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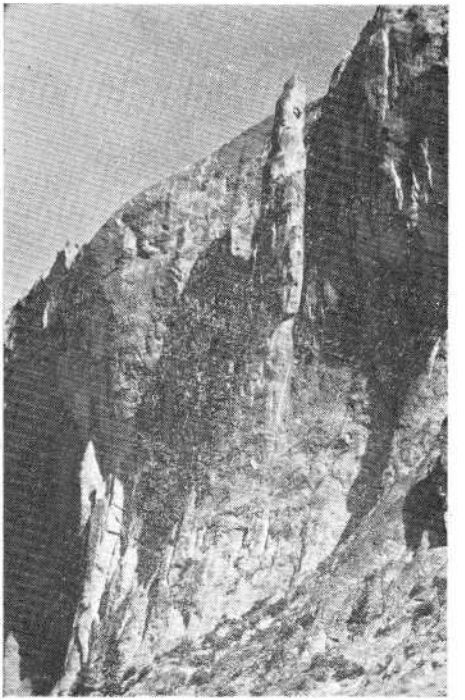
THE FIRST ASCENT OF THE LOST ARROW

By Thomas H. Rixon, Park Ranger

One of the few unconquered rock spires of America—the famous Lost Arrow in Yosemite National Park—was climbed for the first time on September 2, 1946. The first man to stand on the top of this formidable shaft of granite was Jack Arnold, member of the Rock Climbing Section of the San Francisco Chapter of the Sierra Club.

The Lost Arrow is a rather slender granite spire located just to the east of the Upper Yosemite Falls. It is about midway between the brink of the Upper Falls and Yosemite Point. The shaft of the "arrow" or spire extends upward some two hundred feet above the "notch" which connects the base with the solid canyon wall. The outer face of the spire falls away in an almost sheer drop for nearly a thousand feet. The summit of the Lost Arrow is slightly lower and some sixty feet distant from the canyon rim.

Like many other features in Yosemite Valley, the Lost Arrow is a product of erosion by water, frost and glaciers. These forces of erosion were controlled in their action, however, by the joint fractures in



The Lost Arrow
Photo by Ralph Anderson

the granite, for these zones of weakness aided in the formation of such architectural rock forms. For centuries these forces of erosion plucked and quarried away the rock mass along the weakened zone until finally this imposing spire was born. The name "Lost Arrow" appears to have had some connection with an old Indian legend (1).

Rock climbing in the Yosemite Valley dates back to about 1875, when George A. Anderson, after several tries, finally reached the top of the world renowned Half Dome. In the years that followed, one after another of the prominent peaks, cliffs, and spires were climbed by venturesome souls. Finally there remained less than a half dozen isolated spires to challenge the ingenuity and fearlessness of the hardy rock climbers. In 1934 the imposing Cathedral Spires were finally climbed after numerous unsuccessful attempts. Then in 1940 the Pulpit Rock, located on the south side of the Merced River, near the Big Oak Flat road junction, was scaled for the first time. At last there remained but one—the Lost Arrow—most exposed, most difficult and resisting of all.

