

Calendar

MAY 30-JUNE 1 Wild flower show, Julian, California. Also weekends of May 17-18, May 24-25. In town hall.

JUNE 3-4 Annual Pioneer Day, Clovis, New Mexico. Rodeo.

3-5 Intermountain Junior fat stock show, North Salt Lake City, Utah. M. Vern Woodhead, secretary.

4 Strawberry Day at Provo, Utah.

6-7 State rifle matches at Fort Huachuca range, Arizona. George F. Parker, Jr., president state association.

7-8 Arizona semi-annual district convention of 20-30 clubs, Kingman. Guido Sartori, chairman.

7-8 Annual Regatta, Elephant Butte Lake, Hot Springs, N. M.

8 Annual northern Arizona Masonic picnic at Pine Flats picnic grounds, Oak Creek. Claude B. Harrison, Jerome, chairman. Masons, Eastern Star members, their families and friends throughout Arizona are invited.

8-10 State convention of Veterans of Foreign Wars, Albuquerque, N. M.

12-28 Arizona landscapes, oil paintings by Robert Atwood of Phoenix, on exhibit at Museum of Northern Arizona, Flagstaff.

13 San Antonio day to be celebrated at Taos Pueblo, New Mexico.

13-15 Cherry Festival, Beaumont, California.

14-15 Los Angeles Cactus show at Manchester playground, 8800 South Hoover street, Los Angeles, California.

23-25 Society for Research on Meteorites in Flagstaff, Arizona. Arizona State Teachers College, Museum of Northern Arizona and Lowell Observatory, joint hosts. L. F. Brady, arrangements.

24 San Juan Day, Corn Dance at Taos Indian Pueblo, New Mexico.

28-29 Utah Association of National Letter Carriers meets in Logan. H. Lee Hales of Logan, president and chairman.

28-29 Stamp clubs of Tucson, Phoenix and Prescott, Arizona, meet in Prescott. Submit stamps before June 27 to Mrs. Maxine Thilken or Leo Stephens of Prescott. Display open to public.



Volume 4

JUNE, 1941

Number 8

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ARIZONA, by Ivan B. Mardis, Tucson. This picture awarded second prize in Desert Magazine's cover contest in March.

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RANDALL HENDERSON, Editor.

TAZEWELL H. LAMB and LUCILE HARRIS, Associate Editors.

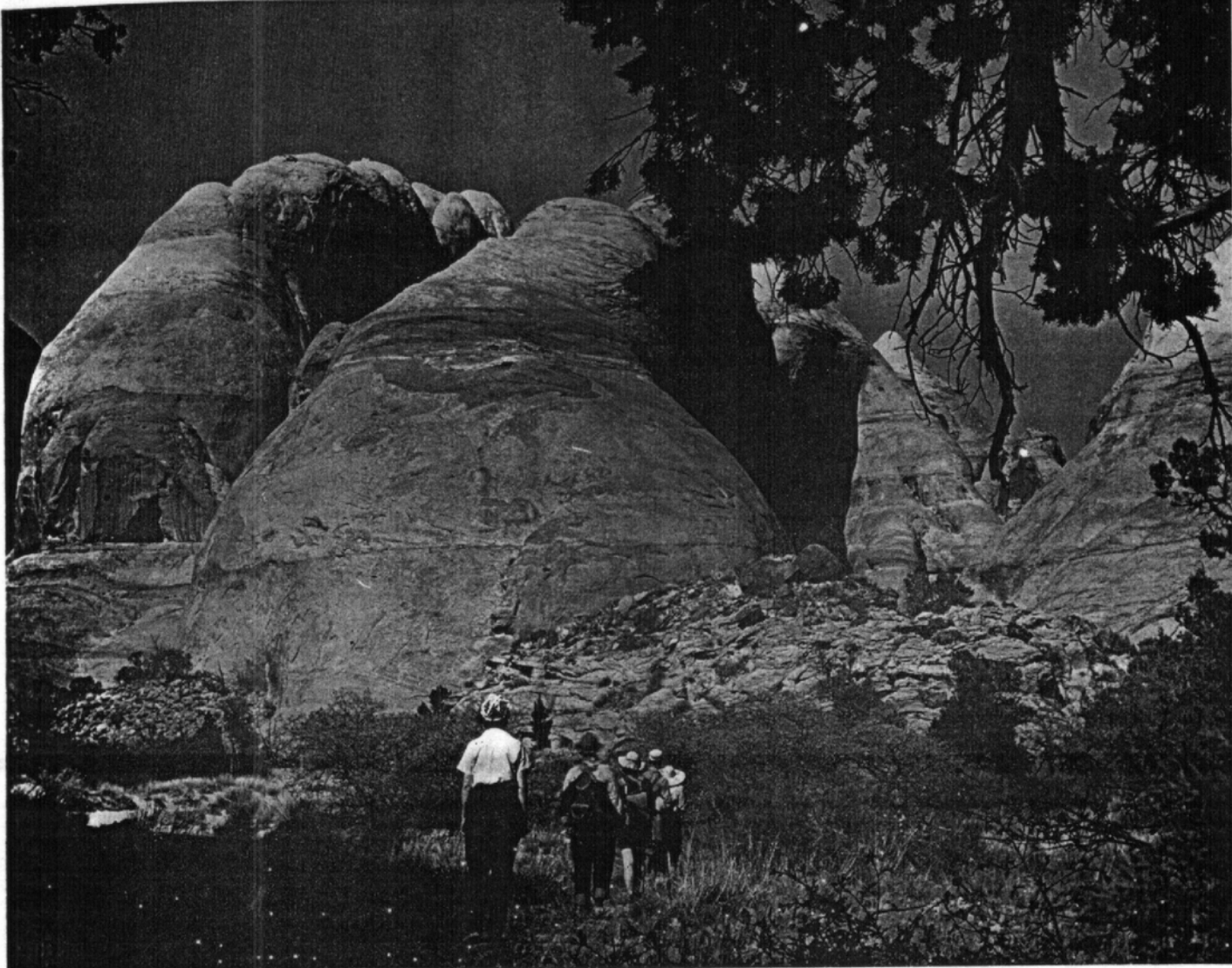
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Sierrans on the march. This picture taken on the approach to Redbud pass.

