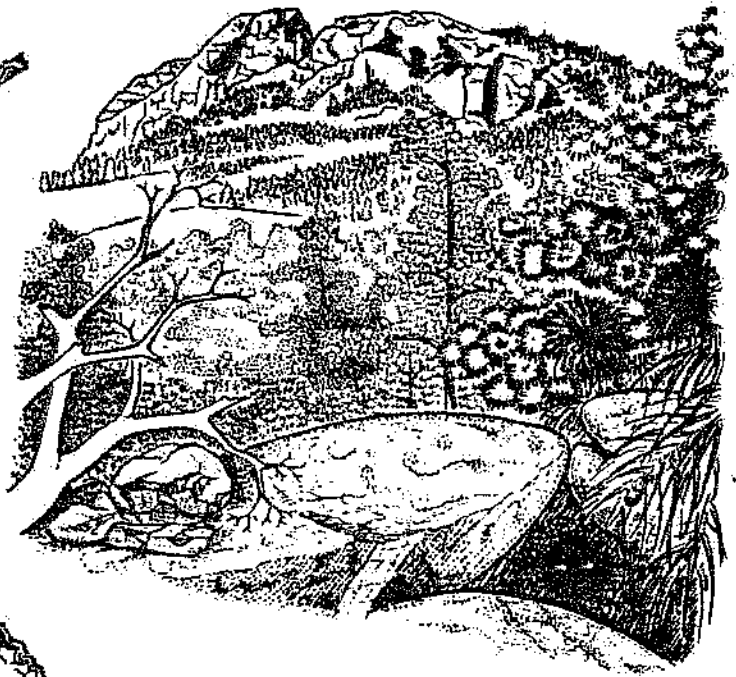
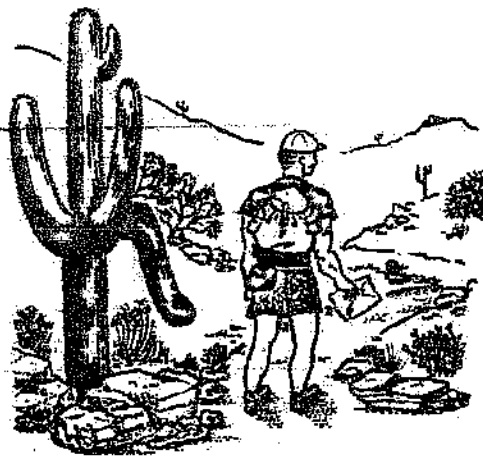


Trail
Guide



Saguaro
National
Monument



A TRAIL GUIDE
to
SAGUARO NATIONAL MONUMENT
in the
Rincon and Tanque Verde Mountains

by
Eber Glendening

Distributed By The
Southern Arizona Hiking Club
P.O. Box 12122, Tucson, Ariz.

