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Land Tenure in the Northeast: A Note on the History of a Concept

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described. This is not stupid *Bison taylori* being hunted into oblivion by the Folsom wanderers. This, instead, is the second decade of the 19th century and the bison dying in these occasional grass fires are part of those enormous million-hooved brown herds about which Harmon writes, a page farther on:

Indeed, in these plains where buffaloes are numerous, it is not customary nor is it needful for people who are travelling, to burden themselves with provisions; for if they have fire arms, they can always kill a sufficiency for the day.<sup>3</sup>

Whatever the fate which befell the long-horned bisons, this comment from old Daniel Harmon's *Journal* hardly encourages the idea that *Bison taylori* perished because he gazed too long and stupidly at man-made fires. His stupid modern brother survived the attentions of a much more numerous horde of aborigines and hunting whites—survived in millions until the railroad killers came and the free range passed away. It would seem that we must look elsewhere for the explanation of the disappearance of *Bison taylori* than to the failure of his fire reactions. Bad though they may have been there is no suggestion that similar stupid behavior injured the survival of his modern descendant.

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#### LAND TENURE IN THE NORTHEAST: A NOTE ON THE HISTORY OF A CONCEPT

Recently, in an excellent paper on the culture of the northeastern hunters, Dr. John M. Cooper has discussed the family hunting-ground system in relation to its ecological background.<sup>1</sup> He is at pains to determine the first writer who discussed the family hunting territory in relation to the type of game exploited in the eastern woodlands. Dr. Cooper indicates that the first such student, according to his knowledge, was a Dr. Rae who wrote in 1882.<sup>2</sup> Most certainly Rae has been neglected, but from the standpoint of anthropological history the idea in question can be shown to have been entertained much earlier.

It is largely a matter of chance whether such records are rescued from the oblivion of early documents. All we can do for the sake of the history of our science in later centuries is to place such items in journals where the historian of science may have ready access to them. Dr. Cooper has done us one such service in his tribute to Rae. I, in my turn, should like to quote from Daniel Harmon's journal of 1820, written over half a century before Rae:

Every tribe has its particular tract of country; and this is divided again, among the several families, which compose the tribe. Rivers, lakes and mountains serve them as boundaries; and the limits of the territory which belongs to each family are as well known to the tribe as the lines which separate farms are, by the farmers, in the civilized world. The Indians who reside in the large plains, make no subdivisions of their territory; for the wealth of their country consists of buffaloes and wolves, which exist in plenty, everywhere among them. But the case is otherwise

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 91.

<sup>1</sup> Cooper, John M., "The Culture of the Northeastern Indian Hunters: A Reconstructive Interpretation," *Papers of the Robert S. Peabody Foundation for Archaeology*, Vol. 3, p. 291. Andover, Mass., 1946.

<sup>2</sup> Rae, J., *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, 1882, Vol. 12, pp. 274-275.

with the inhabitants of the woody countries. These people have nothing with which to purchase their necessities excepting the skins of animals which are valuable for their fur; and should they destroy all these animals in one season, they would cut off their means of subsistence. A prudent Indian whose lands are not well stocked with animals, kills only what are absolutely necessary to procure such articles as he cannot well dispense with.<sup>3</sup>

This comment, I think, can leave no doubt that to Daniel Harmon, voyageur, belongs the credit for the first recognition of the part played by the forest fauna in the determination of family hunting territories. That Dr. Rae's admirable and clear expression of the same views in an anthropological journal of distinction should also have passed unnoticed is suggestive of the tenacity with which ideas of communal land ownership among primitives were held in the nineteenth century. It is to the labors of such men as Dr. Frank G. Speck and Dr. Cooper that we owe our escape from a simplistic dogma which long blinded the students of land tenure even while such hard-gained evidence as Harmon's lay before them in the books.

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#### THE FIRST NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON UNESCO

The First National Conference on the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, called by the U. S. National Commission for UNESCO, was held in Philadelphia on March 24-26, 1947. The conference opened with a general session on Monday afternoon, March 24, followed by an informal reception in the evening. Tuesday was devoted to morning and afternoon sessions of fourteen sections, for the discussion of various aspects of the present and potential activities of UNESCO. On Tuesday evening a second general session was held, and the conference closed with a third general session on Wednesday morning, March 26, at which a summary of the findings of the several section meetings was presented. Approximately one thousand persons were in attendance.

The United States National Commission for UNESCO, which was established to advise and consult with the government of the United States and the United States delegates to the General Conferences of UNESCO, has among its other objectives that of promoting an understanding of the general objectives of UNESCO on the part of the people of the United States. In accordance with this purpose the First National Conference was called to acquaint representatives of interested national organizations with the aims, objectives and program of UNESCO and of the United States National Commission for UNESCO, and to propose ways by which these organizations can take part in carrying out the aims and program of UNESCO. Since it seems obvious that these world-wide aims will interest students of anthropology, a brief report of this first United States National Conference is included in the pages of *The American Anthropologist*. Inquiries for further information concerning UNESCO or the First National Conference should be addressed to Mr. Charles A. Thomson, Executive Secretary, The United States National Commission for UNESCO, Department of State, Washington 25, D. C.

In the search for means of establishing international peace every practical effort to-

<sup>3</sup> Harmon, Daniel W., *A Journal of Voyages and Travels in the Interior of North America* (1820). Allerton Book Company Edition, N. Y., 1922, p. 331.