YOSEMITE NATURE NOTES

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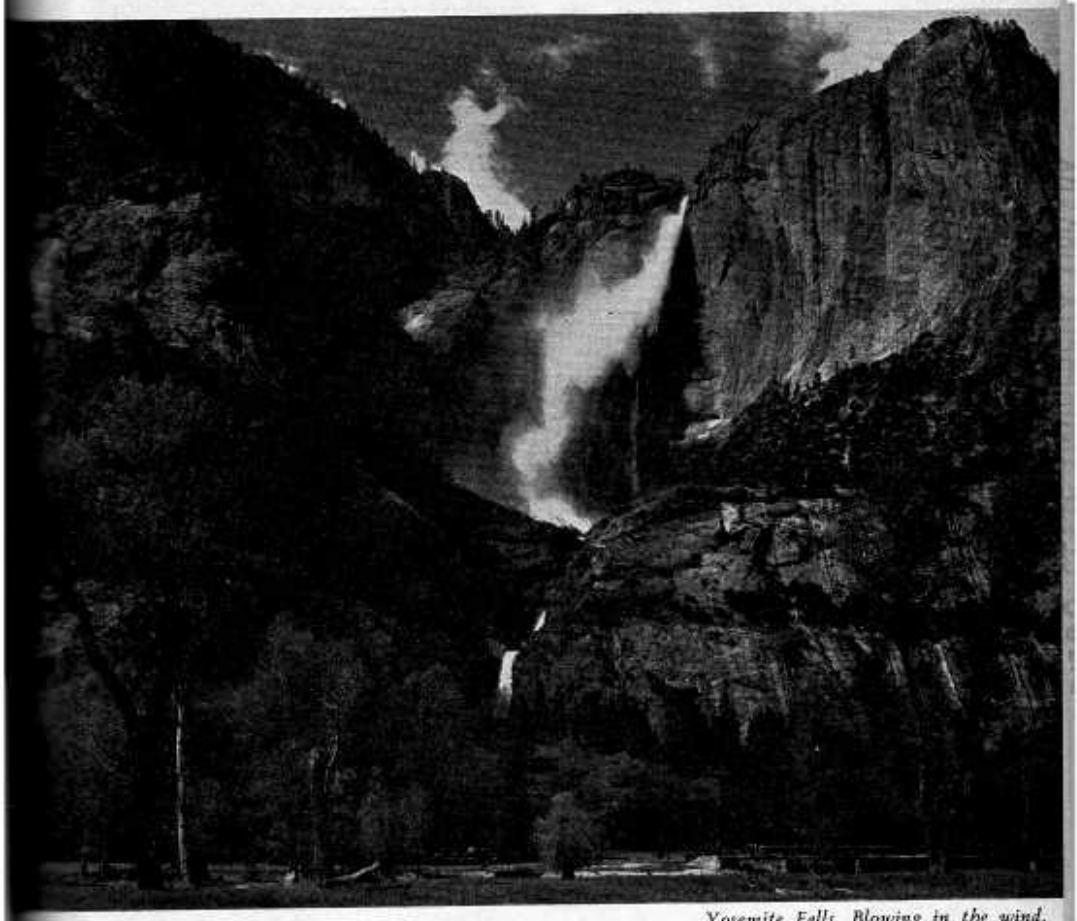
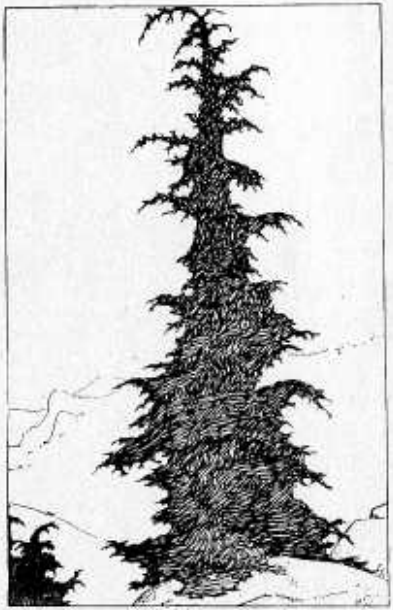


Yosemite Falls, Blowing in the wind.
—Ansel Adams



"Mountain Hemlock"

Yosemite Nature Notes

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TEN DAYS IN THE HEART OF THE SIERRAS

By William S. Rice

...TOR'S NOTE: The following article by Mr. Rice, whose beautiful block prints grace the ...ls of the Yosemite Museum, appeared in *Young People*, published in Philadelphia in 1901. ...s a contrast to Olive Logan's "Does It Pay To Visit Yo Semite" which we carried as a ...al last year. We are grateful to Mr. Rice and to his daughter, Mrs. Dorothy Rice Armato, ...sending the article and the original illustrations for use in *Yosemite Nature Notes*.