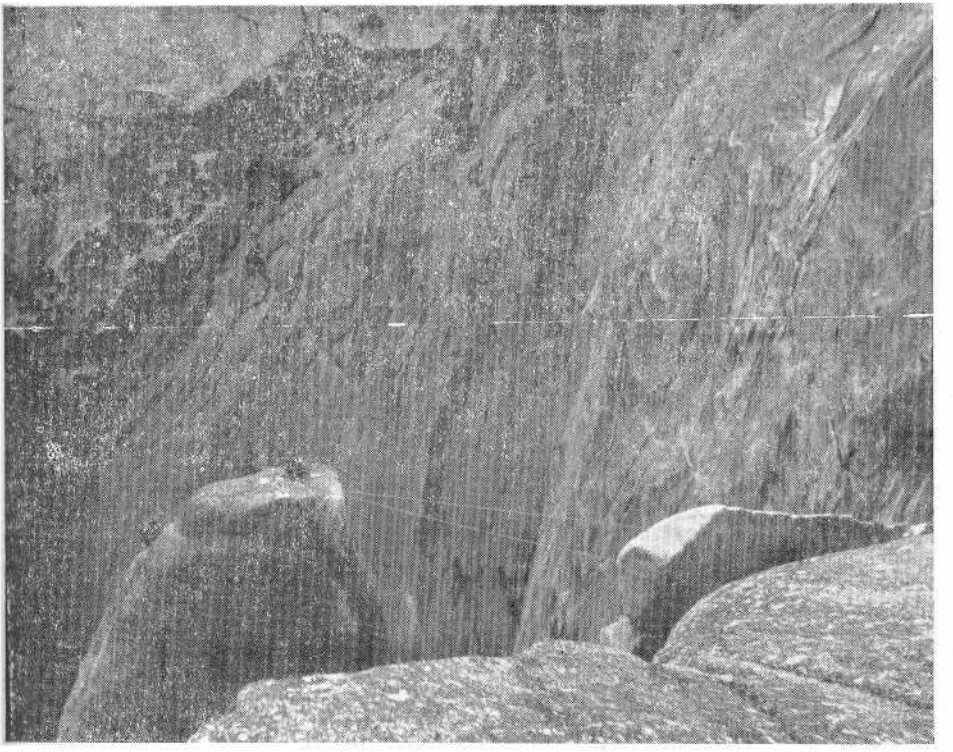
In view of the fact that the Sierra Club has, over the years, encouraged careful and scientific rock climbing, it was quite proper that the first four men to reach the top of this formidable smooth pinnacle should be members of that club. The climbing party was composed of Jack Arnold, Fritz Lippmann, Robin Hansen, and Axel Nelson. They were all experienced rock climbers.

Practically all previous attempts to climb the Lost Arrow had been started from the base of the Upper Yosemite Falls; however, they had met with little success. The climb from the base of the falls to the notch behind the "Arrow" would in itself be a major problem and extremely difficult. There would still remain the greater task of reaching the summit of the granite spire.

After these unsuccessful attempts it was finally decided that the most logical method to be employed should be a rope or Tyrolian traverse extending from the rim of the main canyon wall to the top of the "Arrow" itself. With a rope suspended from the canyon rim to the top of the Arrow, the climbers proposed to form a bridge that would allow them to reach their goal.

The climbers secured a strong but light cord and weighted it with two eight ounce pieces of lead. After many failures they were finally successful in throwing the

(1) See "Yosemite Indians, Yesterday and Today," by Elizabeth H. Godfrey, Yosemite Nature Notes, July, 1941.



Jack Arnold and Axel Nelson on the Top of The Lost Arrow
Photo by Michael Adams

weight and cord across the gap so that the weight hung free on the far side. The weights were lowered as far as they would go, approximately 150 feet below the summit on the outside face, and then the cord was tied to two one-half inch climbing ropes, each of which was approximately 200 feet in length. These had been "back-packed" to the take-off point several days previously.

Arnold and Nelson then roped down from the rim into the notch and traversed around the east edge of the spire until they reached a narrow horizontal rock ledge on the outside face of the spire. From this ledge they were able to reach the lead weighted cord. The climb to this point alone was extremely difficult and required the use of twenty-five iron pitons for direct aid. While secured to this ledge, Arnold pulled in the cord until finally the half inch climbing ropes had been brought across and down to Arnold's station. The far end of the climbing rope

was then securely fastened by Lippmann and Hansen who had remained on the canyon rim.

One of the ropes was used by Arnold as a belay rope. It was fastened to his waist and pulled up as he climbed, but with about six inches of slack in the event of a fall. The other rope, the one anchored to the Canyon rim, was to be used as the line he would use to climb to the top. Arnold also tied himself to another climbing rope which was to be held by Nelson, who was to remain on the granite ledge until Arnold reached the top. Arnold also made three, three-foot diameter rope slings of the light reserve rope that he was carrying. He tied these to the anchor rope with a knot designed to bind when weight is applied, but which would slide free when the weight is removed.

