

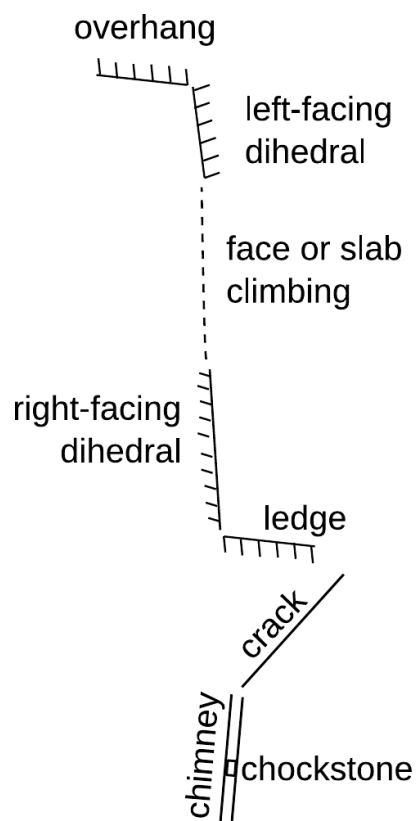
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## Key to Symbols

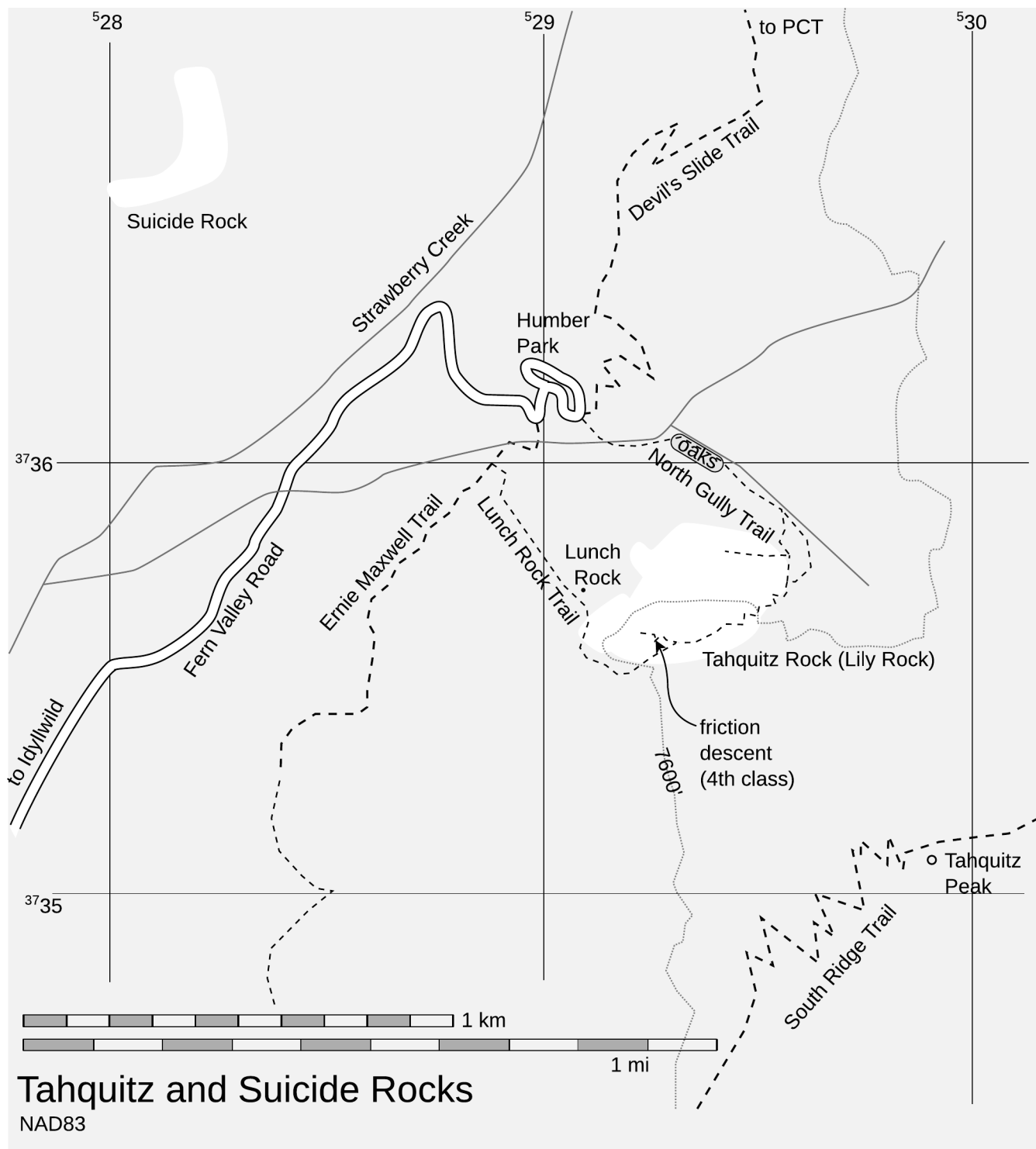


× bolt  
 p fixed piton  
 OW off width  
 LB layback  
 SB sling belay, i.e. hanging belay

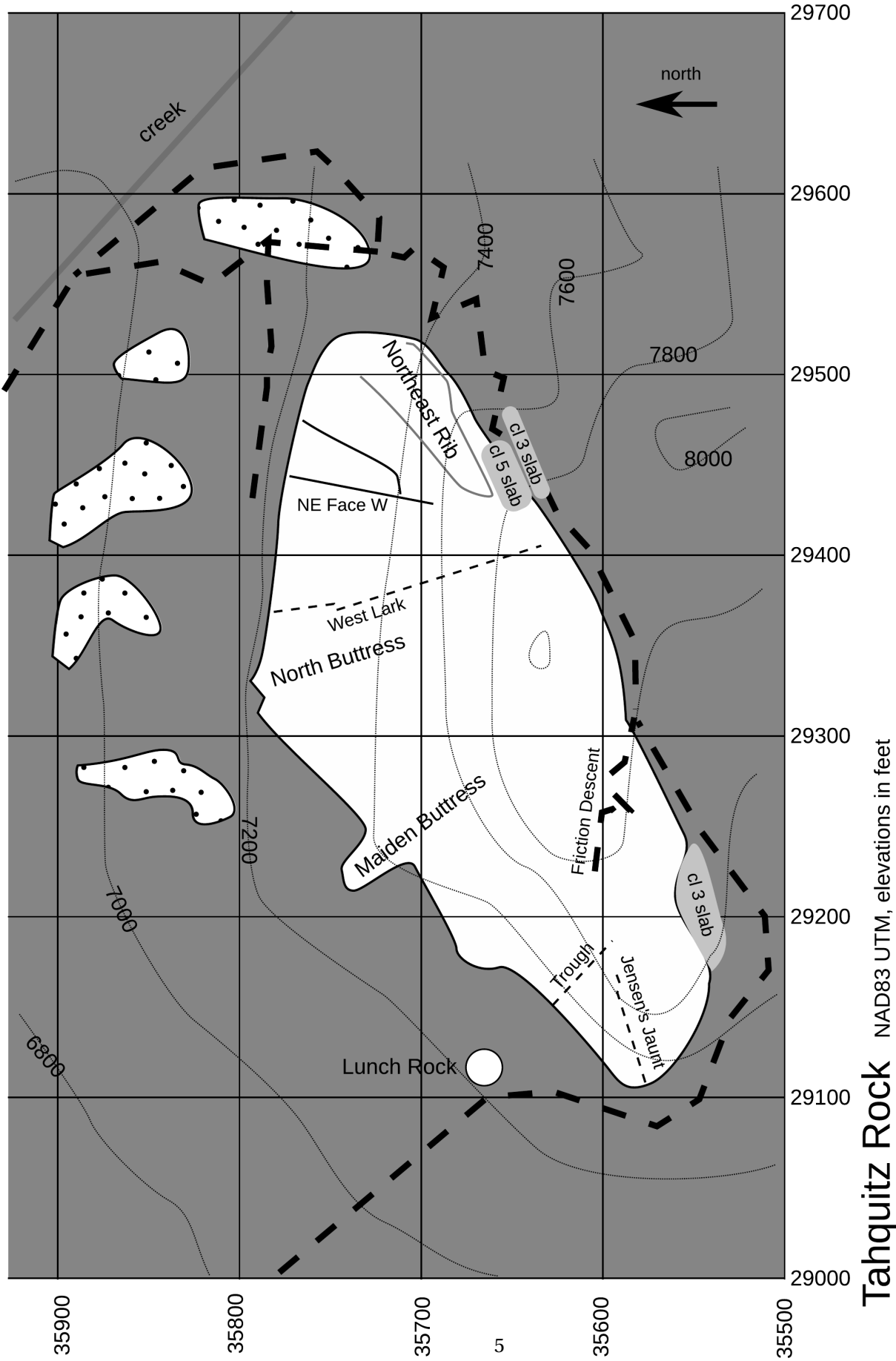
① belay at the top of the first pitch  
 ○ optional belay  
 ○ start of the climb, if not obvious

  
 trough
 
 arete

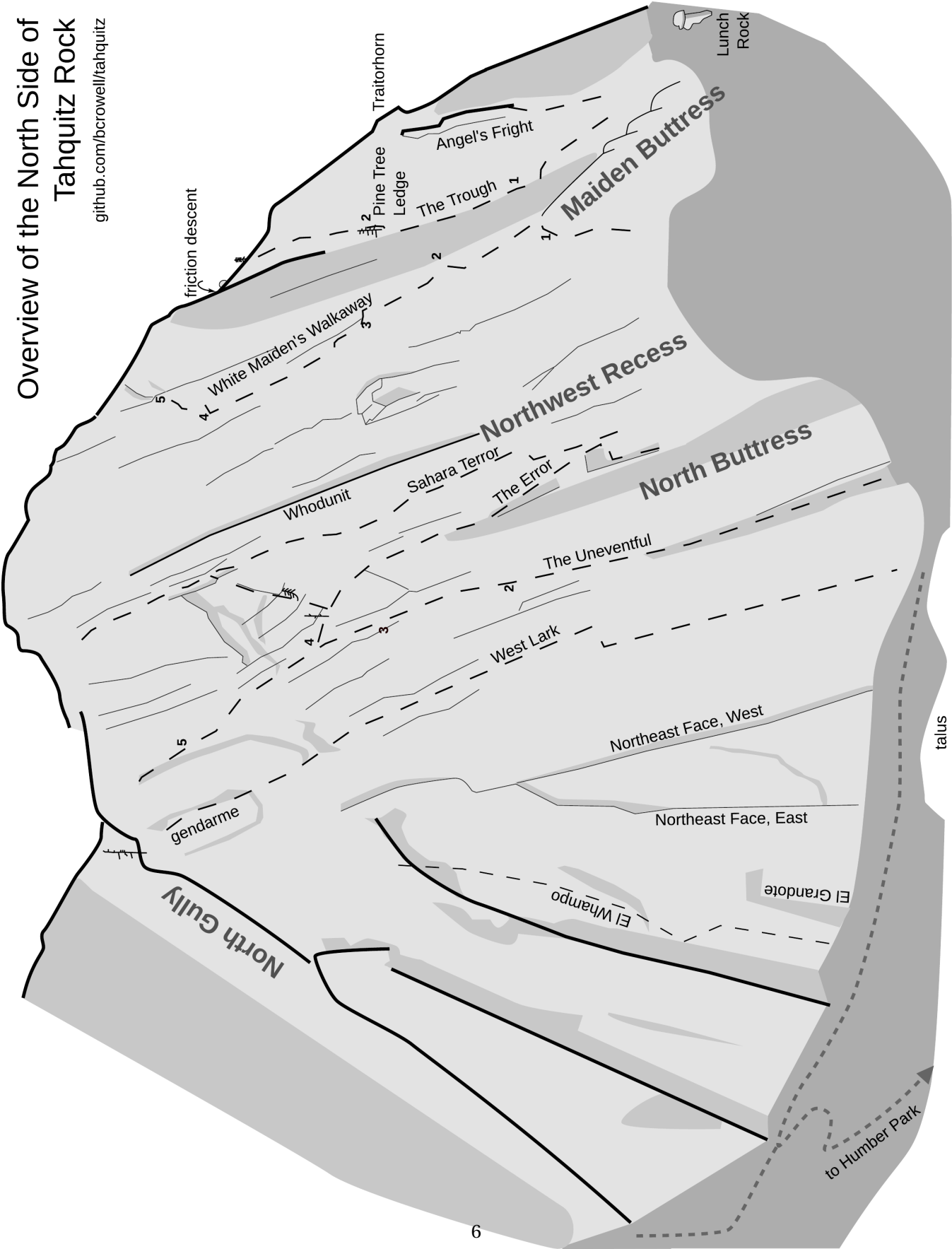
## Map of Fern Valley, Tahquitz and Suicide Rocks



Map of Tahquitz Rock



Overview of the North Side



Overview of the North Side of  
Tahquitz Rock  
[github.com/bcrowell/tahquitz](https://github.com/bcrowell/tahquitz)

## Climbing at Tahquitz Rock before World War II

The recorded history of climbing at Tahquitz begins in 1936 when Jim Smith and Mary Jane Edwards, members of the Rock Climbing Section of the Sierra Club's Los Angeles chapter, noticed Tahquitz Rock as they descended from nearby Tahquitz Peak. RCS later became separate from the Sierra Club for liability reasons and is now SCMA.

No. 68 - Oct. 3, 1940	THE MUGELNOOS	Page Three
<u>T A H Q U I T Z   H I S T O R Y</u>		
Asked by the Mugelnoos for a history of climbing at Tahquitz Rock, Art Johnson, first RCS Chairman, provided the following dates and data, which will serve as a Section record, and which should interest those who were not on hand to pioneer the routes.		
<u>The Trough (Easy Class 4)</u>		
Nov. 10, 1936 - Trough tried. Cold weather and icy winds combined with poor selection of route, to turn back Bill Rice, Nelson Rice, & Art Johnson. Can you imagine that!		
Aug. 22, 1936 - Trough. Jim Smith lead Bob Brinton & Gene Jasaitis up the Trough. Jim wrote Art, "It was surprisingly easy, a good route for beginners." They used 1 piton.		
<u>Finger-Tip Traverse (Minimum Class 5)</u>		
Aug. 23, 1936 - Finger-Tip tried. Jim Smith, Bob Brinton and Gene Jasaitis climbed to the beginning of the traverse. Sept. 19, 1936 - Finger-Tip. Two ropes pushed through the Finger-Tip without trouble, Jim Smith leading Bob Brinton, followed by Art Johnson and Bill Rice. They then descended the Trough to lunch ledge and put two pitons in the Piton Pooper.		
<u>Piton Pooper (Class 6; Class 5 with pitons in place)</u>		
Sept. 20, 1936 - Bob Brinton and Art Johnson climbed Trough to ledge; & alternating leads, powerhoused the Piton Pooper. Jim Smith & Bill Rice climbed it the same day.		
<u>Angel's Fright (Class 5)</u>		
Sept. 20, 1936 - Jim Smith and Bill Rice worked out the Angel's Fright.		
<u>White Maiden's Walk-Away (Class 4-5)</u>		
Aug. 14, 1937 - Jim Smith and Art Johnson ascended by this route.		
<u>McKenzie's Hunt: (Class 5)</u>		
Oct. 3, 1937 - Glen Dawson and Dick Jones pushed the most exposed climb on the rock to completion. 16 pitons. Previously, Bill Rice and Bob Brinton had gone up over the overhanging beginning; and Bill Rice, Bob Brinton and Art Johnson worked 9 pitons up to the pendulum traverse. This climb has been made only twice since the first ascent: by Carl Jensen and John D. Mendenhall Oct. 9, 1938; by Bill Rice & Clyde Nelson 9/28/39.		
<u>Traitor Horn (Class 6; Maximum Class 5 with pitons in place)</u>		
July 17, 1938 - Traitor Horn tried. Jim Smith, John D. Mendenhall (alternating leads), and Ruth Dyer, worked up over lower horn.		
Aug. 20, 1938 - Traitor Horn. Jim Smith, leading, with Art Johnson in support, and Maxine Holton third, made the ascent of this difficult and spectacular climb.		
Aug. 21, 1938 - <u>Jensen's Hunt (Class 5)</u> - Carl Jensen, Jim Smith, and Doug McDonald turned the horns to the north by a delicate one-foot-on, one-foot-off pitch.		
<u>Friction Route (Class 3)</u>		
June 23, 1938 - This easy route up the "back" side of the rock toward the east, was discovered by Jim Smith, as a useful route for beginners in consecutive climbing.		
<u>OTHER ROUTES</u>		
The routes named above are those most commonly climbed at Tahquitz. Following are other routes which have been completed or tried. Many fine climbs, particularly on the North Face, remain to be put through by old or new climbers interested in pioneering.		
<u>North Face</u>		
Aug. 14, 1937 - Glen Dawson and Bob Brinton worked out an intricate route up the slabs. May 19, 1940 - Blair Dawson and Walter Hennies explored a route up the N. side essentially the same as the Dawson-Brinton route. Oct. 1, 1939 - John D. and Ruth Mendenhall, and Wilbur Johnson, ascended about 400 ft. by a new route which should "go."		
<u>Southeast Face</u>		
Nov. 1936 or early 1937 - Jim Smith, Bob Brinton and Art Johnson tried the center of the SE face -- no go; it's still unclimbed.		
May 19, 1940 - Southeast face under summit - Bob Brinton, Tim Evans and Bob Roy McDonald negotiated the crack directly to the summit from the head of the Friction Route.		
<u>From Top Traverse</u>		
Sept. 30, 1939 - Bob Brinton and Homer Fuller traversed from the Trough to the White Maiden's Walk-Away under the big wall.		
<u>Finger-Bowl</u>		
Aug. 25, 1940 - Art Johnson took a shoulder stand off of Klais Strand, to get into a lead of shallow bowls, up a route 50 y ards West of the Friction Route.		
<u>Dawson's Bolly</u>		
July 29, 1940 - Bob Brinton and Blair Dawson climbed lunch rock at head of trail.		

The history of its development as a climbing area is recorded in the 1938-1940 issues of the newsletter Mugelnoos, which has been scanned and preserved by SCMA and is available to members on its website. The reproduc-

tion above shows the club's first attempt to make an organized record of first ascents, which previously had been reported in the newsletter as they occurred. Most of the members were mainly interested in ski mountaineering, hence the title of the newsletter.

Because rock climbing was at this time simply a technique used in mountaineering, rather than a sport in its own right, the attitude was that any way of getting up the rock was fair game, and many of the early first ascents were probably done by aiding on pitons whenever it was convenient. With the primitive ropes, gear, and belaying techniques of the period, a fall at a crux would have been serious. Pitons were left in place "for safety" on Fingertip Traverse, were routinely used as aid on Angel's Fright, and were put in place on rappel in order to facilitate the first ascent of Piton Pooper. Many of these pitons are still in place.

The club began training people in roped climbing and belaying, sometimes at Stoney Point, Strawberry Peak, and Eagle Rock. The route now known as the Friction Descent was originally discovered in June 1938 by Jim Smith, was labeled the Friction Route, and was also used for training. People normally climbed on the west side of the rock and rappelled back down rather than down-climbing, so there was not much interest in the descent routes we use today.

Everything to the left of the Maiden Buttress was unclimbed as of 1940, although there had been several attempts to find routes. Suicide Rock was not even scouted as a climbing area until 1940 (Mugelnoos No. 66), and was considered unclimbable because of the steep slabs and lack of protection. The first recorded FA at Suicide was not until 1955 (Paisano Jam Crack). In general, the only artificial pro was thin pitons, so the selection of routes was extremely limited.

## Weather and Climbing Season

Climbing season usually begins in late March on the south side, but snow may linger into May on the north side. The picture shows how to get a decent guess about conditions based on a satellite image. Figure (a) shows a date when the north side still had snow inside a few alcoves and crevices, visible through binoculars. From the satellite, you can see that there is snow in the north-facing gullies on the ridge connecting Tahquitz Rock to Tahquitz Peak; (b) is two weeks later, when the rock itself was completely free of snow, but there were two small snow piles at the bottom of the Larks, barely visible here as tiny dots.

Many years, for most of the summer, the forecast is for a 20% chance of showers. Waiting for the number to go to 0% could mean not climbing all summer. A forecast of 85 F in Idyllwild, or 100 F in Riverside, usually means it will be hotter than optimal. I usually drink less water than most people, but in these conditions I would bring 2 liters of water on a climb. In midsummer, even the north face is sun-exposed all day.

The end of the season is usually around Thanksgiving. If checking the weather forecast for Idyllwild, keep in mind that the town is at 5400', while the summit of Tahquitz Rock is at 7973'. As a rule of thumb, temperatures on north-facing routes will feel colder by 20 degrees F than the forecast in Idyllwild.

In early or late season, if the forecast for Idyllwild is a low of 45 F and a high of 65 F, this generally means that early-morning climbing on the north side will be a test of fortitude. In these conditions, think about gloves, long underwear, and multiple layers of wool and down. Unfortunately the only part of the rock that receives early-morning sun is the area around the Ski Tracks, where there are only a few moderate trad routes.

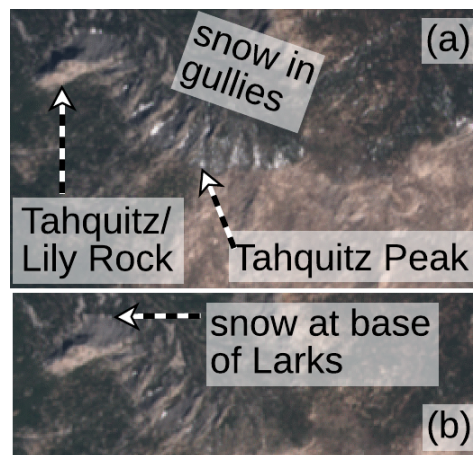


Figure 1: Snow on (a) May 1, 2022, (b) May 15, 2022.

## Ratings

### Historical

The Yosemite Decimal System originated at Tahquitz, and the following climbs were used as the standards to define the scale. For each climb, I've also listed the consensus rating from Mountainproject (in 2015), which shows that there has been quite a bit of inflation in the ratings over the years, mainly at the low end of the scale — nobody wants to say they climb 5.0 these days.

#### *Historical definition of the YDS, and inflation of ratings*

5.0	The Trough	FA 1936	modern 5.4
5.1	Fingertip Traverse	FA 1936	modern 5.4
5.2	Frightful Variation of the Trough	FA 1944	modern 5.2
5.3	East Lark	FA 1950	modern 5.5
5.4	Angel's Fright	FA 1936	modern 5.5
5.5	Ski Tracks	FA 1947, 1957	modern 5.6, 5.9
5.6	Sahara Terror	FA 1942	modern 5.7
5.7	Fingertrip	FA 1946	modern 5.7
5.8	Mechanic's Route	FA 1937	modern 5.8R
5.9	Open Book	FFA 1952	modern 5.9

### Evaluating ratings from a guidebook

When depending on a guidebook for information about the difficulty of a climb, take into account both the popularity of the climb and the date of its first ascent. Old and lesser-known climbs often retain their historical ratings, which can be extremely sandbagged by modern standards.

For example, Summit magazine did a big spread on Tahquitz in 1960, which you can find scans of online. They describe Northeast Farce as 5.3 and White Maiden's Walkway as 5.1. Having done these two climbs, I would agree that Northeast Farce is a couple of grades harder than the Maiden. But the 2001 edition of the Vogel-Gaines guidebook rates these climbs as 5.3 and 5.4, respectively — as if the Maiden were the *harder* climb. What has probably happened is that because the Maiden is one of the most popular climbs on the rock, there has been pressure to inflate its rating. Since almost nobody does Northeast Farce, it retains the rating that was assigned when it was first climbed in 1954.

Another good example of this phenomenon is two obscure climbs on the inaccessible south face of Suicide Rock, named Minor and Spring Cleaning. The first ascent of Minor is lost in the mists of time, while Spring Cleaning had its FA in 1970. Several people who I've done these climbs with agree that they are equal in difficulty, but Vogel and Gaines list them as 5.1 and 5.6.

## Descent routes

### Friction descent

FA June 23, 1938, Jim Smith. This was originally used as a training route for new members of the Sierra Club's Rock Climbing Section.