I PROMISED myself a trip to the Yo-semite Valley but nearly a year elapsed after my arrival in California, before this ...eam was realized. Finally, ... hot day in July, I board-... the train at Stockton, where the ...ting paint for the valley is gen-...ally made. The ride by rail was ...stly across that vast wheat-cov-...d plain, the San Joaquin Valley, ...tching as far as the eye could ...vel, and bounded on the east by ... delicate blue line of the moun-...ns toward which we are steadily ...maine...

Our train finally reached Chinese Station, among the rolling foot-hills, about five o'clock in the afternoon. A three-seated stage was waiting to convey our party ten miles to Priest's Hotel, where we were to stop over for the night. From here we were whirled rapidly over the hills and through primitive mining towns, climbing steep mountains and gazing breathlessly down into deep canyons, where swift-flowing rivers, the Tuolumne and its branches, reflected the grim hills and rays of the setting sun, forming color combinations of indescribable beauty.

The hills became higher, and as twilight deepened around us we were climbing the steepest grade (Priest's Grade) on the road to the top of Priest's Hill. I shall never forget the beautiful moonrise scene that here spread out before us. First, the moon was observed creeping over the ...

rays just illumined the crests of the hills to the north of us, leaving the intervening gaps or canyons in deepest black.

On alighting at the cheerful-looking hostelry on the summit, we were met by a brigade of servants armed with feather dusters, who attacked us and gave us a sound beating, much to our comfort and relief, for the dust is one of the features of the trip.

At six a.m. the start for the valley was made. We had now a distance of forty-five miles to cover by stage in one day. About a mile above Priest's is the mining village of Big Oak Flat, known throughout the world for the large amount of gold secured by the miners in the years 1849 and 1850. Prospecting has been going on everywhere, and not a stone seems to have been unturned in the search for the precious metal. The scenes of "the days of old and days of gold and days of '49' became familiar to the traveler.

Winding along the summits of the mountains, the road passes many curious trees, pines, oaks with great bunches of mistletoe, forming in many places a festooned archway over the traveler as he drinks in the aromatic pine and fir-laden air. Onward we proceeded among pines, firs, and cedars and at noon reached the little inn known as Crocker's, where we were met again by the feather-duster brigade. After dinner we resumed our journey, and a few hours found ourselves passi through the Tuolumne Grove of trees.

These trees are evergreens, kno as *Sequoia gigantea*, and are found groves and forest principally in Sierra Nevadas. They are shelte by a cinnamon-colored bark, nea forty inches thick, and which spongy in texture. These giants estimated as being the oldest liv things on earth, their age hav been reckoned from four thousa to six thousand years, from the centric circles of trees that h been felled. Some of them towe the enormous height of two hund and three hundred feet and are i thirty to forty feet in diameter.

One of them, the "Dead Gia has been hollowed out so that stage drove right through it! W a peculair sensation it was as halted in the heart of the tree stu and gazed upward at the patch blue through the opening at the

This grove is one of the oldest California, discovered when min were in search of precious met Here too are numerous other gi trees, sugar and yellow pines, and cedars, and as we reach higher altitude, silver firs and Do las spruce.

The wild flowers along the w were resplendent in their hues rose, purple, pink, yellow and bl The Mariposa tulip, the beautiful fragrant Shasta lily, syringas, b and white lupines, wild azaleas a lilacs, all mingling with countl thousands of unfamiliar flow formed one immense flower sh along our pathway.

