

Approach

<https://cascadeclimbers.com/forum/topic/74323-tr-gunsight-peak-s-face-6172010/>

<https://onehikeaweek.com/2020/07/20/agnes-mountain/>

<https://www.nwhikers.net/forums/viewtopic.php?t=8027576>

Beckey Guide

Beckey

Agnes-Spruce Creek Route. This may be the best access to the Gunsight Peaks and Dome Peak, but the ferry on Lake Chelan and the shuttle up the road from Stehekin add time and logistical challenges. From the E, leave the Agnes Creek Trail just past 8 mi. (just N of Spruce Creek Junction). Leave the trail where it crosses an avalanche swath (find footbridge at a marshy section adjacent to Agnes Creek and just downstream from the Agnes-Spruce confluence). Find a log crossing or ford. Then head upstream within 100 ft of the bank. Cross through a long avalanche patch. Then aim straight up a gentle rib and old timber. The long hillside steeply rises with tall trees, giving way to alpine terrain (about 3000 ft of ascent). After leaving the highest tree stands, sidehill left and aim for the ridge between Agnes Creek and the Gunsight Peaks.

Pass a minor basin at 6400 ft and proceed to good camp locations near point 7070. Time: 6+ hours. For the East Faces of Gunsight Peaks and the Cannonhole Ridge of the South Peak, proceed up the Blue Glacier to reach the Gunsight West Faces, cross to the Chickamin Glacier via the notch, which is the second S of the Gunsight group.

PCT Southbound to Agnes Mountain

About 8.2 miles from High Bridge was the Swamp Creek fork. After walking for another 1.5 miles, we soon reached the confluence of Agnes Creek and Spruce Creek.



Agnes Creek flows through the deep gorge

Navigating the Raging Agnes Creek

We carefully looked for sturdy logs to cross the raging Agnes Creek and soon saw one near the camp. It looked like the same one other parties had used before to cross the fast-moving water safely. But we continued on the trail, hoping to find something larger. Without any luck upstream, the tiny log was our only viable option to continue the approach. It took impressive acrobatic moves to get ourselves and the heavy packs to reach the heftier downed tree. Then we took turns scooching over two annoying upright stobs in the midpoint of the slippery log.



A downed log used to cross the raging Agnes Creek

Crossing the Mighty Spruce Creek

We had completely forgotten about Spruce Creek until we were near it. Luckily, the only downed tree over the rushing creek was much beefier than the last one we found. So we took turns and carefully walked right to the other side of the fast-moving creek. But our challenging battle was far from over. Soon, we entered the open forest north of Spruce Creek, and the terrain became more difficult to navigate. I had initially wanted to go up the steep slopes and then traverse west over the top of two gullies. But as it quickly became too brushy to continue, we backtracked toward the creek, our last water source before camp.



Crossing over Spruce Creek on a sturdy downed log

Making Camp Below Asa Peak

It only took a short traverse east before we had to stop and reassess our planned route. We then realized that the only feasible way was to go straight up before drowning in a sea of vine maples. From 3000 to 3600 feet was the most excruciating, as there was no easy way around the continuous dense brush.

As luck would have it, we stumbled upon some faint animal trails and eagerly followed them for a while. The steepness of the terrain persisted as we finally reached the semi-open forest at around 4000 feet. We made a makeshift camp at 5000 feet.



A stunning sky of star trails in the Glacier Peak Wilderness

Ascending Toward Icy-Spruce Creek Pass

We awoke to another glorious day with the sun shining brightly through the trees. Our first goal for today was going up to the 6760-foot pass, involving 1800 feet of steep ascent. Then, we would set up camp before making our push toward the majestic Agnes Mountain.