With one sling for each foot and also one around the chest to prevent falling backwards, he slipped the slings up the rope with each step and slowly climbed to the very summit. Three pitons were placed at forty foot intervals on the smooth outer face of the granite shaft, and through these was passed the rope which was being belayed by Nelson from below. When Arnold reached the top he found that the summit of the Lost Arrow was about six feet wide by some fifteen feet long and sloping at a very uncomfortable angle. There was "nothing but fresh air and blue sky for walls, and a first step down of about 2,000 feet on either side."

Nelson waited a short time and then followed Arnold to the top by using the same climbing technique. On the summit they proceeded to place two expansion bolts by which to anchor the traverse ropes. This would make it possible to retrieve the ropes once they had crossed over to the canyon rim. Arnold and Nelson placed their names on a sheet of paper, cached this in a small bullion can which they tied with wire to the expansion bolt, and then traversed across the rope bridge to the canyon wall. Lippmann and Hansen then traversed across to the summit of the Lost Arrow, placed their names on the register and quickly returned to the canyon rim, since it was beginning to get dark.

Thus it was that another challenging rock spire was conquered by the rock climbing fraternity. Although experienced by many years of rock climbing, Arnold remarked that this was one of the most exposed pitches that he had worked on, and that he did not feel "exactly at home" even with all the safety measures which were employed.

THE PLACE OF THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE IN NATURE CONSERVATION

By C. P. Russell, Chief Naturalist

To true conservationists the national parks and monuments have become known as "the pleasuring grounds of America." To a multitude of vacationists they and their living museum exhibits have a basic value that exceeds their playground qualities.

In the development plan of each area in the National Park System there is an analysis of the inspirational and recreational experiences enjoyed by visitors. These analyses emphasize the fact that an important value of the System is to be found in its capacity to stimulate pride in, and understanding of, our natural heritage and cultural traditions. Another important value is indicated in the capacity of the areas to serve as great, natural repositories of scientific and historic treasures. Because faunal relationships in the national parks are held in natural state, so far as possible, the areas constitute useful "check plots" for comparison with other wild areas which are not so carefully protected.

For centuries Americans were so concerned with the exploitation of natural resources that little thought was given to preserving any remnants of them. Neither sentiment, thrift, nor scientific approach influenced this selfish utilization. Only recently did the nation awaken to the realization that its successful exploiters had displayed no great vision.

The preservation of natural areas had its beginning in America when a few far-seeing Californians obtained federal action in 1864 in reserving Yosemite Valley and the Mariposa Grove of Big Trees as a State park. Yellowstone became the first national park in 1872. Twenty years elapsed before other areas were recognized as worthy of similar preservation. Another quarter of a century passed before a program of

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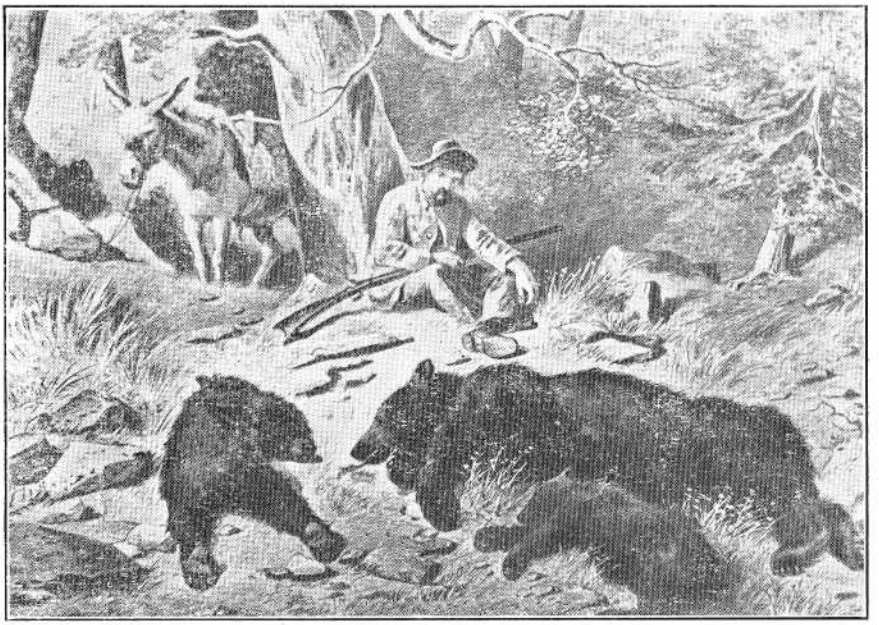
Editor's Note: On August 25, 1946, the National Park Service gave special recognition to the thirtieth anniversary of the establishment of this bureau in the Department of the Interior. We are pleased to present the article prepared by Dr. C. P. Russell as one in the series being run in Yosemite Nature Notes in commemoration of this historic event. (See "The National Park Service—Its Thirtieth Anniversary" by Frank A. Kittredge, Superintendent, Yosemite Nature Notes, June, 1946.)



