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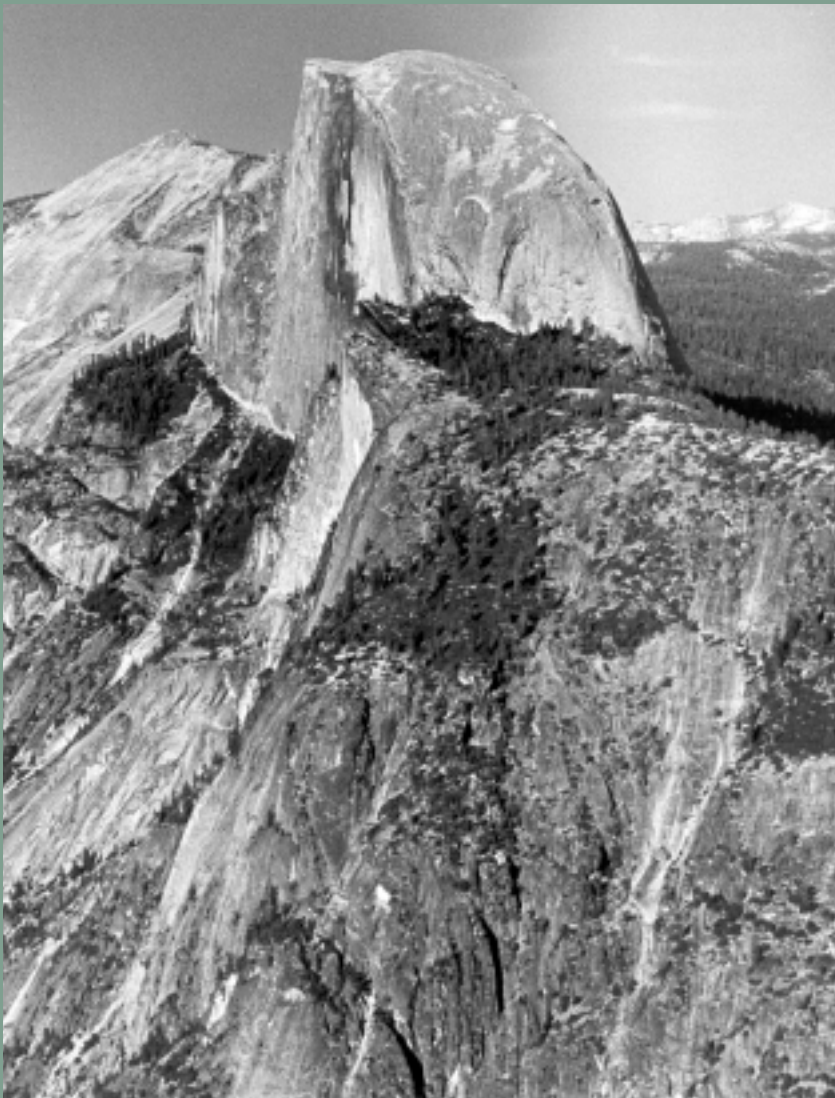
# Yosemite

A JOURNAL FOR MEMBERS OF THE  
YOSEMITE ASSOCIATION

Winter 2003    Volume 65    Number 1

## UP AND DOWN HALF DOME

Notable Ascents and Descents of  
Yosemite's Famed Landmark



# A Message from the President

**A**LL OF US AT THE YOSEMITE ASSOCIATION wish you a very happy new year and send our hopes that 2003 will find you in Yosemite on multiple occasions! There are many initiatives, developments, and changes in the park works, and it promises to be an exciting year for us.

Old faces and new figure in Yosemite and YA news. The incoming Park Superintendent, Mike Tollefson, has arrived and is already at work. We've added a new employee to the office staff (she's Chris Geis), and a new board member, Suzanne Corkins, was appointed to fill a vacancy. Because there were no candidates nominated by the membership to oppose the incumbents, long-time board members Lennie Roberts (former Chairperson) and Christy Holloway (present Chairperson) were elected to new terms as trustees.

Perhaps the biggest news at YA is that 2003 marks our 80th anniversary as a support organization at Yosemite. Founded in 1923, the Yosemite Museum Association, the first cooperating group in the national park system, has evolved over the years to become the present-day Yosemite Association. We've got a number of plans for celebrating this anniversary that you'll hear about as the year unfolds.

If you're looking for an excuse to visit the park, don't forget that our annual Spring Forum is scheduled for March 29, 2003. Among our speakers will be Superintendent Tollefson and Yosemite flora principals Steve Botti and Walter Sydoriak. Check our "Members Pages" for more details about the event.

This issue of Yosemite is stuffed with interesting articles and news. Besides the harrowing account of a death-defying descent of Half Dome by a twelve-year-old boy, we've included Hank Johnston's history of the earliest climbs of that formidable rock. For you geology buffs, King Huber theorizes that the point where Yosemite Falls begins its plunge off the north valley rim has changed over the years.

Other articles include the story of three Yosemite women recognized for their extraordinary accomplishments, member news and announcements (including volunteer opportunities), and an alert about a new letter press, limited edition Yosemite book that is selling out fast.

For those of you looking to participate in our educational classes in Yosemite, we've also included information about upcoming Yosemite Outdoor Adventure courses. There are a number of new offerings for 2003 with the usual well-qualified instructors. We are disappointed to report that one of the courses, the Yosemite Winter Literary Conference scheduled for February, has been cancelled. Call (209) 379-2321 if you have questions about the conference.

As we enter the new year, we would like to thank our many members for the variety and depth of the support you showed the Yosemite Association during 2002. From year-end donations, to hours of volunteer time, to purchases of publications, to extra member dues, to an array of expressions of kindness and goodwill, your contributions to our work to benefit and protect Yosemite were and are greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,



Steven P. Medley  
President

*P.S. My teen-aged son informs me that the ranger jokes I included in the last issue were pretty lame! Can any of you help me out with a couple of good ranger, bear, or John Muir jokes? E-mail them to me at: [smedley@yosemite.org](mailto:smedley@yosemite.org).*



# THE BOY WHO CLIMBED DOWN HALF DOME

My adventure in Yosemite Valley happened in the third week of June, 1928. I was 12 years old, just shy of my thirteenth birthday (July 12). My mother, my 15-year-old sister, Olga, and myself were staying in a house-keeping tent in Camp Curry, very near to the entertainment center which was located fairly close to the valley wall of Glacier Point, almost a mile above Camp Curry.

One morning my sister visited a group of Campfire Girls in some adjoining tents and became friendly with one of the girls named Jean Moore. Jean mentioned that the group was going to hike to the top of Half Dome the next day, a Friday, and invited my sister to come along. Olga asked if her younger brother, George, could come along. Of course, said Jean Moore.

So, the next morning, Friday, we all set off on the trail to Half Dome. Up Happy Valley, then along the Mist Trail to the top of beautiful Vernal Falls. From there the trail led up past Nevada Falls to the back of the mono-

lith, Half Dome. To get to the top of Half Dome, you had to go hand over hand between two raised cables with steel stanchions embedded in the granite to support the cables. The elevation at the top of Half Dome is approximately 8,200 feet.

It was close to noon when we got to the top, so we ate our bag lunches. No one had brought anything to drink, but there was a large patch of snow in the slight depression at the top, so everyone slaked their thirst with pure white snow. We all took a turn at looking over the edge towards the main valley. It was



brehtaking. Across from us was Clouds Rest, and farther left was El Capitan, and farther left, Yosemite Falls. Water was plentiful that year, so all the falls and Merced River on the valley floor were flowing at their best.

It was early Friday afternoon and I became bored waiting for the return trip to begin. So I went back down the cable route that led to the valley floor behind Half Dome, Tenaya Canyon. Then I had an idea, catastrophic as it turned out. I went back up again to the top of Half Dome and told my sister I would be going on ahead back to camp. As I descended, I should have turned left, but for some unknown reason I turned right, walked about half a mile, realized I should be going in the opposite direction, and started back in the correct direction.

It was still only mid-afternoon, and I was taken with the urge to climb up to the edge at the top of the Tenaya Canyon wall. Up I went. The granite was broken and easy to climb, and it was little more than 250 feet to the top. I just had to look over and down, so I walked over close to the edge, and a strange thing happened. In what I can only call a "Time-Swoosh!" I fell over this top edge of the main valley wall. I had absolutely no sensation of falling and could remember nothing of the 2 or 3 seconds that I fell from the top of the main valley wall.

My senses returned instantly, and amazingly I found that I was hanging head down, with my knees hooked over the raised lip of a ledge which was about 150 feet below the top of the valley wall. I must have tumbled downward head over heels, yet I hadn't the slightest sense of falling. No bruises or cuts anywhere. The sailor hat that I wore was still on my head. In the days to come I would fall several times, and each time sustained cuts and bruises. Why not this first fall? I don't know. I can't explain it.

I will describe what I was wearing. My underwear: boxer shorts and a tank-top undershirt (no T-shirts then). My shirt was strong cotton, long-sleeved, called a Hickory shirt. Tough cotton blue jeans, with my Boy Scout jack-knife in one pocket. I wore calf-length leather boots with smooth composition soles. No Vibram soles existed then, but the composition soles gripped well. And my white sailor hat, which I prized, that remained on my head during that initial fall. My physical condition was excellent. I was small, fairly light, with exceptional upper body and arm strength, luckily.

I pulled myself over the lip of the ledge and took stock of my predicament. The ledge was about 20 feet long, with a few small bushes growing in the ledge space.

*Cover: The likely route that Monheit used to descend is via Ahwiyah Point, below and to the left of Half Dome.*





*The north side of Half Dome showing the terrain that Monheit had to negotiate.*



*A nurse attends to George Monheit in Yosemite's hospital facility.*

At either end there was nothing but a smooth sheer drop, straight down several thousand feet. I looked back up toward the near-yet-so-far top of the wall. The depth of the ledge, lip-to-wall, was about 30 inches, so I wasn't particularly cramped for room.

To my right as I faced the valley was Half Dome, about 400 feet away, its face absolutely vertical. To my left I could see Glacier Point, about the same elevation as myself. Below me, several thousand feet of almost vertical valley wall. Above me, on the almost sheer granite wall, was a squared-off slate outcropping of granite, the squared-off end of which ended about 40 feet above my ledge.

So that was my situation, my predicament, on that Friday afternoon. Of course, my not showing up at camp was reported, and the next day the rangers began their search for me, the lost boy. The press was notified, and the suspense began, reported in the newspapers every day: "Lost Piedmont Youth Not Found!" So I tried to sleep on that ledge, that balmy June night, a mere speck whose location no one dreamed of. Friday night ended. I stayed on that ledge, helpless, until Saturday afternoon.

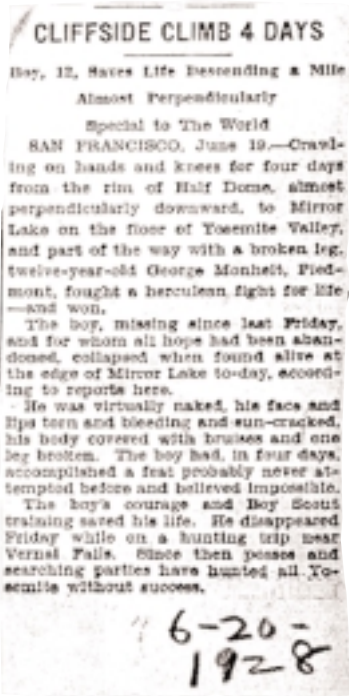
I realized there wasn't the faintest hope of help or discovery, so I looked around me more carefully. At the left edge of the ledge, as I faced the wall, there ran a crack in the granite that was about 2 to 3 inches wide. It fed upward toward the granite slab that overlay the granite wall of the valley. The crack disappeared under the bowed end-portion of the slab, a bowing that formed a

slight cave beneath the slab. So I inched my way up the crack, and as I did my beloved sailor hat fell off. I twisted around to watch it fall thousands of feet below.