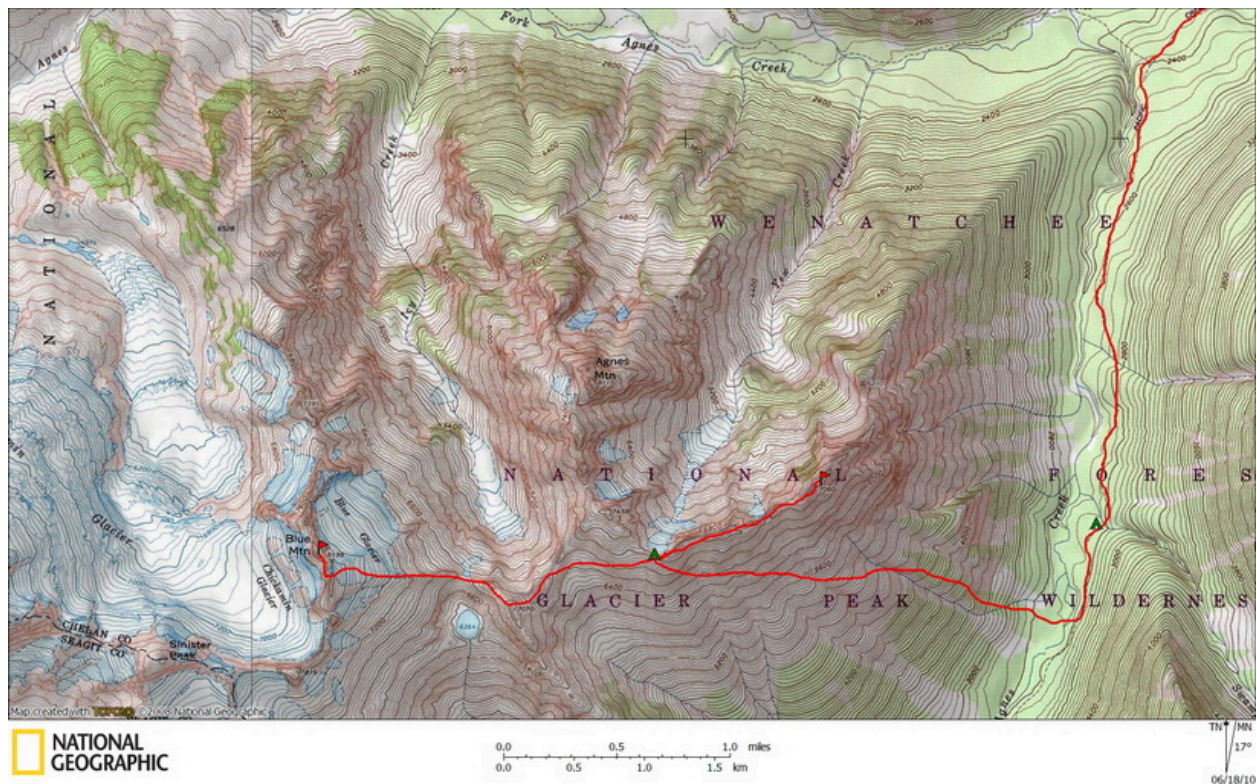
We continued up the steep slopes so we could successfully bypass the two ravines I had intended to avoid yesterday. At 5400 feet, we started moving west-northwest while aiming for the 6760-foot pass as we went through several ribs. Later, at 6400 feet, our goal for day three, the impressive Gunsight Peak, came into our view.



A climber traverses a steep slope with the sharp Needle Peak visible in the background

En Route to Agnes Mountain

I had initially planned to spend the night in the beautiful 6400-foot basin that was adorned with lovely streams. But now, we could be much closer to our first goal by staying on the saddle. We set up camp and relaxed a bit before grabbing our gear and heading up toward Point 7458.



Day 1

Once in Stehekin, a National Park Service shuttle delivers you up valley to High Bridge, where the trail up the West Fork of Agnes Creek begins. Nine miles and 1400' later, you arrive at the relatively plush Swamp Creek Camp, one of many established sites for thru-hikers on the PCT. After all was said and done, Daniel and I arrived in camp at 6PM.

Day 2

S Fork of Agnes creek was flowing heavily, but we were able to find a huge log to cross on about a 9 minute hike up the trail from Swamp Creek. From the valley bottom, we worked up between two giant swaths of slide alder, within earshot (and climber's left) of a small watercourse. There is no avoiding dense Slide Alder and Vine Maple here, you pretty much have to just dive in. We bushwhacked for about 400 vertical feet before breaking out into the open on a steep, grassy, slabby rib. From here, the brush all but ends.



Typical Bushwhacking above Spruce Creek

We ascended the rib as high as we could go before it enters cliffy terrain below Asa Peak. At the apex of the rib, we traversed left for about a mile below Asa Peak and the Yew/Spruce Creek divide, finally gaining the divide itself at the obvious saddle SE of Pt 7458. This would be our camp for the remainder of the trip.

Sinister Peak Notes

Northwest Face

Summit Post

Ascend to the N shoulder of Dome ~8500' (good bivy sites to the south at 8700') and [descend the Chickamin Glacier](#) (crevasses) until about 7200' where you can traverse right and climb to the 7640' Dome-Sinister col: a 'shrund may pose problems in late season.



