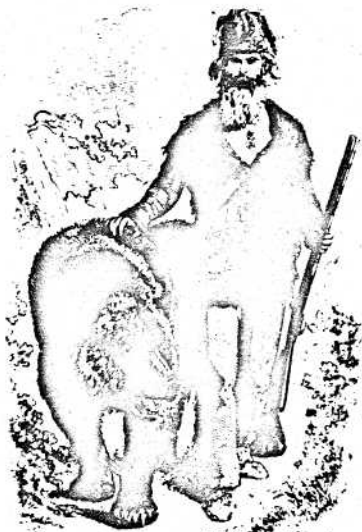


YOSEMITE

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Grizzly Adams and Ben

JOHN ADAMS, SIERRAN MOUNTAINEER. With the discovery of gold in January of 1848, the pastoral Sierran foothills of California were destined soon to become covered with thousands of people in search of their fortune. For many, economic gain was not the only reward for which they were looking. Back east, and in other civilized parts of the world, people went to circuses to see the exotic animals, hoping to find experiences which normally would not enter into their routine lives. When asked why they were going to California, many answered, "To see the elephant!"

While many unusual people were arriving, there was one character, among all of the others, who stood out as an individual.

JOHN ADAMS arrived in California during the fall of 1849. He was born in Massachusetts where he had worked as a cobbler and, until he was nearly killed by his boss' Bengal tiger, as a trapper of live game.

Along with many of the gold seekers, Adams found that life in California did not live up to his expectations. "In the space of three years, I failed three times; from the height of prosperity I

was plunged into the depths of difficulty; until at last, in the fall of 1852, disgusted with the world and dissatisfied with myself, I abandoned all my schemes for the accumulation of wealth, turned my back upon the society of my fellows, and took the road toward the wildest and most unfrequented parts of the Sierra Nevada, resolved thenceforth to make the wilderness my home and wild beasts my companions."

Oddly, Adams left his old identity behind. He adopted the name of his younger brother, James Capen Adams, and headed towards the Sierra with an old wagon, two oxen, two rifles, a Colt revolver, several bowie-knives, a couple of blankets, and a few tools. Settling in a little valley twenty or thirty miles northwest of Yosemite Valley, he built his home with the help of local Miwoks. Game was abundant. He supplemented his basic diet of meat with flour made from grass seeds, coffee made from roasted acorns, and a sweetener, which he was able to prepare from the gum of the Sugar Pines. What cash money he required, he easily obtained by selling pelts and live animals which he was able to capture.

GRIZZLY BEARS were at this time roaming the expanse of the state. The now extinct California Grizzly, unlike the docile Black Bear, was feared by many, and respected by all. A grizzly could weigh well over a thousand pounds, and at any size, was considered to be the most formidable beast within the country, if not the entire world.

While no animal will attack if unprovoked, most, except the grizzly, will temper their hostilities when they feel they have lost the advantage. While it is known that Galen Clark, the early Yosemite homesteader, feasted on grizzly meat, many hunters, when asked whether they had found the grizzly they had been hunting, said "I hain't lost no grizzlies." Adams at first allowed grizzlies a wide berth, restricting his fur trading activities to the pelts of other animals. However, he soon "considered it a point of honor to give battle in every case", and yet he was not to become known as *Grizzly Adams* until after he had traveled to

Yosemite in 1854. Although Indians had lived in the Yosemite region for more than four thousand years, the Valley was not even seen by non-Indians until 1833 when Joseph Reddeford Walker and his trapping party crossed the Sierra enroute to the west coast. The second known sighting, and the first entry into the Valley by people other than Indians took place during the "Mariposa Indian Wars" in 1851.