Back to my inching upward, toes of boots into that crack. I made it to the shallow cave beneath the granite slab. I was small enough to fit into the cave beneath the slab. The cave was open on both sides and I could see Glacier Point at approximately my level. I was lying, barely stretched out, at an angle of approximately 70 to 80 degrees, and there I spent Saturday night. I even saw the Fire Fall from Glacier Point. Was I hungry? Not particularly. Was I thirsty? My God, yes! It is thirst, not hunger, that makes such situations so desperate.

Sunday morning arrived. My tongue had become sticky and rough. Eventually my tongue became like a dry, coarse block of wood in my mouth. No food or water since last Friday. What to do? What would be my next move?

That crack in the granite ran right across the floor of the cave and then turned up toward the top of the valley wall. To get out of the cave, I had to set my toes into the crack which now ran up parallel to the slab. I realized that I would have to lie on my stomach and reach out to grasp the crack and then swing out so I could insert my toes into the crack and then inch my way upward parallel to the 3-foot thick slab on my left. It was extremely difficult. Strangely, just above the point where I had to swing out, a small, tree-like shrub, about ½ inch thick, grew out of the crack. It seemed very tough and strong.



Grasping this shrub enabled me to slowly swing out and start my upward climb. So I put my faith into this shrub and scrambled out. Always look up, don't look down! The crack was now about a foot away from the slab wall and ran straight up, to disappear under the slab which now broke to the right of my ascending figure, about a 30-inch jog, and then continued on up more shallowly toward the top of the wall. I could inch my way up the crack where the slab jogged right, but how to get around that jog of the slab? I could reach the end of the jog with my right hand and slip my hand under the slab there. But to get past the jog I had to grasp the under-edge of the slab, let go of my left hand grip, and swing out to the right and up.

Good thing I was light with a lot of arm strength. I made a solemn vow at that point that if I made it around the jog, I would go to Sunday School every week. Well, I grasped the rough granite crevice with all my strength, let go my left hand, swung around and made it, with clear sailing to the top of the wall. This was now late Sunday morning.

People have asked me "why didn't you cross back over to the Tenaya Canyon wall, climb back down and take the trail back to Camp Curry?" My answer is that when I spent that Saturday on the ledge, I could look about 400 yards along the wall to where an area of broken granite and small bushes led at an angle down towards the bottom of the main valley wall. It didn't look too difficult, and below it was water, Mirror Lake! So I foolishly took

this route that led from the top of the main valley wall to the floor of the valley, nearly a mile down.

So, late that Sunday morning I made the decision to walk down along the route of broken granite and bushes. Obviously, the wall was very, very steep, but I worked my way down with comparative ease, not realizing that I was growing weaker and weaker. About a third of the way down I lost my footing and tumbled head over heels about 30 feet, and brought up hard against a granite boulder. My left ankle had crashed into the boulder, and I felt a sharp pain there.

I took off my left boot and examined the ankle. A discolored lump had appeared on the ankle, and I realized it was worse than a sprain. I had sustained a simple fracture of the tibia. The fibula was not broken. But now I could not stand without severe pain, so I figured that I had to crawl the rest of the way down. With my jack-knife I cut a staff about 3 feet long from one of the larger bushes, and using the staff I continued to work my way down the valley wall.

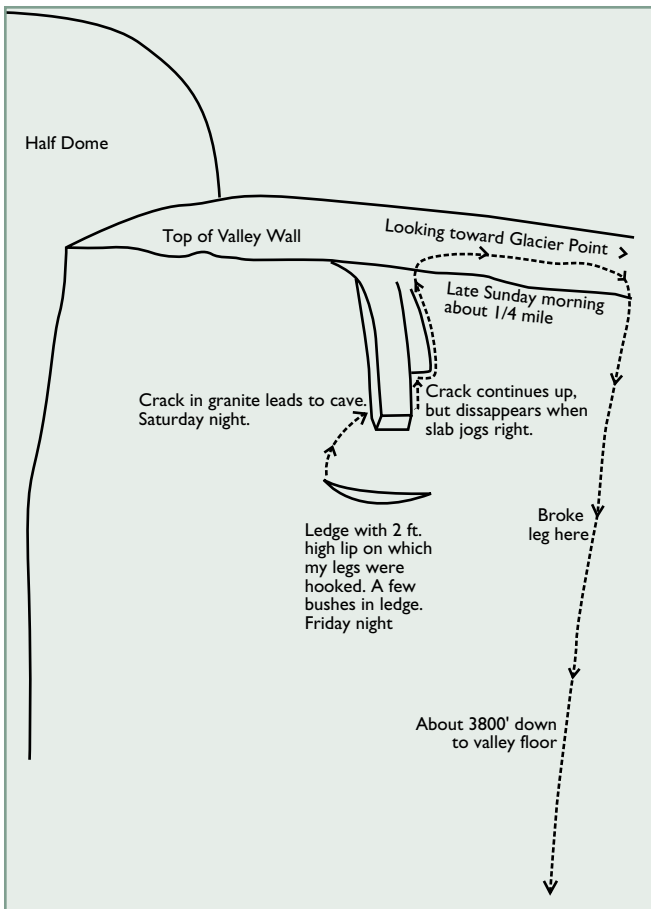
It was late Sunday now. So I cut branches from a big bush and made a bed for myself on a small granite ledge. The night didn't seem cold. I slept fitfully and began to dream. I remember dreaming that I was in a huge milk shake. And I also dreamed about a couple of books I had read recently involving Boy Scouts in the Adirondack Mountains of New York. Nothing in those books concerned mountain climbing, however.

On Monday morning I was able to continue to crawl down the valley wall with the help of the staff. When I was about 100 yards or so from the bottom I was abruptly brought to a halt. The wall dropped off sheer, straight down to the valley floor. I could go no further. I was weak, terribly thirsty, and discouraged. Mirror Lake was down there only a few hundred yards away.

But Monday night was falling, so I cut more boughs and made a bed for myself on a ledge. And I slept fitfully again until Monday night became Tuesday morning, and I could look around and assess my position. The sheer drop-off seemed to disappear as I worked my way to my right. I came to a shallow wash, all smooth granite, on the other side of which the drop-off was not too steep, and if I could get to the other side of this granite wash I could continue on down to the valley floor.

How to get across this approximately 20-foot-wide wash? I noted a large belt or very thick moss growing across the wash. I discarded my trusty staff, dug my fingers into the roughly 4 inches of moss, and worked my way across to the other side where I knew I could continue down to the valley floor. I got across the wash and started down. My leg hurt, I was weak, very, very thirsty (no food or water since Friday), and I was desperate to reach the bottom.

About 30 yards from the bottom, working my way



down through granite boulders and gravel, weakness overtook me and I tumbled head over heels again almost to the valley floor. Somehow, during this last fall my Hickory shirt was torn off and the knees of my jeans were torn open. The palms of my hands were torn and so were my kneecaps. But I was down!

Mirror Lake was no more than 100 yards away from the valley wall. I crawled weakly to the edge of the lake. Water! I tried scooping up some water. It was cold and felt like needles in my mouth. I couldn't handle it. I took the boot off my broken leg and immersed the leg in the cold water. It didn't do any good, so I put the boot back on, and sat there wondering what to do. A foot path ran around the lake, and I sat there close to the path which bordered the lake, thinking about nothing, for about 15 or 20 minutes.

And then along the path came a young couple, a Mr. and Mrs. George Antipa. They had come to the valley from San Francisco on vacation, and had told their friends laughingly that they would find that missing boy! At the sight of my bedraggled, slumped figure they walked over to me and asked me how I had got there. I pointed to the valley wall and told them I had climbed down the wall during the last few days. They, of course, realized that I was the lost boy.

Mr. Antipa picked me up and carried me around the lake to his car. Then they took me to the Yosemite Valley Hospital where they carried me inside. A nurse undressed me and put me in bed. They all realized I was the boy who had disappeared, and there was lots of excitement. I was given warm malted milk, and then I went to sleep. The next morning, after a liquid breakfast, I slept a long time.

When I awoke, I had sort of an emotional breakdown. I began to cry, softly, seemingly for no reason. The nurse noticed this and informed the doctor. He came in, checked me over, and then told me it was not unusual for a person to cry after such an experience. I felt better.

The doctor then looked at the broken left leg. He tried to move the ankle to see if the bone could be set by hand. Excruciating sharp pain! (I stayed on crutches until late July when I went to Berkeley General Hospital, where the surgeon cut open the leg, cleaned out the break, set the bones, put in a pin to secure the set, sewed it back up, and put the leg in a knee-high cast. Crutches necessary for a few months, after which I was almost as good as new.)

My third day at the Yosemite Hospital the press came in to interview me. Newspapers all over the country reported that I had climbed down Half Dome to the valley floor. This was obviously impossible since the face of Half Dome was vertical, sheer, and smooth. But that's how my exploit was reported. My downward climb was immediately adjacent to Half Dome anyhow, so why argue?

Newspaper editorials and articles all referred to the fact that I was a Boy Scout. Yes, I was a Boy Scout, but only a "Tenderfoot." But give a lot of credit to scouting, said the press. This was picked up by Boy Scout troops everywhere. I received many letters from troops all over the U.S. congratulating me on my tenacity and bravery.

I didn't feel brave. I felt grateful that somehow I had made it down and survived. The doctor said that Tuesday was probably the last day I could have survived without water. He was probably right.

*George Monheit wrote this narrative of his Half Dome adventure in 2001 at the age of 85. In 1928, some newspapers conjectured that Monheit wandered around the dome to the Diving Board before making his way to the valley. Others believe that he headed off to the north and down the gully below Ahwiyah Point. Whatever the route, Monheit's descent was a remarkable one for a 12-year-old. This account was brought to our attention by George Monheit's friend, Doug Hastings.*



# THE FIRST ASCENTS OF HALF DOME

Towering 8,842 feet above sea level, the dolphin-head form of Half Dome — “the grandest of all rock formations,” according to John Muir — stands like an indomitable sentinel at the eastern end of Yosemite Valley. In the summer of 1875, twenty-four years after the effective discovery of Yosemite by non-Indians, it remained the only rock about the valley, with the exception of a few peaks and spires, whose summit had not been attained by early adventurers. No less an authority than Josiah D. Whitney, the California state geologist, was certain that Half Dome would most likely remain forever beyond man’s reach. “Never has been and probably never will be trodden by human foot,” Whitney proclaimed in 1868 in *The Yosemite Book*.

Nonetheless, a number of intrepid mountaineers tried in vain to invent a way to the top of Half Dome’s imposing crown during those pioneer years. The first recorded attempt occurred in the summer of 1859 when James Mason Hutchings, Yosemite’s noted editor-innkeeper, and two companions set out from the valley floor along an old Indian route north of Grizzly Peak with the avowed intention of reaching the summit. Hutchings described the odyssey in his book, *In the Heart of the Sierras*:

“There was absolutely no trail whatsoever, as we had to walk on narrow ledges, and hold on with our feet as well as hands, trusting our lives to bushes and jutting points of rock. In some places where the ledges of rock were high, their tops had to be reached by long broken branches of trees, which the Indians used to climb; and, after they were up, cut off the possibility of pursuit from enemies, by pulling up these primitive ladders after them. Not a drop of water could we find. A snow bank increased rather than diminished our terrible thirst. Finally, after many hair-breadth escapes, and not a little fatigue, we reached the top of the lower dome, or eastern shoulder, and were then within four hundred and sixty feet, vertically, of realizing our ambitious hopes.

