

A collection of vintage mountaineering equipment is displayed against a white background. The items include a large ice pickaxe with a wooden handle and a metal head, a coiled rope, a pair of goggles, a metal carabiner or anchor, a metal tool with a ring, a metal tool with a handle, and a metal tool with a handle and a ring. The equipment is arranged in a vertical line, with the pickaxe and rope being the most prominent items.

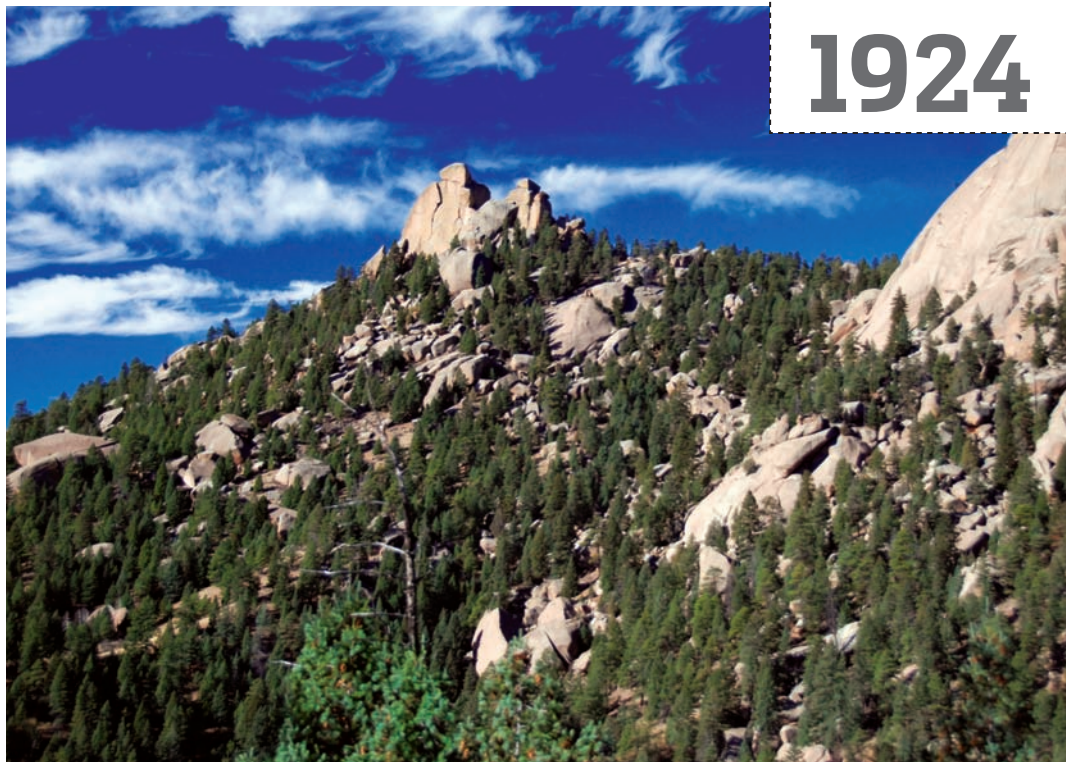
CLIMBING.COM | 37

BY BRENDAN LEONARD



You've said it while climbing a classic route—after an exposed traverse, an unprotectable chimney, or a spooky runout: Wow! Imagine climbing that without cams or nuts, sticky rubber, or any beta. Without even a nylon rope, harness, or belay device—instead, you'd have to wrap a rough, natural-fiber cord around your body to hold a fall.

The saying goes that there are no old, bold climbers, but there are still old, bold climbs that demand respect. Prior to World War II, most American climbers' focus was on alpine climbs like *Stettner's Ledges* on Longs Peak, Colorado—a 5.8 multi-pitch with serious weather and other hazards, put up more than 80 years ago. But to prepare for mountain routes like these, climbers went cragging, developing the techniques of rock climbing—and leaving classic climbs you can still do. Want to follow in some legendary footsteps? History class begins now.



