NPS Form 10-900a
(8-86)

OMB No. 1024-0018

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section _____ Page ___

SUPPLEMENTARY LISTING RECORD

NRIS Reference Number: 03000056 Date Listed: 2/21/2003

Camp 4
Property Name

Mariposa
County

CA
State

N/A
Multiple Name

This property is listed in the National Register of Historic Places in accordance with the attached nomination documentation subject to the following exceptions, exclusions, or amendments, notwithstanding the National Park Service certification included in the nomination documentation.

Signature of the Keeper

2/21/03
Date of Action

Amended Items in Nomination:

Certification/Level of Significance:

This property has been evaluated and documented at the *national* level of significance.

Significance:

Comparative Sites. The historic Camp 9 site in Yosemite National Park, which sheltered the early pre-WWII pioneers of Yosemite rock climbing, lacks the level of physical integrity retained by Camp 4 and is associated with a different period of significance within the theme of recreation/entertainment and American rock climbing history.

These revisions were confirmed with the National Park Service FPO office.

DISTRIBUTION:
National Register property file
Nominating Authority (without nomination attachment)

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
SUMMARY COMMENTS

NATIONAL SIGNIFICANCE
PROPERTY LESS THAN 50 YEARS OLD

Camp 4
Yosemite National Park, Mariposa County, California

Camp 4 is eligible for listing in the National Register at the national level under Criterion A in the area of Recreation/Entertainment for its significant association with the growth and development of rock climbing in the Yosemite Valley during the "golden years" of pioneer mountaineering. During the period 1947 to 1970, the Yosemite Valley region was an exceptionally important center of rock climbing activity. Activities and technological advancements and skills developed here made significant contributions at the regional, national and international level within the sport. Camp 4 was a pivotal element within mountaineering and rock climbing activity in the park. Within the mountaineering community knowledge, skills, and philosophical concepts were largely passed on through word of mouth and hands-on climbing activity among active participants. Few if any documented manuals or written guidebooks were available to guide early aspiring climbers. As a result, the camp grounds and base camps at important climbing locations achieved important roles beyond just the provision of overnight accommodations, serving as vital meeting grounds for participants and significant focal points for training activities, ascent planning, distribution of information and equipment, and the comradeship and esprit-de-corps that defined the early days and history of the movement.

The documentation presented makes a strong case for the "exceptional significance" of Yosemite National Park within the context of modern mountaineering and rock climbing history. Sufficient scholarly recognition has been developed within the field to ascribe Yosemite's pivotal role in the development of new techniques, equipment, and climbing philosophies during what is referred to as the "golden years of rock climbing" after WWII. In addition, scholars have documented the importance of rock climbing and mountaineering to the history of outdoor recreation in California and the United States, in particular the developmental history of Yosemite and the Sierra Mountain area.

Paul R. Lusignan
Historian, National Register of Historic Places
National Park Service
2/21/03

Z:\nr\lusi\camp4list

NPS Form 10-900
(Oct. 1990)

OMB No. 10024-0018

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determination for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and area of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900A). Use typewriter, word processor or computer to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Camp 4
other name/site number Sunnyside Campground

2. Location

street & number Northside Drive, Yosemite National Park ☐ not for publication

city or town N/A ☒ vicinity

state California code CA county Mariposa code 043 zip code 95389

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this ✓ nomination ___ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property ✓ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant ___ nationally ___ statewide ___ locally. (___ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title — Date: January 8, 2003

National Park Service
State of Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property X meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria. (___ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title — Date: 6/18/02

California Office of Historic Preservation
State of Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

Signature of the Keeper — Date of Action

entered in the National Register. ___ See continuation sheet. — 2/21/03

determined eligible for the National Register. ___ See continuation Sheet.

determined not eligible for the National Register.

removed from the National Register.

other, (explain:)

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply)

- [ ] private
- [ ] public-local
- [ ] public-State
- [x] public-Federal

Category of Property
(Check only one box)

- [ ] building(s)
- [ ] district
- [x] site
- [ ] structure
- [ ] object

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

	Contributing	Noncontributing	
buildings	1		building
sites	1		sites
structures	5		structures
objects			objects
Total	1	6	

Name of related multiple property listing
(Enter N/A if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

None

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

RECREATION & Culture: outdoor recreation
SOCIAL: meeting place
LANDSCAPE: natural features

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

RECREATION & CULTURE: outdoor recreation
SOCIAL: meeting place
LANDSCAPE: natural features

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

N/A

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

N/A

Narrative Description
(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

(See continuation sheet.)

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria
(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- [x] **A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- [ ] **B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- [ ] **C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- [ ] **D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations
(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- [ ] **A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- [ ] **B** removed from its original location.
- [ ] **C** a birthplace or grave
- [ ] **D** a cemetery.
- [ ] **E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- [ ] **F** a commemorative property.
- [x] **G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance
(Enter categories from instructions)

RECREATION/ENTERTAINMENT

Period of Significance

1947-1970

Significant Dates

N/A

Significant Person
(Complete if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

N/A

Narrative Statement of Significance
(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

(See continuation sheet.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

(See Continuation Sheet.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- [ ] preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67)
- [ ] previously listed in the National Register
- [x] previously determined eligible by the National Register
- [ ] designated a National Historic Landmark
- [ ] recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #
- [ ] recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #

Primary location of additional data:

- [ ] State Historic Preservation Office
- [ ] Other State Agency
- [x] Federal agency
- [ ] Local government
- [ ] University
- [ ] Other

Name of Repository:

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property:
Approximately 10-11 acres

UTM References
(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1 Zone 11 North, 4,179,984N, 270,635E
2 Zone 11 North, 4,180,080N, 270,544E
3 Zone 11 North, 4,180,207N, 270,606E
4 Zone 11 North, 4,180,287N, 270,749E
5 Zone 11 North, 4,180,076N, 270,779E

X See attached map

Verbal Boundary Description

The Camp 4 site encompasses an elliptically shaped area that extends roughly from Northside Drive north to the Valley Loop Trail at the foot of the talus slopes. Its eastern edge is formed generally by the rock-lined drainage and its western edge is the vicinity west of the search and rescue cabins. Beginning at the eastern margin of Kor Boulder, the boundary follows the drainage south and west along the canal to Northside Drive. It then runs west along the road, then turns north and follows the drainage immediately west of the search and rescue cabins (and Nixon Boulder) to the Valley Loop Trail. At that point, it wraps around Pratt Boulder and follows the trail to Kor Boulder. The boundaries embrace the lower (existing) and upper (historic) campground, as well as the major boulders—such as Wine Boulder and Columbia Boulder—and open, forested landscape that are the camp's character defining features. The boundary is delineated exactly on a topographical map using Global Positioning System technology included with this nomination. It should be consulted for park management, planning, and other purposes.

Boundary Justification

The boundary of the Camp 4 historic site represents the campground's core area of use during the period of significance (1947 to 1970). Historically, Camp 4's boundary was vague, primarily because the campground was informal and defined largely through use and the area's natural features. For this reason, preliminary studies suggested a larger area for Camp 4, encompassing the current parking lot and the Swan Slab area east of the site. However, further research and consultation show that construction of the parking lot and the popularity of the Swan Slab area for recreational climbing occurred after 1970, outside of the period of significance.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: David Louter, Ph.D. /Historian

organization:	National Park Service	date:	10/15/2001
street & number:	909 1st Ave	telephone:	206.220.4137
city or town:	Seattle State: WA	zip code:	98104

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A **7.5 minute USGS map** indicating the property's location.

A **sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

Additional Items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name
street & number telephone
city or town state zip code

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq.*).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

Camp 4 is located in the middle of the Yosemite Valley in Yosemite National Park. It is situated north of Northside Drive immediately west of Yosemite Lodge and north of the Leidig Meadow area. Yosemite Valley is seven miles long and one mile wide. And like the rest of the Valley floor, the campground lies at an elevation of approximately 4,000 feet, and is surrounded by granite cliffs that rise to elevations of 8,800 feet at Half Dome, 7,500 feet at El Capitan, and 7,200 feet at Glacier Point. Camp 4 is known for receiving the first rays of sunlight in this narrow and impressive landscape. Offering modest, designated campsites and camping facilities, the campground covers some 5-6 acres of the forested meadow area extending north of Northside Drive to the boulder-strewn talus slopes at the base of the Valley's steep walls. Although Camp 4 is bordered by forest to the west, a small deteriorated, non-functioning electrical power substation stands near the campground's southeast corner, and a gravel parking area abuts it immediately to the east.

During its historic period (1947-1970), Camp 4 earned national and international acclaim as the center of modern rock climbing. Yosemite climbers invented and developed the techniques and technology to ascend Yosemite's vertical walls; they invented big wall climbing. At the time, Camp 4 was an informal campground of picnic tables and drive-in campsites scattered across the gently sloping Valley floor. An elliptical roadway, leading from an entrance to the center of the campground from Northside Drive, provided access to the area. Although lightly developed, the campground was characterized by its landscape features, such as its canopy of ponderosa pine and oak trees and open space. Especially significant were the massive boulders that dot the campground--among them Columbia Boulder, Wine Boulder, Pratt Boulder, and Kor Boulder.

Beginning in the early 1970s, the National Park Service renovated the campground to regulate camping. Among other improvements, the agency turned the campground into a walk-in only area, designated 37 sites at the lower portion of the campground, implemented a camping fee, and replaced aging bathrooms with a single structure. It also added a kiosk and parking area to the eastern side of the campground, effectively replacing the old entrance from Northside Drive. By the 1980s, the agency had constructed a stone-lined drainage canal near the campground's eastern edge, and authorized the construction of two tent cabins (on two camp sites) for climbing search and rescue personnel. (The number would increase to five tent cabins by 2002.) Although climbers who had lived in Camp 4 during the 1960s declared that these changes ended the era of "laissez-faire" camping, Camp 4 (as the climbing community referred to Sunnyside) retained its place as the physical and spiritual center of rock climbing in Yosemite. At the turn of the 21st century, it continued to attract new generations of world-class climbers.

The historic site encompasses an area that is elliptical in shape. The site's boundaries extend roughly from Northside Drive north (its southern border) to the Valley Loop Trail at the foot of the talus slopes (its northern border), and from the rock-lined drainage (its eastern border) to the vicinity west of the search and rescue cabins (its western border). Beginning on its southern margin and in a clockwise direction, the boundary follows Northside Drive west, then turns north and follows the drainage immediately west of the search and rescue cabins to the Valley Loop Trail. From there, it wraps around Pratt Boulder and follows the trail (taking in the prominent boulders on the north side of the trail) to Kor Boulder. Finally, the boundary wraps around the eastern margin of Kor Boulder, follows the drainage south along the canal, and returns to Northside Drive. The site demarcated by these boundaries retains integrity of location, setting, feeling, association, and materials, despite the changes since 1970. While approximate, the boundaries are appropriate because they include the area

used during the historic period. The site contains not only the upper and lower portions of the campground, but most importantly, it embraces the campground's famous boulders. It is an area that is readily identifiable on the ground, because the boulders act as the site's physical and historical landmarks.

