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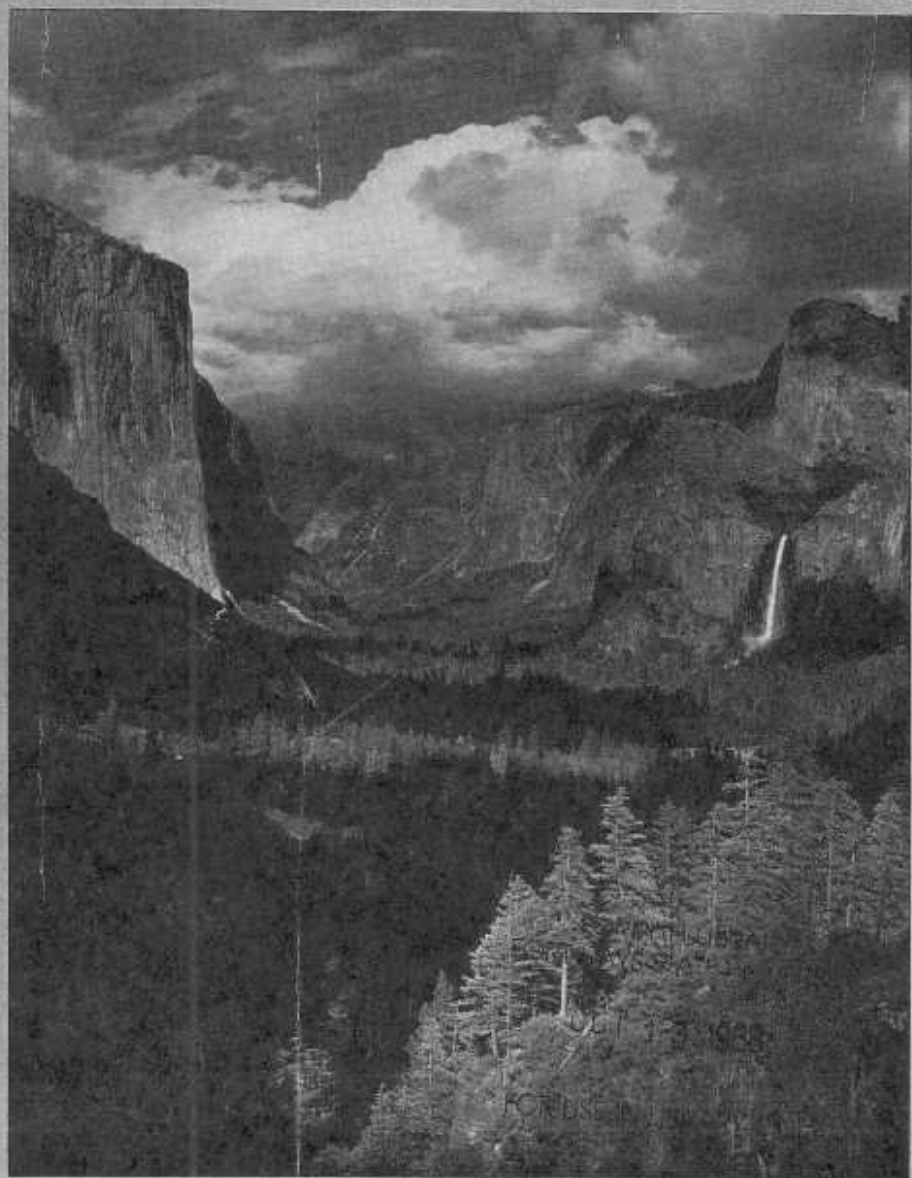




Photo by Ralph Anderson

Tenaya Box Canyon and Pyweack Fall from Mt. Watkins. Only skilled rock-climbers should attempt to traverse this rugged, trailless canyon in which persons have become lost and injured. Anyone considering the trip should first report to the Chief Ranger's Office.

**Cover Photo: Yosemite Valley.** By Ansel Adams from "Yosemite and the Sierra Nevada," text by John Muir, 64 photographs by Ansel Adams. Reproduction by kind permission of Houghton Mifflin Company.

