau, 1968b:11, 12)). A dictum that provided the inspiration over the next 150 years for the legislative preservation of wilderness.

### **Romantic Monuments**

The transcendentalists provided the intellectual legacy that laid the foundations for the preservation of wilderness in Western society. Americans gradually began to regard wilderness as being worthy of preservation because it was something that was held to be distinctly American and superior to anything that the Old World had to offer. Indeed, the relationship of settler to wilderness was seen as crucial to the formation of national identity.

Both Thoreau and Catlin, two of the main influences in the development of American artistic nationalism, had called for the preservation of natural areas. However, one of the main influences on wilderness preservation was the publication of George Perkins Marsh’s book *Man and Nature; or, Physical Geography as Modified by Human Action* in 1864 (Marsh, 1965). Marsh’s book contained two main theses. First, that when nature is left alone, it is in harmony. Second, that Mankind impoverishes nature. In an alternative interpretation of Genesis 1:28, Marsh (1965:36) argued that “the earth was given to him for usufruct alone, not for consumption, still less for profligate waste.” The intention of Marsh was to demonstrate the need to balance man’s use of the natural world. Influenced heavily by his observations in Europe, especially by the example of flooding caused by the clearing of forests in the Alps, Marsh identified major economic as well as Romantic arguments for the preservation of nature. In the second edition of *Man and Nature*, which was produced in the same year as the establishment of Yellowstone National Park (1872), Marsh recorded: “It is desirable that some large and easily accessible region of American soil should remain, as far as possible, in its



primitive condition, at once a museum for the instruction of the student, a garden for the recreation of the lover of nature, and an asylum where indigenous tree, and humble plant... and fish and fowl and four-footed beast, may dwell and perpetuate their kind" (in Nash, 1963:7).

Marsh identified America's long-term economic well-being as depending upon the maintenance of her renewable natural resources. However, recognition of the aesthetic or economic conservation dimensions of wilderness preservation were not of themselves sufficient to establish reserves. The first natural area national reservation to be set aside in the United States was the Arkansas Hot Springs in 1832. "It was not scenically important, and was reserved to the government" because the springs "were thought to be valuable in the treatment of certain ailments" (Ise, 1961:13). However, the reservation was not a "park" nor was it a wilderness area, yet like so many of the national parks that would be established, it did have tourism potential. Satisfaction of preservationist ideas would have to wait until 1864, with the creation of a park in the then remote Yosemite Valley in California. The reasons for the creation of Yosemite as a park are relatively obscure. On June 30 1864, President Lincoln signed a bill granting Yosemite to the state of California as a state park "for public use, resort, and recreation" (Nash, 1963:7).

Yosemite Valley is a spectacular glaciated valley with wild scenery which was compared more than favorably with the European Alps (Jones, 1965). The surrounding Cascade Range was described in 1857 as "mountain scenery in quantity and quality sufficient to make half a dozen Switzerlands" while William Brewer, a member of the California Geological described Yosemite Falls as the "crowning glory" of the valley (in Runte, 1979:19). Such views helped to reinforce the notion of American nature and wilderness as a source of national pride. It is therefore perhaps no coincidence that, on introducing congressional legislation in 1864 to grant Mariposa Big Trees and Yosemite Valley to the State of California for conservation, Senator John Connes of California assured his colleagues that the lands were "for all public purposes worthless, but... [they] constitute, perhaps, some of the greatest wonders of the world" (in Runte, 1977:71). Two streams of thought can be identified in Connes' statement. First, that lands would only be reserved if they had no monetary value in terms of timber, mining, grazing or agriculture. Second, that as nature's monuments, they are part of American culture and contribute substantially to national identity and deserve some form of protection.