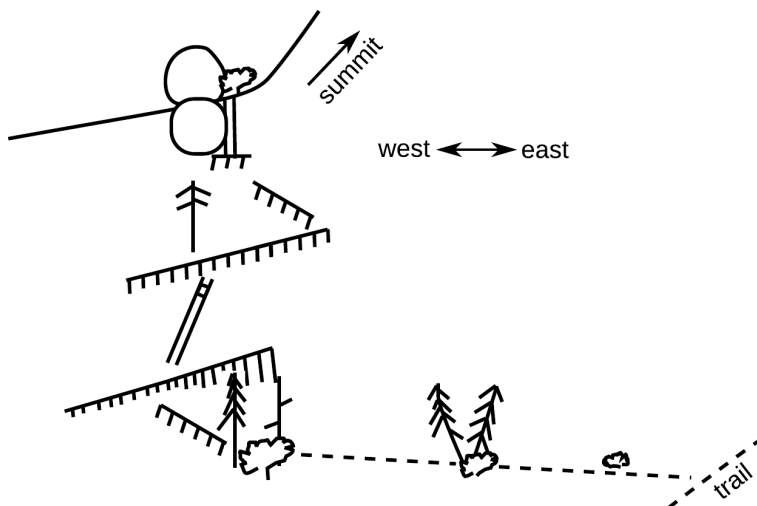
This is the class 3 standard descent for routes that end on the low western shoulder of the rock. Most of these routes end below the friction descent, but some, such as White Maiden's Walkaway, end above it. People have been known to get lost or in trouble on this descent, and some people don't feel comfortable doing it unroped. An alternative is always to go up and over the top of the rock, and then down either the north gully or the climber's trail on the south side of the rock.

Locate the house-sized boulder near the top of Tahquitz Rock's western shoulder, perched above the south side of the rock. Pass around the boulder on either the east or the west side, and go to the east side of the boulder. Insert into a short vertical chimney with one wall formed by a second, lower boulder. The exit at the bottom of the chimney is a big step onto a sloping ledge. This move can be done either by hugging the back wall and stepping down to a tree or by hanging your butt farther out in the wind and feeling for an undercling on the right.

Go down a ramp to the east, then follow a ledge west to a tree. Using a chock-stone for stability, insert into a diagonal chimney. At the bottom of the chimney, take a ledge down to the east.

The remainder of the route is a traverse passing through two wooded islands in the slabs. Each of these islands has two tall pine trees and some oak scrub. One of the trees in the first island is dead. The pine trees in the second island are a double tree. In the first island, pass directly through the grotto formed by the oaks.

Continue traversing across exposed slabs until you reach the dirt.



Return to Lunch Rock on a use trail. This trail can become indistinct in spots, and it is easy to be tempted into false alternatives that lead into dense brush. The correct trail runs parallel to and just a few feet left of the edge of the exposed granite. In most places the edge of the granite means the base of the rock wall, but in two spots it means the edge of some low-angle slabs. Stay off of these slabs, one set of which lies below the friction descent and another near the bottom of the Ski Tracks.

After passing the second set of slabs, continue around the corner and back to Lunch Rock.



## **North Gully descent**

This class 2 descent route is used by climbs that end near the top of the rock or to its east. If coming down from the summit, scramble down class 3 rock to the saddle lying between the summit of Tahquitz Rock and Tahquitz Peak. However, most of the climbing routes that use this descent end below and to the east of the summit, and for these routes the traverse to the saddle is no more than class 2.

The normal North Gully descent, described here, goes down the gully to the north of the saddle. If there has been wet weather recently, it may be faster and safer to go down the south side instead.

If using the standard North Gully descent, then from the saddle, turn left down a steep, rough trail. Descend low-angle slabs on the right, not class 5 slabs on the left. (If there has been wet weather recently, the slabs may be covered with water, forcing you to downclimb along the ramp and east-facing dihedral to the west of the slabs.) The slabs lead down to a big ledge. Rather than continuing down further slabs below the ledge, make a sharp left around a corner.

Below the slab area, a use trail resumes. This trail stays right for a while, no more than 100 feet from the rock face of the Strawberry Creek headwall. It then forks, one fork leading left through the talus field and the other on dirt. The right-hand fork is easier as a descent route.

The trail now gradually becomes more obvious and well maintained, paralleling the creek and passing through a grove of oaks. Continue to the upper parking lot at Humber Park.

## Natural History

### Trees and Shrubs

Here are about a dozen of the most common species you will see on the approach hike, climb, and descent. Species are arranged in groups from least to most specialized. The symbol ★ means that this plant is commonly seen on the rock itself.

*South side trail, dry, sun-exposed slopes:*

- live oak (*Q. chrysolepis* and *wislizeni*) — small, tough leaves
- sugar pine (*P. Lambertiana*) ★ — 1-3" needles in groups of 5. Almost all of the pine trees seen on climbing routes are these.
- Coulter pine (*P. coulteri*) — 6-7" needles in groups of 3, huge cones; less common
- manzanita (*Arctostaphylos*) — smooth red bark, small pink bell-shaped flowers
- mountain whitethorn (*Ceanothus*) — bushes with thorns; less common than at higher elevations

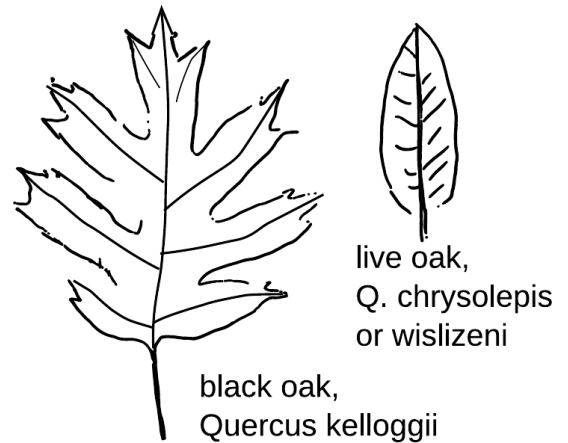


Figure 2: Oak leaves.

*In addition, on the north side:*

- white fir (*Abies concolor*) — 1" single needles. Occasionally seen on climbing routes.
- black oak (*Q. kelloggii*) — large, soft leaves, deeply lobed with three-pointed tips
- incense cedar (*Calocedrus decurrens*) — scaly leaves

*In addition, in wet areas:*

- mountain pink currant (*Ribes nevadense*) ★ — bush or small tree with 3-lobed, serrated leaves
- western azalea (*Rhododendron occidentale*)

*Growing only out of cracks in the rock face:*

- mountain mahogany (*Cercocarpus ledifolius*) ★ — These are the small hardwoods you see on climbing routes, often used as anchors.

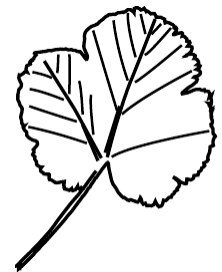



Figure 3: Mountain pink currant.

The 1974 Wilts guidebook notes a single lodgpole pine on East Lark.

Sources: Dole and Rose, **An Amateur Botanist's Identification Manual for the Shrubs and Trees of the Southern California Coastal Region and Mountains**. Tom Chester, "Plant Guide to Devils Slide Trail, San Jacinto Mountains," [tchester.org/sb/plants/guides/devils\\_slide.html](http://tchester.org/sb/plants/guides/devils_slide.html). The arrangement above is what I came up with based on hiking the approach trail from Humber Park to the vicinity of the Ski Tracks.

## Birds

In the spring while hiking in on the approach, you will hear a lot of . This is the song of an adult male mountain chickadee, *Parus gambeli*, looking for someone with whom to mate for life. This three-note version seems to be what the birds in this area consider sexy, not the four-note version of some other areas. I've always heard them but not seen them, but they're small grayscale birds with black throats and white eyebrows. They live in pine trees year-round, eating insects in the summer and in the colder months resorting to pine nuts, insect eggs, and dormant insects. They nest in holes in trees.

While climbing, once in a while something goes whooshing past my head. I think these are violet-green swallows, *Tachycineta thalassina*. Swallows hunt insects while flying, so probably that's what they're doing. While sightseeing from a belay, you will also see the playful aerobatics of ravens, *Corvus corax*.

## Geology

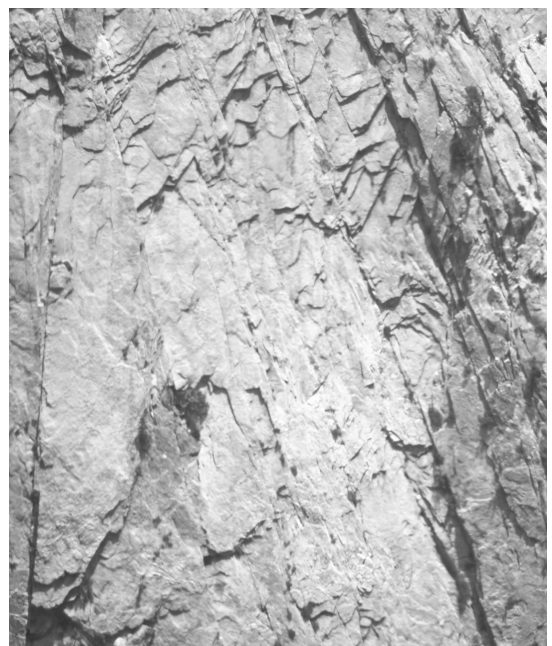
The San Jacinto Mountains are geologically similar to the Sierra, and that's the reason that the rock quality at Tahquitz tends to be so much better than in the San Gabriels and San Bernardinos. Both the San Jacintos and the Sierra were formed by upwellings of magma, called batholiths, that cooled and hardened deep underground rather than erupting at the surface like a volcano. The intrusion that formed Tahquitz happened about 100 million years ago, during the age of the dinosaurs. The San Jacintos are at the north end of their batholith, the south end being at the other end of the Peninsular Ranges, in Baja California.

Because the magma was still underground when it cooled, the cooling process was very slow, taking about a million years to complete, so there was time for large quartz and feldspar crystals to grow. These large crystals are what give rocks like granite their granular texture. The rock in the San Jacintos is quartz diorite, which is similar to granite but contains a different proportion of quartz to other minerals.

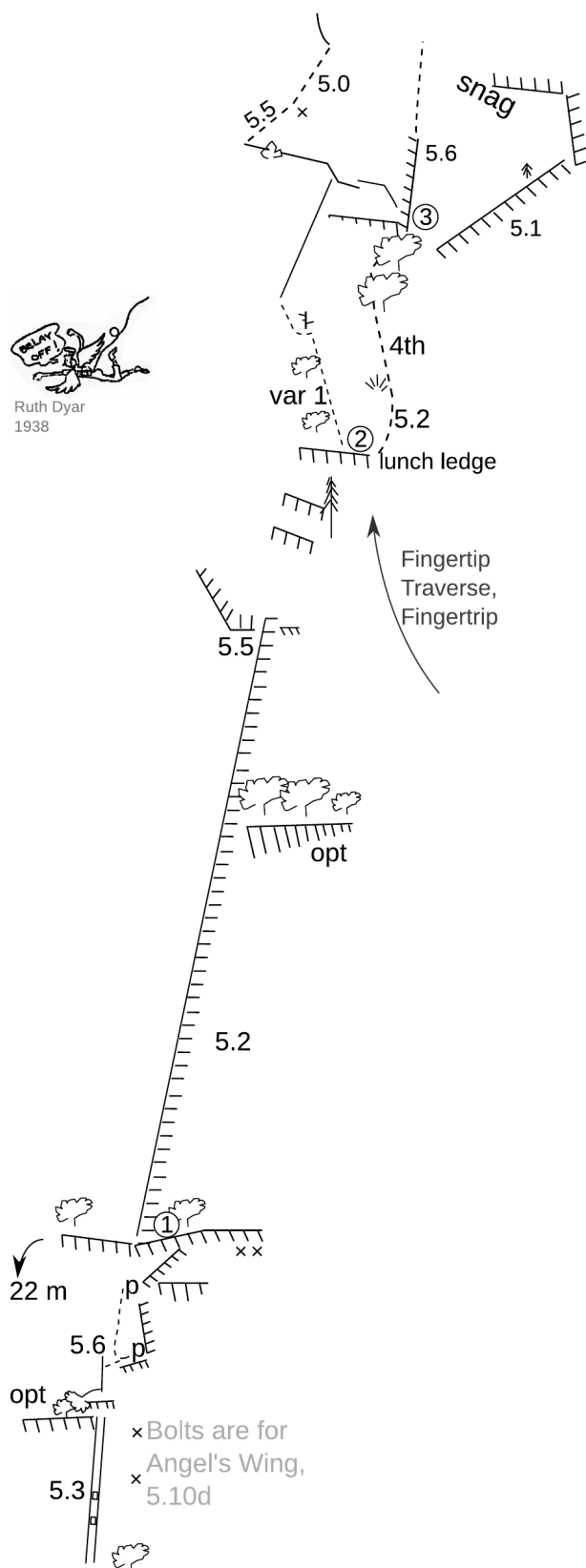
On the west side of the San Jacintos lies the San Jacinto fault zone, which runs from San Bernardino to the Salton Sea. The fault is active, and caused major destruction in the area around Hemet in 1899 and 1918. The mountains were uplifted by tectonic action along this fault line and others to the east.

Unlike the Sierra, the San Jacintos were never subject to glaciation during the Ice Age and Little Ice Age, the southernmost glaciers in California being in the San Bernardinos. This is why Tahquitz lacks the glacial features seen in the Sierra such as cirques, U-shaped glacial valleys, glacial aretes, and erratics.

The rounded rock face of Tahquitz was formed by processes similar to the ones that created the domes of Yosemite. Pressure underneath caused the rock to expand, and the faster expansion near the surface caused the rock to bulge outward. Fragile slabs about 100 feet thick then broke off of the outer part of the shell, like peeling the outer layers of an onion. This shedding process, called exfoliation, produced the smooth and rounded shape of the rock. On a smaller scale, exfoliation of thin slabs continues today. In the photo, it has created the "overlaps" that are natural obstacles on some of the climbing routes on the northeast face.



## Angel's Fright (5.5) ★ ★ ★



This short climb was the original definition of 5.4 on the YDS. The name is a pun on Angels Flight in LA. P1 and P2 were traditionally aided using pitons. The long, uniform left-facing dihedral (P2) is prominent from Humber Park. Fun, varied climbing. The start is above and to the left of Lunch Rock. Pro to 2". FA (with aid?) Sep. 20, 1936, Jim Smith and William Rice.

**P1.** Climb a chimney with a crack on the right that starts as wide hands and then becomes narrower. Use crack technique. The start is made easier by trusting the firmly lodged first chock-stone. Well protected. Optional belay at a large ledge with trees; using this belay makes it easier for the belayer to see what to do on the following, more difficult section. Head up balancy, steep face climbing with possibly bewildering routefinding. Start up a ragged crack, then exit right to a small ledge with a fixed pin (replaced ca. 2020). Move back left on the same ledge and feel for a hidden hold at head height. Go up to a second piton. Climb to the right up a ramp to a big belay ledge with two trees. 30 m

**P2.** Cruise up the big dihedral that forms the backbone of the climb. A finger-width crack runs along the wall. Most of the climbing is easy 5th class, until you reach a vertical headwall. The headwall has good hands, good pro, and an opportunity to rest at a ledge on the right. After the headwall, continue up fourth-class ledges to Lunch Ledge. Here the climb joins up with Fingertip Traverse and Fingertrip. 55 m

**P3.** Climb up around a corner to the right (5.2) and continue up fourth-class terrain.

*Var 1:* Head up and left toward a dead tree, then up and right along a ramp/crack. This variation works if you want to link up P3-4 without excessive rope drag.

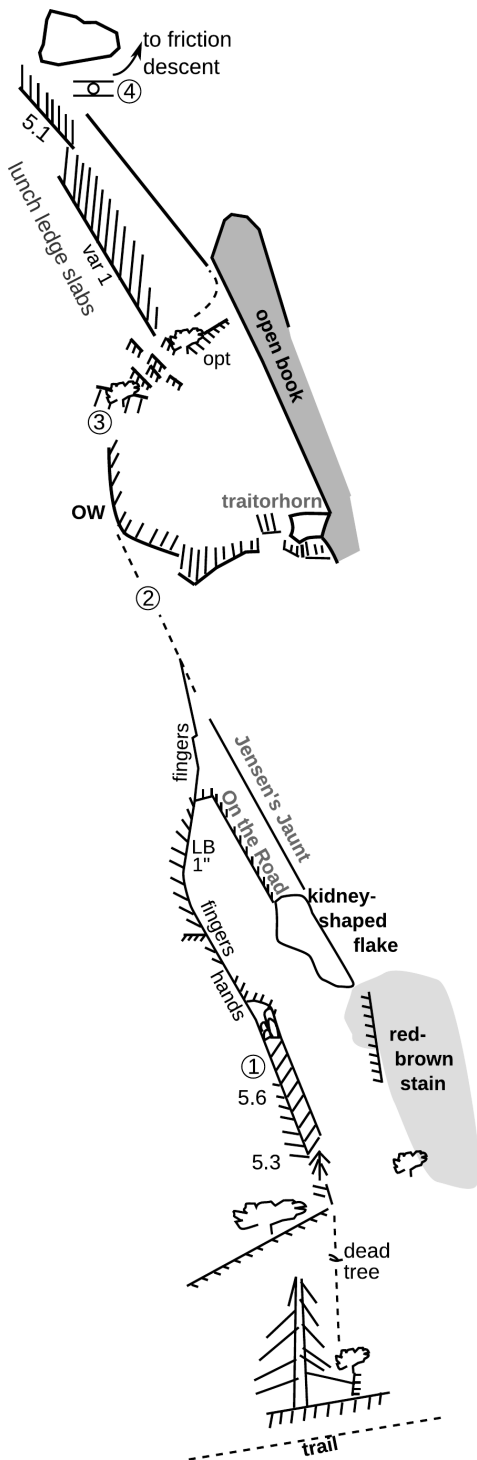
**P4.** Move up and left on a flake and then tiptoe along it as it continues around a corner. This is easily protected with 0.3"-1" cams. A few feet beyond a small tree, head 10 vertical feet up a 5.5 pure-friction slab to an orange bolt. (The slab is steeper directly above the tree.) Beyond the bolt, the slab gets less steep and there is pro.

*Var 2:* Head right into a low-angle gutter, then turn left at an overhang. Rope drag tends to be a problem. Where the wall ends, take care to route the rope so it doesn't snag under the corner. 57 m, 5.1

*Var 3:* Climb a very thin finger crack, punctuated with pin scars. 5.6

*Descent:* Walk uphill to the friction descent route (p. 10).

## Coffin Nail (5.8) ★



### Warning: I've only done P2 once, and I didn't lead it.

This is a more difficult variation of Jensen's Jaunt, differing in P1-2. There is dangerous loose rock on the easy first pitch. The second pitch is sustained and difficult and for the grade, but has excellent pro. On weekends there tend to be traffic jams where Jensen's Jaunt, Coffin Nail, and Traitorhorn all intersect.

Pro to 3-4". Bring plenty of hand- and finger-size gear. White tricam for P4. The FA is unknown.

From Lunch Rock, head around to the foot of the southwest end of the rock. The start of the climb lies in the general area to the right of Fingertip Traverse and to the left of the gigantic right-facing dihedral of Open Book. Starting from the trail, scramble up to a start at a wooded ledge.

**P1.** Climb through an oak tree and then straight up toward a pine. This initial section is 4th class except for one difficult move near a loose dead tree. Enter a deep gully with a narrower chimney at the back. 5.3 climbing stiffening to 5.6. Beware of multiple loose rocks in this section, including one the size of a gallon of milk and one the size of a microwave. It's possible to belay higher or lower than the position shown on the topo.

**P2.** Strenuous hand jamming gets you out of the chimney (first crux). Hand-width climbing and then easier finger widths. There is one good rest stance along the way. The dihedral leans right and becomes overhanging. Layback this section and protect with 1" cams. The second crux is to escape the overhang at the upper left corner. It can be protected as much as desired with finger-width gear. For the initial move, it helps if you know how to do a finger lock and can do a one-arm pull-up. If necessary, the crux can easily be aided. After the crux, continue up easy terrain to a belay (small gear) below and to the left of the Traitorhorn overhang. 5.8+

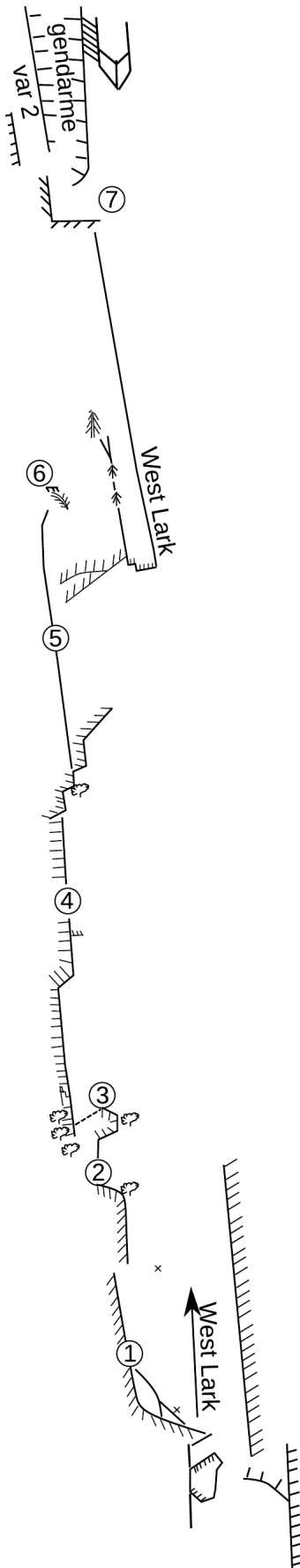
**P3.** Move up and around to the left, to an attention-getting step-around move, which is made easier by taking a step down. The move can be protected with small gear. After the step-around comes an awkward crux move in order to get your right foot into a diagonal crack, with a solid right hand but a sketchy left foot. The initial position is sort of like the Winnie the Pooh story where Pooh gets his head stuck in Rabbit's burrow. Shorter leaders will have to do a little scooching to get to the good hold. It's important to place pro immediately before this move (red BD hex) in order to avoid the risk of a fall that hits a boulder below. Once you start squirming into position, you can also reach forward to place another piece (a 4" cam works best, but decent 2" or 3" placements exist). Follow the crack, which immediately widens and becomes off width. The climbing soon becomes easier, leading to a big, comfy, shady belay ledge at a mountain mahogany. 5.6

**P4.** This pitch involves escaping and surmounting the big left-facing dihedral by going around to the right and getting up onto a ramp of slab that separates the area above Lunch Ledge from Open Book. Climb class 4 blocks to an optional belay, which helps to avoid rope drag. Traverse all the way right to the arete above Open Book. A white tricam in the right orientation can be made to fit in a tiny pin scar along the way, providing at least psychological pro. Run-out 5.0 slab climbing along the arete leads toward a crack. A single 5.5 move is required in order to reach a good hold and place gear (0.75-2" cam). Continue up a low-angle fist crack, 5.0. Natural anchor at a boulder. 5.5 m

**Var 1:** Climb the dihedral and then insert into the 5.1 gutter above Lunch Ledge. I haven't tried this variation, but Vogel calls it 5.7, and it's supposed to protect well.

**Descent:** Walk uphill to the friction descent route (p. 10).

## East Lark (5.6)



This route was the original standard for 5.3 in the YDS. It follows the most natural and obvious line up the north face, a long right-facing dihedral system that jumps back and forth to the left and right. After this, most of the second half of the climb is a slog up a nondescript face that mostly lacks cracks for pro or routefinding.

Because the dihedral zigzags so much, it is difficult to do long pitches without rope drag. Beginners lured by the 5.5 rating in the Vogel-Gaines guidebook may find themselves taking much, much longer than expected to get up this climb, which is long and has a uniform 5.6 level of difficulty on pitches 3-7.

Although it's two YDS grades harder than West Lark, an advantage of this climb over West Lark is that if you fall you're less likely to hit a ledge.

Rock quality is similar to most climbs on the north side. Check holds and gear placements for loose blocks and flakes. The very top of var 2 has a lot of breadbox-size blocks that could be deadly if dislodged.

FA Chuck and Ellen Wilts, G. Harr, and B. Tory, 1950.

Protection to 2". Doubles of 0.5-1" cams will be helpful.

The start lies at the extreme right side of the north face, just to the left of the north buttress. The gendarme and dead tree near the top are the most visible landmark through the treetops. Approach via the North Side Trail, going all the way to the east side of the face, and then take a side trail back to the west along the face of the rock. The start can be located by looking for the distinctive arch on the right, and the big hexagonal flake.

**P1.** Climb the crack that runs along the left side of the hexagonal flake, then traverse left along ledges to the right-facing dihedral.