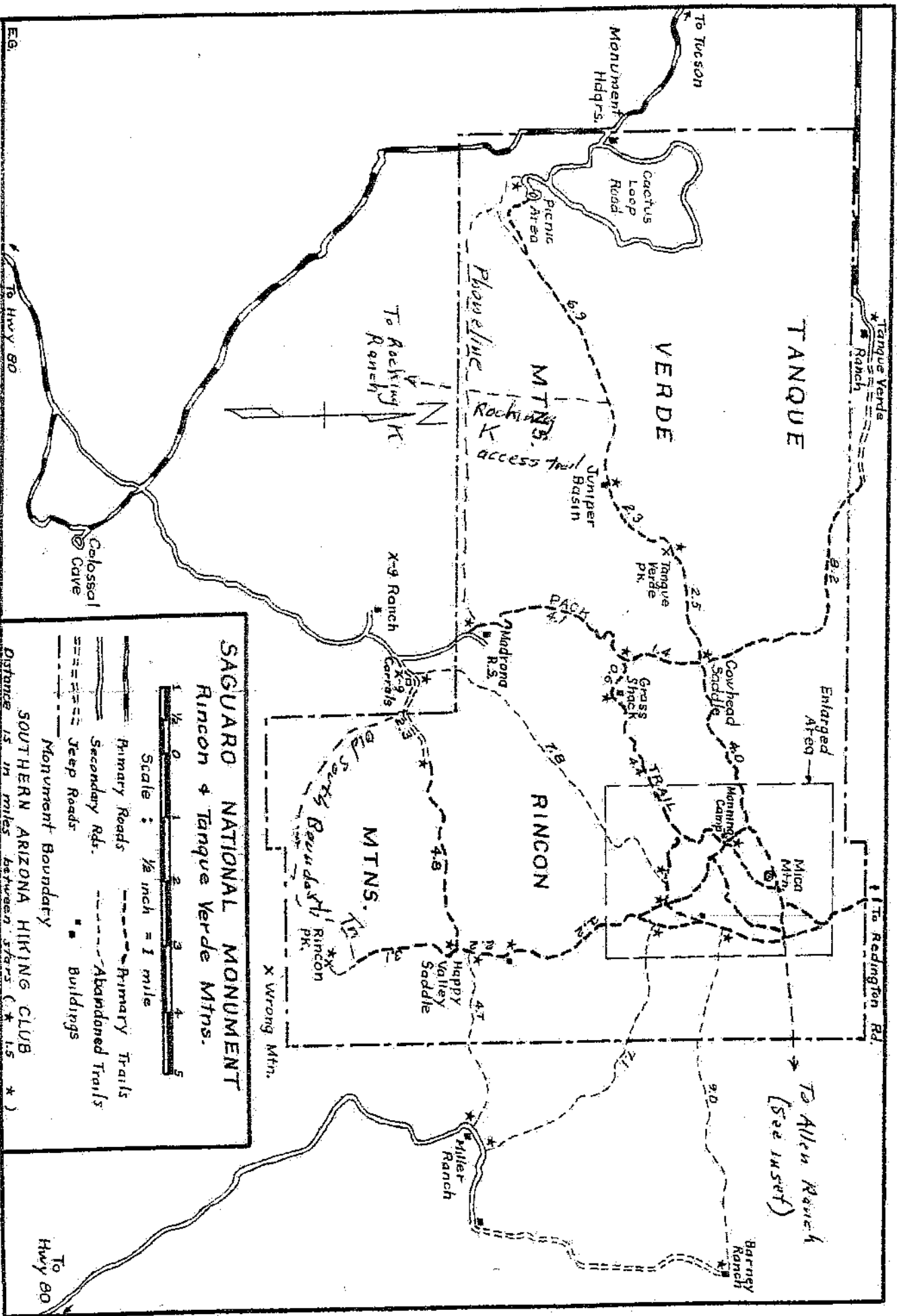
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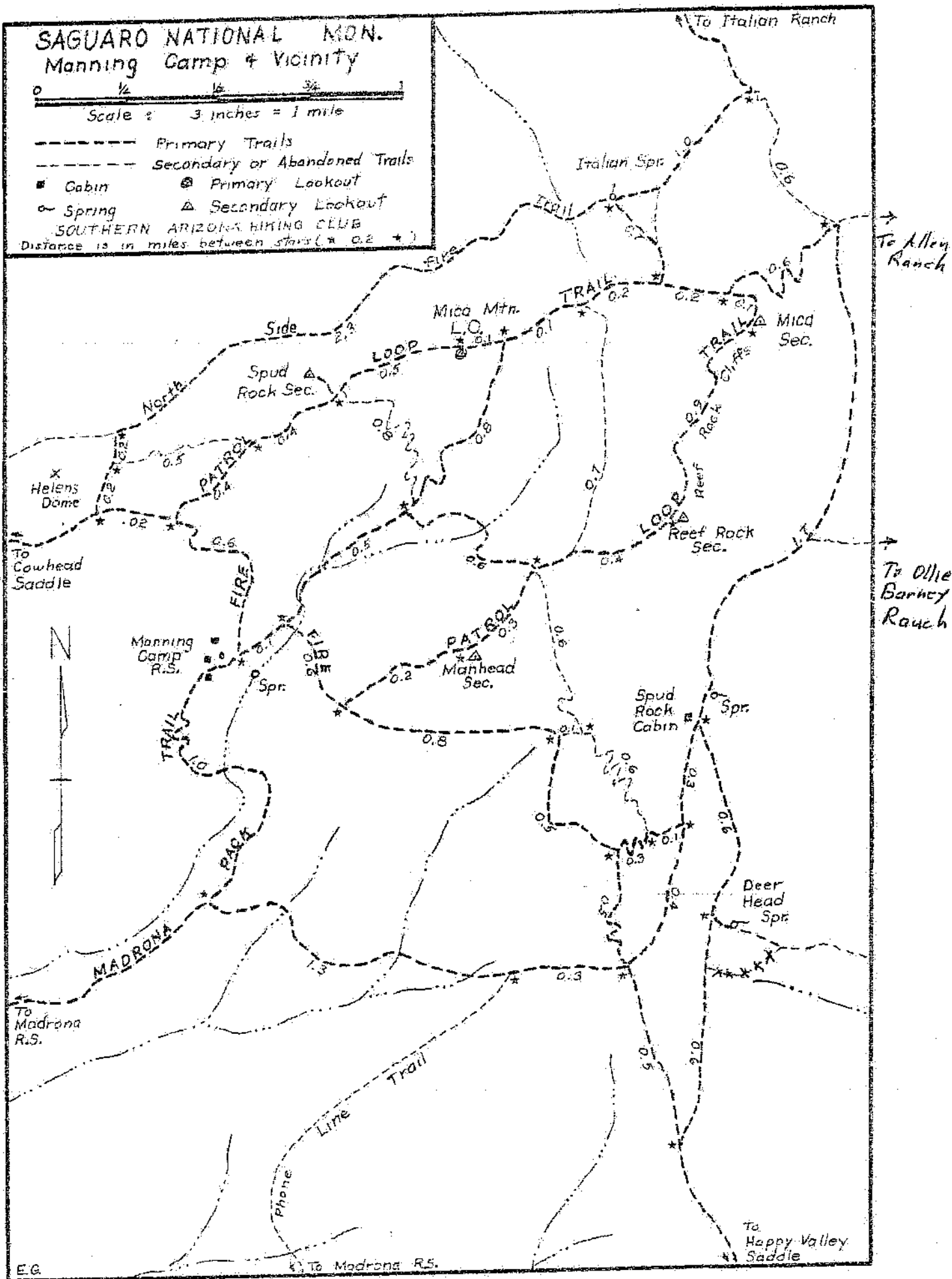
Illustrations: By Joanna McComb



