



The north side of Gannett Peak as seen from Downs Mountain. Photograph by Joe Kelsey.

- a. Grasshopper Glacier
- b. Gannett Glacier
- c. north face
- d. Stephen Koch's snowboard route, Spring 1992

GANNETT PEAK

[13,804 feet]

No more fitting name could have been applied to the highest peak in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem. Henry Gannett worked as an astronomer, geographer, and topographer for the Whitney and Hayden surveys between 1869 and 1879. During this time, Gannett climbed numerous peaks and thoroughly explored from northern Yellowstone to the Green and Portneuf rivers. In 1879, Henry Gannett was appointed Chief Topographer of the U.S.G.S., and subsequently became chairman of the U.S. Geographic Board and its predecessor the U.S. Board on Geographic Names for twenty-five years. He was also one of six founders of the National Geographic Society.



Henry Gannett (1846-1914) climbed many peaks in Yellowstone Park and the Overthrust Belt during his tenure with the Hayden Survey in 1872, 1877, and 1878. Portraits 62, U.S. Geological Survey.

Members of the Hayden Survey were the first to record a notice of Gannett Peak in 1878. During their trip to the summit of Fremont Peak, they saw a "snow capped peak north of Fremont's," but their reports do not indicate that they measured the peak to be higher. Allen D. Wilson was probably too busy with other triangulation to sight a vertical angle and make the discovery. It was Hayden's British guest, mountaineer and geologist James Eccles, who suspected during that same visit to Fremont Peak that "a peak

about four miles north-west appeared to be 30 or 40 feet higher than our own..."

Yet, Gannett Peak would not be recognized for its superiority nor given a name until nearly thirty years later by the U.S.G.S. survey party of Thomas Bannon, S. S. Stahl, and W. N. Kent. Bannon began his survey work in the Wind Rivers under the assumption that Fremont Peak was the highest peak in the range. When his survey data revealed a higher peak to the north, he was not exactly sure how to report this finding. Bannon entered the mountain in his triangulation report as, "The highest and inaccessible point of Fremont Peak of Wind River Mountains, about 5 miles north of Hayden's Fremont Peak station." Despite this association of Gannett Peak as one of Fremont Peak's summits, Bannon had sighted on Gannett Peak from Horse Ridge and Downs Mountain, and was acutely aware of its distinction. Before the 1906 publication of his Fremont Peak 30-minute quadrangle, Bannon attached the name "Gannett Peak." However, others not familiar with the Wind Rivers were initially hesitant to adopt the name. The U.S. Geographic Board contended:

Gannett Peak, however, has none of the isolated grandeur of Fremont's Peak, which stands approximately alone as a lofty sentinel, visible from all directions, and therefore conveying an impression of height perhaps greater than it actually has. Gannett Peak is one of a number of elevations along the ridge, generally much higher, and its real elevation is not, therefore, apparent, nor are individual characteristics striking, either as to elevation or location.

This may well be the case when viewing Gannett Peak from the Green River basin. But from all points north and east that permit a view of the range, Gannett Peak is incomparably more prominent and striking than any other Wind River peak. However, it is very easy for the untrained eye to mistake this northern view of Gannett Peak for Fremont Peak, because the somewhat hidden northwest side of the former and the conspicuous southwest side of the latter are very similar in silhouette. This



Southwest side of Fremont Peak in winter. Photograph by Winston Goodbody.

