

MOUNTAIN CLIMBING IN GLACIER NATIONAL PARK*Compiled by Donald H. Robinson*Mt. St. Nicholas - 9380'

First climbed by Reverend Conrad Wellen, Presbyterian minister of Havre, Montana, on July 29, 1926, after several unsuccessful attempts. He was accompanied by a young man companion, who did not reach the top. Their route went from Parke Cr. to the headwaters of Muir Cr., cross-country under Church Butte to a little lake at the headwaters of Muir Cr., S.E. of St. Nick (lake not shown on map). Thence by the east side of the peak to a ridge running out to the northeast from the peak, where camp was made in a little meadow on the ridge. Next morning they traveled to the great notch on the N.E. facing nose of the mountain (stone cairn here). Here they worked on up to the N.W. face, then back to the east face, and on up, more or less up the east face, except near the top, where they crossed through a narrow notch to the N.W. face and thence to the top. (Ref. Glacier Drift, Vol. III, No. 11, pp. 86-87 - also maps, route)

The second climb was made by Dr. R.T. Young, professor of biology at Montana State University, Missoula, and his son, late in August, 1933. Climbing time was 4 hours, 40 minutes from the base. Their route led via Rotunda cirque on the N.E. slope. The climb was termed comparatively easy after passing the half-way mark. One solid wall had to be climbed by a shoulder stand. (Ref. Glacier Drift, Vol. VI, No. 5, pp. 34)

The third climb was made on August 18, 1937, by R.F. Haines, L.A. Muldown, and J.E. Caughren, Whitefish, Montana. They climbed from the cirque on the south slope, then up the south wall to the shoulder, where they crossed the mountain to the north side, from there gaining the summit. (Ref. Glacier Drift, Vol. X, No. 4, pp. 37)

These are the only known successful attempts on the mountain, although several others have tried unsuccessfully.

Mt. Wilbur - 9293'

Records indicate that this was first climbed in 1924 by Norman Clyde, of California, an intrepid mountaineer who climbed 37 Glacier National Park mountains in 1923 and 23 more in 1924. He makes the statement, "Mt. Wilbur is only for experienced rock climbers". His route lay up the ridge between Wilbur Cr. and Bullhead lakes to the cliffs. There he crossed the mountain high up to the long snow line on the figure four (?). Here he found a way to get through the diorite band, above which it was not bad. He came out on the north slope of the main summit, up which a chimney led to the top. He built a cairn on top. (Ref. Glacier Drift, Vol. IV, No. 9, pp. 62-63)

The second climb was made by two women of the Sierra Club party, shortly after Clyde climbed it, in 1924, Eleanor Davis, of Colorado Mountain Club, and Eleanor E. Bartlett, of the Sierra Club. (Ref. Glacier Drift, Vol. IV, No. 10, P. 72)

The third climb was made by J.M. Warner, Santa Paula, Calif., July 22, 1927, ascending the mountain from the northeast, as Clyde had done, returning down the south face. (Ref. Glacier Drift, Vol. IV, no. 10, p. 72)

The fourth climb was made again by J.M. Warner, accompanied by Grace Boreen, of Minnesota, August 9, 1928. They climbed up the SE. corner to the figure four, later crossing to the north side, apparently following Clyde's route to the summit. They descended the south face, using rope several times, up to 100 feet at a time. (Ref. Glacier Drift, Vol. IV, No. 10, p. 72)

The fifth climb was made by G.M. Kilbourn, of Texas, a walking guide for the Park Saddle Horse Company, via the northwestern ridge, a few days after Warner and Boreen. A week later Kilbourn made a second climb to get better pictures. A few days later Leopold Seethaler, Swiss guide from Many Glacier Hotel, scaled the peak. (Ref. Glacier Drift, Vol. IV, no. 10, p. 72, and Vol. IV, No. 4 & 5, p. 24)

Other climbers have followed successfully, the summit probably having been seen as many as 50 or more people. It still is a climb only for experienced rock climbers. By 1933, 27 climbers had registered at the summit.

Chief Mountain - 9056'

The Lewis and Clark maps designate this peak as "King Mountain". Other earlier maps also called it "Kaiser Peak".

