

About ???? words

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## TOOLS FOR THE OUTDOORS

These may be new to you.

One man's sore thumb brought his voyage of discovery to a halt. Lieutenant Gustavus Doane was a tough character, by all accounts, and well qualified to guide a party of explorers through the Yellowstone country in 1871. What stopped him was "infernal agonies" from a deep inflammation of the type called a felon. Something had to be done, and his companions did it -- with a penknife. Two men held his arm down while a third inserted a blade in Doane's thumb and released the "corruption." Doane gave one shriek, then felt vast relief. Use of his right hand, however, was permanently impaired.

I learned about felons during a camping trip in Patagonia, which is a kind of Yellowstone at the other end of the world. Rods and flies were doing their job, but no one had told me how to protect my most important tools: hands. Cold water soaked my fingers when I stripped line, then dry air cracked my skin. A hangnail became infected, and its throbbing pain took my mind off the biggest landlocked salmon that will ever come my way.



The solution for this problem is called lip balm, but it is more useful for fingers. Before cracks can form and cause hangnails, you rub the waxy stick around the strip of hardened skin at the base of every fingernail. In the kind of climate that trout like best, you might need a rub every hour or so. Fortunately, the stuff is so easy to use that you don't need to miss a cast. My wife buys cuticle cream, but it is expensive and it takes time to apply. Lieutenant Doane could have carried a bacon rind, but rubbing its grease on exactly the right spot would have been a messy job.

#### Mr. Munson's boots

#### A walker's tools

When you walk far enough, good things happen. The stream may be crowded, down near the road, but if you follow its thin blue line far enough into the swamp, you will find what you are looking for. It's like that in the uplands, too. There may not be many birds around, but one is waiting somewhere and you keep after it, step by step towards sundown.

Being endowed with an active fantasy life and long legs, I have been putting one foot in front of the other since my first squirrel. Mind you, it would have been nice to shoot like Dan'l Boone or cast a fly like Charles Ritz. Hiking was what I could actually do, when my feet didn't hurt.

Boots were the problem. I kicked their uppers out of shape, sometimes within days. Modern hiking models with plastic



heel-cups fared no better than boots marketed for hunters. Mine was, to be sure, not a typical case -- more like a one-person laboratory for destruction-testing.

The breakthrough came with low-technology footwear designed for the U.S. military back in 1911. L.L. Bean sold me Engineer Boots built on the Munson last, and whoever Mr. Munson was, he must have done serious research on the 26 bones, 33 joints, and mazes of tendons, muscles, and ligaments in each human foot. The uppers were still in shape when I walked the soles off.

Since then, other boots have worked too -- moccasins by Russell and several pairs of Bean boots [] (the kind with leather tops and rubber bottoms). Here on the home place, with water in all directions, I alternate between five [] pairs of waders with hand-made [] rubber feet. They come from LaCrosse, Cabela's, [] and UniRoyal.[]

Bear in mind, though, that I don't go out of my way to try new kinds of boots. If you like to experiment, here are some suggestions.

Don't try to walk far in waders with molded plastic feet.

If you have boots with plushy interiors, put on gaiters before you hunt in tall grass. Otherwise awns will lodge in the foam padding and stratch your ankles.

When you try on boots in the shop, ask yourself two questions:

► Are your ankle and heel held securely? The rear of the boot should control your foot.



► Do your toes have wiggle-room? They should not push against the front of the boot even when you walk downhill.

The right boots won't make a fashion statement. They may look as if they had been designed for foot soldiers in 1911.

### Oh, my aching back

Most people acquire judgment and a crick in the spine at about the same age. In my case, the reality of the human condition became clear when I began to get tired before I got a pheasant. It took years to realize that legs were not my problem, nor lungs. What I had was not even fatigue. It was an aching back.

Although the ache is almost universal, however, the cause is individual. We all need exercise -- in my case sit-ups plus reverse sit-ups, the latter at five different angles. If in doubt, ask your family doc to refer you to a physical therapist for the right exercises. It's what you get for coming down from your tree. Call it original sin.