**P2.** Continue up the dihedral. Belay at a ledge next to a mountain mahogany. 5.5

**P3.** Climb up and around a flake. Short pitch due to rope drag. 5.5

**P4.** Traverse down across a face with good hands and feet, inserting into a big right-facing dihedral. Climb past a distinctive needle's eye formation. Continue up to where a crux is presented by an overhanging jog in the dihedral. This crux is protectable. If you approach it from the left, you can't see that and the hands and feet on the right are better than you would think before committing to the move. 5.6

**P5.** A set of overhangs are arranged in a series of corners. Traverse some poorly protected slab that is hard for the grade, then climb through a gap at the corner where there is a tree (not the next, more prominent corner). Continue up a crack. 5.6

**P6.** Climb a hand crack to a face with a scattering of small pine trees. Lichen and choss are nuisances. A small ledge above a prostrate pine tree makes a decent belay. 5.6

**P7.** Continue up nondescript face and slab to a big ledge below the huge gendarme. To make the ledge, get over to the right; staying too far left leads you onto a wall/arete above it. Anchor with 1-4" cams. 5.6, 50 m

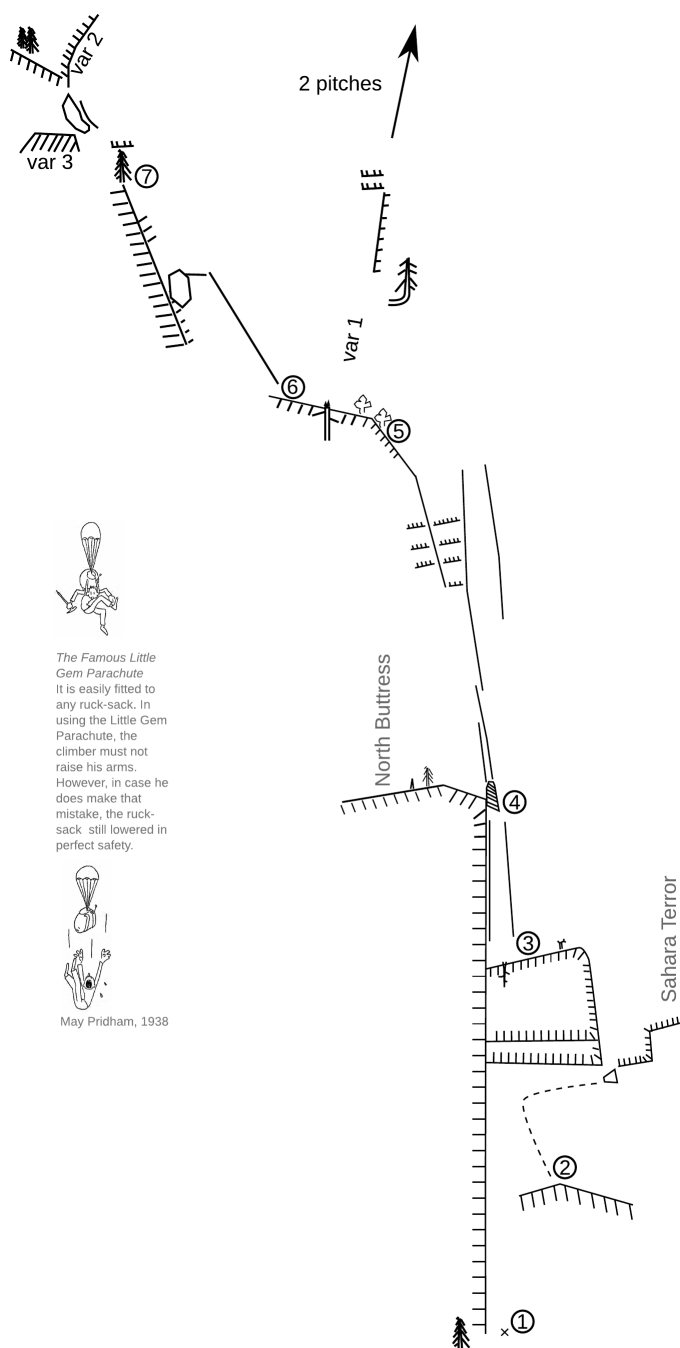
**P8.** Head up to the right of the gendarme. Next to it is its little sister, a rock shaped like the prow of a ship. Between them is a chimney. Climb the chimney, which is a surprisingly easy 5.2 and well protected.

**Var 2:** On the left side of the ledge is a wall/arete. Climb this to a steep but well protected face that is the lower left part of the gendarme, where it fades out. Escape to the left at a bush and insert into the broad chute. Pull over a protectable overhang. 5.4

**Descent:** Gain the summit ridge and head down left into the north gully descent route (p. 11).

Ben Crowell, [github.com/bcrowell/tahquitz](https://github.com/bcrowell/tahquitz)

## The Error (5.7) ★ ★



### Warning: I've only done this climb once.

This is a long climb that starts by following the corner on the right side of the north buttress and eventually passes onto the crest of the buttress. Large belay ledges make this a good route for climbing in a larger group. The rock quality is excellent. The pitches vary in difficulty. Pitches 3 and 5 are the hardest, and they mostly offer abundant pro, although less so in the final section of pitch 5. Approach via either the Lunch Rock Trail or the North Gully Trail, making sure not to confuse the North Buttress with the Maiden Buttrsss, which should be visible to the right. Pro to 3". FA 1952, G. Hemmings, J. Gallwas, B. Lilley, and G. Schlieff.

**P1.** Climb low-angle terrain. 5.3, 55 m

**P2.** Gain the first large ledge. 5.3, 35 m

**P3.** Climb face and slab on fingertip holds, then go right to the first weakness in the overhangs, marked by a triangular boulder. Do not continue all the way to the end of the overhangs, which would put you on Sahara Terror. Pass the boulder on either the left or the right (crux) and then continue up and left. Belay at a large ledge littered with rock and dead trees. 5.7, 50 m

**P4.** Climb low-angle terrain. Either the wide gutter on the left or the crack on the right will work. Belay in an alcove. 5.3, 20 m

**P5.** Climb a double crack up a short, steep wall with plentiful pro. A crack system leads to an area with overhangs and several parallel cracks. Traverse left to get on the leftmost crack. Sustained climbing at the grade until the last few meters, where a large ledge begins to develop near several mountain mahogany trees. 5.7, 57 m

**P6.** Move the belay to the left end of the ledge.

*Var 1:* Above the "J" tree, follow a 5.5-7 chimney/dihedral. I haven't done this version. Two good beta photos on Mountain-project are titled "Jog right to skip the hard dihedral" and "Starting the J tree pitch that looks intimidating." There is some helpful discussion below one of the photos.

**P7.** Climb up and left along the lower of two diagonal cracks. Traverse left at the obvious opportune point, to a little saddle. Downclimb slightly to insert into the dihedral; or, for more spice, head up a thin fingertip traverse (5.6), which can be protected with a small cam. Climb to a large pine in an alcove. 5.5, 60 m

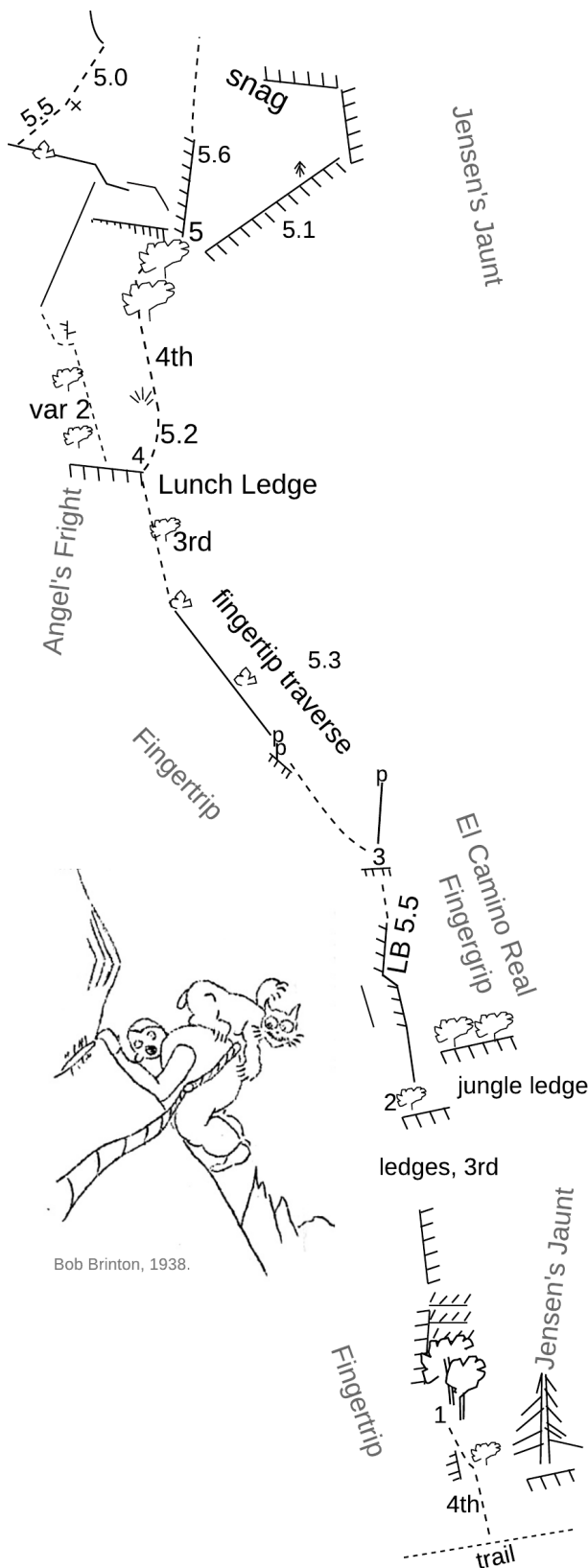
**P8.** Escape the alcove by climbing up and left, then continue upward through a squeeze chimney, 5.7. The spicy friction move into the chimney can be aided with a nut (BD #10) if desired, but placing the nut gets in the way of freeing the move. Move bulky gear off of harness loops and avoid getting stuck in a low body position. An alternative to the chimney is a steep section on the right. After this crux, follow a 3rd-class ledge to a pair of trees.

*Var 2:* After the chimney, continue up a right-facing dihedral, then over a short wall.

*Var 3:* Before the chimney, head left to a black and white mottled slab, with underclings and protection available along its rim. Downclimb into the right-hand exit chute of the Larks. 5.7.

*Descent:* Descend via the north gully (p. 11).

## Fingertip Traverse (5.4) ★ ★ ★



An easy classic, this was the original climb used to define 5.1 on the Yosemite Decimal Scale. Much of the climbing is 4th or easy 5th class, but two very short sections (P3 layback, P6 slab) are more like 5.5 by modern standards. Hike up to Lunch Rock and then head to the right along the trail. P1 starts directly from the trail, near a truncated tree, with the first belay easily visible. It will be convenient to have plenty of small cams. Pro to 2". FA Sep. 19, 1936, Jim Smith, Bob Brinton, Arthur Johnson, and William Rice.

**P1.** Scramble up to a large double oak tree in an alcove, the infamous "ant tree." Anchor below the lower trunk to avoid stirring up the ants. 30 m, 4th class.

**P2.** Climb the ant tree. Don't stick your hands inside the holes in the trunk, because one of them is an ant nest. Don't be too slow. If you smell an odor like bathroom cleanser, it means the ants have sent out an alarm and will soon be all over you. As you get higher in the tree, protect by slinging a branch and also with a 0.3" cam (blue Metolius) in a small finger crack. For the easiest move onto the rock, stand on the very top of the tree and get a solid 2" cam in. Continue up easy terrain. 30 m, 5.0.

*Var 1:* Instead of using the tree, climb the hand crack in the broken overhang at the back of the alcove. Protect by reaching up to place a 2" cam. I've seen a leader attempt this, but they didn't succeed.

**P3.** Climb the flake/dihedral. Near its top is a 10-foot section of 5.5, protectable with 1" cams, on which falls are common. Rather than laybacking the whole thing, a safer option is to jam and stem at first in order to place pro as far up as possible and guard against falling and hitting a flake below. The last few feet can then be laybacked. Exiting the layback, there is a good placement for a 0.75" cam (green C4). Belay (small nuts) at a small ledge a step below the bottom of a crack. Several fixed pins were intentionally left in place "for safety" ca. 1936-38, but the upper one is unnecessary today. 30 m

**P4.** Go around a corner to the left, friction. One of the pair of old pins broke off in 2018 but was replaced in 2022. The step up to reach the narrow crack is difficult unless you step on one of the pins. Traverse along the crack, smearing on the sloping face below. The crack gradually deepens and fluctuates in width from fingers to 2". Protect using the two mountain mahoganies and/or active pro. Continue up 3rd-class terrain past an oak tree, to Lunch Ledge (gear anchor). Here the route joins up with Angel's Fright and Fingertip. 40 m

**P5.** Climb up around a corner to the right (5.2) and continue up fourth-class terrain.

*Var 2:* Head up and left toward a dead tree, then up and right along a ramp/crack. This variation works if you want to link up P5-6 without excessive rope drag.

**P6.** Move up and left on a flake and then tiptoe along it as it continues around a corner. This is easily protected with 0.3"-1" cams. A few feet beyond a small tree, head 10 vertical feet up a 5.5 pure-friction slab to an orange bolt. (The slab is steeper directly above the tree.) Beyond the bolt, the slab gets less steep and there is pro.

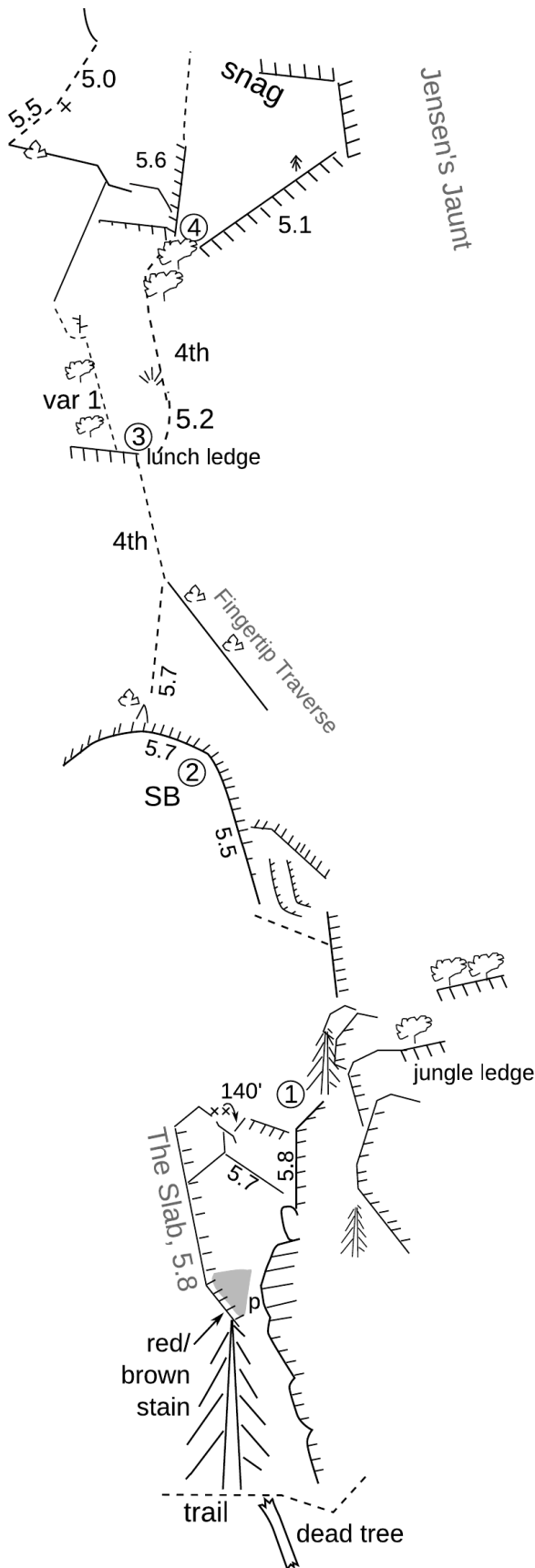
*Var 3:* Head right into a low-angle gutter, then turn left at an overhang. Rope drag tends to be a problem. Where the wall ends, take care to route the rope so it doesn't snag under the corner. 57 m, 5.1

*Var 4:* Climb a very thin finger crack, punctuated with pin scars. 5.6

**Descent:** Walk uphill to the friction descent route (p. 10).



## Fingertrip (5.7) ★



The original standard for 5.7 on the Yosemite Decimal Scale. The initial hard sections of the climb are a lot easier if you mix up the laybacking with stemming and jamming. The name is a take-off on the neighboring Fingertip Traverse, the most memorable sections of the two climbs being their traverses, which run parallel to each other. Fingertrip's traverse, the more difficult of the two, follows an arching overhang. Pro to 2". FA Chuck Wilts, Don Gillespie, and Jerry Rosenblatt, 1946.

In 2019 and 2021, overconfident or inexperienced leaders were injured on P1, which is a zigzagging dihedral that offers some chance of hitting something if you fall. In the 2019 accident, which resulted in serious injuries, the leader depended on a series of nuts that weren't fully extended, and failed to clip the fixed pin. P2-3 are inherently safer because once you get into the arch there is nothing to hit in a fall.

From Lunch Rock, go right. Before a steep section of the trail are the landmarks shown on the topo: a tall pine tree, a red stain, and a dead log.

**P1.** Layback and stem up a left-facing dihedral. An old fixed pin marks the beginning of a cruxy section, but this section is not as hard as it looks from underneath, because some handholds reveal themselves as you climb. The pin should be backed up with gear. Later, to go at the grade, the climb detours left along a 0.75" crack, then back right on a ledge. 5.7, 55 m.

**P2.** Scramble up easy blocks. After this is a section where you can get in as much pro as you want. Traverse a less well protected slab. Stay underneath the overlaps. Step around a corner into the arch. Climb the arch by stemming, laybacking, and jamming. The initial section of the arch is easy and provides some good rest stances. There are cam placements in a variety of sizes, mostly about 0.5 to 1". The most comfortable spot for the hanging belay is at the spot where the arch starts to angle over. 5.6, 35 m.

**P3.** The remaining section of the arch is more difficult due to the more severe angle and the lack of good feet. Escape through the weak point in the overhang at the apex of the arch. Move past a spot where a horn provides a helpful handhold and there is a mahogany farther to the left. Continue to a large, low-lying tree at the top of Fingertip Traverse's namesake feature. After this, the climbing becomes 4th class broken terrain leading up and left to Lunch Ledge. 5.7, ~40 m.

**P4.** Climb up around a corner to the right (5.2) and continue up fourth-class terrain.

**Var 1:** Head up and left toward a dead tree, then up and right along a ramp/crack. This variation works if you want to link up P4-5 without excessive rope drag.

**P5.** Move up and left on a flake and then tiptoe along it as it continues around a corner. This is easily protected with 0.3"-1" cams. A few feet beyond a small tree, head 10 vertical feet up a 5.5 pure-friction slab to an orange bolt. (The slab is steeper directly above the tree.) Beyond the bolt, the slab gets less steep and there is pro.

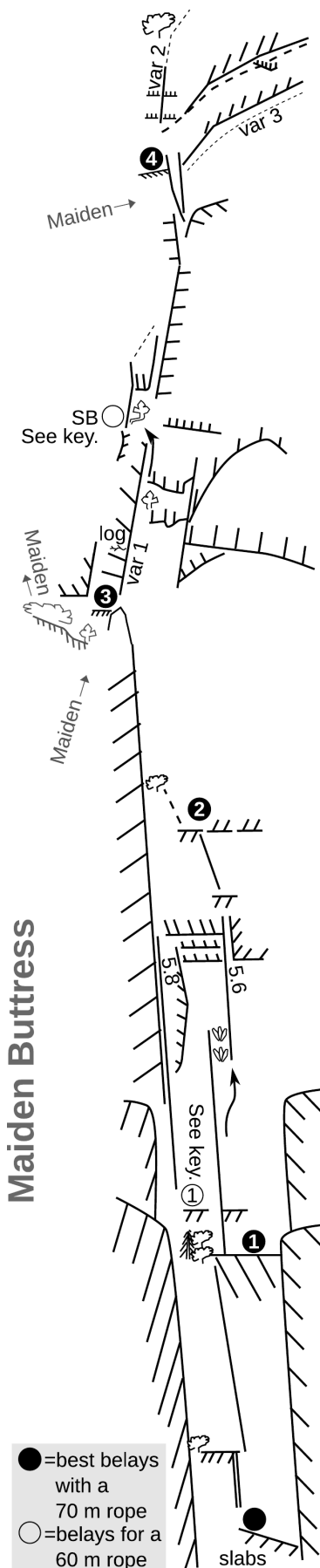
**Var 2:** Head right into a low-angle gutter, then turn left at an overhang. Rope drag tends to be a problem. Where the wall ends, take care to route the rope so it doesn't snag under the corner. 5.7 m, 5.1

**Var 3:** Climb a very thin finger crack, punctuated with pin scars. 5.6

**Descent:** Walk uphill to the friction descent route (p. 10).

Ben Crowell, [github.com/bcrowell/tahquitz](https://github.com/bcrowell/tahquitz)

## Fools Rush (5.6) ♂



This seldom-climbed route starts inside a hidden alcove between two colossal staircases on the right side of the Maiden Buttress. Over in the middle of the buttress there is a different square alcove, on a less titanic scale, which is not the one you want. P1-3 are mostly lousy, so the lovely P4 is best done as a link-up with White Maiden's Walkway.

A traverse ("From Bad Traverse") is also possible from The Trough, but I haven't done it. This starts from just below the first belay (sloping ledge) on the Trough. A photo on the mountainproject page for Fools Rush shows the traverse.

The rock quality on pitches 1-3 is worse than on other nearby routes. Belay 1 is covered with loose rocks. It would be a bad idea to climb this route below another party. There is some choss and brush.

It's not hard to see where the route goes in general, but finding the right small-scale line is often difficult, and mistakes lead into harder climbing or sketchier pro. To use the most comfortable belays, a 70 meter rope is helpful. The route description here is for a 70 m rope and refers to the belays marked with black circles. In white circles, I've marked additional or alternative belays that I think would work with a 60 m rope. With a 60 m rope, careful planning and accurate routefinding are necessary in order to avoid extremely awkward belays sitting in bushes or trees.

Approach via the Lunch Rock Trail. Turn left next to Lunch Rock, a little below the actual base of the rock. The gargantuan right-facing dihedral is extremely obvious visually. A hidden ledge comes in from the right.

Pro to 3". FA Omar Conger, Barbara Lilley, and Don Rappolee, 1959.

**P1.** Climb a crack system and belay at a ledge the size of a dining room, next to a fir and an oak. If using a 60 m rope, it probably works to end this pitch a little higher, at one of the two small ledges above the trees, so as to make the second pitch short enough. 45 m, 5.4

**P2.** Head up a low-angle, brushy crack from the left side of the ledge. (Don't climb the OW chimney farther left up against the wall, or the face next to the OW, which is reputed to be 5.8.) The climbing gets steeper, and there is a crux where the route goes up through a chimney next to an overhang. Continue up and left to a ledge below an oak tree. 63 m, 5.6

**P3.** Bushwhack through the oak tree's branches on the right and insert into the big right-facing dihedral. (The face farther to the right of the tree is worse.) There is an obvious weakness where a horn and a notch interrupt the wall of the dihedral. Landmarks for locating the notch include a dead log straight above it, and a guillotine overhang above and to the right. Exit the dihedral by climbing the wall's steep face. Above the notch is a comfortable saddle. 20 m, 5.6

*Var 1:* I haven't tried this variation, which Vogel describes as one YDS grade harder. A climber who tried it tells me that the crack in the corner of the dihedral gets less than finger width and too small to take gear, so he gave up before the bush and escaped left where there was easier climbing at a large flake. Vogel seems to describe climbing through the bush and then exiting where the dihedral dies out. A narrow ramp higher up on the wall may be helpful.