1924

ELLINGWOOD CHIMNEY, THE BISHOP, SOUTH PLATTE, COLORADO, 5.8, 2 PITCHES

FA: Albert Ellingwood, Agnes Vaille, Stephen Hart

Albert Ellingwood was one of Colorado's earliest and boldest climbing pioneers, putting up notable routes like *Ellingwood Ledges* (5.7) on 14,197-foot Crestone Needle and the difficult San Juan Mountains choss spire *Lizard Head*, nowadays rated 5.8 R. If you get a little sketched stemming up the historic *Ellingwood Chimney*, just remember that after Ellingwood led it for the first time, placing no gear, he downclimbed it after lowering his partners.

The Bishop is located in Colorado's South Platte

area, 3.8 miles south on Jefferson County Road 96 from its intersection with Jeffco Road 97. *Ellingwood Chimney* is the obvious feature in the corner on the west face of the Bishop, left of an enormous roof. Chimney up and attempt to gracefully pull over the chockstone on pitch one, or just bellyflop onto it. The second pitch has a cavernous chimney and then a wide crack to anchors on the right-hand summit.

DESCENT: Rap with two ropes, or one rope to a rap station in the Bishop Chimney (just to the left of *Ellingwood Chimney*). **RACK:** Cams to 4 inches; a 5- to 6-inch piece is good to protect the second pitch. **GUIDEBOOK:** *South Platte Climbing: The Northern Volume*, by Jason Haas, Ben Schneider and Craig Weinhold (fixedpin.com)

The Bishop stands proudly in the middle, with The Dome to the right. *Ellingwood Chimney* is located around the corner to the left of the face.

Timeline

Other events that coincided with these historic climbs.



1924
George Mallory and Andrew Irvine attempt to summit Mt. Everest—neither is seen again. Mallory's body is found in 1999.

1925
First issue of *The New Yorker*.

1927
The first flight of Pan American Airways, from Key West, Florida, to Havana, Cuba.



Mickey Mouse appears in *Steamboat Willie*.

Global population reaches two billion.

1922

East face of Longs Peak, Colorado, first ascent solo by J. W. Alexander, Princeton University professor.



First Winter Olympics are held in Chamonix.



1928
Leon Trotsky exiled to Alma Ata.

1929

WHITNEY-GILMAN RIDGE, CANNON CLIFF, NEW HAMPSHIRE, 5.7, 5 PITCHES

FA: [Hassler Whitney](#),
[Bradley Gilman](#)

When people say “Whitney-Gilman,” they also usually say “exposure,” and you’ll know what they mean midway through this East Coast mega-classic. Cousins Whitney and Gilman first climbed this obvious spine jutting from New Hampshire’s Cannon Cliff not only without cams, but without pitons—they just stopped to belay a dozen times, whenever they found a decent ledge. Remember that when you step out onto the right side of the ridge on pitch three and feel all that air under your feet. Whitney, a distinguished mathematician, might also hold the claim to being America’s first boulderer—he explored the blocs of Sleeping Giant, Connecticut, while a student at Yale in the mid-1920s.

A year after the first ascent, Robert Underhill and Kenneth Henderson (who paired up to pioneer several Tetons classics) repeated the *Whitney-Gilman*. Underhill called it “a long series of passages of great technical difficulty, high exposure, and dubious outlet.” The men hammered in the section of iron pipe that still marks the most exposed section on the now-famous Pipe Pitch.

The Northeast’s most famous climb begins about 50 feet north of where the arête meets the talus. Follow cracks and fixed pins up five pitches, stay-

ing close to the ridge; if you find yourself on loose rock, you’re probably too far left. The crux is on the third pitch, where you’ll step around the corner to the right and look down on the tremendous exposure and spot the infamous pipe. Plenty of variations are possible, but staying to the true 1929 line will keep the climbing 5.7 or easier. Get here first on a weekend or come on a weekday—there’s a fair amount of loose rock on this alpine route.

DESCENT: [Follow the trail off the top into the woods, and it will eventually head left and down to a bike path.](#) **RACK:** [Standard rack](#) **GUIDEBOOK:** [Rock Climbing New England](#), by [Stewart Green](#) ([falcon.com](#))

The *Whitney-Gilman Ridge* follows the obvious feature in the center of the photo, left of the shaded rock.



Hervey Voge took these images on the September 4, 1933, first ascent of *Lunch Ledge*.

