

PEAKING AT YELLOWSTONE

One of the many advantages of living in the Land of Shining Mountains is its proximity to the most famous of the national parks, Yellowstone! Being close enough to be able to drive through the Yellowstone on weekends to watch the geysers play, ^{and the buffalo roam} the bears frolic, is indeed a privilege. Despite frequent visits though, something different may be seen in every visit to the area. It may come as a surprise however, to some veteran park visitors to learn that four additional names for peaks have recently been added to the long list of names already assign^{ed} to outstanding peaks in the Park. Famous names chosen to recognize four nationally known individuals who have in some way been identified with the early history of the play ground.

Most of the prominent peaks in the park were given names years ago when the Park was young. But it remained for my good fortune to have the privilege of suggesting names for the four peaks hereinafter described. That occasion occurred when I was surveying the Revised East and North boundaries of Yellowstone National Park in 1931 and 1932. ^{East} for the U. S. Department of the Interior ~~a few years ago~~. The new ^{East} boundary was re surveyed along the crest of the Absoraka Range of mountains for ninety miles northward from a point two miles east of Eagle Peak, at the head of Eagle Creek in Wyoming, ^{to} Meridian Peak northwest of Cooke City, Montana. It followed the top of the divide affording an excellent opportunity for me to observe the highest peaks along the line at first hand; to identify them and learn whether or not they had already been given names.

Before beginning the survey Mr. Roger Toll, the then Superintendent of Yellowstone National Park requested me to keep a lookout for any unnamed peaks in the Park which I thought worthy of a name, and if any found, to suggest a name for each. This request presented an interesting challenge to me. First, I learned that there is quite a formal procedure to be followed in officially naming an object of that nature! Before adoption the name must be approved by the U. S. National Geographic Board. Before presenting the name to the National Geographic Board the name must meet the approval of the National Park Service.

Matching a peak with an appropriate name required some imagination and research. Some reason must be given for the choice of a name. The line surveyed followed the hydrographic ^{divide} ~~line~~ separating the waters flowing into the Yellowstone River and lake from those flowing into the Shoshone River, on the east. The line thus passed over the highest points along the divide and brought me face to face with the many precipitous cliffs and peaks along the way. The highest peak along the line is Eagle Peak with an elevation of 11,360 feet above sea-level. It took the survey party three seasons to complete the survey. Due to the extreme high altitude of the range we could work only about three months a year. The survey crew consisted of nine or ten men experienced in mountain climbing, including two packers and a cook. Transportation for moving camp and supplies across the mountains was by sixteen head of pack mules and three saddle horses. Usually the line crew would not see a road or truck from the middle of June until September. Usually the pack animals were operating well above the graded trails built by the Park Service, picking their way among the boulders to a campsite by some spring at timberline. The many bears encountered were not the lazy beggars pictured by tourists along the roads. If a grizzly barred the way we obligingly went around. Some exciting confrontations occurred, but ^{no} serious injuries were suffered.

The accompanying photographs show better than words the rough character of the terrain traversed, and is suggestive of the problems encountered. The great changes in working and transportation conditions between those days and now are further illustrated by the photographs of men working with packs on their backs, and of strings of pack animals threading their way among the rocks along the mountain ridge. Back-packing was resorted to only when camps could not be reached by mules on account of cliffs.

Many of the old time pioneers who were identified in one way or another with the early history of the Park had already been honored by having mountain peaks in the Park named for them, such as Colter, Langford, Chittenden and others. Therefore it was necessary to scout around for names of other famous men to honor. The names of two former presidents who had been closely connected with the Park during its early history were selected and given priority. They are President Grant, who signed the Bill creating the Park in 1872, and President Arthur because he was the first president to visit the Park. For President Grant a very prominent peak standing on the divide between the head of Lamar River and Shoshone River was selected. It is easily identified by a projecting cap on top, surrounded by perpendicular cliffs on the north and west sides. Another peak to the south of Grant Peak was selected for President Arthur. Arthur Peak is on the Park boundary line between Middle Creek and Eagle Creek, and is about 10,200 feet in elevation above sea-level. It is south of the Cody road.