There is another possibility. "Low-grade back pain is the best indicator of limb-length discrepancy," said my podiatrist. Well, of course. Anyone who has worked on a car knows that the suspension ought to be even. I can't imagine, now, why I chased bird dogs all those miles without putting a spacer under the short leg. Any kind of pad under my heel would have been better than nothing.

On the odds, you too have some leg or foot problem which, in



technical terms, makes you walk funny. The best kind of spacer in your shoe is called an orthotic device. [] In addition to leveling your gait, there may be other tasks, such as pointing your toes in the right direction. A podiatrist or physical therapist will know. The orthotic will probably cost less than a new pump-gun and get you more birds.

### Rose-colored glasses

#### You can't get it till you see it.

The right lens of my spectacles has a gouge -- probably from a twig, because it happened during a day of hunting ruffed grouse. Vision is always under attack by something, anyhow, sun or brush or birdshot. So there is no question about the need for protective lenses. The problem is picking the right ones.

For years I used polarized lenses for for both fishing and hunting.

### The gun vest

Upland hunting is about surprises. For most birds in cover, you need to be able to shoot within about one second, which means that you probably do not carry your shotgun on a sling. Let's look at some of the other options.

► Cross-body carry. You may know this position as port arms, if you are a veteran. The barrel inclines leftward, where someone may be walking. When a bird flushes, your response is fast -- but perhaps not accurate. The barrel swings right, then back to the



left, then right again....

► Barrel straight up. Safer, slower, and even less accurate. Your barrel tends to swing too far down, then up, then down again.

What's needed is a carry that keeps your muzzles pointed forward -- as if you were shooting clay pigeons.



Rose-colored glasses

Take photos of all the gear mentioned?

Letter: could change order, if you think lip balm is too trivial.

A shining example [hunter/fluor. orange]

The eyes have it.

My only real talent, in this pursuit, had been in my legs.

The woe [shame] was worse than the pain.

The pain was not quite enough to stop me -- just enough to make the last few miles miserable.

There is no back-balm, no common cause unless it is our insistence on walking instead of swinging from limbs.

[The cure might be a return to swinging from branches, but it's not going to catch on.]

When I am fishing, my nails get wetter than my lips and need to be greased more frequently.

If this sounds like a trivial topic, wait till you've sat nursing your thumb while big landlocked salmon are swirling.

Preventing infected hangnails is much easier than living with them. ] Any kind of fat can prevent infected hangnails, in my extensive experience. My wife buys cuticle cream. Lip balm (at 79 cents a tube) works better for me because it is easy to carry and apply. You

Somebody else must have discovered what lip balm is really good for. Maybe he or she was just too proud to write about it.

you might need a dose every hour or two.



But this is not a do-it-yourself project for you, me, or any other quack. Ask your family doctor to refer you to the best physical therapist in town.

A steady bird dog should give you time to prepare for most shots, in the uplands

Boots provided the first clue that something was wrong.

Slim shoes are fancy on the dance floor, misery in the mountains.

This is compensation, psychologically speaking.

The design must have been right, and not just for my particular feet.

For hunting, plain leather boots are hard to beat -- if they have the right shape. The last on which they were built is hard to recognize at a glance, even for an expert, but there are two tests you can make in the shop.

Walking does not require much skill but it does take faith.



