

Absaroka Range

A probable first ascent of Mt. Index in N. W. Park County was made on September 24th by G. Haas, J. Makowski, P. D. Smith, from a timberline camp on the N. W. side. An involved route led from the saddle connecting with Pilot Peak, and the final 150 ft. of the crumbling summit block was climbed by a chimney on the W. face. Descent was made by the same route: reasonably safe and the easiest that could be found.

PHIL D. SMITH.

Wind River Range

In August last Mrs. Underhill and I made the following climbs in the Island Lake region of the Wind River Range, Wyoming Rockies. Camp was placed, first, about half a mile N. of Island Lake; then, at the head of the second Titcomb Lake; and finally, near the head of the highest lake.

Frémont Peak, S. face (first ascent). August 9th. The ordinary route utilizes a S. W. buttress, while the high S. E. ridge constitutes the main divide; midway between these projects a southerly spur. We started up a talus slope immediately E. of this spur. The slope issued from a large gully of broken rock, which was followed up to its head perhaps 500 ft. below the summit. This head, as the gully swung to the right, lay upon a ridge or rib forming the W. boundary of another and yet larger gully to the E., which dropped steeply from the summit and was filled both above and below with a bed of hard snow. Cutting across this couloir (75 ft.), we climbed the rocks, smooth and in places fairly difficult (owing largely to their unsoundness), of its E. border to their head upon the S. E. ridge, two gendarmes removed from the summit. We then traversed these gendarmes and their intervening snow cols to the summit itself, passing at one point a rope-sling left by Henderson's party of 1936, who descended this part of the S. E. ridge. Time, 6 hours from camp near Island Lake (as against 4 hours for the ordinary route, done a couple of days earlier).

Several variations of this route would probably be possible. Where the first gully heads, instead of crossing or following the second, one could *perhaps* climb the steep smooth slabs of the ridge to the left (W.) directly to the summit. Due to bad rock-climbing weather on the day of our trip (cold, wind, and the threat of snow, which actually began to fall just as we gained the summit and continued throughout the descent), we did not even attempt this route. One could undoubtedly start up the face at various points between the S. W. buttress and the S. spur, instead of to the E. of the latter, with the same possibilities at the top. However, none of these

routes is very attractive, as the lower and major part of each is merely a scramble over masses of broken rock. Very likely one could ascend the steep snow couloir throughout its entire length (we did not see its bottom), but the great labor of step-cutting, at least late in the season, would seem to make this strictly a matter of art for art's sake.

Titcomb Needles (second ascent). August 12th. There are four major pinnacles, flanked at each end, but especially on the S., by a large number of minor ones. Through the high central cluster the ridge, instead of running S. and N., bears at first N. E. then N. W., Point No. 2, counting from the S., being at the vertex of the right angle.

Leaving nailed boots at the foot of the peak, we gained the ridge from the E. by a prominent and easy gully leading to a sharp col just S. of Point No. 1. After climbing the minor pinnacle S. of this col we traversed around Point No. 1 on the E. and then climbed it from the N. and E. Passing Point No. 2, for the time being, on the W., we then climbed Points 3 and 4 by moving along and up the E. face. Returning, we climbed Point No. 2 from the S. W. and then descended from the ridge by a gully between Points 1 and 2, roping off part way down over a huge chockstone which is plainly visible from the floor of the valley. Left camp at head of second lake, 7 A.M.; foot of gully leading to ridge, 8.30; summit of minor pinnacle, 9.30; of Point No. 1, 10; of No. 3, 11; of No. 4, 11.15; of No. 2, 11.45; camp again, 1.30.

Despite the reputation these needles have enjoyed owing to their appearance from a distance, they proved to offer no problems of any sort, the climbing on them never being of greater difficulty than Grade II. The most that can be said for them is that they offer a very pleasant bit of exercise under mildly exposed conditions.

It looks as if a really good day's work might be found in the traverse of the entire set of needles, major and minor combined, from the rounded and easily accessible peak at the extreme S. to the col just S. of G-16 on the N. Another good climb which seems possible would be the ascent of the N. E. face directly to Points 3 and 4.

G-16 (second ascent). August 14th. Changed to sneakers and left baggage at foot of gully leading to col just S. of peak. Gaining this col, we started directly up the main S. ridge. The ridge, however, is presently blocked by an almost vertical step, which has the appearance from the valley of a huge fin. We turned this fin on the W., regaining the crest of the ridge only at the summit. The climbing here may be made as hard or as easy as one chooses, depending on how nearly one insists upon approaching the ridge; we lost much time in essaying routes which ran into fairly tight

places. The fin could also be passed on the E., by one who was looking for trouble; the slope of the rock ledges is there very unfavorable. Left camp, 6.55 A.M.; foot of peak, 9.30; col, 10; summit, 11.10.