“To our dismay, as well as disappointment, we found a great smooth mountain before us, standing at an angle of about 40°, its surface overlaid with vast circular granite shingles, about eighteen inches in thickness. There was not a place to set a secure foot upon, or a point that we could clutch with our fingers. The very first sight put every hope to flight of reaching its exalted summit by the means at our command; and, deeming it a simple impossibility, ‘we surrendered at discretion,’ and returned without the realization of our ambitious hopes.”<sup>1</sup>

Some fourteen years after Hutchings’ failure, John



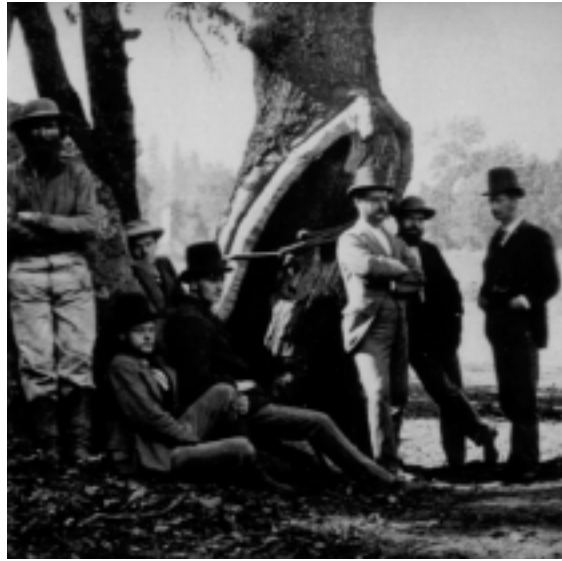
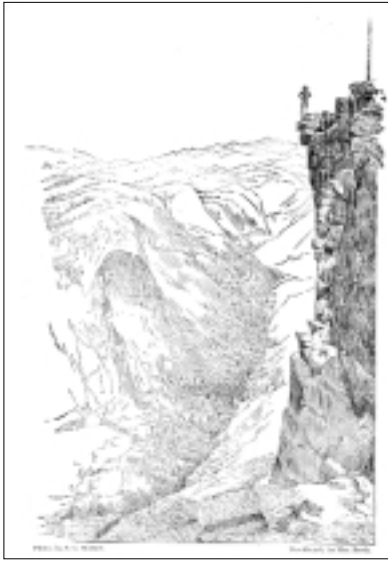
*The “Indian Trail” up the mountain and Ascending the Lower Dome are reprinted from Hutchings’ book, Scenes of Wonder and Curiosity in California, to illustrate his account of his aborted Half Dome climb.*

Conway, Yosemite’s master road-and-trail builder, tried a different method of ascending the grand curve of Half Dome’s east shoulder. Conway had several small sons who climbed smooth rocks like lizards. He gathered them together one day, along with a length of rope, an assortment of eyebolts, and several hammers.

Starting at the base of the upper dome, the boys slithered barefoot up the slanted granite surface carrying the rope, which they fastened securely at irregular intervals to eyebolts driven into fissures in the rock. After reaching a dangerous position nearly three hundred feet above the saddle, they found that the polished upper part of the slope would require laborious drilling for each pin. At that point, they abandoned the attempt, relieved to escape from their precarious perch.<sup>2</sup>

In the late summer of 1875, a courageous young Scotsman named George G. Anderson took up the challenge of conquering Half Dome. Anderson, a “brawny Viking of a man,” was an ex-miner and sailor who worked as a guide, carpenter, and laborer in Yosemite Valley from about 1870 until his death in 1884. The broad and substantial trail he built from Happy Isles almost to the base of Vernal Fall in 1882 under state contract remains a monument to his skill and perseverance.

“The knowledge that the feat of climbing this grand mountain had on several occasions been attempted, but never with success,” James Hutchings said, “begat in



*“Anderson on Precipice of Half Dome” — In 1877, George Anderson, photographer S.C. Walker, and James Hutchings packed up all the photographic equipment necessary for taking views from Half Dome’s summit. They placed a large, flat rock, projectingly, on the edge of the precipice, according to Hutchings, and Anderson stood upon it while Walker took his photograph — “one of his feet being over and beyond the edge eleven inches, as presented in the accompanying view, taken at that time.” This illustration is a pencil sketch made from the photograph, which appeared in In the Heart of the Sierras.*

*George Anderson at left with the party of six Americans and Englishmen who attempted the first tourist climb of Half Dome on October 16, 1875.*

Anderson an irrepressible determination to succeed in such an enterprise. Imbued with this incentive, he made his way to its base; and, looking up its smooth and steeply inclined surface, at once set about the difficult exploit. Finding that he could not keep from sliding with his boots on, he tried it in his stocking feet; but as this did not secure a triumph, he tried it barefooted and was unsuccessful still. Then he tied sacking upon his feet and legs, but as these did not secure the desired object, he covered it with pitch, obtained from pine trees near; and although this enabled him to adhere firmly to the smooth granite, and effectually prevented him from slipping, a new difficulty presented itself in the great effort required to unstick himself; and which came near proving fatal several times.

“Mortified by the failure of all his plans hitherto, yet in no way discouraged, he procured drills and a hammer, with some iron eye-bolts, and drilled a hole in the solid rock; into this he drove a wooden pin, and then an eye-bolt; and, after fastening a rope to the bolt, pulled himself up until he could stand upon it; and thence continued that process until he had finally gained the top — a distance of nine hundred and seventy- five feet! All honor then, to the intrepid and skillful mountaineer, Geo. G. Anderson, who, defying and overcoming all obstacles, and at the peril of his life, accomplished that in which all others had signally failed; and thus became the first to plant his foot upon the exalted crown of the great Half Dome. . . This was accomplished at 3 o’clock P.M. of October 12, 1875.”<sup>3</sup>

Anderson then returned to the valley to put together a more substantial rope to allow others to make the climb. Cosie Hutchings, James Hutchings’ younger daughter, remembered his preparations: “Along the old plank walk between Hutchings’ old corral to Sentinel Bridge, Anderson stretched five separate strands of baling rope

[a soft, loose-fiber rope about the thickness of a lead pencil, but strong and easy to use]. With another strand he went along the 975-foot length knotting the five strands together with a sixth strand and a good sailor’s knot a foot apart — a convenient space for climbers to grasp as they made the ascent. The knotted rope was coiled, tied together, put on a pack mule, and carried to the shoulder of the Dome. Here Anderson shouldered it himself, packed it to the top of the Dome, unloosed it, fastened one end to an iron pin in rock on the summit, slid it down, uncoiling and fastening it in other iron-pin eyebolts he had placed on his first ascent as he went.”<sup>4</sup>

On October 16, 1875, four days after Anderson first reached Half Dome’s summit, a party of six Englishmen and Americans embarked on the climb with Anderson as their guide. The tourists arrived at Snow’s Hotel (La Casa Nevada) below Nevada Fall on October 8 and had been exploring the area before meeting Anderson and arranging for the ascent. Two of the six men made it only part way up the slope, but the other four reached the top. They wrote about their experience in Snow’s hotel register on October 16.

A few days later, a woman named Sally Dutcher, who worked in Yosemite Valley, pulled herself up the ropeway. Miss Dutcher was assisted by Guardian Galen Clark and Anderson himself as she made history for womenkind. In November, John Muir became the eighth person to make the intimidating climb.

James Hutchings and four companions reached the top of Half Dome via Anderson’s rope cable in July, 1876. “The summit of this glorious mountain contains over ten acres,” Hutchings wrote, “where persons can securely walk, or even drive a carriage could such be transported thither. There are seven pine trees upon it . . . besides numerous shrubs, grasses, and flowers . . . This view is the culminating crown of scenic grandeur, that is utterly



without a rival upon earth.”<sup>5</sup>

Anderson hoped to replace his rope with a wooden staircase, but died from pneumonia on May 8, 1884, without realizing his goal. In its *Biennial Report* for 1882, the Yosemite Board of Commissioners said: “South [Half] Dome should be made accessible by better means than a rope attached to iron keys. Two thousand dollars would put a substantial and safe flight of steps up the rock, with balusters on the sides and fenders to protect the structure against danger from snowslides in winter. Thousands of people would stand on this commanding summit nine thousand feet above the sea, and dangle their feet over a precipice a little less than a mile high, if safe and comparatively easy means of ascent were provided. (The exercise of ‘dangling’ is optional.)”

Not only was no staircase ever built, but Anderson’s ropeway broke from sliding ice and snow, which also ripped out some of the eyebolts, during the winter of 1883-84. It was replaced by “two young daredevils” who duplicated Anderson’s original climb in the summer of 1884.<sup>6</sup> The ropeway had to be partially replaced again in 1895, 1901, and 1908. In 1919 the Sierra Club installed two steel cables, raised on pipe supports with footrests every ten feet, to make a safer climb. The supports and footrests are put up and taken down annually by the National Park Service, and the oft-repaired cableway is still in use.

#### NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. James Hutchings, *In the Heart of the Sierras* (Oakland and Yosemite: Pacific Press Publishing House, 1886), 456-57. Hutchings gives the date of his aborted climb as 1869, which is obviously wrong because a similar account appears in his book *Scenes of Wonder and Curiosity in California*, which was first published in 1860. Hutchings visited Yosemite in the summer of 1859. His climb must have taken place at that time. Hutchings has several other erroneous dates in *In the Heart* as well.
2. John Muir, *The Yosemite* (New York: The Century Co., 1912), 167.
3. Hutchings, *In the Heart*, 457-58.
4. Letter from Cosie Hutchings Mills to Mrs. Gregory (Elizabeth H. Godfrey), October 15, 1941, in the Yosemite Research Library.
5. Hutchings, *In the Heart*, 459.
6. Two fascinating accounts of the ascent by the “two young daredevils,” A. Phimister Proctor of Colorado and Alden Sampson of New York City, are given in Hutchings, *In the Heart*, 460-63; and A. Phimister Proctor, *An Ascent of Half Dome* (San Francisco: Grabhorn Press, 1945). Proctor’s account is reprinted in “An Ascent of Half Dome in 1884,” foreword by Hank Johnston, *Yosemite* 61, no. 4, (Fall 1999): 7-11.

All photos from the collection of Hank Johnston



The modern-day cableway.

View of the “dolphin-head” form of Half Dome from Glacier Point.



# YOSEMITE FALLS— A NEW PERSPECTIVE

BY N. KING HUBER



FIGURE 1. Upper Yosemite Fall now leaps from the hanging valley of Yosemite Creek. In the not-too-distant geologic past its water cascaded down through the prominent ravine immediately to the west (left).

Yosemite Falls with their spectacular drop of 2,425 feet (including the Upper Fall, middle cascades, and Lower Fall) are world-renowned and an icon for Yosemite Valley (Fig. 1). They are truly unmatched and were recognized as such early on.