On the Trail to Rainbow Bridge

An average of only 200 persons visit Rainbow Natural bridge in southern Utah each year. It is a very inaccessible place. But this year the great register at the base of the giant arch was signed by one-third of its normal annual quota of visitors in one day. The Sierra Club of California selected the Rainbow trail for its yearly Easter vacation trek—and here is the story of what the Sierrans found in the wild region that lies between Navajo mountain and the Colorado river.

By RANDALL HENDERSON
Photographs by Richard B. Freeman

IN the great canvas-bound register that rests on a rock pedestal beneath the huge arch of Rainbow natural bridge in southern Utah there are many names.

Dr. Byron Cummings and John Wetherill were the first to record their visit to this remote desert landmark. That was in August 1909.

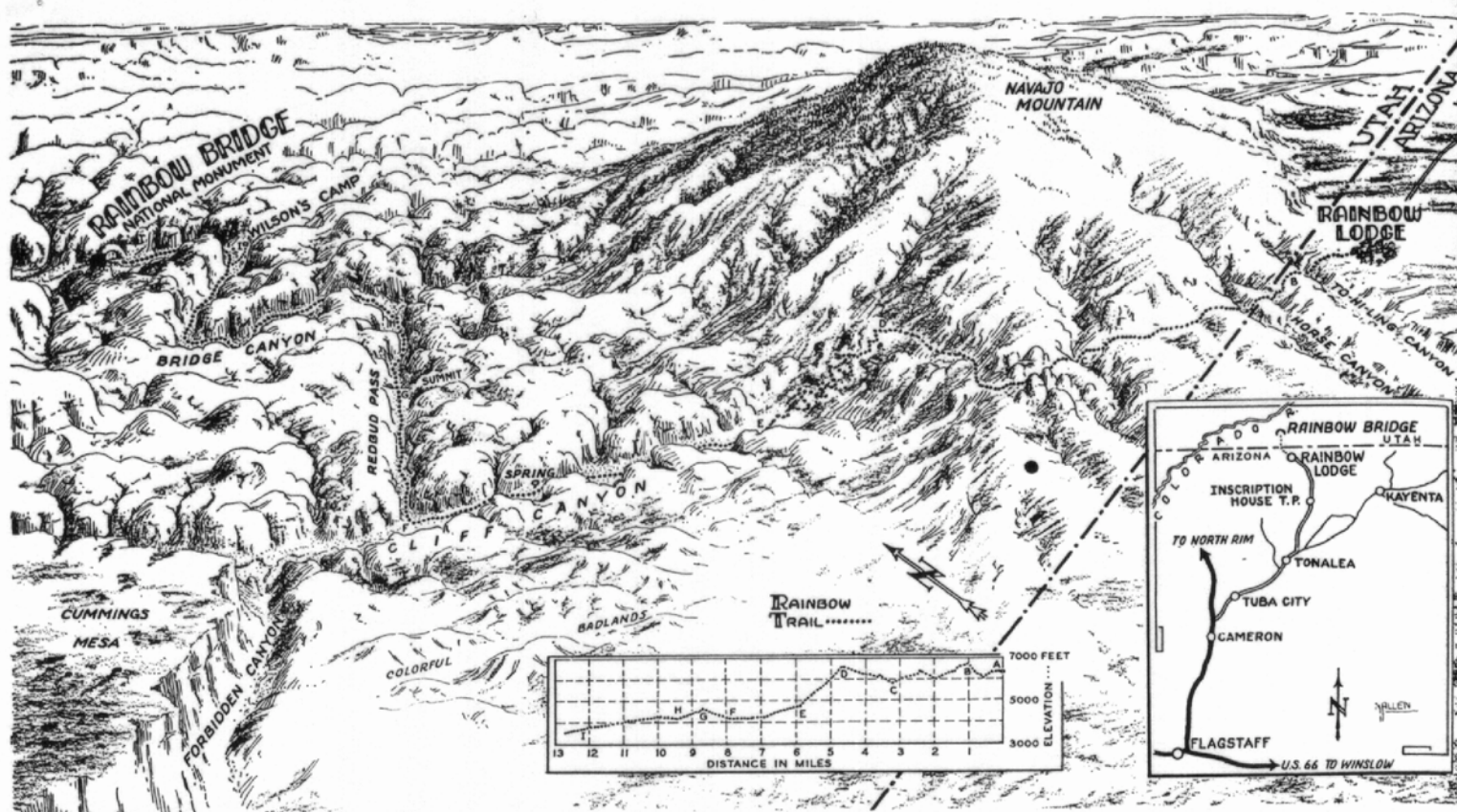
Theodore Roosevelt signed his name there in 1913. Zane Grey was one of the first visitors. J. B. Priestley and Irvin Cobb have left their scrawls across the pages

in more recent years. And there are hundreds of other names not so well known.