organized park protection under a National Park Service was established in 1916.

The new bureau weathered the trying years of World War I and emerged thereafter with a defined policy of administration. The fundamental ideal of park protection is expressed in the Act of August 25, 1916, creating the National Park Service. The lands placed under its administration are to be held "to conserve the scenery and natural and historic objects and wildlife therein, and to provide for the enjoyment thereof in such manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations." In that policy, which has been reaffirmed repeatedly by subsequent acts of the Congress, is expressed the conviction that some small part of America's abundant natural wealth of land and resources may be reserved for the purpose of creating a popular understanding and enjoyment of the natural and historic processes which make the nation distinctive and great.

The basic principles of administration have evolved through experience and have been endorsed by many of the conservation organizations of the country. They may be outlined as follows:

1. The national parks must be kept unimpaired for the use of future

generations, and there must be:

a. No hunting.
b. No logging.
c. No grazing of cattle.
d. No summer homes.
e. No commercial developments, except those required for the reasonable accommodation of visitors.

2. National interests must dictate establishment and use:

a. Each national park is representative of a distinctive American feature.
b. Local interests must not affect high standards in selection, acquisition, and use of areas.

3. Units of the National Park System are preserved for their highest use by all people and are:

a. To be made accessible to the public.
b. To provide reasonable accommodations for the public.
c. To limit recreational development to natural facilities.
d. To interpret park values of primary importance.

These principles have been in effect for many years. Some exceptions have been made in connection with grazing and mining within certain areas but these exceptions have resulted from circumstances relating to the acquisition of the areas. In most cases, they pertain to areas that were established as national parks or national monuments before the National Park Service was created.

In general, there has been a close adherence to the prescribed standards of national park management. In normal times, great vigilance on the part of park executives has been required to sustain the ideals expressed in the code. Under the stress of World War II the number of demands for special privileges and general exploitation of the reserves was greatly increased. The fairly simple task of setting aside representative bits of wild country as visualized by early national park proponents is now a complex undertaking in land management that must be coordinated with the whole structure of government and fitted into the economic framework of the nation. Even under war conditions the national parks have upheld the original standards (1).

One hundred sixty-nine areas — with a total acreage of about 20 million, located in thirty-five States, Alaska, Hawaii, and the District of Columbia — make up the National Park System. Of these, twenty-seven are national parks, spacious land areas in their primeval state distinguished by scenic beauty or natural wonders so outstandingly superior in quality to average examples of

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(1) Newton B. Drury, "What the War is Doing to National Parks and where they will be at its Close." **The Living Wilderness.** May, 1944, pp. 11-15).

their several types as to be distinctly national in importance and interest. It is these superlative areas in particular to which the foregoing principles of protection apply. There are 129 areas of the national monument type; historic landmarks, historic and prehistoric structures, memorials, scenic-scientific areas and other areas or objects of national significance. Some of these have been created as national historical parks, national battlefield sites, national military parks, national memorials, and national historic sites. Most of them were set aside as national monuments by Presidential proclamations under the provisions of the Antiquities Act of 1906. Thirty-eight of the national monuments are noted for their geological or biological features; ninety-one areas in this group are historic or prehistoric in character. There are also eleven national cemeteries, three national parkways, and the National Capital Parks in the National Park System.

