

UP ROPE!

NEWS OF THE WASHINGTON ROCK CLIMBERS

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Seneca Rock

Plans are shaping up for a weekend trip to Seneca Rock on June 30 and July 1. From present indications the Club will be well represented.

Legend tells us of Snowbird, an Indian princess of the Seneca tribe who had a fondness for rock climbing. Growing up in the shadow of what is now Seneca Rock, she was the only one of her tribe who could reach the summit. In an effort to choose between 7 suitors she climbed the Rock, saying that she would marry whoever could follow her. Six of the suitors fell to their death, but the 7th attained the summit and the princess. To Snowbird, therefore, belongs the credit not only for the first ascent of Seneca but for the origin of the custom of marriages between rock climbers.

The "Seneca Trail" or "Warriors' Path," over which the Indians carried produce to trade with the white settlers, stretches from the home of the Seneca Indians in western New York southward into Georgia, and from Elkin, West Virginia, to the east coast. This early forerunner of the Appalachian Trail lent its name to the rock which overlooked the path.

Seneca Rock is a thin vertical vein of quartzite left towering in the air after softer surrounding rocks eroded away. This same vein, running north and south, appears elsewhere as Champe Rock, Elson Rock, and many other nearby cliffs. Thrusting 900 feet above the North Fork of the South Branch of the Potomac at the town of Mouth of Seneca, West Virginia, Seneca Rock rises vertically 100 to 400 ft. above its base on both east and west faces, and stretches north and south for more than 1,000 ft. Its

thickness is only a few feet, and the climber poised precariously on the crest may well picture himself on a "knife-edge ridge overhanging on both sides."

The north peak of Seneca joins the mountain side, so that its summit may be reached by an easy walk along the crest. Across a gap--the Gunsight Notch--is the south peak which rises steeply on every side. The south peak may be scaled on its eastern face without difficult climbing by the Old Women's Route, but other approaches are more interesting and far more impressive. In the notch between the peaks is the freak feature of a freak rock, the Gunsight Gendarme. This 25-foot pinnacle totters upon the knife-edge, its base considerably narrower than its mid-section. It is climbed by a spectacular lead on the eastern face of the gendarme.

When Paul Bradt, Don Hubbard, and Sam Moore reached the top of the South Peak in 1939 they found an inscription, "D. B. Sept. 16, 1908," indicating at least one ascent since the days of Snowbird. But there were no telltale marks of previous rock climbing exploration of Seneca Rock, anywhere on the rock. For details of later explorations see "Climbing on Seneca Rock" by Paul Bradt in the October 1939 issue of the P.A.T.C. Bulletin and "Rock Climbing along the Potomac" by Donald Hubbard in the June 1944 issue of Appalachia.

During 1943 and 1944 the rock was used as a training ground for the Army Mountain Troops. During this period hundreds of names were added to the register on the south peak, and many new routes were pioneered by our brethren in the Army.

Ups and Downs June 17, 1945

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Howard Bloom
Ted Draeger
Dorothy Cross
Josephine Allen
Roy Mortell
Bertha Densmore
Gus (friend of
Bill Kemper)

The first arrivals at Carderock on this month's scheduled trip lost no time in putting ropes into action. Soon ardent climbers began arriving in masses, as well as ardent swimmers, and Carderock was set to ringing with furious activity. Herbie's Horror was subjected to assaults unsuccessful save by its namesake. Chuck Haworth and Jimmy Maxwell climbed Sterling's Crack, their first ascents, amidst cheers from onlookers. Cheers for Jimmy turned into jeers as he climbed the Spiderwalk, removing a large handhold in the process. Chuck, Jimmy, and Betty Kauffman solved the problems of Elsie's Edgeface. Don gave belaying and rappelling lessons to new comers in the vicinity of the Jackknife, which was later climbed in fine style by Ted and Dolores. A roped team of 10 climbers, led by Don, tackled the piton lead across the Nubble Face.

Chris engineered an aerial traverse over the Big Gully, and crowds gathered in line behind him waiting to be initiated into its mysteries. Later climbers scattered to the Chris-Wex-Don and to Arthur's Traverse, while the last climb known to have been made was on the Beginner's Crack by a late arrival, Anne Hubbard, niece of Don's. It was her first experience with climbing, but our impression is that it will not be her last.

Swimming and boating loomed large among the day's activities. The water was quite warm, low, and rather clean for the Potomac. About mid-afternoon Don and Arnold set out in the Sink Stopper for Stop 25, to be later picked up by Chuck and

Eleanor. Sink Stoppering down the river is getting to be a fine art; the two couples met at Stop 25 almost on the dot with no waiting on either side. The river voyagers claim to have found two fine springs en route, between Eagle and Boucher Rocks.