# Yosemite Nature Notes

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C. P. Russell, Superintendent

D. E. McHenry, Park Naturalist

H. C. Parker, Assoc. Park Naturalist

N. B. Herkenham, Acting Asst. Park Naturalist

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## THE BOX CANYON OF TENAYA GORGE

By Enid Michael

Of all the gorges in the Sierra Nevada, the Tenaya box canyon is one of the wildest. A tremendous gash in the solid granite, with Clouds Rest on one side and Mt. Watkins on the other, this narrow, ragged gorge contains a series of waterfalls, intermediate rapids, and remarkable, deep pools. The entrance to the box canyon is about five miles above Mirror Lake. A surfaced trail is found from Mirror Lake to Snow Creek, a distance of a mile. Beyond Snow Creek there is no trail; the terrain is rugged—a boulder-strewn, wooded area that slopes rather steeply up Tenaya Creek. The route over this area is indicated by rocky cairns placed along the way. A rough, wild path this, leading over boulders, fallen timber and other irregularities.

In the old days I often used to traverse this canyon with my husband, Charles, and a longing came over me to go that way once more. Two of my friends, Mr. Bill and Jules, agreed to go with me. The date was set for September 30, 1945.

We meet according to schedule at LeConte Memorial Lodge, and after driving to Mirror Lake, start off for the box canyon. Jules remarks that he would like to see poison oak (*Rhus diversiloba*). He recalls a trip taken once along this way with a

ranger-naturalist. On that occasion the naturalist had pointed out poison oak, but Jules has forgotten how it looks. After crossing Snow Creek colonies of these shrubs begin to appear along the way and Jules spies them before I have time to speak. Mr. Bill remarks that a shrub similar to poison oak also grows along here, and that it is not poisonous.

"The harmless shrub is called squaw bush (*Rhus trilobata*). Its rather thick, firm leaves have three regular leaflets, whilst the leaves of poison oak are thin, of deeper green, and have three rather irregular leaflets."

Fresh green clumps of rigid woodfern (*Aspidium rigidum* var. *argutum*) arouse our favorable notice. Late in the year when growing things assume a drab appearance one is refreshed by the sight of this fern. The sword fern (*Polystichum munifolium*), a plant of similar habit, also furnishes cheer along this wild wood way.

Mr. Bill remarks that higher up the slope is another trail which he usually takes, and that it leads through a stand of king fern. The king ferns are brake ferns or bracken (*Pteris aquilina*), a fern which shows appreciation of improved situations by increasing its size and splendor. Mr. Bill has given the handsome brack-

en the name of king fern. I remind him that along this trail we reach a sandy flat covered with king ferns. Before long this level area comes into view. Tall aspens and white firs cast a cool shade and in the refreshing atmosphere mighty king ferns flourish. As we traverse the level area the ferns reach high above our heads. We note the dried stalks of Sierra lilies (*Lilium parvum*) that last spring held their orange spotted flowers above the king ferns.

I am a trifle in the rear of my two companions and of a sudden a melodious song bursts upon my ear. Soon I overtake Mr. Bill and it is he, standing among the ferns, with head thrown back, who enlivens the quiet atmosphere with melody.

Presently we come up with Jules and I remark to him that when I heard the song I did not know which of my companions was the singer and I asked him if sometimes he sang.

"Oftentimes when I am passing along by running water, I find myself singing," he responds.

In season of high water Tenaya Creek takes advantage of this level area to divide into many streams. One of these, now a dry, boulder-strewn watercourse, reaches into the fern garden. This we follow with the certainty that it will lead us to the entrance of the box canyon. At nine o'clock we reach the entrance and pass into the gorge, threading through a thicket of bigleaf maples. Once through the narrow entrance one follows the course of Tenaya Creek, skirting lovely pools and making a way up huge boulders. Soon the first barrier confronts us: closing the gorge is a high wall, a shapely pool at its foot into which, with graceful curve, drops a waterfall. Over at the left, where the wall meets the cliff, Jules climbs up whilst

I pause to watch Mr. Bill, who ascends alongside the waterfall. Where the water has splashed the wall he almost slips into the pool. This hazard avoided he successfully finishes the climb. Meantime I follow Jules. Now above the waterfall we skirt a second delightful pool, and ascending a low wall of boulders we reach the five-finger fern terrace. Water oozes between the ledges that make up the steep fern terrace. Five-finger ferns (*Adiantum pedatum*) flourish from the base to the top of the dripping terrace and at the base clumps of grass of Parnassus (*Parnassia palustris* var. *californica*) bloom. In order to avoid the next waterfall barrier, we climb up the slippery fern terrace. Once on top of the fern terrace level ledges lead us for several hundred yards along the brink of the gorge. Along these sunny ledges California fuchsia (*Zauschneria californica*) exhibits her bright red trumpet flowers.