**P4.** Enjoyable, well protected face climbing on excellent rock. With a 60 m rope, it will be necessary to build a hanging belay somewhere in the middle. Most of the climbing is 5.4, but there is a more difficult section in the middle that starts at a left-facing dihedral. It works to place pro in the dihedral and then exit onto the easy slab to the right, but this seemed hard for the grade, so there may be an easier line. After the dihedral is a section that can be climbed either in a crack to the left or a chimney to the right, both about 5.6-7. Continue up to an area where the climbing becomes more low-angle and the Maiden again intersects the route. 68 m

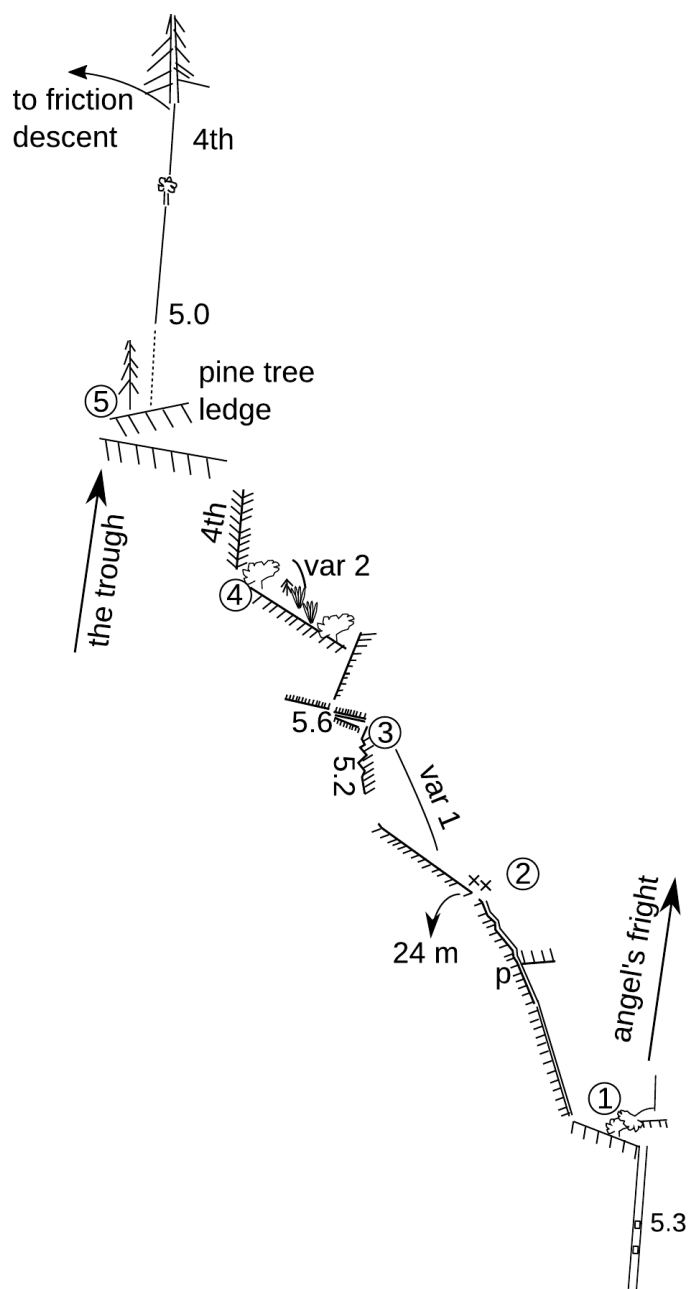
**P5.** Head up and then right into a cave formed by a claustrophobic overhang. Escape the cave by moving out onto a slab, approaching a wall that gets in the way. Mantle over the wall as far to the right as possible.

*Var 2:* Head straight up through gaps in the overhangs above the belay. The crux is the awkward second gap, 5.8.

*Var 3:* I haven't tried this variation. Vogel calls it 5.1.

Ben Crowell, [github.com/bcrowell/tahquitz](https://github.com/bcrowell/tahquitz)

## The Frightful Variation of the Trough (5.4) ●



This is not really a variation of The Trough — all they have in common is the final pitch. Although it could theoretically be climbed in far fewer pitches, breaking it up helps because of brush and rope drag. This climb was the original definition of 5.2 in the Yosemite Decimal System, to be compared with The Trough, which was the standard for 5.0. The start is above and to the left of Lunch Rock. Pro to 2". FA Chuck Wilts and Jim Gorin, 1944.

**P1.** The climb starts with the initial section of Angel's Fright. This is a chimney with a crack on the right that starts as wide hands and then becomes narrower. Climb using crack technique. The start is made easier by trusting the firmly lodged first chock-stone. Well protected. 5.3

**P2.** Traverse a big ledge to another chimney, this one filled with flakes up to the size of a big tabletop. Carefully consider holds and gear placements, since some of the flakes may be loose. A hand/finger crack runs up the back of the chimney, but big holds make it unnecessary to use crack technique to get up the steep part. 5.2

**P3.** Traverse left and then climb a staircase/dihedral. 5.2

*Var 1:* Go up immediately from the belay. I haven't tried this variation. Vogel calls it 5.6

**P4.** Traverse left along an undercling and then make a cruxy 5.6 move up through a gap between a pair of overlaps. Bushwhack across a ledge. Easy climbing except for the crux.

**P5.** Continue to pine tree ledge. 4th class

*Var 2:* Climb a flaring crack from the right side of the brushy ledge, then traverse left across slab. 5.7

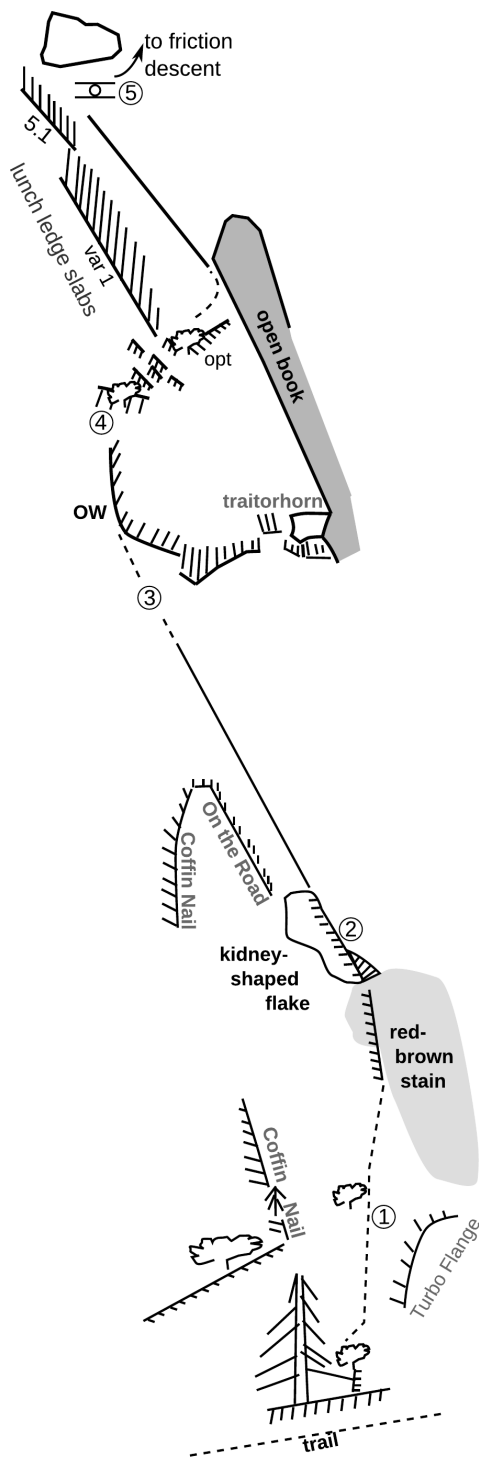
**P6.** Climb a face a couple of feet to the right of the pine tree, aiming for the small oak tree that is visible against the sky. It's difficult to find gear placements here that aren't cracks behind flakes, but it is possible to sling a series of tiny trees. The slope moderates and turns into a gully. Beyond the oak tree is a short section of easy climbing which ends at a huge pine tree. 55 meters, 5.0 and 4th.

From the pine tree, climb up class 3 slab to the left.

*Descent:* Walk uphill to the friction descent route (p. 10).

Ben Crowell, [github.com/bcrowell/tahquitz](https://github.com/bcrowell/tahquitz)

## Jensen's Jaunt (5.6)



The three middle pitches offer sustained climbing at the grade, punctuated with some moves harder than people today expect on a 5.6. The hard moves are all well protected. Grade inflation has caused guidebooks to lump together some much easier climbs such as Angel's Fright and Left Ski Track into the same grade with this climb. The bottom pitches are shared with Traitor Horn, the final ones with Coffin Nail and On the Road. On weekends there tend to be traffic jams where all these climbs intersect. Pro to 3-4". White tricam for P5. FA Carl Jensen, Jim Smith, and Don McDonald, 1938. Chuck Wilts's guidebook says that the route was first climbed because someone fell off of the Traitor Horn route and decided to go around rather than reattempting the horn.

From Lunch Rock, head around to the foot of the southwest end of the rock. The start of the climb lies in the general area to the right of Fingertip Traverse and to the left of the gigantic right-facing dihedral of Open Book. More nearby are two short right-facing walls at about the same height as the first belay. One of these walls is to the left (first belay of Coffin Nail) and one to the right (start of Turbo Flange). From the trail, it is easy to identify the red-brown stain, the kidney-shaped flake, and the imposing overhangs of Traitor Horn, the latter seeming more prominent and higher up than they actually are. Starting from the trail a little to the left of the route, scramble up to a start at a wooded ledge.

**P1.** Climb through an oak tree and then traverse easy terrain to a belay near an oak tree. 4th class, 20 m

**P2.** Climb a thin/balancey face with a cruxy spot 10' above the tree. Head up with the goal of getting on top of the right-facing dihedral formed by the top edge of the kidney-shaped flake. Pass up through an alcove. The escape from the alcove is strenuous for the grade but easy to protect. Belay right above the alcove. (Belaying inside it is cramped and awkward for the start of the next pitch.) P2 and P3 can be linked up if desired. 37 m, 5.6

**P3.** Climb a crack that leads up and left, narrowing from fists to hands. Easy climbing is followed by a steeper section. Continue to the lower left corner of the Traitor Horn overhangs. Belay (small gear) on a spacious slope. 28 m, 5.6

**P4.** Move up and around to the left, to an attention-getting step-around move, which is made easier by taking a step down. The move can be protected with small gear. After the step-around comes an awkward crux move in order to get your right foot into a diagonal crack, with a solid right hand but a sketchy left foot. The initial position is sort of like the Winnie the Pooh story where Pooh gets his head stuck in Rabbit's burrow. Shorter leaders will have to do a little scooching to get to the good hold. It's important to place pro immediately before this move (red BD hex) in order to avoid the risk of a fall that hits a boulder below. Once you start squirming into position, you can also reach forward to place another piece (a 4" cam works best, but decent 2" or 3" placements exist). Follow the crack, which immediately widens and becomes off width. The climbing soon becomes easier, leading to a big, comfy, shady belay ledge at a mountain mahogany. 5.6

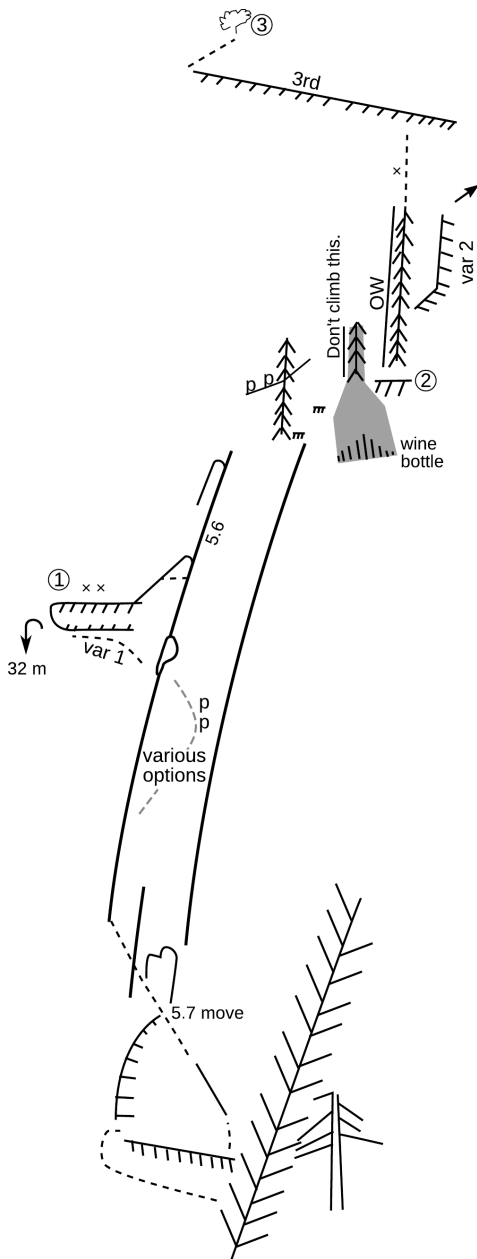
**P5.** This pitch involves escaping and surmounting the big left-facing dihedral by going around to the right and getting up onto a ramp of slab that separates the area above Lunch Ledge from Open Book. Climb class 4 blocks to an optional belay, which helps to avoid rope drag. Traverse all the way right to the arete above Open Book. A white tricam in the right orientation can be made to fit in a tiny pin scar along the way, providing at least psychological pro. Run-out 5.0 slab climbing along the arete leads toward a crack. A single 5.5 move is required in order to reach a good hold and place gear (0.75-2" cam). Continue up a low-angle fist crack, 5.0. Natural anchor at a boulder. 55 m

*Var 1:* Climb the dihedral and then insert into the 5.1 gutter above Lunch Ledge. I

haven't tried this variation, but Vogel calls it 5.7, and it's supposed to protect well.

*Descent:* Walk uphill to the friction descent route (p. 10).

## Left Ski Track (5.6) ★



This short south-facing route is a good in April when the snow is still melting off of other areas. Pro to 3", optionally to 6". Five double-length slings. FA Chuck Wilts and Ray Van Aken, 1947.

From Lunch Rock, take the use trail around the west end of the rock. Go past the huge dihedral of Open Book. Identify the big pine tree that is the start of the climb. Go up the trail until you're at the same height as the top of the tree, then traverse through brush down to the tree's base.

**P1.** From the tree, traverse left across slab under a ledge that provides secure hands. Come back right along the ledge, then left again to the face. From here the goal is to insert into the left ski track. There is a cruxy move, 5.7, to step up onto the face near a short pillar.

The middle section of the pitch is fun, easy, steep face climbing on jugs. Moving to the right sometimes gives easier climbing at the expense of less pro.

Near the top of this pitch, the challenge is to find some appropriate pro for the traverse left to the anchor. The path of least resistance to the anchor passes over a chockstone with an asymmetrical shape like a hand with a finger pointing down. This "hand" block seems to have withstood being pulled on somewhat and stood on top of over the years. It can be slung, but I don't know that it would stay put if you took a hard lead fall on it, and it's big enough that if it came out, it would be catastrophic. Slings it is probably safer than placing a cam behind it. Once you're standing on top of the "hand," there is better pro. Go higher than the anchor to a triangular feature with an off-width crack behind it. Come across the front of the triangle and get behind it. Placements for hand-size pro exist inside the off-width. Move down and left to the anchor. 35 m, mostly easy 5th class except for the crux

*Var 1:* The best protection I know of for this variation is the dubious "hand" chockstone, which may not be safe. Traverse left under the ledge. Pockets for feet make the footing much better than you would think based on the view from underneath. Reach for thin holds on top (easier for taller leaders). A fall would be a nasty pendulum, and I've always worried that taking a fall would pop the block out. 5.6

**P2.** Move up the triangle and get back in the left ski track. The next 15 meters are the most difficult leading on this climb, a strenuous and awkward 5.6-7. Placements exist for 4" and 6" cams and can be easier to reach and find than for normal-sized pro. It's possible to climb either with a more crack-climbing approach or with thin feet on the face. There is a finger of rock that is solidly attached at the bottom. Past the finger's tip, the crack disappears, and you approach a series of aretes that you need to step around. The first arete is marked visually by a shallow diagonal crack at head level, containing two fixed pins. The step around the arete, protected by these pins, is hard but doesn't make as many demands on the leader as the earlier section. After initially committing to this balancey no-hands move, there is a second committing move needed in order to complete the step-around. After doing the first part, feel around with your right hand for helpful thin holds at knee level. Completing these moves leads to a tiny sloping ledge, and then you can step up to a second, more secure tiny ledge. From this stance, reach back and place pro for the follower; a 0.4-0.5" SLCD can be placed high up.

You are now at the left shoulder of a wine bottle, whose neck is a short second arete. This arete superficially looks like the tall third one, including the crack on the left (although it's 3" rather than OW). Don't make the mistake of belaying here and climbing

the neck of the wine bottle.

Step around to a big belay ledge behind the right shoulder. 30 m, 5.6

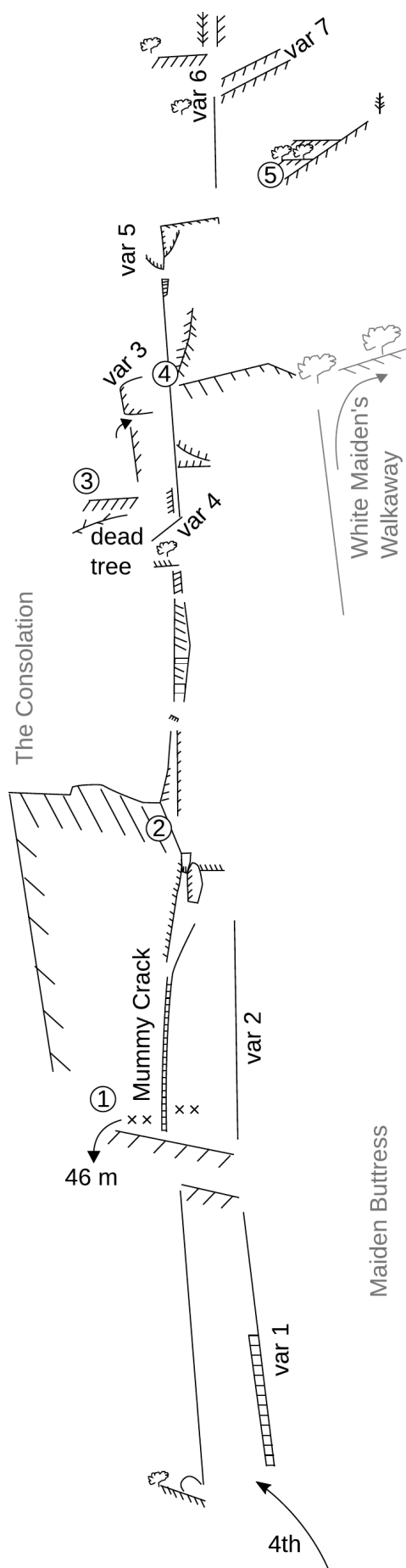
**P3.** Above the belay is an arete with an off-width crack to its left. Climb the arete and place pro in the crack. Easy climbing on the arete ends at some slabs, where there is a bolt. Cruxy friction moves going past the bolt are difficult for the grade and can be aided. Follow a long third-class ledge to the left, then top out at a small tree.

*Var 2:* Climb the arete until an easy opportunity arises to move right. I haven't tried this variation.

*Descent:* Walk uphill to the friction descent route (p. 10).

Ben Crowell, [github.com/bcrowell/tahquitz](https://github.com/bcrowell/tahquitz)

## The Long Climb/Wong Climb (5.8) ★



**Warning:** I've only done this climb once, and I didn't lead any of it. Some additional info was provided by Andrew Barabas.

In the Northwest Recess, immediately to the left of the Maiden Buttress, is a prominent rock formation like a giant flat-roofed dormer window. These two climbs follow a pair of cracks on the bottom right side of this tower, where it merges into the Maiden Buttress. After gaining the roof of the tower via a spectacularly exposed overhang, the climb continues up four more pitches of mostly easier climbing, with one short crux. The first two pitches are very physical.

The 1952 FA of The Long Climb, by Royal Robbins and Don Wilson, started in the right-hand crack and then moved over to the left-hand one, but these days almost everyone does the first pitch using the left-hand crack. That's the only version I've done, so that's what I describe here. Beware of loose rocks on P3, 5, and 6. Pro to 3". Approach either from Lunch Rock or by taking the North Gully trail and then backtracking along the bottom of the rock.

**P1.** Climb a hand and fist crack with pro on the right wall. Belay at a ledge with an anchor consisting of chains attached with one piton and one bolt. This variation is the Wong Climb. 5.8, 40 m

*Var 1:* Climb the right-hand crack, 5.5. This is the original Long Climb route.

**P2.** The Mummy Crack is too wide for thigh jams. Depending on what body position you prefer, you may or may not want to take off your pack and hang it from your waist. Pro is in a crack running up the right wall. At the top, the right wall bends away from the vertical, leading to a claustrophobic alcove with a roof. Squirm out of the alcove on the left where a good right-hand hold makes the move less dire than it appears. Belay on the right edge of the giant, sloping ledge. 5.8, 40 m

*Var 2:* Climb the right-hand crack, which is the Wong Climb. Vogel describes this as a "rather unpleasant squeeze 5.8 chimney with loose chockstones."

**P3.** If you're belaying at the natural spot immediately above the final overhanging move of P2, then there is an obvious ramp system right above you, but the easier climbing is actually the crack a little farther to the right. Climb this, then make a delicate step-around move to insert into the main crack. Higher up, the crack disappears. Head left into nondescript staircase terrain and belay at a ledge above a large dead tree. 5.7, 40 m

**P4.** For the best pro, immediately head back up and right over a blocky wall, inserting into a crack that leads to a tall pine tree. If you want to avoid the loose rock on the upper pitches, a good option is to exit here onto White Maiden's Walkaway. 5.6, 20 m

*Var 3:* Climb slab straight up from the belay, then head right, 5.6R. This is the original route.

**P5.** From the pine tree, a feature in the shape of a bas-relief gun is easily visible. The route continues up the steep, polished slab on the left edge of this feature. The crux consists of transitioning onto this slab and reaching up for a hold in a crack that opens up at the left edge of the "gun." This crack is at first finger width, but then a few inches higher becomes a more secure hand jam. The crux can be protected with small cams under the overlap below and to the left, and also with small gear in the crack. Continue up easy terrain to a belay at a ledge system to the right. Beware of loose blocks. 5.8, 40 m

*Var 4:* After the bush but before the dead tree, go right, linking pitches 3 and 4. (Turning right before the bush decreases rope drag but is harder and less protectable.) 37 m

*Var 5:* Bypass the entire gun/overlap system on slabs on the left. This is the version described in the Vogel-Gaines guidebook, but not in Gaines' Best Climbs. 5.8.

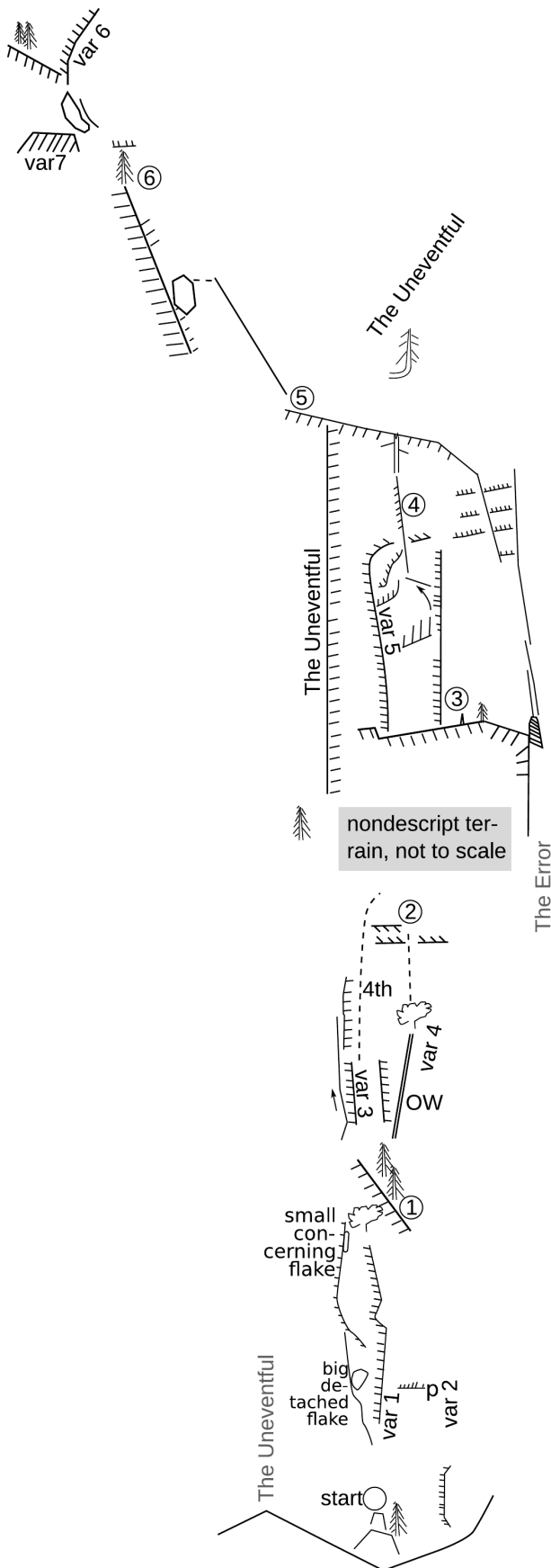
**P6.** Climb 3rd class terrain to the top.