In 1851, the first descent into Yosemite Valley by non-Indians was made by the Mariposa Battalion under the command of Major James Savage. Lafayette Bunnell, who had served as a medical aide during the Mexican War and was called “Doc” by his colleagues, was one of the literate members among the rough frontiersmen making up the group. He was greatly impressed by the valley, and around the evening campfire proposed the Indian name “Yo-sem-i-ty” for both the valley and the falls. Bunnell later recorded his impressions of the valley’s scenic wonders in glowing terms. With respect to Yosemite Falls he noted that: “comparison of the Yosemite Falls with those known in other parts of the world, will show that in elements of picturesque beauty, height, volume, color and majestic surroundings, the Yosemite has no rival upon earth.”<sup>1</sup>

James Mason Hutchings, an early promoter of Yosemite, organized the first party of sightseers to enter Yosemite Valley in 1855. Later that same year he published a lithograph based on a drawing of Yosemite Falls made at the time by Thomas Ayres, and thus introduced these spectacular cascades to the world for the first time (Fig. 2).

In his monumental study of Yosemite Valley, François Matthes wrote: “Surpassing all the other falls [of the valley] in height and splendor are the Yosemite Falls,” and “they are easily [the valley’s] most spectacular scenic feature. Even more than El Capitan and Half Dome they have given the Yosemite its wide renown.”<sup>2</sup> But beyond their scenic impact, recognized by all, is the story of the falls’ possible origin—one that is both fascinating and somewhat surprising.

Waterfalls cascading down a valley’s walls from far above its floor have long been considered as evidence of a glacial origin for that valley. Indeed, little doubt exists that Yosemite Valley represents a profound glacially-driven modification of the pre-glacial Merced River canyon, because no other erosive agent could have



accomplished such excavation. An ancient glacier that filled the valley to its present rim created the basic broad shape of the valley and gouged out a deep bedrock basin whose bottom locally lies more than 1,000 feet below the present valley floor.

The valley-forming glacial episode was named the “El Portal” glaciation by François Matthes in his Yosemite study, because he estimated that the El Portal glacier advanced down the Merced River canyon to the vicinity of the community of El Portal, some 10 miles downstream from Yosemite Valley proper. Today, most geologists would correlate that glaciation with the “Sherwin” glaciation, defined from studies along the east side of the Sierra Nevada. The Sherwin was the most extensive and longest-lived glaciation documented in the eastern Sierra. It may have lasted 300 thousand years and ended about 1 million years ago.<sup>3</sup>

The enormous Sherwin-age glacier that shaped Yosemite Valley was fed from an ice-field in the High Sierra, and was able to excavate the central chasm to a greater depth than smaller glaciers could erode in their side-entering tributary channels. When the ice left, some of the side valleys were left “hanging” with waterfalls at their confluence with the main valley. Since Sherwin time, most of the tributaries have eroded their channels back into the walls to leave little more than steep ravines with minor falls interrupted by chains of cascades, such as those at Sentinel Fall. Free-falling Bridalveil Fall is an exception, although it also has receded back into an alcove from its original position on the valley wall.

Later glaciations in the Sierra Nevada were of lesser area and apparently briefer than the Sherwin, but their actual number is uncertain. Matthes did recognize evidence for younger glacial activity, and he mapped the extent of what he called the “Wisconsin” glaciation, a name derived from the last glacial epoch in the northern mid-continent region of the United States. In the Sierra, his Wisconsin includes both the now-recognized “Tahoe” and “Tioga” glaciations, which probably peaked about 130,000 and 20,000 years ago, respectively. Much smaller than those of the Sherwin, glaciers of these later episodes did not come close to filling Yosemite Valley and thus did little to further modify or smooth its walls.

The sequence of post-Sherwin glaciations, however, probably contributed to the forming of the Upper Yosemite Fall that we know today. The fall leaps from its hanging valley now, but as we will see, it has a more complex history than its neighbor falls, such as Bridalveil Fall.

Yosemite Creek is the largest stream flowing into the north side of Yosemite Valley and probably entered the pre-glacial Merced River canyon through a steep side ravine. Even after the Sherwin glacier excavated Yosemite Valley, Yosemite Creek continued to enter the main valley through that ravine, which lies just west of the site of the

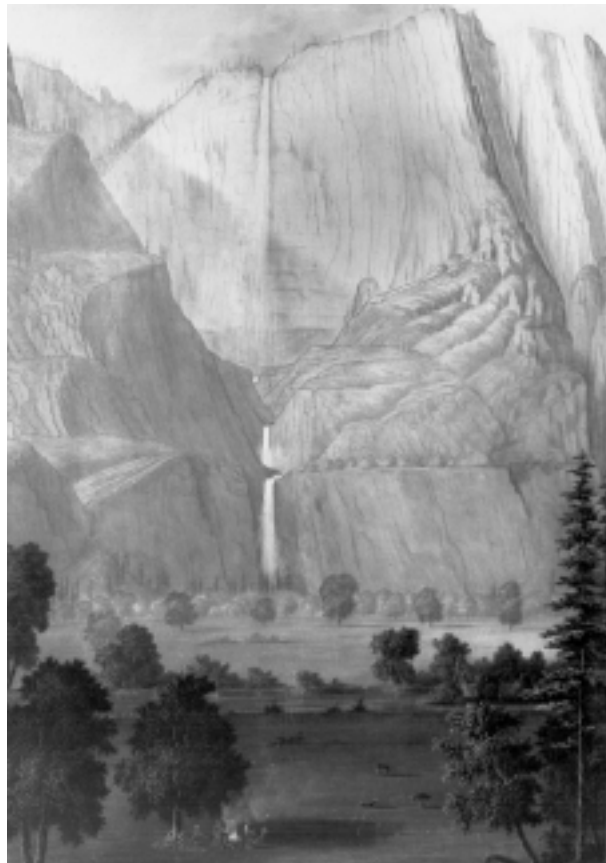


FIGURE 2. This “Yo-hamite or Great Falls” drawing by Ayres was then made into a lithographed poster by Hutchings in October, 1855, which was the first artistic representation of Yosemite Falls to reach the public. (YNP Archives)



FIGURE 3. John Muir noted that, unlike other large streams entering Yosemite Valley, Yosemite Creek flows across a rolling upland, descending gradually with a low stream gradient before cascading over the Upper Fall. (Photo by Richard Frear, NPS Collection)

present Upper Fall (Fig. 1). At that time, the site of the present fall was fed by a very small drainage area between Yosemite and Indian Canyon Creeks and probably hosted only a minor ephemeral fall of short duration during spring runoff.



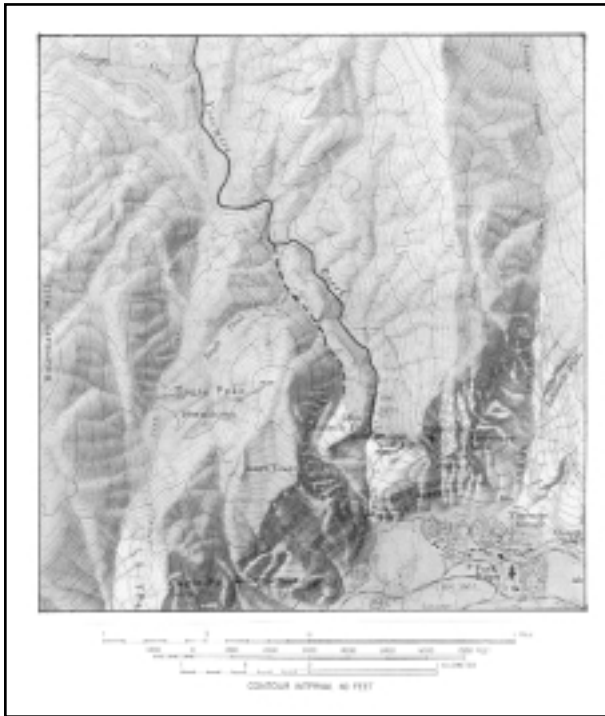


FIGURE 4. Yosemite Creek now and then. Today Yosemite Creek (heavy solid line) flows over the valley rim to create Upper Yosemite Fall. Before its postulated diversion, perhaps little more than 130,000 years ago, Yosemite Creek flowed down an older channel just to the west (heavy dashed line), from which it cascaded down through the steep ravine that is now the route of the Yosemite Falls Trail.

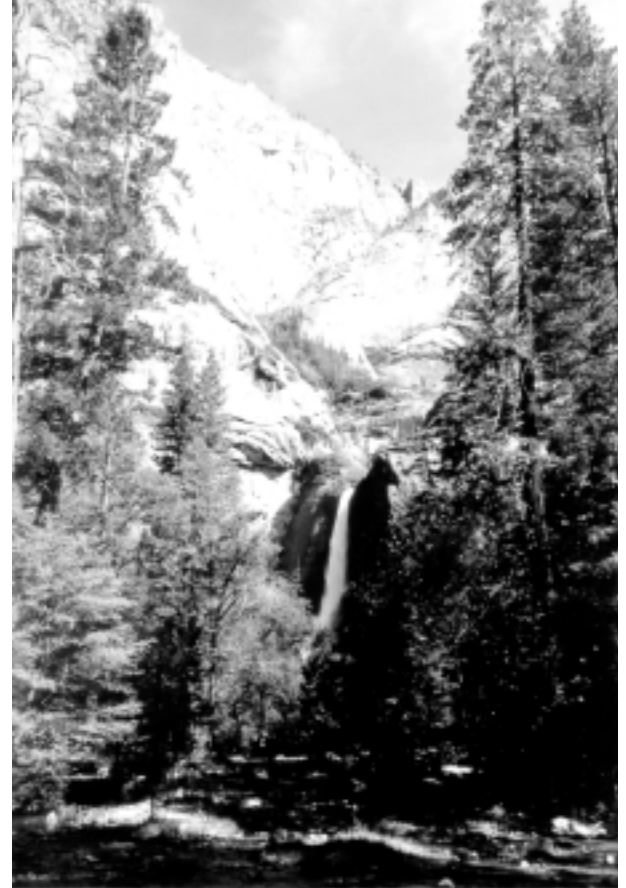


FIGURE 5. View of Lower Yosemite Fall with site of ancient channel descending from upper left down through vegetated area.

John Muir was impressed by the steep ravine, but did not recognize its pre-glacial existence when he noted that: “there is a very deep cañon on the left of Yosemite falls. . . & I could not account for its formation in any other way than by supposing the existence of a glacier in the basin above.”<sup>4</sup> More importantly, Muir noted that Yosemite Creek is anomalous in that above the present Upper Fall it “is rather level”:

*“and to the levelness . . . of this one, we in a great measure owe the present height of the Yosemite Falls. Yosemite Creek lives the most tranquil life of all the large streams that leap into the valley, the others, . . . while yet far from the valley, abound in loud falls and snowy cascades, but Yosemite Creek flows straight on through smooth meadows and hollows . . . biding its time . . . for the one anthem at the Yosemite. . .”*<sup>5</sup>

It would appear that John Muir was the first to observe that Yosemite Creek was unique because it leaped out over the brink of Yosemite Valley (Fig. 3) and was not ensconced in a “cañon,” as were all of the other large streams entering the valley, including Bridalveil Creek.

In his Yosemite study, François Matthes concluded:

*“That the broadly open notch west of the Upper Yosemite Fall was once the path of a stream flowing along the western margin of the [Yosemite Creek] glacier can hardly be doubted, for what appears to be an old stream channel leading to the notch is traceable along the west side of the [present] hanging valley for a quarter of a mile [Fig. 4], and 1,600 feet below the brink, at the foot of the incline on which the zigzag trail is built, there appears from beneath the débris a deeply cut stream channel, now dry, that joins the gorge of Yosemite Creek a short distance above the lower fall.”*<sup>6</sup>

The trail leading north above the head of the notch continues to follow the old Yosemite Creek channel a little more than one-half mile to the junction with the present stream channel.