James Mason Hutchings, the recognized promoter of Yosemite, led what he always called "the first tourist venture" into the Valley in 1855. Preceding Hutchings by a year, Adams, and his friend Solon, a man from Sonora, entered Yosemite at a time when relatively few white men had. In the spring of '54, after stopping by the ranch of W.J. Howard to pick up Adams' mules and a greyhound, (which turned out to be pregnant) they headed towards the Valley. "Our road was rough and difficult; but, after traveling three days, we arrived upon the brink of the great valley. The first view of the sublime scenery was so impressive that we were delayed a long time, as if spellbound, looking down from the mountain upon the magnificent landscape far below. It is vain to attempt to convey the effect produced by those giant and picturesque cliffs three thousand feet high, that romantic valley-bottom with its green carpet and silvery stream, and those groves of trees, which are formed and placed as if a skillful artist had disposed them to portray the essence of romance. It is vain to attempt with words alone, to convey the impressions produced upon the mind by such an enchanting sight;



magnitude may be imagined, beauty may be conceived, but the breadth and scope of these rocks, the tempered tints of these distances, the influence of these sublime forms, enclosing within their compass lawns and groves and grassy banks, presenting at every turn new and unimagined splendors, - all these must be seen and felt, to be fully comprehended."

After first exploring the Valley, the hunters set up camp "ten miles above the falls" probably in the vicinity of Merced Lake. Later, they moved farther upstream, at which time Adams discovered a grizzly's den. He became obsessed with the idea of killing the grizzly. Alone, he staked out the den and waited.

On the third day, Adams was becoming rather impatient. Hoping to rouse the grizzly from her den, he let out a soulful yell. "It echoed like the roar of a lion up the canyon; and a moment afterwards there was a booming in the den like the puffing and snorting of an engine in a tunnel, and the enraged animal rushed out, growling and snuffing, as if she could belch forth the fire of a volcano. She rose upon her hind feet, and exhibited a monster form, - limbs of terrible strength. She looked around in every direction; but in a few moments, seeing nothing to attack, she sat down upon her haunches, with her back towards the opposite side of the canyon, as if her enemy were there."

"During these few minutes I stood as motionless as a statue, hardly breathing, waiting and watching for an opportunity to fire. Had I met such an animal unawares, in an unexpected place, her ferocity would have made me tremble, but after my long watch I was anxious to commence the attack, and felt as steady as a piece of ordnance upon a battery. As I watched, I saw her turn her head towards the den; and, fearing she would retire, I gave a low, sharp whistle, which brought her to her feet again, with her breast fronting directly towards me. It was then, having my rifle already drawn, that I fired; and in an instant, dropping the rifle, I drew my pistol in one hand and my knife in the other. The bear, as the ball slapped loudly in the fat of her breast, staggered and fell backwards, and began pawing and biting the ground, - a sure sign of a deadly hurt. Copious streams of crimson blood also gushed from her breast, and I knew that they came from the fountainhead. The work was indeed, nearly done; but so anxious was I to complete it at once, that I commenced leaping over the bushes to plunge my knife in her dying heart; when, gathering her savage strength, she rose, and, with one last desperate effort, sprang towards me. The distance,



Hutchings and Galen Clark hunting grizzlies amongst the Giant Sequoias.

between us was only thirty feet, but, fortunately, full of brush, and she soon weakened without the prodigious energy requisite to tear her way through it. I discharged the six shots of my revolver; the last of which struck under the left ear, and laid her still for a moment; when, leaping forwards, I plunged my knife into her vitals. Again she endeavored to rise, but was so choked with blood that she could not. I drew my knife across her throat, and after a few convulsive struggles she expired."

Upon entering the den, Adams discovered two male cubs which were less than a week old. Adams returned to camp with his treasures, and giving one to his friend, told the story of his adventure. "Before retiring, Solon christened his cub General

Jackson; I remarked that General Jackson was a great man in his way, but I would call my bear Ben Franklin - a greater name."

Adams attempted unsuccessfully to feed the cubs a combination of water, flour, and sugar. Fortunately, the greyhound had just given birth, and nursed the cubs.

Adams and Solon continued towards the summits, coming across wolves, cougars, more bear, and the elusive Big Horn sheep. After spending close to a month within what is now Yosemite National Park, Adams headed home with numerous hides, "Ben Franklin", two wolf cubs, five cougar kittens, and a pair of fawns.