SAGUARO NATIONAL MON. Manning Camp & Vicinity

0 1/4 1/2 3/4 1
Scale : 3 inches = 1 mile

- Primary Trails
 - - - - - Secondary or Abandoned Trails
 - Cabin ● Primary Lookout
 - Spring ▲ Secondary Lookout
- SOUTHERN ARIZONA HIKING CLUB
Distance is in miles between stars (* 0.2 *)



SAGUARO NATIONAL MONUMENT

This area encompassing 63,360 acres and including the Rincon and Tanque Verde Mountains is administered by the National Park Service as a National Monument. Although the Monument was established primarily for the protection of the fine stand of saguaro cacti on the western slopes of the Tanque Verde Mountains, most of the area is a mountainous wilderness unpenetrated by roads and seen only by hikers and horseback riders. Although not officially designated a wilderness area, the Park Service is administering the back country of the monument as such and no motorized vehicles are allowed on the trails.

The elevation range is from 2900 feet at the northwest corner of the monument to 8666 feet at the lookout tower on Mica Mtn. Two other high peaks separated from Mica Mtn. by deep saddles are Rincon Peak 8452 feet and Tanque Verde Peak 7050 feet. The vegetation ranges from cactus covered grasslands at the lower elevations through manzanita and oak at the intermediate elevations to pines and heavy oak forests at the higher elevations. Also near the mountain tops, especially on the north facing slopes, aspens and dense fir groves are found.

In the summer the temperature ranges from a high of over 100 degrees at the lower elevations to a high of 80 to 85 degrees at the higher elevations. Although the temperature at the higher elevations is quite enjoyable during the summer the trails leading there can be long and hot and care should be taken to carry plenty of water. This is especially true before the rains start when the springs can be dry and water is either scarce or nonexistent. During the rainy season care should also be taken to protect against thunder and lightning storms which can build up very rapidly and at times be quite severe.

The winter can be a fine time for planning trips into the monuments back country as the weather is generally mild and not too cold. However, during storms the weather can become severe with temperatures falling below freezing at the lower elevations and to below zero in the higher areas. In recent years after these storms when the snow is adequate ski touring trips have been planned. However, only those adequately equipped and experienced should plan such a trip.

Presently there are two classes of trails within the monument. Primary Trails are those trails that are being maintained. They are cleared at least once each year of fallen trees and brush and although they can vary widely as to the grade and their general condition they are all relatively easy to follow. In the lower treeless areas these primary trails are marked with orange stakes six inches high, and in the forested areas they are all marked by rectangular orange tags nailed to the trees. The other class of trails is the Abandoned Trails. These are trails some of which were well built and heavily used in the past others which have seldom been used but all of which have been abandoned by the Park Service from the monuments trail system. Along with abandoning these trails the Park Service has obliterated the trail junctions where these trails begin and finding and following these old trails can be very difficult. However, for the hiker who wants to get off the beaten path these old trails offer many challenging and rewarding trips. Several trips should be undertaken on the maintained trails within the monument and an overall familiarity of the country obtained before any trips are planned on these old trails as they are generally longer and rougher than the maps would indicate. These trails are being included in this Trail Guide even though they are no longer being maintained because they have been and still are an integral part of the monuments trail system.

