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SEQUOIA NATURE GUIDE SERVICE

First Ascent of Moro Rock

Moro Rock is one of the outstanding features of the Sequoia National Park, and stands at the south border of the Giant Forest. Its crest can be reached on the north side by a climb of less than four hundred feet; but one can look down over the east side at Hospital Rock Camp and the Kaweah River Canyon nearly 4,000 feet below. In 1917 a series of wooden stairways was constructed up the backbone of the north side of the rock, and since that time some hundreds of thousands of visitors to the park have made the ascent.

As people group at the top and look back over the steep, almost sheer, slope up which they have just come, the question is often asked, "Who was the first to reach the top of this great rock?" Park officers have been as interested in this bit of history as the visitors, and Judge Walter Fry, former superintendent of the park, after much investigation, places the credit with three former residents of Three Rivers. These men, Hale D. Tharp - discoverer of Giant Forest, John Swanson and George Swanson, are now dead; but Judge Fry, while discussing the discovery and exploration of the Sequoia National Park region, secured the following statement from Mr. Tharp on May 25, 1910:

"By the spring of 1861, a few white men had come to the Three Rivers country and I decided it was about time for me to begin occupying the Giant Forest range in order to hold it. So when summer came I drove some horses up to Log Meadow, where I left them all summer. George Swanson, my stepson, and John Swanson helped me drive in. George was just a small boy then. The day after we arrived we all went over and climbed to the top of Moro Rock."

There appears to be no question but that these pioneers of the Giant Forest region were the first to reach the top of Moro Rock, and that the ascent was made in the summer of 1861.

The distinction of being the first woman to climb the rock rests with Mr. Bernard Megrten (formerly Miss Fanny Tharp), of Three Rivers. In company with her father, Hale Tharp, and her brother Nort, she climbed up the north slope to the summit in either 1872 or 1873, when yet a girl in her teens.

The climb to the top before the stairway was installed was indeed a mountaineering feat attempted by only the most intrepid. The wooden stairs took away the dangers of the climb, but still left many thrills for visitors. Complete physical and psychological safety is assured the public in the all-rock rout to the summit which will be built during the coming year, and which will be so located that no damage will be done to the landscape features of the rock. The peak of the rock, where the Geological Survey Bench Mark records the elevation of 6,719 feet, can be reached in a 10 minute trip from the automobile parking area. The view presented of the rugged 13,000 foot peaks of the Great Western Divide is equal to that obtainable in many parts of the Sierra only by several days hard packtrain travel into the mountains.

World-wide travelers, who have seen the best scenery of the Alps, the Andes, the Himalayas and other mountain ranges, have declared the view from Moro Rock to be the equal of any. Yet it may be reached by excellent paved or oiled roads in two hours from San Joaquin Valley towns on the Golden State Highway.