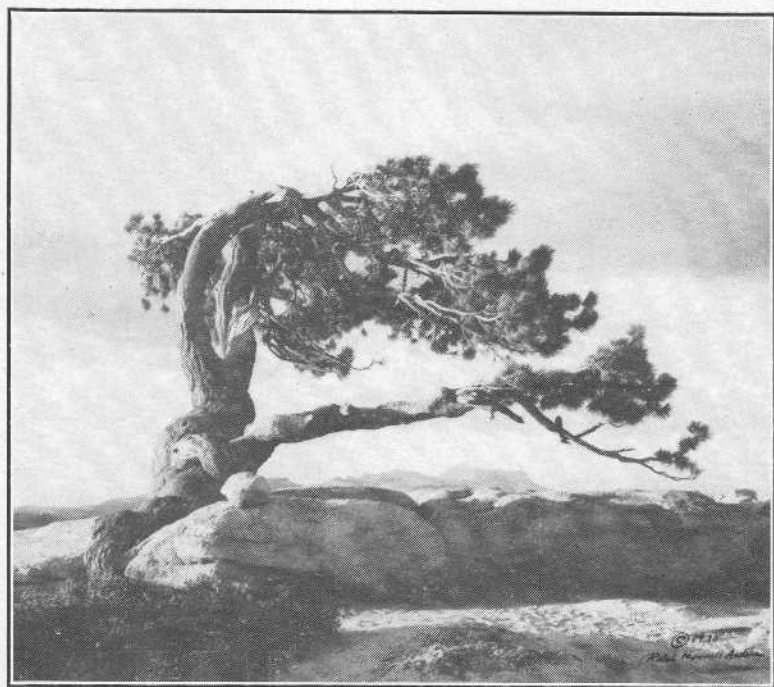


YOSEMITE NATURE NOTES

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Yosemite Nature Notes

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OUR THOUGHTS TURN

By Lieut. James R. Sweeney (*)

With all the talk of post war planning, it seems only logical to speculate, not only on fitting the service men back into civilian life, but to see that their recreational facilities will be the best in the world. In view of the fact, it seems that the National Parks and Monuments with the ranger and naturalist services will continue to introduce more and more of the public to the outstanding beauties and interest to be found in the great out of doors. The National Parks and Monuments have been set aside by the Government because of these features of scenic wonder so that they may be enjoyed by the present generation and all generations to come.

Millions of service men and women in the past four years have learned that they can walk twenty miles a day with a pack with comparative ease. These and others will be the ones who are going to hit the trails in ever increasing numbers to capture the beauty and excitement of the high country.

Yosemite with its hundreds of miles of High Sierra Trails will have more visitors than ever before. A good percentage of these will be interested to see what lies beyond the

towering walls of granite about the Valley and to fish the high lakes and streams where few have tried their luck. Ex-mountain troops want to test their skill on Lyell, McClure, Clark, or the Cathedral Spires, not to mention others. Ex-ski troopers will search out Yosemite's ski trails for cross-country and downhill skiing.

Yes, Yosemite will have its share of the ex-service men and women who will seek the mountains for their recreation.

We will be back.

* * *

* Numerous letters which are received from time to time from members of the Yosemite Naturalist Staff, now in the Armed Services, indicate that the out-of-doors in general and Yosemite in particular still occupies a firm place in their minds and hearts. The above article is part of a recent communication from Lt. Sweeney who was a member of the Yosemite School of Field Natural History during the summer of 1940 and a Ranger-naturalist during the summer of 1941. It typifies the sentiment noted in many letters received from our former associates who are now scattered throughout the globe in the service of their country.(C.F.B.)

THUMBNAIL SKETCHES OF YOSEMITE ARTISTS

By Elizabeth H. Godfrey, NPS Staff

CHRIS JORGENSEN

On the second floor of the Yosemite National Park Museum, visitors will find the "Jorgensen Room," which contains many lovely landscapes in both watercolor and oil of Yosemite scenery, painted by Chris Jorgensen.

A framed photograph of the artist hangs near the doorway. An accompanying label outlines the salient points of his life, and explains how the paintings were bequeathed to the National Park Service by the will of his wife, Angela Ghirardelli Jorgensen, who passed away in 1935, a few months following her husband's death.

Although there are forty-four paintings in the Jorgensen Room, representative of the different types of

scenic beauty in Yosemite National Park, the gift included a collection of 199 paintings. Many were of other National Park Service areas. Consequently, a majority of these paintings were distributed in accordance with their application.