*Var 6:* The Vogel-Gaines finish.

**Descent:** Either go down to the friction descent (p. 10) or go up and over the summit and come down the north gully.

Ben Crowell, [github.com/bcrowell/tahquitz](https://github.com/bcrowell/tahquitz)

## North Buttress (5.5)



This climb and The Uneventful are best viewed not as separate routes but as sets of choices for ways to get up the buttress. P1-3 offer an alternative start to The Uneventful that has easier climbing and significantly better, although not perfect, rock quality. P4-5 are a little harder than the corresponding pitches of The Uneventful and are beta-dependent, but offer cleaner, more aesthetic climbing if done with the right beta. Gear to 3". FA R. Smith and Don Wilson, 1952.

Approach: A gully, the start of The Uneventful, splits the North Buttress at the bottom into two sub-buttresses. The climb starts at the base of the right-hand one. To reach the first belay with a 60 m rope, it's necessary to start on top of a boulder.

**P1.** Climb a series of flakes up and left, staying on the top of the buttress. Finish at the upper pine tree. 5.4, 60 m. A 70 m rope gets you from the pine tree to the oak tree.

*Var 1:* Possibly better rock quality? I haven't tried this.

*Var 2:* Start right and then head left to avoid hard climbing and lack of pro. I had trouble with this. See a beta photo on MP by JJ Klingler.

**P2.** A fun hand crack to the left, then easy terrain. 55 m

*Var 3:* A 5.5 jam/offwidth/layback.

*Var 4:* An off-width crack to the right.

**P3.** Continue up nondescript terrain to a big ledge with a small pine tree and a stump. Picking a line too far to the left creates difficulties with getting over to the ledge, and with using up the rope; but if switching at this point to The Uneventful, finish the pitch by heading left to the pine tree. 50-60 m

**P4.** Start in the straight right-hand dihedral, which fades out. Continue straight up until it reappears. The upper dihedral initially has some pro and holds, on the face, on the arete, and up on the slab above. Place pro here and escape onto the slab. Do a fingertip traverse along a crack, then head up through the left-hand notch. 5.6, 30 m

*Var 5:* Climb the left dihedral. Exit the overhang through the left notch. This variation is easier to figure out, but there are table-sized flakes precariously perched. 5.6

**P5.** Move the belay to the left end of the ledge.

**P6.** Climb up and left along the lower of two diagonal cracks. Traverse left at the obvious opportune point, to a little saddle. Downclimb slightly to insert into the dihedral; or, for more spice, head up a thin fingertip traverse (5.6), which can be protected with a small cam. Climb to a large pine in an alcove. 5.5, 60 m

**P7.** Escape the alcove by climbing up and left, then continue upward through a short squeeze chimney, 5.7. The spicy friction move into the chimney can be aided with a nut (BD #10) if desired. Move bulky gear off of harness loops and avoid getting stuck in a low body position. An alternative to the chimney is a steep section on the right. Continue through a short section of easy 5th class climbing, then follow a 3rd-class ledge past a pair of trees.

*Var 6:* After the chimney, continue up a right-facing dihedral, then over a short wall.

*Var 7:* Before the chimney, head left to a black and white mottled slab, with underclings and protection available along its rim. Downclimb into the right-hand exit chute of the Larks. 5.7.

*Descent:* Descend via the north gully (p. 11).

Ben Crowell, [github.com/bcrowell/tahquitz](https://github.com/bcrowell/tahquitz)

summit ridge

to north gully

5.3

4th

5

p

4

p

3

p

p

2

1

5.3

west variation, 5.7

3rd

This climb is in the middle of the northeast face, to the left of the Larks and to the right of El Grandote. A prominent inverted "Y" is formed by right-facing dihedrals, and this variation heads up its left fork. Approach via the North Side Trail. The "Y" is difficult to see through the trees from the trail, but the north face lies below the prominent gendarme at the top of the Larks, and this climb is on the left side of that face. Sustained 5.6.5.7 climbing on pitches 2 through 5. Pro to 3", with a 4" cam repeatedly coming in handy. FA Chuck and Ellen Wilts, 1963.

**P2.** Continue up the crack. Insert into the main right-facing part of the dihedral and climb a wide (knee jam) crack. End at a bolted anchor on a huge ledge. 5.5

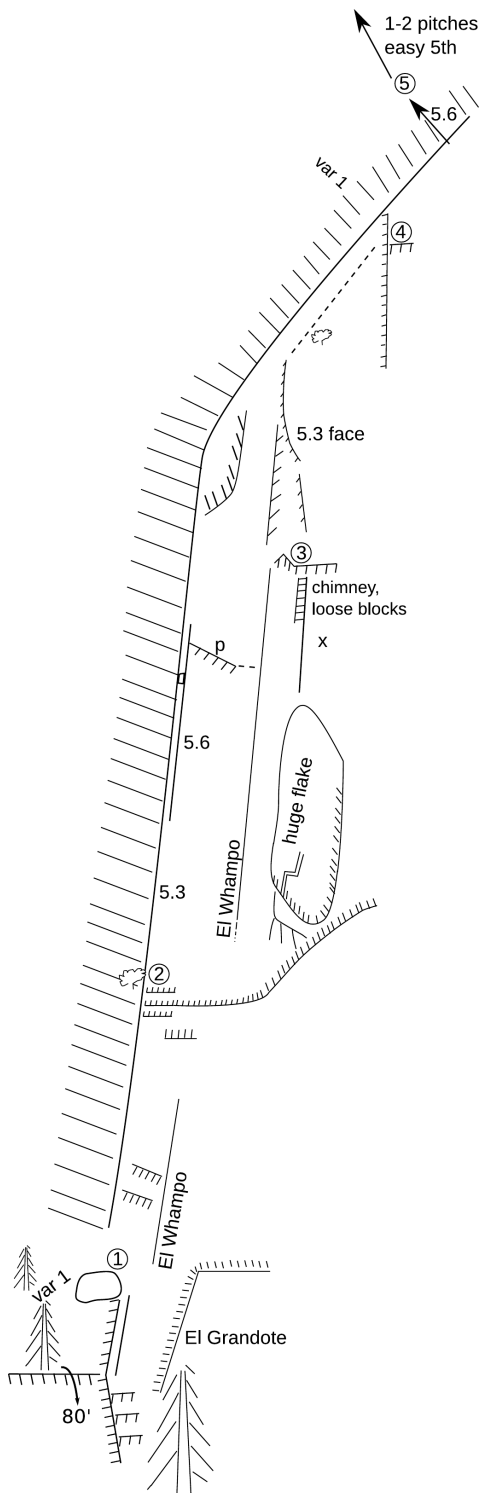
**P4.** Head up the stem of the “Y” toward overhangs. Stay in the dihedral, and don’t be lured off route by the fixed piton above and to the left. Belay as close as possible to the overhangs in order to complete the following pitch with a 60 meter rope. A fixed pin can be backed up with 3” or 4” cams.

**P6.** Continue to the right up 4th class terrain to the summit ridge, or traverse a delicate 5.3 ledge to the left for more direct insertion into the north gully.

Ben Crowell, [github.com/bcrowell/tahquitz](https://github.com/bcrowell/tahquitz)



## Northeast Farce (5.6 PG13) ⚡



It would fun if this climb was a safe, mellow 5.3, a no-stress vertical hike, as suggested by the name and the guidebook ratings. Unfortunately that isn't quite what it is, because P3 is more like 5.6 by modern standards, and it lacks appropriate pro. Other pitches are either the same as El Whampo or minor variations that aren't necessarily any easier.

The route is located on the extreme left corner of the northeast face, at a gigantic right-facing dihedral that dominates this entire area of the rock. This dihedral can be distinguished from the Northeast Rib dihedral to its left because the Northeast Farce dihedral has the distinctive El Grandote overhang immediately to its right. FA Don Wilson and Jerry Gallwas, 1954. Gear to 3".

**P1.** Head up a gully to the left of the El Grandote Arch. A headwall is formed by a bus-sized boulder. Pass around the boulder to the right, and belay on top of it. 5.2, 55 m

**P2.** Climb through bushes, then up the humongous dihedral to a gear belay near a mountain currant bush. Unpleasant and possibly not any easier than doing the El Whampo variation to the right.

**P3.** Continue up the dihedral. Higher up, the climbing becomes much more strenuous, 5.6, turning into more of an off-width crack with sloper holds. A chockstone festooned with old, UV-damaged slings seems unfortunately to be too deeply wedged and buried now to allow the slings to be replaced. Continue to the ledge, which is the first highly prominent one visible above the belay. A 3" or 4" cam can be placed before starting across the ledge. Half-way across the ledge is an old fixed pin. After the ledge fades out, continue a short distance across 5.5 slab to the El Whampo crack, then up it to a ledge. Between the fixed pin and the El Whampo crack, no other protection is available, and if the old, rusty pin were to fail, the result would be a long 90-degree pendulum fall back into the dihedral. (The original version of the route continues past the El Whampo crack across more slab to a big crack, then follows a chimney up to a belay. I would not recommend this because the chimney is full of large, very loose blocks.)

**P4.** Head up and slightly left toward the roof along a curved series of wavy flakes, leading to fun, airy 5.3 climbing over the big gully. As you near the roof, turn right and begin traversing along a slab that is made more secure by the availability of underclings. A comfy belay is available at a little nook inside a dihedral. 5.3

**P5.** Continue traversing and look for a weak spot at which to exit up through the roof. 5.6.

*Var 1:* Exit up and left from the belay, 5.7. Continue up a 5.0 gully to the left, which leads to the crest of the Northeast Rib.

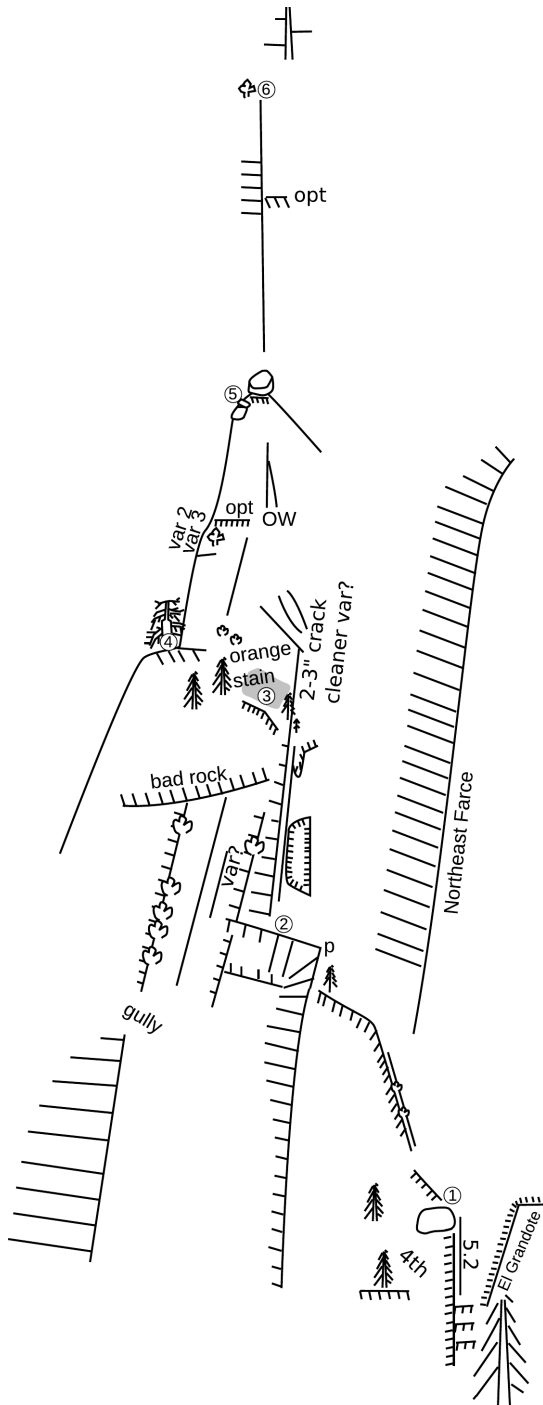
**P6.** Climb easy 5th class terrain to a big, comfy belay at a short, squat pine tree.

**P7.** Two exits present themselves, and either will work. On the left is a fourth-class gully that leads to a short, exposed easy 5th class section to get around a corner. The exit on the right consists of class 4 ledges.

*Descent:* Descend via the north gully (p. 11).

Ben Crowell, [github.com/bcrowell/tahquitz](https://github.com/bcrowell/tahquitz)

## Northeast Rib (5.6)



On the extreme northeast side of the rock, between the North Gully and the smooth Northeast Face, is a corrugated rib made of right-facing dihedrals. This route follows some of the smaller dihedrals in the middle. Pro to 2".

John and Ruth Mendenhall climbed this feature in 1940, but the details of what they did are lost in the mists of time. This description starts to the right of the rib. Easier versions are possible if you insert from the left, a ways up the north gully. Starting at the 4th belay, there are many easy opportunities to exit early into the gully if desired.

**P1.** To the left of the distinctive El Grandote arch is a gully with a headwall at the top formed by a bus-sized boulder. Head up the gully and pass around the boulder to the right, and belay on top of it. 5.2, 55 m

**P2.** Head up and left through brush. The insertion into a short 5.6 chimney can be protected. In the chimney are some good chockstones and one bad one. Continue to a small ledge with a pine tree, then on through an overhang, 5.6, to a large sloping ledge. 57 m

**P3.** Continue up a dihedral. Two parallel cracks run up the dihedral, varying from hand width to squeeze chimney. Protection and rock quality are good, but there are lots of pine needles, and some small rocks lying around. Falling choss tends to come down about 10' to the right of the belayer. The 5.7 crux is at the start of the pitch, where a flake in the center creates an overhang. It works to climb the right-hand crack using crack technique. Taller climbers may be able to throw a leg over the flake, get a left-foot jam, and hump their way up. Near the top of the pitch, the dihedral tapers off. Here a squeeze chimney forms a second crux, 5.6. Pro is available down low inside the chimney. A chicken-wing in the chimney and a left leg over the center flake works as a way of staying high enough to keep from getting your hips stuck, or you can intentionally approach it as a thigh jam. After the chimney, exit left at a small pine tree. Be extremely careful here about kicking down loose rock on your partner. Semi-hanging belay on an orange-stained slab (small gear). Belaying at the larger pine tree also works, but necessitates a little downclimbing later. 50 m, 5.6.

*Var 1:* A possible route that would circumvent the 5.7 crux is a second dihedral, to the left, which is easily accessible by walking around a corner. An obstacle would be the need to wade through a large currant tree. You would still feed back into the upper chimney.

**P4.** Continue up the orange slabs, then bushwhack left through chinquapins over the top-center of the rib. Traverse into a shady, fairy-wonderland refuge inside a giant tree, 10' above the north gully. 20 m, class 4.

**P5.** From a boulder next to the big tree, get back up on the rib by stepping onto the face. Climb to a ledge. Cross the ledge to the right. An optional belay here may reduce rope drag. Climb either a slab or a double crack system, with adequate pro. Finish at a saddle near a jumble of boulders perched atop the apex of the rib. 5.4

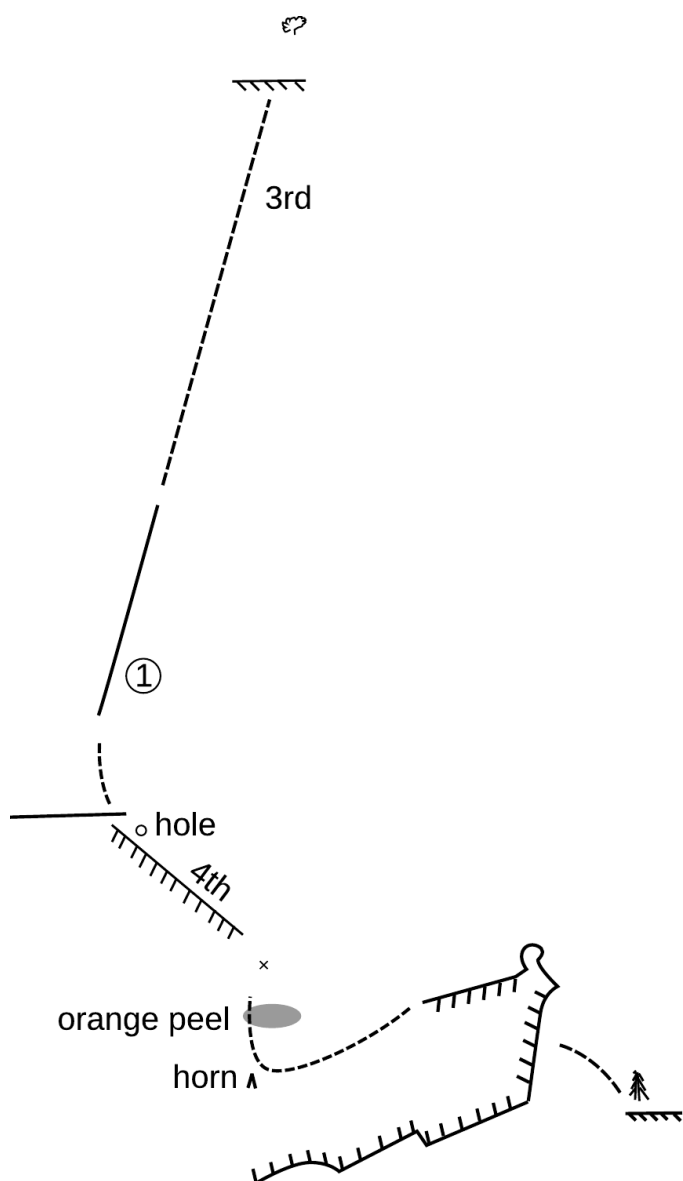
*Var 2:* Rather than getting back up on the rib, climb the dihedral at the bottom of the wall. 4th and easy 5th class, with one short 5.3 section.

*Var 3:* Follow a ledge, aiming slightly left of the mahogany. Good pro and rock quality. One 5.6 pull-up/heel-hook move is required.

**P6.** Bypass the car-sized boulder, passing around it on the left. Continue up a crack. The end of the pitch is at a mountain mahogany, not far below the landmark dead tree. Class 3, 57 m.

*Descent:* Descend via the north gully (p. 11).

## Orange Peel (5.5) ●



### **Warning: I've only done this climb once.**

The start of this climb is just to the left of the friction descent route, and is easy to locate because of the prow of rock with an egg shape on top. The total length of the climb is 73 m if you end at the mountain mahogany. Pro to 3". FA Chuck and Ellen Wilts, 1951.

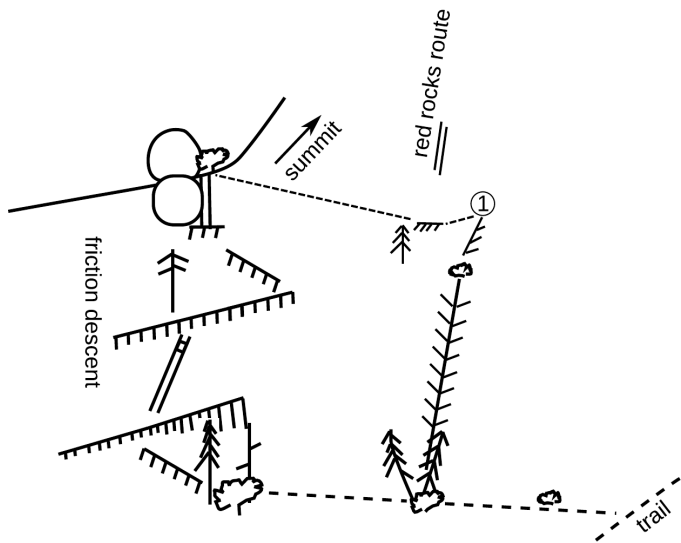
**P1.** After going over the egg, make a traverse down and left about 20 feet toward a small stained feature, the namesake "orange peel." The traverse lacks pro and is therefore a little unnerving for both leader and follower. The moves are relatively easy, but tripping over your shoelaces would result in a long pendulum swing. One way to mitigate the risk is the following. Approach the orange peel from underneath, sling a horn, make a 5.4 move to get on top of the orange peel, and clip the bolts. Then downclimb and clean the pro from the horn (because otherwise the follower would be doing the traverse from considerably higher than the pro). Once you've clipped the bolt, there is a cruxy friction move up and to the left. Follow an easy ledge up and left. Near the end of this ledge, in the shelf on the right, is a unique hold in the rock like the eye of a needle, which can be used for pro. Continue past a horizontal crack and head for a fist crack. ~ 45 m, 5.5

**P2.** Continue up the crack, and then easy terrain to a mountain mahogany tree on the summit ridge. ~ 30 m, easy 5th and scrambling

*Descent:* Walk uphill to the friction descent route (p. 10).

Ben Crowell, [github.com/bcrowell/tahquitz](https://github.com/bcrowell/tahquitz)

## South Gully (5.0)



This is not a recognized route at Tahquitz, and if you refer to it by this name, people won't know what you're talking about. Easy, fun climbing suitable for beginners. Pro to 3". The first pitch is easy to protect with large SLCDs, the second with small gear.

For the approach, climb the trail around the south side of the rock to the end of the friction route (p. 10). Traverse across slabs to a "V"-shaped double tree on the friction route, and belay there.

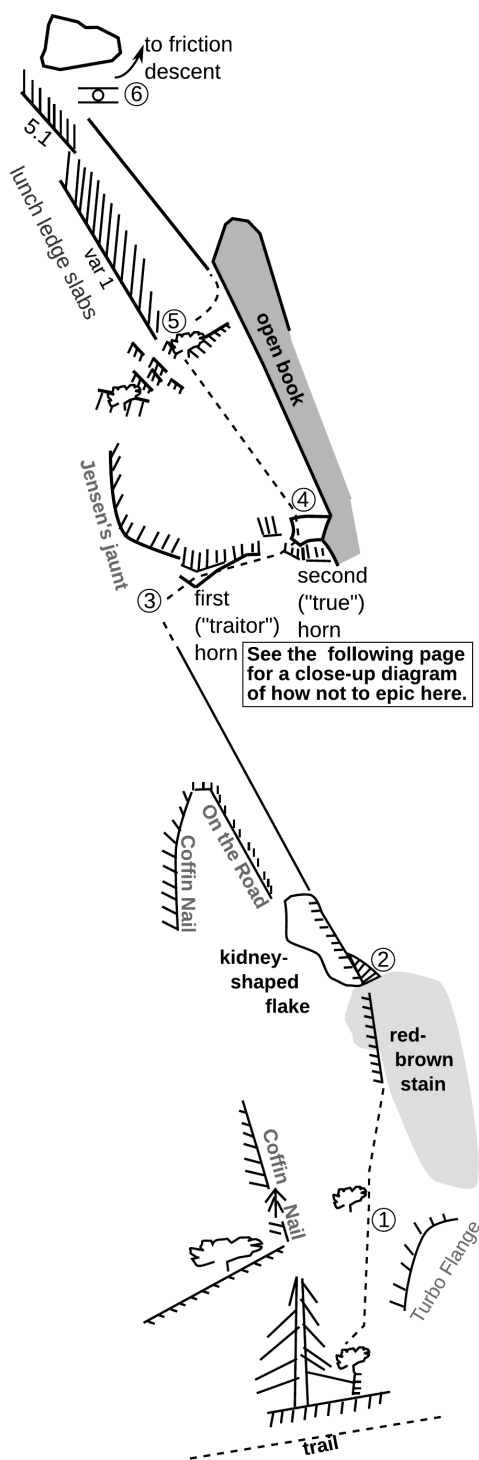
**P1.** Climb a gully up from the double tree. Beginners without anchor-building skills can belay at an oak tree, but a more comfy gear anchor can be built in a lower-angle area above the tree, where a horizontal crack in a boulder accepts small active gear such as pink and red tricams. 5.0, 40 m

**P2.** Traverse left to a ledge and then across slab. Protect with small gear. Finish at a manzanita tree near the top of the friction route. 5.0, 40 m

Descend via the friction descent route (p. 10), which is just to climber's left of the end of the climb.