- a. Mount Sacagawea
- b. West Buttress
- c. Bunch-Stewart ski line
- d. 1842 Frémont party route
- e. standard southwest spur route from Indian Basin
- f. Kit Carson's high point in 1842
- g. Mistake Lake

FREMONT PEAK

[13,745 feet]

So dominant is Fremont Peak above the Green River basin that early trappers and explorers long believed it to be the highest peak in the Rocky Mountains. In addition to its obvious superior height, Fremont Peak also is conspicuous for its gigantic relative breadth. One might suspect such a vast mountain to be replete with fissures on all flanks for climbers to ascend with comparative ease. Yet, colossal cliffs, serrated ridges, crevasses, and steep chimneys banish all those looking for a “walk-up” and funnel those without a rope onto only one route! Indeed, the first three known ascent parties—which include John C. Frémont’s party of six in 1842, a group of eight surveyors in 1878, and Harold and Charles Titcomb in 1901—followed close variants of a tongue of lower angle rock on the southwest side of the mountain. An

alternate route was found only twice in the next thirteen ascents. Edd T. Pennock and John Cook were the first to ascend the Upper Fremont Glacier to the east ridge in August 1905, and Albert Ellingwood, Carl Blaurock, and Herman and Elmina Buhl climbed the northwest ridge from Upper Fremont Glacier on August 8, 1924.

Other aspects would not see ascents until over a decade later. Robert and Miriam Underhill reported a route on the nondescript south side in 1939. This craggy multi-faceted aspect is scored by a striking couloir that drops over 2,700 feet into Indian Basin. In early June 1997, Win Goodbody and Greg Seitz skied this couloir during a south-to-north ski traverse of the Wind River Mountains as it loomed inspiringly ahead during their entire tour of the country south of Fremont Peak. The west face is one of the most impressive alpine escarpments in the Rockies with 1,500-foot walls, arêtes, and spires of superb rock quality. Fred Beckey and Pat Callis were the first to tackle this wall near its southern edge with an ascent of Red

-A-

Worthen Meadow Reservoir parking elevation: 8,790 ft
 Elevation gain: 4,640+ feet
 Distance via Tayo Creek: 16 miles
 Overall grade by south slopes: III Class 2
 Distance via Deep Creek Lakes: 15 miles
 Overall Grade by northeast ramp: III Class 2
 Estimated ascent time: 6 to 10 hours
 Maps: Cony Mountain, Sweetwater Gap, Temple Peak

-B-

Sweetwater parking elevation: 8,990 feet
 Elevation gain: 5,200+ feet
 Distance via Mountain Sheep Lake: 13 miles
 Distance via Sweetwater Gap-Poison Lake: 13 miles
 Overall grade by south slopes: III Class 2
 Estimated ascent time: 6 to 11 hours
 Maps: Sweetwater Needles, Sweetwater Gap,
 Temple Peak

-C-

Little Sandy parking elevation: 8,970 feet
 Elevation gain: 4,220+ feet
 Distance via Coon Lake: 16 miles
 Overall grade by south slopes: III Class 2
 Estimated ascent time: 7 to 12 hours
 Maps: Jensen Meadows, Sweetwater
 Needles, Temple Peak,
 Sweetwater Gap



*North side of Ellingwood Peak from Indian Basin.
 Photograph by Winston Goodbody.*

- a.** north arête
b. northwest couloir, climbed by Albert Ellingwood in 1926, and skied by Win Goodbody and Greg Seitz in 1999
c. southwest ridge

ELLINGWOOD PEAK

[13,052 feet]

Occupying a spur ridge in the periphery of Titcomb Basin, Ellingwood Peak is the southernmost “thirteener” in the Wind River Mountains excluding Wind River Peak. A search for an “Ellingwood Peak” on any official map of the Wind Rivers will be very frustrating, as the name does not exist. The peak that climbers have called “Ellingwood Peak” since the 1930s was unwittingly renamed “Harrower Peak” in the 1960s by the Sublette County Historical Society, which was unaware that it already had a name. James K. Harrower was a ranger, game

warden, Pinedale Mayor, and history buff. The Geographic Board accepted the name “Harrower Peak” and it first appeared on the 1968 Fremont Peak South quad after Harrower’s death in 1967. Mountain enthusiasts have been hesitant to make the switch and the name “Ellingwood Peak” remains on unofficial maps, such as one published by Earthwalk Press.