After our visit with California fuchsia we again dip down to the stream at the base of another waterfall. Looking about for a way up the waterfall Mr. Bill chooses a black, slippery chute or tunnel alongside of the waterfall, and this he manages to wriggle up. With Mr. Bill safely to the top of the fall Jules and I cross the stream, and make use of the "Spiral Staircase," a series of winding upward ledges; at the top we find Mr. Bill sitting on a boulder in the middle of the stream eating an apple. We join him and he shares his apple with me.

"What a delicious, juicy apple. Is it a Yosemite product?"

"Yes, I got a knapsack full of them in the apple orchard near the Company warehouse."

Refreshed by a rest in the sunshine we follow on along the stream till we reach an unusually large



Photo by Onas Ward.

Tenaya Canyon from Glacier Point. The gorge and box canyon are beyond the farthest patch of forest here visible.

pool which blocks further progress. To get by this and the wild portion of the gorge just beyond we retrace our steps a short distance and climb up the left wall alongside a bank of huckleberry oak (*Quercus vacciniifolia*). A short climb brings us to a level ledge which we follow. The ledge is irregular and in one place, quite narrow. Good handholds along here enable one to squeeze by. Before long we come to an inscription on the wall. Dates have been carved into the rock and then painted with indelible black paint. In all there are twenty-three dates—the first date, 1909, the last, 1940. The initials along with these dates carved into the stone are S. L. F.

When Charles and I used to come this way and first saw these initials and the dates, fewer then, we were mystified. It was some years before we discovered that the author was S. L. Foster of the overhead railways in San Francisco. He used to spend his vacation in the "Lost Valley"

just beyond the Tenaya gorge. He would bring along a telescope basket filled with his supplies and stay two weeks. He liked to take sun baths, so in here, when the weather was nice, all he would wear was a belt. On that he would hang his knife, fishing tackle, and other utensils needed as he moved about. He would bring dried shrimps as his main article of diet. Then he brought lemons and made salad of white violet leaves and blossoms with a few drops of lemon juice. On one occasion Charles, Walter Fitzpatrick and I, when we had come through the box canyon to the Lost Valley, discovered Mr. Foster here. He saw us coming and, hastily retiring behind a tree, elaborated his attire. He was very cross at us for intruding upon what he considered his private retreat. A certain amount of cajoling, though, put him in good humor and he sat with us and drank tea.

As we follow the ledge into Lost

Valley I recount the tale of S. L. F. to my companions. In Lost Valley the hedges of mountain ash (*Sorbus sitchensis*) are in glorious berry, the clusters of berries a deep orange red, giving a brilliance to the scene difficult to describe. A small, rounded, level valley where the trees grow very tall and great cliffs reach for the blue sky on either hand, and a tranquil stream sings as it moves along over polished granite, Tenaya Lost Valley seems like the land of "heart's desire."

"Seems to me it must be lunch time," remarks Mr. Bill.

"Let's go on to the head of the valley to eat lunch. I can't eat here in this 'brush,'" comments Jules.

On the way Jules becomes much excited. "In this pool I saw a crowd of fish. I stood still and the shadow of my head and shoulders showed in the water. The fish were curious and one fish turned his head and looked at me with his green eyes."

At the head of Lost Valley, into a delightful, rounded pool, drops Slide (Pyweack) Fall. Jules feels this is a perfect place for lunch; Mr. Bill and I acquiesce. Accordingly we sit at the brink of the gracious pool and enjoy a happy lunch hour. This pool has its crowd of trout. Mr. Bill throws them crumbs of peanut butter which they eat, and Jules catches them a fly.

"Do you ever fish?" I ask Jules.

"At times when I need them for food. I was at Snow Creek ski cabin and the food stored there had spoiled. Then I fished for food. I think fishing is a poor sport. I enjoy much more seeing the fish alive in the pools. Don't tell anybody about the fish in these pools," remarks Jules.

"It seems to me that these fish are perfectly safe, for it's few folks that will get in here," I observe.