From the summit we descended somewhat to the N. W. and then easily traversed the W. face, at the level of the S. col, to regain the latter and the gully of ascent (11.45). Essentially a very easy mountain, and less interesting than the Titcomb Needles.

Unnamed Peak, ca. 13,000 ft., at head of valley (first ascent). August 16th. The main divide crosses the head of the Titcomb gorge in an E.-W. direction. On this divide, somewhat W. of Dinwoody Pass at the precise head of the gorge, lies "The Sphinx," and between the pass and the Sphinx a set of high towers projects S. as a spur of the divide. In Henderson's excellent monograph, the authority for the region, these towers have somehow slipped by without a designation. However, they not only exist, but they constitute a very prominent object as seen from the Titcomb Lakes, and one bound to intrigue the rock climber.

Climbing up over a foundation ridge extending S. from the towers, we gained a small snowfield filling the basin W. of them and S. of the Sphinx. The steep W. wall of the towers is cut by several gullies; by the most southerly of the large ones, over rock disagreeably unstable at the foot but becoming firmer as it steepened near the top, we gained the ridge. Our point of emergence upon this was just S. of the main towers, of which there are four. After climbing the minor point to the S., we traversed the E. face to the gap just N. of the first high tower, which we then climbed by its N. ridge. From this gap the second tower looked highly unattractive, being very abrupt and its rock insecure. We therefore descended for a bit the gully leading down to the W., crossed the intervening rib, and reascended by the neighboring gully to the gap N. of the tower. (This latter gully was bedded with ice for 45 ft. at its top, and having neither nailed boots nor ice-axes with us, we viewed it with some misgiving. However, Mrs. Underhill led it by using a lie-back against the rocks along one side, and sliding up the ice.) After climbing the second tower from the N. we then repeated these tactics (with rope-off down the ice gully), coming up to the ridge a last time between the third and fourth towers. From here the latter was climbed easily enough, but the third tower, and the highest and steepest of the four, was for a step or two a really interesting proposition. One piton was used, and the descent required a rope-off; the sharp summit was very airy indeed.

While nowhere above Grade III in difficulty, these towers supplied a good climb, much superior to that of the Titcomb Needles. The course should, however, be taken from N. to S., reversing our route, when a straightforward traverse of all the summits could be made, with rope-downs over the sharp S. faces.

Unnamed Peak, ca. 13,100 ft., adjacent to the preceding (first ascent). August 16th. Immediately W. of Dinwoody Pass, and between it and the towers, lies another undesignated peak. Following the climb just described we crossed this peak in order to return home via Dinwoody Pass, and were somewhat surprised to find that it bore no cairn. It is, however, of no account, having only a few feet of climbing at its summit, and dropping to the pass in a long talus slope.

What I believe will prove to be the finest rock climb in the entire district has never yet been reconnoitered or even referred to in print. Just S. of and parallel with Mt. Doublet, from the flank of which it rises like an outrigger, lies a set of high pinnacles. We¹ first noted these in 1929, when making a traverse of Doublet, and christened them at the time the "Vajolet Towers," from their strong resemblance to these famous Dolomite peaks. They are invisible from the Titcomb Lakes, being hidden by Mt. Helen, but stand out prominently, to the E., from the S. slope of Dinwoody Pass. What they would actually amount to no one can, of course, say without attaining their very foot, but from all the angles from which I have viewed them they appear very promising indeed. They would be approached from the head of the Titcomb Lakes, bearing N. E. up into the trough between themselves and Doublet.

ROBERT L. M. UNDERHILL.



COLORADO CLIMBING NOTES

The principal event last summer in Colorado Mountain Club activities, was the School of Mountaineering which the Club held in lieu of their usual summer outing. This school, held in the Rocky Mountain National Park, gave instruction in nature study, geology, and all branches of climbing on rocks and on snow and ice. To many members it was their introduction to the methods of serious climbing, and capable instructors were on hand to conduct the work. An average of sixty persons were introduced to safe rock and snow climbing, and were so enthusiastic about this kind of an outing that it is quite probable that another school of the kind will be held in another year or two.

¹ Henry S. Hall, K. A. Henderson, and the writer.