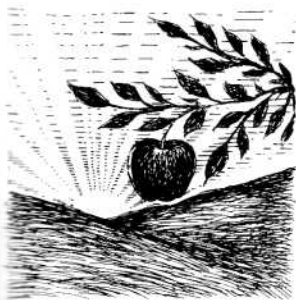


YOSEMITE

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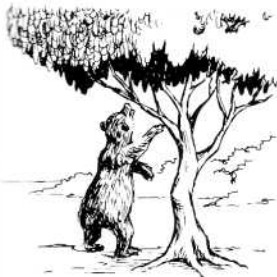
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FORTY THOUSAND SUNSETS: THE APPLE ORCHARDS OF YOSEMITE VALLEY — Forty-thousand days. That's about how long they've been here. Not long, considering the Sequoias or the Bristlecone Pines. But for apple trees, no mean achievement, especially in the western United States. Certainly in Europe there must be apple trees much older. I wonder how old an apple tree can become.

Usually in California we don't find out, because old orchards are replaced by new ones, or by houses. The Yosemite trees have survived because of their location and their peculiar history. We cherish them for their story. And — walking among them on any autumn afternoon — we can also cherish them for their aged beauty; bending, arching, down on their knees or flat on their backs, or when almost choked by surrounding cedars and pines, they grope blindly toward the light. The textured bark has ridges and knots and ripples of rosy gray, often stippled by regular lines of sapsucker holes. And there is, of course, the frequently wormy, wonderfully juicy, red or green or yellow fruit.

We humans are not the only ones to appreciate the orchards. Besides the worms and the birds — you can usually find at least a dozen Brewer's blackbirds in an orchard at once — there are the bears. When they eat apples, they make quite a project of it, climbing the trees, swatting low-hanging fruit, chomping noisily on their finds. A bear gives himself over wholly to the pleasure of the feast. He seems to think the trees were planted just for him.



If not for bears, why were the trees planted — so many, and so long ago? We reach back and try to understand — and can't, really — what it was that made a man like James Lamont come and settle in the valley in 1859. For two winters he lived alone in a cabin, with only Indians to share the valley with him. The second winter he is said to have lived in his cellar for fear of attack, so it can't have been the neighbors that drew him here.

But the first fall he set out an orchard, and the second year, another. His first orchard was just east of today's stable, and the second was at the present Curry parking lot. In 1869 when the State of California was suing him for possession of the land, he stated that he had "two very large and very fine orchards of fruit trees, now beginning to bear abundantly, being of the very choicest selections of grafted fruit, consisting of apples, pears, peaches, plums,

¹Cited by Ordway, Nelson K., "Exotic Trees of the Yosemite Valley," 1932, p. 1.

nectarines, almonds, etc., over one thousand trees altogether; all of which have been transplanted and cultivated with the greatest care and labor in thoroughly and deeply preparing the ground, and by constant cultivation.”¹

Lamon was no sooner well established than James M. Hutchings came to live in the valley. We know almost nothing of Mr. Lamon’s personality. Hutchings was a more colorful character who left his imprint on everything he touched. In 1855 he visited Yosemite Valley, and decided to live there and devote himself to publicizing it — with himself as chief guide, hotelkeeper, and landowner. In 1865 he built “Hutchings House,” and the next spring set out an orchard of 150 trees. This orchard was located near the present Yosemite Elementary School.



At that time there was a rush to plant orchards in California. Miners had at first brought fruit seeds and planted trees, but by the 1850’s a number of nurseries were doing a thriving business. Lamon got most of his trees from the Marshall Nursery in Mariposa.

Hutchings got his from the Harris Nursery; they were brought into the valley as young saplings on muleback.

Lamon established two claims, totaling 378 acres. Hutchings claimed 160 acres. At this period Yosemite Valley was changing status, for in 1864, President Lincoln granted the land to California for a state park, and in 1866, the state formally accepted the grant. Thus Lamon’s claims preceeded the grant, but Hutchings did not. Even in Lamon’s case there was some question of the legality of his claim, as the land had not been surveyed at the time he preempted it. In 1867 the State of California brought suit against each man for repossession of his land. They were both outraged, after the work put in, the improvements made and, in Hutching’s case, the publicity which he had almost single-handedly given the valley. They determined to fight the suits. In the meantime, the Commissioners of the state passed a bill awarding each man 160 acres. They gerrymandered their half-mile squares; Hutchings claimed a cross-shaped area which would have blocked the valley from wall to wall and obstructed all traffic, and Lamon claimed, not a single block of land, but bits here and there of the best parts, including the two orchards. The state began to look with disfavor on the whole enterprise, and the grants were finally blocked in a U.S. Senate committee.