Lunch over we decide we had bet-

ter get going. Accordingly we shoulder our knapsacks and climb to the top of Slide Fall, then follow the stream and after this, branch off into a draw that Jules has wished to try for some years. This proves to be a hard, steep, long climb. Mr. Bill grows tired and thirsty. In a deep mossy recess I discover a drip of water and, filling my cup, give it to Mr. Bill. This revives him and he and I go on, but we have lost sight of Jules. After climbing a while and no Jules in sight, Mr. Bill yodels for him.

No answering yodel, only a waving in the huckleberry oak far below. After a space there comes a yodel, and down below I perceive Jules join Mr. Bill. Jules seems to have bumps on his forehead and from the gestures I conclude that two "charliehorses" attacked Jules while in the huckleberry oak and caused him to fall over and bump his head on a stone. Jules seems to be recovered now and the three companions continue merrily on and up the draw. Jules reaches the top first and when Mr. Bill and I reach him he is building a monument out of stones. When it is complete, we write our names on a paper and Jules places it in a can, and places the can down in the lower center of the cairn.

Now at the top of the draw, as we look about we are all of the opinion that the Snow Creek trail is far away. Domes, mountains, pinnacles are now our companions and we are far from home. Nevertheless, by maneuvering about and climbing over the slope of a mountain we do at length step into the trail. On the way over, though, Mr. Bill had his turn with "charliehorses." In view of this last painful episode Jules said that he would name the way that we had come "Charliehorse Pass."

## YOSEMITE HONEYMOON

By Mae B. Nattkemper

It was the Spring of 1912. My young husband had just completed his second year as Professor of Speech at the University of Southern California. It was just two years since I had married him—my college sweetheart. We had not yet had our honeymoon. It had long since been planned and often and enthusiastically discussed, ever since we came to California from the Midwest those two years before and caught our first glimpse of the High Sierra. It was to be a Yosemite honeymoon and at last we could go. We had saved \$630 from our meager salary—enough, we figured, to buy a car and set forth on our adventure.

Upon the advice of our friend Glenn Martin, who was then experimenting with his first plane, using a Ford engine, and who was driving a Ford car, we bought a little Ford roadster. It cost us \$600. We had \$30 left. We were the richest, happiest youngsters in California.

But when we told our plans to our friends and relatives they were aghast. They were emphatic in their warning that we were entering into the impossible. Not only was our \$30 inadequate but motoring to Yosemite was unheard of. Did we not know that cars were not allowed in the Valley? That the roads were just awful beyond Los Angeles County? No road signs to direct us, no garages for gasoline or repairs, and impassable mountain grades? But they could not make us listen to their fatherly advice nor cool our ardor. Our spirits were undaunted. We were going.

So on June 11, 1912, we set forth on our honeymoon and the first of

what were to be many adventures into the mountains of our beloved West.

In spite of their warnings and advice we felt sure we were amply prepared — blankets, food, extra cans of gasoline, and an extra tire all filled the back of Fordy. We had removed the top to lighten the load of our 1912 Model T Ford, feeling sure it was only an extra and unnecessary weight to carry. Who ever heard of summer rains in California anyway? And we must have as little as possible to carry up those grades we had heard about.

True, we found no signs to guide our way but a friend who worked on the railroad had told us there was a road of sorts following the Southern Pacific to Fresno upon which he had sometimes seen a car bumping along. At Fresno we would turn off and head into the mountains. So we followed the railroad.

At fifteen miles an hour, the speed limit of that time, it was three days before we got to Fresno. But they were happy days and not too bumpy. We had met about a dozen cars. We now turned toward the mountains and, alas!—big white clouds. Both only thrilled us. Surely they couldn't mean rain, and how beautifully those fluffy masses lay along the mountain tops. But by the time we came to the steeper grades the road began to be muddy and it was sprinkling.

A little store then came into view at Coarsegold and we stopped to see if we could find something to keep off the rain. The owner was asleep in his chair tilted back against the counter and frowned at our disturbance of his nap. He said

he would see what he could find and brought forth a piece of table oil-cloth, barely enough to go around us. Just what we needed and weren't we lucky! He told us we would need chains for our tires pretty soon. He had none but did have some strong hemp rope that might do. We got it and were merrily on our way when we came to a steep downgrade and skidded to the bottom. Then we wound the rope around the tires and started upgrade. We couldn't make it. Just then the sun came out from behind a cloud and we said, "Oh, that's fine. We'll just wait a little while until the road dries." The sun and dry air did just that and we cranked up Fordy and rolled on.