Ben Crowell, [github.com/bcrowell/tahquitz](https://github.com/bcrowell/tahquitz)

## Traitor Horn (5.7PG) ●



Mostly 5.6 climbing, with a short and poorly protected crux. The crux is beta-dependent and can be confusing to climb, protect, and follow. The pro for the crux is all to the left of the actual climbing, which the follower can't see from the belay, so make sure the follower understands what to do. If the leader does the wrong thing with pro and routing the rope, the follower can be exposed to a crushing pendulum fall and then left hanging in space.

The bottom pitches are shared with Jensen's Jaunt, and also intersect with Coffin Nail and On the Road. On weekends there tend to be traffic jams where all these climbs come together. Pro to 3". White tricam for P6. FA J. Smith, A. Johnson, and M. Holton, 1938. FFA Roy Gorin and William Shand, 1941.

From Lunch Rock, head around to the foot of the southwest end of the rock. The start of the climb lies in the general area to the right of Fingertip Traverse and to the left of the gigantic right-facing dihedral of Open Book. More nearby are two short right-facing walls at about the same height as the first belay. One of these is to the left (first belay of Coffin Nail) and one to the right (start of Turbo Flange). From the trail, it is easy to identify the red-brown stain, the kidney-shaped flake, and the crux of the climb. Starting from the trail a little to the left of the route, scramble up to a start at a wooded ledge.

**P1.** Climb through an oak tree and then traverse easy terrain to a belay near an oak tree. 4th class, 20 m

**P2.** Climb a thin/balancey face with a cruxy spot 10' above the tree. Head up with the goal of getting on top of the right-facing dihedral formed by the top edge of the kidney-shaped flake. Belay at a cramped alcove. Belaying from low down in the alcove makes it easier for the leader to get going on the next pitch. P2 and P3 can be linked up if desired. 5.6

**P3.** Climb a crack that leads up and left, narrowing from fists to hands. The first moves out of the alcove are strenuous. These are followed by an easier stretch, then a steeper section. Continue to the lower left corner of the overhangs. Belay (small gear) on a spacious slope. 5.6

**P4.** To the right of the belay are two horns. Climb over the first horn, not under, where there is a loose block. Continue traversing through easier and well protected terrain into an alcove with slightly overhanging walls. The second horn sticks out of the right wall. The route mostly goes up the middle of the right wall, but with some detours to the left and right. On the left side of this wall, in the corner, is a crack that provides the only pro, but the route doesn't go up this crack. Although the pro isn't optimal, the "floor" of the alcove is steep, so there isn't really much to hit if you fall. Clip two fixed pins in the crack, and back them up with a green or purple camalot. Use stemming to move to the right and get to the middle of the wall. The crux is to get far enough right to get a hand on a good hold on the horn. Pull up onto the horn and mount it like a saddle. Tiptoe back left along a ledge, with holds above. At the middle of the wall are good holds allowing you to escape the alcove. (*Don't* detour further left to the back corner to place more pro. Getting back there is more likely to make the leader fall than just completing the crux. It also leaves the follower where they can either get stuck hanging or take a brutal pendulum swing into the wall and *then* get stuck hanging.) Belay immediately, rather than higher up, to avoid routefinding and rope management problems for the follower, who cannot tell where the route goes based on where the rope runs. Route the rope as far to the right as possible, or a fall by the follower will be a dangerous pendulum swing that then leaves them hanging helplessly in space. 5.7PG, 35 m

**P5.** Move the belay up class 4 terrain to a mountain mahogany.

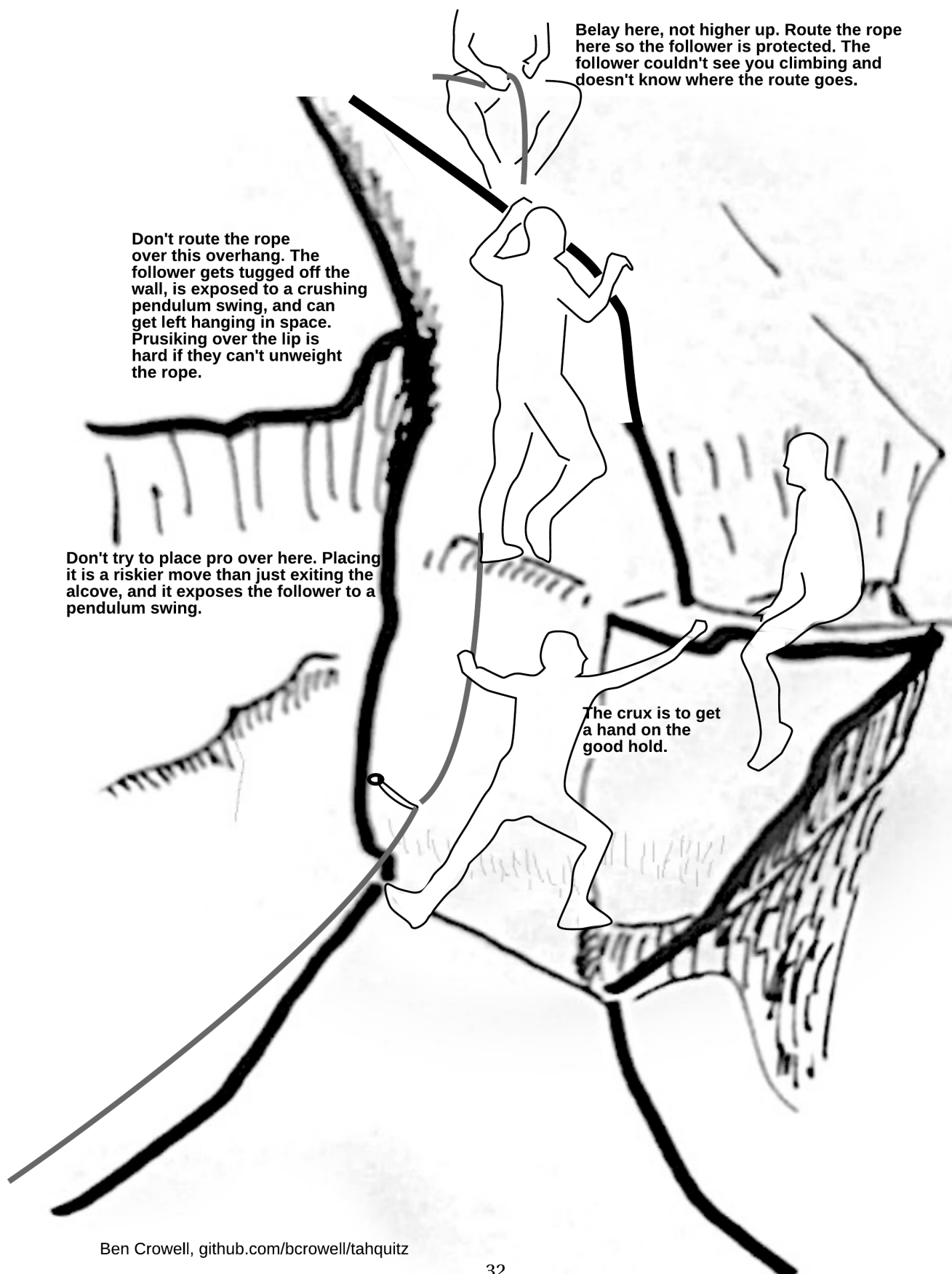
**P6.** From the mahogany, move up and right onto a slab. On this slab, traverse all the way right to the arete above Open Book. A white tricam in the right orientation can be

made to fit in a tiny pin scar along the way, providing at least psychological pro. Run-out 5.0 slab climbing along the arete leads toward a crack. A single 5.5 move is required in order to reach a good hold and place gear (0.75-2" cam). Continue up a low-angle fist crack, 5.0. Natural anchor at a boulder.

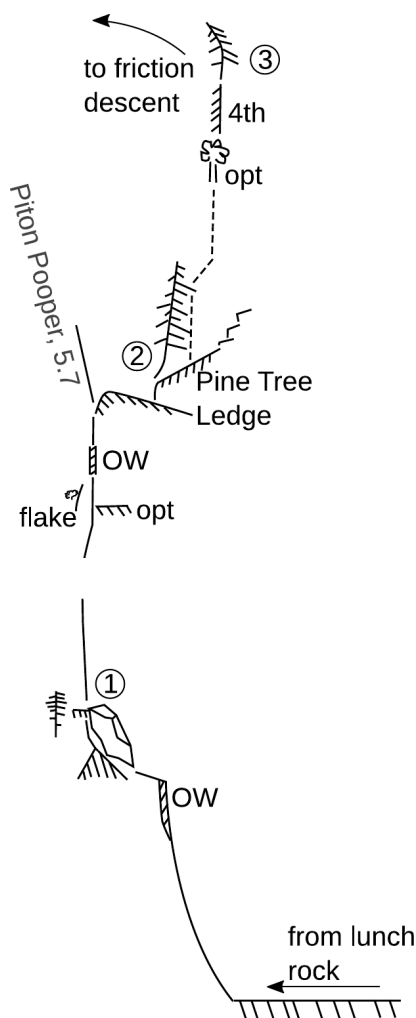
**Var 1:** Climb the dihedral and then insert into the 5.1 gutter above Lunch Ledge. I haven't tried this variation, but Vogel calls it 5.7, and it's supposed to protect well.

**Descent:** Walk uphill to the friction descent route (p. 10).

# How not to have an epic on Traitor Horn, and how not to set your follower up for one either.



## The Trough (5.3) ★ ★



The Trough was the first technical route at Tahquitz, pioneered by members of the Sierra Club's rock climbing section. Later it served as the original definition of 5.0 on the Yosemite Decimal Scale, and with continuing grade inflation it has now come to be rated about 5.3. The namesake feature constitutes the second pitch, which includes a few awkward spots. 3 pitches. Gear to 3", long slings for trees.

The route was first attempted as a winter ascent in November 1935. A newsletter from a few years later<sup>1</sup> says of the FA, "Aug. 22, 1936 ... Jim Smith led Bob Brinton & Zene Jaisaitas up the Trough. Jim wrote. . . , 'It was surprisingly easy, a good route for beginners.' They used 1 piton."

**Approach:** From the bottom end of the parking area at Humber Park, take the Ernie Maxwell trail and then turn left at the signpost for the climber's trail. Climb to Lunch Rock. Continue past Lunch Rock to the foot of Tahquitz Rock. Turn left, and crawl up through a chimney behind a tree. Follow the ledge until it ends. The actual route is not visible from the start, because it's around a corner to the left.

**P1.** Follow a low-angle crack around the corner. Fingers and friction initially, then off-width. You now find yourself at a large, sloping, triangular ledge, with a VW-size boulder on the right. Insert into the obvious trough and climb a short distance to the top of the boulder. Belay at a small ledge next to the top of the boulder. 5.1, 35 m

**P2.** Continue up the trough. The second half of this pitch contains several moves that in many areas would probably be considered 5.4-5.5.

At a spot with a small mountain mahogany growing from behind a flake on the left, either commit to hanging from the flake by your hands, or go straight up the finger-width crack. The flake is a sloper in front, but there are solid holds behind it.

Next comes a short hips-high and hips-width OW that tends to snag gear hanging off of harness loops. There are many good gear placements inside the OW, and an uncertain leader can easily pull on gear to get up.

You now come to a point where continuing up the crack system would lead into more difficult climbing (a different climb, Piton Pooper 5.7), and you see Pine Tree Ledge to the right.

A difficult move gets you over a round prow and onto the ledges to the right. Pro (e.g., black totem) is available in a thin piton-scarred crack that opens wider above. Stem to get up a little higher, with help from a small chockstone on the left, before committing to the move. The most foolproof method I've found on lead is to get a hand on a phone-size flange, then hang down to the right by both hands so that your body weight is in the secure direction of pull, and finally mantle and kick a heel up.

Continue up to a second ledge and belay at the big pine tree. 5.3, 55 m.

**P3.** Climb straight up a face a couple of feet to the right of the pine tree, aiming for the small oak tree that is visible against the sky. It's difficult to find gear placements here that aren't

cracks behind flakes, but it is possible to sling a series of tiny mountain mahoganies.

The route goes around a corner to the right. If you don't succeed in routing the rope smoothly around this corner, it's common to find yourself with excessive rope drag. In this situation, one solution is to belay at the oak tree before the drag gets worse.

Beyond the oak tree is a short section of easy climbing, protectable with 0.5-2" cams, which ends at a huge pine tree.

55 meters, 5.0 and 4th.

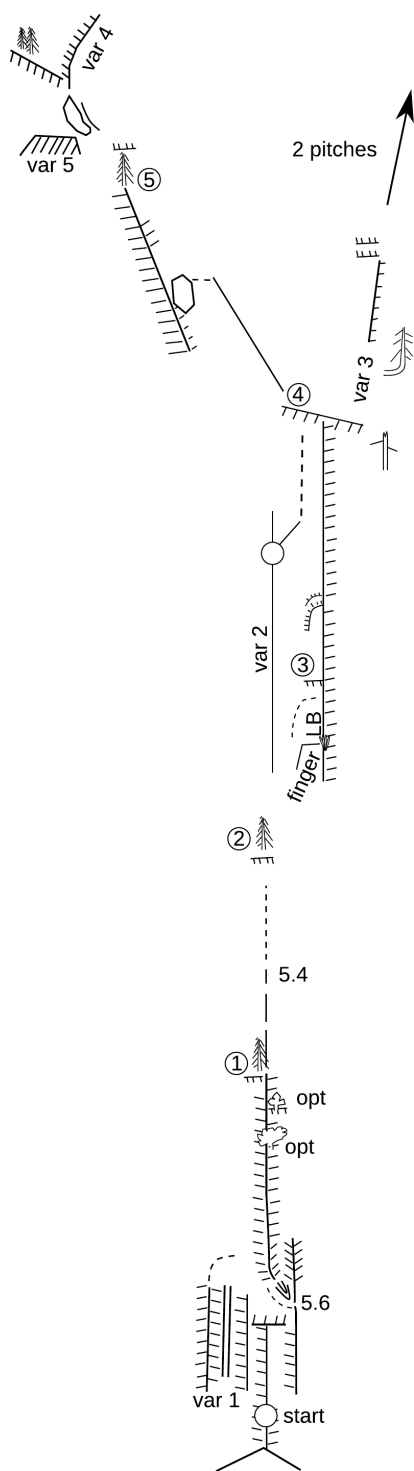
From the pine tree, climb up class 3 slab to the left.

*Descent:* Walk uphill to the friction descent route (p. 10).

Ben Crowell, [github.com/bcrowell/tahquitz](https://github.com/bcrowell/tahquitz)

<sup>1</sup>Mugelnoos No. 68, Oct. 3, 1940

## The Uneventful (5.5) ★ ★



### Warning: I haven't done the right-hand variation at the end.

Some of the belay ledges are littered with loose rock, a problem that can be avoided by starting on the North Buttress route instead. Avoid climbing this route below another party. Six to seven pitches of climbing, most of it 5.4 to 5.6. Gear to 4". FA Harry Daley, Yvon Chouinard, C. Butler, and Dan Doody 1959.

**Approach:** The Uneventful lies on the North Buttress, which is the one in between the Maiden Buttress and the Northeast Buttress. Immediately to the left are the Larks, and a clear visual landmark from the trail is the huge gendarme that lies at the top of the Larks. A gully splits the North Buttress in two at the bottom, and the Uneventful starts in this gully, at a deep, shady alcove with azaleas growing in it. To complete P1 with a 60 m rope, it's necessary to scramble up some class 3 terrain to get higher in the gully. Even with a 70 m rope, start a few meters above the dirt.

**P1.** Above the start, the gully immediately splits into three forks. The middle fork is blocked by a steep headwall. Head up the right-hand fork, which curves around behind the headwall. A crux is formed by an overhang consisting of two tongue-shaped flakes. Continue up the gully as the climbing gets a little easier, and finish at a comfy belay below a huge, truncated pine tree. Alternative belays exist a little lower at an oak tree and a mountain mahogany, but these will not get you to the second belay. 5.6, 60 m

**Var 1:** Detour left to a right-facing chimney underneath an arete. Climb the chimney, gain the crest of the arete, continue up to a small dead log, and then make a committing friction move to get back in the dihedral. 5.6

**P2.** The gully starts to dissipate, and the climbing gets easier. 5.4, 60 m

**P3.** Start up and then, when you get an opportunity, head over to insert into a 10 foot tall, 80 meter long, left-facing dihedral. One fun way to do this is by following a horizontal fingertip crack to a currant bush, followed by some laybacking along the dihedral. It's also possible to move up a little higher in a 1" crack and traverse a low-angle part of the slab. After inserting into the dihedral, continue to a belay either at a decent ledge in front of a wall, or a little higher to a hanging belay right below the overhanging arch. 5.6, 50 m

**Var 2:** An obvious alternative line is a shallow crack paralleling the dihedral. As the crack becomes less defined, the climbing becomes more difficult and leads out onto the steep face above the Larks. A decent belay spot is available after about 40-50 m. (Anchor with a 2" cam.) From the belay, a crack and flake system provides an exit to the right. Beware of possibly loose flakes. 5.8

**P4.** Climb a difficult 20 m section starting with an overhanging arch, which protects well. Continue up the dihedral to a big ledge near two distinctive trees: one shaped like a "J" and one that is now a stump. Make the belay as far as possible to the left on the ledge. 5.6, 35 m

**P5.** Start from the left end of the ledge to avoid running out of rope. Climb up and left along the lower of two diagonal cracks. Traverse left at the obvious opportune point, to a little saddle. Downclimb slightly to insert into the dihedral; or, for more spice, head up a thin fingertip traverse (5.6), which can be protected with a small cam. Climb to a large pine in an alcove. 5.5, 60 m

**Var 3:** Above the "J" tree, follow a 5.5-7 chimney/dihedral. I haven't done this version. Two good beta photos on Mountainproject are titled "Jog right to skip the hard dihedral" and "Starting the J tree pitch that looks intimidating." There is some helpful discussion below one of the photos.

**P6.** Escape the alcove by climbing up and left, then continue upward through a short squeeze chimney, 5.7. The spicy friction move into the chimney can be aided with a nut (BD #10) if desired. Move bulky gear off of harness loops and avoid getting stuck in a low body position. An alternative to the chimney is a steep section on the right. Continue through a short section of easy 5th class climbing, then follow a 3rd-class ledge past a pair of trees.

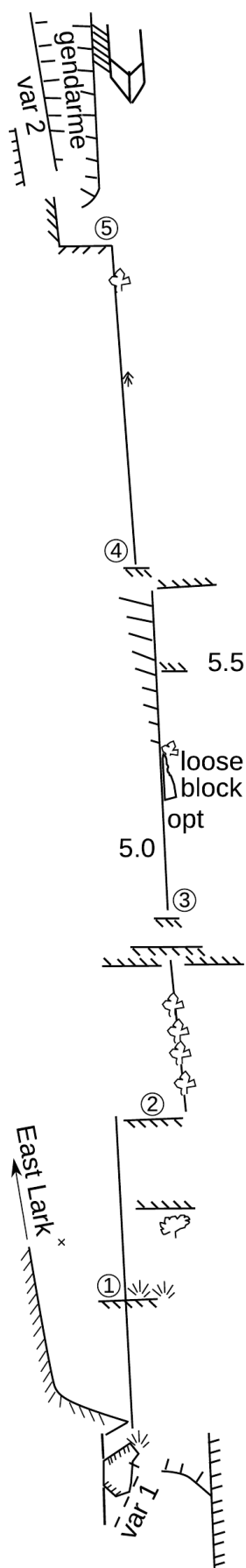
**Var 4:** After the chimney, continue up a right-facing dihedral, then over a short wall.

**Var 5:** Before the chimney, head left to a black and white mottled slab, with underclings and protection available along its rim. Downclimb into the right-hand exit chute of the Larks. 5.7.

**Descent:** Descend via the north gully (p. 11).



## West Lark (5.4) ★



A low-angle ascent up a series of obvious crack systems, with straightforward routefinding. The few harder moves are protectable. This is a good climb if you're looking for something that's easy but won't be mobbed on a Saturday morning. Beginners attracted to this climb because it's easy should keep in mind that it's much longer than many of the easy climbs at the west end of the rock. Pro to 2". Doubles of 0.5-0.75" cams are helpful on the later pitches. FA Roy Gorin, J. Hudson, William Dixon, and Ellen Wilts, 1954.

The first half of the climb is easily protected with nuts, but there is the constant hazard of falling and hitting a ledge. Pitches 4 and 5 have a lot of rounded, flaring cracks and take a little more work to protect, but there are no ledges, so a fall would be relatively inconsequential.

The rock quality in general is fine, but not as stellar as some at Tahquitz, so don't trust holds without thinking, and be careful of kicking down loose rock from belay ledges. The very top of var 2 has a lot of breadbox-size blocks that could be deadly if dislodged.

The start lies at the extreme right side of the north face, just to the left of the north buttress. The gendarme and dead tree near the top are the most visible landmarks through the treetops. Approach via the North Side Trail, going all the way to the east side of the face, and then take a side trail back to the west along the face of the rock. The start can be located by looking for the distinctive arch on the right, and the big hexagonal flake.

**P1.** Head up the crack that runs along the left side of the hexagonal flake. Protect against falls onto the numerous ledges. 5.2, 33 m

*Var 1:* Climb to the top right corner of the hexagonal flake, then past an inconvenient bush and left a few feet across the flake. Easier climbing, except for the friction move past the bush.

**P2.** Continue up similar climbing in the same crack, ending at a set of ledges on the right. 5.2, 40 m

**P3.** From the right side of the ledge, begin climbing a different crack. A series of small mountain mahogany trees grow in the crack and can be used for pro. Continue up through a gap in an overhang (5.6 crux) and belay at the second ledge above it, on top of a little buttress (0.75" and 1" SLCDs). (Belaying underneath the overhang makes it impossible to reach the comfiest spot for the next belay unless you have a 70 m rope and simul the last 5 feet.) ~ 50 m

**P4.** Continue up easy climbing with less abundant protection. A right-facing wall develops to the left. About 25 m up, there is an extremely dangerous loose block shaped like a crayon, with a mahogany growing out of its tip. If you want to split this pitch in half, the last relatively comfy semi-hanging belay is near the base of this death crayon. After the death crayon, the dihedral grows and the climbing gets harder. This section eats finger-width pro. Escape a headwall by climbing the easy wall to the left. Belay at a comfy ride-em-cowboy saddle immediately above the corner (0.5-1" active pro). 57 m

**P5.** Continue up a low-angle gutter by toeing in, securely but somewhat painfully, to a crack. It takes a little work to find pro. A small white fir and currant bush can be slung. As you near the end of the pitch redirect the rope to avoid dragging it over the currant. Finish at a big ledge below the huge gendarme. Anchor with 1-4" cams. 5.0, 50 m

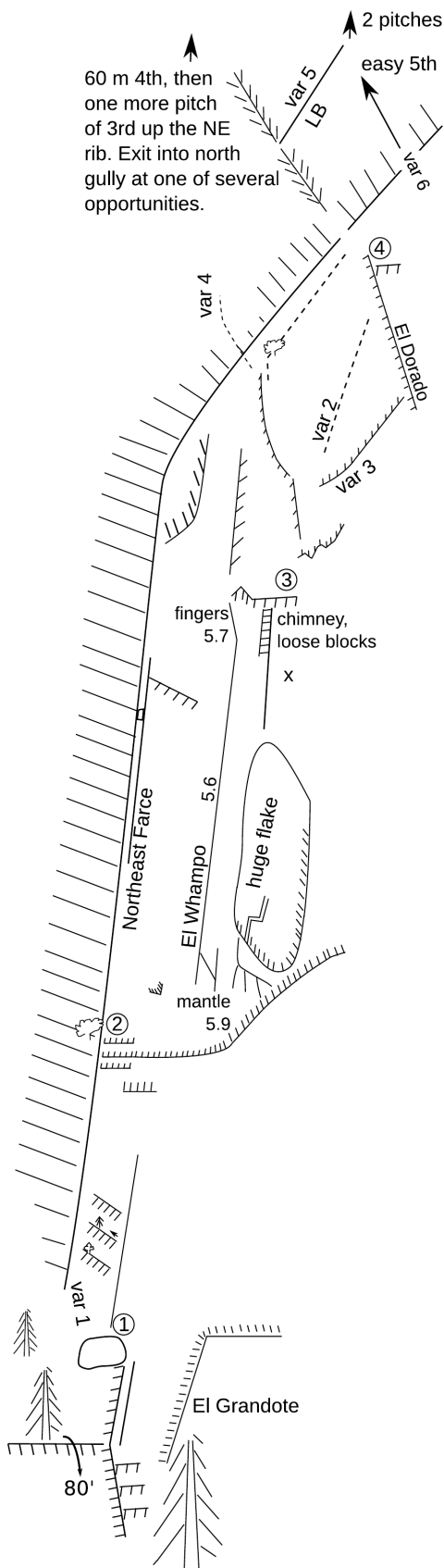
**P6.** This easy pitch is the most fun part of the climb. Continue straight up, on the right side of the gendarme. Next to it is its little sister, a rock shaped like the prow of a ship. Between them is a chimney. Climb the steep and scary-looking chimney, which is a surprisingly easy 5.2 and well protected. Over all this is the easiest and safest pitch on the climb, and makes an excellent lead for a beginner.

