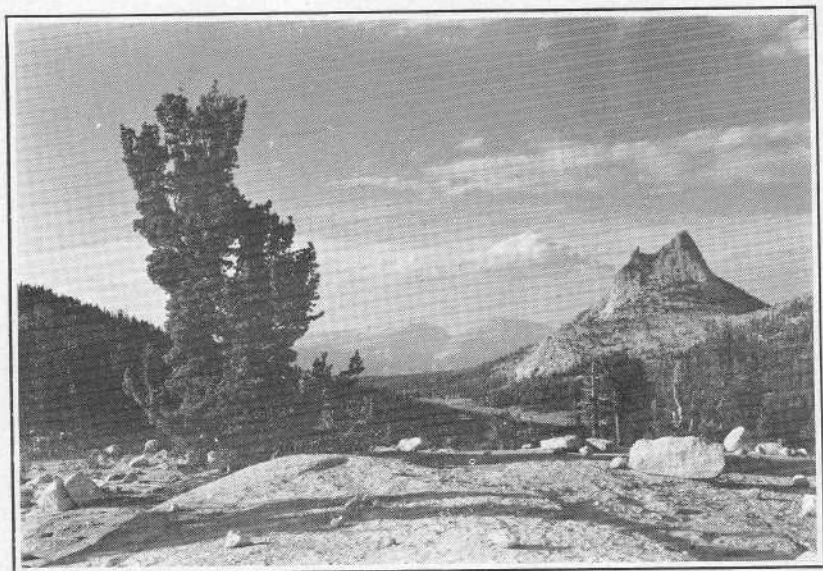


YOSEMITE NATURE NOTES

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Cathedral Peak

Yosemite Nature Notes

THE MONTHLY PUBLICATION OF
THE YOSEMITE NATURALIST DEPARTMENT
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F. A. Kittredge, Superintendent

C. F. Brockman, Park Naturalist

M. V. Walker, Associate Park Naturalist

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SONNET TO AN EVENING PRIMROSE

By June Alexander

Unearthly, fragile watcher of the night,
Shy remnant of the day's more gaudy bloom,
Friend of the fairy-ring, to whom the sight
Of aerial, gentle magic does assume
The commonplace of life, oh not to you
The blazing sun a god. You worship lone
And mystic evening things—a secret dew—
A silver star—a furtive moth; your own
Calm moon, bright queen of all that's dark and still
You image here on earth, Diana's jewel,
As set against the timeless night, you fill
The tiny people's breasts with awe. But cruel
The ways of Artemis, who from on high
Decreed you serve her only once—and die.

Miss Alexander is a local Yosemite girl now attending Fresno State College. Her poem was originally published in the Annual Anthology of College Poetry and is reprinted here by permission of the National Poetry Association, Los Angeles, California.



THUMBNAIL SKETCHES OF YOSEMITE ARTISTS FERDINAND BURGdorFF

By Elizabeth H. Godfrey, N.P.S Staff

Among present day artists who come to Yosemite to paint is Ferdinand Burgdorff, who lives at Pebble Beach, California.

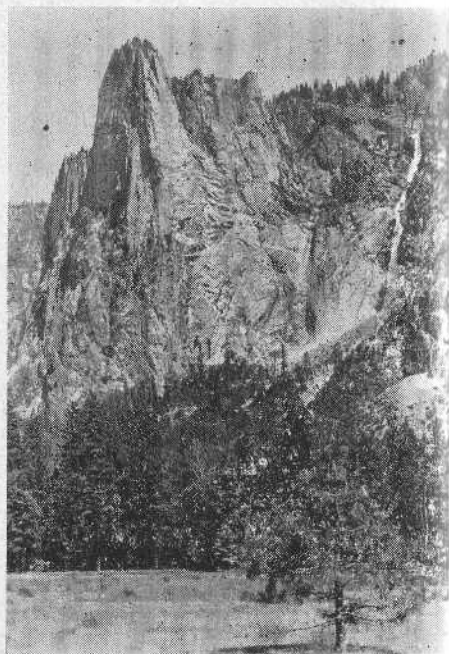
"Each fall," writes Mr. Burgdorff, "when the leaves turn to gold and the atmosphere is definitely blue, I long to be in Yosemite."