Much of the old stream channel in the steep ravine below the notch has been filled by rockfall since it was abandoned. However, the deep cut of the old channel mentioned by Matthes just above the Lower Fall is so pronounced that it shows clearly on the topographic map and was probably responsible for a small waterfall now present in the middle cascades. The site of this old channel, although largely obscured by vegetation, can be



FIGURE 6. Glacial morainal complex of probable Tahoe-age on Yosemite Creek that caused stream diversion to present channel. Open circles indicate scattered morainal material. Darkly-stippled arcuate areas indicate complex of moraine ridges as mapped by François Matthes.

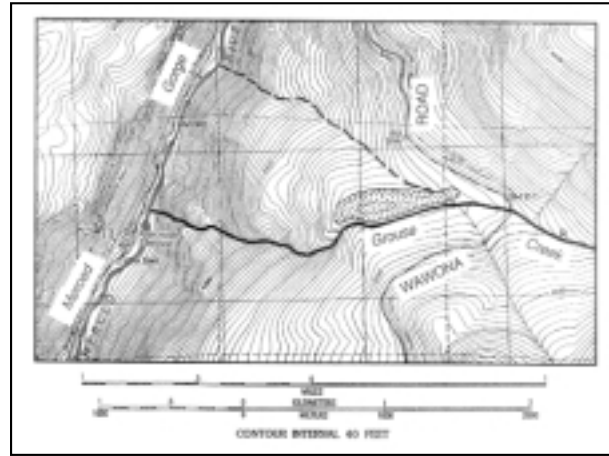


FIGURE 7. Grouse Creek, flowing from right to left (heavy solid line), skirts the uphill side of a glacial moraine deposit (stippled area). Prior to diversion by the blocking moraine, Grouse Creek followed the heavy, dashed line down to the Merced Gorge.

seen from below the Lower Fall (Fig. 5). It also can be seen from the Yosemite Falls Trail near where the trail turns upward into the actual ravine.

The presence of this lower ancient channel is critical to our interpretation of Yosemite Creek's history. It is lower in elevation than, or well below, the probable valley bottom of the pre-existing Merced River canyon prior to glacial deepening. It, therefore, likely continued to be the active channel for Yosemite Creek even after Yosemite Valley was glacially excavated a million years ago.

Matthes did not speculate on how or when Yosemite Creek was diverted from that old channel into its present channel to create Upper Yosemite Fall. He did, however, map a complex of glacial moraines, a series of arcuate ridges crossing the drainage above the valley rim (Fig. 6). These moraines consist of glacially-transported boulders and other debris that was deposited at the stationary front of the glacier occupying the valley of Yosemite Creek. As a glacial epoch comes to an end and the rapidly melting front of the glacier retreats upvalley, episodic pauses in its retreat will result in the formation of a series of morainal ridges, termed recessional moraines, such as those mapped by Matthes. He attributed these moraines to his Wisconsin-age glacier that

flowed down Yosemite Creek, but which apparently stopped about one-half mile short of the rim of Yosemite Valley itself.

While Matthes' moraines need to be remapped in light of our current knowledge of more numerous post-Sherwin episodes of glacial activity, they nonetheless offer a plausible explanation for the present-day location of Upper Yosemite Fall. The younger morainal deposits probably blocked the old channel of Yosemite Creek, which was then forced to find a new path through the intricate complex of nested moraines and was diverted on to its present site at the lip of the cliff.

The notch of the present Upper Fall is much smaller than the notch of the old Yosemite Creek leading to the abandoned ravine because the site was originally fed by only a very small stream and because there has been much less time—maybe hundreds of thousands of years less—for erosion there since the diversion of the much larger Yosemite Creek to it. Still, the present channel is cut fairly deeply in massive bedrock and is certainly pre-Tioga in age. Thus the present Yosemite Creek channel is probably at least as old as Tahoe in age, possibly older if diversion can be attributed to an unrecognized older glaciation.

Lending credence to the above explanation are several specific examples of stream diversions by glacial moraines in Yosemite, both from the latest glacial episode and an earlier one. An example of the latter that was described by Matthes is on Grouse Creek just west of the Wawona Road (Fig. 7), where he observed: “Grouse Creek, it would appear, has been deflected from its original lower course by a heavy embankment of glacial débris—the left lateral moraine of the Yosemite [Valley] Glacier—and it now follows a new course, having broken through the embankment at a point half a mile farther south.”<sup>7</sup>

Matthes did not locate this site on any of his published maps, but its probable location below the Wawona Road was deduced from a topographic map. My recent visit to the site with Jim Snyder, park historian, confirms Matthes’ interpretation. The fortuitous preservation of this moraine is due solely to its diversion of Grouse Creek that has left it as a separate ridge along and outward from the canyon slope. This morainal deposit, some 2,000 feet above the Merced Gorge, is certainly old and is probably a product of the Sherwin glaciation. The degree of cavernous weathering of giant boulders mantling the deposit documents its considerable age (Fig. 8).

Within Yosemite Valley itself, prior to the final Tioga-age glaciation, the Merced River probably flowed westward near the center of the valley. Blocked by the cross-valley ridge of the terminal moraine constructed by the Tioga glacier at Bridalveil Meadow, the melt water broke through along the north margin of the glacier to form a spillway near the north valley wall where the river still flows today.<sup>8</sup>

Following upvalley retreat of the snout of the Tioga glacier to just west of El Capitan Meadow, the glacier sta-

bilized and the El Capitan recessional moraine ridge of bouldery debris was constructed across the valley, again obstructing the drainage. This time the melt water broke through along the south side of the valley to form a spillway near the south valley wall where the river remains today.<sup>8</sup>

Matthes’ Wisconsin glacial stage and his mapped morainal complex on Yosemite Creek may include both the Tahoe and Tioga glaciations. If the foregoing diversion scenario for Yosemite Creek is valid, Upper Yosemite Fall, with its “newly” hanging valley, is less than one million years old and may be little more than 130,000 years old. And what a spectacular addition to Yosemite Valley’s architectural wonders it is!

#### NOTES

1. Lafayette Houghton Bunnell, *Discovery of the Yosemite, and the Indian War of 1851 Which Led to That Event* ([1880], Reprint by Yosemite Association [1990]) p. 182.
2. François E Matthes, *Geologic History of the Yosemite Valley* (U. S. Geological Survey Professional Paper 160 [1930]), p. 18.
3. G. I. Smith, V. J. Barczak, G. F. Moulton, and J. C. Liddicoat, *Core KM-3, a Surface-to-Bedrock Record of Late Cenozoic Sedimentation in Searles Valley, California* (U. S. Geological Survey Professional Paper 1256 [1983]), p23.
4. Robert Engberg and Donald Wesling, eds., *John Muir, to Yosemite and Beyond* (Salt Lake City, UT: University of Utah Press [1999]), p. 68.
5. John Muir, *Yosemite Glaciers* (New York, NY, *New York Daily Tribune*, [Dec. 5, 1871]), p. 8, cols. 5-6.
6. Matthes, *Geologic History*, p 112.
7. Matthes, *Geologic History*, p. 36.
8. N. King Huber and James B. Snyder, *A History of the El Capitan Moraine* (Yosemite Association, *Yosemite*, v. 64, no. 1, [2002]), p. 2-6.

#### ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I am deeply indebted to James B. Snyder, Yosemite’s park historian, for assistance in the historical aspects of this article.

**N. King Huber is Geologist Emeritus with the U. S. Geological Survey.**



FIGURE 8. Giant, cavernously-weathered boulder mantling the Grouse Creek morainal deposit. Park Historian Jim Snyder provides scale.



## Spring Forum on the Horizon

March 29, 2003 is the date set for YA's annual Spring Forum to be held in Yosemite Valley. This popular member event will feature a day filled with the "Yosemite experience." Attendees will be able to choose from a variety of fascinating auditorium presentations and naturalist-guided walks.

At press time the YA staff was still finalizing many of the details, but indoor programs will include presentations by Steve Botti and Walter Sydoriak, author and illustrator of *An Illustrated Flora of Yosemite National Park*, and NPS ranger Mike Osborne who will show us *Yosemite without the Icons*.

The line-up for outdoor programs will feature walks led by NPS interpreters, tours of the Ahwahnee Hotel, fine print

viewing at The Ansel Adams Gallery, living history (YA's own Tom Arfsten portraying Galen Clark), botany with Sierra College's Joe Medeiros, a writer's walk with YA Vice President/CFO (and newly published author) Beth Pratt, and much more. The day's events will close with a wine-and-cheese reception and book signing with Steve Botti and Walter Sydoriak.

In addition to the Saturday events, the National Park Service has scheduled a public open house at the East Auditorium on Friday, March 28. Members are invited to drop in anytime between 2:00 p.m. and 8:00 p.m. to receive information, ask questions, and share ideas and concerns about park planning and implementation projects including the Fire Management Plan, the

Yosemite Lodge Area Redevelopment Plan, and the Curry Village and East Valley Campground Improvement Project. The Friday NPS event does not require advance registration.

Registration materials for the Spring Forum were mailed to members in January. Attendance is limited to the first 500 registrants. The day's agenda and information about participating in the events (including the walk sign-up form) will be mailed to those who register.

We are grateful to the National Park Service, The Ansel Adams Gallery, Yosemite Concession Services, and many other friends of YA for their help in putting together all the events for this special weekend.

## Take a Working Holiday in Yosemite

Apply now to take part in one of six resource management projects in Yosemite this year! You'll work with other YA members under the direct supervision of National Park Service project leaders, and camp in a group campsite hosted by a Yosemite Institute naturalist. Strong financial support from Yosemite Concession Services completes this cooperative effort of four park partners contributing to the good of our favorite national park. The trips scheduled for 2003 are:

- |                        |  |
|------------------------|--|
| <b>June 15 – 21</b>    | <b>Weed Warriors (El Portal)</b>                                 |
| <b>July 6 – 12</b>     | <b>Wawona Weeding and Rare Plants</b>                            |
| <b>July 20 – 26</b>    | <b>Tuolumne Meadows Rare Plants (botany background required)</b> |
| <b>August 3 – 9</b>    | <b>Tuolumne Meadows Restoration Projects</b>                     |
| <b>August 17 – 23</b>  | <b>Backcountry Restoration</b>                                   |
| <b>Sept 28 – Oct 4</b> | <b>Yosemite Valley Restoration Projects</b>                      |

From Sunday afternoon to the following Saturday morning, you'll camp with your group (up to 15 YA members), work on various restoration and re-vegetation projects for four days, and enjoy a day of rest (go exploring?) mid-week. Seventeen satisfying meals, as well as snacks, are provided during your stay. Each member contributes \$50 toward food, and pitches in to help with various camp chores.

If this sounds like your idea of a meaningful working vacation, call Anne at (209) 379-2317 for more information or an application. Or go to our website, [www.yosemite.org](http://www.yosemite.org), click on "Six Ways You Can Help Us Help Yosemite," and then follow the link to "volunteering" to download an application.



RUSSELL MORIMOTO

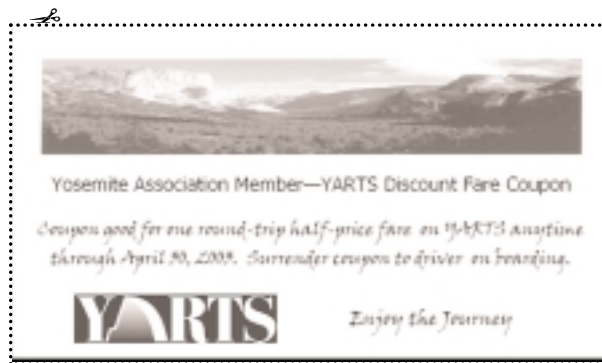
## Try YARTS at a Discount

The Yosemite Area Regional Transportation System (YARTS), the only daily public transit service into Yosemite National Park, is celebrating its third anniversary. YARTS offers a choice to those traveling in the region by providing an affordable, dependable alternative to driving in the region and to the park.