*Var 2:* On the left side of the ledge is a wall/arete. Climb this to a steep but well protected face that is the lower left part of the gendarme, where it fades out. Escape to the left at a bush and insert into the broad chute. Pull over a protectable overhang. 5.4

*Descent:* Gain the summit ridge and head down left into the north gully descent route (p. 11).

Ben Crowell, [github.com/bcrowell/tahquitz](https://github.com/bcrowell/tahquitz)

## El Whampo (5.7) ★



This route braids together with others including Northeast Farce and El Grandote. Many variations are possible, the sweet El Whampo crack pitch being the only naturally defining feature of this particular climb. Variation 1 is Northeast Farce. Different guidebooks and tribal elders disagree about which of the variations of P4 is the real route. The climb starts at the base of the huge right-facing Northeast Farce dihedral, at the extreme left side of the northeast face. This dihedral can be distinguished from the Northeast Rib dihedral to its left because the Northeast Farce has the El Grandote overhang immediately to its right.

There are two isolated hard spots in the whole climb, both of which can be made a little easier by pulling on gear if necessary. Pro to 3". Doubles of cams 0.5-1" for the El Whampo crack. Doubles of 3" cams make it easier to cheat the hard move on P5. FA Richard Coats, Larry Reynolds, D. McLean, and D. Ross, 1964.

**P1.** Head up a gully to the left of the El Grandote Arch. A headwall is formed by a bus-sized boulder. Pass around the boulder to the right, and belay on top of it. 5.2, 55 m

**P2.** Somewhat difficult climbing and not great pro. Climb a thin crack and then move left into the dihedral at the second-highest ledge, which has a tiny fir tree. Follow the dihedral to a gear belay near a mountain currant bush. (Avoid using up a 2" cam for the anchor.) 5.7, 40 m

*Var 1:* Climb through bushes, then up the dihedral. Unpleasant but easier and better protected than the El Whampo version.

**P3.** Traverse right across slab. Protect with a #2 (yellow) Metolius TCU under a cubical prow. Go to the second (right-hand) finger crack. A difficult mantling move is required in order to start up the crack. To protect this move, use small pro such as BD #5 nuts or a black Totem. Sam Ricker reports that it helped to stem with one foot against the left crack. After mantling, move back left to the actual El Whampo crack. Continue for 20 m of much easier climbing with solid foot jams and abundant pro. Near the top, there is a short, slightly more difficult section that narrows to finger width and leans left. A 2" cam is helpful for the anchor. 5.7, 45 m

**P4.** Head up and slightly left toward the roof along a curved series of wavy flakes, leading to fun, airy 5.3 climbing over the big gully. As you near the roof, turn right and traverse 10 m along a slab that is made more secure by underclings, 5.5. A comfy belay is available at a little nook inside a dihedral.

*Var 2:* Head more directly toward the belay. 5.7 PG.

*Var 3:* Traverse an undercling, protecting with cams, then insert into the El Dorado trough. (Reputed to be better protected than var 2. I haven't tried this one.)

*Var 4:* Escape the arch early. I haven't tried this variation.

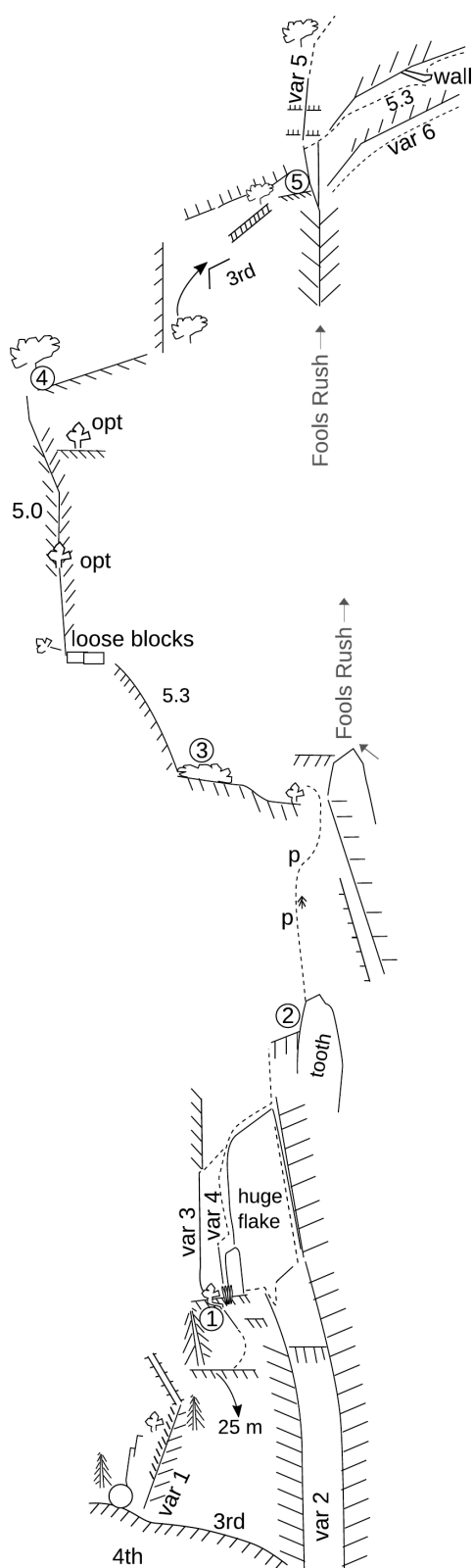
**P5-7.** Escape up and left through an awkwardly slanting gap in the roof above the belay. The gap is fists and wide fists, with poor feet, but you can protect it well with cams. A solid fist jam as available for the crux move, if you haven't placed a cam in it. Weenies like me can place two 3" cams, pull on them to get up, and keep bumping them up. Continue up a gully, which forks into a gully on the left and a right-facing dihedral to the right. Climb 4th-class terrain up the left and get on the Northeast Rib route. Continue on the 3rd-class crest of the rib all the way to the top (near a dead tree), or exit early into the northeast gully.

*Var 5:* Layback the dihedral to the right. Hanging belay. Continue up two more pitches. Climb slab to a big, comfy belay at a short, squat pine tree. After this, two exits present themselves, and either will work. On the left is a fourth-class gully that leads to a short, exposed easy 5th class section to get around a corner. The exit on the right consists of class 4 ledges.

*Var 6:* Take an easier exit farther to the right and finish on Northeast Farce.

*Descent:* Descend via the north gully (p. 11).

## White Maiden's Walkway (5.4) ★ ★ ★



### Warning: I haven't done var 6.

A Tahquitz classic. Difficult routefinding. Mostly 5.0 to 5.3, but a few 5.6 moves are required. Start from the left side of the Maiden Butte, which can be approached either from the North Side Trail or the Lunch Rock Trail. Pro to 3", or 4" for variation 2. FA Jim Smith and Arthur Johnson, Aug. 14, 1937.

**P1.** Start near the highest tree in the crook of the butte. Hand jam (or pull on a cam) to get onto a series of flakes. Traverse toward a ledge with a big pine tree. (Enter the left-trending gutter only briefly.) Behind the big pine, climb a short crack to a ledge with a mahogany and a currant.

**Var 1:** Start at the more visually obvious spot, at the bottom of a gully. The first move is a difficult mantle, worth protecting.

**Var 2:** Start in the square alcove at the center of the butte. Climb over car-sized flakes. Belay at a large wooded ledge. Mostly 5.0-5.4, with a few harder moves, including one near the start. 3-4" cams are helpful.

**P2.** Traverse to the right, under the branches of the currant and then over a saddle behind a car-sized chickenhead. From the saddle, lean over to place pro in a 1" crack. Downclimb a few feet to a stemming stance and then come back up to the crack. Finish traversing the slab and insert into a gutter, which magically becomes 5.0 if you grope and find the invisible undercling. Watch for an exit to a large saddle on the right. A common mistake is to overshoot the saddle instead of exiting. 35 meters

**Var 3:** A clean fist crack just left of the mahogany. Left foot in the crack, right foot in the crack or stemming. Don't try to keep feet on the face. 5.7

**Var 4:** An unpleasant ragged fist- and off-width crack starting from the currant tree. A fall near the start risks impalement. 5.6

**P3.** From the center of the saddle, head straight up toward a waist-high white fir. Near the second fixed pin, you run out of easy ways up, the only apparent option being a very difficult mantling move up to a small sloper hold. Instead, grope for a series of excellent holds that allow you to easily move up and to the right. Come back to a ledge containing a small mountain mahogany and a larger prostrate oak tree. Place gear to route the rope so as to avoid damaging the mahogany by dragging the rope over it. 5.4, 35 meters

**P4.** Climb 15 meters up a 5.3 flake/arete. As the flake levels out and disappears, your left hand lands on a large, loose conch-shaped block, and there is a second block farther to the left. Walk across the two blocks and make a committing step around a corner to a stemming stance underneath a small tree. The stance can be stabilized with a hand in a finger-width crack on the right. Get on top of the tree and then head up a 5.0 gully. Belay at a big ledge with two mountain mahoganies. 58 meters

**P5.** Traverse almost to the right-hand tree, then head up into a right-facing dihedral. Before getting too close to the ceiling, turn right and follow a hip-width gutter. Gear belay in a one-inch crack in a right-facing dihedral in the big gully. Class 3.

**P6.** Go 10 feet up the one-inch crack, then exit right into a cave. ASAP, trend as far right as possible on slab, then step farther right for the easiest mantle past a short, slightly overhanging wall. 5.3

**Var 5:** Unpleasant. Head straight up through gaps in the overhangs above the belay. The crux is the awkward second gap, 5.8.

**Descent:** Either go down to the friction descent (p. 10) or go up and over the summit and come down the north gully.

Ben Crowell, [github.com/bcrowell/tahquitz](https://github.com/bcrowell/tahquitz)

# Emergency Rappels

## General Information

All the climbs described in this book go up and over, with a walk off the back. It's not normal to rappel back down these routes, and doing so will be difficult and extremely time-consuming, and will usually involve leaving gear. Retreat will be especially difficult on the north side or from high up on the rock. The information about rappel routes on pp. 38-41 is provided here so that in an emergency such as a severe injury, climbers will have some help in evaluating their options. In a serious emergency, it may be a better option to call 911. Riverside Mountain Rescue Unit does technical rescues on the rock.

If you are going to rappel off of trees, do not trust old nylon slings left behind by other people. Back them up with your own cord. Two people were killed in 2022 when they rapped off of old tat in this area. Because this is not an area where people routinely rappel, a sling on a tree may just be left over from when someone put it there a decade ago, and may not have been used since then.

## Diagrams

*From the Maiden Buttress:* See p. 39.

*From the Pine Tree Ledge area:* See p. 40.

*From the Lunch Ledge/Fingetrip area:* See p. 41.

Other areas have more limited options. See Gaines, Best Climbs, pp. 49, 58, 61, 115-116, 128.

30 m = 98 ft

35 m = 115 ft

60 m = 197 ft

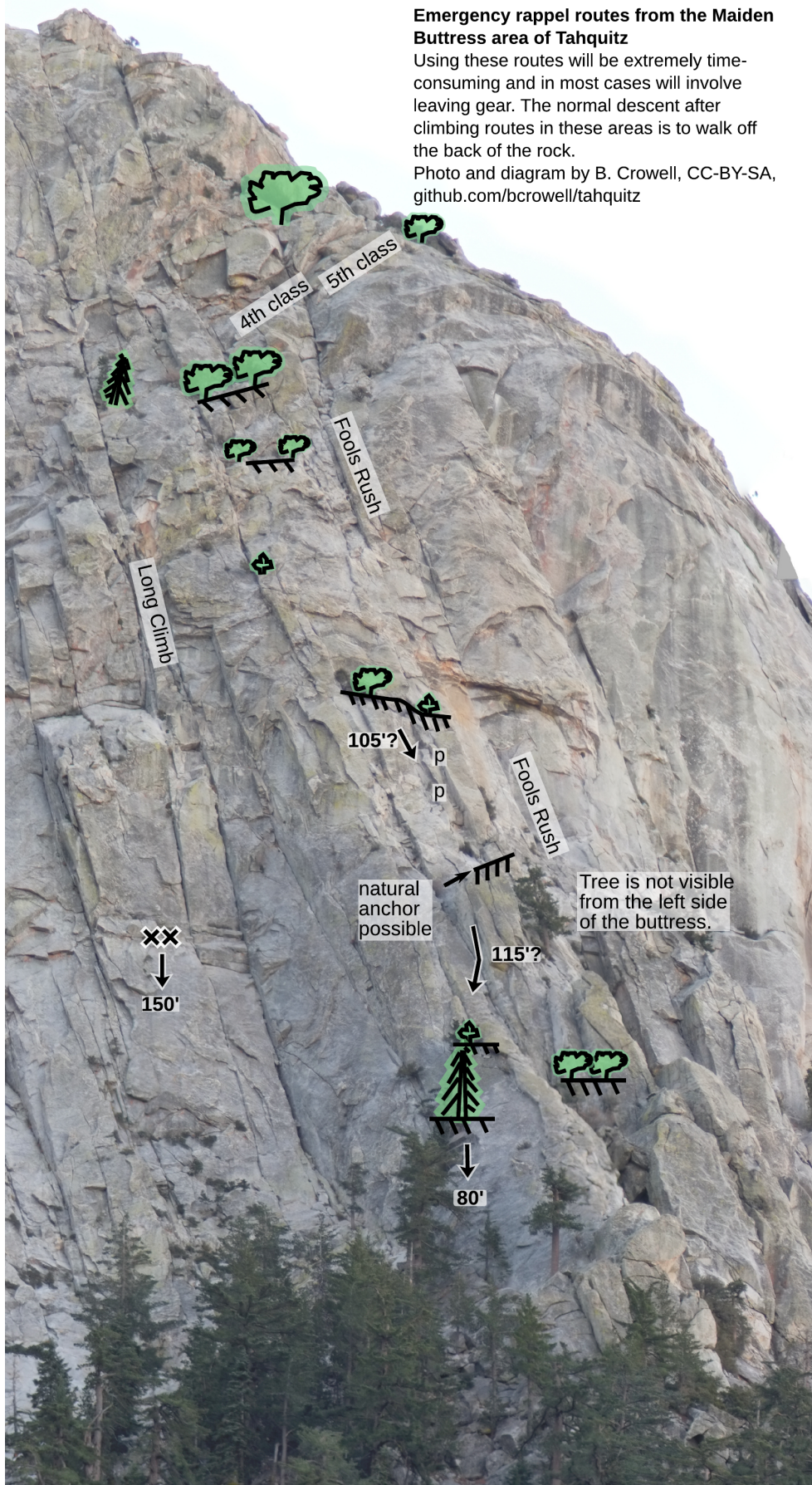
Rappels described as 100' can be done with a single 60 m rope.



**Emergency rappel routes from the Maiden Butress area of Tahquitz**

Using these routes will be extremely time-consuming and in most cases will involve leaving gear. The normal descent after climbing routes in these areas is to walk off the back of the rock.

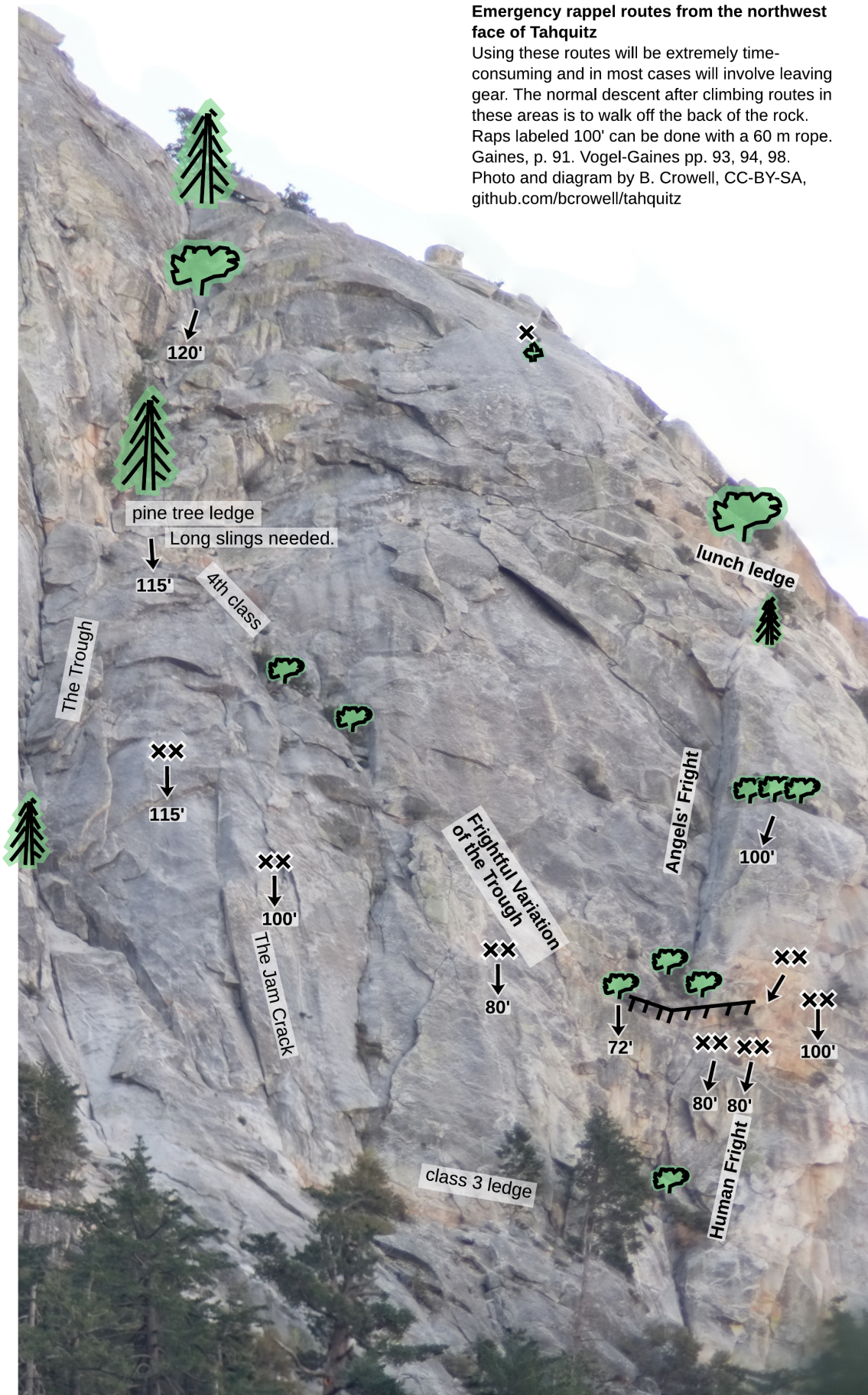
Photo and diagram by B. Crowell, CC-BY-SA, [github.com/bcrowell/tahquitz](https://github.com/bcrowell/tahquitz)





### Emergency rappel routes from the northwest face of Tahquitz

Using these routes will be extremely time-consuming and in most cases will involve leaving gear. The normal descent after climbing routes in these areas is to walk off the back of the rock. Raps labeled 100' can be done with a 60 m rope. Gaines, p. 91. Vogel-Gaines pp. 93, 94, 98. Photo and diagram by B. Crowell, CC-BY-SA, [github.com/bcrowell/tahquitz](https://github.com/bcrowell/tahquitz)





### Emergency rappel routes from the west shoulder of Tahquitz

Using these routes will be extremely time-consuming and in most cases will involve leaving gear. The normal descent after climbing routes in these areas is to walk off the back of the rock. Raps labeled 100' can be done with a 60 m rope.

Based on Vogel-Gaines, pp. 97, 104, Gaines, pp. 98, 101-102, 109.

Photo and diagram by B. Crowell, CC-BY-SA, [github.com/bcrowell/tahquitz](https://github.com/bcrowell/tahquitz)

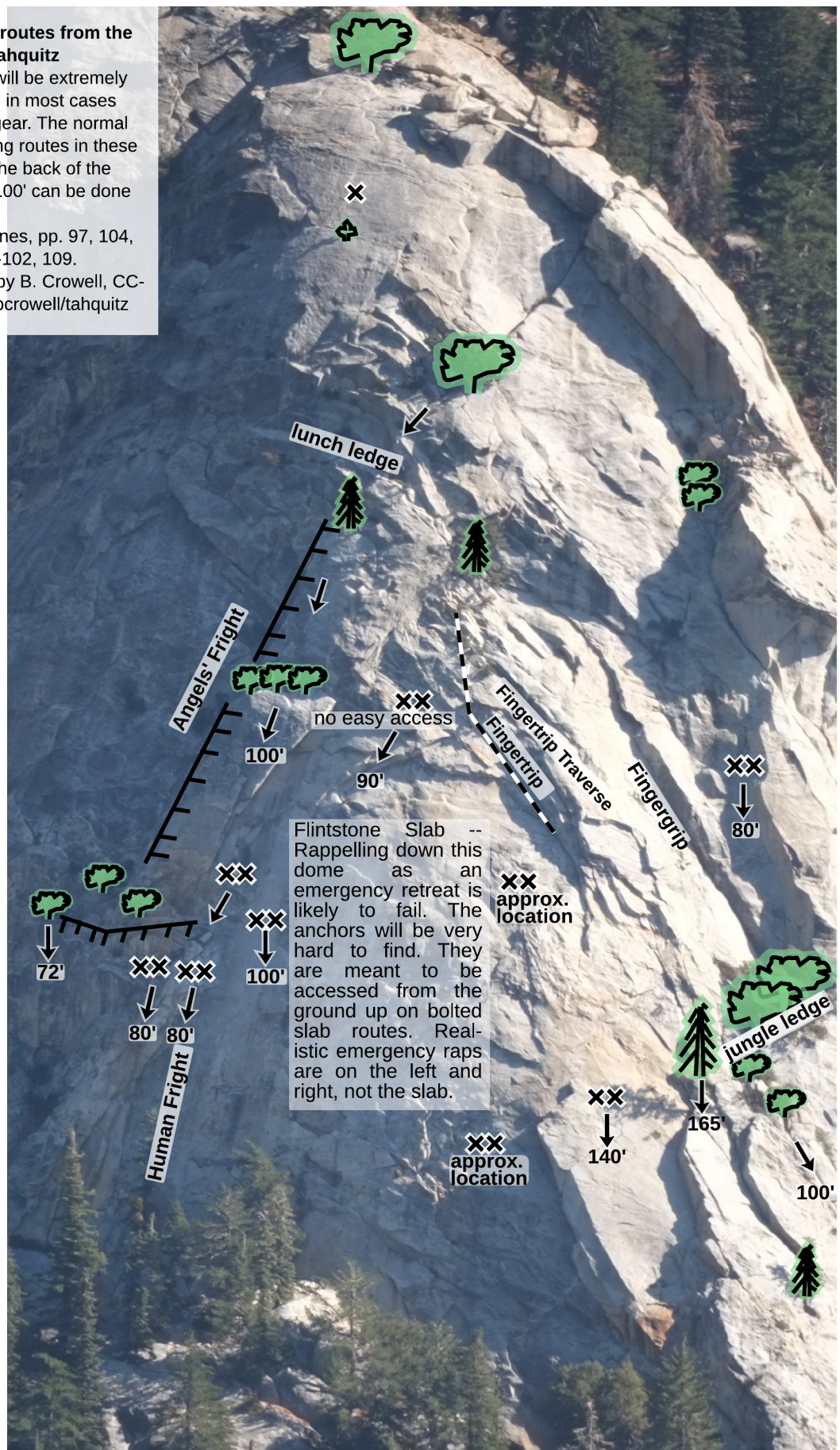
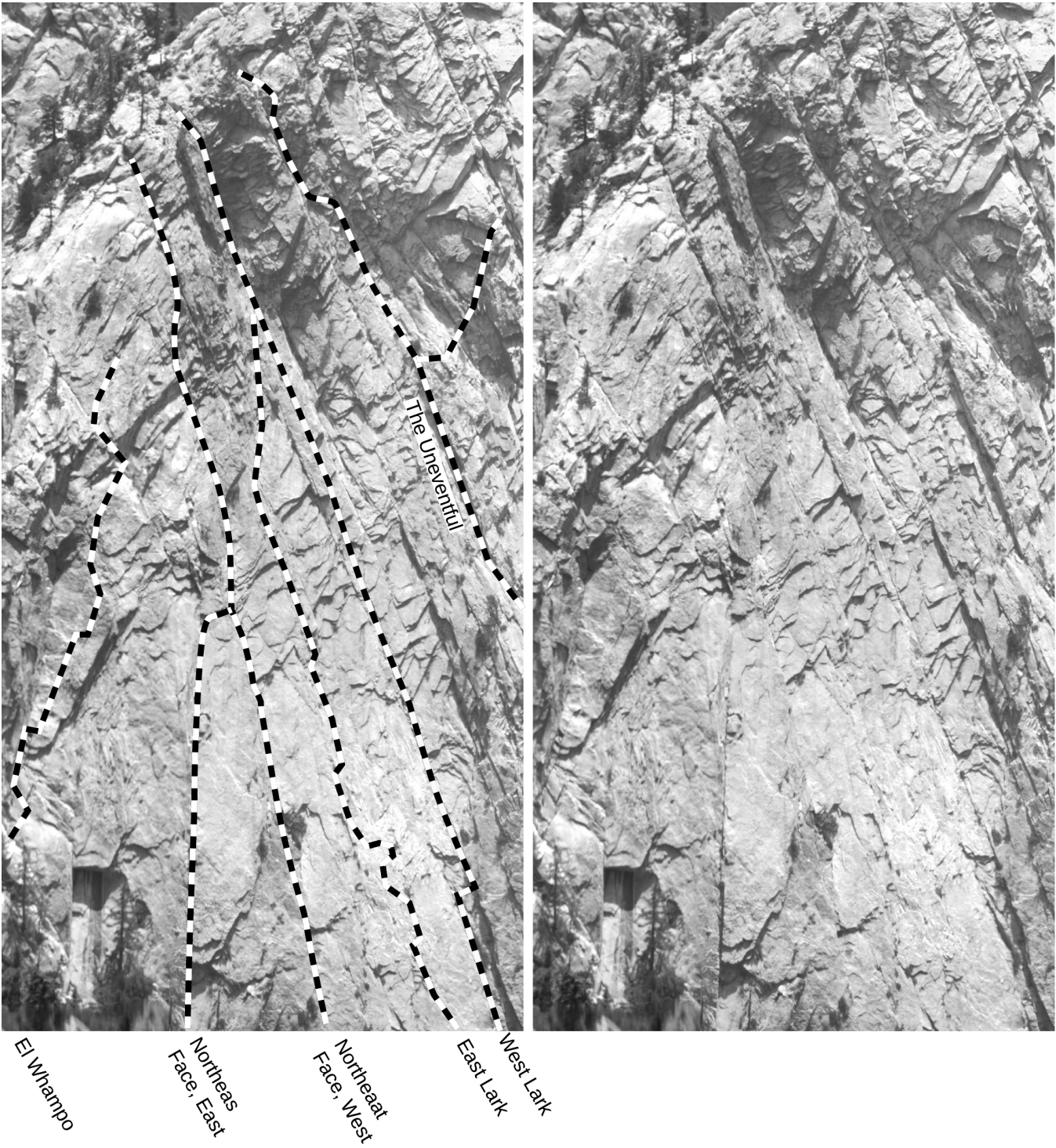