On one such day in late October 1935, Mr. Burgdorff was in the Valley, and captured with his vision the gold and blue atmosphere that is so typical of autumn in Yosemite. He used as his subject a stripling oak near the Ranger Club, vivid in fall color and scintillating in bright sunshine. Sentinel Rock, cast in deep blue haze, looms upward in the background. Mr. Burgdorff presented this painting to the Museum art collection, and because of its rich color contrast and good composition, it commands the attention and admiration of many visitors.

"Yosemite," states Mr. Burgdorff, "requires first of all very good and faithful drawing and then good composition, because sometimes a tree must be moved here or there, but it must always be so that it actually could be there naturally. Of course one paints the falls, which I did the same as every other painter, and the meadows too. But even so, my aim is always to make the picture like nature, and not an egotistical dem-

onstration of the different colors sold by the art material dealers."

Ferdinand Burgdorff was born in Cleveland, Ohio, November 7, 1883. From boyhood he was keenly interested in everything which was art or



nature. After graduating from high school, he attended the Cleveland School of Art, and won all available scholarships. At that time Frederick Remington was painting Indians, and Fernand Lungren, noted desert painter, was doing some outstanding landscapes of the Southwest. Burgdorff, impressed by their work, was

inspired to paint the "Golden West."

In 1907, he left for Santa Fe, New Mexico. Here he found colorful subjects to paint. There were adobe houses, Mexican natives bringing wood from the mountains on burros, golden cottonwoods against blue skies, and snow-covered peaks in the distance.

The first picture he sold was to the Santa Fe Railroad of an Indian in a blanket wearing a flat-topped hat and long tan leggings. The Santa Fe used this for a post card and for the main picture in their book "Indians of the Southwest." The Santa Fe also has another Burgdorff painting which hangs in El Navajo Hotel at Gallup—a scene of the Casa Blanca cliff dwellings which the artist painted during a trip to Canyon de Chelly National Monument.

From Santa Fe, Mr. Burgdorff went to California, and after traveling about the State, made his home in the Monterey country where he painted the pines and cypress trees of that area. As opportunity permitted he would take trips to the Southwest and travel about that romantic desert region with horse and wagon. He had made the acquaintance of Fernand Lungren in 1908, and on one occasion he had the pleasure of accompanying the artist whom he so greatly admired, on a trip to the Painted Desert, the Hopi Villages and the Grand Canyon. At the Grand Canyon they had a happy meeting with the Yosemite artist Chris Jorgensen (see **Yosemite Na-**

ture Notes, November 1944).

In 1911, Mr. Burgdorff returned to Cleveland where he exhibited and sold many of his paintings. With the proceeds he started out on a two-year trip around the world.

In Paris, he studied under Rene Menard and Florence Este. He went on to Italy and Greece, spending three months at Athens. In Egypt he painted desert scenes and landscapes along the Nile. Going on to the Philippines in 1913, he stayed at Manila for six months. On his way home he saw Peking, Shanghai, Nagasaki, and Port Arthur.

When Mr. Burdorff returned to the United States in 1915, he again made his home in California, but maintained his interest in the Southwest. In 1924, he and Jimmy Swinnerton, famous cartoonist, and also an excellent landscape artist, went to the snake dance together at the Hopi Villages at Walpi and Oraibi, then on to Grand Canyon where they lived at Grandview for three months. Mr. Burdorff then remained in the Southwest until 1928.

In speaking of Yosemite, Mr. Burgdorff states, "Back in 1910, I was told by artists and others that Yosemite was grey and green in color, and not the glorious gold and blue of the West that I sought for painting. However, when I went to Yosemite, for the first time in 1917, I found that there are no greys; that the color is that of the rainbow—properly used—depending upon the sunlight and atmosphere of the moment. There are

greens, yes, but none that can be squeezed out of a tube; they also are part of that same rainbow."