This was first scaled by H. I. Stimson (later U.S. Secretary of State), and Dr. Walter B. James of New York, in 1892. It was later climbed by Mr. and Mrs. George Bird Grinnell and Mr. and Mrs. John J. White in 1903. (Ref. Glacier Drift, Vol. II, No. 1, p. 13; Vol. III, No. 6, p. 54)

Mt. Cleveland - 10,438'

There is no record of the first ascent of this peak, but numerous parties have been registered there since the Sierra Club register box was placed there in 1924 by Norman Clyde. The usual route of ascent is from the west and presents no particular mountaineering difficulties. (Ref. Glacier Drift, Vol. X, No. 4, p. 32-33)

Going-to-the-Sun Mountain - 9594'

The first record of ascent of Going-to-the-Sun Mountain is the entry in the peak register of Francis Barbour Wynn, who installed the register in 1919. Since then, approximately 50 people had registered up to 1938. Among these were Norman Clyde, 1923; G.M. Kilbourn, 1927; Leopold Seethaler, 1928; and 16 Sierra Club members, led by Clyde, in July, 1937. Most of the ascents were made from the Siyen Pass or Preston Park areas. (Ref. Glacier Drift, Vol. II, No. 7, p. 64; Vol. IV, No. 4 & 5, pp. 23-24; Vol. X, No. 4, pp. 31-32; and Vol. XI, p. 18)

Other First Ascents

Mt. Rockwell - Believed to be Norman Clyde, 1923 (Ref. G. D., Vol. II, No. 5, p. 46)

Citadel Mtn. - Claimed by Norman Clyde (G.D., Vol. II, No. 7, p. 63) but believed to have been climbed much earlier by Francois Matthes (Matthes Hist. Notes)

Fusilade Mtn. - Believed to be Norman Clyde, 1923, (Ref. G.D., Vol. II, No. 7, p. 65)

Heavens Peak - Believed to be H.R. Chapman, while doing preliminary work of triangulation in mapping the west side of the park. Date unknown.

(G.D., Vol. IV, No. 6, p. 34)

Kinnerly Peak - Norman Clyde and 3 companions of the Sierra Club climbed it in 1937 & found no evidence of previous climbers (G.D., Vol. X, No. 4, p. 33)

Personal Sketches

"Peter Hauser, one of the men at work daily on the Transmountain Road, deserves special mention. He is an Austrian by birth, 49 years old, and has done much mountain climbing for pleasure and for pastime. To him the ascent of a mountain is but a Sunday pleasure jaunt. While working on road construction on the Mt. Baker, Washington, highway, he climbed Mt. Baker, 11,000 feet, and Mt. Shuksan. In 1925 he climbed Mt. Rainier and spent 48 hours on the summit alone. He has climbed Mt. Whitney and Mt. Shasta. In the park, previous to the 1928 season, he climbed Rising Wolf, Despair, Grizzly, Red, and Spot Mountains. During the summer of 1928 he climbed Clements, Reynolds, Oberlin, Gould, Pollock, Piegan, and Cannon. It is his custom to build a cairn of rocks on the summit. As one stands on Logan Pass, or on the Garden Wall trail, and swings field glasses from one summit to another, the monuments Hauser has erected are plainly visible." (Ref. Glacier Drift, Vol. IV, No. 4 & 5, P. 22)

"G.M. Kilbourn, who was waling guide for the Park Saddle Horse Company during the past season (1930), spent much of his time climbing mountains, sometimes alone, sometimes with others. In 1927 he climbed Altyn, Appekunny, Swiftcurrent, Going-to-the-Sun, Pollock, and Siyeh Mountains. He also climbed to the hole near the summit of the wall at Iceberg Lake. Here the wall is so thin it has broken away at either side, until an opening through the wall has been made. The roof of rock is 75 to 100 feet thick. From Many Glacier Hotel the hole looks like a tiny speck through which the sky is seen, although in reality the space from floor to top is quite high. The wall on either side appears precipitous, but is approachable.

"His climbs in 1928 were made to examine various routes of approach and return. He made the ascent of Grinnell Point, Henkel, Grinnell (twice), Allen (twice), and Wilbur (twice), all in the Many Glacier region. Siyeh is the fifth in height in the park, 10,004 ft. From Many Glacier Hotel to the top of Piegan Pass and return by Cracker Lake and Canyon Creek is not far from 25 miles, with a vertical climb of a mile. To do this is more than a full day's work, but Kilbourne was about in the evening seeking business for his company following a tramp that would take the heart of all but the most courageous and the physically perfect....."