When I signed the big 500-page book in the afternoon of April 8 this year I was No. 3323 on the list of visitors. Being curious, I remained there for an hour reading the inscriptions that appeared on its pages. There is human interest in that book. Some of the visitors wrote poetry. Others merely wrote rhymes. There were uncomplimentary remarks about the mules that brought some of the visitors over the 14-mile trail from Rainbow lodge. Some of the remarks were reverent, some were funny. They were just a cross-section of America.

I think the most expressive notation was that of the man who wrote: "I hiked the 14 miles. I've been under this bridge and on top of it and I've seen it from both sides—and I still don't believe it."

But don't let this fellow's unbelief keep you from visiting Rainbow bridge if you have the opportunity to go. There is enough color and artistry and splendor along that 14-mile trail to make the trip



worth while even if the world's largest stone rainbow was not at the end of it.

I went to Rainbow bridge with the Sierra club of California—which means I walked the 14 miles.

We could not have ridden in if, we wanted to. There were 78 in our party, and there aren't that many saddle horses in that part of Arizona unless you count those half-tamed little Navajo mustangs from the reservation. As a matter of fact, Bill Wilson, who operates the pack train out of Rainbow lodge had to recruit some of these Indian ponies to help his mules carry in the ton and a half of bedrolls and grub for the hiking party. Bill said it was the biggest party on record.

The Sierrans organized the trip under the leadership of W. E. (Andy) Andrews. It was the annual spring outing trip of California's best known outdoor organization.

Our rendezvous was the U. S. Forestry camp ground seven miles south of Prescott, Arizona. We assembled there for our first campfire program Saturday night, April 5. Cars were rolling into camp far into the night. There were school teachers, lawyers, stenographers, engineers, bankers, artisans—folks who like to spread their sleeping bags on the ground and explore the remote mountain areas for rare flowers and strange birds and unusual camera shots. Or who go just for the companionship they find in forests and among rocky pinnacles.

Our schedule for the Sunday trip north into the painted desert of northern Arizona included many detours. Some of the

Sierrans visited Walnut canyon national monument. Others went to Sunset crater and Wupatki ruins.

Our Sunday night camp was in a little clearing in the juniper trees on the rim of Neetsin canyon near Inscription House trading post. We met a friendly welcome there. Jimmy Brewer, custodian of the Navajo national monument, and Gladwell (Toney) Richardson had selected the campsite—and were there to see that both Arizona and the National park service extended due courtesies to the visitors from California.

The elevation there is close to 7,000 feet. It was cold that night. Ice froze in the wash basins. But wood was plentiful and we had a roaring campfire. We were on the Navajo reservation, and Toney Richardson invited some of his Indian friends to stage a native dance for the white tribesmen from California. The Indians were quite willing—for a consideration—and the canyon echoed with their weird chant as they stamped around the fire.

The Richardsons—Toney and his father—are the traders at Inscription House. Rather, the elder Richardson does most of the trading while Toney writes thrilling western novels. He has sixty-odd titles to his credit, most of them published in England. The war put a crimp in his market and now he is spending much of his time trading flour and velveteen for blankets and silver jewelry and wool—and gathering material for more stories.