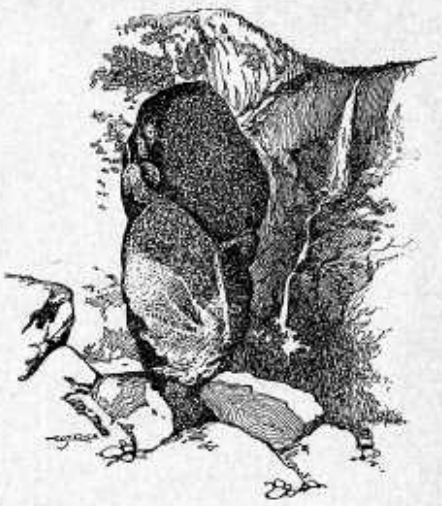
The road now winds about summit and we are aware, by ca ing a glimpse of a snowy peak, t the higest altitudes have b reached. Pine-laden breezes swe over us, cooled by the snow

of the high Sierras, and the ride down grade has commenced. Curious, fantastic rocks are pointed out until a turn in the road brings us to the face of a bold precipice, where the whole panorama of the valley lies spread out before us. Immediately every tourist exclaims, "Oh my!" and that is all he is capable of. This is known as "Oh my, Point," and is three thousand three hundred and fifty-seven feet above the floor of the valley. Trees two hundred feet high look like toy trees diminized and horses like mere pinheads.

To our left is the noble granite rock of El Capitan, three thousand three hundred feet high; to our right the filmy thread of the Bridal Veil Falls, three hundred and thirty-six feet in height, creamy in the golden rays of the setting sun. At our feet we can trace the windings of the crystal Merced, "river of mercy," peacefully flowing and reflecting flowers and trees and the on-looking rocks.

Our stage now spins along merrily and we descend the slopes of the valley, winding dangerous curves that fairly make one hold in with might and main." Yet with all we are silent, for we are at a loss for words, caring only to let our eyes feast on the ravishing beauty of the scene and to gaze upward to where the purple - stained, snow - capped peaks pierce intensely blue skies.

The floor of the valley is reached at last, and here, as we glide along at a gallop, fresh scenes await us. On our left comes a silvery fall, clear from the top of the brow of the cliff. Our guide informs us that, "That is the Virgin's Tears." "Why?" some one asked. "Because they're so far from the Bridal Veil," he replied cleverly. As we rounded the bend in the roadway, a scene of unspeakable loveliness greeted us, the



Great Yosemite Falls, the larger one leaping in steaming spray from the face of the cliff to its first terrace, over a thousand feet below, where it wanders about in a series of cascades until it makes its final plunge to the floor of the valley and joins the waters of the onrushing Merced. . .

Other curious rocks noticed along the drive to our camp were Three Brothers, Sentinel Rock and Dome and Royal Arches, and the beautiful South or Half Dome with its brow curved with a cap of glittering snow. Our stage finally halted at the camp that was to be our temporary home for a week.

The trail to Sentinel Dome and Glacier Point was one that was much enjoyed by our party. The point is the shelf of rocks overhanging the perpendicular face of a cliff three thousand three hundred feet high. From this point to Sentinel Dome was about one and a half miles, and from the bare, rocky slopes of this promontory we beheld the grandest view of the entire valley. On the very crest of the dome grew a stunted old pine, springing out of the crevice of a rock. How the tree managed to exist there was

a mystery to me. It must have attained a great age, for vegetation advances slowly at such altitudes. From this point the whole chain of snow-covered peaks of the high Sierras and their valleys are visible, and furnished to us the clue to the source of the wonderful streams which pour over the mountain walls from such amazing altitudes.

The valley from this point of view was seen to divide into three different canyons, each containing objects of great interest. There was the Tenaya Canyon with Mirror Lake, that gem of the valley, nestling amid the pines, the Little Yosemite with its two falls — the Nevada and the Vernal, and the Illilouette, or South Canyon.

The view from the top of (Yosemite) fall is one of the most impressive I have ever witnessed. The trail leading to the top is very exhausting to ascend, but the view from the brink of the falls amply repays the exertion. It was the last place I visited before leaving the valley. Once there, I crept along a narrow shelf, holding on to an iron railing, got my heels well set in the rocks and proceeded thus until I reached a shelf of overhanging rock at a point close to the over-plunging current. Here one gets a perfectly free view of the frothy white spray th descends in rocket-like strea About two hundred feet below brink of the fall is a ledge th breaks the force of the water i countless streams of spray, whi when the light is just right, p duces wonderful rainbow effects.