Thoreau's metaphor of lumbermen murdering trees was frequently alluded to in response to the desecration of nature's monuments. However, the American democratic ideal also played a prominent part in attempts to prevent further desecration. Thoreau, observed that the private game and

forest parks of the European aristocracy were unsuited to the needs and ideals of America. “Why should not we, who have renounced the king’s authority, have our national preserves, where no villages need be destroyed, in which the bear and the panther... may still exist...our forests, not to hold the king’s game merely, but to hold and preserve the king himself” (Thoreau 1858:316–317). Similarly, Frederick Law Olmsted (1952 (1865):21) opposed the “monopoly... of the choicest natural scenes” by “a very few, very rich people.” Instead, he proposed that parks should be established to ensure that natural scenery was available to all the people. One early visitor to the region, Samuel Bowles, recognized that Yosemite might serve as a model for a national system of nature and wilderness reserves (Nash, 1967:107). Indeed, it was with the establishment of what is generally recognized as the world’s first national park, Yellowstone in 1872, that the political duty of government to preserve wilderness areas was established not only in the United States but elsewhere in the world as well.

### **The End of the Frontier: The Rise of Progressive Conservation**

The year 1890 was notable not only for the creation of Yosemite National Park, but also for an event that would have far greater impact on the popular consciousness of the United States—the closing of the frontier. The results of the census of 1890 indicated that for the first time, centers of population stretched out across the continental United States. This did not mean that vast, empty spaces did not exist, rather it indicated America was becoming increasingly characterized by industrialization and urbanization rather than by the pioneer. For two and a half centuries, “the frontier had been synonymous with the abundance, opportunity, and distinctiveness of the New World” (Nash, 1968:37). With the closing of the frontier, a form of cultural anxiety developed that focused on the need to retain links with the wilderness out of which the American nation had been created. The most eloquent expression of this occurred in the writings of the historian, Frederick Jackson Turner (Turner, 1920, 1966).

In Turner’s eyes, it was the wilderness which led to the creation of an American people, distinct in customs, traditions and values from the Old World whence they or their ancestors originally came. Wilderness provided for the “perennial rebirth” of the American character. According to Turner writing in 1893, the frontier, “the meeting point between savagery and civilization” was “the line of most rapid and effective Americanization”, while the advance of the frontier “meant a steady movement away from the influ-

ence of Europe, a steady growth of independence on American lines” (Turner, 1966:2,3,4). The loss of the frontier therefore meant the close of the “first period of American history” and the possibility of losing the “striking characteristics” that American intellect owed to the frontier (Turner, 1966:29, 28).

Turner’s frontier thesis struck a receptive chord in American popular culture as well as other “frontier” societies, such as Australia, Canada and New Zealand. The thesis united traditions of American nationalism noted above with respect to the transcendentalists such as Thoreau and Emerson, with popular, almost imperialist, perceptions of the need to conquer the landscape (Cross, 1970; Kearns, 1981). Reaction to the loss of the frontier manifested itself in two ways. First, the rise of progressive conservation in which the finite nature of America’s natural resources was recognized (Hays, 1957, 1959). Second, the reinforcement of the perception of wilderness having cultural and spiritual values for the American people and the consequent rise of what Nash (1966) described as “the wilderness cult”, elements of which, it may be argued, are still with us with respect to contemporary nature-based tourism.

The progressive conservation movement represented a “wise use” approach to the management of natural resources, and its conservation motives were economic rather than aesthetic in intent. Hays (1959) saw three agencies as being the product of the movement: the Bureau of Reclamation, the National Park Service and the United States Forest Service. However, as Clarke and McCool (1985:35) argued, “of the three, the Forest Service stands out as the most complete representation of the several concerns and issues that fueled the early conservation movement” in the United States.

Though the Forest Service was not founded until 1905, momentum for its creation had been building up in the two prior decades. Several bills relating to timber on public land had been introduced from the 1870s onwards, but in 1891 the President was given the power to set aside vast acreages in the public domain as forest reserves (Clarke and McCool, 1985). Both preservationists and progressive conservationists saw the *Forests Reserves Act* of 1891 as a means to protect wilderness areas. Preservationists, led by John Muir, wanted wilderness to contain no human activity that would be unsympathetic to the primitive nature of a wilderness area. However, progressive conservationists, led by the noted forester Gifford Pinchot and Theodore Roosevelt, wanted forest lands managed on a sustained yield basis and were therefore in favor of timber harvesting, the building of dams for water supplies, and selective mining and grazing, all in the name of conservation.