YARTS wants to reward Yosemite Association members for your support of the park by offering you a one-time 50% discount off their regular fares. Two will ride for the price of one, or a solo rider will ride for half price. Additionally, each adult ticket holder may take one child (age 16 or younger) on YARTS at no charge. This offer expires April 30, 2003.

To take advantage of this offer, clip the coupon below and present it at any YARTS ticket sales location. If you're attending the Spring Forum on March 29, consider using YARTS for your trip!

For more information about YARTS schedules, fares, routes, etc., log onto their website at [www.yosemite.com](http://www.yosemite.com) and click on "YARTS," or call them toll-free at 1-877-989-2728. We are very grateful to the Merced County Association of Governments for making this unique opportunity available to our members.



## Association Dates

**March 29, 2003**

Spring Forum, Yosemite Valley

**August 4, 2003**

Yosemite Association 80th Anniversary!

**September 13, 2003**

28th Annual Members' Meeting,  
Tuolumne Meadows

**March 27, 2004**

Spring Forum, Yosemite Valley (make your own YCS lodging reservation anytime after March 26, 2003)

**Member Info Line 209/379-2317**

If you're planning a trip to Yosemite and have questions, give our phone line a call between the hours of 9:00 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday. We don't make reservations, but we can give appropriate phone numbers and usually lots of helpful advice.

## Leaving a Yosemite Legacy

Since 1923, thousands of individuals and families have helped the Yosemite Association undertake its important educational, scientific, and research programs, with gifts of time, services, and money. Each year we receive critical support for Yosemite in the form of charitable bequests from wills and estate plans. Such bequests play a vital role in our future funding.

We encourage you to consider including a gift to the Yosemite Association in your will or estate plan. It's a way to ensure that others will enjoy Yosemite far beyond your lifetime.

For information about leaving a Yosemite legacy, call (209) 379-2317, or write to P.O. Box 230, El Portal, CA 95318

## New Board Candidate Nomination Process

For many years, members have been able to nominate candidates for YA's annual board election using a petition process at the annual meeting each September. Most recently, petitioners were required to collect the signatures of fifty current members in order to place a candidate on the ballot. At its December meeting, the YA board of trustees amended its bylaws to change the way board candidates can be nominated by petition.

Beginning in 2003, those wishing to become candidates for the YA board by petition must collect signatures from at least 4% of the current membership (which membership stands at roughly 8,500). Signatures can be collected all year and at such events as the YA Spring Forum and Annual Members Meeting. At the petitioner's expense, YA will mail petition materials to all or part of the membership.

If you have questions about the new petition process, please call the YA office at (209) 379-2317.

## Deeper Discount for Members!

Your YA membership just became even more valuable! Members are now entitled to a full 15% discount on tuition for any of the Yosemite Outdoor Adventure courses. In the case of multi-day adventures, that means you can save at least the cost of a year's basic membership dues. So "Get Lost with a Ranger," take a "Walk Among Giants," or "Raft, Hike & Bike Yosemite" this year!

## YA Benefits from Your Online Shopping

Help the Yosemite Association when you shop online. Access your favorite merchants, like Amazon and Lands End, through [www.yosemite.greatergood.com](http://www.yosemite.greatergood.com) and 5% or more of your purchase will go directly to YA at no extra cost to you.

**GreaterGood.com**  
Shop where it matters.

## Are Your YA E-Mails Being Blocked?

Many of our members have signed up to receive YA's periodic electronic newsletters. We recently learned that some Internet service providers (ISPs) have added "spam filters" that prevent unsolicited e-mails from being delivered to their users. Unfortunately, the YA e-mail newsletter has been a victim in some of those cases (even though users have asked to receive it). If your ISP is blocking our e-mail, you may not even know about it. We understand that the ISPs blocking our messages might include inreach.com, social.rr.com, junio.com, home.com, excite.com, prodigy.net, pacbell.net, dellnet.com, and others.

Why is this happening and what can you do about it? Some of the filters intentionally block all e-mails from servers that send out large quantities of mail. Because our mailing list is almost 11,000 names, we fall into that category. If you suspect that you're no longer receiving our electronic newsletter, you should call or e-mail your ISP and let them know that you want to receive e-mail from all senders @yosemite.org. If you've changed your e-mail address, be sure to notify us so that we can keep sending you news from Yosemite. You can also change your e-mail address by visiting our website at [www.yosemite.org](http://www.yosemite.org).

If you have questions about this problem, please send an e-mail to [info@yosemite.org](mailto:info@yosemite.org), or call (209) 379-2646.

## Mihalic Retires; New Superintendent for Yosemite

Yosemite National Park Superintendent Dave Mihalic retired on January 3, 2003, after 33 years of federal service. Mihalic arrived in Yosemite in October 1999 to complete stalled plans for reconstruction of Yosemite Valley after the devastating January 1997 flood. Though the Yosemite Valley and Merced River plans were swathed in controversy, Mihalic completed them on time. Most hailed the proposals as delicate, balanced approaches to preserving Yosemite Valley while still allowing access and public use. Implementation is underway.

Mihalic and his family will move to Missoula, Montana, where they own a

## Yosemite Outdoor Adventures Program Offers Lots in 2003!

Snowshoe for a day with an experienced naturalist. Take a writer's walk in spectacular Yosemite Valley. Make a traditional California Indian flute with a master craftsman. Raft the scenic Merced River with a park naturalist or gaze at the starry skies over Half Dome with an astronomer.

Our one- and multi-day courses offer something for everybody — hiking, photography, art, natural history, backpacking, writing — and are taught by park rangers, veteran outdoor leaders and seasoned naturalists. Classes are offered year-round and include free camping or room reservations (at an extra cost).

Upcoming adventures include:

- Snowshoe Explorations with a Naturalist: February 15 and March 1
- Winter Explorations with a Ranger: March 8 - 9
- Winter Photography in Yosemite: March 2 - 5
- Discovering Spring Wildflowers at Hite Cove: April 6
- A Writer's Walk in Yosemite: April 19
- The Birds of Spring: April 27
- Four Great Waterfalls: April 25 - 27
- Raft, Hike, Bike Yosemite: May 2 - 4
- Strolling with a Storyteller: May 10
- Making the Music: California Indian Style: May 17

For a complete list of courses visit [www.yosemite.org](http://www.yosemite.org) or call (209) 379-2321 to request a catalog.

## Generous Members Contribute to Fundraising Goal

Thank you! Over 570 members have responded generously to our appeal for additional donations to help fund our educational programs and services. As of January 14, we have received over \$51,000 toward our winter goal to raise \$100,000. We are deeply gratified by the unfailing support of our members. If you have not yet responded to our request, won't you take a few moments

now to make a donation and help us reach our goal? Contact the YA office for assistance. You can also donate online using our secure website and your credit card; simply visit [www.yosemite.org](http://www.yosemite.org), click on "Six Ways to Help Us Help Yosemite," and follow the link to "Make a Donation."



home. "It has been fun to work in such special places with such special people," said Mihalic. "Mine has been a dream career, with Yosemite at its pinnacle. How can you top Yosemite?" The association extends a heartfelt "Happy Trails!" to the Mihalics as they embark on this new phase of their lives.

Enter new Yosemite Superintendent Mike Tollefson, who returns to the Sierra from Great Smoky Mountains National Park, where he had been superintendent since 2000. While there, he implemented the internationally significant All Taxa Biodiversity Inventory, a 10-year program designed to inventory every living

species in the park. Tollefson's long career with the National Park Service includes the superintendency at Sequoia/Kings Canyon National Park from 1995 to 1999. Watch for an in-depth interview with Tollefson coming in a future issue of *Yosemite*.



# THREE YOSEMITE WOMEN RECEIVE DISTINGUISHED AWARDS

Three women who live and work in Yosemite National Park have recently won awards for their exceptional accomplishments and established a high standard of achievement for their fields of work.

National Park Service Director Fran Mainella awarded Park Ranger Laurel Boyers the Director's Wilderness Management and Stewardship Award last November 15 in Washington, D.C.

Boyers, the park's backcountry district ranger and parkwide wilderness manager, was recognized for a spectacular set of career achievements that have promoted wilderness understanding and protection in a park known for its crowded centers of activity, but often overlooked for its 704,000 acres of legislated wilderness.

Her achievements include pioneering work in the development of volunteer coalitions, building wilderness centers, promoting educational outreach and advanced wilderness research, and directing the park in the cooperative ethic of minimum tool and leave no trace operations. Boyers was the first female wilderness ranger in Yosemite National Park.

"To be rewarded for working hard to provide stewardship for wilderness areas, some of our nation's finest places, seems to be an award for a privilege," said Boyers of receiving this award.

Park Ranger Billie Patrick received the California

Mounted Officer of the year 2002 for "recognition of her continuing efforts to promote Mounted Law Enforcement throughout the state of California." She was selected by her peers—mounted officers from police departments and sheriff departments throughout the state.

Patrick has re-established the tradition of the Mounted Patrol Ranger Program in Yosemite National Park. She consistently demonstrates that the role of the mounted ranger is viable and integral. Her duties vary from search and rescue to public outreach, and, of course, law enforcement.

"I believe in the tradition, history, and positive energy that horses bring to law enforcement. Here in Yosemite it binds history (since our roots are in the cavalry), education, the community, the National Park Service, and visitors together. It is awesome to see a child's face light up when he or she reaches out to pet your partner."

Barb Miranda, Sierra Nevada Wilderness Education Project Director, received the Wilderness Education and Leadership Award for 2002. Miranda works for the US Forest Service, the National Park Service, and the Bureau of Land Management to further wilderness education in the Sierra Nevada.

Miranda is being recognized for three programs that she has implemented:

**Project Leave No Trace**—Miranda has trained over 4,000 Boy Scouts in Leave No Trace Ethics.

**Wilderness Riders**—Partnership with the Backcountry Horsemen of California. This program has grown to an established cadre of fifty horsemen and women who have educated 12,000 other stock users in minimum impact skills.

**WildLink**—experiential and web-based education program for high school students. It includes teacher workshops, "hidden histories" about culturally diverse Americans in the Sierra, expeditions for students and on-line journals, resource monitoring data, and career counseling. WildLink brings wilderness to the culturally diverse youth of California and they return to their communities as ambassadors of wilderness.

"This award is for the vision that all wilderness managers (of the three agencies) had to see the value of partnerships for wilderness education in the Sierra Nevada. I am privileged that I got to be the one to guide their vision," explained Miranda.



From left: Billie Patrick, Barb Miranda, and Laurel Boyers.

# EXPERIENCING YOSEMITE AS A VOLUNTEER: A REPORT FROM THE NEWBIES



We were first-time long term volunteers for the Yosemite Association this past September and wanted to share the experience with some of you who might be considering the program. We had never done anything similar to this and wanted to try it last summer because we had finally become “semi-retired” and were able to fit a month of volunteering into our remaining work schedules. As “newbies,” as we were called when we got to the park, we were understandably nervous about this whole thing. The week before our session was scheduled to start (on Labor Day weekend, no less!) we made a day trip from our home in Walnut Creek to see just what the volunteer camp – and people – were like. What if we couldn’t deal with the camping arrangements, or, worse yet, the other volunteers? After all, some of these people had been living in tents for months, and they might have lost all vestiges of civilization by September. Obviously, everything passed the eyeball test.