The National Park Service also administers the Boulder Dam National Recreational Area and a number of recreational demonstration areas. The latter will be transferred to State ownership or other arrangements will be made for their administration as soon as practicable. In addition, under cooperative agreements with the Bureau of Reclamation, the National Park Service assists in the planning and development of recreational facilities on lands bordering upon the lakes impounded by the Shasta and Friant Dams in California.

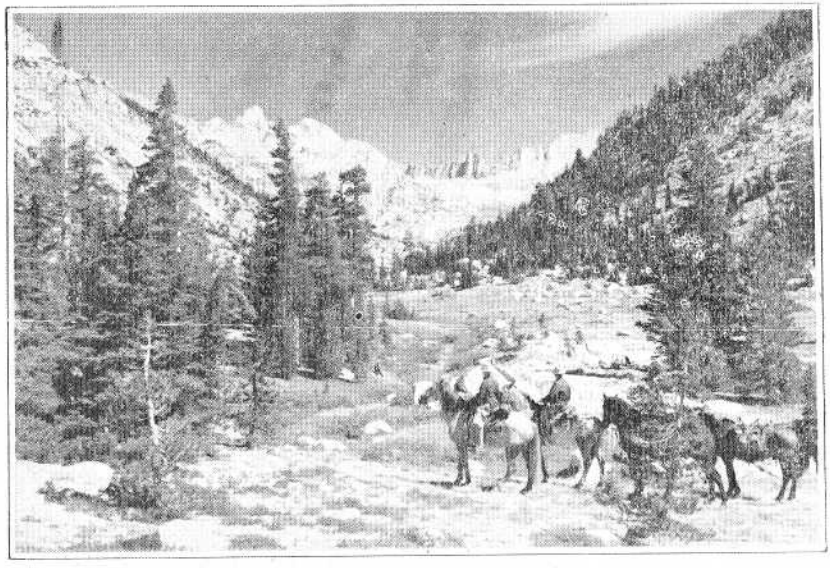
A superintendent or custodian is in charge of each of the more important units in the National Park Service. In some cases the custodian constitutes the entire staff. A large park, such as Yosemite National Park, requires a rather large organization to meet the needs of maintenance, protection, interpretation and general management of business on a year around basis.

A regional scheme of administration was adopted in 1937 with Regional Directors located in Richmond, Va. (Region One); Omaha, Nebr. (Region Two); Santa Fe, New Mex. (Region Three); and San Francisco, Calif. (Region Four). Sixty-eight field areas are located in Region One, 22 in Region Two, 47 in Region Three, and 24 in Region Four. The National Capital Parks, including eight related memorials and historic buildings in the District of Columbia, are under the immediate supervision of the Director's Office. The Director and his staff are located in the Merchandise Mart, Chicago 54, Illinois. A liaison office is maintained in Washington, D. C., in charge of the Associate Director.

The National Park Service is one of seven major bureaus within the Department of the Interior charged with the responsibility for advancing the domestic interests of the people of the United States and administering

the conservation of natural resources. I's sister bureaus are the Bureau of Land Management, Bureau of Reclamation, Geological Survey, Bureau of Mines, Office of Indian Affairs, and the Fish and Wildlife Service. The activities of these bureaus in the past exerted a vital influence upon the development of the Nation. Today they provide the mainspring for the conservation of a vast heritage of soil, forests, minerals, waters, and wildlife upon more than 750 million acres of public land in the continental United States and in the outlying territories and island possessions. In all but one instance the units within this great branch of the Government are concerned with the development and exploitation, as well as the conservation, of the resources under their care. The exception is the National Park Service.

As indicated earlier in this account it is the purpose of the National Park Service to use its areas but not to use them up. The national park program is properly referred to as a form of land use but, unlike forestry, agriculture, or mining, it is not a consuming use of resources. There is no "locking up" of natural values in national parks. The Big Trees of Sequoia National Park are not being logged, but no one can say that they are not being used by the millions of people who visit them. Viewed in this light, it is apparent that the preservation of this particular resource is the most complete and enduring use that could be made. Year after year it is "sold" and resold without impairment or depletion.



