

A New Ascent in the Hayes Range

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COMING up on the boat to climb Mt. Hayes, we had a chance to study a picture of the second highest summit of the Alaska Range E. of Mt. McKinley, a peak about 13,000 ft., lying nearly 10 miles E. of Mt. Hayes. We decided to attempt it if Mt. Hayes was climbed in time. The best route presented was directly up one of the N. ridges. The western of these appeared the best. Further study of this route was made from Mt. Hayes and we felt it would go except for one pitch, which later turned out to be a steep face. Shand and I also hoped to go out by the Black Rapids Glacier and since the map showed a glacier going around to the S. side—the back side from us—we decided to try this approach.

Leaving Henry Hall and Brad and Barbara Washburn at the landing field at noon on August 5th, Sterling Hendricks, Bill Shand and I headed up the Hayes fork of Delta Creek, crossing over the tongue of the Hayes Glacier and picking up the cache of food and supplies we had left two days previously. Rain had been threatening for the past hour or so and it now settled down to a steady drizzle. We continued up the hills which terminate this part of the Hayes Range and planned to cross over near where the Houston party landed in 1936. Due to the weather we camped sooner than planned, a procedure we were forced to adopt almost daily for the next couple of days. But by August 8th we had crossed "Trident Glacier" and passed along the W. side of the E. prong and camped as near the icefall on this prong as we could.

A momentary clearing on the 8th gave us a chance to reconnoiter the icefall and we decided our course. The next morning dawning clear, we broke camp and attacked the icefall by a medial moraine. The going was relatively simple at first, but about halfway up the fall the blocks and séracs were less smooth and the terrain became broken. As we progressed this broken condition increased, until near the top there was a collection of massive séracs and névé blocks. Leaving me on a sérac with the packs, Shand and Hendricks roped and crossed over more of these blocks to the actual top of the fall. Beyond lay another pile of névé blocks. With our packs such

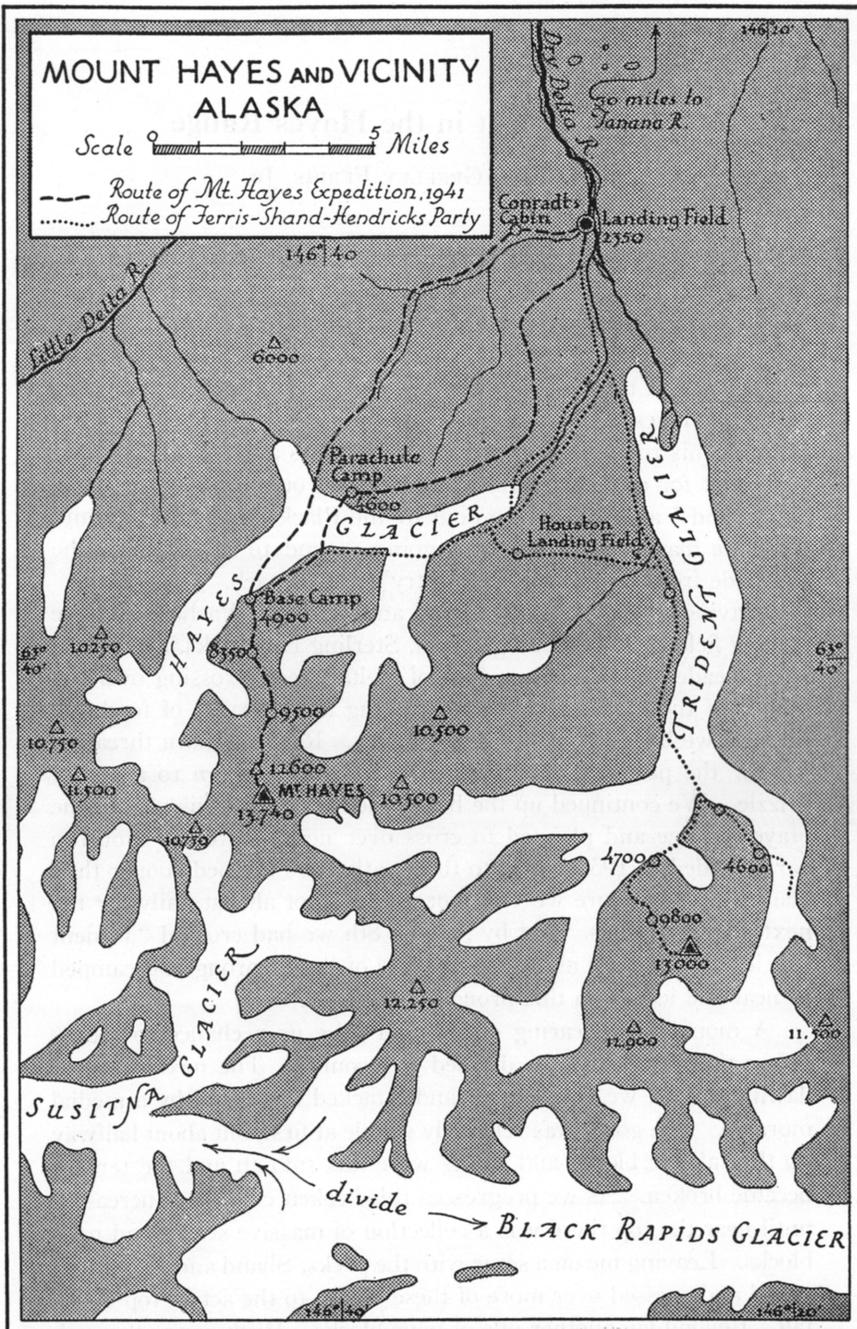
ROUTE AND LAST CAMP ON 13,000-FT. UNNAMED PEAK
CLIMBED BY FERRIS AND SHAND