Of all the interesting areas in the monuments back country, probably, the primary point of interest is Manning Camp Ranger Station. This wilderness ranger station is located high in the pines just a little over a

mile from the highest point in the range. This is the administrative site for the high country during the summer months and it is here that the fire lookouts, trail crews and other park personnel stay who maintain and protect this section of the monument.

At the summit of Mica Mtn. is the 100 foot high fire tower. This tower is now being manned only during times of extreme fire danger and when being manned the lookout lives at Manning Camp and walks back and forth to the tower each day. Four miles to the south of Manning Camp is a small lookout on Happy Valley Knoll. This is the primary lookout in the monument and it is occupied throughout the fire season generally by a married couple who live in a small cabin just below the summit of the knoll. There are also several secondary lookouts in the area of Mica Mtn. which are visited once or twice a day during the fire season by a ranger on horseback. Another of the primary points of interest is Spud Rock Cabin. This deteriorating cabin was once the administrative site for the area when it was under the jurisdiction of the Forest Service. In recent years this historic landmark in the area has succumbed to the winters snows and it will soon have to be demolished.

Even though in recent years the number of hikers using the area has increased tremendously, it is surprising that even more people don't use it. This is especially true because of its nearness to Tucson and the easy access to the many trails going into the high country. For a strong hiker any point in the monument can be reached and a return made in the same day. For the backpacker trips as long as a week can be made with very little duplication of any trails. There are excellent places for spending the night throughout the area, however, water is a prime consideration and is found permanently in only a few locations. Permanent water can be found at Italian Spring, Spud Rock Cabin and Manning Camp. The only constructed campground facilities are at Grass Shack and Manning Camp. There are several areas and springs which contain water several months of the year and of course during the rainy season when the creeks are running water can be found everywhere.

In the description of the trails that follow an attempt has been made to point out the best campsites and water sources. These are not necessarily constructed campsites but just nice places where a bedroll can be rolled out and water is available (sometimes) nearby. It should be remembered that whenever a camp is planned in the back country of the monument that a fire permit must be obtained from the park rangers. These permits may be secured at the Visitor Center at the Park Headquarters the year-round or at Madrona Ranger Station when manned. An attempt has also been made to give the condition of the trail. However, this can change from one year to the next or even from one month to the next. In each of the descriptions there are different key points along the trail such as trail junctions followed by a series of numbers in parenthesis. In each case the first number is the accumulative distance in miles from the beginning of the trail and the second is the actual elevation of the point. At the present time the Park Service is planning on putting up many new trail signs within the area. In several instances the mileage given on these signs could vary from those given in this Guide by a few tenths of a mile.

With this in mind it is the sincere hope of the Southern Arizona Hiking Club that this Guide will be an aide toward giving you many enjoyable trips into the high country of Saguaro National Monument.

MADRONA-MANNING CAMP PACK TRAIL

This is the trail by which the Park Service packs all of its supplies to the Manning Camp Ranger Station near the top of the mountain. It is also the best maintained and most often used of all the trails going into the high country of the monument. The trail begins at Madrona Ranger Station on the south side of the monument and can be reached by a good graveled road.

Madrona Ranger Station (0.0 ; 3375)

The trail leaves from the parking lot directly behind the ranger station and the beginning is well signed. The trail climbs through mesquite and chaparel to the junction with the Cowhead Saddle Trail (4.1 ; 5440). The Cowhead Saddle Trail goes to the left. Our trail goes to the right over a low ridge and drops into the canyon bottom at Grass Shack.

Grass Shack (4.7 ; 5280)

The Park Service has developed a picnic area here with tables, fire places, and rest rooms. There is a poor spring about a hundred yards upstream from the trail crossing. This spring is usually dry during the drier months and cannot be considered a dependable source for water. However, during the summer rains and when the creeks are running this makes a nice campsite.

From Grass Shack the trail continues up the ridge through heavy oak stands and finally into the pines. It passes the junction with the Spud Rock Cabin Trail (8.1 ; 7500) and a mile later comes to Manning Camp (9.1 ; 7950).