CONTRIBUTING RESOURCES

The entire area, nominated as a site, is considered a contributing resource.

NONCONTRIBUTING RESOURCES

Six large structures are noncontributing elements because the National Park Service constructed them after 1970 and they are therefore outside of the period of significance. These are:

- 1 bathroom, or comfort station.
- 5 Search and Rescue Cabins (canvas tents on wood platforms).

Summary

Camp 4 has integrity and is eligible for listing in the National Register under Criterion A in the area of Recreation/Entertainment for its significant association with the growth and development of rock climbing in the Yosemite Valley after World War II. From 1947 to 1970, Yosemite National Park played a pivotal role in the development of modern rock climbing and the years that define the era represent an exceptional period of significance. During this period, what climbers called the "golden age," the Yosemite Valley was at the epicenter of the evolution of climbing techniques and technology, as well as the evolution of beliefs about the best way to climb. Yosemite rock climbers invented big wall climbing, an activity that allowed them to ascend for the first time Yosemite Valley's vertical granite cliffs. Their accomplishments brought rock climbing into the modern age, and earned Yosemite Valley an international reputation as a climbing Mecca.

The methods developed here would affect climbing throughout the world. Although climbing took place above the Valley floor, Camp 4 served as the campground as well as the intellectual and social arena for Yosemite's expert climbers and climbing innovators. It was a meeting ground and focal point for training activities, ascent planning, the distribution of information and equipment, philosophical debates about climbing standards, and the comradeship and esprit-de-corps that defined the early days and history of the sport. Camp 4, then, is associated with the broader history of climbing; it is the place that best represents the evolution of modern rock climbing in both the minds of climbers and the general public.

Statement of Significance

With its soaring granite cliffs and isolated spires, the Yosemite Valley, centered in Yosemite National Park, has come to symbolize the national park idea and American ideas of nature. Beginning with upper-class tourists who were drawn to Yosemite's sublime grandeur in the mid-19th century, most stories about park patrons focus on their appreciation of the Valley's impressive landscape. Yosemite and other national parks have become famous for viewing scenic wonders from the comfort of a fine hotel or through the windshield of an automobile. Other tourists, however, appreciated the Valley for the opportunities it provided for a more direct contact with nature through rock climbing. Compared to auto tourists who dominated national parks in the 20th century, especially Yosemite, rock climbers were in the minority. Their experience with the park, though, was no less important than that of windshield tourists.

Although climbing in Yosemite had its roots in the mountaineering adventures of naturalists like John Muir, it was in the quarter century after World War II that advancements in climbing technology and technique placed Yosemite Valley at the forefront of modern climbing. At the time, the Valley's walls were among the most technically challenging in North America; they were also virtually untouched. To meet the challenges of the Valley's vertical walls—with their hard granite and vertical system of cracks—and notoriously hot weather, Yosemite climbers forged new kinds of pitons and developed other equipment that would offer protection on routes up the Valley's vertical frontier. In the process, these same climbers invented the activity of "big wall" climbing by pioneering multi-day routes up the Valley's steep rock faces. This new style of climbing was important not only for how but the way people climbed. Good style was also a matter of good ethics. Yosemite

climbers believed there was a right way to climb, and developed standards for the sport in which climbers should remove all protection afterwards. In doing so, they would leave the route in seemingly pristine condition for others to find.[1]

This attempt to impose an order on the sport revealed an effort to preserve and promote an ideal of climbing in which the landscape was not harmed and the inherent adventure of climbing was not diminished. Although climbers would debate the limits of technology in their ascents, they would not abandon its use altogether. Like other encounters with nature, especially through automobiles, climbing displayed the complex and often contradictory relationship modern Americans have with nature. Pitons and nylon ropes may have enabled climbers to appreciate the natural world, but pitons and ropes were also potentially the source of its destruction. It was one thing to climb safely; it was quite another to dominate the great walls with bolt ladders and other devices.

Although climbing took place above the Valley floor, Yosemite climbers made their home in the park's Camp 4. In the postwar era, Camp 4 was attractive to climbers because it was the only all-season campground in the Valley. More than casual resting place, Camp 4 soon became the center of the climbing community—or climbing "colony"—not just in Yosemite but in the world. Camp residents included Royal Robbins, Warren Harding, Yvon Chouinard, Chuck Pratt, and Jim Bridwell, all of whom were climbers with world-class reputations. They were the innovators who advanced climbing. They were the ones who charted new routes up Yosemite's walls, and they were the ones who invented new techniques and equipment to make those climbs successful. They also began to promote climbing as a sport by publicizing their feats and by initiating a number entrepreneurial efforts, including Yvon Chouinard's Great Pacific Iron Works and Patagonia®, Wayne Merry's Yosemite Climbing School, and Royal Robbins's Rock Craft.

In the twenty-five years after World War II, Yosemite was the epicenter in the evolution of climbing techniques and technology, as well as the evolution of beliefs about the best way to climb. It was a period that climbers called the "golden age" of Yosemite climbing. During that time, the Valley's major walls would be climbed, and the park would earn an international reputation as a climbing Mecca. Thus besides its function as a campground, Camp 4 served as a kind of social arena for unaffiliated climbers who resided there for extended periods of time. Cohabitation shaped a sense of community and forged relationships that were crucial to the innovations and outdoor recreational business ventures that emerged from Yosemite in the last half century. In these ways, Camp 4 provides a window to the history of climbing.

Exploration and Inspiration: Early Mountaineering in Yosemite

[1] Joseph E. Taylor III, "The Moral Economy of Bolts: Ethics, Egos, and Economics in Yosemite Valley," paper presented at the Pacific Coast Branch of the American Historical Association, Kanapali, Hawaii, August 7, 1999, copy in author's possession. While much has been written about climbing by climbers, I am indebted to the work of Jay Taylor, professor of history at Iowa State, for much of the interpretation of rock climbing in Yosemite that follows. I am also indebted to the advice and insights of Andy Kirk, professor of history at the University of Nevada Las Vegas. Both individuals bring a unique perspective to the subject of climbing, for both are climbers and environmental historians.

Modern rock climbing would come of age after World War II, but mountaineering has a long history in Yosemite and other areas of the American West. In the mid-19th century, explorers and scientists descended on the region, inventorying resources and mapping the country as part of western expansion. Geologists like Clarence King surveyed the Sierras, including the Yosemite Valley, in the 1860s and 1870s. His reasons for climbing to the summits of Sierra peaks emanated from the challenge of the climb as well as a desire to understand their geological history and to learn more about what was to many a new land. And one of his main objectives was to determine what natural wealth the Sierra possessed to further the nation's growth. King's interest in the West's landforms, however, revealed more than an intellectual curiosity and a quest for fortune. It also exposed an emotional response to the region's mountains specifically and to western scenery generally as sublime. King was a keen observer who described the Sierras, including Yosemite, as awe-inspiring and beautiful but not without a sense of desolation and terror when confronted with the power of nature in this setting.[2]

Although science and adventure were reasons to seek out Yosemite's mountains, mountaineering was also part of the park's growing stature as a natural curiosity in the late19th and early 20th centuries. It was a time when Americans of various backgrounds sought out places like Yosemite as part of a larger national movement "back to nature." They wanted relief from the alienating influences of the nation's growing industrialization. California residents and western tourists valued, for example, Yosemite as a pleasuring ground where they could escape the pace and pressures of urban-industrial life. Although scenic excursions to western places had once been open only to wealthy Americans who could afford such sojourns in the late 19th century, middle-class tourists increasingly dominated the scene by the early 20th century. At first, they toured Yosemite and other parks by horse and wagon, but automobiles—reliable and affordable after 1910—quickly replaced this mode of travel and opened the parks to a broad audience. Capable of seeing parks on their own terms, middle-class tourists were concerned less with parks as symbols of national heritage, a point of concern for their genteel counterparts of the 1870s and 1880s. This new group of sightseers cared more about what parks and other wild lands offered them for recreation and individual experience.[3]

Although some of California's most famous mountaineers and scientists climbed in Yosemite during this period, none was more famous than the naturalist John Muir. Muir, who arrived in the Valley in 1871, was immediately impressed with the grandeur of its granite walls that reached more than three thousand feet above the Valley floor. Unlike Clarence King, Muir's explorations yielded a somewhat different impression of the Valley and surrounding mountains. In his descriptions of the Yosemite country and its mountains, Muir spoke of the natural world as home; wilderness was not desolate or terrifying, but a place to renew one's spirit. Like many at the turn of the twentieth century, Muir expounded on the virtues of returning to the natural world as an antidote to the ills of the nation's urban-industrial life. A wilderness evangelist, Muir extolled the value of wild places like Yosemite and argued that it should be respected and revered. He fought to preserve Yosemite as a

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[2] Michael L. Smith, Pacific Visions: California Scientists and the Environment, 1850-1915 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), 73-92. See also, Clarence King, Mountaineering in the Sierra Nevada (1872; Yosemite National Park: Yosemite Association, 1997), 124-143.

[3] Stanford E. Demars, The Tourist in Yosemite, 1855-1985 (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1991), 55-80; Hal K. Rothman, Devil's Bargains: Tourism in the Twentieth-Century American West (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1998), 50-112.

national park, which was established in 1890. He formed the Sierra Club in 1892 to fight for the protection of the new park and its expansion, as well as to lead club members on mountain parties into the high country.[4]

A New Frontier in Climbing:
Aid Climbing in Yosemite from the 1930s to World War II

Up until the 1930s, climbing peaks in Yosemite was really hiking up the backs of mountains. During the depression, however, a new generation of climbers looked upon Yosemite's strikingly perpendicular walls as possible to climb. (Up until this time, only one climber, George Anderson, had successfully climbed one of the Valley's Walls. In 1875, Anderson climbed the east face of Half Dome, using bolts and ropes.)[5] For this new age of climbers, Yosemite's vertical cliffs were the focus of adventure. Led by Richard Leonard and others from the San Francisco Bay Area, these climbers drew their confidence from climbing accomplishments elsewhere in the nation and world, especially the use of direct aid, primarily pitons, carabiners, and ropes, in Europe. By the early 1930s, California climbers were learning—and putting into practice—the principles of rope handling and belays. Their use of aid not only allowed them to ascend peaks faster and with greater safety, but also broke with the past and took their sport in a new direction. Because of roped climbing, they were no longer satisfied with the easy ascent of peaks. Climbers now selected routes for the challenges they offered. Climbing was becoming, to recite a popular phrase, not about reaching the summit, but about the climb itself.[6]

One group, the Cragmont Climbing Club, was instrumental in taking climbing in this new direction in Yosemite. According to Gary Arce, the Cragmont Club, a group of Bay Area climbers headquartered in Berkeley, "revolutionized attitudes and belay methods on vertical rock." With leaders like Leonard, the club believed that falling—controlled and done safely through good belays—improved climbing skills. It was belief that ran counter to older schools of climbing. Club members improved conventional belay methods by modifying them for vertical climbing without sacrificing safety. Two of the most important methods were the hip belay and dynamic belay. In the first belay, the rope passed over the belayer's hips not shoulders, more safely supporting the weight of the fallen climber. In the other belay, the rope passed slowly through the

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[4] Gary Arce, Defying Gravity: High Adventure on Yosemite's Walls (Berkeley: Wilderness Press, 1996), 11-14, 185; Smith, Pacific Visions, 92-100; Hans Huth, Nature and the American: Three Centuries of Changing Attitudes (1957; Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1972), 151; Stephen Fox, John Muir and His Legacy: The American Conservation Movement (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1981), 3-26.