CODY PEAK

Another famous man whose name is synonymous with the "West", who called that part of Wyoming his home was chosen as one to be honored by having one of the Park's prominent peaks named for him. This is none other than the famous Scout and Guide, William F. Cody, known world wide as Buffalo Bill. Indeed! An outstanding picturesque, solid granite monolith was found favorably situated ^{standing 500 feet} high in isolation on the very top of a ridge ~~on~~ the east boundary of the Park. This majestic pinnacle which is situated just north of the Cody Road near the East Entrance to the Park, stands more than five-hundred feet high, on the skyline when viewed from the east. It is an excellent exemplification of that legendary scout of old, CODY, scanning the landscape. It seems that no other name for that rock would be as fitting, as it stands on the lonely ridge like the trusted scout that Cody was! Easily identifiable from other mountains in the area, the peak serves as a guidepost for hikers, hunters and other wayfarers who might be trudging the surrounding hills.

PLENTY COUPS

Traditionally, the northwestern corner of the State of Wyoming, particularly the western part of Big Horn Basin, was known as Crow Country, being the summer hunting grounds of the Crow Indians. Indeed! A fact not generally known is that a portion of the land now included in Yellowstone National Park was at one time a part of the Crow Indian Reservation! Therefore, it was thought altogether fitting to name one of the peaks for the long time chief of the Crow Tribe, Chief Plenty Coups. Chief Plenty Coups was widely and favorably known throughout the nation as a patriotic American, and a friend of the whiteman. His headquarters was at Crow Agency, Montana. A prominent peak on the divide between Eagle Creek and Miller Creek, in the eastern part of the park was named for Plenty Coups. The elevation is about 10,200 feet, and it may be seen by looking southeast from a point on the Cody Road a few miles east of Sylvan Pass. A large delegation of Crow Indians from the Crow Reservation, together with representatives of the Cody Club, held a powwow at that spot in the road at the time I was surveying the boundary line, and dedicated the peak to their Chief, Plenty Coups! I was happy to attend the meeting.

The present generation, looking over the pictures of the crew working along the crags may think that it was a most arduous job, not only laborious in climbing over the rocky slopes every day, but also undesirable by being isolated from town and the bright lights for months at a time. The hard work was compensated for by the stimulating fresh mountain air, the exhilarating effect of seeing new and beautiful country every day, and the general ^{buoyant} feeling of being privileged to literally stand on top of the world looking down in all directions. Judging from what I have heard the boys who were working with me say, they each and every one now look back upon those summers as among the happiest they can remember. I know I will never forget the friendly loyalty and whole hearted cooperation I received from each one.

I also want to say that the employees of the National Park Service did everything possible to make our job more pleasant and easier. Special mention going to Mr. Röger Toll, Superintendent, Joe Joffe, Assistant Superintendent, and Rangers Lee Coleman, Ben Arnold, and Scotty Bauman.

I might add that we were careful not to do anything unnecessarily to marr the virgin look of the park by blazing trails and cutting trees. It was necessary to make new trails through virgin timber for the mules to reach isolated campsites in high remote areas. However, we never blazed the trails, but marked them by tying pieces of cloth on limbs for the packers to follow. Neither were corral poles cut to confine the mules. Instead, mules were gentled by a generous use of oats in a nosebag. Mules will take most any chance to obtain a mouthful of oats. They do become adept at stretching their necks out to get a taste of oats without getting caught.

Although most every day men and animals were clamoring over cliffs, rocks and logs no serious accidents occurred.

Bears and Buffalo

In view of the rash of attacks by bears upon tourists in the parks during the past few years, it seems remarkable that we all avoided injury from the many bear we encountered during the three summers. Although we walked through the remote timbered areas and slept in tents or out in the open all summer long, for three seasons we were lucky enough to avoid serious injury. It was ^{due} largely to our diplomacy when meeting bears, and giving them the right of way if they insisted.

Many incidents did occur, however, when the situation was tense for a few moments. Some of those situations alone would form the basis for a pretty good story! Such as the time a silvertip grizzly kept the packers up in trees all night when they camped along an isolated trail in the back country; or the time I pulled all the lower limbs off a tree trying to get up out of reach of an old buffalo bull that was chasing our dog!. That was while Jack Morris was already high up in a tree looking down at me! Looking back over the years at those times they may now appear comical, but at the moment they were deadly serious!