This is the primary administrative site for the area and is manned by Park Service personnel throughout the summer months. There is a good campground in the area and permanent water is available.

PHONELINE TRAIL (abandoned)

This trail leaves from the Madrona Ranger Station area and goes up Phoneline ridge east of and parallel to the pack trail. As the name implies this is the location of the phone line between Madrona and Manning Camp. Although both this trail and the phone line are now abandoned the trail is followable except for a few short stretches where it is heavily overgrown by oak and manzanitas. Also the last mile where it goes through the burned area caused by the 1954 fire is all but impossible to follow. It is said that at one time this trail was a wagon road and that this is the route by which some of the supplies were packed into Manning Camp when it was built and first occupied early in the 1900's.

X-9 Corrals (O.O ; 3250)

The beginning of this trail is the jeep road that goes north from the corrals and loading chutes approximately 2 miles southeast of Madrona Ranger Station. These corrals are on private land and if the gate is locked permission to cross this land should be obtained from the X-9 Ranch just a couple of miles to the west. Although there has been some troubles in recent years the owners of this land are still friendly toward granting hikers and other persons who will respect the improvements in the area access to the trails leading into the monument, and normally the gate will be found unlocked. This jeep road going north from the corrals can also be reached by going due east out of Madrona Ranger Station. Once on the jeep road go north. The jeep road soon disintegrates into a foot trail and continues to climb up the ridge. Care should be taken to stay on the trail through the brushy sections. The remains of the old phone line often times makes a good trail marker. About two miles from the top the trail makes a prominent bend to the left and crosses the drainage to the crest of the ridge on the other side of the canyon. Once the crest of this ridge is reached the trail enters the area of the 1954 burn. All of the downed trees and brush makes this section of the trail impossible to follow. The best bet is to just stay as

near as possible to the crest of the ridge and pick as good a route as you can through the downed trees. About one mile of this bushwacking will bring you to the Spud Rock Cabin Trail (7.8 ; 7600) Manning Camp is 2.3 miles to the left and Spud Rock Cabin is 1.0 miles to the right.

MADRONA-HAPPY VALLEY SADDLE TRAIL

This rocky but easily followed trail leaves from the X-9 Corrals approximately two miles southeast of Madrona Ranger Station and goes east to the prominent saddle between Mica Mtn. and Rincon Peak. It is the most popular route for those desiring to climb Rincon Peak and also in conjunction with the Pack Trail or the Phoneline Trail it makes a good loop trip to Manning Camp and Mica Mtn.

X-9 Corrals (0.0 ; 3250)

This trail begins as a jeep road and goes east from the corrals and loading chutes about two and a half miles parallel to Rincon Creek before disintegrating into a foot trail. The first part of this trail is across private land and if the gate at the corrals is locked permission should be obtained from the X-9 ranch to cross this land. (See the Phoneline Trail, page 10) Shortly after becoming a foot trail it crosses Rincon Creek and then begins climbing continually until Happy Valley Saddle is reached and the trail fork to Rincon Peak.

Happy Valley Saddle (7.1 ; 6230)

Here among a very refreshing stand of large ponderosa pines is the remains of an old camp. There is a poor spring nearby which should not be depended on for water. However, when the creek is running this makes a very nice campsite. Just a couple of hundred yards east of the camp is the trail fork to Rincon Peak. Rincon Peak is the second highest point in the monument and the view from the summit is one of the finest in Southern Arizona. (See page 12 for the description of the trail to the summit) Our trail leaves Happy Valley Saddle and goes north. After

a half mile it passes the junction with the HAPPY VALLEY trail coming up from Miller Ranch (7.6 ; 6300) which drops off the east side of the mountain. Continuing north our trail climbs steeply on many switchbacks before leveling off just below the summit of Happy Valley Knoll and the junction of the spur trail that leads to the small lookout on top (9.3 ; 7100). The round trip to the summit of the knoll is less than a quarter of a mile and the view from the top is well worth the effort. Just a tenth of a mile past the junction of the trail to the lookout another trail fork is encountered that leads to the cabin where the lookout lives. From here our trail continues fairly level until the Spud Rock Cabin Trail is reached (11.5 ; 7830). Manning Camp is 2.5 miles straight ahead; Spud Rock Cabin is 0.7 miles to the right.

HAPPY VALLEY SADDLE-RINCON PEAK TRAIL

This trail leaves from Happy Valley Saddle and goes to the summit of Rincon Peak 8482 feet high and the second highest point in the monument.