[5] Arce, Defying Gravity, 185.

[6] Steve Roper, Camp 4: Recollections of a Yosemite Rock Climber (Seattle: The Mountaineers, 1994), 19. Evidence for the evolution of climbing and the concept of the climb and not its completion as the essence of modern rock climbing can be found in Chris Bonington, Everest the Hard Way (New York: Random House, 1976), and Galen Rowell, In the Throne Room of the Mountain Gods (San Francisco: Sierra Club, 1977). Both are cited in Joseph L. Sax, Mountains Without Handrails: Reflections on the National Parks (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1980), 36.

belayer's hands, causing less strain on his hands, the climber, and equipment. These were "major advancements in climbing technique," noted Arce, and gave the climbers a "huge boost in confidence."[7]

Armed with these new climbing techniques and equipment, the Cragmont group, which had reorganized as the Rock Climbing Section (RCS) of the Sierra Club, eyed the monolithic and smooth granite of Yosemite's walls with enthusiasm. Early mountaineers, who did not possess this kind of equipment or skills and who were accustomed to the fissured and broken rock of the High Sierra, thought that the walls and spires were unclimbable. In the mid-1930s, Leonard and his cohorts proved these predictions wrong. They successfully ascended Washington Column (1933), Higher Cathedral Spire (1934), and Lower Cathedral Spire (1934). David Brower, later renowned as a conservation leader, influenced Yosemite climbing, too. Known for his "delicate movements," Brower ascended a number of new routes, including one up Cathedral Chimney. Brower often climbed with Morgan Harris, and it was Harris who led a team up Royal Arches (1936) above Yosemite's Camp 9 (the Sierra Club group camp and for a time the RCS camp as well). The climbs were significant because they displayed "exceptional levels of innovation, boldness, and determination." The ascent of Washington Column, for example, was the first technical climb, using pitons, ropes, formal belays, and other equipment, to be completed in the Valley. The route up the Higher Cathedral Spire likewise was accomplished using European pitons and carabiners. But Leonard and his companions, such as Jules Eichorn and Bestor Robinson, also employed pendulum traverses, double-rope technique, and unusual piton placements to overcome obstacles on the climb and the limits of their rather primitive equipment.[8]

Their accomplishments opened the door to modern rock climbing in Yosemite. With increased skill and confidence, climbers began to rely less on pitons and other equipment for direct aid and more for safety. But they were not yet ready for the big wall climbs of the postwar generation. In the late 1930s, Yosemite climbers briefly flirted with the two greatest problems of the time—Lost Arrow Chimney and the monolithic Half Dome –but decided against them. Safety, of course, was an issue. The climbers "were neither mentally nor technically prepared" for these climbs, according to Chris Jones. Another growing concern was the use of excessive aid. As Leonard recalled later, the route up the bald southwest face of Half Dome would cross the "undefined borderline between justifiable and unjustifiable use of direct aid."[9] Not only would another generation of climbers have to solve the great problems, but it would also have to resolve the ethical question of how much aid was appropriate.

Big Wall Climbing: Yosemite's Golden Age, 1947-1970

During World War II, climbing in Yosemite, like other activities in American life, was suspended. Many Yosemite climbers joined the Army and trained troops in the fundamentals of mountaineering. After the war, climbing gradually increased, and the postwar era became a significant watershed in the sport. Climbers

[7] Arce, Defying Gravity, 18-19; Chris Jones, Climbing in North America (1976; Seattle: The Mountaineers, 1997), 125-129. As Jones observes, 129, while pitons and carabiners existed, they were not in great supply in the United States and they had to be imported at some expense, especially during the depression, from Germany.

[8] Arce, 22-23; Jones, Climbing in North America, 131.

[9] Jones, 132. Leonard is quoted in this citation.

benefited from a new and relatively inexpensive and abundant supply of mountaineering equipment developed for the Army. In general the equipment, which included nylon ropes (replacing hemp), harder pitons, and aluminum carabiners, was lighter and stronger. Besides technological advances, climbing changed because postwar Americans had more leisure time, greater mobility, higher income, and better education. All of these conditions helped foster a greater appreciation of wild places and an interest in outdoor recreation. Although we often associate the swarm of auto tourists that descended on national parks in the 1950s with this shift in recreation, climbing was also part of it. With better equipment, the drive to improve their skills, and the desire to be in a natural setting, postwar climbers literally took the sport to new heights.[10]

In Yosemite the invention of big wall climbing, its practical and ethical aspects, was the sport's most defining characteristic. John Salathe was the first and most important climber of his time. He helped define big wall climbing as a multi-day effort using direct aid on the Valley's vertical granite walls. He did so by climbing what were considered at the time to be the Valley's three great climbs: the southwest face of Half Dome (1946), Lost Arrow Chimney (1947), and Sentinel Rock (1950). Salathe was a Swiss blacksmith, and his successful climbs can be attributed partly to his forethought. He conceived of routes and then set out to accomplish them. He used stronger pitons, made from a steel alloy, which he forged himself. Harder pitons were essential tools for direct aid on routes up vertical cracks of granite. Salathe invented other ways to overcome the problems presented by days spent on Yosemite's granite faces. His methods included improving his strength, losing weight, and training to climb with less water (which along with all other supplies had to be hauled up) in Yosemite's notorious heat. He also demonstrated that to be successful on Yosemite's big walls one did not have to overwhelm the routes with bolts and other technological devices. With a route in mind, better equipment, and lighter loads, Salathe was able to succeed and inspire later climbers to envision "new" problems to overcome.[11]

For these reasons, many climbers consider Salathe the father of American climbing, and his 1947 ascent of Lost Arrow Chimney stands out as the opening of the so-called golden age in Yosemite climbing. It was the first ascent of a very difficult rock face, which lasted more than five days and demonstrated the technological and logistical innovations necessary to complete such a climb. It was a test of physical as well as psychological endurance. It demonstrated the deep commitment climbers would need to ascend Yosemite's intimidating vertical walls. Thus, Lost Arrow Chimney was the "first big wall climb in the country." It set in motion a new age in climbing.[12]

In the 1950s and 1960s, the next group of Yosemite climbers would have a profound influence on the sport. Although a number of climbers achieved fame in the Valley, two stood out among them: Royal Robbins and Warren Harding. By the mid-1950s, there were four major walls left to be climbed: the northwest and south faces of Half Dome, El Capitan, and Mt. Watkins. And either Robbins or Harding would complete the first ascent of each cliff. In the process, they would demonstrate contrasting styles and conceptions of

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[10] Roper, Camp 4, 34; Samuel P. Hays, Beauty, Health, and Permanence: Environmental Politics in the United States, 1955-1985 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 2-5, 13, 22-24, 34-35.

[11] Jones, 175-180;

[12] For Salathe's significance, see Tom Frost and Pat Ament, "Camp 4, A Historical Gem, All the Reasons Necessary to Show that Camp 4 Should Be (And Possesses All the Qualities To Be) Listed On the National Register of Historic Sites," c. 1997, 6, copy in author's possession. Arce, 31; Roper, 41.

climbing—elegant lines or blank wall conquests—and become embroiled in the debate over climbing standards. Robbins and Harding not only "established routes of exceptional difficulty and beauty," but they also pushed the ideal of big wall climbing to its logical but complicated conclusion.[13]

The stage for the debate was set in the late 1950s, when Robbins and Harding made the first ascents of the northwest face of Half Dome and the Nose of El Capitan, respectively. In 1957, Robbins led his team up Half Dome, completing one of the longest and most demanding routes in North America. Besides being "first," the ascent demonstrated Robbins's interest in climbing challenging routes with attention to what he and many climbers considered to be good style. They rejected Himalayan-style siege tactics and limited the use of permanent anchors in the rock. Robbins ascended Half Dome in classic alpine fashion. In a single, concentrated effort, he exploited the wall's natural weaknesses and used less than twenty bolts to cross blank sections.[14]

Harding, on the other hand, believed that the Valley's walls presented a unique challenge that should not be limited by the concept of good style advocated by Robbins and other Yosemite climbers. In 1958, inspired by Robbins's accomplishment, Harding completed his ascent of the 3,000-foot Nose of El Capitan, a huge wall with many blank faces. Harding attacked the cliff using siege tactics. His team members ascended the wall as high as they could, fixed ropes behind them, and then lowered themselves to prepare for the next assault. The process lasted more than a year—and required125 bolts. Harding's ascent earned him some national fame, but his peers in the climbing world were skeptical. Many, like Robbins, objected to his siege tactics and his use of so many unnecessary bolts. This style diminished the challenge of the climb and displayed a lack of respect for the natural world.[15]

But the issue of style was not so clearly divided as the two climbs made it seem. However Yosemite climbers felt about the methods used on these two ascents, they all seemed to agree that something important had happened. The psychological barriers of big wall climbing had been lowered, showing that it was possible to climb the biggest walls. However one felt about climbing styles, bolts were common to climbing; they helped to advance the sport. Robbins, for example, made the second ascent of the Nose following Harding's route in 1960. Robbins was able to use some of the bolts placed by Harding, yet he completed the climb in alpine-style. His ascent lowered the climbing time on El Capitan from forty-five days to seven days. Applying Salalthe-like methods to the Valley's largest monolith, Robbins completed what some consider the first modern big wall climb.[16]

During the next decade, Robbins and Harding would not only become renowned as big wall pioneers, but also they would come to represent the poles of a developing climbing scene in Yosemite. Other very talented climbers such as Yvon Chouinard, Tom Frost, TM Herbert, Chuck Pratt, Steve Roper, and Galen Rowell would make first and second ascents of the Valley's cliffs, often in the company of either Robbins or Harding. But Robbins and Harding would help define the sport, its physical and mental boundaries. Robbins promoted a kind of moral code for climbing. Throughout the 1960s, he demonstrated his ideals by completing very difficult routes in usually good style and then broadcasting his message through climbing publications. He

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[13] Joseph Taylor, "The Moral Economy of Bolts," 3; Arce, 38, for quotation.
[14] Taylor, 6
[15] Taylor, 4-6; Jones, 251-255.
[16] Taylor, 6-8; Roper, 120-128.

wanted people to know that how one climbed—by leaving the route as close to its original condition as possible—was more important than completing the climb. Harding also completed incredibly difficult routes, but often continued to use siege tactics and many bolts, and seemed to send a different message to the climbing community—reach the summit at all costs. He developed a reputation as a renegade and promoted an ideal of climbing that resisted rigid guidelines. He openly resisted attempts by Robbins and others to limit the sport, it seemed, with strict standards.[17]