IN SAN FRANCISCO "James Capen" Adams established "The Mountaineer Museum" in 1856. Ben was still with him, serving as Adams' bodyguard, pack animal, and closest friend. Among the other creatures in Adams' live menagerie there were nine bears, including Samson, a 1500 pound grizzly; two elks; cougars; and a few eagles. After several months Adams moved to the northeast corner of Clay and Kearny Streets, renaming his establishment the "Pacific Museum." City life and environment may not have agreed with his friends. On January 19, 1858 there appeared in the *San Francisco Evening Bulletin* an article entitled "Death of a Distinguished Native Californian", announcing the death of Ben Franklin.

In 1859 Adams moved the location of his museum again, and on January 7, 1860 he sailed for New York to begin working for Phineas T. Barnum. During the 3½ month voyage, an old head injury, sustained during an encounter with a bear, reopened and continued to worsen. After working for Barnum throughout the summer and into the fall, Grizzly Adams took to his death bed.

An hour before his death, on October 25th, 1860, Adams replied to a clergyman who had asked him about his faith -

"I have attended preaching every day, Sundays and all, for the last six years. Sometimes an old grizzly bear gave me the sermon, sometimes it was a panther; often it was the thunder and lightning, the tempest or the hurricane, on the peaks of the Sierra Nevada or in the gorges of the Rocky Mountains."

By Dean Shenk

Information for this article drawn from "The Adventures of James Capen Adams, Mountaineer and Grizzly Bear Hunter of California" by Theodore Hittell, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1911; "The Grizzly Bear Hunter of California", by Francis P. Farquhar, The Grubhorn Press, 1948; "The Legend of Grizzly Adams" by Richard Dillon, Coward-McCann, Inc., 1966; "Grizzly Adams: A Memorable Mountain Man" by Richard Dillon, Univ. of Calif., Davis, 1966.

Illustrations reproduced are, in sequence, from "Adventures of James Capen Adams", Theodore Hittell, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1911; "The Life and Adventures of Christopher Carson", Chas. Burdett & G.C. Evans, 1860; "Scenes of Wonder and Curiosity in California", Hutchings, J.M. Hutchings & Co., 1861.



"BIG SIX" - HALF DOME RESCUE. The rescue of six people Feb. 4-6 from the top of Half Dome by Park Service and concessioner employees and a helicopter crew from Lemoore Naval Air Station was covered by the media during and after the operation.

Thinking there might be interesting details of the events as they transpired, we searched the Rescue Log and the government report (AAC-SAR Report; form #315 Rev 4/74). The log entries are terse and contain code words and numbers that meant little to us. But, by overlaying the log with the expanded report, certain highlights emerge.

The weather in the Sierra had been unseasonably mild through the end of January; on Feb. 4, early a.m., it worsened quickly and severely.

LOG ENTRIES

2/4/76 1500 hrs. Report received in Ranger office that six persons overdue from overnight trip to Half Dome and possibly in trouble because of heavy snow storm and lack of any winter weather gear. Report (apparently) speculative. Watch put on residences of people involved.

2/5/76 0700 hours. Full scale operation begun when it appeared that victims had not returned.

0900 hrs. Lemoore N.A.S. contacted requesting helicopter. Helicopter not authorized without more definite information.

1007 hrs. Lloyd Price and Craig Patterson, Yosemite Mountaineering School, left Happy Isles "traveling light and fast" for base of cables (on Half Dome) to evaluate situation. No tracks seen in snow on trail; the six evidently still on Half Dome. Concern over falling ice, avalanches on Mist Trail and Horse Trail. Still snowing.

1045 hrs. Scott AFB contacted to arrange for C130 aircraft overflight to determine if people in fact on Half Dome.

1102 hrs. Five man team departs from Valley Rescue cache with full bivouac gear.

1106 hrs. Using Questar telescope and helped by a break in the clouds, rangers spot red flag on stick on Half Dome. Distress signal?