Jimmy Brewer—smiling Jimmy—was our guide the next day on a hike down in-

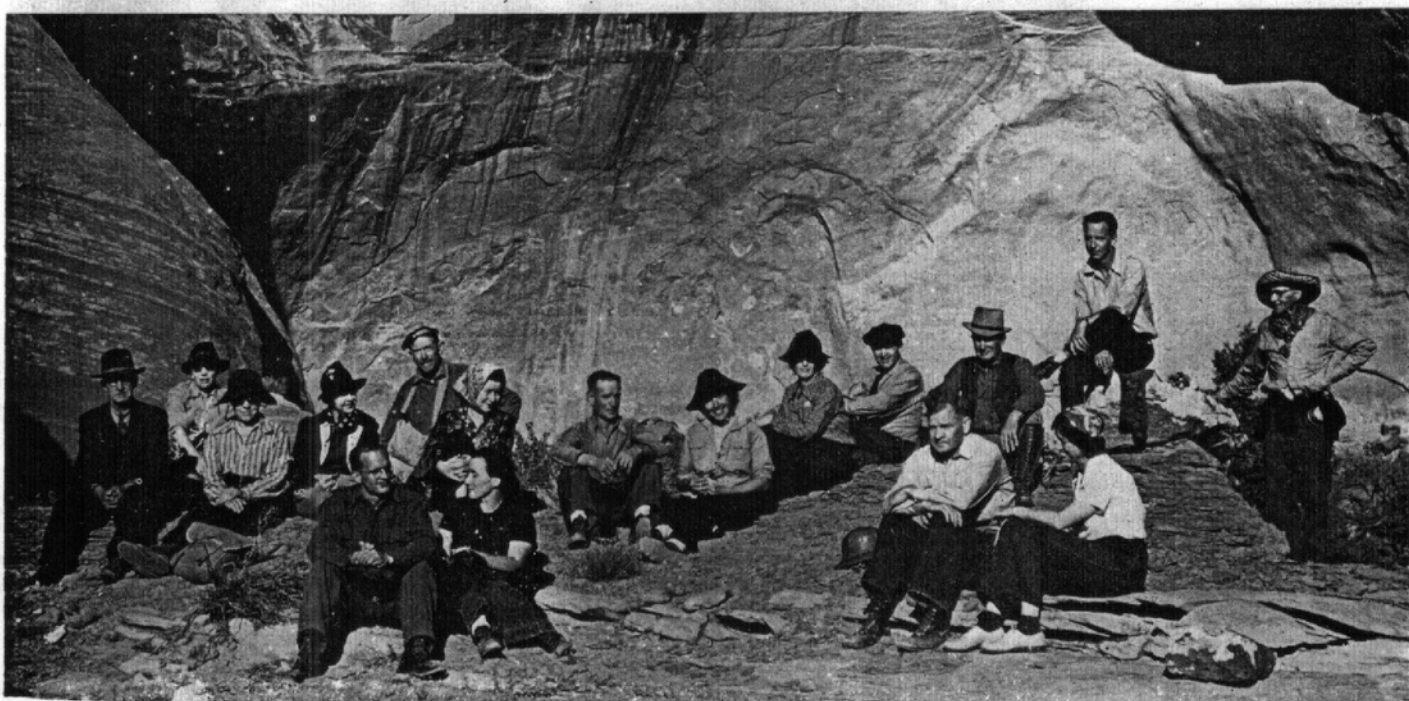
to Neetsin canyon to visit the ancient Inscription House ruins. These are wattle-and-daub cliff dwellings built, according to tree-ring records, between 1200 and 1300 A. D. Their name derives from an old date etched in one of the walls — 1661. No one knows who put it there, or the circumstances. John Wetherill, who was one of the first white men to visit these ruins, says there were faint traces of additional lettering when he first saw the inscription. But the message was unintelligible, and today only the date remains.

Inscription House is one of the three ruins in the Navajo national monument. The other two are Betatakin and Keet Seel. Jimmy and Sally Brewer live in a little cabin near Betatakin, keep a watchful eye over the cliff dwellings, guide visitors along the trails in summer and keep busy shoveling a pathway to the woodpile and the water tank when they are snowed in during the winter months. They wouldn't trade places with the richest member of the stock exchange.

Shallow steps have been cut in the steep sandstone wall that leads up to the overhung cove where the Indians built their dwellings. It is a rather precarious climb — but the Indian women carried their ollas of water up this same route 700 years ago, and thought nothing of it.

The visit to Inscription House was merely a sidetrip for the Sierra party. Our goal was Rainbow bridge.

At noon Monday our caravan headed out along the 35-mile road to Rainbow



Above—Members of the Sierra club party detoured from the Rainbow trail to visit Inscription House ruins in a cave high up in the sandstone cliffs. Shallow steps have been cut in the rock for climbers. Below—Sierra hikers along Rainbow trail. Andy Andrews, leader of the party is second from the right.

lodge where our third night's camp was scheduled.

Navajo mountain is the landmark for travelers in this part of Arizona. *Nat-sis-an* the Indians call it. Its summit is 10,416 feet high, and when we were there it was capped with snow. Some of the Sierrans had planned to climb it, but they had failed to bring their skis, and the natives advised against it.

Rainbow lodge, where Katherine and Bill Wilson furnish meals and lodging and pack and saddle animals for visitors to the bridge, is at the southern base of the mountain.

Every one who has traveled the remote desert trails of the Southwest is acquainted with Katherine and Bill. She knows human nature and all the arts of the hostess. Bill knows mules. They say he can actually talk their language. The Wilsons are a perfect team for this far outpost. Half the pleasure of a trip to the bridge is the evening spent in the cozy lodge of the Wilsons.

We camped that night among the rocks and piñons and junipers near the lodge. We sat around a huge fire. There were stories and songs, but we were mostly interested in plans for the 14-mile trek to Rainbow arch. Bill Wilson told us about the trail, and Andy gave final instructions for the early morning start. Bedrolls and food for seven meals, including such cooking utensils as were necessary, were to be stacked at the corral ready for the packers by seven a. m. The load limit for each person was 30 pounds.

John Wetherill and Charles L. Bern-

heimer first scouted the possibility of a trail to Rainbow bridge between 1921 and 1924. John was guide and skipper on the four expeditions they made into this unexplored country. Bernheimer supplied the finances. They mapped a route and some work was done on it.