The cases dragged on for many years, finally reaching the U.S. Supreme Court, which, in 1873, decided against the settlers. At this point, Lamon was paid twelve thousand dollars, and Hutchings twenty-four thousand dollars. Lamon signed a lease for his land (apparently the state did not balk at leasing it to a private party) but died the following year. Hutchings was evicted from his property in 1875 and went to San Francisco to enter the tourist business, still advertising his ex-home. In 1880 he returned for four years as guardian of the park.

As time went by, the orchards had a checkered career. Lamon’s first orchard, now popularly called the Stable Orchard, was leased to a Mr. Aaron Harris, who operated a large ranch in the present Ahwahnee Hotel area, including the orchard. Thus this orchard was maintained and the fruit was sold to local residents and innkeepers. At a somewhat later date (1889), the Stable Orchard was leased to a Frenchman, Etienne Manet, who also grew vegetables for local sale.

During these early days before 1900, the whole valley was being domesticated, with kitchen gardens, dairy herds, and hay fields, as well as the orchards. All the food production was for tourists and residents; none was exported. By 1900, freighting from the foothill and Central Valley ranches made agriculture in the valley unnecessary, and it began to decline. Probably the utilization of the orchards became more casual with this change. Also, especially

after the First World War, the philosophy of the National Park Service began to evolve away from "development" and more in the direction of conservation.

The local residents continued to use the orchards. Whatever spraying and pruning occurred were intermittent. Mr. Leroy Rust (now Postmaster in the valley) told me that in the 1930's, as he remembers, there was great interest in the orchards, with the organization of community parties to prune and harvest the trees. Residents made pies, applesauce, jellies, and quantities of cider every fall.



The American Legion Post did some pruning for several years after World War II, and later the Lions Club took over the job. For at least the past decade there has been less interest in the trees, and although they continue to bear well in most seasons, they suffer more from neglect than formerly. The last pruning was done in the early 1970's in the Curry orchard, in order to make headroom for the shuttlesbuses.

But maybe neglect is good. Certainly it's better than destruction, which is what some have proposed for the orchards from time to time. The trees are exotics in the valley, and the policy of the Park

Service is to remove all exotics unless there are reasons to the contrary.

In the case of the orchards, there are such reasons. The trees are not competing with indigenous plants. In fact, anyone who examines the thicket of trees between the Curry parking lot and the road will find who competes with whom, and who wins. It isn't the apple trees. All the orchards are dying out, and in time will have disappeared entirely from the valley.

In 1932, Nelson K. Ordway wrote a Field School project on the exotic trees of Yosemite Valley. At that time he noted three pear trees in the Stable Orchard, and one cherry tree in the Hutchings Orchard. He did not count the apple trees.

In 1946, C. Frank Brockman wrote an essay, "Introduced Trees in Yosemite National Park." He noted one pear in the Stable Orchard, and in the Hutchings Orchard, "mostly apples, but a few cherries."

In May, 1976, my husband and I decided to count all the orchard trees. Some are in fairly countable rows, but others along the edges, particularly at the Stable and Curry Orchards, are difficult to count. There may be some error — but not much! — in our figures. Also, some of the smaller specimens may represent later self-seeding rather than the original plantings. It is difficult to be certain.

In the Stable Orchard we found 257 trees, of which four are dead, leaving 252 living apples and one living pear tree.

In the Curry Orchard, we found 200 living apples (of which 22 are moribund) and 15 dead apple trees.

Lamon stated that he planted "over a thousand" trees. If we take his figure of 1,000, the 431 trees still living and not moribund represent about 43% of the original two orchards.

In the Hutchings Orchard we counted 68 live apple trees, four dead apple trees, two live cherries, and two live pear trees. Note that Mr. Ordway missed one cherry tree, which is not surprising. It is on the river bank, and is especially interesting for the braided effect of the trunks at the base. Mr. Rust tells us that this three-trunked tree was braided together years ago by the Sovulewski "boys."

Also in the Hutchings Orchard we found one apple tree which had been subjected to tree surgery at some time, and has concrete fills on two sides. The concrete on the south side is clean, but that on the northeast face of the trunk is dotted with rusty-orange lichen. Perhaps a lichenologist could tell us the approximate date of the fill, by the size of the lichen spots.

If, as he wrote, Mr. Hutchings planted 150 trees, the 72 remaining would be 48% of the original planting. Or, averaging the figures for all three orchards, about 45% of the original number of trees still remain.



The Stable Orchard has recently been nominated for National Historic Landmark status. At the present time they are already protected by being in the National Park. No amount of protection, however, will halt the inevitable aging and attrition of these fine old trees.