June 24, 1945

Don Hubbard	Jan Conn
Arnold Wexler	Herb Conn
Steve Yurenka	Fitz Clark
Bruce Burnside	Mary Judy
Dorothy Hagerman	

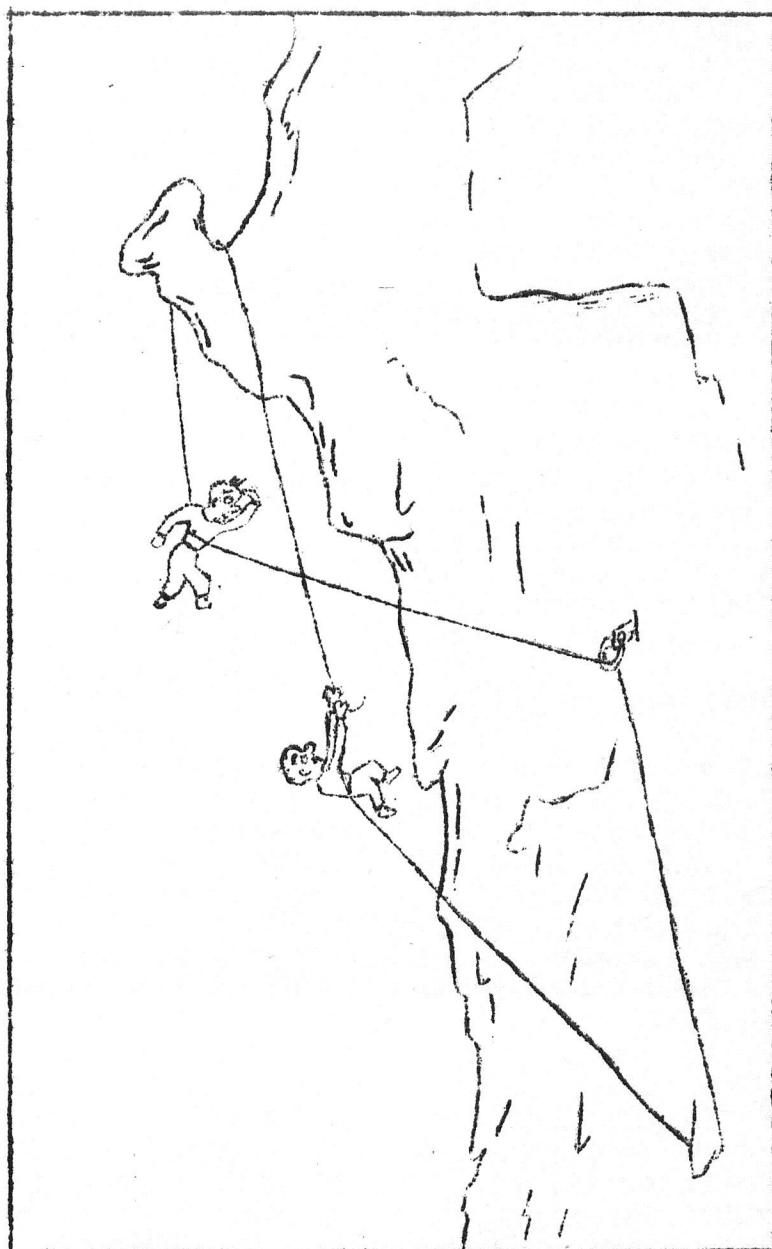
Oventop Mountain, Va., was the scene of much thrashing among the underbrush and a little rock climbing. The morning was spent in efforts to find the rocks. A lengthy debate at the summit of a high ridge revealed many widely divergent theories on the location of the points of the compass.

Since no sight can be more pathetic than rock climbers lost in the woods, let us skip lightly to events of the afternoon. Don led a rope of 7 on a layback climb recommended by Fitz. After a bit of scrambling and rappelling, another roped team--Herb, Jan, Steve--zig-zagged up the face of the rock by a second route. The friction slabs of Oventop are almost without holds and require minute differentiation between the angle of repose and that of uncontrollable slippage and slide.

Arnold, who had spent the day looking for trails and picking berries, arrived soon to show the group the proper way down. More huckleberries, dewberries, and black raspberries, gathered during the descent, were saved to accompany ice cream at Warrenton.

Betty Kauffman	Harriet Hulbert
Andy Kauffman	Chuck Haworth
Jimmy Maxwell	Jim Worthem
Christy (Pussy)	Behrenberg

Today was a red letter day at Carderock with six successful first ascents of A climbs. Chuck earned the title of Hero of the Day by climbing the Spider Walk, Leonard's Lunacy, and Arthur's Traverse, all for the first time. Jimmy Maxwell came in a close second with two first ascents--Leonard's Lunacy and Arthur's Traverse. Harriet, not to be outdone by such masculine endeavors, made her first ascent of Leonard's Lunacy. Jimmy Maxwell



"The question, Cyril, is NOT how we got INTO this mess!"

and Andy also climbed the Spider Walk.