LUNCH LEDGE, WASHINGTON COLUMN, YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK, CALIFORNIA, 5.6, 6 PITCHES

FA: [Hervey Voge](#), [Richard Leonard](#), [Jules Eichorn](#), [Bestor Robinson](#)

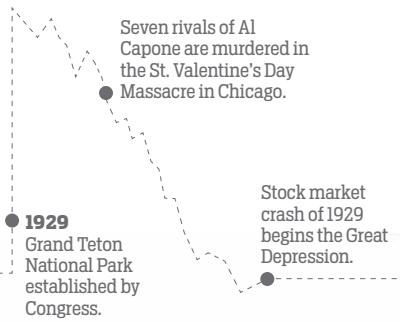
Imagine a Yosemite Valley untouched by climbers. On Labor Day weekend in 1933, 24 years before Royal Robbins climbed Half Dome, and 78 years before Tommy Caldwell updated his Facebook feed while attempting the Dawn Wall, four members of the Bay Area-based Cragmont Climbing Club put up Yosemite’s first technical climbing route, using 10-inch hardware nails as pitons. Through the 1950s, *Lunch Ledge* was one of the most popular climbs in the Valley, but by 1971, Steve Roper wrote in his guidebook that it had waned in popularity after the discovery of “more enjoyable routes.” Still, it’s a worthwhile pilgrimage for those who want to touch a piece of history.

To retrace the first route in the Valley, head east on the trail from the back parking lot of the Ahwahnee Hotel, then head north where the bike path and horse trail nearly meet. Follow the drainage until you can begin making your way up slabs a few hundred feet left of the separation between Royal Arches and Washington Column, diagonaling up class 3 terrain to reach a ledge about 200 feet off the ground. Follow easy ground up the heavily treed face, working generally up and right to arrive eventually at a large tree at the edge of an 800-foot drop. Cracks and chimneys lead to the traditional sixth pitch, a crack once called the “Reigelhuth Chimney,” with a bolt protecting the 5.6 crux move near the bottom.

One year after the ascent of *Lunch Ledge*, Eichorn, Leonard, and Robinson returned to the Valley and completed a much more audacious climb: the first ascent of Higher Cathedral Spire, now a very popular 5.9.

DESCENT: [Rappel off trees or continue up the Direct Route \(5.7\) on Washington Column.](#) **RACK:** [Cams to 2 inches](#)

1933



Seven rivals of Al Capone are murdered in the St. Valentine’s Day Massacre in Chicago.

1929
Grand Teton National Park established by Congress.

Stock market crash of 1929 begins the Great Depression.



1930
On March 12, Mahatma Gandhi sets off on a 200-mile protest march with 78 followers to protest the British monopoly on salt.

3M creates Scotch Tape.



1931
First ascent of the north face of Mt. Sneffels, Colorado, by Dwight Lavender and the San Juan Mountaineers.

Empire State Building is completed, the tallest in the world.

1932
Laurent Grivel invents the 12-point crampon.



ANGEL'S FRIGHT, TAHQUITZ ROCK, CALIFORNIA, 5.6, 5 PITCHES

FA: [Jim Smith](#), [Bill Rice](#)

The history of Tahquitz Rock is like a “who’s who” of early American climbing: TM Herbert, Bob Kamps, Jerry Gallwas, and Royal Robbins all did routes here. Oh, and that rating system that goes as high as 5.15b? That was invented here. After the Sierra Club decided to start a Rock Climbing

Section in 1932, a few members quickly began exploring. The first fifth-class route at Tahquitz went up in

1936

1936, and one month later, Smith and Rice put up *Angel's Fright*, nowadays rated anywhere from 5.4 to 5.6, depending on who you ask.

The route starts almost directly above Lunch Rock with 40 feet of old-school squeeze chimney, leading to steep jugs heading up the face. Cruise up the right-trending corner to Lunch Ledge (the top of the traditional third pitch—not to be confused with Lunch Rock); it's easy to find another ledge if there are other parties there. From Lunch Ledge, take an almost-horizontal crack to the left until it peters out, then friction up the slab with a lonely bolt for protection.

