

ARTI-FACTS

The Newsletter of the Idyllwild Area Historical Society

Fall 2006

Preserving the History of Idyllwild and neighboring communities in the San Jacinto Mountains

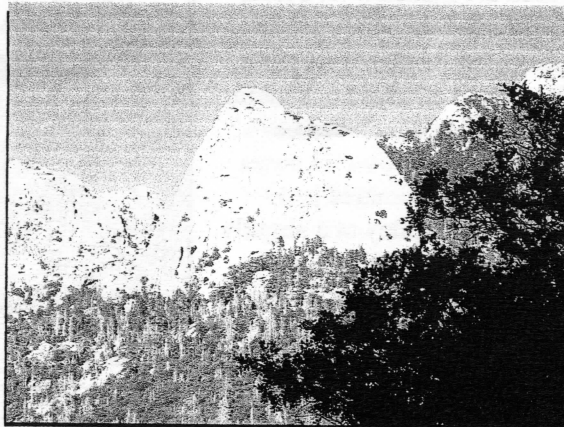
TAHQUITZ — A ROCK CLIMBER'S WORLD CLASS CHALLENGE

By Ben Killingsworth

Without a doubt, the most easily recognized and identified object in the vicinity of Idyllwild is Lily Rock, better known to experienced and novice rock climbers alike as Tahquitz Rock. In fact, it is well known by rock climbers the world over as one of the premier rock climbing locations in the world.

To many of us that information comes as somewhat of a surprise, perhaps even disbelief. Those of us lucky enough to live within sight

of it appreciate the grandeur of the giant boulder, but world famous? Well, as a rock climbing friend of



European origin put it, "If you were to walk down a sidewalk in Paris and men-

tion Tahquitz Rock to a rock climbing enthusiast, he or she would know all about it; its climbing history,

the relative difficulty of the many established routes to the top, as well as the names of some of its more famous climbers." Rising to a height of about 8000 feet above sea level from its base about 1000 feet below,

Tahquitz Rock has a long history, indeed. That is, if
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DON'T FORGET THE HOME TOUR ON OCTOBER 21st 10:00 am to 4:00 pm

Most of the hard work is done. Five beautiful homes were found, their owners agreed to participate, photos were taken, detailed information about each home was gathered, ads for the Tour Book were sold to local businesses, articles were written for the Tour Book, press releases were distributed, a banner to be displayed over North Circle was made, tickets were printed, Idyllwild Life Magazine included a wonderful spread in their latest issue, the Tour guide was expertly designed and printed, and volunteers to serve as docents and parking assistants were recruited.

Now it's up to you to enjoy the fruits of our labors, but hurry. Advance ticket sales are up this year, so don't get left out.

Tickets can be purchased in advance at Faux Ever After, The Grey Squirrel, the Pony Express and the at the Museum on a weekend.

On the day of the event, get your tickets at the tent in front of what's left of the tree monument at 9:30 am.

CURATOR LYNND A HART MOVES ON



On July 1, 2006, Lynnda Hart retired from her role as curator and museum director for the Idyllwild Area Historical Society: Thus ended an era.

As the society's founding curator, for the past six years Lynnda has personified IAHS. She was our driving force, our public face, and the genius behind our museum. Quite simply, without her leadership the society would not exist today.

Uniquely blending the aesthetic sense of an interior designer, the persuasiveness of a sales
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MEMBERSHIP UPDATE

Ten new members joined the Historical Society between June 11, 2006 and August 8, 2006

Individual

Francis Blake, Fullerton, CA
Alexandra Wagman, Florence, CA
Kate Kramer, Hemet, CA

Business: Ralph Hoetger, Idyllwild, CA

Family

Doris Valentine, South Lake Tahoe, CA
Lynn Underwood, La Mesa, CA
Carol and Gene Rice, Idyllwild, CA
William and Annette Cooper, Idyllwild, CA

Sponsor: Betty McElfresh, San Diego, CA

Welcome to you all!

TAHQUITZ ROCK

(Continued from page 1)

you consider 100 million years a long time, because that's when it was formed as the result of the intrusion of plutonic rock creating what is now referred to as the Southern California Batholith.

Plutons, incidentally, consist of molten magma, which more or less floats upward from deep within the earth's crust, and as it cools forms a huge expanse of granite rock below the surface of the earth. Through the process of erosion over a period of millions of years, the rock becomes exposed, forming a batholith.

