

100 YEARS OF CONSERVATION AND PUBLIC SERVICE ON THE ROUTT NATIONAL FOREST

“Historic Place Names of the Routt National Forest” by Mary Peterson, Forest Supervisor

As is true on most national forests, the place names of prominent mountains, parks, and town sites within the current Routt National Forest are a result of the history of Indian tribes, explorers, miners, and settlers. Following are a few of the derivations of some of the colorful historic place names on the Routt National Forest.

Bears Ears Mountain was so called from the shape of the twin peaks which resemble two ears. This is the accepted local name. It is called **Anita Peak** on Hayden's map of 1876.

Columbus Mountain. This was named from a Missouri cowboy named Columbus who was redheaded and freckled. He was herding horses for Robert McIntosh in 1884, and one evening McIntosh came into camp and asked, "Is supper ready?" Getting no answer, he said, "Guess I was talking to that damn hill." It has been called Columbus Mountain from that time. It was called **Crescent Peak** on Hayden's map is also called that now by many residents of the upper Snake River. From the Snake River the outline of the mountain against the sky is almost a perfect crescent.

Diamond Park or Diamond Grove Park was named by Robert McIntosh, the name suggesting itself from a diamond shaped grove of trees growing in the center of the park. McIntosh was a Chicago contractor who came to Hahn's Peak in 1876 and engaged in the mining business until the 1880's when he acquired a ranch on the Snake River. He operated the store at Slater, Colorado until his death in 1924.

Farwell Mountain bears the name of John D. Farwell, who came from Chicago and built the Elk River Ditch for placer mining purposes at International Camp. He also started the first church and Sunday school in this county at International Camp in 1877. International Camp, which was locally referred to as "Bug Town", was the first mining camp in this district and located about one mile east of the present town of Hahn's Peak. It was thus named on account of a number of capitalists, or "Big Bugs" as they were called, settling there while they were working mines in that vicinity.

Gore Pass or Gore Range was named for Sir George Gore, a young rich Irish nobleman and sportsman who came from Ireland with a large company made hunting excursions in the Rocky Mountains as early as 1854. He camped in Middle Park in 1855, and for more than two years hunted with Jim Bridger as companion and guide and interpreter to the Indians. Gore brought an expedition of fifty persons, secretaries, stewards, cooks, dog tenders, hunters and servants. He had a train of thirty wagons besides numerous saddle horses. Grizzly bears, elk, deer, antelope and 2,500 buffalo were killed. Gore first crossed Gore Pass in 1855.

Hahn's Peak was named after an old German prospector, Joseph Hahn, who first discovered gold on Willow Creek whose waters now feed Hahn's Peak Lake to the North and the nearby Steamboat Lake. In 1885, Hahn, William Doyle, and Captain George Way returned to find gold on every side of the peak. In 1886, Hahn, Way, Doyle, and a company of prospectors organized the first mining district, the Hahn's Peak Mining District, in Northwest Colorado Territory. This industrial center in Hahn's Peak Basin rapidly led to permanent settlement of the Snake, Yampa, and Elk River drainages. From 1878 to 1912, Hahn's Peak was county seat of all the lands now contained in Moffet and Routt Counties. Mr. Hahn lost his life while crossing the Gore Range enroute to Empire for supplies. He became unable to travel and was left behind while his partner went ahead to seek help but being unable to exercise, Hahn perished from the cold before the return of his partner.

Hayden. The town and early national forest was named in honor of Colonel F. V. Hayden, Surveyor General of the United States, who worked in the west in the 1870's.

Morrison Creek was named in the 1870's by James Crawford. The Ute Indians told him there was a crazy man on this creek and that he was starving. Crawford found the fellow in bad shape. He was cooking the tails from his burros when Crawford arrived. The fellow's name was Morrison.

Mount Oliphant was named by the reconnaissance party of Ray Peck and Percy Paxton in 1910 while they were working on Black Mountain and Mt. Oliphant was a triangulation point. It was named after J.A. Oliphant, a ranger employed by the Forest Service at that time.

Nieman Peak is a rocky peak located west of Slater Park and north of Saddle Mountain. It was named after Charles Nieman, cowboy foreman for the Leavenworth Cattle Company, who in 1883 took a party of cowboys there after cattle that they were gathering for the winter. He took the party to this place and got into fallen logs and rock slides and had some of the packs torn up and a horse ran away from the pack and was lost. The experience of the riders on that trip was not forgotten and the mountain was named Nieman Peak.

Steamboat Springs was named by James H. Crawford, who emigrated from Missouri, after two mineral springs, close together, which made a noise like the paddles of a steamer, and could be heard at a distance. They came straight up from a hole in the solid rock, fountains six inches in diameter, and thrown a foot or so in the air. The Town of Steamboat Springs was established on the homestead of W. G. Mellen. Mellen, who had homesteaded in 1875, relinquished his filing in favor of the Steamboat Springs Townsite Company headed by J. P. Maxwell.

Storm Mountain was so called from the fact that storms always gather around its summit. In 1965 it was renamed **Mount Werner** in honor of famous skier, Buddy Werner, an internationally renowned alpine ski racer who died trying to outrace an avalanche in the Swiss Alps on April 12, 1964. A native of Steamboat Springs, Buddy

had a breakneck style which caused spectacular spills, but also enabled him to win virtually every championship available during his mercurial career. He was America's first truly world class ski racer.

Walden, the county seat of Jackson County was named for M. A. Walden, early postmaster at Sage Hen Springs, near the present town of Walden. In 1881 the town of Walden did not exist but there was a ranch on the Michigan River at the present townsite owned and operated by M.A. Walden. This ranch was a stopping place for travellers between Laramie and Teller City.

Yampa River was named by the Ute Indians from a plant (*Carum gairdneri*) that they used in bread making and also smoked. This plant grows thick along the stream. Also called the **Bear River**. The town of Yampa originated from a store established on the site by Henry Hernage in 1886.

Mount Zirkel. Some sources say the 12,180 foot Peak was named for an old settler named Zirkel who settled at the base of the peak and others say the peak was named to honor Ferdinand Zirkel's contributions to the science of geology. The Mount Zirkel Wilderness was one of the original areas protected under the 1964 Wilderness Act and has since been expanded twice to its present size of 160,648 acres. It contains the rugged peaks of the Sawtooth Range and the headwaters of the Elk, Encampment, and North Platte Rivers. There are over 70 lakes within the wilderness as well as 15 peaks over 12,000 feet, Mount Zirkel being the highest.

Sources:

Names of Places on the Routt National Forest, unpublished document, author unknown.

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