Happy Valley Saddle (6.0 ; 6230)

Going south from Happy Valley Saddle follow the trail for about two and a half miles until it appears to quit on a flat shelf just north of the summit. From the trails end bushwack up the steep slope to the saddle on the summit ridge just east of the peak. From this saddle the summit is just a short but brushy scramble to the west. It is the present intention of the Park Service to extend this trail all the way to the summit of the peak doing away with the final bushwack and there also has been some talk of putting a lookout on top. The distance from Happy Valley Saddle is 3.1 miles and there is a 2650 foot climb. However, most hikers consider this the most rewarding trip in the monument.

MILLER RANCH-HAPPY VALLEY SADDLE TRAIL (abandoned)

This trail begins at the Miller Ranch in Happy Valley on the east side of the monument and goes directly to Happy Valley Saddle between Rincon Peak and Mica Mtn. Due to the difficulty in finding the lower end of this trail it would be best for those going over this trail for the first time to plan their trip to come down it.

Miller Ranch (0.0 ; 4225)

The trail begins by going directly up the canyon bottom. After approximately one mile the canyon forks and the trail leaves the canyon bottom on the ridge between the two forks. The location is marked by an old sign. The next half mile is very difficult to follow but after awhile carins and limbed trees begin to show the route. The entire way is rocky and brushy but generally speaking the higher the trail gets the better and more followable it becomes until it joins with the Happy Valley Saddle-Mica Mtn. trail (4.7 ; 6300). The trail camp in Happy Valley Saddle is 0.5 miles to the left and Manning Camp is 6.4 miles to the right.

TURKEY CREEK-SPUD ROCK CABIN TRAIL (abandoned)

This trail begins in Turkey Creek about one mile east of the Miller Ranch in Happy Valley and goes up the canyon to Spud Rock Cabin. The upper end of this trail is through the area burned by the 1954 fire and is very difficult to find. For this reason those going over this trail for the first time should plan on going up it. A very excellent loop hike can be made by going up this trail and returning through Happy Valley Saddle and the Miller Ranch Trail.

Turkey Creek (0.0 ; 4200)

The trail begins by going up the canyon bottom approximately two miles to a masonry water tank. At this point the trail is hard to find but it continues up the right

side of the canyon a short distance before crossing and getting on the ridge on the left side. From here it continues on up the ridge to a prominent saddle. From the saddle the only problems are a few brushy areas until Mud Spring is reached (5.5 ; 6800) Although this spring does not put out much water it can usually be depended on for having water the year around. Shortly after leaving Mud Spring the 1954 burn is entered and the trail becomes increasingly difficult to follow. After the trail becomes impossible to follow bushwack due west until Deerhead Spring-Spud Rock Cabin Trail is reached (7.1 ; 7500) Spud Rock Cabin is less than a mile to the north on this trail.

ITALIAN RANCH TRAIL

This interesting but seldom used trail begins at the old Italian Ranch on Tanque Verde Creek two miles south of the Redington Road. It is a well constructed trail and in the past was one of the main trails leading into the high country of the monument. It is the shortest trail to Mica Mtn. and being on the north side of the mountain it is cooler and stays in the pines longer than the other routes. This trail begins outside of the monument and until it enters the monument is not being maintained by the Park Service. However the Southern Arizona Hiking Club has recently cleared that portion of the trail outside of the monument and it is now easily followed all of the way. Perhaps the only thing keeping this from becoming one of the most popular trails in the monument is the difficulty in getting anything but a jeep or a pickup to the beginning of it.

Italian Ranch (0.0 ; 4050)

The trail leaves the corrals (nothing remains of a ranch) on a jeep road going east and soon crosses Tanque Verde Creek. This road is drivable for about two miles in some pickups but many find it impossible. It is quite steep in places and also badly washed. About one quarter

of a mile from Park Tank the foot trail begins on the south side of the jeep road and is marked by two orange discs nailed to an oak tree.

Park Tank (Foot trail begins) (2.1 ; 4700)

The trail at this point is in a broad flat oak covered valley through which it ascends gradually to the upper end. Through here cattle have obliterated most of the tread but the trail is followable by orange discs nailed periodically to trees. Soon the trail becomes more prominent and no more trouble should be encountered as the trail climbs through the oak and heavy stands of manzanita and on into the pines. Near the Monument Boundary in an oak covered flat area is a spring and an excellent campsite (6.5 ; 7000) This spring is very poor and not a dependable source of water. From here the trail climbs to the crest of the ridge and a trail fork. An abandoned trail drops off of the east side of the ridge and then turns south before joining the trail coming down from Mica Secondary. This is the shortest route to Spud Rock Cabin and in the past was used by the Forest Service when they were using the cabin as a ranger station. Our trail continues up the crest of the ridge a little over half a mile before turning to the right on a newly constructed alignment which takes it past Italian Spring and another trail fork.