Although geographers define a batholith as an exposed area of granite rock at least 100 square kilometers in size, many, including the Southern California Batholith, cover thousands

of square miles, in this case reaching from Riverside County to the southern tip of Baja California.

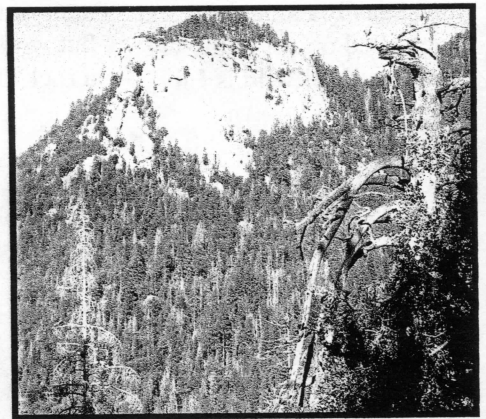
Half Dome in Yosemite National Park is another example of a huge rock, which is part of a different batholith.

By the way, the terms pluton and plutonic rock are named after Pluto, the Roman God of the Underworld.

Apparently, while he was at it, Pluto also created another rock in our area, Suicide Rock, which has become an almost equally well known climbing attraction. Situated just across Strawberry Valley at a slightly lower elevation, Suicide Rock attracted the attention of early Tahquitz Rock climbers, including Pat Callis and Charlie Raymond.

Between 1966 and 1968 Callis and Raymond established about thirty routes, and in 1970 reported the results of their efforts to rock climbers throughout the world. Since then Sui-

cide Rock has grown in popularity to the extent that it often plays host to more climbers than does Tahquitz, primarily because of the greater vari-



ety of routes, ranging from very difficult to relatively easy, that Suicide offers. The number of routes had reached over 100 by 1979 and has steadily increased to about 300 today.

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LYNNDA HART

(Continued from page 1)

man, the physical strength of a construction worker, the local knowledge and connections of a long-term resident, and the boundless energy of a gray squirrel, Lynnda Hart shaped one of the Hills most successful organizations

Back in the summer of 2000, when some Idyllwild residents began to worry about losing historic

to worry about losing historical buildings and the artifacts and memories of older citizens, they floated the idea of a society dedicated to preserving and sharing the rich history of the San Jacinto Mountains. This was hardly a new idea. Such a group had existed here in the 1960s, but soon faltered and died.

But this time there was a Lynnda Hart to step forward and crystallize the vision of a museum as the focal point for telling Idyllwild's story.

Without prior museum experience, she volunteered for the role of curator and pursued it with her characteristic drive. Our mission became her life.

Almost miraculously – unless you know Lynnda Hart – within 18 months of its corporate establishment, our fledgling society found, funded, and bought the present museum property. By then, the group of 34 who attended the first organizing meeting had exploded to 404 members.

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TAHQUITZ ROCK

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Never-the-less, it was Tahquitz that attracted the first serious climbers, beginning in the early 1900's after two hikers, Jim Smith and Mary Jane Edwards, while descending from Tahquitz Peak noted its potential as a first rate climbing spot.

Smith returned later that year accompanied by four other members of the Sierra Club Rock Climbing Section and together they established four climbing routes on the rock's west side. By 1943 the number of routes had grown to twelve, by 1960 there were sixty, and by 1979 were over ninety routes established. Today are there in the neighborhood of 200 such routes.

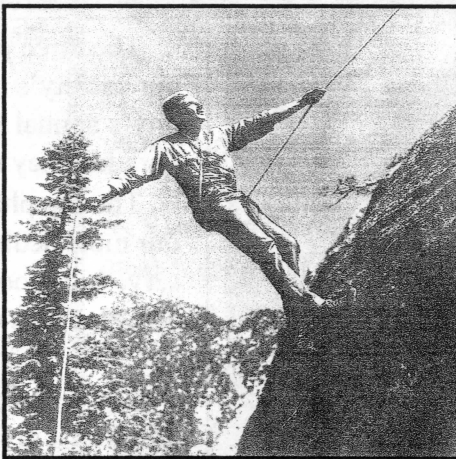
In the early 1950's climbers Royal Robbins, considered by many to be the premier rock climber, and Don Wilson collaborated on the development of a new decimal system of rating rock climbing routes according to difficulty. Before their innovation, technical rock climbs, meaning a climb requiring the use of ropes, anchors, protection and belays, were rated as easy, moderate, or hard. Although the system is now referred to by most as the Yosemite Decimal System, it was, in fact, developed on Tahquitz by Robbins and Wilson, and many believe it should properly be called the Tahquitz Decimal System.

