

Climbs in the Northern Waputiks (Canadian Rocky Mountains)

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THE day of the packtrain is passing. At least, it seems so as one watches the working gangs on the road to Bow Lake. Where once the trail wound through the woods there is now a broad avenue, straight as a surveyor's line, stretching northward from the Lake Louise mountains to the Dolomite towers. But the road is still rough enough to make Jim Simpson's car buck as no broncho ever did.

The season of 1933, with its great snow-fall and overcast days, held back climbing in the Rockies, so that the first ascent of the year on Mt. Victoria was not made until July 15th.

We met at Lake Louise station that evening, Kingman and Thorington, and Conrad Kain arrived by train from Golden. Next afternoon found us beyond the road's end, walking through the jackpines to Bow Lake, reaching Simpson's cabins just in time to avoid a pelting storm of hail. We at once went fishing; a double, arching rainbow gleamed above the blue water, and the trout bit madly. Conrad concocted a mulligan that would "revive the dead," while Tommy Frayne and Jack Harris brought the horses along the lake shore in time for supper.

Bow glacier. How different it looks. Not many years ago it seemed to send its icy curtain down into the tree-tops; now it has run up toward its snowfield, leaving bare cliffs and waterfalls below. Deer come to drink at evening—two bucks in velvet, a grey doe and a spotted fawn—and their procession makes a lovely reflection in the brook.

On July 17th, after long search for wandering horses, we packed up, wandered through the flowering meadows of Bow Pass, stopping only to admire that superb panorama of the North Saskatchewan, and drove the horses down the steep slopes of fallen logs and stone-slides to the delta of Peyto Lake. We camped near the glacier. Horses had never been there before, but in a grove of trees we found two rusted cans and a punctured coffee-pot, left on an old winter trap-line.

Next day we walked up the icy highway and made the first ascent of Peyto Peak (9,805 ft.), climbing its southern screes to reach its pent-house tower at the northwest angle, whence there is a fine steep climb of several rope-lengths to the top. We sat and watched the cloud shadows drifting across the Wapta snowfield, and at last glissaded down on the northern side to the frozen surface of Caldron Lake, and so to camp.

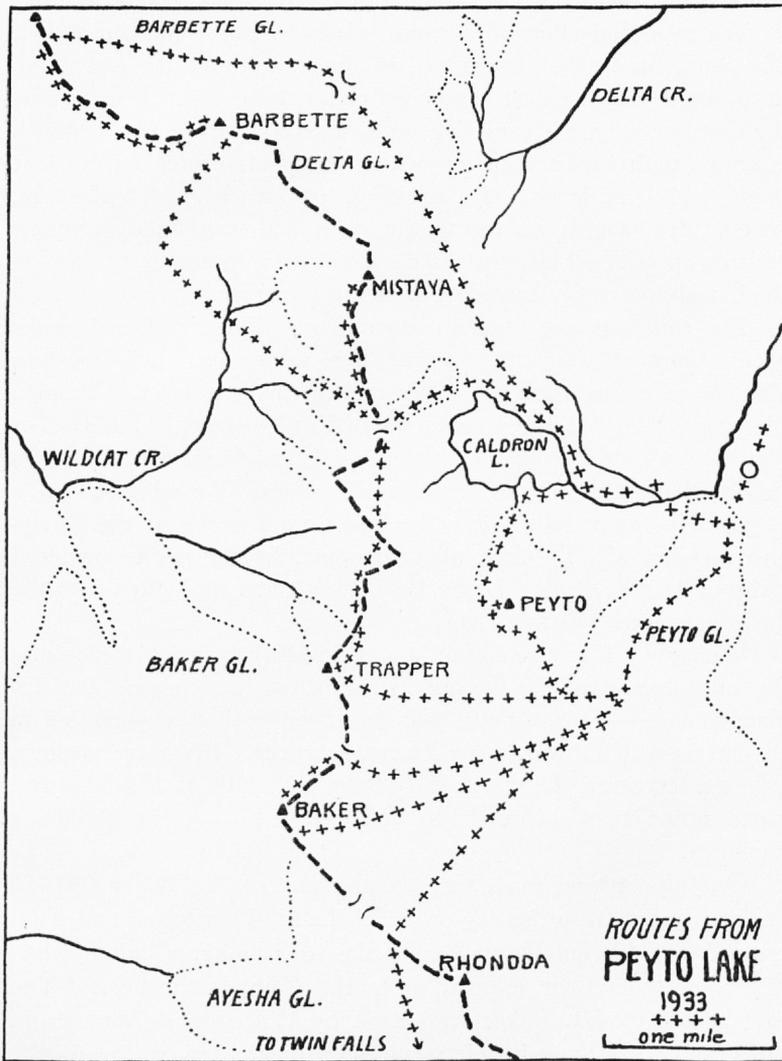
Two days of foggy weather held us there. On the first of these we visited the glacier, making a photographic station and marking the ice terminus. The torrent emerges from a translucent cave, into which a team of horses could be driven if one cared for the experiment. The stream from Caldron Lake comes down in serpentine bends, through a little canyon, and joins the main stream across the ice-front.

