GRAND TETON

[13,770 feet]

The Grand Teton is the most prominent mountain in Greater Yellowstone, visible and striking from nearly every major summit, and irresistible to any mountaineer who sets eyes on it. In 1924, six people climbed the Grand Teton. In 1960, 462 climbers signed the summit register. In the year 2,000, over 5,000 people attempted to climb the Grand, by far the most coveted peak in Greater Yellowstone today. More ranges and peaks are visible from the summit of the Grand than from any other summit in the ecosystem. On a clear day, one can see north to the Henrys Lake Mountains, Hilgard Peak in the Madison Range, Mount Holmes in the southern Gallatin Range, Granite Peak in the Beartooths, and Pilot and Dead Indian peaks in the Northern Absaroka. To the east, Eagle Peak, Overlook Mountain, Younts Peak, Francs Peak, Pinnacle Butte, and Ramshorn Peak are just a few of the visible Absaroka summits. The entire Gros Ventre Range spreads across Jackson Hole and Gannett Peak and Temple Peak are plainly seen in the Wind Rivers. Hoback Peak, Triple Peak, Wyoming Peak, Man Peak, and Mount Baird are visible in the ranges south of Jackson Hole. And to the west, the Lost River and Lemhi ranges stand out in bold relief above the Snake River plain in Idaho. The Grand Teton so dominates its surroundings that other peaks and ranges appear insignificant. Thus, Teton climbers seldom are inspired to explore the rest of Greater Yellowstone.

With at least 115 established routes and variations, it is manifest that mountaineers have focused on the Grand Teton. It has been climbed more different ways than any alpine peak in Greater Yellowstone, and perhaps in North America. However, the large number of routes is much less a testament to the number of climbers in the area than it is an indicator of the mountain's complexity and climbing quality on all aspects. For example, the mountain's ten primary features—its three south ridges, east face, east ridge, north face, north ridge, west face, and the northwest and southwest ridges of the Enclosure—all were first climbed before World War II by just three men and their climbing partners. Jack Durrance climbed five of these major features, and Robert Underhill and Paul Petzoldt climbed three each. (Durrance and Petzoldt climbed the north face together in 1936.) Two other major features of the Grand Teton were climbed more recently. In 1961, Ray Jacquot and Herb Swedlund chopped steps up the Black Ice Couloir and the north face of the Enclosure was first tackled by George and Mike Lowe in 1969.

Several of these primary features are part of a group of routes that Leigh

Aerial view of the Grand Teton from the northeast.
a. *Teepe Glacier*
b. *Dike Snowfield*
c. *east ridge*
d. *Hossack-MacGowan route up the northeast couloir*
e. *north face*
f. *north ridge*
g. *Grandstand*
h. *Gunsight Notch*
i. *Teton Glacier*

Aerial view of the Grand Teton from the southeast.
a. *Enclosure*
b. *Upper Saddle*
c. *Central Rib*
d. *Central Rib Couloir*
e. *Black Dike Traverse*
f. *Complete Exum Ridge*
g. *Beckey Couloir*
h. *Ford Couloir*
i. *Petzoldt Ridge*
j. *Stettner Couloir*
k. *Underhill Ridge*
l. *east face*
m. *Otterbody Chimney*
n. *east ridge*
o. *Teepe Pillar*

To begin their climb, Stevenson, Langford, and twelve other members of the Snake River Division approached up Teton Canyon and established a base camp in lower Alaska Basin. The next morning, eleven men left the camp at 5:30 A.M. with the thermometer reading eleven degrees. Each man was miserably equipped with only an alpine staff and a bacon sandwich. With several narrow escapes, they climbed over the divide of the range, traversed across the headwaters of Cascade Canyon, and climbed over the Middle Teton's west ridge into Dartmouth Basin. The Grand Teton loomed immediately above, but the arduous approach already had compelled four of the group to give up and start back to camp. Even mountaineer Gustavus Bechler was forced to turn around after spraining his ankle in the talus while scurrying out of the path of a boulder his mates had dislodged above.