Two other Tahquitz climbers of note are Chuck Wilts and Glen Dawson, who also made significant contributions to local climbing lore.

In any case, the decimal system begins at 1 (which is akin to walking on level ground) and ends at 5. However rock climbs which fall into the 5th category are further divided by an open ended ranking beginning with 5.0, the easiest, and ranging to the most difficult climb yet rated of 5.14.

Although the first rendition of the rating system for the 5th category ended at 5.9, over the years climbers

became aware that some rock climbs rated at that level were much harder than others, and so finally someone had the courage to rate a climb above that level.



Free Climbing Tahquitz Rock
Photo courtesy of Vivian Mendenhall

Of course, all climbs at the 5.0 and above level are classified as technical rock climbs using methods first established by the Rock Climbing Section of the Sierra Club and put into practice on Tahquitz in 1936, some 15 to 20 years before the decimal system was established.

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LYNNDA HART

(Continued from page 2)

Lynnda immediately recruited an eager corps of volunteers, first to remodel a garage and shed into a modern, functional office, then to transform a 1920s cabin into a charming, beautiful museum. The new office was occupied early in 2003, and by October of that year we celebrated the museum's grand opening. An instant attraction for Idyllwild, it has since drawn over 3,600 visitors each year.

Today our membership has grown to 726, scattered across the country. Close to 75 volunteers keep us going, 40 of them serving as museum docents, a dozen as governing board members, and the rest maintaining buildings and grounds, seeking photos and artifacts for our collection, or making periodic events like the home tour and ice cream social so

successful.

Lynnda often said that IAHS has been the experience of a lifetime for her, but she expected the time would come to move on. Once her husband, Don, retired, opportunities opened to travel and pursue new interests together.

Lynnda Hart is one of a kind, exquisitely equipped to create and develop a new organization like ours. Now she has embarked on a new journey, and the Idyllwild Area Historical Society remains her thriving legacy. She set the standard for the rest of us, as we continue to preserve and share the rich history of these mountains.

With lasting gratitude we wish Lynnda and Don all the best for this next phase of their life.

MUSEUM BUSINESS UPDATE

Things are looking up. Compared to last year, for the period June 1st through September 4th, our stats are up in almost every category.

The number of visitors increased 44 percent, from 1335 to 1925, while revenue increased from \$2474 in 2005 to \$3158 in 2006, a 27 percent increase.

Retail and ticket sales were also up substantially, increasing from \$1446 to \$2140, or 48 percent over last year.

Our busiest week (Thursday through Sunday) was Labor Day with 275 museum visitors, followed by the Fourth of July with 268, and the Jazz Festival with 151 visitors.

We now expect over 4000 visitors during 2006.

The only real downside was a slight drop in donations, from \$922 in 2005 to \$879 in 2006, which doesn't sound too bad until taking into account the large increase in the number of visitors, the end result being a 33 percent decrease in the amount placed in the donation jar, per visitor.

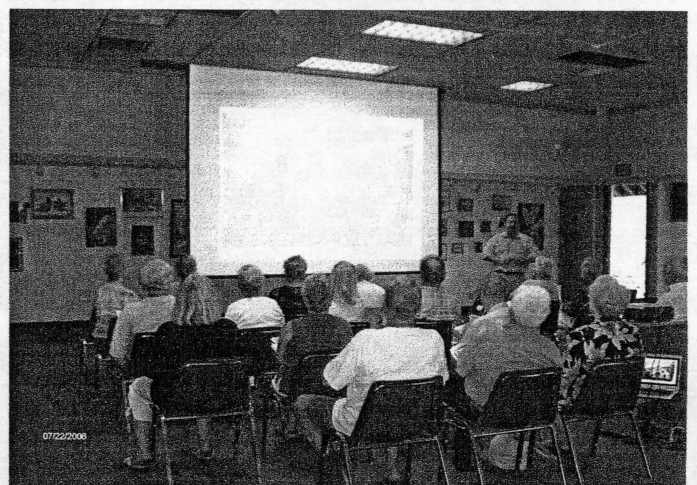
OUR VOLUNTEERS IN ACTION



The three photos in the left column illustrate our society's participation in one of our community's annual highlights, the Independence Day Parade. They made us all look good, didn't they.

The top photo in this column shows three of our most dedicated volunteers as they prepared to serve big scoops of ice cream to all comers. The occasion was our second annual Ice Cream Social.