Although Ellingwood Peak is not as prominent on the Wind River skyline as other peaks in its vicinity, it is one of the most beautiful peaks in the range when viewed up close. Its most impressive feature is undoubtedly the mile-wide triangular rock rampart of the north face, which rises over 2,200 feet above Indian Basin. At the center of the face, a stunning arête, which was first climbed by Bob Bauman on August 1, 1967, rises

TEMPLE PEAK

[12,972 feet]

Once likened as the “bookend of the Wind Rivers,” Temple Peak is the most prominent peak in the southern Wind Rivers when viewed from the Green River basin. Its 2,300-foot north wall and 3,400-foot sloping southwest spur are seen in profile on the southwest edge of the range lending the appearance of a gigantic bookend. These broad southwest slopes offer the only easy route up this enormous mountain. The east and west faces are striped by cliffs and rocky ribs, but both aspects are bisected by steep couloirs that offer moderate routes up and exciting ski descents. The enormous north face has been climbed by a number of different routes, but none of them surmount the steep rock wall directly to the summit. Harry Willits and Weir Stewart Jr. established the first route on the face on August 21, 1946. In merely four hours, they climbed broken rock on the right side of the right fork of the

face’s prominent Y-shaped couloir. Fred Beckey and B. Monroe established a variation of this route on August 22, 1961, and Beckey returned to establish a new route in 1988. Beckey’s second route climbed partway up the left branch of the Y, then followed a spectacular ramp system diagonally upward to the summit ridge north of the summit. Approaching from Big Sandy Opening partway on skis, Gary Cole, Bob Nettle, and Paul Henry made the first complete ascent of the left branch of the Y on May 30, 1963, finishing the climb in the east couloir.

“We understand that the Wind River Mountains have now become famous for climbing and we can expect climbers in at all times. We hope that most of them do their climbing in the summer or that they take better precautions than did the group which just departed.”

—*Pinedale Roundup* columnist Chet commenting on the rescue of Californians that climbed Temple Peak in January 1966.

The first recorded winter ascent was made around the New Year of 1966 by Californians Margaret Young, Jim Richardson, and Tom Cochrane. Young, a pilot, landed her plane in Big Sandy Opening, but after the ascent, her airplane slid off the packed runway into



The north face of Temple Peak from a hill between Deep and Miller lakes.
a. northeast buttress
b. Beckey’s north face left route
c. Y-shaped couloir of the north face



Northeast aspect of Lizard Head Peak from the Lizard Head trail, showing the northeast prong leading directly to the summit. Photograph by Joe Kelsey.

LIZARD HEAD PEAK

[12,842 feet]

According to Kenneth Henderson, early adventurers named Lizard Head for its appearance from Big Sandy Mountain. Others argue that the mountain has a reptilian appearance when viewed from the north, though few can see the semblance of a lizard. Lizard Head Peak more noticeably resembles a giant George Washington in repose when viewed from Jackass Pass. The Hayden Survey of 1877 first recognized the prominence of Lizard Head Peak as one of the highest mountains in the southern Wind Rivers and applied the name “Mount Chauvenet” on their 1879 map. Louis Chauvenet was a topographical assistant with A. R. Marvine’s survey party in northern and

western Colorado in 1874, and survey leader in the Midwest in the 1880s.

The local name “Lizard’s Head” was published on the 1925 Wyoming National Forest map and again on a Wyoming geological map of the same period. However, both maps placed the name precisely in the position of today’s Wolfs Head Mountain, while leaving “Mount Chauvenet” positioned on today’s Lizard Head. On their official map five years later, the Wyoming National Forest moved “Mount Chauvenet” into position on today’s “Cathedral Peak.” That map also inaccurately adjusted the relative positions of the Pogo Agie north fork and the Little Wind south fork rivers, and named the mountain at their heads “Cathedral Rock.” Today’s Lizard Head sits as the apex of these two drainages, but because of the drainage error on that map, it is uncertain whether the name “Cathedral Rock” was ever really intended for today’s Lizard Head. U.S.G.S.