The first great fact about conservation is that it stands for development. There has been a fundamental misconception that conservation means nothing but the husbanding of resources for future generations. There could be no more serious mistake. Conservation does mean provision for the future, but it means also and first of all, "the recognition of the right of the present generation to the fullest necessary use of all the resources with which this country is so abundantly blessed. Conservation demands the welfare of the country first, and afterward the welfare of the generations to follow" (Pinchot, 1968 (1910):9).

Pinchot and the progressive conservationists advocated the "wise" use of natural resources, while the preservationists continued to focus on the aesthetic and spiritual qualities of forest wilderness. As Fernow (1896 in Nash, 1967:137) wrote in *The Forester*, "the main service, the principal object of the forest has nothing to do with beauty or pleasure. It is not, except incidentally, an object of esthetics, but an object of economics." Such a viewpoint was anathema to the preservationists. Muir believed that "government protection should be thrown around every wild grove and forest on the mountains" in order to preserve the "higher" uses of wilderness (in Nash, 1963:9). The problem which faced Muir and which exists to this day, is that the existence of high-quality wilderness is incompatible with productive forest management. However, Muir was but one influence on the "discovery" of wilderness in American popular culture. As Nash (1966) recorded, the period around the turn of the century was, par excellence, the time of the "cult of the wilderness."

With the closing of the frontier, many Americans searched for their national identity in the primitive. The romantic and transcendentalist perception of nature was appreciated with renewed vigor, especially by those who lived in the cities of the eastern seaboard. In a reversal of attitudes, the city gradually came to be seen as having a degrading affect on the virtues of American civilization, while wilderness and contact with nature was held as having a regenerative influence on the moral fiber of the American people. The sense of fear and terror, once only associated with nature's wilderness, increasingly came to be associated with the urban wilderness of the sprawling cities and their accompanying alienation (Hays, 1957). As Tuan (1974:111) noted, "the growing appreciation of wilderness, like that of the countryside, was a response to the real and imagined failings of city life."

Turner's frontier hypothesis received much support from Roosevelt who believed that wilderness promoted "that vigorous manliness for the lack of which in a nation, as in an individual, the possession of no other qualities can possibly atone" (in Nash, 1967:150). The importance of the frontier values

was also supported by the creation of hunting clubs such as the Boone and Crockett Club and mountaineering and walking clubs such as the Appalachian Mountain Club and the Sierra Club in the 1880s and 1890s (Jones, 1965; Sax, 1980; Manning, 1984). The wilderness cult represented a nostalgic attempt to regain America's lost past in the wilderness. However, the acclamation of the primitive was also matched by a desire to preserve monuments which had a national historical significance.

With an increased appreciation of the position of wilderness in American culture the Grand Canyon and Yellowstone assumed the mantle of national symbols. At the turn of the century, wilderness and natural landscape preservation became important as many Americans felt the need to retain cherished parts of former environments. Wild scenery enthralled Americans. Elaborate albums and books on wilderness were extremely popular. The success that had eluded Thoreau during his lifetime was reaped by his intellectual inheritor, John Muir, because it was "the context rather than the content of the respective philosophies [that] determined their popularity" (Nash, 1967:160) with the frontier as an essential element in the cultural context of conservation and appreciation of wilderness.

### **The Frontier In Contemporary Context**

The above discussion has highlighted the manner in which ideas of and relations to "the frontier" influenced the overall human-environment relationship in American society and, more particularly, the establishment of national parks and other forms of conservation. In the late twentieth century, the cultural history of the frontier is still extremely important in relation to contemporary tourism activity. Ideas of sustainability and nature-based tourism are extremely influential in terms of tourism policy and development, yet their historical antecedents and the cultural framework within which they occur had already been well established by the turn of the century (Hall, 1998). However, the significance of the cultural basis for tourist visitation to frontier and wilderness areas is given relatively little attention in the tourism literature.