But the trail in use today was built for the most part by Hubert and S. I. Richardson. Later Hubert bought out his brother's interest. He erected the lodge and built much of the road that connects it with Inscription House trading post.

It was a pioneering job that called for some capital and a great deal of faith. But the Richardsons had what the task required. It has not been a paying investment so far—but if you stop at Hubert's trading post in Cameron and ask him about it, he will laugh and tell you he had a lot of fun doing it, and he doesn't regret the gamble.

The Sierra campers, each little group around its own campfire, were eating their bacon and hot cakes when the sun came up Tuesday morning. By seven o'clock the duffle bags were piled high around the corral, and the hikers were strung out along the trail. Seventy-two members of the party were walking, and six had arranged for saddle horses. Among the walkers were three men nearly 70 years of age and several women past 50.

For a trip of this kind, the Sierran's rule of the trail is simple—every member according to his own wishes. The seasoned hikers may travel as fast as they want to go. The short-rests-and-lots-of-them walkers may take their time. The botanists are

free to botanize as they go along, and it is a field day for the camera clan. And since a majority of those who go on these trips are city dwellers, how they do enjoy the freedom of such an outing.

Leaving Rainbow lodge, the well-defined trail skirts for miles around the base of Navajo mountain. The elevation at the lodge is 6400 feet, at the bridge 3750. But it is not down hill all the way. There are deep gorges to cross: To-hi-ling canyon, Horse canyon, and a third which none of the wranglers could name. We would zig-zag down to the floor of the canyon, then climb the steep trail up the opposite wall—and as far as elevation is concerned would be just about where we started. There is no monotony on such a trail.

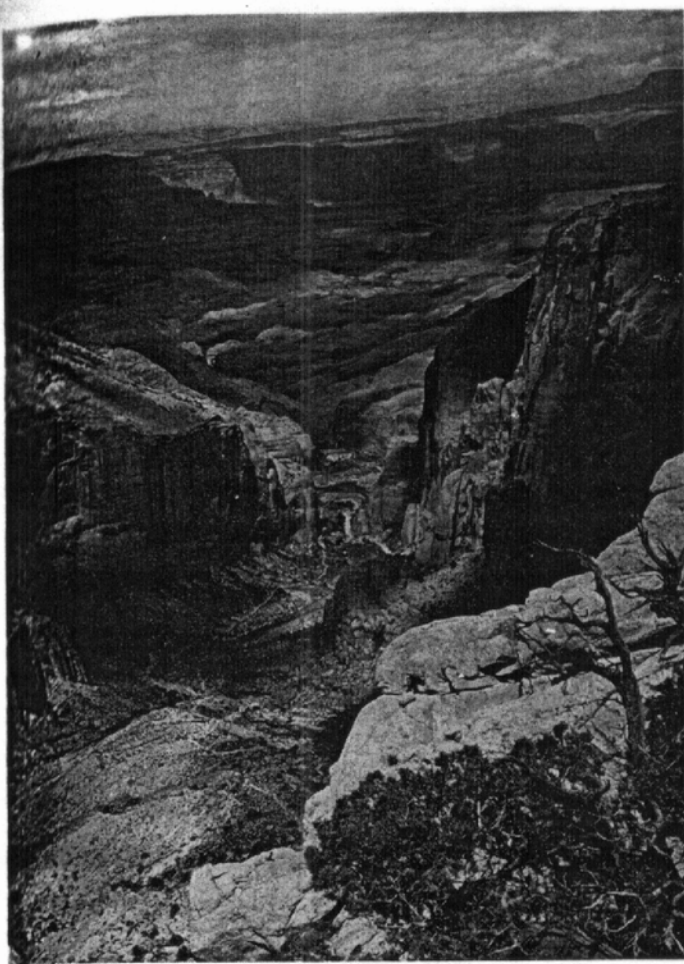
A mile and a half from the lodge we passed a slab of rock that marks the Utah boundary. Rainbow bridge is accessible only from Arizona, except for those who brave the Colorado's rapids and come downstream to the mouth of Bridge canyon in a boat. This is one place where you can cross a state boundary without having to prove that you are an American citizen and have no white mice in your luggage.

Two hours after leaving the lodge we had crossed the intervening canyons and reached the great talus slope that extends 2000 feet down to the floor of Cliff canyon.

