

Mount Sill (14,153 ft; 14,162 ft)

This peak has the best summit view in the Sierra. It is a sacred mountain to the Paiutes: *Nee-na-mee-shee* (the Guardian of the Valley), and is worshipped in their religious ceremonies. Further reading: Porcella, pp. 162-174.

Southwest Slope. Class 2-3. First ascent July 24, 1903, by Joseph N. LeConte, James K. Moffitt, James S. Hutchinson, and Robert D. Pike. Ascend the Glacier Creek drainage to where it is possible to go left (northwest) into the cirque between Mount Sill and Polemonium Peak. Cross the snowfield at the head of the cirque, keeping to its right, and follow the west ridge of the peak to the summit. The upper part of the west ridge consists of large talus. *Variation: South Headwall.* Class 4, with one rappel. First ascent July 15, 1975, by Woody Stark and Richard Webster. From the Glacier Creek drainage, instead of turning left toward the cirque southwest of Mount Sill, climb the headwall visible from Lake 3559 m (11,672 ft). The first ascent party used one rappel to avoid aid. From the top of the headwall, follow the southeast ridge to the summit.

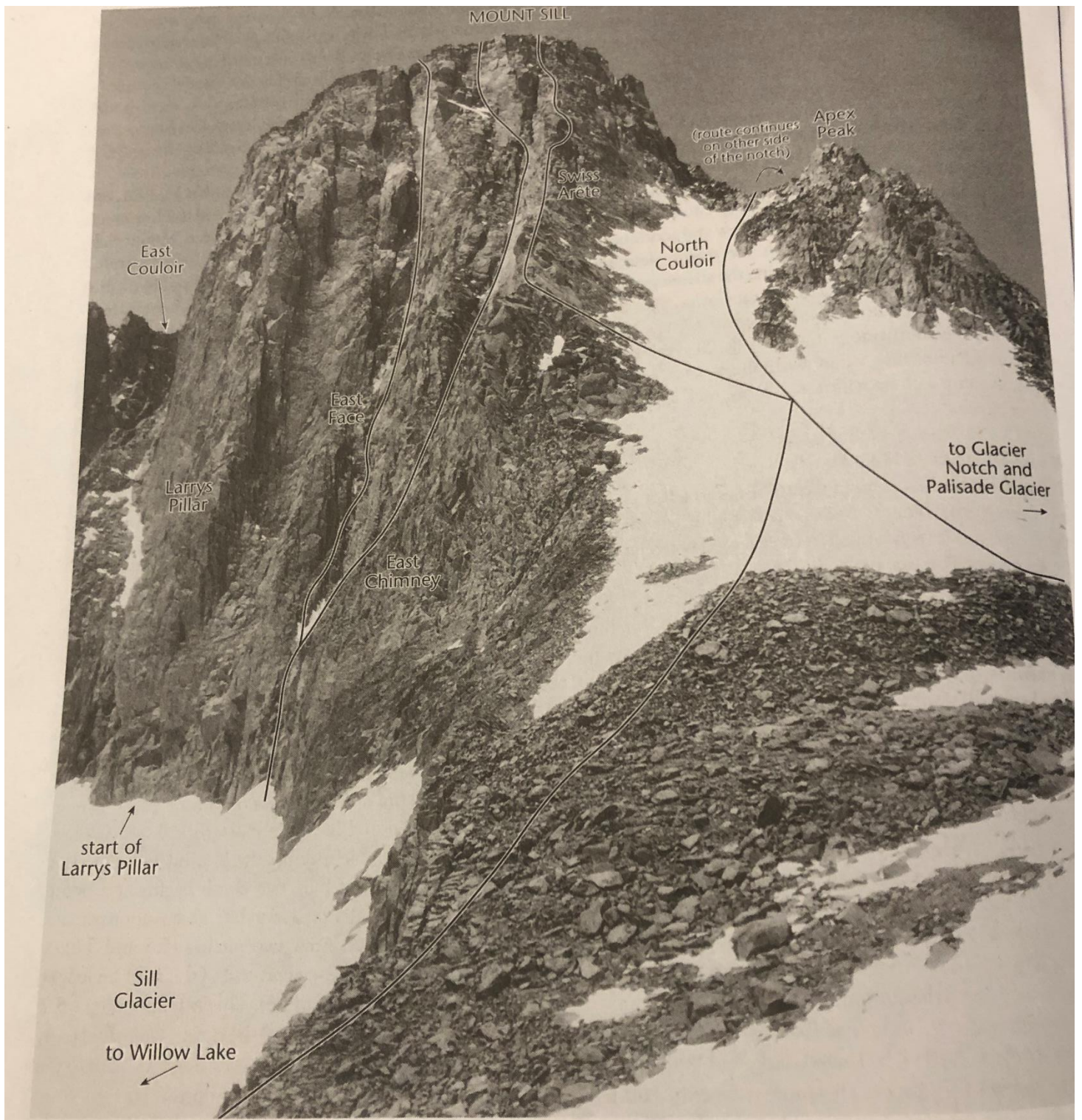
Traverse from the U Notch and Polemonium Peak. I, 5.2. First ascent August 2, 1933, by Lewis Clark, Ted Waller, Julie Mortimer, and Jack Riegelhuth. This route is described under Polemonium Peak. The ridge west of Mount Sill to the gap before Polemonium Peak is class 2-3.