In the 1960s, more climbers seemed to favor Robbins's style of climbing. His second ascent of the Nose opened new possibilities for Yosemite climbers, and a string of remarkable first ascents followed and firmly established a distinct Yosemite style for big wall climbing. In 1961, for example, Robbins, Pratt, and Frost pushed an ambitious but circuitous second route up the Salathe Wall on the southwest face of El Capitan. The party limited the use of fixed ropes, was on the wall only ten days, and needed only thirteen bolts. The next stage came in 1963, when Harding, Chouinard, and Pratt ascended the unclimbed southwest face of Mt. Watkins. They reached the summit in a single, five-day push in sweltering weather that tested each climber's limits. Watkins signaled the end of siege climbing in the Valley. Afterwards, climbers were expected to succeed in one push or begin again. The following year, Robbins, Pratt, Frost, and Chouinard advanced climbing further with their ascent of the southeast face of El Capitan, known as the North American Wall. Beset by winter conditions and seams of rotten rock, the climbers pushed to the summit in ten arduous days. In doing so, they completed what was considered the most difficult technical climb of its time.[18]

By avoiding siege tactics and minimizing bolting, climbers like Robbins expanded their skills, but they were making more than a statement that "it could be done." They wanted to retain the challenge of climbing Yosemite's vertical walls. And they began to reduce further the amount of support on their climbs. In 1965, Chouinard and TM Herbert, for example, climbed a new route up El Capitan, the Muir Wall. The ordeal lasted eight days, and they relied on only two men and 30 bolts, they insisted, to create a "purer form of climbing." According to Chouinard, it required greater effort and more risks, but ultimately yielded greater rewards. This form of climbing was more in the spirit of John Muir, he noted, who took only the bare essentials and attained a closer contact with nature. Climbers should take their inspiration from Muir who adapted to his surroundings.[19]

But climbers, whose skills had advanced so much, required even greater struggles to maintain a sense of adventure. In 1968, Robbins took paring to the extreme by soloing the second ascent of the Muir Wall. There had been previous solo climbs in Yosemite, but none on something as massive as El Capitan. The challenges such a climb presented were immense. Robbins not only had to ascend the face of the wall, but he also had to overcome the psychic and physical barriers of climbing alone. He reached the summit after nine days, pushing not only his skills to new levels but also turning the focus of climbing inward.[20]

As they looked inward, climbers pondered the meaning of climbing and central to this question was the use of direct aid. What were the limits of bolts? Robbins, Chouinard, and other leading free climbers like Frank Sacherer worried that bolts "could become a substitute for skill and courage." Anyone could climb Yosemite's big walls if they constructed bolt ladders. Someday there might be little distinction between elite

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[17] Ibid.
[18] Taylor, 7-8; Jones, 334-336.
[19] Arce, 70.
[20] Taylor, 9-10.

and average climbers. Ironically, as Robbins and others contemplated standards for the use of technology on climbs and attempted to limit its use on their climbs, they did not eliminate it altogether. As Yvon Chouinard noted, "the better climbers...know when a bolt must be placed." Yosemite's elite climbers, then, were aware of their dependence upon pitons and bolts and the effects of using them. It was this self-awareness that enabled them to justify and regulate their use.[21] It was like saying a scalpel in the hands of anyone but a surgeon was a knife. It was the difference between life and death.

This perception did not provide a clear idea of what constituted the overuse of bolts, for this issue, like the issue of development in national parks and other wild places, was largely a question of aesthetics. Some of the loudest bolt opponents, for example, used bolts to ascend the Valley's remaining blank, virgin walls. Royal Robbins, for one, hammered his way up routes on Royal Arches, Sentinel Rock, Washington Column, the Cathedral Spires, and four more routes on Half Dome. His 1969 climb of the Tis-sa-ack route on Half Dome alone required 110 bolts.[22]

While Robbins's peers considered these climbs significant, despite the reliance on bolts, the climbing community was not so charitable towards Warren Harding. Harding did not feel compelled to discuss the merits of bolts, like the "Valley Christians," as he called climbing moralists and climbed however he pleased. Harding tackled difficult routes and earned a reputation as a workhorse who excelled under severe conditions. Drilling holes and anchoring bolts were simply part of his climbing mission, whether he was scaling Leaning Tower, Mt. Watkins, Lost Arrow, Liberty Cap, or the south face of Half Dome. Like his climb of the Nose of El Capitan, his ascent of the unclimbed south face of Half Dome was an epic struggle. He reached the summit in 1970, five years after he started—using 180 bolts.[23]

The climbing community recognized Harding's ascent of the south face as a great achievement, but it also worried that it symbolized a trend toward more aid climbing on walls where there were no crack systems. Climbers wondered what this meant for the future of climbing if bolts, not the natural features of the Valley's great walls, determined routes. Harding's invention of "Bat Hooks," a tool that could be inserted into shallow holes to support a climber's weight, seemed to support their fears.[24]

The debate about the appropriate use of technology often seemed to come down to personal choice and illustrated the complicated relationship people have with the natural world. Yvon Chouinard, for instance, objected to the use of bolts and bat hooks because they would simplify climbing, allowing anyone to climb. But he had been selling pitons and carabiners, which he made himself since 1958. He developed a variety of pitons specifically for the Valley's hard granite and shallow cracks. Moreover, Chouinard and other climbers benefited greatly from another piece of equipment, jumar ascenders. Brought from Switzerland to Yosemite in 1963, jumars allowed more efficient hauling of bags on multi-day climbs. Along with specialized pitons, jumars became standard equipment in Yosemite's new big wall method. Thus while Chouinard helped open

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[21] Taylor, 10. Chouinard quotation is from this citation.
[22] Taylor, ll-12; Jones, 343.
[23] Arce, 58; Taylor, 11.
[24] Jones, 343; Roper, Camp 4, 203; Taylor, 14.

new possibilities for expert climbers like himself by inventing and benefited from adapting existing equipment to different uses, the same advantages were available to less experienced climbers, too.[25]

In this regard, Chouinard and other climbers championed climbing through their entrepreneurial endeavors and outdoor journals, and reached an audience of both seasoned and novice climbers. In 1964, for example, Chouinard expanded opportunities for expert and recreational climbers by forming with Tom Frost The Great Pacific Iron Works (and later formed Patagonia®). The company manufactured and marketed a growing assortment of outdoor gear. Chouinard also promoted climbing and his outdoor products through his own writings in climbing magazines and other journals. Likewise Robbins popularized the sport through his editorial work at, and contributions to, Summit magazine, and began his own line of outdoor gear, Rock Craft.[26]

Chouinard, Robbins, and others may have seen fellow big wall climbers as their primary audience but their activities helped raise interest in climbing, foreshadowing the beginning of recreational climbing, and prompting some concern about the direction of the sport. The main issue was one of aesthetics, namely the damage to cracks on the faces of the Valley's cliffs. The repeated pounding and removal of pitons (not bolts) scarred the cracks and caused climbers to reconsider their methods. Unlike in Europe, where climbers left their pitons in place, American climbers removed them to preserve—or at least present—nature in its pristine condition for later parties. Like the backpacking philosophy of take only pictures and leave only footprints, this ideal had its unintended consequences. It still promoted the use of fragile environments. The metal spikes rapidly altered the faces of the Valley's cliffs, and in 1969, the National Park Service closed several to prevent further damage to cracks. In response, climbers like Royal Robbins began to preach the benefits of using less invasive forms of protection to replace pitons. The main tool was artificial chocks used by British climbers. By the late 1960s and early 1970s, several of the Valley's influential climbers were making the conversion to clean climbing. (They used Chouinard's line of "nuts," which chocks came to be called.) More importantly, by using them climbers could think of themselves as closer to nature and as preservationists in the spirit of John Muir.[27]

In 1970, however, Warren Harding completed the most ambitious bolting project to date: El Capitan's Wall of Early Morning Light (also known as the Dawn Wall). The intimidating climb, which covered 2,800 feet of overhanging, intermittent crack systems, lasted twenty-seven days. It required 330 bolts and allowed Harding and partner Dean Caldwell to ascend a route that had turned many back. After nearly a month on the mountain, several storms, and an abortive rescue attempt, they finished the longest big wall climb in history. It was a media event. A swarm of reporters, cameras, and microphones greeted Harding and Caldwell on the top of El Capitan. Hoping to exploit their new-found celebrity, the climbers participated in a whirlwind tour of national sports and talk shows.[28]

After several weeks their fame faded, but criticism from fellow climbers was still brewing. Many were appalled by the number of drilled holes. Photographer Ansel Adams weighed into the discussion, observing that the climb was little more than an "engineering achievement," and Chouinard nicknamed Harding the "mad

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[25] Roper, 95; Tom Frost and Pat Ament, "Camp 4, A Historical Gem," 6-7. Among the pitons Chouinard designed were postage-stamp sized "RURPs" and near paper-thin "knifeblades, as well as a selection of larger pitons of different dimensions for use in the varying widths of Yosemite's cracks.

[26] Taylor, 16.

[27] Roper, Camp 4, 213-214. 217-218; Arce, Defying Gravity, 72-75.

[28] Arce, 79-90.

bolter." Many in the Yosemite community also condemned the media hype that followed the Dawn Wall climb. The attention not only broke an unwritten stricture of humility, but it also broadcast the wrong message about climbing. Ironically, those who protested Harding's climb and its publicity were also actively conveying their own message about climbing and the meaning of nature through the sale of outdoor gear, articles, and photographs.[29]

The Dawn Wall climb was significant because it was an impressive feat, and one of Yosemite's most controversial climbs. It illustrated the complex issue of climbing standards. At first Royal Robbins applauded Harding's ascent and praised his "eccentric individualism." Then in 1971, he attempted to erase the route by chopping out all of Harding's bolts. The issue, it seems, could turn even the best of Yosemite climbers into hypocrites. Only a few years earlier Robbin's had railed against such action, calling it just as bad as indiscriminate bolting. He also believed that climbing should not be policed, citing the Park Service's restrictive rules on Mount Rainier as a prime example. Even more problematic, Robbins did not finish his chopping project on the Dawn Wall. Early in his ascent, Robbins began to realize chopping all the bolts would take a long time. Moreover, he began to appreciate the quality of Harding's route and aid placement; one good lead led to another. Afterwards, he decided to abort his mission, conceding that Harding won. In one sense, Harding won because he maintained his reputation as a rugged individualist who cared little for physical or moral boundaries. In another sense, he did not necessarily win because he did not lead rock climbing into mechanical oblivion. The trend in climbing was not towards bolt ladders (and possibly bolt guns and suctions cups) but more clean climbing.[30]

The controversy over Harding's climb helped define the end of an era, Yosemite's "golden age." By 1970, climbers had accomplished impressive routes up the Valley's immense granite cliffs, and their techniques, technological innovations, and philosophical debates—just as much as their ascents of Half Dome and El Capitan—helped revolutionize the sport. After the 1960s, Yosemite climbing, and by association rock climbing in general, followed trends by Robbins and others. Although good lines were more difficult to find, a new generation of climbers completed harder free climbs, thereby eliminating the need for the kind of aid used during the previous twenty-five years. Beginning in the early 1970s, climbers like Peter Haan and Jim Bridwell used more chocks, attempted "pitonless" climbs of existing routes, and experimented with more free and solo climbing. It was a time that saw the first solo of the Salathe Wall on El Capitan, the first free ascent of Half Dome (northwest face), and the first all-female ascents of El Capitan.[31]

Other changes after the end of the "golden age" centered on equipment. Opinions about bolts changed as free climbing increased in popularity, and climbers relied on bolts for safety. Climbers could not use chocks everywhere, especially on hard face climbs in the Valley. Bolts were now an alternative to chocks, however, and not universally abhorred. They not only protected the lives of climbers (many of whom were now doing as a form of outdoor recreation) but they also preserved the rock. Compared to pitons, bolts caused less damage to cracks and thus were the more reasonable choice.[32]

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29 Taylor, "The Moral Economy of Bolts," 19-20; Arce, 91-92.
30 Taylor, 21-23; Arce, 91-92.
31 Arce, 91-178.
32 Taylor, 25.