From the col, Stephenson & Bongiovanni advise climbing moderate snow on the NW face until an easy scramble yields the summit as shown below.



Eric Gilbertson

Most parties on Sinister either climb the exposed class 3+ ridge directly from the Dome-Sinister col, or wrap around to the south side of Sinister and climb up a loose gully to gain the ridge. Since we were so early in the season, there was a snow ramp on the northwest face, climbers left of the col, that reached all the way to the level area of the west ridge.

Onehikeaday has a a day pic below:



En route to Sinister Peak



West Ridge

West ridge: Becky suggests continuing from the col to the south side of Sinister's west ridge under a notch, then climbing a dirty gully to the ridge followed by steep, exposed snow and a final easier scramble. Class 3 and steep snow.

Mountaineers:

Descend the Chickamin Glacier northeasterly to 7,200 ft where you can traverse right and climb to the 7,640 ft Dome-Sinister col; a bergshroud may pose problems in late season. From the col, climb moderate snow on the NW face, ending with an easy scramble (Class 2-3) to the summit (8,440 ft).

Onehikaday:

Steep snow below Sinister Peak north ridge: I didn't think it was as scary as it looked.



Went then went up the ridge on exposed terrain.



Finished on class 2 terrain up to the top.

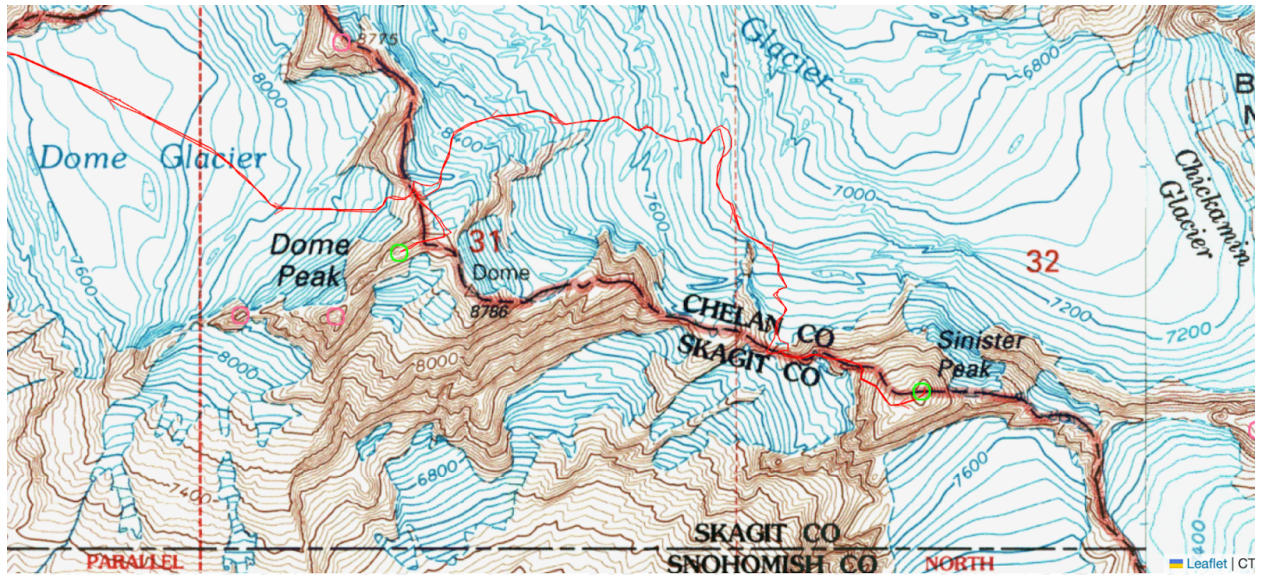
Lemke:

By 5:30am in the morning, we started up the Dome Glacier, over the Dome Col and descended the Chikamin. The route finding was already done for us since Fred had made steps the day before. Weaving around crevasses, we dropped all the way down to 7,100 feet, then ascended to the Dome/Sinister Col, bypassing the giant schrund guarding the saddle on the far left. We then crossed over to the south side and ascended around below the lower west ridge, and up a steep Class 3 gully to a notch in the ridge. The remaining snow/rock walk was an easy class 2 romp to the summit.