In the bottom photo a group of our members are shown giving their undivided attention to our Annual Meeting speaker, Steve Lech, who gave an interesting talk about his latest book about the history of Riverside County.



IDYLLWILD AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY BOARD OF DIRECTORS

OFFICERS

President	Marcia Donnell
Vice President	Carolyn Levitski
Secretary	Adele Voell
Treasurer	Bob Smith

DIRECTORS

Corrinne Brown
Nancy Fletcher
Joe Hart
Nanci Killingsworth
Sue Miller
Shirl Reid
Lynn Voorheis
Kay Wanner

ADVISORY BOARD

Harry Bubb
Kay Cenicerros
Craig Coopersmith
Walter Parks
Kent Steele

COMMITTEE CHAIRS

Museum Collection

Shirl Reid, Assistant Curator

Home Tour

Nanci Killingsworth

Hospitality

Linda and Larry Turner

Membership

Adele Voell and Shirl Reid

Newsletter

Ben Killingsworth

Website

Francoise Frigola

TAHQUITZ ROCK (continued from page 3)

Not only are the climbs rated according to difficulty, they are given names, such as The Vampire, The Edge, Paisano Overhang, The Open Book, Super Fly and Gates of Delirium, to mention just a few.

One of the more intriguing aspects of Tahquitz is the Cahuilla Indian legend that provided its name.

Tahquitz, according to the legend, was, and for all we know still is, a supernatural being who controlled thunder and lightning, earthquakes and meteors. He is said to reside in and around the rock and sometimes kidnaps young people to serve as his slaves.

Legend has it that when he is displeased rumblings can be heard emanating from the rock. Indeed, many climbers have attested to hearing these sounds, and while some say it is only the result of small earthquakes, or perhaps just the wind blowing through rock crevices, until we hear from Tahquitz himself, the truth will continue to elude us.

MEA CULPA

OK, the newsletter is late, but it only proves, once again, that Murphy's Law is alive and well.

"What can go wrong will go wrong," he said, and he was right, I'm here to tell you.

First, as the newsletter deadline approached, I got sick. Nothing serious, so after a few doses of high test antibiotics I was back in business, but the clock was ticking.

Then it happened. Apparently I had passed on my illness to my desktop computer. At first it was just a few coughs, but it quickly developed into something more serious. Alas, after a short struggle my desktop computer died.

My new computer is still on the way, but, obviously, I managed to eventually get the job done with my seldom used and poorly equipped laptop computer.

Ben Killingsworth, Editor

THE BOTTOM LINE

Truth be told, the success of the Idyllwild Area Historical Society depends in large part on the dedication of a relatively small group of its members who devote innumerable hours performing a variety of indispensable duties. Yes, the money donated by its almost 800 members is extremely important, also. Without it and the money raised from the Home Tour and a few other events, along with the help of an occasional grant, the Society would not exist, but neither would it exist without the passionate and unselfish support of its volunteers. As noted elsewhere in this newsletter, the IAHS is one of the most successful non-profit organizations on the Hill, something every member should be proud of.

MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION

Benefits of Membership

- Quarterly Newsletter
- Field Trips
- Gatherings
- Volunteer Activities
- Support of local historical research and preservation
- Support of Museum
- 10% discount in Museum Shop

Membership Application

Name(s) _____ Address _____

Email Address _____ Telephone _____

Membership is for: (Check) Self A gift

If a gift, your name _____ Address _____

Membership categories:

- \$15 Individual
- \$25 Family
- \$35 Contributing
- \$35 Business
- \$100 Sponsor
- \$500 Patron
- \$750 Corporate
- \$1000 Founder's Circle—Qualifies donor for lifetime membership with name on plaque in museum. May also be achieved by contributing \$100 per year for 10 years

After completing membership application cut out along dotted lines and mail along with your check to:

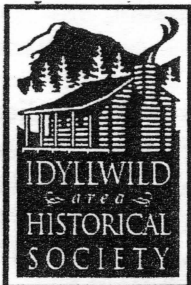
Idyllwild Area Historical Society, PO Box 3320, Idyllwild, CA 92549

The Museum is located at 54470 North Circle Dr, Idyllwild Tel: (951) 659-2717

We're also on the web at www.Idyllwildareahistoricalsociety.org

PO Box 3320

Idyllwild, CA 92549



Don't forget the Home Tour on October 21st

Non-profit
Organization
U.S. Postage

PAID

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