Balanced rocks and overhangi ones are everywhere. One can tain hair-raising glimpses of rushi thundering torrents and deep c yons if one has the nerve to try experiment. One place afforded as thrilling a sight as any I w nessed. We crept close to the ed and lay down, peering over th sands of feet into the yawning aby straight below us. A draught of c mountain air blew steadily in faces from below, adding a thrill terror to the place.

Two of the features of the vall should never be missed. Those a a trip to Mirror Lake at sunrise a to the Happy Isles, where th streams from the different falls me in cascades, forming numero wooded isles, a veritable bit of fair land. Our week in the valley passe all too quickly, and when the ti came to bid adieu to those wo drous scenes, we did so with th greatest reluctance.

YOSEMITE BEARS CHIP TEETH!

By Douglass H. Hubbard, Associate Park Naturalist

Campers in Yosemite National Park can tell you that bears will eat almost anything. They also like to chew on wooden signs. But when their destruction of routed wooden directional signs along the park's 750-odd miles of trails began to run into hundreds of dollars, National Park Service officials decided that it was high time that something drastic was done.

There is disagreement as to what makes bears destroy signs. It is not food-hunger old timers say, but rather a resentment of something man-made and carrying a man-smell in a place where, in the bear's opinion, it shouldn' be.

In an effort to learn more of this destructive resentment a series of experimental signs were made in the Yosemite sign shop, using different kinds of wood including redwood, ply, and even native pine gathered in the forest. These were finished in a variety of ways: some were oiled or painted different colors while others were left natural. Placed along a bear trail, all were intact one morning, and all were damaged or destroyed later the same day, apparently through the efforts of a single passing bruin. This let the air out of the theory that it was a specific thing such as a paint smell, a color, or a wood texture that aroused the bear's anger, if anger it be.

The answer seemed to lie in constructing a type of sign which would be harmonious with the surroundings, yet impervious to teeth which can pierce a can of beans as easily as though it were a tube of toothpaste. Signmaker Lee Buzzini and Welder Bill Kirk of the Yosemite National Park staff put their heads together and came up with an idea—why not cut the signs from sheet metal with an oxy-acetylene torch?

Experimental signs were made, but not without trial and error. This included the perfecting by Mr. Buzzini of a method of laying them out in quantity, using a diamond-point vibrating marking machine and a sliding template for outlining the letters on the ⅛-inch steel, which was too smooth for adherance of the soapstone generally used for marking metals. Mr. Kirk is able to flame cut the new, metal signs at the same speed as the routed signs can be made, and the final costs of manufacturing the two types are practically the same.

The metal signs become more attractive as they rust and rust provides a natural maintenance by obliterating man-made initials and other marks. To date not one has been damaged by bears; but there is no way of knowing the inner frustrations the creatures may be suffering!

FORESTA'S YESTERDAYS

By Donald E. McHenry, Chief Park Naturalist

Immediately within the boundary of Yosemite National Park, adjacent to Big Meadows and somewhat above and north of the Arch Rock Entrance Station is a 200 acre tract of woodland which has been subdivided into summer homesites. This development is known as Foresta. Little except promotional material has been written about it, yet the series of events which have taken place here over the intervening years justifies an historical footnote of more than passing interest.

On November 20, 1884, a parcel of 160 acres of the public domain was patented to Thomas A. Rutherford. He died the following year and was buried at Big Meadows. This land was then conveyed to Phillippe Provost as recorded on January 11, 1887, and was subsequently sold to James M. McCauley for $100. To this original 160 acres was added 40 acres from the adjoining McCauley homestead, thus completing the 200 acres that comprise the Foresta subdivision. C. P. Snell and V. W. Lothrop received title to these 200 acres from Barbara McCauley, who had succeeded to James McCauley's properties through the settlement of his estate.

In 1913 Snell sold this property to A. B. Davis who decided to make it into a summer resort. Apparently this brought the Foresta Land Company into existence. Mr. Davis first built the seven mile road from El Portal to Foresta at a reported cost of $25,000. Because of the need for additional funds to continue the road up to Crane Flat to connect with the old Big Oak Flat Road, Mr. Davis sold his magnesite mines for $20,000. Fred McCauley was engaged as his surveyor.