Photo, B. Washburn

MOUNT HAYES AND VICINITY ALASKA

Scale 0 5 Miles

--- Route of Mt. Hayes Expedition, 1941
..... Route of Ferris-Shand-Hendricks Party



conditions were felt to be impractical so we returned the way we had come. The clouds settled somewhat but as no rain fell we passed our two previous campsites on the W. side of East Prong Glacier and hiked around the buttress where the glacier prongs met. We continued to the left along the S. lateral moraine of the fused Middle and West Prong Glaciers. After crossing a small glacier which came out of the cirque backed by the 8000-ft. N. face of our peak we found a perfect campsite at the foot of what we had called "Blitz" ridge. Here we established base camp (*ca.* 4750 ft.).

The next day was still unsettled and clouds enveloped the mountain, so the morning was spent resting. In the afternoon we walked out onto the glacier and luckily a dispersion of the clouds gave us a chance to plan our approach to the summit. With good weather we felt the mountain could be climbed in two days from base camp.

August 11th was clear and beautiful. It was our first really clear day since we had landed on July 15th. There was not a cloud in the sky and Mt. Hayes rose gracefully at the head of West Prong Glacier. The 8000-ft. face of our peak was truly impressive. We broke camp and started along the moraine. Here the party separated, as Hendricks had to return to Fairbanks. We bade him farewell and headed up the scree slope beside a hanging glacier. Using this slope and the lateral moraines we reached a long snow slope. Kicking steps into this we reached a shoulder of the ridge. Here at about 8100 ft. we ate lunch, having come up from about 4750 ft. in four hours.

The ridge was straightforward. We continued along this passing a few cornices. The snow conditions were not of the best. There was a breakable crust through which we fell to a depth considerably above our ankles. One rather broad place had a large schrund at its upper end but a broad bridge gave us easy access to the ridge beyond. Here we approached three large séracs which were formed from a single massive névé block that had split apart. In the center of these we made camp as they were extremely secure and it was a well-protected place. The altitude was about 9700 ft.

Our luck held, and August 12th was as beautiful as the preceding day. Leaving the tent at 5 A.M. we reached the foot of the face in a few minutes. At the lower schrund we roped and crossed it. Shand led, kicking steps into the well-crusted slope. We crossed beneath some protruding rocks and then traversed back above them. Here the snow turned to blue ice covered with an inch of crusted

snow up which we had to cut steps. As we neared the end of the stretch the exposure became quite extreme as we were working out over the N. face of the mountain on a slope of about 65° . We were considering returning as we had no secure means of belay. At this point the ice stopped and became waist deep powder snow. It was crusted on the top and packed down to a deeper crust below, so with no fear of avalanche we crossed further out on the face beneath a snow bulge. Another bulge below us decreased the slope. This remarkable change in snow conditions was probably due to a schrund below the upper bulge filling in with snow drifting over this upper bulge. Also the lower bulge which had helped form the schrund offered a chance for the snow to drift in and remain, as it was considerably less steep than the ice face. Also we noticed the sun seldom struck this part of the face and there was, therefore, minimal melting and freezing. Here we left some 200 ft. of rope attached to a 3-ft. tent peg for further use.