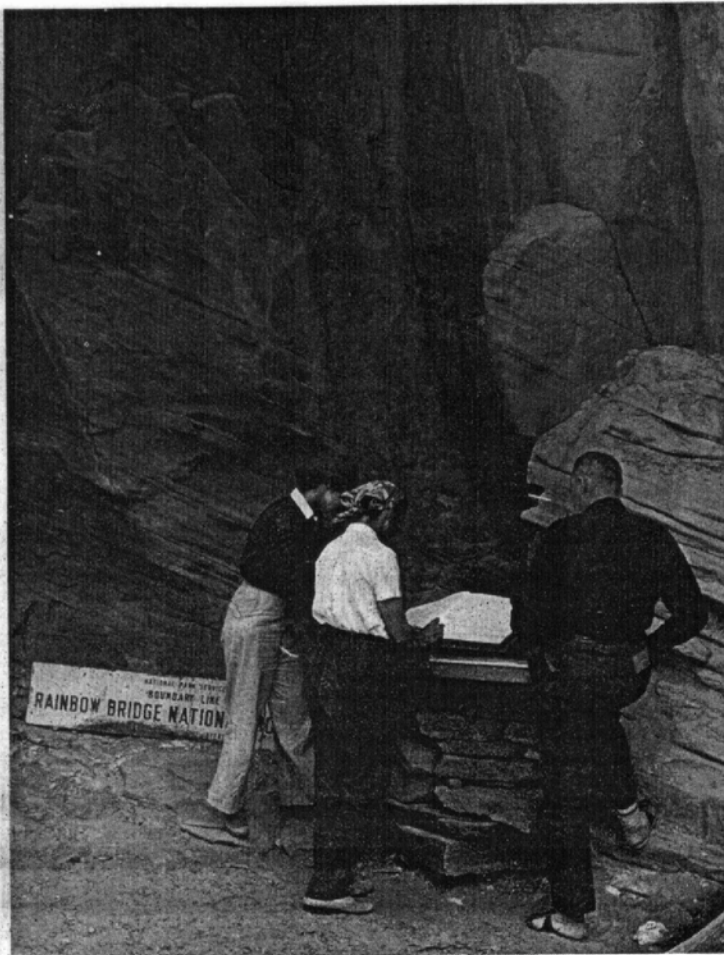
From this point, what a panorama! If you can imagine the coloring of Bryce canyon combined with the sheer rugged majesty of Grand Canyon you have a picture that approaches the view from Rainbow trail high up on the side of Navajo



Some of the hikers climbed to the top of the bridge. The arch is reached by roping down from an adjacent dome. White arrow indicates one of the climbers on the 50-foot rope-down.



From high upon the side of Navajo mountain looking down 2000 feet to the floor of Cliff canyon. The trail zig-zags down the mountain side and may be seen winding along the bottom of the canyon below.



Over 3400 visitors have signed this register beneath the arch of Rainbow bridge, the first being Dr. Byron Cummings and John Wetherill, first white men to record their visit here in August 1909.

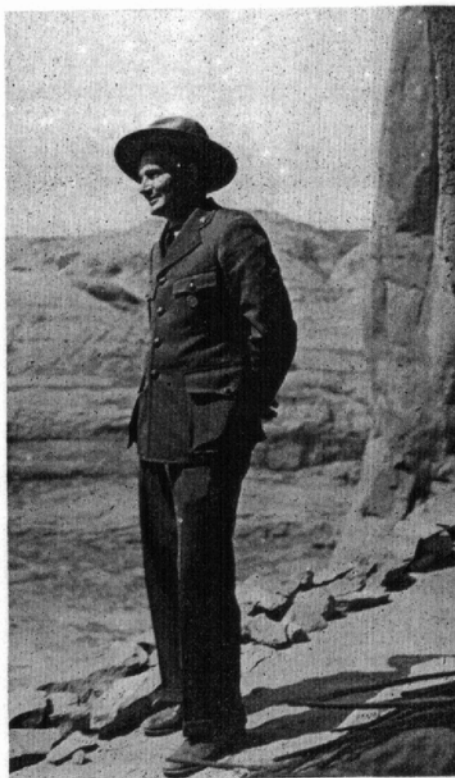
mountain. It is a landscape of cliffs and turrets and canyons and domes as far as the eye can see—all daubed and streaked and splashed with the pastels of the painted desert.

When you have viewed from this point the vast jumble of sandstone erosions that lie between Navajo mountain and the Colorado river you will understand why the white man did not find Rainbow bridge until 1909. Also, you will understand why a bronze plaque has been placed on the canyon wall near the bridge honoring the Piute Indian boy Nasjah Begay who guided the first party through that wild labyrinth of stone to the place where the arch is located.

A slender white line is visible far down on the floor of Cliff canyon. That is our trail but it takes a lot of zigging and zagging to get down to it.

We found water seeping from the sands in the bottom of the gorge, the first opportunity we had had since leaving the lodge to replenish our canteens. It was

Jimmy Brewer, custodian of Inscription House ruins for the National Park Service.



noon when we reached there and we ate our lunch beside the cool stream that runs between vertical sandstone walls.

During the morning trip our view was always down, to gorgeous scenery below. But for the rest of the day we traveled between high cliff walls, looking up on either side to fantastic forms fashioned by erosion and weather, and decorated with water-stain patterns of strange design.

Sometimes the stream would disappear in the sands, but farther below it would come to the surface again. Our trail wound back and forth across the creekbed. Flowers were just beginning to blossom. Wild onion and loco weed were most common. If you are not acquainted with these flowers, do not be prejudiced against them by their names. Loco weed has a lovely purple blossom—and you don't have to eat it. The little lavender flower of the onion is most fragrant.

This was my first acquaintance with wild onion, and I picked a couple of blossoms for their perfume. But that was a mistake. The broken stems also have a perfume of a different character—and it was hours before I got the odor of onions off my hands. Wild onion belongs

by the side of the trail where Nature put it.