1116 hrs. Again requested helo from Lemoore.

1121 hrs. Additional visual contact — red and green flags.

1123 hrs. Voice contact from Mirror Lake attempted with bull horn. Instructions given about waving if injured. Unsuccessful.

1235 hrs. Angel 4, Lemoore Huey helo, dispatched for Valley

1350 hrs. Angel 4 returning to Lemoore, account of foul weather.

1353 hrs. Ground support party increased to 12, equipped for technical ascent of cable route. Five departed.

1450 hrs. Remaining seven departed.

1616 hrs. Price and Patterson reach base of cables, wind 15 mph. Cold, snowing, unable to make voice contact with victims.

1905 hrs. Lemoore reports will try again a.m. 2/6

2036 hrs. First support group arrives at base of cables, joining Price and Patterson.

2210 hrs. Price and Patterson attempt ascent with fuel, food, clothes.

2335 hrs. Price and Patterson forced back by inability to judge dangerous conditions in the dark. Further rescue attempt hazardous; resume at daylight.

2/6/76 0455 hrs. Lemoore helo requested.

0530 hrs. Support party of 24 assembled to pack supplies and technical climbing gear.

0628 hrs. Lemoore helo en route.

0800 hrs. Angel 4 arrives at Ahwahnee meadow after flight in bad weather up Merced River Canyon. Weather prevents immediate rescue attempt. Technical ascent planned in event weather precludes use of helo.

1038 hrs. Angel 4 tries approach to Half Dome; weather prevents success.

1042 hrs. Mike Graham, Camp 4 rescue team, and Dan Dellinger, NPS, reach summit.

1130 hrs. Graham reports: 6 people on top, all alive, no frostbite, weak, had one two-man tent.

1245 hrs. Visibility improves briefly. Angel 4 off.
1300 hrs. Angel 4 returns with three victims and gear.
1300 hrs. Angel 4 back in air.
1317 hrs. Angel 4 back to Ahwahnee meadow with remaining victims.
1320 hrs. Mission completed. Angel 4 returning to Lemoore.
1417 hrs. Rescue and support parties start for Valley.
1930 hrs. All down.

So, all's well that ends well.

We were on the fringe of the action as people, things, and plans were assembled. There was no hesitancy on the part of anyone in the rescue parties. They were, as usual, ready, willing and able. The helicopter crew twice groped through rain, clouds and snow trying to reach the Park. The whole operation came off as planned but we're satisfied, if the weather hadn't cleared enough for the helicopter to reach Half Dome, the rescue would have ended with equal success.

WHAT'S Y.N.H.A. DOING? By now, members have received the announcement about the First Annual Members Meeting - April 24 and 25. As stated in the invitation, this will be an historic event and an important milestone in the Association's affairs. The Y.N.H.A. staff and "recruits" and the National Park Service people who will present the interpretive programs are very enthusiastic about their assignments and mission. Their programs will be varied and stimulating. Those electing to attend and participate in the Board of Trustees' quarterly meeting will gain an insight into the association's policy-making procedures.

Dana Morgenson, Board Chairman, has become somewhat of a celebrity since the publication of his fine Yosemite Wildflower Trails book. Mr. Morgenson may be persuaded to autograph copies!

While the members meeting isn't a "public meeting" we hope those members attending will bring a friend, if they choose; friends are quite welcome.

Dr. Carl Sharsmith's Winter Ecology Seminars were conducted under nearly every variety of weather — sun, snow, hail and rain. This diminished neither enthusiasm nor attendance; each of the four classes went out full.

The summer seminar catalogs have been out about three weeks and the early returns indicate that the programs are being well received. Dr. Sharsmith's Alpine and Subalpine Botany classes are more than one-half filled. According to Jean Saulsbury, seminar secretary, about 52% of seminar participants are Y.N.H.A. members.