1986, by Northwest Face. Class 4. First ascent June 10, 1927, involves by Norman Clyde. There is a small pyramid-shaped peak a chute (locally known as "Apex Peak") just north of Mount Sill (UTM 664065). From the Palisade Glacier, climb the snow/ice couloir leading to the notch between this small peak and Mount Sill, and continue up the North Couloir to the summit. There is much loose rock on this side of Mount Sill; the North Couloir from Glacier Notch is preferred.

North Couloir. Class 4. First ascent September 25, 1931, by Walter A. Starr Jr. From Glacier Notch ascend the L-shaped snow/ice couloir leading to the notch between Mount Sill and Apex Peak, on the north side of Mount Sill. (Alternatively, you can ascend the class 3 rocks on the right side of the couloir.) Climb toward Mount Sill from the notch for 80 feet and then traverse to the right across the Northwest Face. This leads to a small, scree-covered rib. Ascend the rib to the west ridge, then follow the ridge to the summit. *Variation*: I, 5.2. First ascent by George Wallerstein. Climb straight up from the start of the traverse for five short pitches. Some leader protection is needed on the third pitch.

North Couloir, Descent Route. Class 4. This is commonly used as a descent route after climbs of the Swiss Arête, east face, or the V Notch of Polemonium Peak. At an approximate elevation of 13,900 feet on the west ridge of Mount Sill (near a prominent rock spike along the ridge), descend the north side of the ridge about 200 feet. Traverse down and across the Northwest Face to a point just above the notch between Mount Sill and Apex Peak to the north. Descend to the notch and go down the 35-degree North Couloir (or the class 3 rocks on its north side) to Glacier Notch.

Swiss Arête. II, 5.7. First ascent July 3, 1938, by Spencer Austin, Ruth Dyar, Ray Ingwersen, Richard M. Jones, and Joe Momyer. This is one of the classic climbs of the High Sierra, ascending the north buttress of Mount Sill. It is in a spectacular location and has little loose rock. From Glacier Notch, traverse up and left, across the North Couloir, to the north buttress of Mount Sill. The climb begins at a point where the buttress flattens out a bit, at an approximate elevation of 13,500 feet. After two pitches (5.5 and 5.6), a 5.5 pitch leads to an impasse. Traverse to the right on ledges to an exposed outside corner (5.6). This is followed by a 5.7 move up an open book. The rest of the climb is mostly class 4, with a few class 5 moves over and around huge blocks to the summit. *Variation*: Continue directly up the buttress from where the impasse is met (5.9). *Further reading*: Bard, *Mount Sill: Swiss Arête*; Fiddler, pp. 203–206; Croft, pp. 96–97.



Mount Sill from the northeast

East Chimney. III, 5.8. First ascent July 4, 1960, by Tom Condon and Fred Kipfelsberger. The glacier on the eastern side of Mount Sill has been called "Sill Glacier." This route starts by climbing the prominent chimney on the right side of the east face of Mount Sill. The chimney widens after two pitches, turning into a bowl. Climb up and right over broken ledges for four pitches to a chimney system heading up and left. Climb the chimneys to a ramp leading up and left, meeting the ridge about 100 feet southeast of the summit.