When we had gone down Cliff canyon perhaps two miles we came to a little meadow — the junction where Redbud canyon enters Cliff canyon. There are two abandoned Navajo hogans here, and on a nearby rock wall are ancient inscriptions, evidently incised there before the Navajo invaded this region.

We left Cliff canyon at this point and followed the upstream course of the Redbud territory to our right. The season was early, but in a sheltered cove we saw three of the Redbud trees in blossom. If you will imagine a young apricot tree with crimson flowers you have an approximate picture of the Redbud. It is a lovely decoration for this grim-walled canyon.

The pass at the head of Redbud canyon is through a narrow crevice. There is a steep climb over a sandy hump, and then the trail drops down to a narrow passageway that leads out into Bridge canyon. From here the route follows the floor of the canyon downstream to the place where the giant arch spans the creek.

The canyon is so narrow and the walls so high we were in shade much of the time despite the fact that it was early afternoon.

Some distance upstream from Rainbow bridge the trail climbs out of the bottom of the gorge and contours around the sidewall to a little mesa where there is a spring, and here Bill Wilson has established a terminal camp for his pack trains. The bridge is less than a mile below.

Some of us decided to continue downstream along the floor of the canyon. This route is not passable to pack animals, but we had little difficulty scrambling over

the rocks and detouring the pools of water.

One of my companions suddenly exclaimed, "There it is!" I looked up and saw Rainbow bridge almost overhead. I had no idea it was so close. I can understand the thrill Dr. Cummings and John Wetherill felt when first they caught sight of that great arch. It is so big, so symmetrical, so colorful as to leave one gasping for words.

There's a magic tonic in that bridge. Seven hours on such a trail is a long hike for people who work in offices and classrooms and shops — and we were tired when we reached the arch. But there was little evidence of it. Before sundown the rocks and ledges around the bridge were swarming with Sierrans — signing the register, taking pictures, climbing difficult walls, exploring the possibilities of an ascent to the top of the arch.

Snow-capped Navajo peak in the background provided a striking backdrop for the photographers. It is a picture that could not be gotten later in the season.

We were to camp that night on a rocky bench above the bridge, near the Wilson camp. Bill Wilson, who had remained behind with the pack train, rode into camp about dusk with the report that the animals with our bedding and food would be very late.

To transport the huge load of dunnage for this record crowd of visitors, it was necessary to recruit extra animals from the Navajo. Those Indian ponies are never too well fed, and are temperamentally unfitted for packing purposes. Probably for the same reason that a Navajo Indian would never make a good hod-carrier. They are creatures of the wild. But they

were the only stock available — so Bill made the best of it.

The mules came through on schedule — but the Indian ponies were still arriving at midnight, and some of the food and bedding never did reach this camp.

But Bill Wilson was equal to the emergency. There was a well-stocked commissary at the packer's camp in a nearby cove. Wilson built a blazing fire, rolled out three big dutch ovens and numerous cans of corn and beans and tomatoes — and by 10 o'clock that night was serving mulligan and biscuits to relay after relay of hungry Sierrans. Bill made the biscuits himself — and no wrangler ever did a better job. There was ample bedding in storage at the camp for those whose sleeping bags did not arrive.

For the Sierrans all this was a gay adventure. A huge campfire was built and while the hikers awaited their turn in the breadline they sang and told stories and planned the things they would do tomorrow.