With the completion of the extended road, Mr. Davis began building a small hotel, community houses, 37 tent houses, a swimming pool, and bath houses. He developed springs and built reservoirs, piping the water to these buildings. This is the Mr. Davis for whom the Davis Road between El Portal and Foresta and the Davis Cutoff between Crane Flat and Big Meadows was named. A post office known as O-Pim was already available to the subdivision, having been established previously at the adjacent Meyer's homestead in the 1870s or 1880s. It is not known if this post office was still active when Foresta came into existence.

In the early stages of development, Foresta had a strong appeal primarily to people of culture such as university professors, high school teachers and educators in general, because it seemed to promise "seminar discussions under the peacefully thought-provoking surroundings of the primeval forests of Yosemite National Park." This led to the organization of a sort of local summer Chautauqua known as Foresta Summer Assembly, to which as many as five to six hundred people are said to have come. Among the leaders of these meetings were such persons as David Starr Jordan, Jack and Charmion London, George Wharton James, Ellen Beech Yaw, Joaquin Miller, John Muir, Benjamin

Ide Wheeler, then President of the University of California, and many other prominent people. In time the assembly idea failed miserably.

Transportation between El Portal and Foresta was furnished in sightseeing buses which met the visitors at the train at El Portal. The passengers were driven over the "Foresta Triangle" from El Portal to Foresta. From there they traveled through the Merced and Tuolumne Groves of "Big Trees" on to Crane Flat, Gin Flat, down the old Gentry Grade to Yosemite Valley and then back to El Portal.

Since the Foresta project failed to pay off, Mr. Davis abandoned it in 1915 and returned to his home in New York. Three years later an unknown and mysterious character appeared on the scene. This man arrived in El Portal by train and walked to the McCauley ranch where he inquired from Fred the way to Foresta. That evening Fred noticed smoke in the direction of Foresta but did not investigate.

As it was customary for Fred to go down into Yosemite Valley to deliver meat and vegetables which he raised on his ranch, he had agreed to take this man along with him in the morning. For this he used the old Coulterville Road which ran past Big Meadows and the adjacent Foresta. As they rode towards the valley the man informed Fred that the hotel at Foresta had burned the evening before. He said that he had built a fire in the kitchen range and took a walk up to the large reservoir. He reported that when he had returned the hotel was just smouldering ashes. He thought that the stove door had fallen open and had let the fire fall on the floor or something. Well, no one could fool a wise bird like Fred with such a tale as that, so when they reached Yosemite Village Fred reported to Superintendent Lewis what this man had said. The man was arrested and questioned but he insisted that he was telling the truth. Since nothing could be proved against him after three days he was allowed to go free. There are some who have asserted that this was a premeditated act involving ulterior motives.

In the meantime the Meyer boys at Big Meadows, having noticed the smoke of the burning hotel, went over to investigate. When they reached it they found the hotel completely burned and the fire almost out, but the surrounding trees were on fire and the fire, creeping along the needles, had reached the porch of the cabin then owned by a Mr. Swift. Horace and George succeeded in extinguishing all fires. That there was not a serious forest fire was due to a total lack of any breeze.

One of the lots of the Foresta subdivision which, by generous donation of Professor W. A. Setchell of the University of California, is now in the title of the United States stands an historical structure of the Yosemite scene. This cabin was constructed in 1874 by George Anderson on land now part of Big Meadows, property of Horace Meyer. George Anderson is noted for the first successful ascent of Half Dome in 1875. Professor Setchell purchased the Anderson cabin from George Meyer and had it removed to the site it now occupies in the Foresta subdivision. The cabin is one of the oldest man-made structures in Yosemite.[1]

Not long after the hotel burned J. J. Michaelson of San Francisco acquired ownership of Foresta, taking in W. S. Wright, also of San Francisco, as partner. Mr. Wright became the manager of the Foresta Land Company and sole owner in

1925. As the project prospered less and less, the Foresta Land Company went out of existence to be followed by a series of operators of one sort or another. None realized enough success to establish the Foresta undertaking as a profitable venture. Today Foresta stands as a monument to past dreams largely unrealized, a forested area with a scattering of summer cottages, a subdivision decidedly less pretentious than originally conceived.