On July 21st we went up to Caldron Lake, by a good route just north of its stream, and ascended Mt. Mistaya (10,100 ft.) by its eastern snow basin and southern ridge. This took us but five hours, and rope was not required. The peak breaks in a great northern precipice; the day was superb, with views from the Lake Louise mountains to the Columbia icefield, while in the west the Purcells and Selkirks seemed to form a continuous wall from the dim south until they were hidden behind the Freshfield peaks.

Proceeding southward, almost on the watershed, we added another first ascent by taking Trapper Peak (9,790 ft.) from its northeastern angle. The summit is made up of jagged plates of rock, from which one looks down Baker glacier into the depths of the Blaeberry. Its steep eastern face was our homeward route, a continuous glissade of six hundred feet, bringing us into the basin above Peyto glacier.

Settled, perfect weather seemed likely to continue. Next morning, at an early hour, we were on the northern shore of Caldron Lake, on our way to Mt. Barbette (10,080 ft.).¹ This is the beautiful peak one sees from the Saskatchewan trail, lifting its snowy wall above the icefall dropping to Mistaya Lake, and its conquest seemed not altogether easy. We crossed the snowy expanse of Delta glacier to the portal between Mt. Patterson and our objective peak, rounding into the Barbette basin. Occasionally

¹ The last unclimbed 10,000-ft. peak of the main watershed between Kicking Horse and Howse Passes.



an avalanche would crash down one of the couloirs which seam the northern face of Mt. Barbette, and bulging icefalls stood guard above the northern wall, forcing us to the northwest corner.

We rope and start on a route selected after some discussion. The wall, up to the watershed, is almost a thousand feet high, at an angle which Conrad later estimates to be 50°. For half of the distance we are scrambling on a narrow buttress, above which is snow, with ice beneath, on which every step must be cut. It is the old experience, ever exciting, or standing in anchorage, rope at full length, enlarging the steps and watching fragments of ice whiz by. At last the slope lessens, and we are on the watershed, walking easily toward the summit cornice.

But this was not done in a moment. The Freshfield peaks were shimmering in the sun of late afternoon, their western glaciers reflecting the light. We looked through Howse Pass to the gravel flats and green meadows of Forbes Brook. Mt. Forbes was a broad, dark spike, with the Lyell peaks and Mt. Columbia raising their white spires successively behind, like wing-sets of a stage. Nearer at hand were the lower rock peaks of the watershed beyond Mt. Breaker, all overtopped by the snow-powdered cliffs of Howse Peak. Down Barbette glacier we looked into the dark waters of Mistaya Lake.

We came off our mountain at the southwest angle, outflanking the unbroken precipice facing Mt. Mistaya, and passed the unmapped lakes—frozen now, though ringed with trees—hidden in the basins which drain to the Blaeberry gorge. From the western side we recrossed the watershed at the col south of Mt. Mistaya, raced down to Caldron Lake and reached camp in gathering darkness.

On July 24th we made the second ascent of Mt. Baker (10,451 ft.), ten years from the day on which Ladd, Thorington and Kain crossed Mt. Gordon from Bow Lake to Takakkaw camp, when returning from their expedition to the Columbia icefield.² The first ascent of Mt. Baker was made by Wilcox and Aemmer in 1923, and we followed their route, with much step-cutting on the narrow northeast arête. Again we looked across the Blaeberry, to Mt. Mummery with its gorgeous glacier, to the rock-towers on Waitabit Creek, to the array of Selkirk peaks south of Rogers

² *A. J.*, 25, p. 178.

Pass, and to the Purcells, with Howser Spire rising above the northern summits.

The end of the trip was approaching. On the morning of July 26th we struck our tent at daylight, and packed our belongings. A little of sadness always clings to a spot where once has been a camp: a few dead bows, bleached poles, ashes and scattered pegs. But we were too busily engaged with the last of the hot-cakes to think of this at the time, and were soon off to the glacier.

By sunrise our feet had carried us far up on the snowfield, and in less than four hours we were crossing the Rhondda-Baker col to its steep western side. Passing along the flanks of Ayesha and Collie we circled up to Yoho Peak for lunch, glissaded down to Twin Falls cabin for tea, and walked the trail to Takakkaw camp for late supper.³ It forms a perfect climax: the Alps from end to end in a single day, the snow firm and a rope seldom needed. Still, it is a long stroll, even for the young fellows we still delude ourselves into being.

³ This was the first time that a crossing of the watershed was made from North Saskatchewan drainage to Yoho Valley.