East Face. III, 5.7. First ascent September 1, 1963, by John Mendenhall, Rich Gnagy, Burt Turney, and Genevieve Turney. This route ascends the chimney/gully system in the middle of the east face. Climb the class 4 chimney on the right side of the east face to a large, overhanging chockstone. Climb a thin crack (5.7) behind the chockstone. This is followed by a 5.6 pitch, then a 5.7 pitch. Easier climbing leads to a steep gully that is ascended for four pitches on its right side (5.2). Continue up the gully that becomes a steep chimney and climb its right wall (5.4-5.7) to its top, where an exposed traverse to the left leads to the southeast ridge, at a point about 200 feet from the summit. *Variation:* From the top of the gully, climb up and to the right around a small buttress to a chute. Ascend the chute and follow a ramp system left to a point about 100 feet southeast of the summit. *Variation:* III, 5.9. First ascent July 1991 by Kevin Malone and Pat Brennan. From the top of the gully, continue straight up for five pitches. The last three pitches are 5.9.

Larrys Pillar, Center. III, 5.10. First ascent 1978 by Mike Farrell and Mike Graber. This prominent pillar is on the southern half of the east face of Mount Sill. It was affectionately named by the guides of the Palisade School of Mountaineering after their late director, Larry Williams. Ascend a left-leaning, overhanging crack from Sill Glacier. Once above the overhang, go to the right and climb the center of the pillar.

Larrys Pillar, Left Side. III, 5.9. First ascent August 1986 by Ken Davenport, David Wilson, and Michael Graber. After surmounting the overhanging crack, climb the left side of the pillar.

East Couloir. Class 3. Descended June 16, 1934, by Norman Clyde, Hervey Voge, and David Brower. First winter ascent January 1957 by John Mendenhall and Henry Mandolf. From Sill Glacier ascend the left-hand snow/ice couloir to where the two couloirs join. Follow the main couloir to the notch on the southeast ridge, and ascend the ridge to the summit.

Polemonium Peak (14,080 ft+; 14,000 ft+; 0.15 mi SE of North Palisade)

This is the small peak immediately southeast of the U Notch. On some maps, the name Polemonium Peak has been erroneously placed on Peak 13,962 (13,920 ft+), 0.3 mile southeast of the correct peak. *Further reading:* Porcella, pp. 176-183.

From the U Notch. I, 5.2. First ascent August 2, 1933, by Lewis Clark, Ted Waller, Julie Mortimer, and Jack Riegelhuth. The top of the U Notch is attained by ascending either the Southwest Chute or the U Notch Couloir on North Palisade. From the top of the U Notch, climb up and right onto a ledge on the northwest face of Polemonium Peak for 60 feet of easy class 4. Then traverse diagonally upward to the right for about 100 feet toward the obvious notch that is just above the prominent gendarme on the southwest arête. Go up from the notch, where several class 5 moves are followed by class 4 climbing to the summit.

V Notch Couloir. III, AI2 or WI3. First ascent September 1957 by John Mathias and John Ohrenschall. This is one of the classic ice climbs of the High Sierra. The route ascends the left branch of the obvious couloir east of the U Notch, and features 50-degree snow/ice for 900 feet. The bergschrund is usually passable on its left side, and most parties belay from rock on the right side of the couloir to avoid rockfall. It is possible to climb the rocks in the upper part of the couloir, but this is seldom done in this age of modern ice-climbing equipment and *sangfroid*. *Further reading:* Fiddler, pp. 207-209.

Southeast Side. Class 4. First ascent July 27, 1930, by Jules Eichorn, Glen Dawson, John Olmstead, and Charles Dodge. Ascend to the top of the snowfield southwest of Mount Sill, or follow the west ridge of Mount Sill west to the gap just before the true summit of Polemonium Peak. Downclimb into the gap and follow the knife-edge ridge to the summit of the peak. This last section consists of two short pitches of easy class 4.

Palisade Glacier and Vicinity