DESCENT: Come down the [Friction Route](#), a class 4 downclimb beginning at the huge boulder at the edge of the South Face cliff. Climb down the northeast side of the boulder to a ramp, and then head right down the ramp until you can begin making your way down and left. **RACK:** Cams to 3 inches; some long slings to prevent rope drag **GUIDEBOOK:** *Rock Climbing Tahquitz and Suicide Rocks*, by Randy Vogel and Bob Gaines ([falcon.com](#))

1937

WIESSNER ROUTE, DEVILS TOWER, WYOMING, 5.7, 3 PITCHES

FA: [Fritz Wiessner](#), [Lawrence Coveny](#),
[William P. House](#)

If the wooden-stake ladder William Rogers and Willard Ripley used to climb Devils Tower in 1893 is considered cheating, then Wiessner, Coveny, and House's five-hour ascent of this route to the summit is the first ascent of the tower by “fair means.” Wiessner and House had already established their pre-eminence in North American climbing—the year before they did the coveted first ascent of 13,177-foot Mt. Waddington in British Columbia's Coast Mountains. As you grunt and sweat up the pitch-two offwidth on Devils Tower with a couple of big cams on your harness, remember that Wiessner only pounded in one piton on the entire route, and afterward wished he hadn't placed it. As he said in 1937: “I wouldn't recommend that anyone except an experienced mountain climber attempt the trip we made. It is an extremely difficult climb for 200 feet, and to one who

does not know mountain climbing, it would be practically impossible to reach the top. A serious accident would be very likely to result.”

Wiessner's namesake route begins at a bolted anchor down and right of the Leaning Column on the southwest shoulder of Devils Tower. Pitch two is the offwidth that keeps traffic away from this route; take a 6-inch piece to reasonably protect it, or a 7-inch piece to be comfortable, and a double-length sling to tie off a chockstone. Wiessner's sole piton placement on the route came above the difficult offwidth. Cruise up pitch three and take in the view of the high-desert Belle Fourche Valley below, then third- and fourth-class to the summit.

DESCENT: Use the [Meadows Rappels](#): four double-rope raps to the ground. **RACK:** Cams to 6 inches, two ropes for rappel. **ANCHORS** are bolted. **GUIDEBOOK:** *Devils Tower Climbing*, By Rachael Lynn and Zach Orenczak ([extremeangles.com](#))

Devils Tower bathes in golden light, with Wiessner Route near the right skyline.



The drive-in theater is invented. *King Kong* shows for the first time.

1933

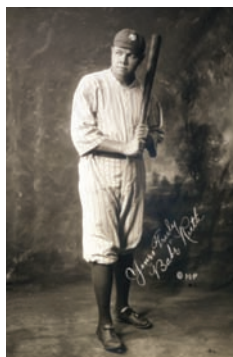
Prohibition is repealed with the passage of the 21st Amendment.

1935

Babe Ruth hits the 714th and final home run of his career.

1934

FBI guns down Bonnie Parker and Clyde Barrow.



Pierre Allain creates the first soft-rubber-soled climbing shoe.