Those which still remain after some 40,000 sunsets still blossom, bear fruit, and offer a quiet fascination to the person who walks among them to study their variety of bizarre and lovely forms. Indeed, they are a most fitting monument to James Lamon and James Hutchings, the first two white settlers in the valley.

by Elizabeth S. O'Neill

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LIBRARY NEWS...The Yosemite National Park Research Library outgrew its quarters adjacent to the Chief Interpreter's Office last winter. As books continued to pile up and library users became more and more pressed for space, a move was engineered to alleviate these problems. Early this year, the process of relocating the library operation was begun. The room which for many years functioned as the Naturalist's Study Room (and for a long period to house the Yosemite Field School), was cleaned, painted, and remodeled for its new role as library. New lights, shelving, magazine racks, and furniture were installed during the winter

months as the move neared its end. The project is now complete, and the results are gratifying. The Research Library can now accommodate more users and materials, and it provides an excellent environment for research, study, and reading.

The change of quarters was greatly facilitated by a gift of \$2,000 presented by Mr. and Mrs. Alfred Barton of Middleburg, Virginia, in memory of their son, Peter. While climbing in the

area of El Capitan, Peter fell to his death in June, 1975. To perpetuate the memory of their son as well as his interest in and love for Yosemite, the Bartons have also established the "Peter Godfrey Barton Memorial Fund" which is already benefitting the library. The kind contributions of the Barton family are deeply appreciated by the National Park Service and the many users of the library.

The Yosemite Natural History Association has also made several recent gifts to the Research Library. To provide a supplement to the library's acquisition budget, \$500 was allocated for purchase of books. Grants for the binding of periodicals and deteriorated materials were also made. As always, gifts from members are warmly welcomed. Be sure to stop by the "new" Research Library next time you're in the park.

LIBRARY ACQUISITIONS

During the past six months, several important additions to the Research Library have been recorded. Listed among them are the following titles:

"Discovery of the Yosemite" by L.H. Bunnell (2nd edition)

"Foley's Yosemite Souvenir and Guide" by D.J. Foley (1904 and 1913 editions)

"Motorists' Guide Map and Manual" (1924 edition)

Gift of Mr. Max Hilberman

"The Overland Monthly" Volumes LXI and LXXI (1913 and 1918)

Gift of Mrs. Ruth Lewis

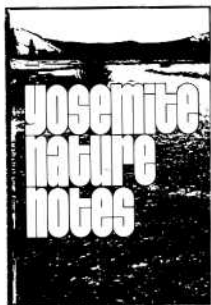
"Reminiscences of a Ranger" by Major Horace Bell

"Twenty Years in the Backwoods of California" by John C. Shay

"Two Weeks in the Yosemite and Vicinity" by Rev. J.M. Buckley

Gift of Bill and Mary Hood

"Yosemite National Park" by O.W. Lehmer (1912)



The long-awaited YOSEMITE NATURE NOTES is now in print and we're proud of the 28 fine articles; among the more provocative is: "Where Water Flowed 'Uphill' on Pothole Dome" by Richard Balogh, "Lost Lake" by Tina Hargis, "Pine Trees, Barnacles and Everything" and "Dr. Carl W. 'Zeke' Sharsmith", both by Will Neely. The regular price is \$3.42; the price to members is \$2.50, including tax, handling and postage. Please be sure and include your membership number when you order.

We're looking forward to a rousing turn-out for the Second Annual Members Meeting in Tuolumne Meadows Sept. 10 and 11. The meeting and picnic will be at Parsons Lodge with an assortment of hikes and activities planned for the weekend, as we wrote you in early July.

Shortly after we established ourselves in Parsons Lodge at Tuolumne, we wrote Michael McCloskey, Executive Director of the Sierra Club to express our pleasure at being instrumental in the Lodge's being open again - Mr. McCloskey responded as follows: "I want to thank you for letting us know of the most appropriate use of the Parsons Lodge that your association is making in Yosemite National Park. We are glad to hear that you are keeping good traditions alive in that part of Tuolumne Meadows. I have asked our librarian, Christie Hakim, to review our books here to determine whether there are any that we could loan you for use in the library."

We're pleased at the interest by the Sierra Club in our efforts at Parsons Lodge and we hope that books will be forthcoming from our members.

The YNHA embroidered patches have finally arrived; new individual members will receive theirs soon. They are available to the rest of us for \$1.50 by mail (including tax and postage). They're a rich brown and white and are a fine addition to your pack or jacket. YNHA decals are also available for 50¢ (includes tax and postage). Patches and decals may be purchased by members at the Annual Members Meeting Sept. 10-11.

MEMBERSHIP INCREASE. In the first nine months of the last fiscal year, 8 people had expressed their fondness and concern for Yosemite by becoming LIFE members. In the same period this year, 16 have become LIFE members, 3 Participating LIFE members and Dumont Printing Co. has taken out a Corporate LIFE membership. We're grateful for their support and indeed of all of our members.

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