THE YELLOW  
A HISTORY OF OUR

BY AUBREY L. HAINES

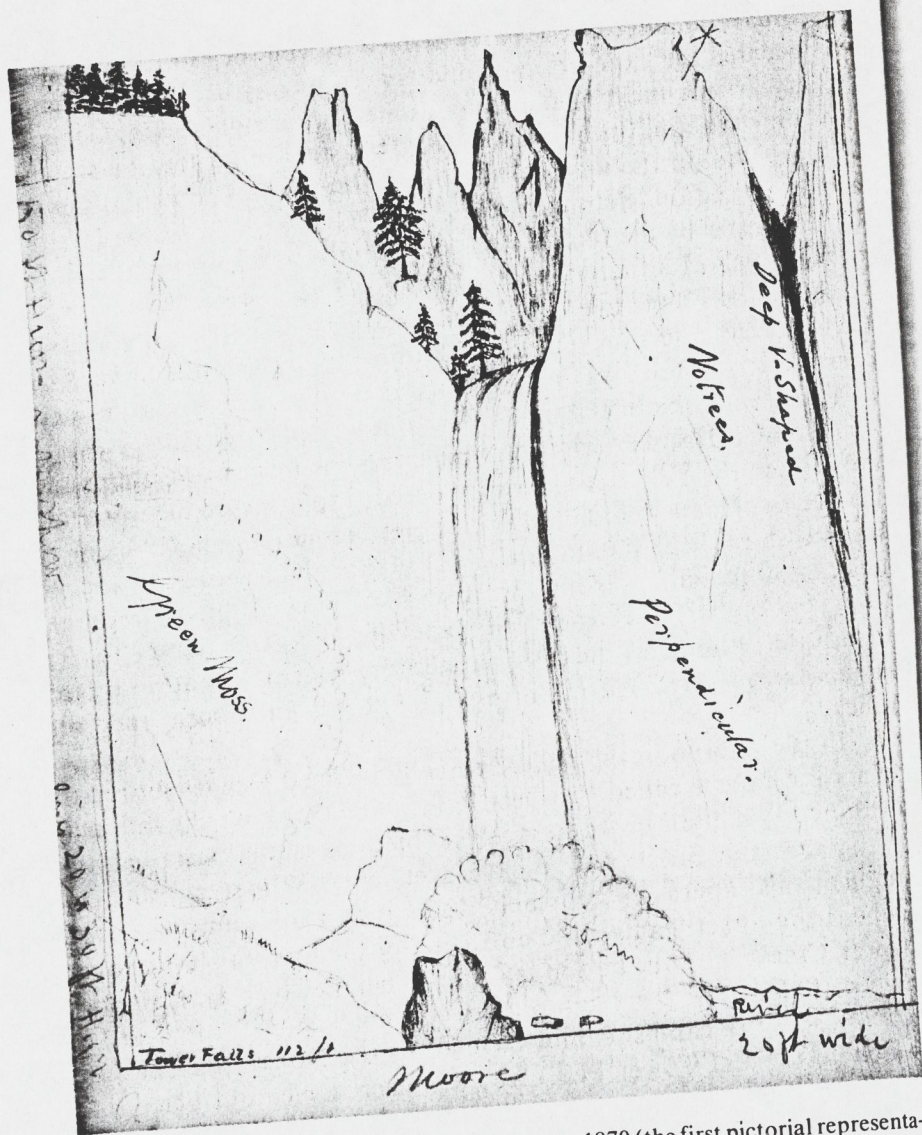
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VOLUME ONE

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Tower Fall, as sketched by Pvt. Charles Moore, 1870 (the first pictorial representation of a Yellowstone feature). From Yellowstone Park Museum collection.



But there was one member of the party who was in no condition to partake of the boisterous proceedings of the camp. From the time of departure from Fort Ellis, Lieutenant Doane had been suffering from a deep-seated inflammation in his right thumb of the type called a felon. Despite several attempts to probe it "with a very dull pocket-knife," the pain had increased to a degree that allowed him no rest. While the others snored in their blankets, the lieutenant paced back and forth by the campfire with his hand wrapped in a wet bandage to subdue the "infernal agonies."

There was another sufferer in the camp, though his case was not as difficult to alleviate. The dog, Booby, had become so sore-footed he could hardly travel and it was necessary to fit him with little moccasins. It was a kindness which was amply repaid at a later date.

Breaking camp at 8 o'clock on the morning of the twenty-ninth, the expedition moved southward along the route picked by General Washburn the day before. They were following an ancient Indian trailway which ascended the long ridge flanked by Tower and Carnelian creeks on one side and Antelope Creek on the other, until the final rise of Mount Washburn was reached, whereupon that aboriginal track sidled westward around the peak toward a prominent gap (later named Dunraven Pass) and descended the Sulphur Creek drainage to reach the vicinity of the Yellowstone Falls.