C. A. Harwell, former Park Naturalist of Yosemite National Park, was instrumental in the acquisition of this gift. During a visit to Yosemite by the Jorgensens in the early 1930's, he met with the artist and suggested that inasmuch as the museum had paintings by Ayres, Hill, Best, Bierstadt, and others, one of the Jorgensen paintings should also be included. Jorgensen was impressed with the idea and, upon his suggestion, Harwell visited the ar-



Sentinel Hotel in the early days - about 1885

that's home at Piedmont later and selected the painting of "Mount Lyell at Sunset." Thus the seed was sown for a larger gift at a later time.

Jorgensen's Life

The life of Jorgensen was characterized by a pathetic beginning and many early hardships, which, nevertheless, were overcome and crowned by success in later life.

His childhood was not a rosy one. He was born in Christiania, (now Oslo), Norway in 1859. When six years old his father, a seafaring man, passed away, and left his widow with five small children. A brother of Mr. Jorgensen in far away San Francisco persuaded her to bring her children and come to live near him. Thus when "little Chris," as he was called, was ten years of age, he sailed with his mother and brothers and sisters to their new home.

As the family had no income except their own earnings, Chris worked at whatever job he could get to contribute to the family larder. It was not until he was 14 that he was able to follow his natural bent in the field of art. On February 14, 1874, he learned that an art academy was opening—"The California School of Design," now the California Art Association. Chris was eager to attend, and interviewed two of the school's organizers—Virgil Williams and Ross Martin. They agreed to give the ambitious lad free tuition in exchange for minor tasks about

the school. In later years, when Jorgensen had achieved his ambition to become an artist, he credited much of his success to his kind and understanding friend and instructor, Virgil Williams.

Even with free tuition, young Chris had to divide his time between employment and going to art school. At 15 he started to work part time for Bugbee and Sons, an architectural firm. Next door was the studio of Thomas Hill (1) who took an interest in the young man and his desire to paint. Hill not only permitted Chris to watch him paint, but gave him a key to his studio so that during his absence, Chris could go in to look and study.

With most of his elementary education obtained at night classes at the old Lincoln Grammar School, and his days divided between work and the art school, Chris at 20 was rewarded with a position as art instructor in the California School of Design. In one of his classes was a wealthy young society girl, Miss Angela Ghiradelli, with whom he fell in love and married a year later. It was a happy, successful marriage. They had two children—a son, Virgil, and a daughter, Am-ee. Livelihood that had been earned at a great sacrifice in his youth was now provided by his wife's fortune, affording Jorgensen the rare opportunity of painting for the pure love of it.

From 1881 to 1883, Jorgensen served as Assistant Director of the

(1) Well known Yosemite artist. See Yosemite Nature Notes March 1944).

California School of Design. In 1892, the Jorgensens went to Italy where Chris studied for two years.

Residence in Yosemite

From 1899 to 1918, the Jorgensens made their home in Yosemite Valley. Today, their old home and studio, and the rustic cabin near-by, that served originally as servant's quarters, still stand, and are used as residences for National Park Service employees. The location is on



the north bank of the Merced River near the Sentinel Bridge. In the old days, this was conveniently near the popular Sentinel Hotel (now obliterated) where wealthy guests stayed, and casually dropped in to see Jor-

gensen's paintings and sometimes to purchase them.

Jorgensen used his architectural talents in the design of his studio home with its spacious living room, huge fireplace, where a "raft o'kettles" hung. In back was a patio for out-of-door meals. In addition to his paintings, Dutch furniture, also made by Jorgensen, and Indian baskets gave the Jorgensen living room a cozy, personalized atmosphere.

Without being told the average person would have instinctively known that Jorgensen was an artist. In stature he was a small person, about 5'4", and his every-day dress was a brown corduroy jacket, matching knickers, a soft shirt and black silk tie. He always wore a large felt hat with a somewhat rakish tilt. He had flashing blue eyes, a dark mustache and goatee, and he had the reputation of having a genial word for everyone.

Among the celebrities who visited the Jorgensen home was President Theodore Roosevelt: In 1903, when on a visit to Yosemite, the President stopped for a few moments in response to a cordial invitation from Jorgensen, and displayed considerable interest in the artist's work and his Dutch furniture. Later when Jorgensen was in Washington, D.C., he remembered the President's invitation to call upon him at the White House. When the President saw him he is said to have exclaimed, "Wait a minute. I'll have your name in one minute . . . You're the man who

paints pictures of Yosemite and makes Dutch furniture!"

In addition to his Yosemite paintings, Jorgensen also won a reputation for his portrayal of the California Missions both in water color and oils. He also painted commendably the Grand Canyon, the Arizona desert and many other scenic spots.

When he left Yosemite, Jorgensen's attractive home and adjoining cabin became the property of the National Park Service under the terms of his lease with the United States Government. (2).