1938

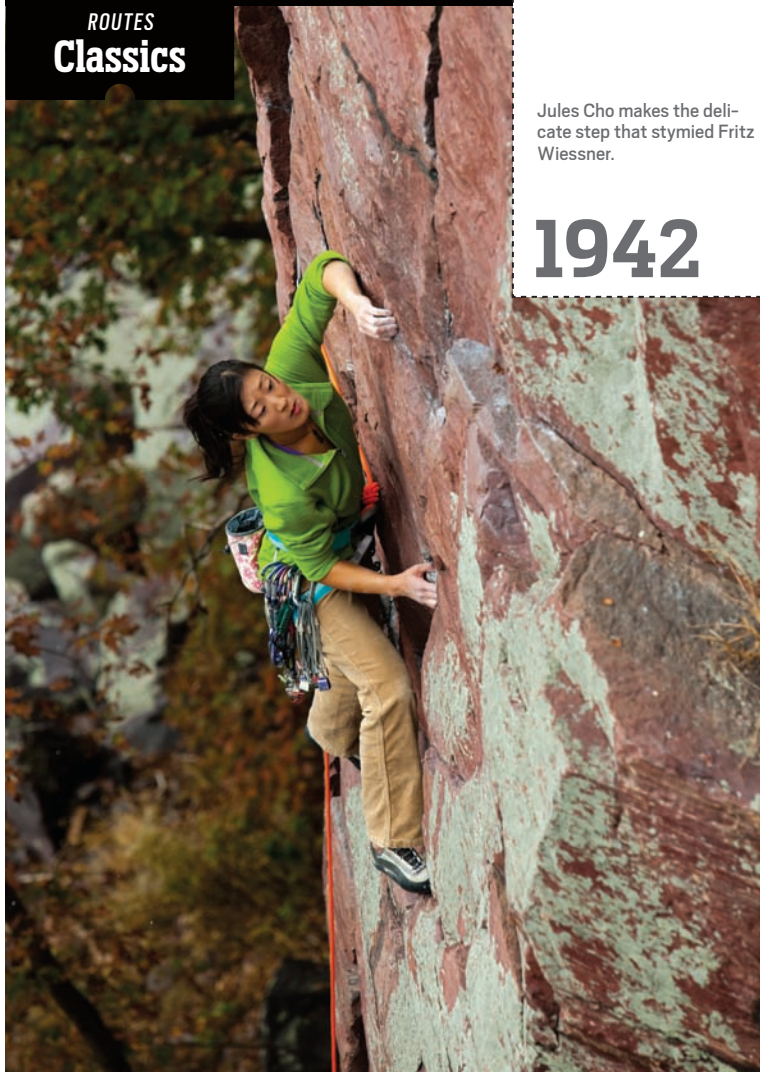
Anderl Heckmair, Ludwig Vörg, Heinrich Harrer, and Fritz Kasparek make the first ascent of the North Face of the Eiger.



American Jesse Owens wins four gold medals at the “Nazi Olympics” in Berlin. 1936

Jules Cho makes the delicate step that stymied Fritz Wiessner.

1942



NAME OF AD

BRINTON'S CRACK, DEVIL'S LAKE, WISCONSIN, 5.6

FA: [Bob Brinton](#)

Bob Brinton's name doesn't appear nearly as prolifically in climbing history books as Fritz Wiessner's, but this single pitch at Devil's Lake forever marks the day Brinton bested the well-known pioneer. By 1942, the legendary Wiessner had put up bold new routes in the Gunks, Cannon Cliff, Devils Tower, and other areas, and climbed to within 700 feet of K2's summit. But he backed off an attempt on this 5.6 line in Wisconsin. Plenty of leaders do the same thing, at the same spot Wiessner did: a spooky and committing traverse across bad hand holds. After Wiessner bailed that day in 1942, Brinton climbed to

his high point, devised a traverse, and stamped his name on this classic-of-all-classics at Devil's Lake.

There's no shame in first toppling this heady and sandbagged 5.6 on Brinton's Buttress—that's the style at the Midwest's most famous climbing area. Start in the wide crack near the corner of Brinton's Buttress, and when the crack runs out, take a deep breath, lean in, and trust your feet at the "step-across" move. Jam up an exposed crack to the top.

DESCENT: [Walk off.](#) RACK: [Lots of 2- and 3-inch pieces](#) GUIDEBOOK: [Climber's Guide to Devil's Lake](#), by [Sven Olof Swartling and Pete Mayer](#) ([uwpress.wisc.edu](#))

1939

David Brower, Raffi Bedayn, Bestor Robinson, and John Dyer make the first ascent of Shiprock, New Mexico.



1941

Mt. Rushmore sculptures are completed by Gutzon Borglum.

1944

NAME OF AD



Tim Keenan sails up the exposed final pitch on the Gunks' Yellow Ridge.

YELLOW RIDGE, SHAWANGUNKS, NEW YORK, 5.7, 2-3 PITCHES

FA: [Fritz Wiessner](#), [Ed Gross](#), [Ann Gross](#)

Fritz Wiessner “discovered” the Gunks for climbers in 1935, spotting the rock all the way from the Hudson River while climbing at Breakneck Ridge. Wiessner first explored the cliffs at Millbrook (the first-ever Gunks route was the seldom-climbed 5.5 *Old Route* at Millbrook), and then put up classics everywhere else. His name is all over the Gunks history books, on routes like *High Exposure*, *Frog's Head*, and *Horseman*. He waited until 1944 to put up *Yellow Ridge*, arguably the best 5.7 at the Gunks: a long exposed traverse, classic “Gunks 5.6” roofs, and an offwidth start that will take you back to the early days of climbing.