Some exploring on the summit led us to the top of a steep couloir on the NE face of Sinister, that ended merely a few feet from the summit! I wonder if anyone has ever climbed it? It was a little broken up now, but a few weeks ago would have been a good route. Approach for it would be same for North Face, just a little further around the north side of the mountain.

Rando on Peakbagger:

As part of the Ptarmigan Traverse. Took the Chikamin glacier to the West Ridge of Sinister which we scrambled in its entirety (4th class). Looked better than the gully on the south side with more solid rock.



Rando on Peakbagger 2:

Once on the ridge the exposure increased but there were ample solid hand and foot holds that made it pretty fun. The climb up the ridge is short and there is a rap station at the top just where the climbing ends. I think this rap station is likely the best one to take, probably worth looking at the snow below to see if there is a bergschrund. Thinking it would be faster, we rapped down the second rap station which leads into a gully, which was super loose and sucked! There was a second rap station half way down but getting off the rock and over the bergschrund required one big heroic move. Would only recommend this descent if the gully is snow filled. Summit register needs new notepad and pencil.

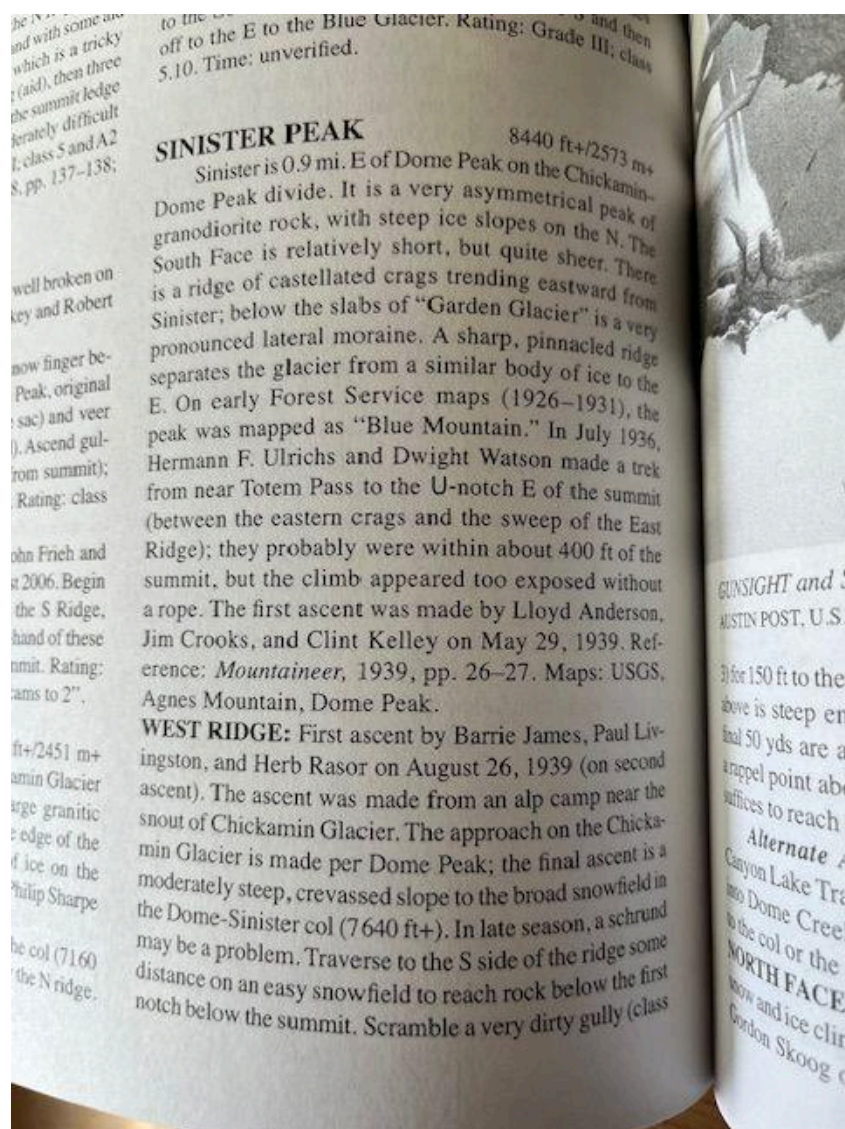
Rando on Peakbagger 3:

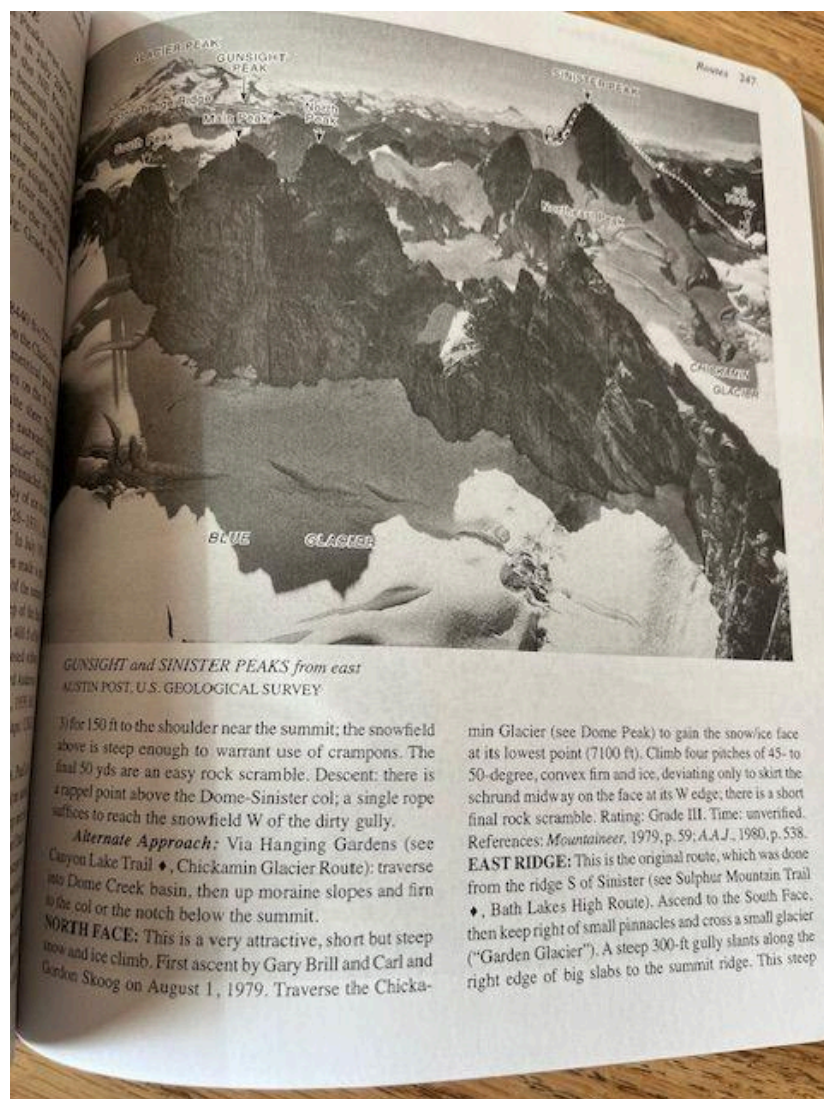
Climbed over a thin snow bridge to get to the saddle before the ridge. We accessed the ridge from the south on a gentle scree slope then had a few class 4 moves to easier terrain and the summit. Removed some chewed up tat

Rando on Peakbagger 4: (CLIMBED SAME TIME OF YEAR 2015)

Navigating the glacier was pretty straight forward and we dropped down to 7200ft. before heading for the West ridge of Sinister. We scrambled the ridge from the col a few

3rd+ class moves with exposure lower on the ridge led to easy class 2/3 all the way to the top. We were able to stay on rock the entire way until just below the summit. Made the summit around 10am. Morgan noted that Sinister had seen 5 parties in a year only twice before, sometimes only one party per year. Not climbed very often. We left the summit around 10:45am making our way back over the Chickiman to the shrund. Morgan and Imran kindly left their rope anchored above the crack which we gladly used as a hand line to get over/up the gap. We made the short climb up from the col to the top of Dome and made the summit at 2pm. Stan led the 4th class summit block and set up a hand line, pretty exposed.





GUNSIGHT and SINISTER PEAKS from east
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3) for 150 ft to the shoulder near the summit; the snowfield above is steep enough to warrant use of crampons. The final 50 yds are an easy rock scramble. Descent: there is a rappel point above the Dome-Sinister col; a single rope suffices to reach the snowfield W of the dirty gully.

Alternate Approach: Via Hanging Gardens (see Canyon Lake Trail ♦, Chickamin Glacier Route); traverse into Dome Creek basin, then up moraine slopes and firm to the col or the notch below the summit.