The Jorgensens also had a palatial home at Carmel, California, and today, as remodeled, it is known as the La Playa Hotel. Along with George Sterling, Jorgensen is credited with the founding of the original

artist's colony at Carmel.

In 1906, Jorgensen exhibited 116 paintings at the Cosmos Club in Washington, D.C. The exhibit included many Yosemite paintings in addition to a complete collection of paintings depicting the twenty-one original California Missions, paintings of the San Francisco fire and earthquake disaster and others.

The Jorgensen's later years were spent in their charming home in Piedmont, California, where the artist continued to paint up until the time of his death in 1935.

The beautiful Yosemite paintings by Jorgensen now exhibited at the Museum are a fitting monument to his memory, and give him a conspicuous place among Yosemite artists.

- (2) Before the construction of the Yosemite National Park Museum in 1925, the old Jorgensen studio-home was used by the Park Service as a small museum.

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WHAT A GLUTTON!

By Clyde E. Quick, Park Ranger—Summer 1944

Early last July an incident occurred that reversed the theory that a trout will not bite soon again after being well hooked.

Two brothers were fishing from the shore of Babcock Lake, 3.4 miles above the Merced Lake Ranger Station. One of the boys, using a Royal Coachman fly, hooked a 13 inch Eastern Brook trout but, unfortunately, it got away, taking the fly in the bargain. Nearby the other boy was fishing the same spot with salmon eggs. Soon he hooked and landed this same trout. In its mouth were six salmon eggs and the same Royal Coachman fly that had been lost by

his brother a short time previously.



BEAR ANTICS

Yellow jackets seem to have been a bit more common in Yosemite Valley during the late summer and early fall of this year than is generally the case. On several occasions their nests in the earth along our trails were disturbed by strollers whose languid meanderings were

immediately characterized by bursts of speed and a greatly increased tempo. One group of yellow jackets picked a spot in the play yard of the local school as a nest site—as a number of youngsters who unfortunately selected the same location as a place to jump rope will recall. But

the bear is either indifferent to the activities of the yellow jackets, chooses to ignore their attacks, or feels the results gained justify the price paid. The nests with their larvae provide an occasional variation in their late summer diet. One evening, while returning from the Museum, we noticed a recent and rather extensive excavation in the dry earth between the road and the Museum wildflower garden. A few yellow jackets still circled the spot above the remains of their ravaged nest in what might be characterized as a disconsolate mood (if the term can be applied to this offensive-minded insect). Sometime during the day a bear has passed the spot, lo-

cated the nest and scooped it from its subterranean location. (C.F.B.)

* * *

During the late summer and fall of each year the apple orchards of Yosemite Valley — planted years ago by James C. Lamon and James M. Hutchings, pioneer residents of the Valley — become a source of considerable interest to our bear. Not content to limit their activities to windfalls the animals climb into the trees and shake or pull quantities of fruit from the branches. On one occasion in late September three bear were seen in the Hutching's orchard busily "roughing" the apples to the ground. (C.F.B.)





MUSEUM NOTES

RECENT BOTANICAL COLLECTIONS

By Carl W. Sharsmith (*)

During the past summer, through means provided by the Yosemite Natural History Association, it was possible for the writer to spend about ten weeks in Yosemite National Park on a highly interesting and important project of botanical collecting. Results of this work contribute to the development of the herbarium of the Yosemite Museum.

The work was fruitful to the extent that the herbarium was enriched by the addition of 702 mounted specimens, together representing 528 different plants. Of the number added this year, 146 species had not been previously represented in the herbarium. The total number of species of Yosemite plants now represented in this collection numbers 1113. Two native plants, hitherto unknown in Yosemite National Park, were collected and are of particular interest. One was a horsetail or scouring rush technically known as *Equisetum kansanum*. The second new "find" was one of the grasses — *Glyceria erecta*. In addition 35 native plants of the region, rarely noted in the Park, were also collected, of which 29 had not been previously re-

presented in the herbarium. Further, one of the interesting and important factors in a study of botanical relationships in an area such as a national park is the number of exotic or non-native plants that manage to creep into the area in response to certain changes over a period of time. Although little attention was given to this phase during the past summer nine such plants were collected that had, so far as I was aware, not been noted in the past. All were new to the herbarium. Concentrated study in this field will undoubtedly extend this number.

The collections were made largely in Yosemite Valley, about Wawona, along the Glacier Point Road with particular emphasis on the Perego Meadow region, the west boundary of the Park in the vicinity of the Arch Rock Entrance, and Tuolumne Meadows.

* Yosemite visitors in past years will recall Dr. Sharsmith, who holds a position on the faculty of the botany department of the University of Minnesota, as a ranger-naturalist. He served many summers in that capacity at Tuolumne Meadows.



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Dan Anderson