Perhaps the greatest change after the "golden age" was that Camp 4 could not contain climbing as it boomed in popularity. In the 1970s, recreational climbers swarmed to Yosemite. Many took advantage of the Valley's commercial climbing school, begun by Warren Merry but run by the Yosemite Park and Curry Company. The climbing school opened in the late 1960s, and operated primarily at Swan Slab, a popular bouldering area east of Camp 4. Recreational climbers were also among the increasing number of tourists who visited Yosemite, from some 250,000 people in the 1930s to some 2.5 million by 1970. Novice climbers competed with the experts who considered themselves local or resident climbers, many of whom resided in Camp 4—the climber's campground. Rather than having Yosemite's walls to themselves, resident climbers encountered crowded conditions, long lines, and increasing amounts of trash at the base of popular climbs. As climbing matured, those who had charted new routes up the Valley's vertical walls no longer toiled in isolation and obscurity. More importantly, Yosemite's elite climbers found it increasingly difficult to define their sport through standards. There were simply too many people climbing. Thus, bolts emerged as the best long-term solution; they "became central to the safety and aesthetic sensibilities of the sport's future."[33]

A Sense of Place and Self: Camp 4 and Yosemite Climbers

In Yosemite, rock climbers of the postwar era may have scaled the Valley's granite walls, but the center of climbing, physically and conceptually, was Camp 4. Prior to the 1940s, most Yosemite climbers congregated at Camp 9, located on Tenaya Creek. The Sierra Club reserved the site for its annual group outings, and most prewar technical climbers stayed there because they were members of the Sierra Club. Climbers of this era had little choice of when they climbed and where they stayed, because of Park Service policies regarding group camping at the time. Most of the significant early climbs took place then during the club's annual events. By the mid-1940s, though, most of the Valley's important climbers did not participate in Sierra Club outings, and none of them could reside in Camp 9. These individuals began to converge on Camp 4, a dusty campground of trees and massive boulders, near Yosemite Lodge.

The U.S. Army originally designated Camp 4 in 1906, several hundred yards south of today's campground. The Army soon abandoned the area because of poor sanitary conditions. In 1929, the Park Service formally developed Camp 4 as the Valley's first winter campground and picnic area in its present location. In addition to basic facilities, like picnic tables and toilets, the agency built an entrance road into the ten-acre site from the main Valley road, which led to the picnic grounds and a parking area. Little information exists about the use of Camp 4 after its development for winter recreation. In 1941, though, an official park brochure identified the site as Camp 4. By the late 1940s, the camp had up to 50 tables scattered across several acres of gently sloping forested terrain. The lower, flatter section of the campground was a fairly organized site, with well-spaced tables and a network of dirt roads. But the upper section, closest to the mammoth boulders and talus slopes had no formal roads, thus allowing visitors to drive and camp virtually wherever they pleased in the forested area. (At the time, they entered from the Valley road to the south roughly through the

[33] Roper, 211-213; Taylor, 26.

center of the camp.) There were no designated or numbered campsites, and this informal arrangement allowed tourists (climbers) to create their own sites by grouping picnic tables to meet their needs.[34]

By the mid-1950s and 1960s, as Yosemite climbers began to innovate techniques and technologies to scale the walls of Yosemite Valley, word of their accomplishments spread. And Camp 4 emerged as one of the most important places for rock climbing in the world. It attracted climbers like Royal Robbins, Warren Harding, Mark Powell, Chuck Pratt, and Yvon Chouinard, as well as a number of international climbers, who valued the area as a place for climbers. These and other climbers also liked Camp 4 because it was the only all-season campground in the Valley; it received early morning sunlight sooner than other campgrounds, and it had excellent bouldering. Climbers favored the upper portion of the campground, most likely for its seclusion and proximity to the boulders that they used for practice climbing.[35]

Camp 4, despite being dusty, trampled, and noisy (or perhaps because it was all those things), displayed the social composition of Yosemite's climbers. In the 1960s, climbing was not viewed as a mainstream activity, and those drawn to the sport tended to consider themselves on the social fringe. This did not mean that they were poor or underprivileged. In the social ferment of the 1960s, many of them were white males from middle-class backgrounds, taking breaks from pursuing college degrees. They liked Camp 4 because on public land they could survive with little money. Camping was free. They pilfered leftovers from the Curry Company's cafeteria across the road, and warmed themselves in the Yosemite Lodge's lounge during cold or stormy weather. Their sole focus was the Valley's walls in one of the country's most revered cathedrals of nature.[36]

Climbers had stayed in Camp 4 since the end of World War II, initially on weekends and by 1957 for extended periods of time. That summer Mark Powell became the first Yosemite resident climber. By 1963, Camp 4 was firmly established as the Valley's climbing center. Its inhabitants thought of camp as a vibrant "colony" of climbers. Those who stayed in the campground considered themselves part of a larger climbing community of "kindred spirits," and they lived in Camp 4 to be around like-minded individuals.[37]

In this respect, Camp 4 was not only the staging area for the ascents of Yosemite's monolithic granite walls, but also the social and intellectual arena for big wall climbing. Before there were published sources on Yosemite climbing, climbers convened here to share stories about past climbs, plot strategies for new routes, and debate the ethics of climbing. It was here that Royal Robbins developed the Yosemite Rating System, which classified the difficulty of climbs in the Valley. Camp 4 was also the place where climbers like Yvon Chouinard invented or refined their climbing equipment. Chouinard, for example, tested his new pitons on Camp 4's boulders in front of his fellow climbers in the late 1950s. When he offered his pitons and other

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[34] For a description of Camp 4 as it evolved over time, see Harlan D. Unrau, "Evaluation of Historical Significance and Integrity of Sunnyside Campground, Yosemite Valley, Yosemite National Park, California," June 6, 1997, 3-4, copy in author's possession. See also Steve Roper, Camp 4, 30. My interpretation of where the road entered the campground is based upon a historic base map of the years 1946-1972. See Land and Community Associates, Yosemite Valley Cultural Landscape Report 2 vol. (October 1994), vol. 2, figure L-4.

[35] Roper, 30.

[36] Arce, Defying Gravity, 71-72.

[37] Roper, 144; Arce, 72-73.

climbing gear for sale on a picnic table there in 1960, Camp 4 saw the birth of the modern outdoor equipment industry.[38]

Camp 4 reflected the history of climbing in the Valley in other ways. During the 1950s and 1960s, the camp was gaining worldwide attention for its "awesome bouldering." Yosemite climbers practiced their free climbing on the camp's boulders, such as the Columbia Boulder, the largest, which stands at the center of the camp. In addition to its size, Columbia Boulder is known for the route "Midnight Lightning," considered the "world's most famous boulder problem." As an honor, Camp 4 residents named the camp's other boulders for the climbers who completed difficult routes up them. The names of the boulders—Pratt Boulder and Kor Boulder, among others—read like a list of famous Valley climbers who distinguished themselves before their peers. At the same time, Wine Boulder and Cocaine Corner are suggestive of the alcohol and drugs that were also part of the camp's social scene.[39]

The lifestyle of the climbing community was significant, because like climbing itself, Camp 4 could not be insulated from mainstream society. Climbing grew as a sport because outdoor recreation skyrocketed in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The backpacking revolution was in full swing, and windshield tourists flooded national parks and national forests in ever larger numbers, too. Within the confines of Camp 4, resident climbers and "tourists" increasingly clashed, especially on weekends when the camp population swelled. Climbers regarded tourists as outsiders who did not or could not share their appreciation for nature. Tourists were offended by the seemingly squalid conditions of the camp, and by the hedonistic and bohemian lifestyles of many climbers they encountered. Many tourists complained to the Park Service about the loud and lewd young men occupying the camp who threw late-night parties that often featured large amounts of alcohol consumption and drug use. The Yosemite Park and Curry Company, the park concessionaire that operated the Yosemite Lodge, voiced similar concerns, claiming the climbers—many of whom hung out in the lodge—were bad for business. In the early and mid-1960s, the Park Service felt compelled to act as complaints mounted and more young climbers took up residence in Camp 4. Park rangers tried to enforce the camping time-limit rule of two weeks per year, but they failed, thwarted by the evasive actions of the rebellious youth. The issue, though, did not hide but was painfully exposed by the so-called Fourth of July riots in 1970. The anti-Vietnam War protests turned violent and spilled out of Stoneman Meadow and into surrounding parking lots and campgrounds.[40]

The riots underscored the crowded conditions in the Valley, and further prompted the Park Service to take action at Camp 4. In 1970, the agency began to renovate Camp 4. In an attempt to remove any association with climbing, it seems, the Park Service renamed the camp "Sunnyside," a reference to the early morning sun that warmed the campground. It also attempted to regulate camping; it established numbered campsite units—complete with picnic tables, campfire rings, and metal food storage containers—in the lower, flatter portion of the former Camp 4 area. Park managers closed the upper portion of the campground (the climbers' favorite section) to further regulate camping and to allow this area to recover from years of heavy use. The agency also

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[38] Roper, 95, 193-208.

[39] John Sherman, Stone Crusade: A Historical Guide to Bouldering in America (Golden: The American Alpine Club, 1994), 102-110; Roper, Camp 4, 151-154.