James Stevenson was by far the strongest hiker of the lot and outpaced the remaining climbers during the steep ascent to the Lower Saddle. Following Stevenson up a scree- and snow-filled couloir above Dartmouth Basin was Langford and two seventeen-year-old boys who Hayden invited along on the 1872 survey because of their relation to guest members. Charles Spencer was Langford's nephew and Sidford Hamp was the nephew of William Blackmore, a close friend of Ferdinand Hayden. Hamp already had fallen twice on snowfields during the approach and slipped a third time in the couloir below the Lower Saddle. He wrote in his diary the next day: "I knew that if I slip[p]ed, I should be smashed, so I was very carefull, but just about 1 yard from the rocks we were making for, I did slip, but I turned over onto my stomach, and stretched open my legs, and turned myself into the rocks." Hamp clearly states in his diary and in a letter to his mother that this fall occurred on the way up to the Lower Saddle. Curiously, Langford seems to relocate the scene of Hamp's peril to some point above the Lower Saddle both in his diary and subsequent *Scribner's Monthly* article. Langford did this by sequencing Hamp's fall after a description of climbing above the Lower Saddle and by exaggerating the dimensions of the precipice Hamp would have fallen over had he not been able to arrest himself:

> *For a moment his destruction seemed inevitable, but with admirable dexterity he threw himself astride the icy ridge projecting from the mountain. Impelled by this movement, with one leg dangling in the crevice next the mountain side, and the other sweeping the snow outside the glacier, he slid with fearful rapidity, at an angle of forty-five degrees, for the distance of fifty feet, falling headlong into a huge pile of soft snow, which prevented his descent of a thousand feet or more down the precipitous side of the mountain. I saw him fall, and supposed he would be dashed to pieces.*

In a letter to his mother in England that he wrote two weeks later, Hamp revealed only that "there were big rocks below" and mentioned nothing of a large

precipice. Perhaps he simply did not want to distress his mother. Upon reaching the Lower Saddle (about halfway between the saddle's lowest point and the Black Dike) at around noon, Langford, Hamp, and Spencer took shelter from the strong winds behind a large boulder and ate part of their lunch. Hamp's diary clearly states that Stevenson rejoined the group at their lunch spot near the Lower Saddle, some 2,000 feet below the top. He then contradicts himself in his letter to his mother stating that after their snack at the saddle, "we went on and met Mr. Stevenson," but he gave no indication as to how far. According to a theory proposed by the Bonneys in their book *The Grand Controversy*, Stevenson not only had attempted to reach the main summit during his solo jaunt, but also he had discovered the man-made rock edifice on the west summit of the Grand Teton. It seems unlikely that Stevenson would go all the way to the Upper Saddle, scramble around for a while, and descend almost all the way to the Lower Saddle to reunite with the others. Langford's description suggests that they reunited somewhere near the Upper Saddle:

> *Pressing carefully forward, we attained a recess in the rocks, six hundred feet below the summit, where we halted. While resting here, far above us, we heard the loud shouts of Captain Stevenson, which we answered. Soon he joined us, with the information that he had been arrested in his ascent, at a point two hundred feet above us, by an intervening rock, just too high for him to scale.… He had made several ineffectual efforts to reach the overhanging edge of the rock, and at one time lost his foothold, his entire weight coming upon his hands while he hung with his face to the wall.*

Meanwhile, geologist Frank Bradley had struggled up an exposed direct route toward the lowest point in the saddle with W. R. Taggart and John M. Coulter. Of these three, only Bradley reached the Lower Saddle, but instead of trying to catch up with Langford and the boys, he decided to await the arrival of a barometer that was being carried by another man. Unfortunately for Bradley, that man already had given up. While waiting, Bradley made note of sheep tracks, large hailstones lying amidst the rocks, and forty- to fifty-mile-per-hour winds whipping through the saddle.