We crossed onto the bulge above us by climbing an overhanging schrund. This gave us easy access to a steep snow slope up which we quickly moved to the ridge above. Here we rested before tackling the 500 ft. of narrow ridge ahead. The face according to our aneroid was 600 ft. and had taken us three hours from camp to climb and requiring some 40 steps cut in the ice.

The narrow ridge ahead consisted of snow and rock gendarmes. There was also a small cornice almost the whole length. On one side the ridge sloped to the precipitous N. face of our objective. The other side dropped almost as rapidly to a cirque on the W. The ridge itself was basically a granite fin. One of the rock gendarmes presented a nice problem. We had to climb over it as there was no way around. The holds were small but secure and on top there was a huge bonnet of snow up through which one had to push to get over. This was the last part of the narrow ridge. It now broadened a bit and rose abruptly to bring us out onto a small plateau where we had our first lunch.

After lunch we continued along the ridge which was impressively corniced, some reaching out 30-40 ft. Another short ridge of snow and rock gendarmes was crossed and once more we had these massive cornices to traverse. Here the snow was well wind-packed and the ridge led to the foot of the double summit. We traversed this obliquely toward the east peak, which is higher. Just as we reached the base of this cone the sound of an airplane attracted our attention.

It was Washburn on one of his photographic flights. We later found he had taken pictures and we appeared as two minute dots at the foot of the summit cone.

We continued up this cone which was solidly wind-packed and reached the summit at 1.30. Here we took pictures and finished our lunch. The summit was rather long and narrow, being about 150 ft. long and perhaps 25 ft. wide, with a large crevasse running lengthwise. From the top we could look down on the numerous icefalls which would have continued to block our path had we climbed on up the East Prong Glacier. Far to the W. Mt. McKinley rose majestically above a haze of clouds that later covered it. The aneroid gave a reading of 13,200 ft. on the summit. This was not in agreement with the survey which gave the final contour at 12,800 ft., reading in 200-ft. intervals. The height is probably in the vicinity of 13,000 ft., which is what we called it.

A few misty clouds sailed over us and after a half hour's stay we were willing to leave, and we returned by the route we had come. At about 11,500 ft. we had trouble with our crampons balling due to the sun. Moving carefully we reached the narrow ridge where we had to exercise extreme caution. The cornice was rotten and had to be kicked off in places. As we were crossing this ridge a huge avalanche roared off the opposite wall of the cirque to our left and plummeted some 2000 ft. in space before reaching the cirque floor below. We reached the face and started down. Fortunately the sun had not hit the steep snow slope and we were able to walk down it to the schrund, which we jumped. We used the line left here for a rappel which brought us below the ice. Tying on the rest of our rope we used it as a hand line to below the rocks. We followed the old steps back across the lower schrund and breathed a sigh of relief at being off the face. We reached camp at 5 P.M. and sat down to a gorging repast.

Good weather appeared to have descended for a spell and the 13th was perfect. We broke camp and, with a last fond look toward the summit, headed down the ridge. We checked the aneroid at the shoulder and found it to agree within 50 ft. of the previous determination (8100 ft.). Reaching the glacier we picked up our small cache at base camp. We crossed the glacier and proceeded down the W. side of Trident Glacier, about 9 that evening reaching the Hayes fork of Delta Creek. We attempted to cross the stream, but the hot days and the late hour had considerably swollen

the water and we were both thankful for the rope we had brought along for just this situation. We were swept off our feet by the current, which was fast and reached well to our hips with its full force. Thus maltreated, and considerably chastened, we decided to go upstream some seven miles and cross over by the snout of the Hayes Glacier. Chilled by the stream and angered by its inhospitable action we started off that evening. As we burst out of a clump of alders onto a sand bar about half way to the glacier the sight of two large fresh bear tracks altered our plans. We built a fire and settled down for the night. Between the boulders being thumped and thudded along by the stream and the memory of the bear tracks we tried "to knit the 'ravelled sleeve of care." The next morning as we ate a scanty breakfast, having abandoned our excess food on the mountain, we saw Washburn fly by on his second photographic flight.

We continued up the stream, eating all the blueberries that came to hand. Crossing the tongue of the glacier uneventfully we headed for the landing field and arrived about three hours later. Here bathing and resting amused us for two days until Johnnie Lynn, our pilot, came to return us to Fairbanks and those chocolate sodas and cakes galore.