As evening approached, however, and we were higher up, it began to rain in earnest and we knew we would have to seek some kind of shelter under which to spread our bedding for the night. An old saw-mill hove into sight. Soft, dry saw-dust was piled under a roof which was large enough to cover both us and the car. Surely Lady Luck was following us right along. Our sleep was undisturbed and peaceful.

A bright, warm morning awakened us and we made Fish Camp that day. It was a logging camp then. A small crude lodge and several little houses made up the settlement. A railroad went through which carried logs from within the mountains.

Here we learned it was true—automobiles could go no farther. We would have to leave Fordy. A stage-coach would go through tomorrow. The fare? Too much for our purse and why ride anyway? Did John Muir ride through these mountains? We'll walk as he did. We'll send our suitcase on the stage but we'll walk and won't it be fun! So with-

out a thought of anxiety we parked Fordy under a big spreading pine and next morning set forth afoot. We had gone but a little way when an empty logging train came along and stopped. We laughed and jumped on one of the big flatcars. It took us almost to Wawona before we knew it. And then our memorable walk began—that winding trail through corridors of pine and fir which led us to new heights of ecstasy. Laughing streams, cold and crystal clear, tumbled across our path as though inviting us to drink our fill. Quiet, friendly deer grazed in flower-strewn meadows brilliant with color. Birds filled the air with sweet and tender notes. Bushy-tailed squirrels ran across the trail playing together and scampering up and down the trees. Even a bear waddled among the dogwood. And O!—the views across the canyons and mountain tops. Could this be real? Surely we must be dreaming.

"We can't make it tonight, I guess," my husband said late in the afternoon. "But we haven't our bed rolls or any food," said I. "Oh well, we won't worry, something will turn up," he said. And then, just around a curve there came into view a little house. It was the stage drivers' overnight stop, we learned from the woman who answered our knock at the door. "Now sometimes they don't all get here and if one doesn't show up you may have his bed," she said. But if he does come? "Well, you can sleep in the barn on the hay I guess." Fine, how lucky we always are. The stage driver didn't come but the bedbugs did and we wished we were in the hay.

At breakfast next morning three stage drivers were at the table and all seemed interested in our adventure. "You should go into the Valley



by way of Glacier Point," they told us. "That first glimpse of it from up there is a thriller, and the trail down past the falls is super." Then the driver next to me whispered—"You and your husband go on up the road and I'll pick you up pretty soon. I'm going up there with an empty stage. It's a steep climb and you'll need a lift." We left rejoicing in our good fortune and soon the stage was there and we were up in it behind six beautiful horses rolling along those steep and picturesque grades until



that indescribable view which only Yosemite can offer, burst upon us. Our kind driver showed us around, pointed out the trail to the valley floor, bade us goodbye and good luck, and wouldn't even accept the small tip we offered.

We couldn't tear ourselves away. Surely we could afford one night at Glacier Point Hotel, a decision we were never to regret. So after a full and happy day we gathered around the big fireplace of the hotel that night with a crowd of other guests.

"Why don't you read some of your nature poems to these folks? They'd love them I know," I said to my husband as we sat there. He timidly approached the landlord with this suggestion which was gladly accepted. He was urged to read on and on. Next morning when we went to pay our bill he was told he had more than paid it the night before with his entertaining and owed nothing.

We started hilariously down that beautiful eleven-mile trail. We were really a part of these vast mountains now. We were theirs and they were ours. Nevada Fall has never seemed so alive, so musical, so splendid as it was that day when we wound our way around its rushing beauty. Vernal was at its best. The happy, sparkling Merced River. And deer roamed everywhere. We arrived at Camp Curry, not tired but actually refreshed, and were we hungry!

That night we made the acquaintance of Mr. and Mrs. Curry. We felt as we still do, that we had met two people chosen by God to be the genial hosts to mountain lovers who came to enjoy the wonders of Yosemite. We were made to feel we were their dearest friends because we loved Nature, the mountains, God's great outdoors. I'm sure they made everyone feel the same.

We learned that next evening Mr. Curry was beginning his evening programs in a new recreation hall just finished. Guests were asked to lend a hand if they had a talent.

Musicians there were aplenty. We wondered if they would like my husband's readings. He offered his services and was heartily welcomed to the program. At dinner next day, Mr. Curry announced to his guests that Professor Nattkemper of the University of Southern California would read the comedy "David Garrick" in the new hall that night. One of the young men at our table turned to his pal and said, "Wonder if he could be that old man with whiskers we saw up there at Yosemite Falls today. He's the only one around here I've seen who looks like a professor but he didn't look like he could read a comedy." That night when my husband was performing this fellow looked at me sitting near him and blushed. Prof. Nattkemper was on the program every night while we were there.

