



The northeast aspect of Granite Peak from Tempest Mountain.

- a. east ridge
- b. north face
- c. Notch Couloir
- d. Granite Glacier

GRANITE PEAK

[12,799 feet]

Not only is Granite Peak the highest peak in Montana, but also it is often purported as technically the most difficult climb of all of the fifty states' high points. The source of the name "Granite Peak" remains a mystery, but early prospectors or hunters might have named it after noticing the peak's metallic sheen and dominance from a distance. Arnold Hague was probably the first to record the name in print in the mid-1880s. Granite Peak was also included as a station on Edward Douglas' triangulation map for the Survey of Montana in the U.S.G.S. *Eighth Annual Report* in 1886.

Granite Peak was chiseled from an ancient high plateau by three glaciers, leaving it unmistakably as the monarch of the range from all directions. The Pleistocene Huckleberry Creek glacier carved the northeast side of Granite Peak into one of the ecosystem's most impressive alpine walls. Today, its remnant, the Granite Glacier, continues to gouge the north face offering climbers a steep snow or ice approach complete with crevasses and a bergschrund. This glacier, and over 1,000 feet of challenging rock climbing on the north face above, was first climbed by

Don "Claunch" Gordon on August 4, 1963. After descending from Tempest Mountain carrying a rope and hardware, Claunch climbed it solo using keen route finding sense to locate what might be the easiest line on the face. Crossing chimneys and ribs from lower right to upper left, his route is quite intricate, but he climbed 1,500 feet of Class-4 rock in a mere four hours from Tempest saddle. Claunch ultimately used no self-belays and called it his "most rewarding and interesting solo climb ever."

Chad Chadwick and Warren Bowman made first direct ascent of face on July 12, 1972 climbing the left side of the middle pillar. After a bivouac only a few pitches from the top, Chadwick attempted a direct ascent of the upper middle pillar but did not have enough gear for aid climbing near the top. They retreated by climbing left of the pillar to the summit and rated the route Y.D.S. III 5.7. Between Christmas and New Year's Eve of 1972, Brian Leo, Dougal McCarty, and four others skied up Huckleberry Creek to attempt winter ascents of both the east ridge and north face. High winds kept the team from sleeping well for two nights and left them little energy for their climbs, but a clear morning motivated McCarty and Leo to go for the north face. Leo was climbing strong and led nearly every pitch. A storm struck near the summit and McCarty fell several times as the climbing became desperate. In their bivouac near the summit, McCarty's toes became frostbitten, but the duo was able to descend to their comrades' snow cave at the "snowbridge" on the east ridge the following day. As one of the earliest winter climbs of a major north wall, it was a true milestone for mountaineering in Greater Yellowstone. A winter ascent of this face was not repeated until March 1978 by Jack Tackle and Ken Currens. This wall remains one of the Beartooth's most frequented alpine climbs, but it was the scene of a tragic accident in the mid-1990s when rocks trundled from the summit by careless climbers killed a climber on the face below.

The first ever winter ascent of Granite was claimed via its east ridge on February 21, 1966 by Wyoming moun-

Mountaineers with aspirations to climb Bears Tooth should be warned that it is no small feat. Bears Tooth has seen very little climbing activity for such a prominent feature, perhaps only a couple of ascents per year. Much of this can be attributed to the arduousness of the approach, but also to the difficulty and hazard of the climb itself. Many climbers admit that the hardest, most tedious, and most dangerous part of the ascent is just reaching the base of the spire. From the canyon upstream of Black Canyon Lake, ascend steep slopes and precarious boulders into the amphitheater below the enormous east wall of Beartooth Mountain. Scramble diagonally from lower left to upper right over exposed and slick slabs covered with granite grit. To climb the west arête, one must climb three pitches to gain the notch between the main mountain and the spire. The first two leads

traverse across the wall below the notch from a fixed piton and the final pitch climbs straight up over 5.8 loose rock. The west arête contains four pitches of 5.9 climbing in steep cracks and overhangs. To climb the more popular east arête, continue traversing diagonally across exposed sandy ledges and rope up for a 5.6 unprotected slab traverse across the south face of the spire. The east arête entails four pitches on excellent rock trending on the north side of the arête. The crux 5.8 layback near the top dramatically overhangs the Beartooth Glacier basin.

BEARTOOTH MTN.
ASCENT

Rock Creek parking elevation: 8,680 feet
Elevation gain: 4,471+ feet
Distance via Moon Lake: 9 miles
Overall grade by southwest ridge: III Class 2
Estimated ascent time: 5 to 9 hours
Map: Silver Run Peak



Northeast aspect of Glacier Peak. Rick Hooven took this photo during the summer of 1978. Courtesy of the Jim Williams Collection. a. Hidden Glacier; b. Fred's Truckstop Betty; c. Beckey Couloir; d. The Patriarch; e. Catch-a-Fire Couloir

GLACIER PEAK

[12,351 feet]

This massive peak dominates the headwaters of West Rosebud Creek and sports one of the Beartooth's best venues for alpine climbing and glisse mountaineering. Fred Beckey and Dave Beckstead were perhaps the first technical climbers to visit the peak, enticed simply by examining topographic maps and aerial photos. They were particularly struck by Glacier Peak's 2,000-foot northeast face, which is tucked in a remote cirque at the head of West Rosebud Creek. In the summer of 1964 or 1965, the pair approached from Mystic Lake and found that the face was dissected by a couloir bound by colossal rock walls. They climbed steep snow in the couloir until it became narrow and steep near the top, and finished the route with five pitches of Class-5 climbing on good rock. Henceforth known as the "Beckey Couloir," the route has seen several repeat ascents, including a winter ascent