Determined to try again for the summit, Stevenson led Langford, Hamp, and Spencer back toward the site of "Stevenson's peril." According to Hamp, "we came to a place where the snow had separated from the rock about 2 feet, and one could see between to the depth of 40, 50, or sometimes 100 feet.…" Upon seeing the hazardous terrain that lay ahead, exhausted, and still rattled by his frightening slips, Hamp proceeded no farther and Spencer chose to wait with him on a ledge for Langford and Stevenson to return. Ostensibly, Hamp and Spencer stopped somewhere near the Upper Saddle, but it is difficult to correlate Hamp's description of such large moats with any point near the Upper Saddle as we know it today. In 1980, historian William Bueler inferred that in 1872 a massive icy snowdrift might have covered the steep wall above the Upper Saddle and that this was where Hamp saw the deep moats. Bueler called attention to the fact that after Langford and Stevenson left Hamp and Spencer behind, Langford made no mention of the spectacular exposed traverse across the "Belly Roll" and "Crawl" in any of his writings. His explanation was that Langford and Stevenson bypassed the Belly Roll, Crawl, and "Owen Chimneys" entirely by climbing this steep icy snowdrift directly over the vertical rock headwall above the Upper Saddle. This theory is plausible but unlikely, primarily because it leaves no place for Stevenson's peril, which according to Langford, was located immediately below a "shelving expanse of ice." Moreover, Langford mentioned nothing of moats near Hamp and Spencer's high point and instead referred in his diary to their niche as a "narrow bench," which Bonney argued is in fact an accurate description of the Belly Roll and Crawl area. The more likely theory is that Langford and Stevenson indeed made the traverse across the Belly Roll and Crawl and arrived at the overhanging chimney or "Double Chimney" where Langford took over the lead:

> *When I saw the perilous position from which he had escaped, I could not but regard his preservation as almost miraculous.… A rope*

A rendition of James Stevenson's misstep by* Scribner's Monthly *artist J. Minton. *National Park Service, Yellowstone National Park Museum Collection (Yell 758).*

A rendition of Sidford Hamp's third slip by* Scribner's Monthly *artist J. Minton. *National Park Service, Yellowstone National Park Museum Collection (Yell 757).*

Aerial view of Mount Owen from the northeast.
a. *East Prong*
b. *Koven Col*
c. *Briggs-McClure 1974 ski route*
d. *east ridge*
e. *northeast snowfields climbing route*
f. *Koch's 1999 snowboard descent of the Direct Northeast Snowfields*
g. *Crescent Arête*
h. *Run-Don't-Walk Couloir*
i. *north ridge*

Mount Owen. That distinction belongs to the west ledges. However, the Koven Route is approached directly from the east, whereas the west ledges route requires a longer and less direct approach from Valhalla Canyon on the west. The Koven Couloir was the natural route choice during the first winter ascent of the mountain. On December 19 and 20, 1965, George Lowe, Larry Nelson, T. Q. Stevenson, Mike Lowe, Steve Swanson, John Marsh, and Steve Nelson climbed both the east ridge and Koven Route.

Seven miles north of Moose, Wyoming on the Teton Park Loop Road, turn west at a sign for Lupine Meadows trailhead. Drive over a bridge and follow signs through three junctions for 1.5 miles to the trailhead. Hike south along the Valley Trail on an ancient moraine for 1.7 miles to a trail junction and continue straight. Climb 20 switchbacks, passing one trail junction en route to Amphitheater Lake, which is nestled in a small cirque nearly 3,000 vertical feet and 5 miles by trail above Lupine Meadows. Follow a trail around the north side of the lake and climb to a small saddle north of the lake. A climbers' trail traverses from this saddle across ledges to the rugged boulder field of an ancient Teton Glacier end moraine. Negotiate these rugged boulders and gain the terminal moraine of the current glacier near the base of the east ridge of the Grand Teton. Make a delicate traverse across scree onto the Teton Glacier and walk across the snow or ice to the lower chimney of the Koven Couloir. Climb this wet and awkward 5.4 chimney in two pitches and continue up a sloping bench into the mouth of the Koven Couloir, which reaches over 50 degrees during its 500-foot ascent to Koven Col.

From Koven Col, gain the upper snowfield by turning west and ascending a wet or snow-filled chimney, or by climbing ledges to the right of the chimney. Climb left onto the southeast face of Mount Owen and make an exposed ascending traverse across the snowfield to its uppermost reaches. In mid-to-late season, it is often possible to walk on rocks instead of kicking steps across steep and exposed snow. From the top of the snow, climb slabs and chimneys toward a notch immediately south of the summit. Traverse on a good ledge around the west side of the summit knob and finish in an obvious short chimney.