A number of themes emerge in the analysis of the values associated with wilderness: experiential, mental and moral restorative, scientific and economic (e.g., Hendee, Stankey and Lucas, 1978; Hall and Page, 1999). Experiential values highlight the importance of the "wilderness experience." Given its essentially personal nature, the wilderness experience is extremely difficult to define (Scott, 1974). Nevertheless, aesthetic, spiritual and escapist

values, which are related to the cultural geography of the frontier and to strong elements of the “experience” which is commodified for the benefit of wilderness tourists. Indeed, no less a writer than the ecologist Aldo Leopold argued that the opportunity to re-live or imagine the experiences of pioneers or the “frontier” that formed national culture—a point reiterated in the Australian context by Hamilton-Smith (1980) and Johnston (1985) among others (also see Hendee et al., 1978; Hall and Page, 1999)—was an essential component of the value of wilderness and wilderness recreation.

Associated with the values of the wilderness experience is the idea that wilderness and contact with the frontier can provide mental and moral restoration for the individual in the face of modern civilization (e.g., Carhart, 1920). This theme values wilderness as a “reservoir for renewal of mind and spirit” and in some cases offers: “an important sanctuary into which one can withdraw, either temporarily or permanently, to find respite” (Hendee et al., 1978:12). This theme harks back to the biblical role of wilderness as a place of spiritual renewal (Funk, 1959) and the simple life of Thoreau’s *Walden Pond* (Thoreau, 1968a). The encounter with wilderness is regarded in the context of adventure based activities, as forcing the individual to rise to the physical challenge of wilderness with corresponding improvements in feelings of self-reliance and self worth. In this context, one might note the current phenomenon of the popularity of such television series as *Survivor*. As Ovington and Fox (1980:3) wrote: “In the extreme”, wilderness:

generates a feeling of absolute aloneness, a feeling of sole dependence on one’s own capacities as new sights, smells and tastes are encountered. . . . The challenge and the refreshing and recreating power of the unknown are provided by unadulterated natural wilderness large enough in space for us to get “lost” in. Here it is possible once again to depend upon our own personal faculties and to hone our bodies and spirits.

In contemporary society, the preservation of wilderness is regarded as an essential component in the scientific study of the environment and mankind’s impact on the environment. Furthermore, wilderness has increasingly come to assume tremendous economic importance because of the value of the genetic material that it contains. However, the multi-dimensional nature of the wilderness resource may lead to value conflicts over the use of wilderness areas. In particular, wilderness has importance as a tourist attraction for frontier communities. Yet while the overt tourism dimensions of frontier and wilderness tourism in relation to such issues as regional development are highlighted in the literature, the cultural underlay has been lost or ignored.

This chapter has sought to emphasize the notion of the frontier as culturally based. National parks and wilderness areas are therefore part of the changing cultural geography of the frontier, without which any discussion of frontier tourism must surely remain incomplete. Importantly for tourism in frontier regions, this chapter has also noted that the intellectual and spatial representation of the frontier is constantly changing. Therefore, any notion as to the future direction of frontier tourism development needs to be related to ideas of cultural change as much as to notions of the economic periphery.

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The national park which conserves wild nature may therefore be interpreted not only as a physical boundary between civilization and wild nature, but may also serve as a symbolic reference point to the central role of the frontier in Western society. To set aside an area of land as wilderness is as representative of cultural values as is the conversion of land to agriculture. Understanding the values of wilderness and its preservation may therefore provide insights into the manner in which national parks constitute representations of the frontier through their use and management. The value of Public, Social, and Political Context Part 17 Tourism Frontiers in Borderlands Chapter 18 Tourism in Borderlands: Competition, Complementarity, and Cross-Frontier Cooperation Chapter 19 Tourism and Culture Clash in Indian Country Chapter 20 The Changing Cultural Geography of the Frontier: National Parks and Wilderness as Frontier Remnant show more. About Shaul Krakover. Shaul Krakover is Associate Professor of Geography at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev. He is the author and editor of a number of books including Frontiers in Regional Development (1996 with Yehuda Gradus and Harvey Lithwick Western frontier life in America describes one of the most exciting periods in the history of the United States. From 1850 to 1900, swift and widespread changes transformed the American West. At the beginning of that period, a great variety of Native American cultures dominated most parts of the region. By the end of the era, the West had become a bustling society populated by new immigrants of all kinds. Historians sometimes define the American West as lands west of the 98th meridian, or 98° west longitude. This line of longitude runs through the middle of Texas and Kansas up through the east