Ten busy, happy days followed, each one finding us on a new trail making new and wonderful discoveries and filling us with awe at this scenic splendor. Each night found us stretched upon our comfortable beds at Camp Curry, tired to exhaustion I am sure, yet never willing to admit we needed rest.

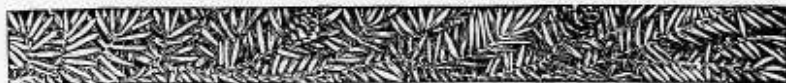
Deeper and deeper we lay under the spell of these majestic walls of granite—El Capitan, Half Dome, Cathedral Spires, and the Arches—

and the rushing, gleaming waterfalls all held us spellbound. Now we knew, as never before, the real meaning of life, of our love for each other, of God's great power. We had found the real home of peace. We did not want to leave.

But next morning, after a walk to Mirror Lake, we decided to turn our faces toward Fish Camp and Fordy. We went in to say goodbye to Mr. and Mrs. Curry and settle our bill. We owed them nothing. "But what do I owe you?" asked Mr. Curry of my husband. We were square.

When we had walked almost to Wawona that day a stagecoach came along. It was our friend who had taken us to Glacier Point. He invited us to get in and we were at the hotel in time for dinner. Next morning we left after an early breakfast and that day found our Ford, just as we had left it, under the big pine. We managed to drive to Mariposa Grove from there, although the road was rough and precipitous, where we spent two days marveling at trees so big, so old and so beautiful.

Now we left for home on an uneventful trip, a bit sad at leaving our new-found mountain friends. But we had each other and we had \$19.91 in our purse. We could go again next year.



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The 1950 Special Number of **Yosemite Nature Notes** will be an illustrated pamphlet dealing with the mammals of Yosemite National Park. It is planned for release within the next three months and will be sent without extra cost to all paid-up subscribers on the date of issue. If your subscription expires with the June or July number be sure to get your renewal in promptly in order to receive your copy of "Mammals of Yosemite."—Ed.

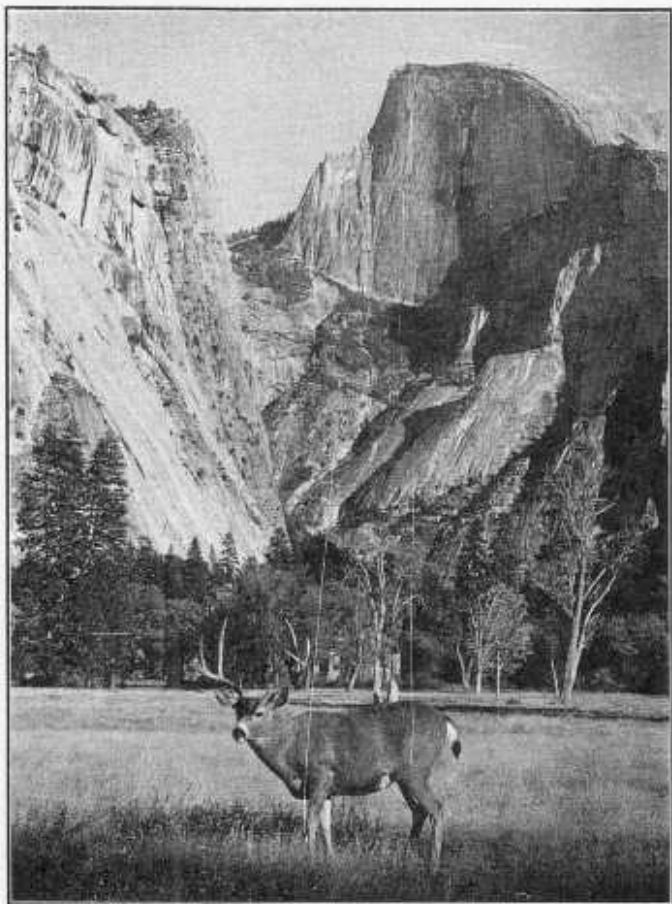


Photo by Ralph Anderson.

Ahwahnee Meadow and Half Dome.



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Dan Anderson