NORTH FACE: This is a very attractive, short but steep snow and ice climb. First ascent by Gary Brill and Carl and Gordon Skoog on August 1, 1979. Traverse the Chicka-

min Glacier (see Dome Peak) to gain the snow/ice face at its lowest point (7100 ft). Climb four pitches of 45- to 50-degree, convex firm and ice, deviating only to skirt the schrund midway on the face at its W edge; there is a short final rock scramble. Rating: Grade III. Time: unverified. References: *Mountaineer*, 1979, p. 59; *A.A.J.*, 1980, p. 538.

EAST RIDGE: This is the original route, which was done from the ridge S of Sinister (see Sulphur Mountain Trail ♦, Bath Lakes High Route). Ascend to the South Face, then keep right of small pinnacles and cross a small glacier ("Garden Glacier"). A steep 300-ft gully slants along the right edge of big slabs to the summit ridge. This steep

ridge has snow on the N face; in early season a dangerous cornice may exist here, and if the snow is loose, the climbing could be dangerous. Where the ridge flattens there is a sheer 15-ft step (shoulder stand used on original ascent). The upper part of the ridge widens and the route joins the S ridge just under the summit. Gear: include crampons.

SOUTH FACE: Climbed by Ted Mueller, Stewart Wilson, Maury Muzzy, Dick Pargeter, and Charles Torkko on July 25, 1964. Ascend or traverse the "Garden Glacier" (see East Ridge route) to the foot of the face just W of a large slab wall. Climb the face for about 400 ft, then angle left to the prominent notch in the upper SW ridge. Rating: class 3-4. Time: unverified.

BLIZZARD PEAK

7880 ft+/2402 m+

This is the double-summit crag at the junction of the Sinister-Gunsight Peak ridge, at the upper eastern edge

Gunsight Peak

The last day or 2, I had been thinking I might not be able to even give Gunsight a shot due to the weather and Jayden not used to these big off trail trips. I was ok with bailing but when I told Jayden at 4:30am that the weather looked great, he was eager and ready to go for it and I was surprised. We quickly got going and headed up and down the ridge lines towards Gunsight. At the low saddle above Blue Lake, we filled a couple bottles of water and headed up the firm slopes to what I thought was the proper col. My mistake as I went one too far South and we went to what should have been the more obvious one. I was still skeptical that Jayden would want to continue on steep firm snow over to the Chikamin but I wanted him to at least get a look at Sinister and Dome Pks. That view was absolutely amazing!

Once he got that view, he said he was good and ready to go and the slopes didn't bother him. I was already feeling pretty proud of him for dealing with the miserable buggy approach, getting to high camp and then have a great attitude for the toughest summit. We descended a couple hundred feet and traversed over towards the West face of Middle Gunsight. I had a few crampon issues and Jayden reached the climbing route first.



Gunsight Pks

I got the rope and rock pro out and Jayden put me on belay. The first pitch is the crux (5.6+) and it was wet and very slick, probably due to the heavy rain the day before. It took me much time to figure out a way up the slimy slab but it went to my excitement. Jayden easily followed and wondered what took me so long. I think that was probably the hardest move that I've ever done in the mountains.

Anyways, after that, we scrambled up nice grippy slabs to the col between the North and Middle Pks. I found and traversed a ledge until I was underneath a chimney I spotted from down below. It was some easy 5th class moves to another rap anchor on the summit ridge. I belayed Jayden up and we were now an exposed ridge scramble to the summit.



Jayden climbing up the chimney



Jayden at the start of our climbing ledge

The above pic is a good shot of where we step off of the snow.

Dome Peak Notes



View of dome/sinister from sentinel, 6/11/25



The final snow slopes of Dome, pictured above.



The final ridge summit of Dome, pictured above. [Belaying a short pitch/hand line seems like the move here.] I decided to check out the direct ridgeline. After one spicy face move, I found myself walking a narrow “sidewalk in the sky” with incredible exposure on either side!

ridge has snow on the N face; in early season a dangerous cornice may exist here, and if the snow is loose, the climbing could be dangerous. Where the ridge flattens there is a sheer 15-ft step (shoulder stand used on original ascent). The upper part of the ridge widens and the route joins the S ridge just under the summit. Gear: Include crampons. **SOUTHFACE:** Climbed by Ted Mueller, Stewart Wilson, Maury Mezey, Dick Paugeter, and Charles Torkko on July 25, 1964. Ascend to the foot of the face just W of a large East Ridge route; to the foot of the face just W of a large slab wall. Climb the face for about 400 ft, then angle left to the prominent notch in the upper SW ridge. Rating: class 3-4. Time: unverified.