The Board of Trustees, at the January meeting voted to provide Association funds for several park projects. Park Research Scientist Dr. Jan van Wagendonk recommended to the Board that a grant be made for a survey of park bird populations. Ted Beedy will undertake the doctoral research project which should help index the effects of human use and fire protection on bird population levels and distribution. The \$1500 approved will cover subsistence, travel, etc. for the first year of a two year study.

An amount of \$1500 was allocated for the preparation and printing of the park "mini-folder" in foreign languages. This amount will cover the costs of the folder translated to the Spanish tongue.

Y.N.H.A. requested and received approval of \$1755 - to be used for the employment of three naturalists to present programs for park visitors between June 15 and July 5. Because of federal budgeting procedures, the park interpretive staff is not at sufficient strength during this period to provide programs for the visitors, who, by mid-June, are in the Park in considerable numbers. Three people won't fill the need, but they will help. Park Superintendent Leslie P. Arnberger expressed his appreciation for the Association's cooperation.

Y.N.H.A. received approval of a request for \$800 to develop a self-contained automatic slide/sound program on the birds of the Yosemite region. A color photo of a Yosemite bird will appear on the screen accompanied by a taped recording of the bird's call. The sound track also will relate a pertinent message about the bird's habitat and ecological niche. The

machine probably will be installed in the Happy Isle Trail Center. Marie Mans, a Y.N.H.A. member and an accomplished birder has offered her assistance in locating photos and tapes of bird songs.

GEORGE FROST, who lives in Detroit, Michigan came west for the Ostrander Lake Ski Trip. Evidently Mr. Frost had a pleasant experience, as he wrote:

"The trip led by Warren White last week was a most happy and rewarding adventure for me. I appreciate and very much respect the spirit of enthusiasm and voluntary activity it represented.

I fear that I personally took a great deal more than I gave in connection with the trip. In any event, the enclosed is intended to express support for the Association and the activity. No person as far away as I am can be much of a steady supporter, but I do hope there will be other opportunities to enjoy Yosemite in the future. Otherwise, I fear, my support will of necessity have to be limited.

My hope is that an effort can be made to fully reimburse the trip leaders for their expenses. I particularly think of Fred (the dentist, whose last name I do not know) who used up waxing and other materials on my behalf."

We welcome new Life member Frost, as we do William J. Gastrock of Burlingame, Calif., Harold E. Basey of Modesto, Miss Ilo E. Dillin of Minier, Illinois, Willard E. Melton of Yosemite National Park, and Mrs. Byron Nishkian of San Francisco.

BIRDS AND BIRDING - In the Summer '76 seminar catalog, David Gaines' birding classes were described, albeit sketchily. Gaines sent us the following, perhaps to drum up business, but it does have a nice sound.

Long before the first humans arrived, birds had colonized Yosemite, retreated when the glaciers advanced, returned when the glaciers receded - adapting and evolving as thousands of years of water and ice sculptured the mountains. So it is not strange that birds are "at home" in Yosemite - Ouzels, for instance, sing to every stream, Swifts wing along the sheerest cliffs, the Rosy Finch nests on the summits of the peaks.

Four life zones and seven major habitats, ranging from pine-oak forest through fir and pine to alpine meadows and fell-fields, provide sustenance and shelter to more than one hundred kinds of breeding birds, each unique in dress, song and personality. There are brilliantly yellow tanagers and woodsy brown wrens, raucous jays and musical thrushes, grouse which outwit with caution the speed of the predacious goshawk.

Objectives in the birding seminars are to learn the birds and understand their roles in the Yosemite environment. Class participants will range the park from the Valley floor to Tioga Pass, learning to recognize birds by plumage, song and behavior. Beginners will learn what to look for and how to use a field guide. The subtleties that separate the Hammond's from the Dusky Flycatcher and the female Cassin's from the Purple Finch will be plumbed. In particular, search will be made for such elusive Sierran "specialties" as Great Gray Owl, Flammulated Owl, Black Swift, Black-backed Woodpecker, Pine Grosbeak and Gray-crowned Rosy Finch.

Anyone with an interest in birds and natural history should respond happily to a birding seminar.

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