[40] Roper, 144-147, 212, 217-218; Arce, 73-77; Jones, Climbing in North America, 327-329; Alfred Runte, Yosemite: The Embattled Wilderness (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1990), 202.

implemented a camping fee of $3 per night. In 1972, the Park Service changed Camp 4 more by converting part of it to walk-in use only, and several years later made the change for the entire campground. Around this same time and to promote walk-in camping, the agency constructed a dirt parking lot adjacent to the eastern edge of the campground. In the 1980s, park managers renovated the campground again, constructing a stone-lined drainage canal that runs diagonally across the campground's eastern edge, adding rock-lined pathways that connect the campground to the parking area, and installing new bathroom facilities.[41]

In the minds of many climbers, the formalization of Camp 4 (which climbers and the general public continued to call the area) corresponded with events taking place up on the Valley's walls: it signaled the end of Yosemite's golden age. The camp's renovations and restrictions caused one climber to declare "freedom lost." For Royal Robbins, the changes symbolized the end of "laissez-faire camping...a tradition long-doomed by population growth, increased leisure, and four-wheeled campers." Robbins's pronouncement, however, did not spell an end to climbing in the Valley nor the campground's popularity with climbers. If anything, the presence of climbers here seemed to take on greater permanence. During the late 1960s, the Park Service began to employ climbers for technical search and rescue missions, and in the early 1970s, the agency gradually made formal arrangements for the program, and assigned climbers permanent sites (with tent cabins) in Camp 4. More importantly, throughout the 1980s and 1990s, Camp 4 continued to attract world class climbers, like John Bachar, Peter Croft, Ron Kauk, and Lynn Hill. Yosemite's new generation of big-wall climbers may not have experienced Camp 4 as others remembered it. But they did not necessarily lament its loss as their counterparts from the 1960s and 1970s, for they found here a connection to the essence of Yosemite climbing. In 1994, as one climber observed, "Yosemite Valley is the cradle of American climbing and the undefeatable spirit that was nurtured here is as strong as ever among the boulders of Camp 4."[42]

Conclusion

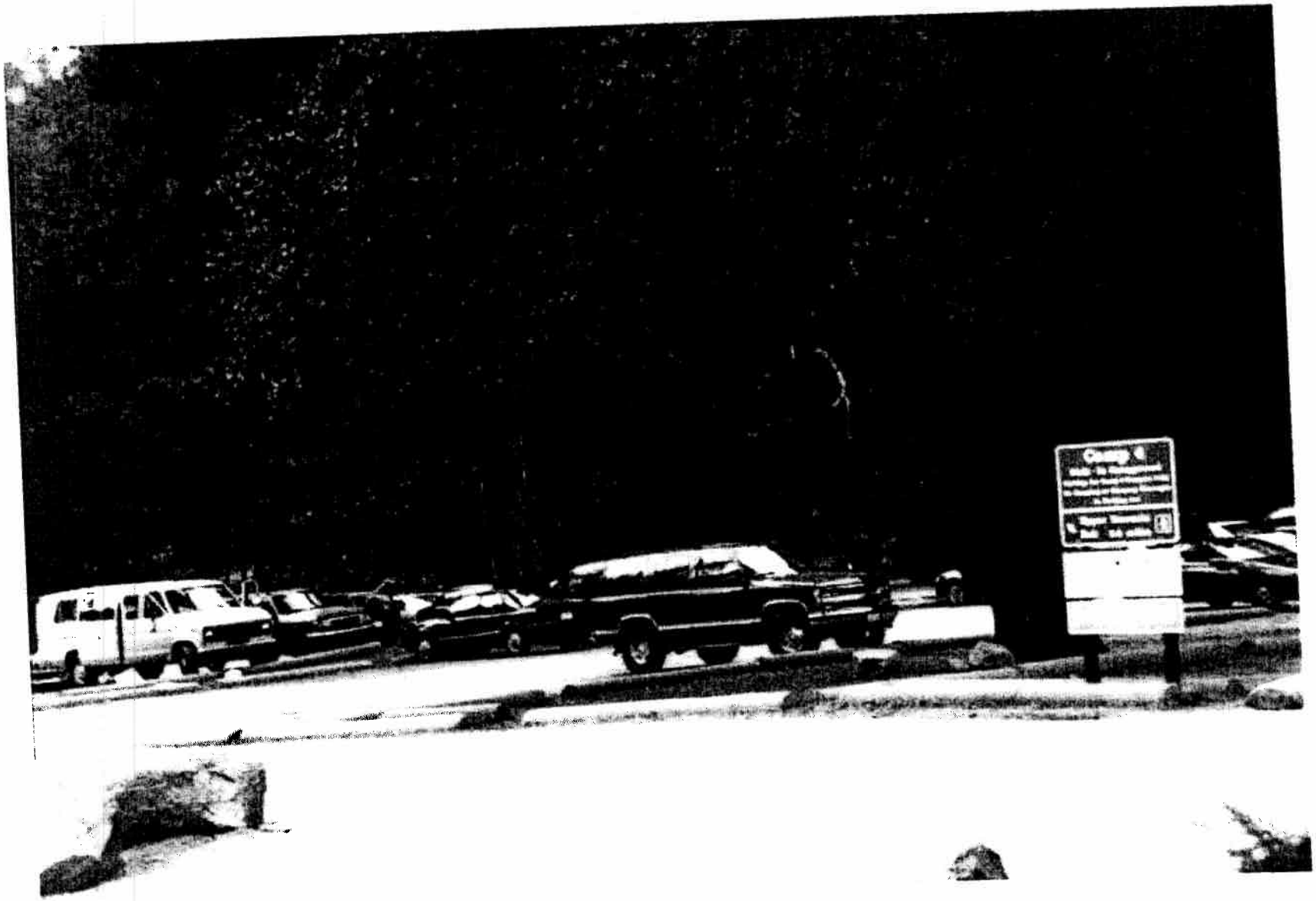
Camp 4 is significant for its association with the history of modern rock climbing in Yosemite Valley from 1947, when John Salathe made his pioneering climb of Lost Arrow Chimney, to 1970, when the evolution of big wall climbing reached its apex with the accomplishments of individuals like Royal Robbins and Warren Harding. Camp 4 is eligible for listing in the National Register under Criterion A in the area of Recreation/Entertainment. In the twenty-five years after World War II, Yosemite National Park played a pivotal role in the development of modern rock climbing and the years that define the era present an exceptional period of significance. During this "golden age," the Yosemite Valley was at the epicenter of the evolution of climbing techniques and technology, as well as the evolution of beliefs about the best way to climb. The advancement of climbing in Yosemite Valley earned it an international reputation as a climbing Mecca. Besides its function as a campground, Camp 4 served as the intellectual and social arena for Yosemite's expert climbers and climbing innovators. In Camp 4, climbers shaped a sense of community, fashioned climbing ideals, and forged relationships that were crucial to the climbing innovations and outdoor business ventures that

[41] Harlan Unrau, "Evaluation of Historical Significance," 8; Roper, 211.

[42] Roper, 211-212; Kevin Worrall, "A New Age in Old Camp Four," Climbing (May 1-June 15, 1994), 152. Worrall is quoted in Unrau, 9.

emerged from Yosemite in the last half-century. In these ways, Camp 4 became significant for its association with the broader history of climbing.

As a site associated with the history of modern rock climbing in Yosemite Valley, Camp 4 retains the physical characteristics necessary to convey its historic function and use during the historic period (1947 to 1970). The camp's history corresponded with the history of climbing in the Valley, evolving from an informal area in which climber's congregated in the 1940s, to a more formal camping area beginning in 1970. The campground continues to provide a relaxed location within a natural setting conducive to the activities of climbers using the site for its central location, areas of communal activities, nearby training sites, and planning sites. The boulder field within the campground played a key role in the educational and training activities conducted at the site. View holistically, Camp 4 was essentially a mixture of natural and informally created environments set in a scene dominated by natural features—trees (oaks and ponderosa pines), open spaces, and boulders—surrounded by vertical granite walls within the narrow confines of Yosemite Valley. The dominant materials and characteristics were predominantly natural and remain in place today, despite minor changes in the built environment. The changes of the 1970s and 1980s altered the way the camp functioned more than they affected the important physical characteristics that defined the historic campground area. Camp 4 retains the dominant physical characteristics necessary to convey its historic significance and possesses integrity of location, setting, association, feeling, and materials.

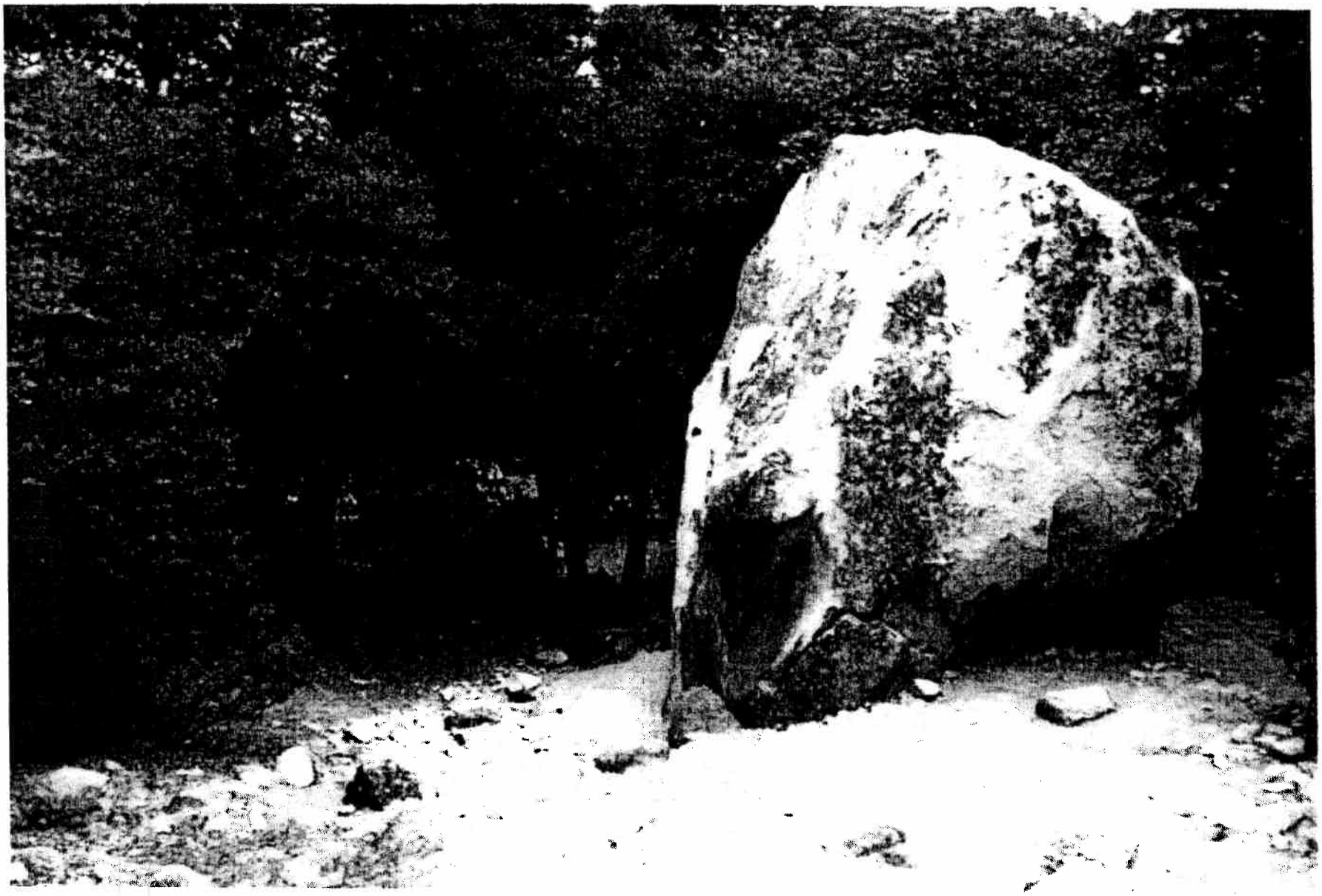


Camp 4, Yosemite National Park, Mariposa County, California.
David Louter, September 2001, National Park Service, Seattle.
Looking north into Camp 4 parking lot, (outside of boundaries of site).