"Kilbourne has climbed Pollock three times, not of necessity, but because on the first and again on the second attempt his kodak pictures were not successful. His ascent of Mt. Gould involved trail travel from Many Glacier to Granite Park, along the Garden Wall several miles, and up the west side to the summit....."

"The climax of Kilbourn's climbing was Mount Wilbur, which viewed across Lake McDermott (Swiftcurrent) from Many Glacier, presents a face of rock that seems almost vertical. He made his first climb on August 15th, alone. Six days later he repeated it, accompanied by a friend who did not reach the summit. The second climb was mainly to secure a better set of photographs than were obtained the first time. He attacked the eastern face by a slightly different way from the few who had preceded him. With the aid of glasses, he located a gully near the middle of the mountain, three-fourths of the way up, that broke the diorite cliffs in steps. From these he continued to the summit of the ridge....."

(From Glacial Drift, Vol. IV, No. 4 & 5, pp. 23-24)

"Leopold Seethaler, Swiss guide, who daily took a party of tourists from Many Glacier Hotel to and across Grinnell Glacier, is a real mountaineer. Early in the season, while stationed at Going-to-the-Sun, he made the first ascent of the north Summit of Little Chief, by climbing the seemingly vertical crags. He climbed Going-to-the-Sun from the Sexton Glacier side, after taking his part to Grinnell Glacier and return. He left the trail five miles from the hotel at five in the afternoon, reached the summit soon after eight, and made the descent almost entirely after dark.....On occasions Seethaler entertained guests of the Many Glacier Hotel by climbing to the top of a tall fireplace chimney, using only the rock projections as holds. He was a cool, deliberate guide, who could pick a route with a glance of the eye. He was fearless but extremely careful, and could tell instantly whether a rock wall was unscalable, or whether there were hand and foot holds for an ascent...."

(From Glacial Drift, Vol. IV, No. 4 & 5, pp. 23-24)

"In 1923 Norman Clyde, of California, visited Glacier National Park, and, alone, ascended thirty-seven mountains. The following year he ascended twenty-three more summits. He began with Mt. Henry, reached by easy trail from Glacier Park to Two Medicine. From Mt. James he followed the continental Divide, taking not only the summits actually on the Divide, but also those reached from the Divide by short ridges or spurs. During 1923 he got as far north as Many Glacier, ascending practically all summits nearby. Of the thirty-seven mountains he claims first ascent of eleven, but he is quite surely in error.

"In 1924 he accompanied the Sierra Club, and intended to equal if not surpass his 1923 record. But he stated that accompanying the club was a disadvantage and prevented him from making his object in number of ascents. He climbed to the top of only twenty-three. He began with HeavensPeak and Mt. Vaught, near Lake McDonald. Next he is in almost the extreme north of the park; he climbed Cleveland and Merritt, coming back southward again and ending with Mt. Allen near Many Glacier. Of those mountains ascended he claims first ascent of Mt. Merritt and a mountain in the Guardhouse group west of Sentinel Glacier. He traveled alone, carrying provisions and blankets. Usually he spent the night in a sheltered spot at some high elevation, and was ready for the ascent of some nearby summit the following morning, without making a long journey or partial ascent before the real climb began.

"He expected to return in 1925 and complete his list of ascents, but for some reason did not return. He has set an example of mountain climbing that will be hard to equal."

(Ref. Glacial Drift, Vol. IV, No. 9, p. 62)

Mountaineering References

Glacial Drift (Nature Notes)

Vol. II, No. 1, p. 13

"	"	"	5	"	45-47
"	"	"	6	"	54-56
"	"	"	7	"	62-66
"	III	"	1	"	6-7
"	"	"	2	"	17-18
"	"	"	5	"	39-40
"	"	"	6	"	54

Vol. IV, No. 4-5, pp. 22-24

"	"	"	6	"	33-34
"	"	"	9	"	62-63
"	"	"	10	"	72-73
"	"	"	11	"	76-77
"	"	"	12	"	86-88
"	VI	"	5	"	33
"	"	"	"	"	34

(Cont'd next page)

(References, cont'd)

Vol. III, No. 8, pp. 66-67
" " " 11 " 86-87
" IV " 1 " 2-3
" " " 2-3 " 12-15

Vol. VI, No. 5, pp. 37
" IX " ~~3~~, " 31-33
" X " 4, " 31-35, 37
" XI " -- " 18