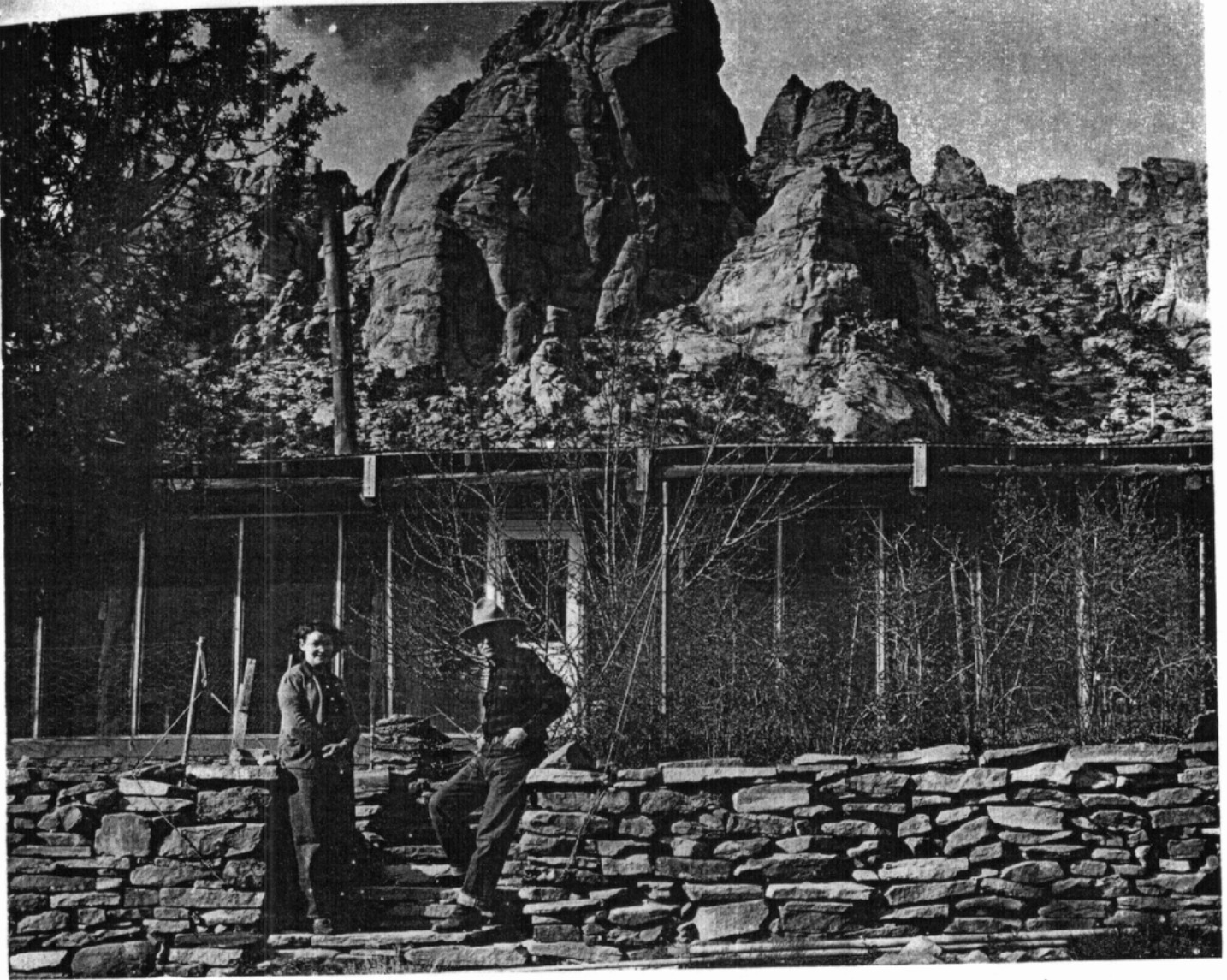
Including the packers there were nearly 100 persons in camp. By midnight Skipper Bill Wilson and Andy Andrews had everyone fed and bedded down for the night.

Various excursions were planned for the second day at Rainbow. Ropes had been brought along and one group was to climb the arch of the bridge. Others, including Superintendent Frank A. Kittridge of Grand Canyon national park who had joined the hiking party at the lodge, wanted to walk the six miles down Bridge canyon to the Colorado river.

I joined the climbing party. Following the usual route, we went downstream a



It required many pack animals to carry bedrolls and grub to the night camp at Rainbow bridge for the 78 members of the Sierra party. The wranglers in the background are Navajo Indians.



Katherine and Bill Wilson in front of their Rainbow lodge at the foot of Navajo mountain.

quarter of a mile below the bridge, then worked our way up a sandstone wall on the south side of the canyon. It was comparatively easy going until we reached a vertical pitch 20 feet high. Here shallow holes had been cut in the rock by previous climbers. The ascent was not especially difficult but a rope belayed from above was used by most of the party as a safety measure.

From that point it was an easy walk over smooth sandstone to the dome of the buttress which flanks the south end of the Rainbow arch. This dome is higher than the bridge, and separated from it by a narrow crevice. To reach the end of the bridge span it is necessary to go down an almost vertical 50-foot wall into the crevice.

In 1927 a group of climbers from the Plaindealer in Cleveland, Ohio, cut 30 toe and finger holes in the vertical wall and this is the route used by subsequent climbers to reach the top of the bridge. An iron belay pin has been drilled into the top of the dome for roping purposes.

The register on top of the bridge is a tin can weighted down with a couple of loose rocks. The procedure is to write your name on any slip of paper you happen to have in your possession and stuff it in the can. I judged there were 25 or 30 names on record, and our party added a dozen more.

It was nearly noon when we returned to the base—and there I had the unexpected pleasure of meeting Norman Nevills and a party of voyagers navigating the Colorado from Mexican Hat, Utah, to Lees ferry. They had camped at the mouth of Bridge canyon the previous night and walked the six miles up to the bridge. Other members of the party were Tommy and Evelyn Box and T. Allen, Jr., and Hazel and Lynn Lyman.

"I told them we would probably be the first visitors to register at Rainbow bridge this season," Norman confessed, "and when we arrived we found hikers on every rock and ledge."

Early in the afternoon we took the back trail toward the lodge. The return was to

be made in two stages. We hiked the seven miles back over Redbud pass and camped that night in the meadow where the old hogans were located, at the junction of Cliff and Redbud canyons.

By noon the following day the advance guard of the excursion party began arriving at Rainbow lodge. The others followed during the afternoon and that night Katherine Wilson served a bountiful dinner to the entire party. She even baked pies for the mob—such pies as one would hardly expect to find far off in that remote corner of the northern Arizona desert.

Yes, the Sierrans were tired that night. Twenty-eight miles of hiking over such terrain, plus many extra miles of climbing and detouring for a majority of the party, is a big assignment for folks whose normal routine seldom includes anything more strenuous than hoeing the flower garden or changing a tire on the automobile. But the memory of a trek to Rainbow bridge will bring a glow of satisfaction to those who were on the trip long after the sore muscles have been forgotten.