

From Greg Child fax 206 641 4728  
Attention JJ fax 303 545 6774

Dear JJ,

I put a few paragraphs together which may be helpful in presentations to the powers that be. Change, add or delete any of this as you wish. I tried to tailor it to the minds of people who are not familiar with climbing at all, so forgive some of my excesses.

### HISTORICAL PRECEDENTS OF CLIMBING IN THE USA AND NORTH AMERICA

The first climbers of North America were Indian hunters, who ascended rock formations long before western settlers ever appeared. Traces of Indian ascents have been recorded on lofty rock outcrops in the desert areas of the southwestern United States, while on the summit of Long's Peak, which is Colorado's highest point, the remains of an Indian hunter's hideout was discovered. That Indian hunter's ascent of Long's Peak pre-dates the 1868 first whitemen's climb by hundreds of years. Meanwhile, south of the border in Mexico, an old Spanish journal of 1522 records two Conquistadores climbing the 17,888-foot-high volcano Popocatepetl, for the pragmatic purpose of finding sulphur for gunpowder.

Climbing to appreciate the beauty and challenge of the vertical world got its contemporary start in the USA in the 1800s. In Colorado, Pike's Peak was ascended in 1820. In the Cascade Range of Washington state the first ascent of Mount Saint Helens came in 1853, and of Mount Rainier in 1870. These peaks, which rise above 14,000 feet and which are perpetually ice-covered, were great feats for the era.

1875 was the year that bolts were first employed to make an ascent of a cliff. A Sierran named George Anderson led a party up Yosemite's Half Dome by using a hand-held drill which he struck repeatedly with a hammer to carve out a small hole, into which he tapped a crude steel shaft to stand on. The bolts used by climbers today are much smaller and are virtually invisible from the ground. The line of cables and steps which tourists use today to gain the famous summit of Half Dome follows Anderson's historic path.

By the turn of the century climbers were regularly ascending mountains purely for the physical and spiritual challenge they offered. The steep-sided Grand Teton of Wyoming was climbed in 1898, and around then major peaks in Alaska and the Canadian Rockies were being climbed too. Perhaps the culmination of the early days of American mountain climbing came in 1913, with the first ascent of America's highest peak, Mount McKinley, by a tough team of Alaskans that

included an Indian American. Paralleling those ascents were hundreds of other climbs made by many men and women devoted to the challenge and freedom they found in climbing mountains. Indeed, none other than Senator Robert Kennedy himself appreciated those elements of the climbing experience when he participated in the ascent of a previously unclimbed peak near the Alaska-Canada border, in the 1970s. His team named the peak Mount Kennedy to honor his late brother, President John F. Kennedy.

Rock climbing on low altitude cliffs--a rather distinctly different activity to climbing icy mountains--began in the USA in 1916 when a Colorado professor named Albert Ellingwood pioneered ascents of cliffs in the Sangre de Cristo Range and at Garden of the Gods, in Colorado. He saw individual cliffs as small mountain challenges in their own right, and he understood that an expanse of cliff might have dozens of pathways leading up through the vertical, and that each climb was uniquely different in its character and in its potential for personal discovery and adventure. Like climbers today, he regarded cliffs as a playground for integrating the human spirit with the natural world. Some of Ellingwood's climbs, like Lizard's Head, a steep plug of rock in Wyoming, are still popular climbs.

Increasing numbers of climbers began refining their skills and seeking out difficult climbs and new ways up mountains or cliffs in the 1930s. In 1939 America's great technical rock climbing challenge was Shiprock, in New Mexico. On that climb, David Brower, the famed environmentalist, drilled several bolts into the rock to make the first ascent. The ascent received great media applause.

Another challenge of that era was the first climbing ascent of Devil's Tower, in Wyoming, in 1937. This is the rock tower popularized in the Stephen Spielberg movie "Close Encounters of the Third Kind." On the 1937 climb, Fritz Wiessner led a team up a 400-foot-tall vertical wall--a great display of skill for the time, and as significant a technical advancement for climbing as the Spielberg film's special effects were to the movie business. Wiessner's group were not the first to stand on the summit of Devil's Tower, however. In 1893 two farmers had scampered up the tower by hammering a 350-foot-long ladder of wooden spikes up a crack in the wall in order to hoist the American flag on top. It was done in the spirit of patriotism and business enterprise, to entertain a group of 1,000 watchers at a fair below. During the flagbreak a wind blew the flag onto the fields below where it was cut into strips and sold off to souvenir hunters.

The era of the 1950s was the period when many of the steepest formations of America were first climbed, like El Capitan in Yosemite Valley. In the decades following this

ascend some fifty other routes were established on this one rock wall, and it came to represent to the international climbing community the symbol of the proud and seemingly impossible wall of stone. Yosemite has played an important role in world climbing. Much of the equipment and tactics used for overcoming vertical terrain by climbers all over the world, as well as by fire brigades, rescue personnel and the military, were devised out of the need to develop new equipment for scaling Yosemite's huge cliffs. That new equipment includes today's modern "clean climbing" gadgets which do not scar the rock in any way.

A new style of climbing emerged in the 1980s. "Sport climbing" utilized the steepest sections of cliff, and created numerous "mini climbs" of such ferocious difficulty that climbers would train their fingers and tendons for years to make it through a mere 40-foot of climbing. Such climbs were protected by strong steel bolts, left in place for other climbers also wishing to make the ascent. These sport climbs require as much effort and skill as an ascent of Mount McKinley. Each sport climb is named and recorded in a log book. Some sport climbs become so famous that the names they are given are recognizable in Europe, Britain, Japan and everywhere that climbing is practiced. Foreign climbers visit the USA just to test themselves on such routes--showing that climbing is a tourist activity.

As we near the year 2000 we find that the face of climbing has changed a great deal since the crude efforts of the 1800s. It could be said that finally, climbing has come of age, since sport climbing in a competitive format and on an artificial cliff will be a demonstration sport at the next winter Olympics in Oslo, Norway.