It Pays to Advertise.

In the April 18 issue of UP ROPE we placed a plea for red blooded male climbers. Sunday's climbing at Carderock showed the results. New climber Jim Maxwell and new enthusiast Chuck Haworth have been doing things. Once again we men can raise our heads and look any woman climber in the eye. Our heartiest thanks!

Don Hubbard
Chris Scoredos

The Donalds' Ducks Traverse (A-6)

At Echo Cliffs, on the Virginia shore of the Potomac 2 miles below Great Falls, the main bluffs overlooking the River may be trav-

ersed at three levels. At the water's edge (or below, if the River is high) is the Waterline Traverse, an ordeal requiring 2 pitches of tension climbing and generally resulting in a swim or a rubber boat rescue. Near the top of the cliffs is the Big Toe Traverse (B-10), to be described in a later issue. But the most elegant route on Echo Cliffs is the Donalds' Ducks Traverse, at an intermediate level.

Descending the cliffs in the vicinity of the cabin, at the only point which yields to easy scrambling, the climbers reach a level platform 25 feet above the River. The leader selects his party, jingle's his hardware, and leads off upstream.

Beyond a corner a face is traversed just above a slight overhang, or an alternate lower route

may be used. One or two pitons should bring the party to the next outside corner, face to face with a forbidding recessed area topped by a wicked overhang. Protected by a piton at the corner the leader crawls along a sloping ledge to the back of the recess. After placing another piton he uses a key foothold and fingerholds in the cave-like aperture directly beneath the overhang to swing from the ledge onto the vertical wall ahead. The traverse is continued with the arms, head, and shoulders ducked into the cave, while the feet flounder blindly for holds on the smooth face below. Stance for a belay may be found at the far side of the recess. The next pitch is down onto easier slopes. An easy lead from here takes the party to the cliff top; but if the leader is equipped with a baseball bat to quiet his mutinous party, he will continue traversing at essentially the same level until he reaches a horizontal toe crack, which must be negotiated with little hand support, leading to the upstream end of the cliffs.

To lead this traverse, one should have experience, plenty of hardware, and many hours of daylight ahead. The ability to swim and high-dive seems equally important, if one may judge from the phenomenal plunges of Donald Hubbard and Donald Jacobs (hence the name--Donalds' Ducks) during their pioneer work upon the traverse. Don Hubbard and Charlie Daniels, supported by Ed Siggers and Sterling Hendricks, were the first to cross, in 1940.

Beginner's Climb (B-5)

On the 60-foot wall of Old Rag Mountain, a mile east of the summit, is the "Beginner's Climb" recommended only to beginners of exceptional caliber. The climb may be recognized by the deep chimney which starts 25 feet above the ground and narrows to crack proportions at the top.

Starting in a 15-foot inside corner 30 feet left of the chimney, the climber reaches a sloping ledge leading into the bottom of the chimney. Chimneying up and out over empty space, he arrives at a point where he can go out no farther and up no farther. But if he ignores logic and the airy expanse between his legs, he will do both, until he reaches a first-rate handhold on the

western face. With this encouragement he continues into a "Mummery Crack," which may be climbed more easily as a layback, leading to the summit.

The climb requires balance and a steady head. It is usually done by a roped team without pitons, as there are sufficient belay spots to protect the leader.

In the fall of 1939 Charlie Daniels and Paul Bradt picked out the climb as one suitable for their team of beginners. Charlie led, promising his crew that the going would shortly become easier. A beginner himself, if one judges only from point of time, the irrepressible Mr. Daniels reached the cul-de-sac at the top of the chimney, met the challenge, and continued to the top.

Charlie's Lead (B-6)

Above the railroad tunnel at Harper's Ferry are the soot-blackened 150-foot granitic cliffs of Maryland Heights. Scrambling 50 feet up the dirt slope at the base of the cliffs west of the tunnel one arrives at the start of this climb.

The initial pitch is up, on rotten rock. Traversing left the climber rounds a broken corner and continues angling up a face beneath a slight overhang. A right angle inside corner extending from the bottom to the top of the cliffs is crossed, whence the route leads straight up to the cave just below the summit. From the cave the climber scrambles easily to the top.

The climbing is severe and dirty. The first pitch presents the hazards of loose rock. Here Charlie Daniels gained his first experience at the art of leading, when he pioneered the route in 1939.

Don't worry

The first volume of UP ROPE will run out after a few more issues. We have heard from several subscribers who were afraid that their subscriptions would expire without their realizing it.

Unless an expiration notice appears fastened to the front page of this issue, you have at least two issues to go.

So don't worry. We won't let you forget.