Yellow Ridge lies just a few minutes from the road at the Near Trapps. The route works its way up a tricky face down and right of an offwidth about 20 feet up the wall. Get into the business on the left side of the offwidth, and then set up a belay to minimize rope drag. Climb the corner above for 20 feet and traverse out 50 feet left to a belay, then head left to the nose for your dose of exposed and steep climbing to the top.

DESCENT: [Walk off via the cliff-top trail to climbers' right](#). RACK: [Standard rack](#). A 3- or 4-inch piece works to back up the piton on the offwidth. GUIDEBOOK: [The Gunks Guide](#), by [Todd Swain](#) ([falcon.com](#))

1942

Duct tape is invented.



Of all the gin joints in all the towns in the world, Ingrid Bergman walks into Humphrey Bogart's in *Casablanca*.



CONN'S EAST, SENECA ROCKS, WEST VIRGINIA, 5.6, 3 PITCHES

FA: [John Stearns](#), [George Kolbucher](#), [Bob Hecker](#),
[Jim Crooks](#)

The U.S. Army's 10th Mountain Division is famous for its February 1945 night-time operation to take Riva Ridge in the Apennines, Italy, to the surprise of the Germans, who thought Mt. Belvedere

unclimbable even during daylight. Much of the 10th Mountain Division's stateside training took place at Seneca Rocks and other nearby crags, where they hammered in more than 75,000 pitons—many of which have never been removed, giving one section of rock at Seneca the nickname "The Face of a Thousand Pitons."

This route, boldly traversing a huge chunk of the east face of Seneca's South Peak, is a mark of their legacy—it was climbed for the first time just a few months before the assault on Riva Ridge.

Conn's East—named for American climbing pioneers Herb and Jan Conn—begins about 50 feet left of the twin Castor and Pollux cracks on Upper Broadway Ledge on the East Face of South Peak. Climb the right-leaning ledge system past a tree, and continue up and right to anchor bolts. Pitch two is where you get your old-school money's worth, hanging

1943

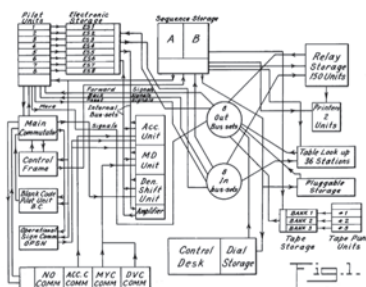
Due to shortages in copper, the U.S. one-cent coin is struck in steel.



1944



Smokey Bear debuts as spokesperson for wildfire prevention.



IBM introduces the first automatic digital calculator, which is 51 feet long and 8 feet high.

Dutch physician William Kolff invents the kidney dialysis machine.

Surgeons at Johns Hopkins Hospital perform the first open-heart surgery.

NAME OF AD

out over big exposure as you move across a bulge, and telling yourself that it's "only 5.6" until a couple of big jugs appear. Finish out the third pitch to join *Gunsight to South Peak* and then scramble to the summit along the ridge.

DESCENT: Scramble down north along the summit ridge to a notch at the top of *Alcoa Presents*, and do three single-rope raps to *Upper Broadway*. RACK: Standard rack GUIDEBOOK: *Seneca: The Climbers Guide—Second Edition*, by Tony Barnes (earthboundssports.com)

Nicky Dyal enjoys the jugs on the last pitch of *Conn's East*, with an attentive Dan Schwarz belaying.



The Allies invade France at Normandy Beach.



First ascent of the *Maiden*, Boulder, Colorado.

Benjamin Green invents sunscreen.

Ballpoint pens go on sale.

Star Wars director George Lucas is born.



1954 First ascent of the Diamond, Longs Peak, Colorado, by Bob Kamps and Dave Rearick.



NAME OF AD