Italian Spring (7.2 ; 8200)

This is an excellent spring with permanent water and adequate nearby campsites. At the trail fork the right-hand fork continues around the north side of the mountain coming into the Tanque Verde Ranch Trail just east of Helens Dome. Our trail goes to the left and climbs until it rejoins the crest of the ridge, and then continues up the ridge until it joins with the Patrol Loop Trail on top. (7.8 ; 8480) Mica Mtn. tower is 0.5 miles to the right.

TANQUE VERDE RANCH TRAIL

This trail begins behind the Tanque Verde Guest Ranch

just outside the northwest corner of the monument and climbs across the north side of the Tanque Verde mountains and through Cowhead Saddle on its way to Manning Camp. Since this trail begins on private property permission should be obtained before beginning a trip.

Tanque Verde Guest Ranch (0.0 ; 2720)

Go east from the ranch to the base of the mountain where a jeep road begins climbing steeply up a ridge. Our trail follows this jeep road approximately two miles to a broad saddle where a two foot high pile of rocks on the south side of the road marks the beginning of the foot trail. If this turnoff is missed and the jeep road is followed it soon begins dropping into the basin below. The descent into the basin is warning enough to go back to the last saddle along the road where the foot trail will be found. The next three miles to Pine Canyon is across mesquite and oak covered grasslands. Many cattle are grazed in the area and often times the cattle trails are better than the main trail. Little can be said about trying to stay on the trail through this section except that it can be done if care is taken. If the trail is lost, go east staying as far to the south as possible without climbing until Pine Canyon is reached. This is the prominent canyon draining out of Cowhead Saddle. Where the trail meets Pine Canyon is the site of Douglas Camp and Douglas Spring. Nothing remains of a camp and the spring is not a dependable source of water. Once in Pine Canyon our trail turns south and goes up the canyon at first staying on a minor ridge to the right of the canyon bottom and later in the canyon bottom itself. This section of the trail is brushy but much more easily followed than below. The trail continues on up Pine Canyon to Cowhead Saddle and the trail forks there.

Cowhead Saddle (8.2 ; 6100)

This is the major saddle between Tanque Verde Peak and Mica Mtn. The trail to the west leads to Tanque Verde Peak 2.5 miles away. The trail to the south descends 1.4 miles to where it junctions with the Pack Trail coming up from Madrona just below Grass Shack. Our trail goes to

the east where it continues to climb staying very close to the ridge crest until it begins to level off just west of Helens Dome. This section of the trail near Helens Dome is quite pretty and offers many fine campsites. However, the only water will be when the creek is running. The climb up Helens Dome is also quite interesting. It is climbed from the southwest corner of the rock through an unusual tunnel and then up a short friction slope. This is not particularly difficult but care should be taken as a fall would be very serious. Our trail continues to the south of Helens Dome past the junction of the Spud Rock Secondary Trail and on to Manning Camp. (12.2 ; 7950)

TANQUE VERDE RIDGE TRAIL

This trail begins at the Picnic Area off of the Cactus Loop Road near the Monument Headquarters and goes up Tanque Verde Ridge to the summit. Recently the Park Service cleared and reworked this trail and it is a very enjoyable trip to the summit of Tanque Verde Peak. Along with being an enjoyable trip this summit offers a superb view of the city of Tucson and the surrounding valley. This trail also offers a long but interesting route to Mica Mtn. and the Manning Camp area.

Picnic Area (0.0 ; 3100)

Our trail leaves from the picnic area and climbs across the foothills until the crest of Tanque Verde Ridge is reached. Once on the ridge it continues eastward staying close to the crest, crossing over the tops of several subsidiary peaks and around the sides of several others, until Juniper Basin is reached. Here in the Basin among several tall junipers is the remains of an old concrete cabin and a nearby spring.

Juniper Basin (6.9 ; 6000)

The area around this unique and picturesque shack offers many excellent campsites. The spring will generally have water in all but the driest months. This area,

therefore, makes an excellent place to camp on either a two day trip to Manning Camp or a two day trip to Tanque Verde Peak. From the old shack our trail continues up through the pines and oaks to Tanque Verde Peak.