Between 1917 and 1934, Mr. Burgdorff made several trips to the Valley. In 1934, he returned for the purpose of painting the backgrounds of the life zone cases in the Yosemite Museum. In describing this work he states, "It was the happiest work I ever did. I was working with the museum preparator's group in Berkeley, under the direction of Ansel Hall. Mr. Hall requested me to go to Yosemite to paint the backgrounds of several life zone cases, and to be back in Berkeley in two weeks. But to put away the taxidermy exhibits into safety in an upper room, and then paint the board backgrounds with four coats of white took two weeks alone. Then after that, it took five weeks' of close, devoted work to paint the backgrounds, to prepare the settings for each life zone case, and restore the taxidermy."

From 1932 to 1936, Mr. Burgdorff spent a considerable portion of the summer and fall months painting in the Valley. He also painted Tioga Pass in winter, showing the High Sierra peaks against blue sky.

He has exhibited yearly in the exhibitions of the Bohemian Club of San Francisco, of which he has been

an artist member since the first day of his arrival in San Francisco in 1908. For many years he has exhibited etchings as well as paintings in the Carmel Art Association exhibitions, and in the past has had one-man exhibitions in the east and south, as well as in the State exhibitions in Sacramento and Santa Cruz.

Recently, while vacationing at Carmel, California, Frank A. Kittredge, present Superintendent of Yosemite National Park, met with Mr. Burgdorff in his studio at Pebble Beach. Mr. Burgdorff told Mr. Kittredge that he was doing a bit for the war effort by painting pictures for the U.S.O., Red Cross, Army Nurses' quarters, hospitals, and other war services, and presenting them as gifts. In January 1945, when Superintendent Kittredge received a request for photographs of Yosemite scenery from the Commanding Officer of the destroyer tender, U. S. S. Yosemite, named for Yosemite National Park, he recalled Mr. Burgdorff's generosity, and wrote to him to see if he would like to donate a Yosemite painting to this ship. Mr. Burgdorff replied by return mail that he would be delighted to do so at once. The painting is of the view of the Valley looking east from the Wawona tunnel.

REFERENCES

Information for the above was obtained by the writer through corresponding directly with Mr. Burgdorff and through personal acquaintance. No previously published material was used.



OFF THE BEATEN TRAIL

INTO THE HIGH SIERRA

By Bob W. Prudhomme

Before the pros and cons of a twenty-four mile hike may weigh too heavily upon our decision we hurry briskly up the canyon trail from Happy Isles. Our destination is Merced Lake, the first of the five High Sierra camps which link Yosemite Valley with the great back country that lies beyond its magnificent walls.

It is a cool, clear morning in late July, and the river, bearing its icy waters from the summit peaks, roars down through the boulders and rapids filling the canyon with song. As we cross the Vernal Fall bridge, a water ouzel comes out on a rock close to the swirling waters of the stream where he commences a morning dip. After a minute or two, in which he vanishes under the surface of a green pool, he appears again upon his rock bearing a breakfast treat. Then in a burst of song he flutters down the stream leaving behind a trailing, liquid melody that fades into the voice of the river. It is a

strange contrast of delicate beauty blending with the rush of wild waters that leaves us spellbound.



We soon reach the Mist Trail and with faces wet with spray continue to the brink of Vernal Fall where we

(*) Bob Prudhomme was employed during the summer of 1942 as Museum Assistant. From last reports, he is now PHM 2/c in the U. S. Navy.

may watch its breathless plunge into the canyon. After a brief rest with time allowed to dry out we are on



our way to Nevada Fall, the second of the two great waterfalls of the Merced and by far the most impressive, its waters rocketing into mid-air to break into plumes of spray against the cliffs below. At its base the trail passes through a dense grove of Douglas-fir through which one may see the spray blowing down the canyon to leave every shrub and tree glistening and wet. From the top of Nevada Fall our trail drops into the cool, forested spaces of Little Yosemite Valley where now the Merced has once again become a peaceful,

quiet stream, its banks covered with azaleas and shadowed with the tall spires of white and California red fir. A golden-mantled ground squirrel scurries across the trail while overhead a Clark's nutcracker voices his discontent to a group of chattering golden-crowned kinglets and chickadees as they flit among the trees.