MOUNT OWEN ASCENT

Lupine Meadows parking elevation: 6,770 feet
Elevation gain: 6,158+ feet
Distance via Amphitheater Lake: 8 miles
Overall grade by Koven Route: III Class 5.4
Estimated ascent time: 5 to 10 hours
Maps: Moose, Grand Teton

FOSSIL MOUNTAIN

[10,916 feet]

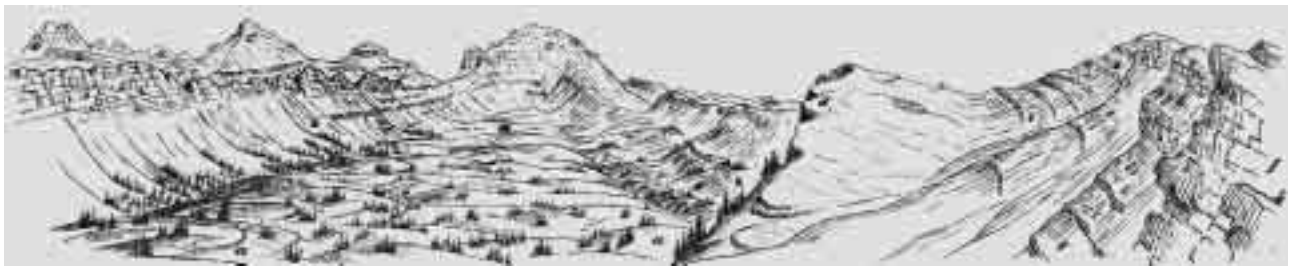
Fossil Mountain is the only one of seven selected Teton peaks in this book that is not a part of the high crystalline peaks thrust between the Teton and Buck Mountain faults. Fossil is considerably lower, less complex, and less desirable from a technical mountaineer's perspective, but it is arguably the most beautiful peak on the west side of the Teton Range. An ascent of Fossil also is representative of any exploration into the unique high country of the Teton west slope. As the granite core of the Tetons tilted upward, ancient sea floor beds cracked along the Teton fault. East of the fault, these beds were dragged 17,000 feet toward the earth's mantle and gradually buried by erosional deposits. West of the fault, gigantic plates of sedimentary rock thousands of feet thick were tilted upward at a 10- to 15-degree angle. Runoff and glaciation eroded away younger softer layers on the surface exposing harder layers such as the Madison limestone, which comprises the graceful summit cliffs of Fossil Mountain.

During the uplift, the entire succession of sedimentary strata cracked in numerous locations. This gave water runoff an opportunity to penetrate through hard beds, such as Madison limestone and Bighorn dolomite, and erode the softer rock beds below, such as the Darby formation and Gallatin limestone. The result are numerous subterranean cave systems, the most famous of which interconnects between the Ice and Wind caves near Fossil Mountain. Secretive spelunkers also claim to have discovered some of the world's deepest vertical caves, which follow fissures downward through the strata.

Aerial view of Fossil Mountain from the southeast.
a. *Darby south fork*
b. *west ridge*
c. *southwest face*
d. *east face*
e. *Darby middle fork*

Fossil's graceful lines cannot easily be seen from Jackson Hole. Rather, most people become familiar with its sphinx-like profile when they step off the Jackson Hole Aerial Tram at the top of Peak 10,450. This undoubtedly led ski patrolmen Callum Mackay, Robbie Fuller, and Ray White to make the first winter ascent and ski descent of the mountain by its southwest face in January 1973. Fossil also is particularly eye-catching when viewed from Highway 32 on the Idaho high plains northwest of the Teton Range.

On the 1899 U.S.G.S. Grand Teton quadrangle, Thomas Bannon labeled today's Fossil Mountain with the name "Housetop Mountain." A geologist by training, Fritiof Fryxell was taken by the profusion of fossils in the sedimentary layers of the western slope and in 1930 moved the name "Housetop Mountain" to its current position on a house-top-shaped mountain three miles to the southwest.



Orestes St. John's sketch of Fossil Mountain and the head of Darby south fork from the ridge above Terrace Creek in the Hayden Survey's **Eleventh Annual Report,** *1879.*