Editor's Note: Part of the above information was furnished by Mrs. N. M. Goodrich of Santa Barbara, and a long-time summer resident of Foresta.

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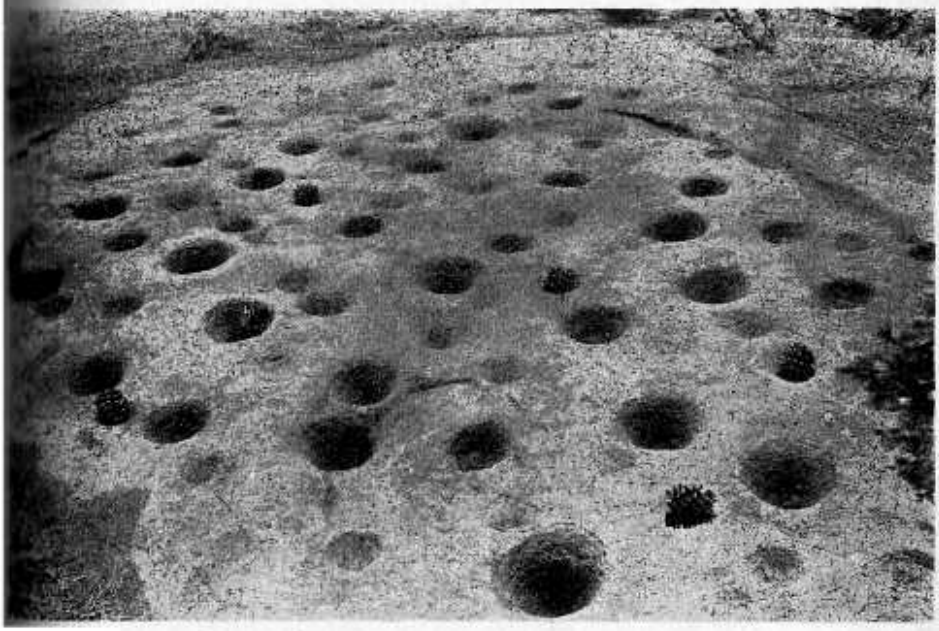
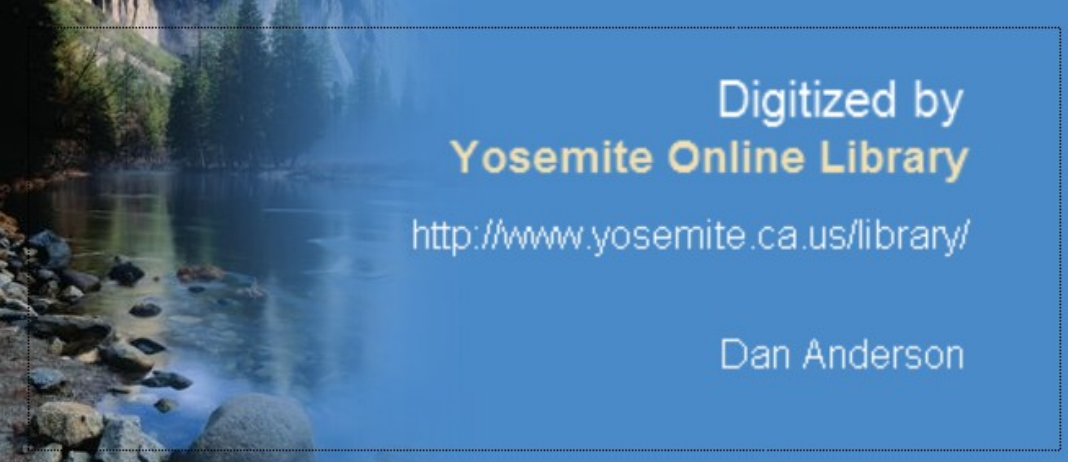
(1) See also "The Historic Anderson Cabin" by Emil Ernst, *Yosemite Nature Notes*, vol. 33, no. 10, October 1954.



—*Anderson*

Indian mortar holes near Big Meadow in the Foresta region.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