For those geography minded park visitors wishing to see or visit some of the peaks and other features described herein it is pointed out that Eagle Peak may be seen from the highway at a point between Fishing Bridge and the Lake Lodge. It is the pyramid shaped peak standing along in the distant haze about twentyfive miles distant, bearing about S. $47^{\circ} 30'$ E. President Grant peak should be in view from the same spot between Fishing Bridge and the Lake Lodge bearing about N. 80° E. A green sign marking a point midway between the equator and the North Pole was placed on the north side of the highway where the road to Cooke City crosses the Park line at the Northeast Entrance to the Park. The position of the above sign on the 45th degree of latitude was calculated from the published latitude of Meridian Peak.

Stonecup Lake

Airborn visitors flying over the Park may see two or three small lakes along the East Boundary of the Park that are well hidden from foot visitors. One of which at least deserves honorable mention. Namely:- Stonecup Lake, so named because that is where I discovered an ancient stone cup, or goblet. Stonecup Lake is situated just outside the park on the north side of Jones Creek a half mile east of Jones Pass, about a mile southeast of Mt. Chittenden. The story of that discovery is:- We were camped on the shore of that lake, and one evening after supper some of us were looking for arrowheads along the lake shore. I noticed a small rounded section of stone exposed, and it did not move when I kicked it with my boot. Curious, I dug it out of the ground finding it to be a manufactured cup, or goblet with a short stem, made from solid rock. (see picture) The artifact now rests in the Park Museum at Mammoth Hot Springs under my name.

Canoe Lake

Another small lake, Canoe Lake, is situated ~~separately~~ on the divide between the north fork of Miller Creek, and Timber Creek. The park boundary ~~crosses~~ ^{is just east of} Canoe Lake, and it is situated about fifteen miles south of Cooke City. Canoe Lake is about 300 feet long and 50 feet wide at the widest place.

Northeast Corner of the Park

The day we set the Northeast Corner of Yellowstone National Park is one to be long remembered by those taking part. It sets near the top, on the south slope, of Meridian Peak at an elevation of about 9700 feet above sealevel, and some 2500 feet above the highway. The monument is a brass tablet with a $3\frac{1}{4}$ inch stem cemented in a solid granite outcrop. Just as Red, the boy from Kansas City got the hole drilled and the tablet seated, a heavy storm of rain and hail struck us. It was in the afternoon so everyone struck off down the hill for camp. The road was 2500 feet below us down a rocky slope. It was every fellow for himself in the rain. I had the transit to carry, but Ed Wilson, the boy from Missouri volunteered to change off with me in carrying the transit down. A person had to be careful where he placed every step in the loose rock on the hillside to keep from falling. Hard enough when dry, but in the cold rain and hail, with 6 inches of water racing down each little gully, where we usually had to walk, made it doubly hard to find solid footing. Hands cold, with cold water running down ones back, it was not funny. It was with a great sigh of relief we piled into the truck at the bottom of the hill. It was just one of those days!

Petrified Tree
The day I found the petrified secora stump which is eleven feet and nine inches in diameter standing on the ridge at the head of Specimen Creek, I enjoyed watching an old Big Horn ram across the canyon climbing the almost perpendicular face of Big Horn Peak. The face of the peak he was working his way up ^{was} composed of conglomerate, or cement gravel. The ram was being followed by a lamb about 18 inches in height. The ram would walk along a shelf looking for a way to get up to the next shelf, jump up and follow the next shelf to find a way on up the cliff. The lamb followed like a dog. When the ram had to jump a bad place the lamb would do like wise even though he might have to try several times to make it. The old sheep paid no attention to the poor lamb. If the sheep had to turn back along the shelf he would walk right over the lamb like it was not there.

Shelf Lake

Another place of considerable interest is Shelf Lake, so named because it is situated near the top, and on the southeast slope of the divide at the head of Specimen Creek in the northwest corner of the Park. The lower rim of the small lake is formed by ^a natural reef thrown up around it giving the lake the appearance of sitting on a shelf, or hanging on the wall.

Hardships encountered by Surveyor.