The first and most important thing we can say about our time in Yosemite is that we loved it. The work we were assigned to do was mostly fun. We probably liked Happy Isles the best because we found “playing store” very attractive. We also liked frolicking in the nearby river on our lunch break. The other work assignments were near the Visitor Center and we enjoyed them as well, but in a different way, since they were more visitor intensive.

The thing that made our stay most worthwhile was the park, of course. Even when we were tired after a long day of answering the same questions, we would hop on our small fold-up bikes to head back to camp and get a glimpse of Half Dome as we crossed the meadow; the amazing beauty of the place would strike us as fresh – every day. There were other special times in the park, too, like the first couple of days of the full moon when moonrise over the valley was truly a spectacular event. We just stood on the boardwalk that crosses the meadow, watching with our mouths hanging open. The moonlight slowly crossed the face of the granite cliffs, and finally reached the meadow where we stood with many other overnight visitors out for the late evening event, changing the color from a dark vague gray-black to a much more breathtaking silvery white with haunting shadows. It was over in less than 30 minutes, but it was something we will never forget.

The wildlife also charmed us. There was a coyote that swaggered through our campsite most mornings, just like he owned the place. Deer were everywhere, not necessarily a plus, but we thought that the big buck that went running down the path from the Yurt to Shuttle Stop #1 showed a lot of class. Bears, however, were a disappointment for us, since we never actually saw any even though we heard them, or the rangers chasing them, almost nightly.

The only negative aspect to our stay in Yosemite was

the scarcity of communication opportunities with the world we had left behind. We brought our cell phone, but soon learned that we were only served on “roam” mode at 45 cents a minute. Other volunteers had other phone services that worked better, although we would occasionally find them clinging to the side of a tree or in other odd locations, sometimes spinning in slow circles in an attempt to improve their reception. Fortunately the park still has working pay phones. Internet connections, however, were more of a problem, since very little was available to us in the park. Silly us, we thought we’d be able to stay in touch with our business by internet. But by the end of our stay we found that we rather liked being unavailable to clients and friends, mostly because we preferred Yosemite to the real world.

Our fellow volunteers turned out to be a nice group of people, and we all worked to keep harmony in the campground. I suppose the “4,000 foot margarita” (a patented concoction) offered at 5:00 p.m. each day might have contributed to that sense of well-being. The YA staff was helpful to us and very patient about answering the multitude of questions we managed to come up with. When we began our month we would snicker about our \$10 a day stipend, saying that it was a good thing that the Yosemite Association didn’t know we’d be willing to pay them the \$10, but by the end of the month we understood the real reason for the stipend. We are pretty sure we spent that much and more in the YA bookstore and The Ansel Adams Gallery before we left.

Even with our expenditures, we came away from our volunteering experience richer. It was wonderful spending a month living and working with people who share our passion for the park. The camaraderie that we developed with our fellow volunteers was an added bonus. Knowing that we made an impact on countless park visitors and played an important role in contributing to the well-being of one of our country’s greatest national treasures was certainly gratifying. We highly recommend this program to any YA member who enjoys working with people and has a month or more at his/her disposal.

## Be a Volunteer

***Editor’s Note: Jerry and Susan were members of the Yosemite Valley volunteer corps during the month of September. Along with the other volunteers in the valley and at Tuolumne Meadows, they accumulated over 7,000 hours of service to YA and the park. If it weren’t for these dedicated individuals, many facilities, including Parsons Lodge, Happy Isles Nature Center, the Yurt information station, and the Museum Gallery, would be closed to the public.***

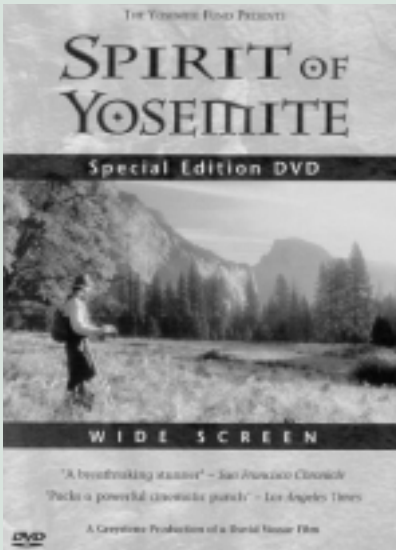
***If you would like to share your commitment to Yosemite as a YA volunteer during the upcoming 2003 season, have a month or more at your disposal, can provide your own food and camping equipment, and are willing to work a four- or five-day week for a \$10 per day stipend, please contact Connie or Anne at (209) 379-2317 for an application. To download an application from our web site ([yosemite.org](http://yosemite.org)), click on “Six Ways to Help Us Help Yosemite,” and follow the link to “Volunteering.”***



*Volunteer Mike Bonham directs visitors seeking assistance in YA’s Camp 6 Yurt information station.*



# YOSEMITE CATALOG



## **Spirit of Yosemite - Special Edition DVD**

*A Greystone Production of a David Vassar Film.*

This is the state-of-the-art film presented at the Visitor Center in Yosemite Valley in a special expanded DVD format. The program, which was a prize winner at the Jackson Hole Wildlife Film Festival, originated on 35mm color negative film and mastered on high definition video. The 5.1 Surround Sound is available on the DVD as well as full surround stereo.

The special edition DVD includes over 30 minutes of new material in the form of 3 new short films highlighting the beauty of Yosemite Valley, the Mariposa Grove of Big Trees, and Tuolumne Meadows and the High Sierra. These three new featurettes were shot in all four seasons with new music composed by Tony Humecke.

The DVD also provides 8 audio options and 5 different languages: English, Spanish, French, German, and Japanese. Options for stereo surround without narration and a director and producer commentary track also are included.

Through this full-featured DVD, you can enjoy the majesty of Yosemite as you are transported to the beauty of various regions of the park, including Yosemite Valley, Tuolumne Meadows, the High Sierra, and the Mariposa Grove.

DVD in clamshell box; running time 55 minutes; copyright 2002, The Yosemite Fund. \$19.95; **member price \$16.96**



## **SummitMark Bench Mark Paperweights for Half Dome, El Capitan, and Glacier Point** *by GEOsitu.*

These handsome new paperweights are heavy medallions fashioned after actual survey markers located on top of renowned Yosemite landmarks. They are artfully rendered in brushed pewter – beautifully cast and finely detailed. The medallion for Glacier Point is a facsimile of the U.S. Geological Survey marker there. Because no such markers have been placed on Half Dome and El Capitan, the paperweights for those locations feature an image of the site, the site name, and geographic information for each.

The paperweights come in a blue fleece stuff sack with colorful cord and cordlock, and information is provided about the locations they commemorate, including elevation and map coordinates. That data is from the official United States data source on domestic geographic names, the Geographic Names Information System (GNIS).

Each paperweight is 3.25 inches in diameter, made of cast pewter, weighs 6 to 7 ounces, and is packaged in a fleece bag. Copyright 2002, GEOsitu. \$32.95; **member price \$28.01**

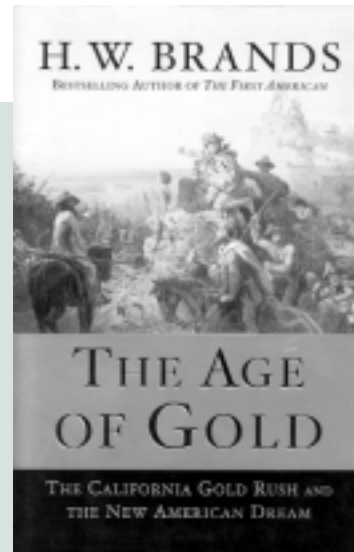
Note: please specify El Capitan, Half Dome, or Glacier Point.

**The Age of Gold—  
The California Gold Rush and the American Dream**

by *H. W. Brands.*

When gold was first discovered on the American River above Sutter's Fort in January 1848, California was sparsely populated frontier territory not yet ceded to the United States from Mexico. The discovery triggered a massive influx as hundreds of thousands of people scrambled to California in search of riches, braving dangerous journeys across the Pacific, around Cape Horn, and through the Isthmus of Panama, as well as across America's vast, unsettled wilderness.

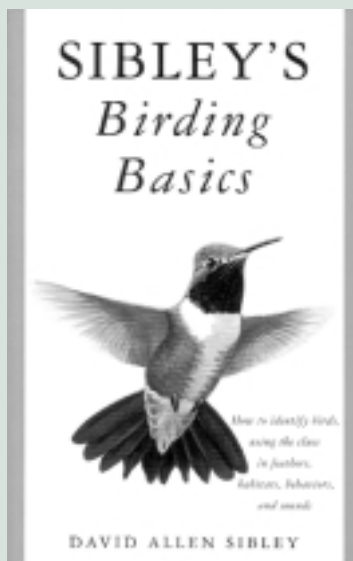
Cities sprang up overnight, in response to the demand for supplies and services of all kinds. By 1850, California had become a state — the fastest journey to statehood in U.S. history. It had also become a symbol of what America stood for and of where it was going.



In *The Age of Gold*, H. W. Brands explores the far-reaching implications of this pivotal point in U.S. history, weaving the politics of the times with the gripping stories of individuals that display both the best and the worst of the American character. He discusses the national issues that exploded around the ratification of California's statehood, hastening the clouds that would lead to the Civil War.

He tells the stories of the great fortunes made by such memorable figures as John and Jessie Fremont, Leland Stanford and George Hearst — and of great fortunes lost by hundreds now forgotten by history. And he reveals the profound effect of the Gold Rush on the way Americans viewed their destinies, as the Puritan ethic of hard work and the gradual accumulation of worldly riches gave way to the notion of getting rich quickly.

560 pages; 6.5 x 9.5 inches; illustrated in black and white; hardcover with dust jacket; copyright 2002, Doubleday Books. \$29.95; **member price \$25.46**



**Sibley's Birding Basics**

by *David Allen Sibley.*

The focus of this new work is described on the cover as “How to identify birds, using the clues in feathers, behaviors, habitats, and sounds.” To create the guide, the author thought through all the skills that enable him to identify a bird in the few instants it is visible to him. Here he shares that information, integrating an explanation of the identification process with many painted and drawn images of details or concepts.

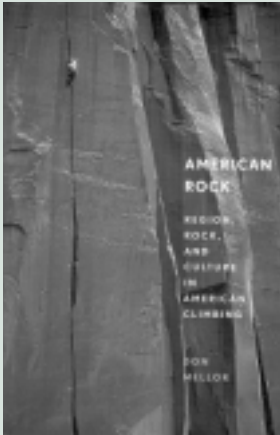
The book begins by reviewing how one can get started as a birder, with discussions of equipment, where and when to go, and the essential things to look for when birds appear. Sibley reviews all the basic concepts of bird identification, and issues warnings about “illusions and other pitfalls” – and advice on avoiding them.

The second part of the book deals with the major aspects of avian life that differ from species to species: feathers (color, arrangement, shape, molt), behavior and habitat, and sounds. This scientifically precise, beautifully illustrated volume distills the essence of David Sibley's experience and skills, providing a solid introduction to “naming” the birds.

experience and skills, providing a solid introduction to “naming” the birds.