Where the trail started its detour of the central peak, a party peeled off for a climb to the summit, leaving Hedges, who was poorly mounted, to confide to his diary, "Wish I had a better horse to see more country." And he had reason to lament, for the view opening from that windswept mountain top is a magnificent panorama which was accurately typified by Doane when he prefaced several pages of scenic details with the comment that it was "beyond all adequate description."<sup>60</sup> Indeed, where does one begin? With the drab, piled-up lavas on which he stands? With the raw cleft of the Grand Canyon at the mountain's very feet? With the silvery expanse of Yellowstone Lake southward in the middle distance? Or somewhere in the mountains that circumscribe the gaze in all directions but the southwest? Perhaps that is why Gillette wrote so little and Langford recorded nothing of what he saw.

But there was more purpose to that ascent than mere admiration of the expansive landscape. An aneroid barometer was carried up to determine the elevation of Henry Washburn's peak; and, strange to say, that single instrument was made to render four different values. Hauser entered the reading as 10,700 feet, Gillette made it 10,579, Langford said 9,800, and Doane, who may have attempted a correction for the 50 degree air temperature, used 9,966.<sup>61</sup>





Lieut. Gustavus C. Doane as he appeared in 1875. From Strong, *A Trip to the Yellowstone . . . 1875* (1876).



Mud Geyser. Despite the novelty of the geyser, a nearby cavern in the hillside belching viscous mud with deep reverberations "resembling the reports of distant artillery" proved more interesting. Hedges' interest in this Mud Volcano, as they called it, led him to endanger his life by climbing onto the outer rim, from which he was tumbled by an unexpected, steamy exhalation. The fresh mud clinging to grass and tree limbs nearly 100 feet distant hinted that he could easily have fared worse. In a ravine 100 yards beyond that dangerous place they found clear, hot water pulsing from a green-walled, gable-like cavern which also emitted a hollow, thundering sound. Hauser called it Cave Spring, but his name stuck no better than several others that have been applied to what is now Dragons Mouth Spring.<sup>70</sup>

Well pleased with the novelties found in the Mud Geyser area, the party moved on toward Lake Yellowstone on September 3 with most of the expeditioners suffering from a malaise variously attributed to canned peaches, to the hot-spring impregnated water they had been drinking, and, by Hedges, to breathing what he thought were noxious gases bubbling up in the river water near where he had fished the evening before.

While the pack train was crossing the Yellowstone at what would later be known as the Nez Perce ford—an operation that consumed most of the forenoon—Washburn and Langford rode back to the Crater Hills for another look at the features in that area. This excursion nearly resulted in Langford being boiled in an alum spring where the margin had been undermined by the violent agitation of the water. He says,

This, however, I did not at first perceive; and, as I was unconcernedly passing by the spring, my weight made the border suddenly slough off beneath my feet. General Washburn noticed the sudden cracking of the incrustation before I did, and I was aroused to a sense of my peril by his shout of alarm, and had sufficient presence of mind to fall suddenly backwards at full length upon the sound crust, whence, with my feet and legs extended over the spring, I rolled to a place of safety.<sup>71</sup>

Meanwhile, the main party moved up the east bank of the Yellowstone River, having a "plain trail" as far as Pelican Creek. There they became lost in fallen timber and floundered through two muddy crossings of the creek before they reached the shore of Yellowstone Lake near where the Folsom party had camped the year before.

The condition of Lieutenant Doane's thumb had been worsening each day, taking a terrible toll of his strength; it was determined before the lake was reached that an operation would again have to be



attempted. As Langford was to be the acting surgeon, he prepared for the ordeal by whetting his penknife on the pommel of his saddle as he rode toward the lake. After supper that evening an operating table was improvised from a box of army cartridges, and other simple preparations were completed.