At the uppermost end of the valley the trail begins to climb once again and enters a spectacular country of sheer granite walls and smooth pavements which sweep to the river's edge. It is a country of great contrasts, of sparkling granite and deep, azure skies, of gnarled juniper and of playful winds. Our trail soon leaves the river and climbs up the side of the canyon into a magnificent grove of quaking aspens that shelters gardens of wildflowers. The rustle of shimmering leaves and the scented gardens urge us to stay and linger awhile in these quiet glens, but we are now only a mile or two from Merced Lake with the possibilities of a cool dip and a dinner at the camp before we must return. The trail descends again into the canyon and crosses a wooden bridge above the roar of the river. We enter a dense stand of mountain hemlocks which suddenly opens out upon the sandy shores of the lake, its blue waters dancing in the sunlight. At the far eastern end of the lake is the High Sierra camp with its neat rows of white tents where there is the bustle of campers and the odor of steaks

sizzling on the fire. After a refreshing swim in the lake's frigid waters we hurry to answer the welcome sound of the dinner gong and, like all the others, rush madly for the dining tent. An appetite is not to be bargained with in these climes, so our table is stocked to satisfy King Henry himself, not to mention two very hungry hikers.

Reluctantly we note that it is getting late and that we must retrace our steps back to the Valley. We walk along the lake trail where now the rich colors of twilight are gathering. Already the sun has set beyond the far shore, but as always in its mythical way it reaches back to paint the mountain peaks and the forests with a flourish of crimson. It is the alpen glow reflecting its fire in the mirrored waters of the lake and lingering on until the last shadows of night steal over the range to sprinkle the sky with stars.

As we travel down the canyon trail a full moon rises over the forested ridges and granite slopes, filling the depths of the canyon with shadows and reflecting upon the river where every pool and rapid becomes a sheen of rippling silver. Somewhere in the distance a coyote lifts his sad voice to the night and from another hill there comes an answering call. An owl flashes across the trail winging silently into the shadows of an aspen grove where

now the moon is playing among the leaves and painting the trunks and limbs a phosphorescent white. Following its course down the canyon our trail enters again into the Little Yosemite Valley where spire-like trees stand silhouetted against the moon. There is the fragrance of azaleas that fringe the river bank, the pungent odor of wet moss and needles, and the stir of birds among the trees as they waken to our steps. Ahead of us in the center of the trail a deer stands watching and melts quietly into the shadows as we pass.

In the near distance there is the thunder of waters that tells us we are close to Nevada Fall. A short distance beyond and we are upon its brink where the waters of the Merced plunge wildly into the depths. Captured by the moon they become a shower of glittering diamonds that drop to vanish into the black shadows below. Then on to Vernal Fall where the mists blow in gusts across the trail and where the river gathers the full force of its waters for the final chapter of its journey to Yosemite Valley.

Over two years have passed since this memorable trip, but it has not been forgotten. There are memories which in these days of chaos and disorder help us to endure the waiting until we may once again return, memories which are like the warmth and glow of a campfire lighting the darkness.



MUSEUM NOTES

COMPLETE VOLUMES OF NATURE NOTES AVAILABLE

A number of complete volumes (unbound) of the back issues of Yosemite Nature Notes have been assembled and are available at the prices listed below. Because some volumes contain as many as two **Special Issues**, there is a variation in the price per volume.

The number of complete volumes assembled is rather limited, therefore, orders will be filled on a first come—first served basis. Complete volumes issued prior to 1934 will be assembled whenever sufficient stock is on hand, and they will be added to the following list from time to time.

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YOSEMITE FIELD SCHOOL

In spite of the fact that the Yosemite School of Field Natural History was discontinued for the duration following the summer of 1941, a number of requests for information concerning this activity are occasionally received. We hope to resume this school when conditions permit.

In addition to many who were members of previous classes, the majority of those numbered in the

1941 group are now scattered widely about the world in various branches of the armed services. Yosemite is proud of the records they have made in the defense of our country. Their letters are read with eager interest. It is hoped that our answers bring a bit of the Sierra wilderness in which they are all interested, to wherever duty has taken them.

(C.F.B.)



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Dan Anderson