

The Squaw Mountain Trip

By HAROLD S. BABB

As Memorial Day fell on Sunday this year and was observed on Monday, an opportunity was given for a trip of two and a half days. The visit to Squaw Mountain was anticipated with much pleasure; the territory was new to the Mazamas as an organization, and there is perhaps nothing which adds zest to a trip as much as the sense of entering fresh fields. This circumstance, with the added inducement of its being the first extended trip after the confinement of the winter months, was responsible for the large attendance. A total of eighty-seven persons participated, including those who joined us on Sunday and Monday.

The main party left Portland on Saturday afternoon, May 29, 1920, by the Cazadero railway. We detrained at Faraday. Here there began, by way of introduction, a fairly steep climb out of the canyon of the Clackamas River. After having reached the more level country east of the river the walk during the rest of the afternoon was without appreciable gain in elevation. The ten miles to Bee Creek were covered in remarkably good time for such a large party.

A beautiful camp-site was found near an abandoned homestead. The main camp-fire was located in the center of a level open space surrounded by forest trees, which gave a feeling of protection. Several automobile parties joined us here. A dozen or more cook-fires quickly sprang up, glowing and sparkling among the trees in every direction, and the familiar business of making a snug camp for the night under a somewhat threatening sky was everywhere in progress.

After dinner there gathered one of the most irrepressible camp-fire circles known to Mazama memories. Perhaps the spirit of hilarity was an expression of the joy of returning to camp days once more—perhaps it was spring in the air—but at any rate, the usual orderly if unpremeditated procedure of conducting the evening's entertainment was out of the question, and enthusiasm had its way. There was no "owl session," however, as the thought of the fourteen miles to be covered on the morrow, to the top of the mountain and back, acted as a persuasive reminder of the human necessity of sleep.

We set out at seven in the morning on the Forest Service trail. Now we began a gradual climb which continued practically all the way to the summit. Our trail led us, mile after mile, through a forest of fir, with rhododendrons in great profusion. We soon encountered the first patches of snow. These increased in size and frequency, and during the latter half of the ascent the ground was seldom visible. Snow fell on us, too; five or six times during the day it came down thickly and quietly for a few minutes, only to be relieved each time by a burst of brilliant sunshine.

We lunched beside a stream a short distance below the summit. Meanwhile the mountain top, in full view, beckoned us upward, and after lunch and a short rest, we began the final ascent, skirting around the head of the valley on a curved ridge towards the top. The last effort was a steep snow climb.

The Forest Service lookout station on the summit shows an elevation of 4,791 feet above sea level. Those who preferred round numbers climbed the ladder at the rear of the cabin to an even 4,800 feet.

The weather was fickle that day. As we stood on the summit the sun would now and then suddenly appear, the clouds to the west would open up and reveal an impressive view down into the Willamette valley—a sunlit landscape with cloud shadows racing over it; then it would clear to the south, and just as we stood in eager expectation of catching a glimpse of Mt. Hood looming up in the northeast, down would come the clouds on us once more. For almost an hour the weather played this game of hide-and-seek with us. Finally, weary of being so hopelessly "it," we started reluctantly on our downward way, obliged to content ourselves with the leader's word that Mt. Hood stood in all his splendor just behind the clouds.

We reached camp in good time for dinner. The camp-fire session was very enjoyable, if less hilarious than the evening before, and this time the owls were free to make the most of their nocturnal proclivities.

Monday was bright and clear. The morning was spent by the more energetic in a game of baseball, for which the pasture of the old homestead furnished a setting,—“a diamond in the rough,” as it were.

We broke camp after lunch, and walked the ten miles back to Faraday in the afternoon.

In spite of our disappointment in the view from the summit, and in the failure of the rhododendrons to be in bloom on schedule time, the outing was a memorable one. A trip well planned and executed cannot fail to be enjoyable, especially with such an enthusiastic attendance. In this instance Mr. Parker gave us the additional pleasure of introducing us to a new and interesting territory easily accessible from Portland.

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