Tanque Verde Peak (9.2 ; 7050)

From the summit of this highest peak in the Tanque Verde Mountains is one of the finest views to be had from any of the mountains surrounding the Tucson Valley. Tucson itself is laid out to the west. The Catalina Mtns. are to the north and the majestic profile of Rincon Peak is to the southeast. Mica Mtn. with the lookout tower beckens to the east for those who wish to continue on. From the summit it is only 2.5 miles on to the east to Cowhead Saddle where the Tanque Verde Ranch Trail is joined.

Cowhead Saddle (11.7 ; 6100)

Manning Camp is 4.0 miles up the main ridge to the east. Madrona Ranger Station is 5.5 miles to the south and the Tanque Verde Guest Ranch is 8.2 miles to the north and west.

MANNING CAMP-MICA MTN. AREA

In the area encompassing the top of Mica Mtn. is a large network of trails. This area is all high and the vegetation consists mainly of pines with some oaks. It is here on these trails through the pines that the most delightful hiking in the monument is to be found. Indeed, many days can be spent just wandering around on these high trails.

Primary among these trails is the Fire Patrol Loop. This trail goes by the several secondary lookouts on the mountain and is used by the Park Rangers in search of fires. It is an excellent trail and always well maintained. Leaving Manning Camp it goes to Spud Rock Secondary and then on to the fire tower at the summit of Mica Mtn. This one hundred foot high tower is one of the

primary lookouts for the monument and is manned during the height of the fire season. Leaving the tower the Fire Patrol Loop Trail continues east to Mica Secondary, then south to Reef Rock Secondary. From Reef Rock an excellent view is had down to the aspen lined meadow below and the old Spud Rock Cabin. From Reef Rock the Fire Patrol Loop Trail continues west through a large meadow caused by the 1943 fire and on to Manhead Secondary and back to Manning Camp. The entire loop is 5.0 miles long and from the different secondary lookouts along the way commanding views of most of the monument can be obtained.

Another and larger loop can be made by beginning at Manning Camp and going down the main Pack Trail 1.0 miles to the Spud Rock Cabin Trail, then going east 2.0 miles to Spud Rock Cabin. This old and picturesque cabin was once maintained by the Forest Service as an administrative site but it has not been used for many years and time along with the weight of the winters snows has just about collapsed it. The nearby spring is a dependable water source and with the many possible campsites in the area this makes one of the better places in the monument to camp. The loop trail goes north out of Spud Rock Cabin at the base of Reef Rock Cliffs 1.7 miles to a saddle. In this saddle is a trail fork. The best trail climbs up to the west to the Fire Patrol Loop Trail near Mica Secondary. It is also possible to take an old and now hardly followable trail down into the basin to the north and then climb the short distance out of the basin to the ridge on the west where the Italian Ranch Trail is met. From here it is possible to go back up the Italian Ranch Trail to Italian Spring and then along the north side of Mica Mtn. on the Northside Fire Trail to Helens Dome and the Tanque Verde Ranch Trail. The Tanque Verde Ranch Trail can then be followed back to Manning Camp completing the loop. This loop is 9.8 miles long and takes in much of the fine country around the sides of Mica Mtn.

Between many of the secondary lookouts and other points of interest are numerous other trails. Although it would be impossible to describe them all, the map shows their locations. Some of these have not been worked in many years and are now difficult to follow. Others are

well maintained and easy to follow. All have their individual characteristics and all are well worth the effort to those who would like to see something new and different.

SOME SIMPLE RULES TO REMEMBER

One of the prime attractions that the high country in Saguaro National Monument has to offer hikers is that it is a wilderness area even though it is not classified as one. But being a wilderness area means more than just being a roadless area. It means finding the area as nature made it and not finding a lot of dirty campsites with tin cans and rubbish strewn around. If you camp within the monument or anywhere else, please follow these simple rules.

1. Burn all papers and trash and let the fire burn down to ashes.
2. Put the fire dead out and scatter the rocks you had ringing the fire.
3. Smash all tin cans flat and CARRY THEM OUT along with all unburnables such as aluminum foil.
4. DO NOT BURY ANYTHING. If it cannot be burned, carry it out. Remember, if you can carry a can in full, you can certainly carry it out empty.
5. Look around the area and make sure it looks better than you found it. Try to make the area look like no one had ever been there.

If everyone observes these few simple rules, we will all be able to enjoy our wilderness trips even more.