Camp 4, Yosemite National Park, Mariposa County, California.
David Louter, September 2001, National Park Service, Seattle.
Looking west to interior of camp, Columbia Boulder is in foreground. Note climbers at Midnight Lightning route.

Camp 4, Yosemite National Park, Mariposa, California.
David Louter, September 2001, National Park Service, Seattle.
Looking west into Camp 4, East boundary of site is in foreground – rock-lined drainage. In background are camping sites, loop road.

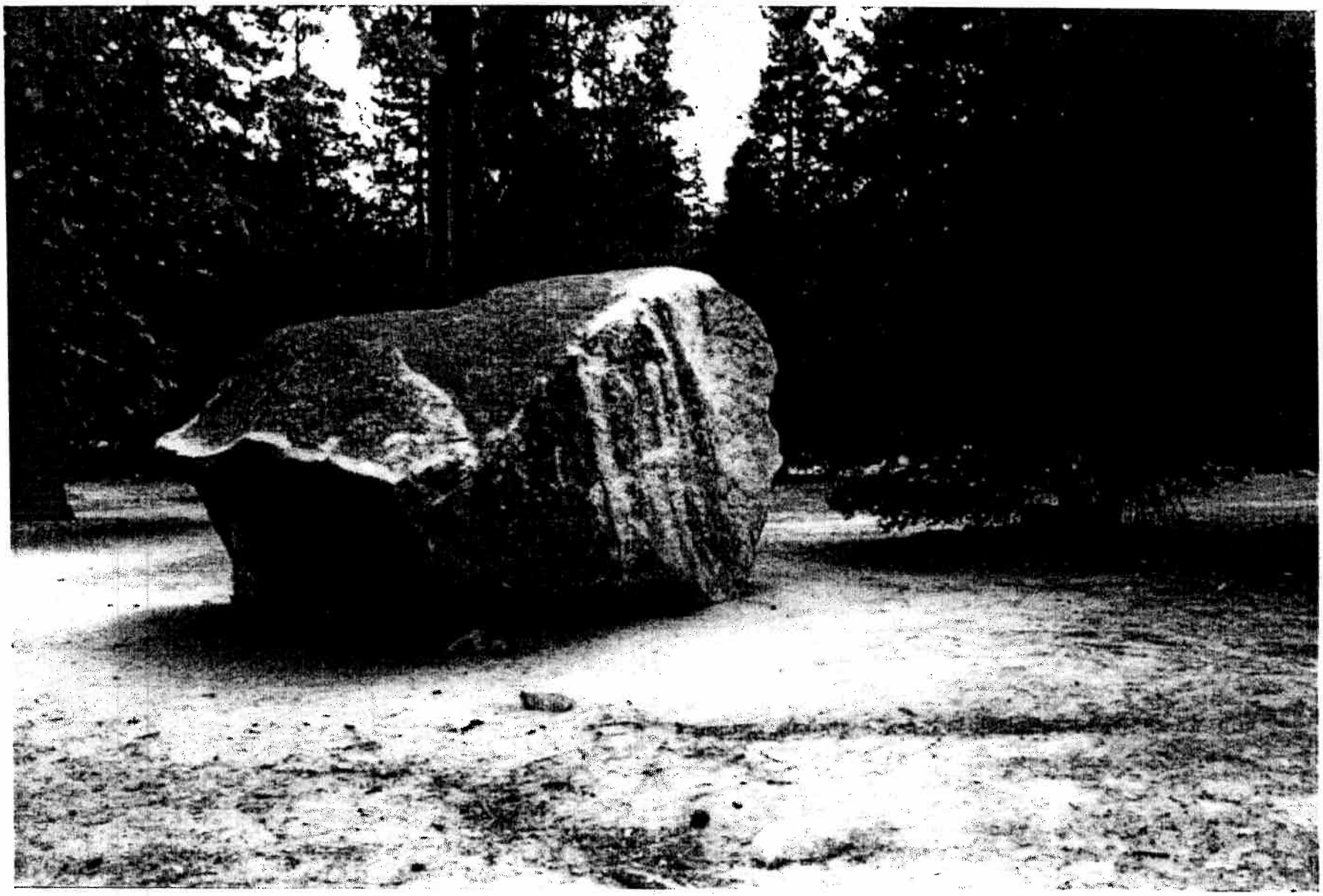
Camp 4, Yosemite National Park, Mariposa County, California.
David Louter, September 2001, National Park Service, Seattle.
Looking northwest towards west boundary. Note: Nixon Boulder to left, Search and Rescue cabin center, west boundary wraps behind cabins, up a shallow draw.



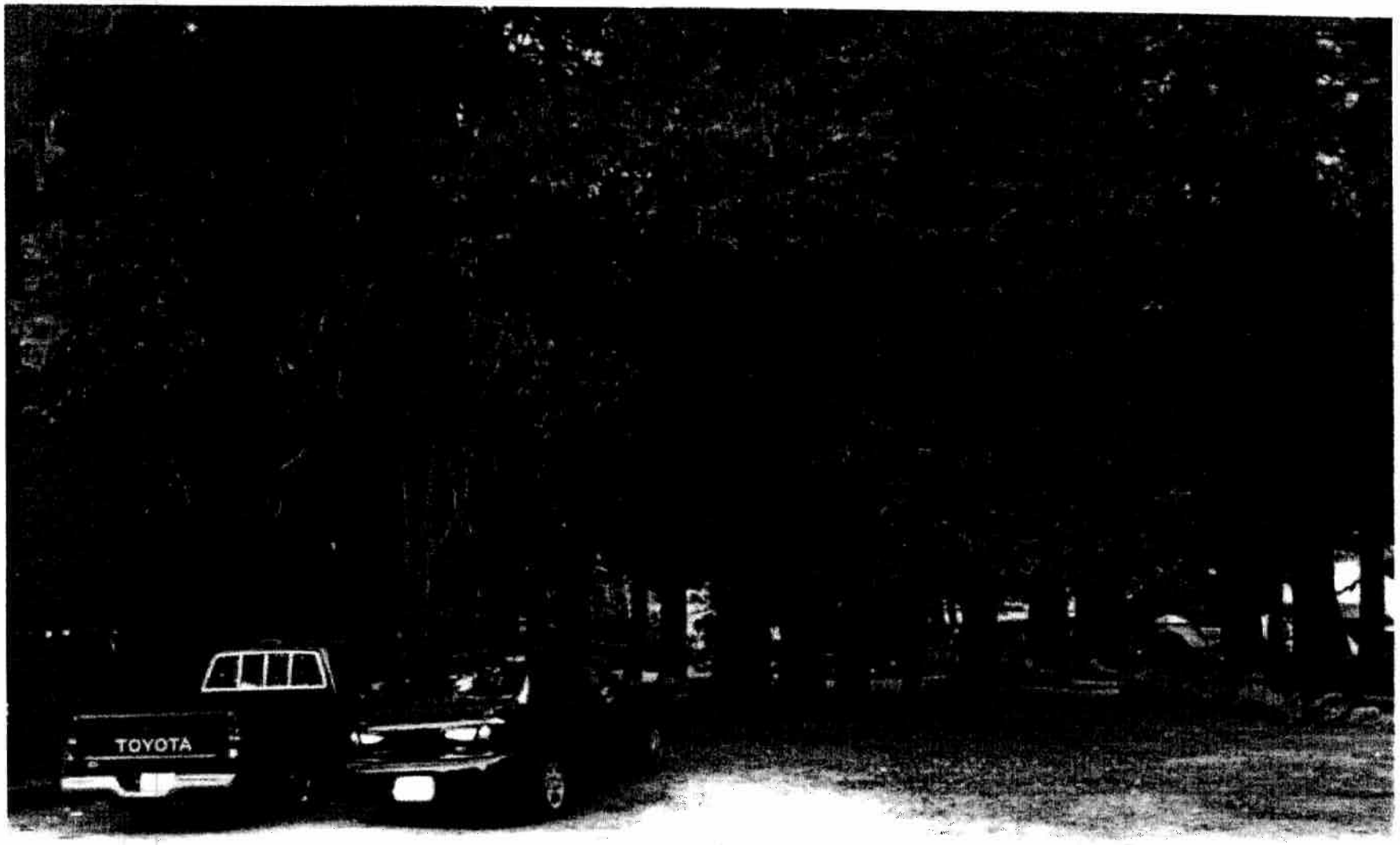
Camp 4, Yosemite National Park, Mariposa County, California.
David Louter, September 2001, National Park Service, Seattle.
Looking south from Yosemite Valley Trail along west boundary of site. Pratt Boulder is in foreground – a marker, reference for site boundary. Boundary includes trail and adjacent boulders. A similar boulder, Kor Boulder, forms marker for east boundary corner.

Camp 4, Yosemite National Park, Mariposa County, California.
David Louter, September 2001, National Park Service, Seattle.
Interior view of camp, looking north. Note: Columbia Boulder is in foreground, open space above it. Cliff scree slopes beyond, form north boundary.

Camp 4, Yosemite National Park, Mariposa County, California.
David Louter, September 2001, National Park Service, Seattle.
Looking east along Yosemite Valley Trail – massive boulders that represent Camp 4 are in foreground.