BLIZZARD PEAK 7880 ft+/2402 m+
This is the double-summit crag at the junction of the Sinister-Gunsight Peak ridge, at the upper eastern edge

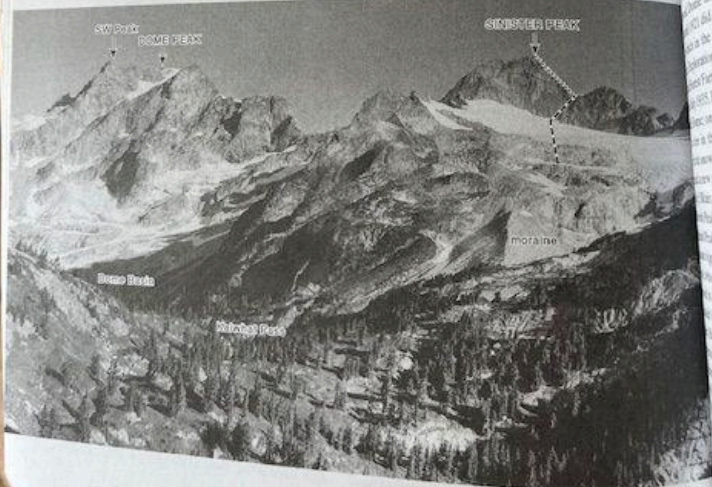
of the glacier in the Spruce Creek drainage (0.6 mi. E of Sinister Peak). The lower summit is 7875 ft.
ROUTE: The ascent was made by the 1939 first ascent party of Sinister Peak's East Ridge by traversing the ridge above Chickamin Glacier from Sinister.

DOMES PEAK

8920 ft+/2719 m+
Dome is a massive Gothic structure, chiseled from a granitic intrusion, the result of weathering and ice erosion. The magnitude of glacier action of the ages is evident, and even a short distance beyond the margin of the Chickamin Glacier are fresh, bouldery, unstable moraines indicative of greater ice volume in the recent past. This magnificent fortress of glaciers and monolithic rock forms the centerpiece of the Cascade crest region N of Glacier Peak.

Dome has two main summits separated by a narrow crest, with Dome Glacier on the NW and a long rock

DOMES and SINISTER PEAKS from south
Dwight Watson



... on the SE. These two summits, the higher Northeast Peak and the slightly lower Southwest Peak, divide the Chickamin from the Dome Glacier, while a series of jagged crags extend 1.1 mi. NW (dividing the Dana and Chickamin Glaciers) to Elephant Head, the prominent ice-sculptured bastion that has great cliffs plunging into the cirque of Agnes Creek's West Fork. The South and Southeast Faces of Dome form a formidable recessed wall, a complex facade; at about 7400 ft, a master joint forms a large slanting ramp that bisects the main face from the upper wall of the Southwest Peak. E of this ramp, the face continues to the Dome-Sinister col.

Dome's rock is quartz diorite of Miocene Cloudy Pass batholith. Northward and westward from this batholith there is a sequence of gneisses, following the structural trend of the metamorphic-plutonic terrain, continuing to the Skagit River. These rocks vary from pre-Jurassic through Tertiary in age. Various metamorphic and sedimentary formations that abut the southern, eastern, and western contact of the batholith are in obvious contrast with the light gray tone of the Dome intrusive.

In 1910, summer outing members of The Mountaineers viewed Dome and discussed climbing possibilities, but not until 1921 did an outing list the peak as a potential ascent, which in the field seemed unfeasible because of distance. Explorations in the early 1930s by Hermann Ulrichs and Forest Farr again stimulated interest. In May and again in July 1935, Forest Farr and Norval Grigg attempted to reach Dome; on the latter trip, which was largely spent under a tree in the rain, they climbed to about 8500 ft, where fresh snow on the rock forced a retreat. In 1936 they organized a new party, including Don Blair and Bob Hayes. On July 5 Blair, Farr, and Grigg did the entire climb of the Southwest Peak. The party lacked time to continue to the Northeast Peak, of "about the same height." Their priority was soon vigorously contested by George Freed and Erick Larson, who first climbed the other peak on August 1, and believed it definitely higher. An editorial comment later indicated both parties believed their respective summit higher. Both peaks were climbed again by the Ptarmigan Traverse party (first summit traverse) on July 21, 1938.¹⁰ References: *Mountaineer*, 1936, pp. 16-18; 1949, pp. 18-19; 1964, p. 21; 1967, pp. 26-28; *Mazama* 52, no. 13 (1970), p. 90; *A.N.A.M.*, 1989, p. 75. Maps: USGS, Dome Peak, Agnes Mountain.