When Doane was told that we were ready, he asked, "Where is the chloroform? I replied that I had never administered it, and that after thinking the matter over I was afraid to assume the responsibility of giving it. He swallowed his disappointment, and turned his thumb over on the cartridge box, with the nail down. Hedges and Bean were on hand to steady the arm, and before one could say "Jack Robinson" I had inserted the point of my penknife, thrusting down to the bone, and had ripped it out to the end of the thumb. Doane gave one shriek as the released corruption flew out in all directions upon surgeon and assistants, and then with a broad smile on his face he exclaimed, "That was elegant!"<sup>72</sup>

Doane's relief was immediate and he was able to sleep that night, and the following day and night also, a nap of thirty-six hours, from which he arose much recovered. A less beneficial effect of the surgery was permanent impairment of the use of his right hand.<sup>73</sup>

Since the camp could not be moved while Doane was resting, September 4 (Sunday) was spent as individual preference dictated. According to Langford, Jake Smith exclaimed, "If we're going to remain in camp, let's have a game of draw," and he probably found enough kindred spirits to organize one. Langford preferred a nap, but later he and Hedges went down the beach to a place where they found many pieces of sandstone worked into odd resemblances by the action of the waves. The Curiosity Shop, as Hedges called it, was the place referred to by those prospectors who told members of the Washburn party, prior to their departure from Bozeman, that the shore of Yellowstone Lake would yield "the dishes and cooking utensils of an ancient and more civilized race of Indians than now roam about it."<sup>74</sup>

The island that now bears the name of Dr. Hayden's able assistant, James Stevenson, lay so invitingly near that Gillette built a raft for voyaging to it; but the wind blew hard all day, rolling up waves that tore the frail craft apart within an hour of its launching, leaving him without a means of satisfying his curiosity as to whether human feet had ever trod the island.

General Washburn undertook a reconnaissance southward along the lake shore in the hope of finding a trail around the east side of the lake. His report of an *appearance* of a good route probably



unduly influenced the vote taken that evening to decide their future course. With only Jake Smith and Sam Hauser dissenting, it was decided to go around the lake. That departure from the route followed by the Folsom party proved less fortunate than the one they had taken around the Grand Canyon.

The trek around the lake began at 9 A.M. on September 5, with the main party working their way along the east shore, sometimes following the beach and sometimes passing through the forest on convenient game trails, to a campsite in the vicinity of present Park Point. Langford and Hedges remained behind in order to measure the distance of the Teton peaks by triangulation, but they were unable to lay out a baseline of sufficient length and "abandoned the scheme after some two hours of useless labor," to hurry after their comrades.

On the following day, the route lay mostly through the forest, and progress was greatly impeded by fallen timber (a condition that would become much worse south of the lake). A difficult day, lightened only by a cursory examination of the fumarole area Doane named Brimstone Basin, ended in disappointment among the swamps where the upper Yellowstone River enters the lake. Hedges, who was then leading the pack train, attempted to cross the swamp by following a sandbar fronting on Southeast Arm, but "after struggling through the tangled willows for two hours, found the creek channel [Yellowstone River] to be a wide and deep slough, impassable for man or beast."<sup>75</sup> This knowledge was gained by miring some horses to their bellies before the train was backed out of that cul-de-sac. A camping place of sorts was found in a grove of pines on Beaverdam Creek.

Hedges indicates they had only salt meat to eat at their uncomfortable camp; and yet, several diarists attest that game was plentiful, if fresh tracks have any meaning. The lack of success in keeping the camp kettles supplied is explained by Doane's disgusted comment, "Our party kept up such a racket of yelling and firing as to drive off all game for miles ahead of us."<sup>76</sup>

On the seventh, the pack train waited at Beaverdam Creek until General Washburn found a route around the swamp that had baffled Hedges. While his party was so employed, Langford and Doane ascended a nearby peak to get a better view of the region south of the lake. The two climbers skirted the edge of the swamp, traveling southeasterly for two and one-half miles before ascending the timbered ravine from which Cabin Creek flows. They were able to ride most of the distance to the saddle at the head of that stream, and there they tied the horses to stunted trees at timberline, then scrambled over what Langford called "loose granite" to the summit that now bears John Colter's name.<sup>77</sup>