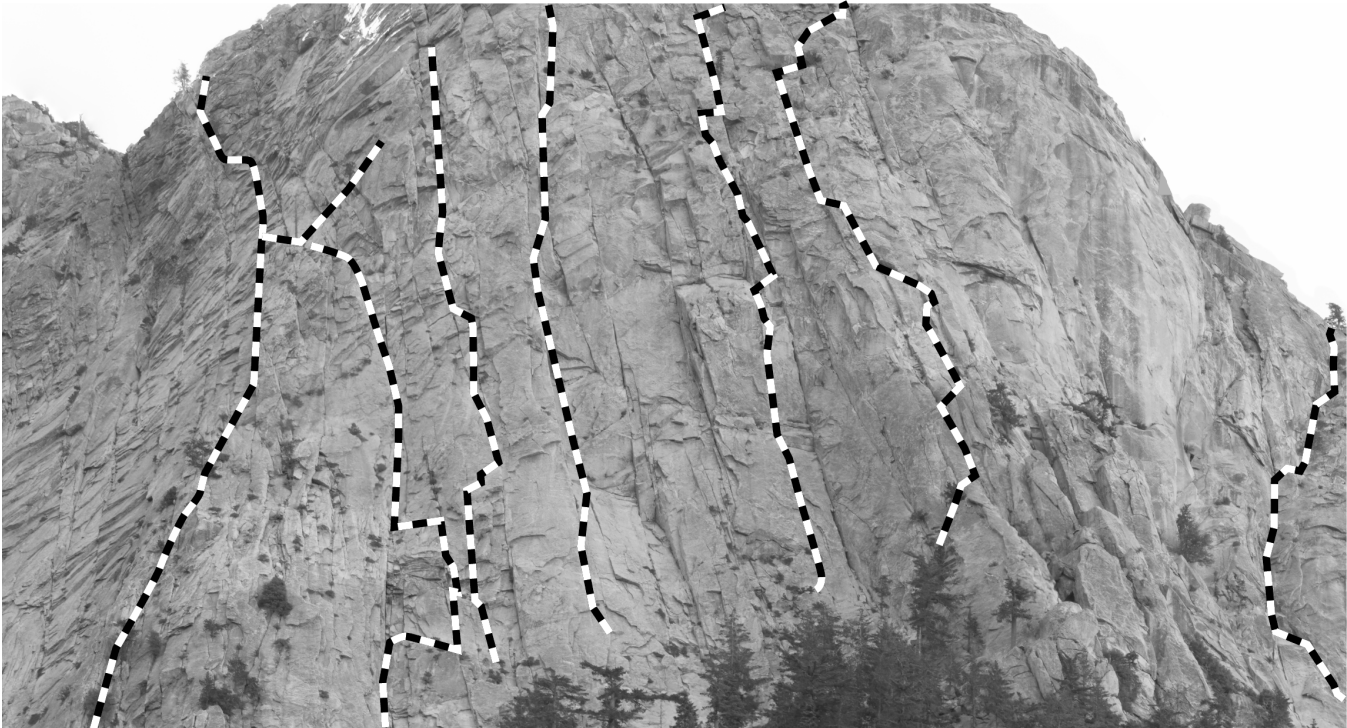
Photo Overviews

Overview of the Northeast Face



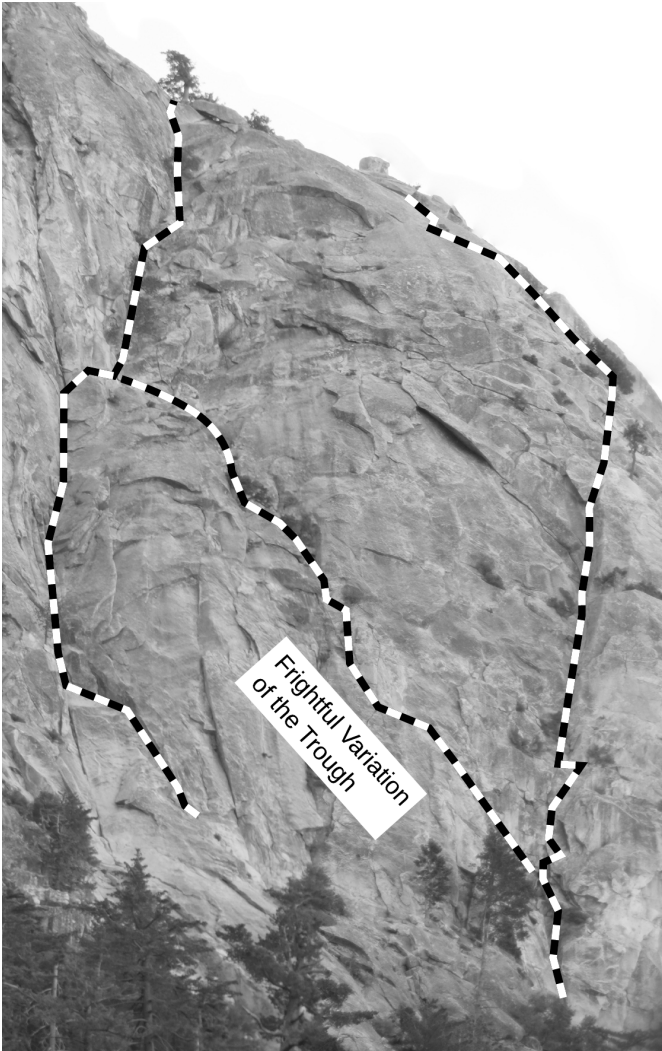


Overview of the Middle of the North Face



The Uneventful  
The Error  
Sahara Terror  
Whodunit  
LongWong  
White Maiden's Walkaway  
The Trough

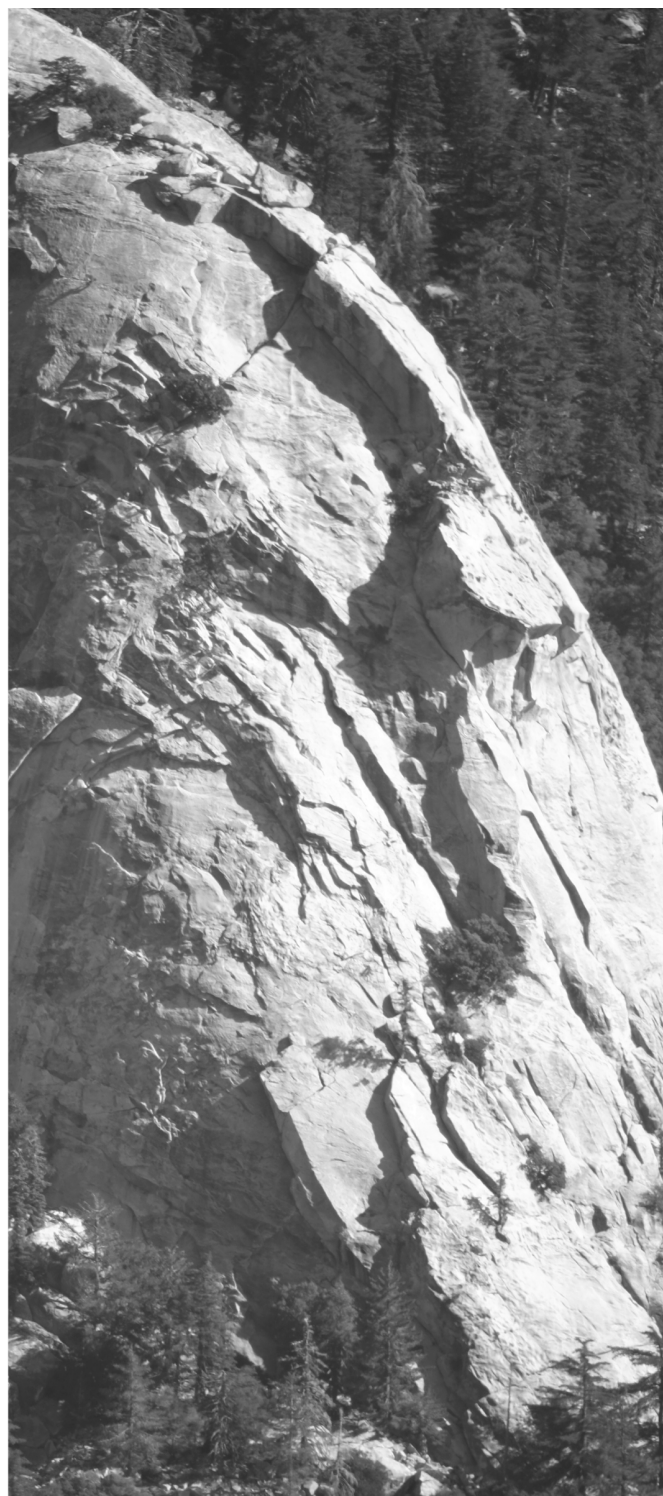
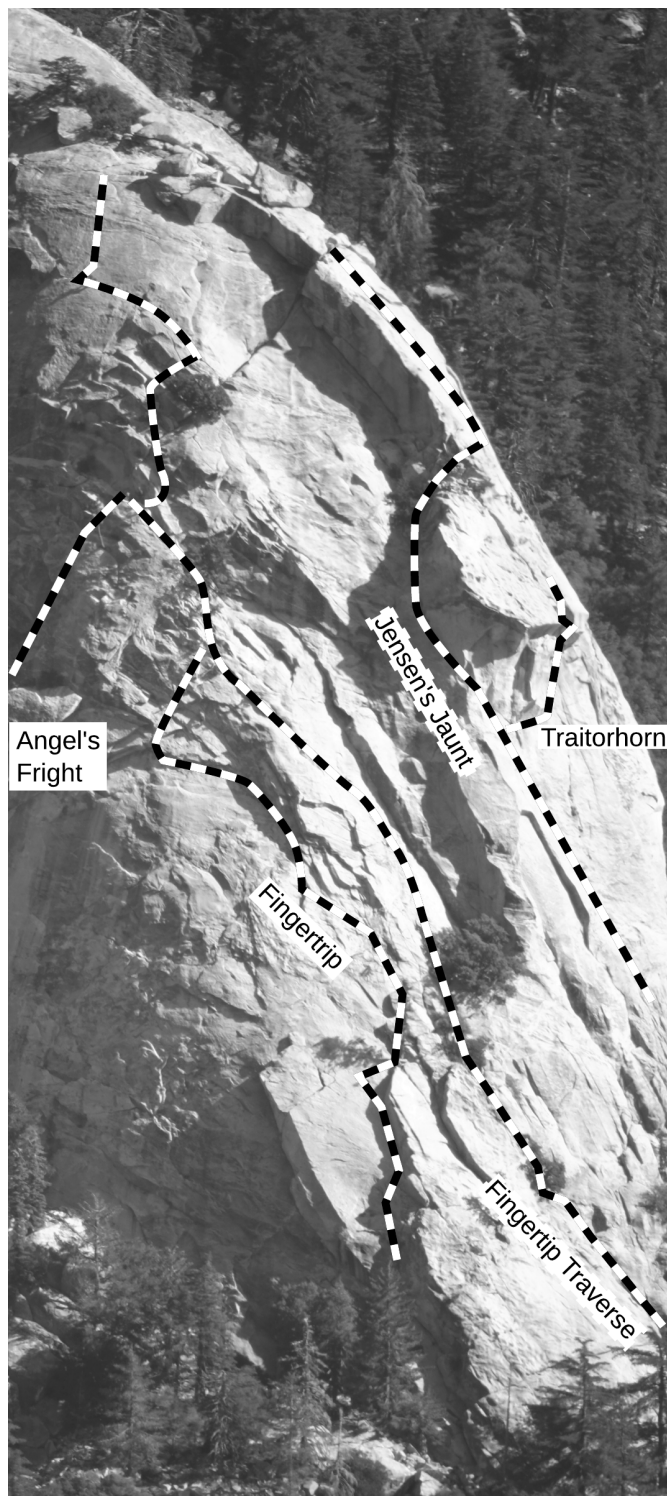
Overview of the Northwest Side



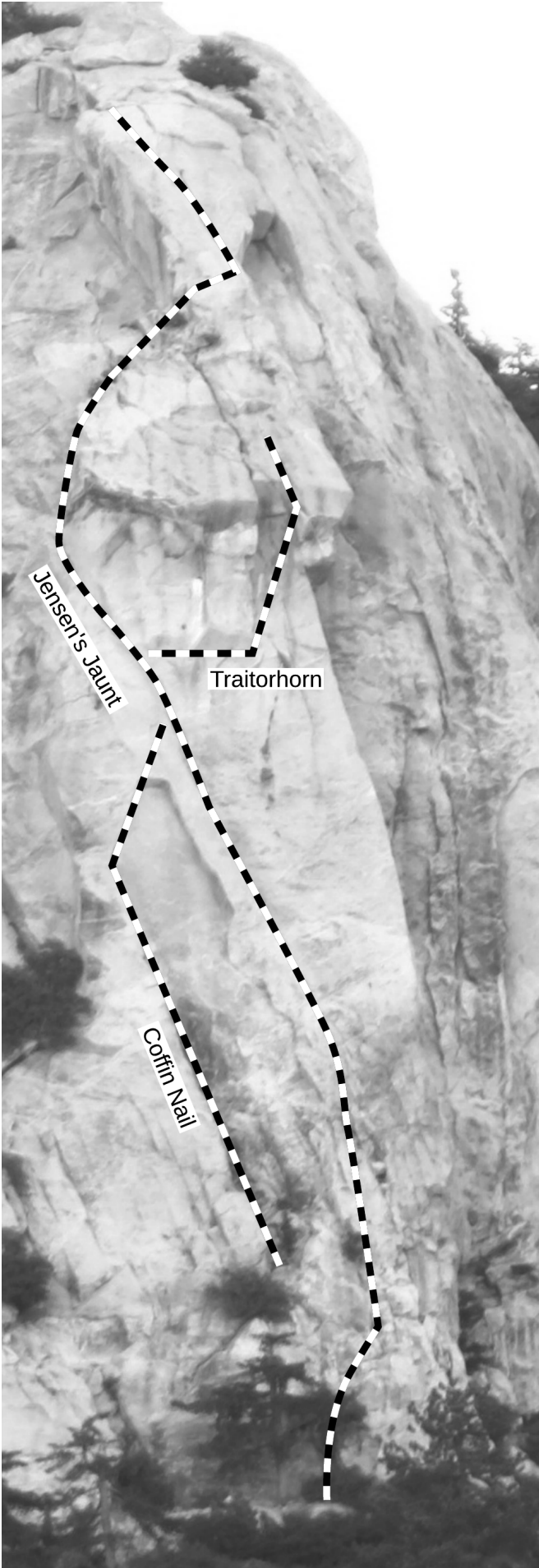
The Trough

Angel's Flight

## Overview of the West Side (Left)



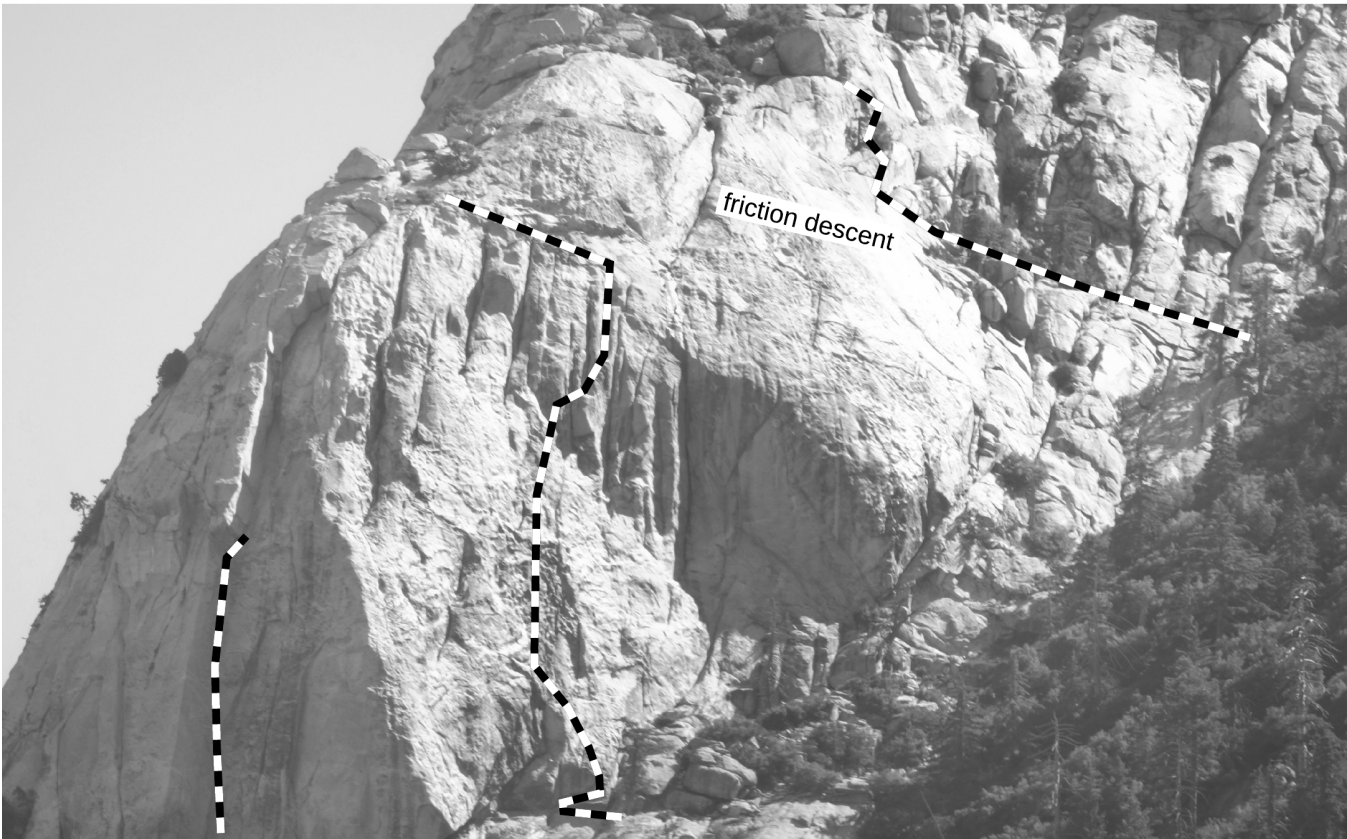
Overview of the West Side (Middle)







Overview of the South Side



Open Book

Left Ski Track

## Best climbs at grades 5.3-7

There are a couple of 5.7 climbs that I haven't done, so take my opinion on that grade with that grain of salt.

### By grade, climbs with consistent difficulty

The following are my opinions about the climbs that have the best climbing, pro, and rock quality at each grade, selected to be climbs where the difficulty of the different pitches is roughly consistent.

5.3	p. 33	The Trough	
5.4	p. 18	Fingertip Traverse	
5.5	pp. 37, 20	White Maiden's Walkway to Fools Rush	(best with a 70 m rope)
5.6	p. 34	The Uneventful	(some loose rock on belay ledges)
5.7	p. 36	El Whampo	

### On crowded weekends

5.4	p. 35	West Lark	
5.5	p. 25	North Buttress	
5.5	p. 20	Fools Rush	(best with a 70 m rope)
5.6	p. 16	East Lark	
5.7	p. 17	The Error	

### Uneven difficulty

These are good routes for a climbing team of unequal ability, if each person wants to lead something.

White Maiden's Walkway	p. 37	5.6 (first move off the ground), 5.6 (one committing move with pro) or 5.7 var., 5.4, 5.3, 4th, 5.3
Angel's Fright	p. 14	5.3 (crack technique), 5.6, 5.2 (to optional belay), 5.6, 5.2, 5.5 (friction)
Northeast Farce/El Whampo	pp. 27, 36	Mix and match pitches from these two climbs, 5.3-7, avoiding the unpleasant and poorly protected P3 of Northeast Farce.
Fingertrip	p. 19	5.7, 5.7, 5.7 and 4th, 5.2, 5.5 (friction)

## All climbs by grade

South Gully 5.0 ... p. 30  
The Trough 5.3 ... p. 33  
Fingertip Traverse 5.4 ... p. 18  
The Frightful Variation of the Trough 5.4 ... p. 21  
West Lark 5.4 ... p. 35  
White Maiden's Walkway 5.4 ... p. 37  
Angel's Fright 5.5 ... p. 14  
North Buttress 5.5 ... p. 25  
Orange Peel 5.5 ... p. 29  
The Uneventful 5.5 ... p. 34  
East Lark 5.6 ... p. 16  
Fools Rush 5.6 ... p. 20  
Jensen's Jaunt 5.6 ... p. 22  
Left Ski Track 5.6 ... p. 23  
Northeast Farce 5.6 PG13 ... p. 27  
Northeast Rib 5.6 ... p. 28  
The Error 5.7 ... p. 17  
Fingertrip 5.7 ... p. 19  
Northeast Face, East Variation 5.7 ... p. 26  
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