An official report by the Chief Surveyor, Mr. Roland Reeves, who executed the original survey of the North Boundary of ~~the State of Wyoming~~ ^{the State of Wyoming} ~~Yosemite National Park~~ in 1879 has this to say about the difficulty of running the line east over Electric Peak:

"In crossing this barrier our hardships were peculiarly severe. On the evening of September 6th quitting work on line our party started down the mountain to find camp. We divided into five smaller companies. The camp was not found until noon the next day, all hands having lain out without shelter or food since the evening of the 5th. I walked fully twenty miles trying to find the pack train and I think others travelled as far."

Survey man lost.

A member of Mr. Roland Reeves crew later became lost while surveying this line and his body was never found. This incident is reported in the field notes as follows:

"From the 73rd mile eastward the entire region is almost impassable. We lost one man (Mr. Hopkins) in the 75th mile and it is supposed he must have fallen down one of the numerous horrible canyons which are notorious in that region. His horse and coat were found but not himself though vigorous search was made for him along the streams and along the lower levels."

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Mountain falls

I witnessed from beginning to end an event when camped on the north side of Soda Butte Creek a mile above the Park line, that only a comparative few people in the whole world are privileged to see from beginning to end. It was on a rainy Sunday in July, ~~with visitors in camp~~. My wife and daughter Zoe had brought five or six relatives from California out from Helena to spend the day while we were camped on the road. About five p. m. the rain slacked off and the sun came out bright. Everyone stepped out of the tent and was admiring the mountain scene. The rain had cleared the air and the evergreens were freshly washed and the brightest green. The mountain flowers sparkled with tiny droplets of water, and fleecy clouds brushed the mountain tops. A gorgeous sight. I, for no particular reason, happened to be gazing at the bare face of the high precipitous granite wall at the very top of Republic Peak towering nearly 3000 feet above us, just across the creek. At that very second it broke loose! Without a warning. I saw a section of granite about twice the size of the Helena Federal Building, start ever so slowly, it seemed, to tilt slightly toward me, all in one gigantic rock. Immediately I saw at the base where it joined the mountain side, rock began to crumble and dust to rise. By the time I could count to three the whole chunk of granite began to break up as it struck the talus slope below. Then the mighty roar reached us. Filled with awe we stood breathless as the mass tumbled down over the slide rock. The creek bed and 300 feet of level, timbered bottom land protected us from the rolling stones. Fortunately, no house-sized boulders came our way. The toe of the debris reached as far as Soda Butte Creek in front of us and dammed the creek slightly. The incredulous feature of this episode is that I was looking at the spot the instant the block of rock started to move out, before any dust or sound attracted my attention. It was uncanny!

A word of caution about bears! In the twentyfive summer seasons spent in the remote areas of the Rocky Mountains of Montana and Wyoming a few things have been learned about the habits of wild bears and how to avoid trouble with them. When walking through the timber or brush where bears may be encountered one important thing to remember is to try to avoid surprising bears at close range. Most all bears, even the monstrous grizzlies, will move out of the way to avoid a confrontation if they know in advance that a person is approaching. There are exceptions of course, if they have food or smell food, they may not want to leave it, or if they have cubs up a tree afraid to come down. Occasionally an old cross grizzly will not want to leave his regular trail. In such cases it best to give him the right of way.

It is wise to deliberately make some noise as you proceed through timber or brush, by breaking off some dead branches, shaking the brush, cough or clear your throat, or even whistle a little, anything to warn them of your approach. That gives them an opportunity to save face, or get their cubs out of the path of possible danger. If you do find yourself between a bear and its cubs, get out of the way fast if you know which way to go!

If camping out one should avoid rolling out his bed near where folks have been picnicking and left food scraps, food wrappings, even the smell of food on the ground. Above all do not roll your bed out on a dining table, even if is a nice smooth place! A dog is more likely to attract a bear than to scare it away. Of course no one should offer food to a bear from the car, or at any other time for that matter. If you hold a cookie in your hand the bear may be afraid you will jerk it and not let him have it, and will grab your whole hand or arm to be sure you wont fool him! He has probably been fooled that way!

It is also best to give a bull or cow moose a wide berth. They sometimes attack without any apparent reason.

The grizzly bear should not be eliminated, just give him his 'Civil rights'. The original boundaries of the park were changed to add more grazing land and make it easier to patrol.

End

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