There are four distinct approaches to Dome Peak: (1) Downey Creek Trail ♦, Bachelor Creek Route; (2) Agnes Creek Trail ♦, West Fork Route; (3) Canyon Lake Trail

♦, Chickamin Glacier Route; (4) Agnes-Spruce Creek Route ♦. Numerous ascents have been made during the Ptarmigan Traverse ♦.

NORTHEAST PEAK

First ascent by George Freed and Erick Larson, August 1, 1936. First winter ascent by Fred Beckey, Paul Gonzales, and Laurel Black in March 1994. Follow a footpath to cross the S ridge leading toward Spire Point at 6200 ft; make a traversing ascent for 200 ft SSE to below a cliff.

DOMES GLACIER ROUTE: This is the most popular route, an easy yet beautiful alpine route. From a camp near Cub Lake or on Itswoot Ridge (see Downey Creek Trail ♦, Bachelor Creek Route), follow a footpath to cross the S ridge leading toward Spire Point at 6200 ft. Make a traversing ascent for 200 ft (SSE) to below a cliff (beneath the Spire Point ridge). Then traverse the basin, keeping just below a rock ridge toe. Then make an obvious ascending traverse to Dome Glacier (heather, talus, snowpatches). Ascend the glacier easily to the high col (8560 ft+) just N of the summit. Ascend the snow ridge SE for 300 ft; circle left, then right. Ascend the arete (rock- or snow-covered) to the final summit ridge. There is a short, exposed rock traverse to the summit (class 3). **Note:** A section of the summit fell away in 1985. Rating: class 3. Time: 5-6 hours from Itswoot Ridge. Gear: crampons advisable after midsummer.

CHICKAMIN GLACIER ROUTE: Route of first ascent party. Approach via Agnes-Spruce Creek Route ♦ or West Fork Agnes Creek (see Agnes Creek Trail ♦). Thickets of vine maple and slide alder exist for 2 mi. beyond Icy Creek (allow 1 day beyond trail's end to the glacier). The original party used a steep ridge to reach the glacier; there is a timbered hillside that can be taken to the E side of the snout. From the N side of the valley, it is possible to cross the creek (about 3800 ft) and then ascend a steep, brushy ridge to the slabs and flat terminal moraine area below the glacier (one party made the creek ford above the falls with a rope pendulum). There is good camping at the larch groves E of the snout. Keep the E glacier lobe to avoid icefalls and reach the flat area (6800 ft) beneath Gunsight Peak. Bear W and climb through a wide crevassed area, then ascend to the high col. There are short, steep slopes, and there may be crevasses and route-finding problems in years of early breakup. Rating: unverified. Time: 12 hours from West Fork Agnes Creek.

Alternate Approaches: The glacier can be approached



DOME PEAK from southwest
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from Hanging Gardens (see Canyon Creek Trail ♦, Chickamin Glacier Route) and the Spruce-Chickamin ridge ("East Chickamin Col"). One could also cross to the Chickamin Glacier by the higher Dome-Sinister Peak col (see Sinister Peak).

SUMMIT TRAVERSE: The rock is excellent: this is a sharp, exposed ridge containing several small gendarmes. The traverse can be made in either direction; it is mostly a ridge scramble, or climbers should keep close to the crest on the S side. Rating: class 4. Time: 1–2 hours.

INDIAN SUMMER ROUTE (S face of SW summit): First ascent by Jason Schilling and Nate Farr in September, 2011.

The route was reached from Dome's main summit, then a descent of the E ridge to the base of the long S face. Climbing on or near the buttress, along the left side of the S face on solid granite, with a crux chimney on the fifth pitch. Rating: Grade II; class 5.8. Reference: *Mazama*, 2011, pp. 23–24.

SOUTHWEST PEAK

8880 ft+/2707 m+

The upper part of the complex Southwest Peak is a steep SE-facing wall, while the narrow, serrated W arete features a cannonhole of about 10 by 20 ft—perhaps the largest such phenomenon in the Cascade Range. First ascent by Forest Farr, Norval Grigg, and Don Blair on July 5, 1936.