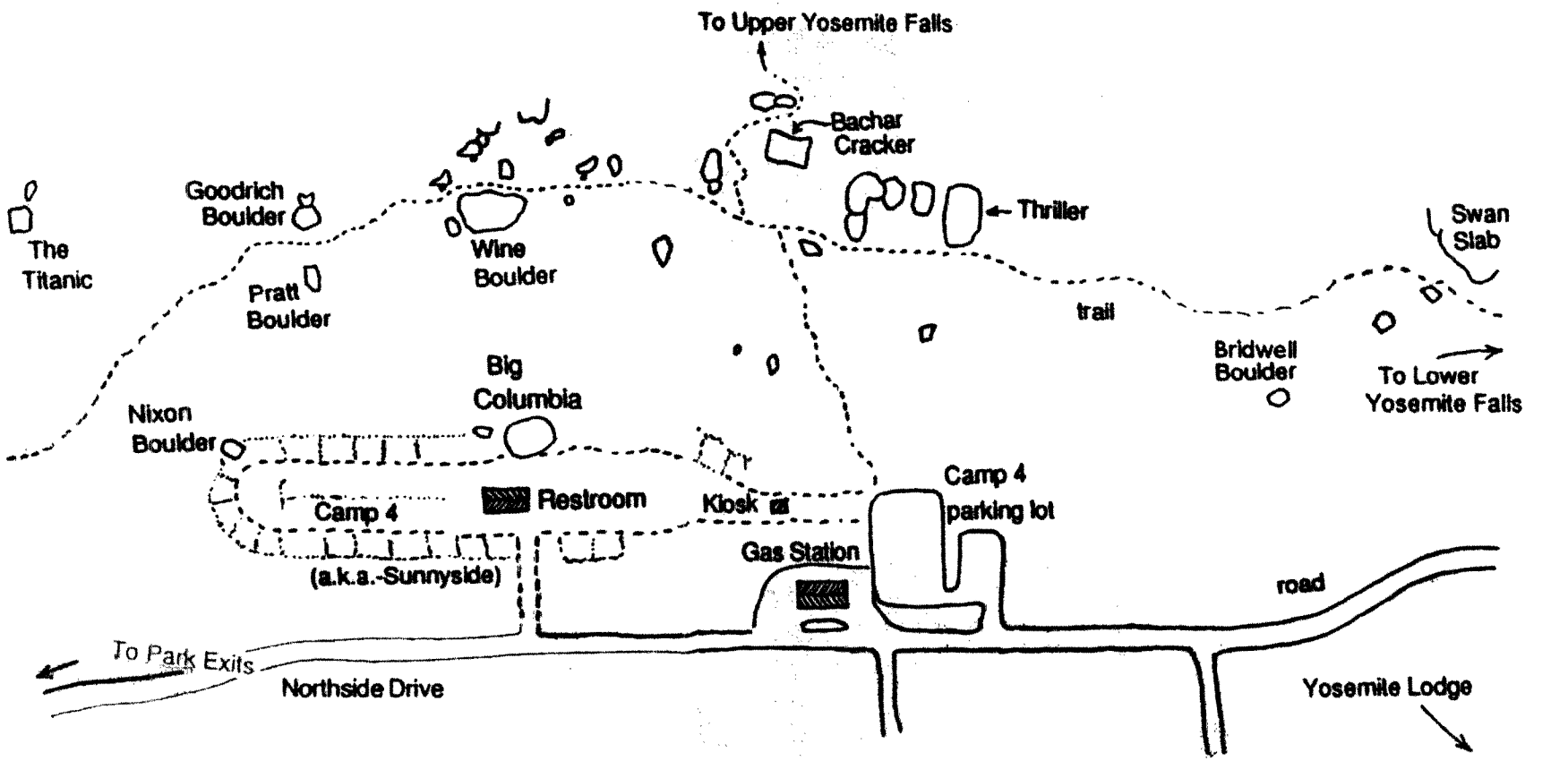


Camp 4, Yosemite National Park, Mariposa County, California.
David Louter, September 2001, National Park Service, Seattle.
View of Little Columbia, one of Camp 4's boulders.



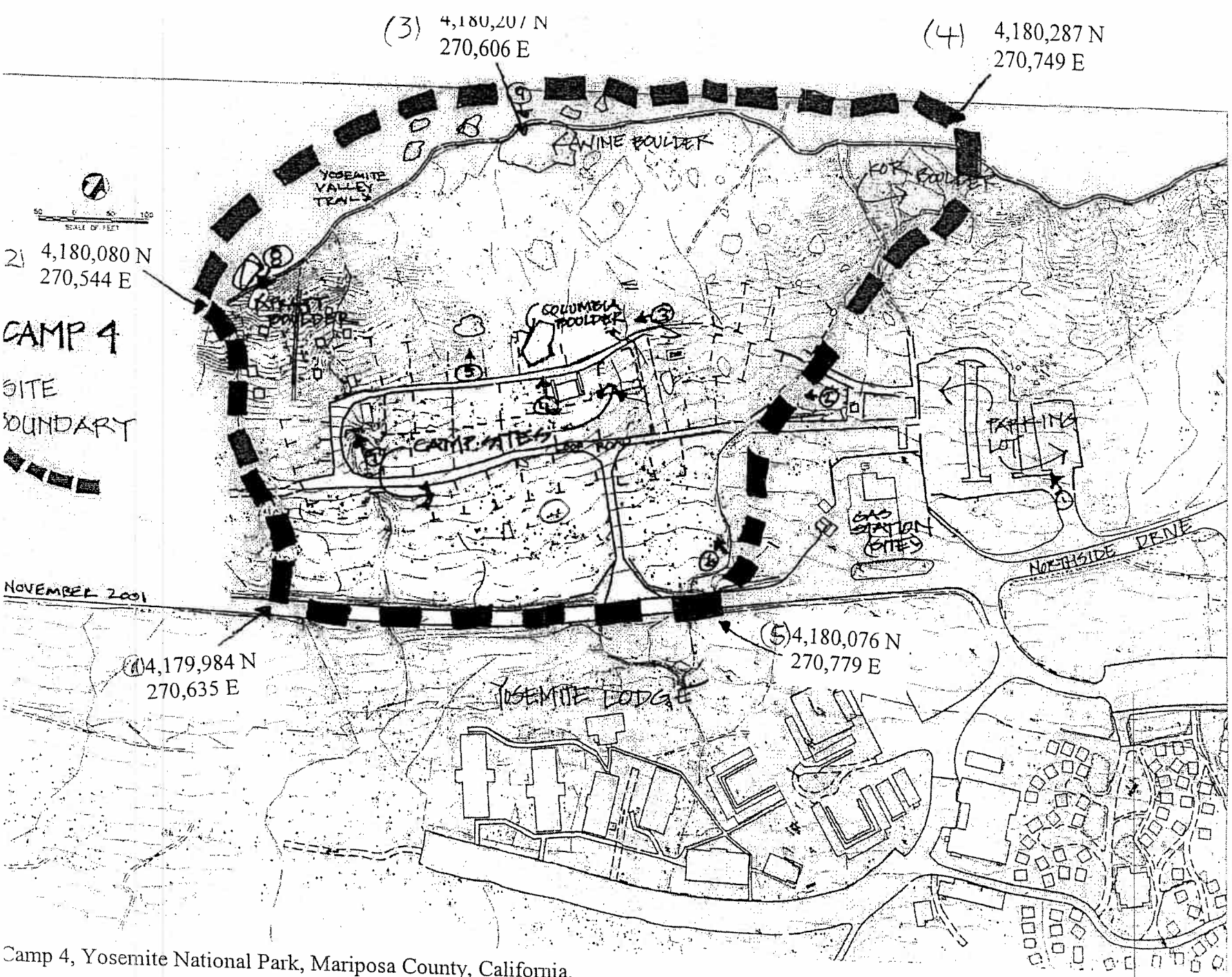
Camp 4, Yosemite National Park, Mariposa County, California.
David Louter, September 2001, National Park Service, Seattle.
Looking north into camp from Northside Drive. Northside Drive forms to camp's south boundary.

Camp 4 Overview Map



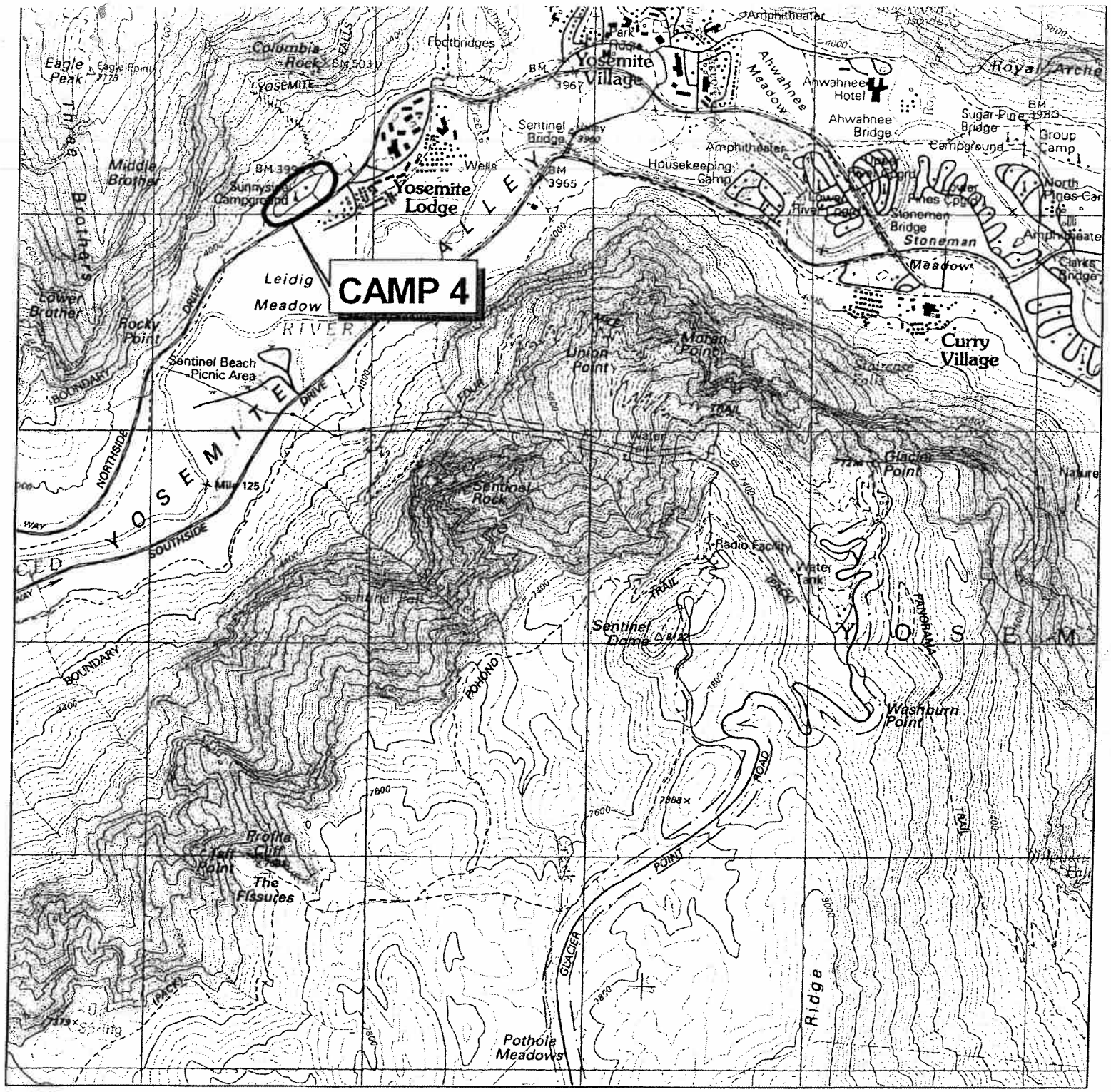
Source: Don Reid, Selected Bouldering Yosemite Valley, 1996.

Camp 4, Yosemite National Park, Mariposa County, California.
Overview Map.



Camp 4, Yosemite National Park, Mariposa County, California.

Projection:	UTM
Units:	Meters
Zone:	11 North
Datum:	NAD27



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Camp 4 Historic Site, Yosemite National Park, Mariposa County, California
Location map (Half Dome Quadrangle, CA, 7.5 minute series, USGS 1992)