A common question, the answer to which seldom seems to penetrate the consciousness of the questioner, is: "Are National Forests also National Parks?" National Forests embrace some 176 million acres of land, eight times greater than the extent of the lands administered by the National Park Service. They are administered by the U. S. Forest Service, a bureau of the Department of Agriculture. The harvesting of natural resources characterizes the management methods of the Forest Service; logging, grazing, and mining are practiced; power developments are permitted; and citizens may lease summer home sites or hunt and trap in the national forests. "In the administration of the forest reserves it must be clearly borne in mind that all land is to be devoted to its most productive use for the permanent good of the whole people . . . . All the resources are for use, and this must be brought about in a thoroughly prompt and businesslike manner, under such restrictions only as will insure the permanence of these resources." (2) This, the so-called "multiple use" concept distinguishes the national forests.

By way of contrast, the national parks and other areas administered by the National Park Service may be regarded by certain commercial interests as "locked up." The thoughtful citizen, however, will discern that the demands made upon

(2) Secretary of Agriculture James Wilson in a letter establishing policy, February 1, 1905. Quoted in **Forest Outings**, 1940, p. 1.

the country's natural resources are so large that national parks and monuments may soon be among the few places in the world where forests continue to evolve normally, where animal life maintains its natural relationship to its environment, and where the processes of Nature are unaffected by man's harnessing of forces. A country so rich as is the United States, including Hawaii and Alaska, may quite properly set aside about 85/100 of 1% of its area subject to the pattern of management which endeavors to preserve inviolate for all time to come some vestige of the pioneer America.

MOUNTAIN LION VISITS YOSEMITE VALLEY

By Lloyd M. Smith

On the morning of August 5, an occupant of one of the tents in Camp 19 near the Sentinel Bridge had an opportunity to make a most unusual daylight observation. He paused as he started to leave his tent, for not more than twenty feet away there stood a nearly adult mountain lion (**Felis concolor californica** May). The lion remained motionless and apparently not unduly alarmed except for the slow "twitching" of its long and slender cylindrical tail.

When the observer stepped from the tent the lion quickly slipped behind some large boulders and disappeared; however, the blue fronted jays in the vicinity kept up a loud, raucous chorus for nearly an hour indicating that the big cat was taking its time getting out of the vicinity.

GRAY FOX IN YOSEMITE VALLEY

By Ranger Naturalist Robert J. Rodin

During the past summer a Park visitor, Mr. J. E. Brogan of Inglewood, California, reported seeing a gray fox, probably (**Urocyon cinereoargenteus townsendi** Merriam), on the floor of Yosemite Valley near Indian Caves. This observation was made at approximately ten o'clock on the morning of July 26.

The fox came down from the talus slope and crossed over to the meadow on the far side of the highway. After crossing the highway he continued a short distance down a trail, but here some distraction caused him to leave the trail and slink along through the tall grass which grows in the open spaces between the trees. His actions were soon explained, however, for he was observed jumping up toward the low branches of a pine tree in an apparent attempt to catch a bird. His efforts were futile and the bird escaped. The fox soon detected the presence of human observers and quickly vanished into the protection of the meadow below.

NATURE NOTELETS

The rather late warm and dry season seems to have the azaleas and red-buds slightly confused. Several small azalea shrubs just outside the Yosemite Museum have suddenly burst into bloom. One of the red-bud bushes only a few feet away has also brought forth some thirty to forty deeply colored blossoms. Superstitious folk might consider this a bad omen, but we just consider it a rare and unusual show. (M. V. W.)

Only a fair crop of California wild grapes was produced this season (1946) on the vines that cover the south side of the Yosemite Museum. There was enough fruit, however, to attract a large number of robins. These birds feasted royally for a short time and practically harvested the entire crop in a period of three to five days. (H. C. P.)

On a recent trip to May Lake I was surprised to see a rather large trout (18 to 20 inches) with its body almost entirely covered with a greenish-white fungus-like growth. The specimen rose for a fly but did not take it, and I had an opportunity to observe the fish for several seconds before it disappeared from sight. This was apparently a specimen that had been attacked by an epizootic of **Saprolegnia**, which is known to occur in this region and which takes its toll of lake trout each season. (M. V. W.)