160 pages; 5.5 x 8 inches; illustrated in full color; paperback with gatefold flaps; copyright 2002, Alfred A. Knopf. \$15.95; **member price \$13.56**

To see an expanded list of the Yosemite-related books, maps, and products we offer for sale, visit the full-featured, secure **Yosemite Store** on the internet at: <http://yosemitestore.com>



### **American Rock – Region, Rock, and Culture in American Climbing**

*by Don Mellow.*

This book is a celebration of the diversity of American rock climbing, and an authoritative history of how the sport has evolved at dozens of climbing hotspots around the country. With a remarkable variety of geologic environments to choose from, American climbers have seen huge increases in their numbers. The author suggests that with this newfound popularity and the advent of climbing gyms and schools, the once obscure sport may become bland and homogenized.

In examining climbing areas across the country, Mellow chronicles the rich history and vibrant personalities of the climbing scene, and explores the meanings behind ongoing debates in the climbing community over access, techniques, and equipment. Throughout he pleads for conservation and respect, to protect these fragile resources for generations of climbers to come.

This is the first and only book to look at American climbing as a whole, especially important as the specialties diverge. All climbers and others interested in the sport will appreciate learning about the history, the culture, and the great places of American climbing.

304 pages; 6 x 9 inches; illustrated in black and white; hardcover with dust jacket; copyright 2001, Countryman Press. \$27.95; **member price \$23.76**

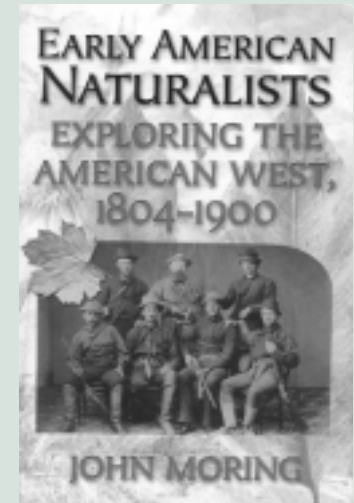
### **Early American Naturalists—Exploring the American West, 1804-1900**

*by John Moring.*

This history is the first to detail the lives, adventures, and discoveries of pioneering American naturalists such as Meriwether Lewis and William Clark, Martha Maxwell, Spencer Baird, Asa Gray, John Torrey, Florence Bailey, John Burroughs, and John Muir. All of them wandered purposefully, with pen and ink in hand, through the unknown reaches of the American continent, sketching and writing about the natural wonders they encountered.

Regardless of the formidable obstacles and travails they faced, these naturalist-explorers persisted to provide an invaluable scientific foundation for those interested in the plants, animals, and environment of the American West. This book celebrates those intrepid trail-blazers who boldly navigated and documented the untrammelled, awe-inspiring frontier west of the Mississippi. The author elucidates an important part of the discovery of the biota of the United States while describing adventures that will enthrall any naturalist.

244 pages; 6 x 9 inches; illustrated in black and white; hardcover with dust jacket; copyright 2002, Cooper Square Press. \$27.50; **member price \$23.38**



### **Pajaro Field Bag**

This waist pack features seven pockets for everything you'll need when you're hiking or enjoying time in the outdoors. The main pocket is sized to accommodate field guides, travel books, or binoculars. There are smaller pockets (including one with a zipper) for note pads and maps, and specialized pockets for pencils, pens, and sunglasses. Best of all, a secret pocket sealed with Velcro keeps keys, credit cards, and other valuables safe.

It's the best such pack we've found.

Made in the U.S.A. of durable Cordura in navy blue, forest green, or black by Pajaro. (please specify color) \$29.95; **member price \$25.46**





NEW COLORS AND LOGO NOW AVAILABLE!

**Yosemite Association Water Bottle**

by Nalgene

This highly functional wide-mouth Nalgene bottle made of super-tough, lexan polycarbonate is now available with the traditional Yosemite Association logo in four new colors: meadow green, honey yellow, violet, and glacier blue.

The bottles are virtually leak-proof, won't conduct heat or cold, and don't affect the taste of water or other liquids. You'll never lose their easy-to-open, attached, screw tops. Besides the YA logo, the bottles feature permanent gradation marks to make measuring powdered foods and drinks easy.

A bottle weighs 5.3 ounces including attached cap; from Nalgene. \$9.95; **member price: \$8.46**



**Yosemite Association Mug**

This distinctive and functional heavy ceramic mug feels good with your hand wrapped around it. Available in two colors (green or maroon), it's imprinted with our logo and name in black and white. Holds 12 ounces of your favorite beverage.

\$6.50 (please specify color); **member price \$5.53**



**Yosemite Wilderness Pin**

Here's a beautiful enamel pin commemorating Yosemite's unparalleled wilderness. It's circular in shape with a high country scene rendered in blues, grays, and greens. A real treasure for collectors. Approximately 1 inch in diameter. \$4.00; **member price \$3.40**



**Yosemite Association Patch**

Our Association logo is embroidered on colorful, sturdy fabric for placement on daypacks, shirts, blue jeans, jackets, or wherever! The patch is available in two attractive colors: dark blue and maroon. \$3.00 (please specify color); **member price \$2.55**



**Yosemite Black Bear Stuffed Animal**

This soft and fuzzy stuffed black bear (actually dark brown with a lighter muzzle) comes fitted with a yellow ear tag—just like those used by National Park Service rangers to research and track the bears in Yosemite.

The Yosemite black bear is part of an awareness program designed to educate the public so that bears will be

roaming the Sierra Nevada for years to come. All proceeds from our sale of the stuffed bear will be donated to the program and aid Yosemite bears.

The yellow ear tag is a replica of those actually used in Yosemite, and securely affixed. Washable with warm water and mild soap, the cuddly bear is a great gift for children and bear lovers alike. Available in two sizes: large (14 inches from tail to snout) and small (10.5 inches). Large bear, \$14.95; **member price \$12.71**; small bear, \$9.95; **member price \$8.46**



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Welcome to our newest members! You've joined over 9,000 like-minded individuals, families, and businesses helping the association make Yosemite an even better place.

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## New Yosemite Association Faces

As our association turns 80 years old, we continue to evolve. Recently, that evolution has brought several new people into our organization. On the board level, Suzanne Corkins of Palo Alto was appointed last year as a new trustee to replace Bob Eckart, who resigned. Ms. Corkins is the Director of Business Development for a biotechnology company in the Bay Area, with experience as a management consultant. She holds undergraduate and business degrees from Stanford University, and is a rabid Sierra Nevada backpacker. She and her husband Trey Pruitt hiked the John Muir Trail to celebrate their marriage.



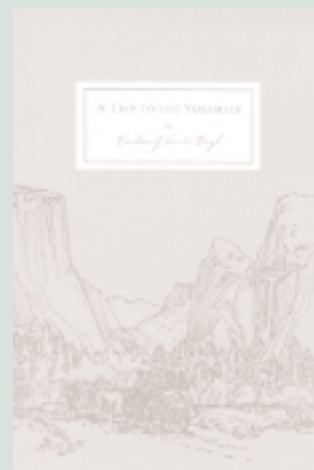
Mr. Eckart joined the YA board in 1993, and served the association for nearly ten years, many of them as board treasurer. We will miss Bob and his wife Nancy, who recently relocated to the Phoenix area, where the mountains are somewhat smaller than those in Yosemite. Everyone at the association sends gratitude and appreciation for the contributions of the Eckarts, and we wish them all the best in their new home and community.

The YA office staff has been augmented, too. We are pleased to welcome Chris Geis as our new administrative assistant. Now that Anne Steed has moved to the membership department full time, and Shelly Stephens to the sales department, Chris serves as the new “hub” of the organization, handling an amazing range of responsibilities and perplexities here at YA world headquarters. We hope she’s as happy as we are that she has joined our staff.

We welcome both Suzanne Corkins and Chris Geis to our organization, and look forward to benefiting from the involvement of them both.

## New Limited Edition Book Available

The Yosemite Association recently announced the publication of *A Trip to the Yosemite* by Caroline G. Van der Burgh. It is an account of the author’s trip from her home on the East Coast to Yosemite shortly after 1900. The stong-willed, intelligent, unmarried, and independent woman later self-published for her family her report on the journey by train from San Francisco to Merced and then by stage from Merced over the Santa Fe route.



This is the first time that *A Trip to the Yosemite* has been made available to the public. Filled with reverence and appreciation, Van der Burgh’s impressions of the scenery and landmarks within the “veritable Promised Land” reinforce the timelessness of Yosemite’s appeal and beauty. For this finely-printed edition, an introduction was prepared by Ms. Van der Burgh’s granddaughter, Carolyn Lansden Whittle, and a series of striking line drawings by acclaimed Yosemite artist Jane Gyer were commissioned. Twenty of the drawings are included in the book.

The forty pages of text were designed by Michael Osborne Design and printed letterpress on Mohawk Superfine text at One Heart Press in San Francisco using photopolymer plates. The book measures 6 x 9 inches and was hand bound into Teton cover using a Japanese-style stab sewing. The edition is limited to 250 numbered copies, each signed by the illustrator. Only about 75 copies are still unsold.

*A Trip to the Yosemite* may be purchased by Yosemite Association members for \$60; the price is \$75 for non-members. California residents should add sales tax of 7.75%. Shipping and handling is \$5.95 with the United States. To order, call (209) 379-2648, or visit our online store at: [www.yosemitestore.com](http://www.yosemitestore.com).



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## Join the Yosemite Association

The Yosemite Association initiates and supports interpretive, educational, research, scientific, and environmental programs in Yosemite National Park, in cooperation with the National Park Service. Authorized by Congress, the Association provides services and direct financial support in order to promote park stewardship and enrich the visitor experience.

Besides publishing and selling books, maps, and other materials, YA operates an outdoor adventure program, the Art Activity Center, the bear canister rental program, and the Wilderness Permit Reservation system. Revenues generated by these activities fund a variety of National Park Service programs in Yosemite.

You can help us be successful by becoming a member. Individuals, families, and businesses throughout the country have long supported the Yosemite Association with their dues and participation in our programs.

Won't you join us in our efforts to make Yosemite an even better place?

### MOVING?

If you are moving or have recently moved, don't forget to notify us. You are a valued member of the Association, and we'd like to keep in touch with you.

### MEMBER BENEFITS

As a member of the Yosemite Association, you will enjoy the following benefits and much more:

- *Yosemite*, the quarterly Association journal;
- 15% discount on all books, products, and tuition for Outdoor Adventures offered by the Association;
- 10% discount on Yosemite Concession Services lodging in the park and at Tenaya Lodge (some restrictions apply) AND a members-only "Park Partners" lodging reservation phone number;
- 10% discount on lodging at The Redwoods in Yosemite (Wawona);
- 10% discount at The Ansel Adams Gallery in Yosemite Valley (some restrictions apply);
- Opportunity to attend member events and to volunteer in the park;
- Know that your support is helping us make a difference in Yosemite National Park.

When you join at one of the following levels, you will receive a special membership gift:

*Supporting:* the award-winning video, "Yosemite: The Fate of Heaven."

*Contributing:* *Yosemite—The Promise of Wildness*, an elegant book of essays and photographs.

*Sustaining:* *Tradition and Innovation, A Basket History of the Indians of the Yosemite/Mono Lake Area*, a beautifully illustrated, finely printed book.

*Patron:* a matted color photograph by Howard Weamer, "Half Dome—Storm Light."

*Benefactor:* an Ansel Adams Special Edition print, "Yosemite Valley—Thunderstorm."

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is published quarterly for members of the Yosemite Association. It is edited by Steven Medley and produced by Robin Weiss Graphic Design. Copyright © 2003 Yosemite Association. Submission of manuscripts, photographs, and other materials is welcomed. E-mail can be sent to: info@yosemite.org  
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