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June 2009

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Bill Chupka enjoys a spectacular evening view of Surveyor's Notch, pictured here on the skyline above Upper Deep Creek Lake in the Wind River Mountain Range of Wyoming.

Surveyor's Notch

>> By Bill Chupka, LS and Jay Drake, LSIT

It's March 2008. I'm in the office downloading data, and Jay says "Hey, I found something in a book I was reading about a feature in the Wind Rivers called Surveyor's Notch. Have you heard of that?" "Yeah," I reply, "it's right there by Wind River Peak. I can see it from the top of the hill as I drive to town." Jay continues about how the Hayden Expedition was here in the 1870s, surveying and mapping in the Wind Rivers, and about how we have to go there (to Surveyor's Notch) this summer. Jay's on a quest to visit as many as possible of the PLSS initial points, as well as anything else related to early surveying in the West. He apparently thinks some of us should join him on a 10- or 12-mile backpack trip to Surveyor's Notch so we can walk in the footsteps or something. Anyway, this talk about Surveyor's Notch got me fired up, so I got my trusty old digital camera and jumped in my old Cessna 172 (flying is one of my spare time passions) and within a day or so e-mailed Jay this photo. The rest is history, which, according to the bits of information we've found, goes something like this:

The first recorded ascent of Wind River Peak was by A.D. Wilson, a surveyor/topographer with the Hayden Expedition in 1878. Surveyor's Notch was named by the surveyors on the expedition. For one of my generation it makes perfect sense, though I'm not sure some of the youngsters, whose experience is almost exclusively GPS, would relate.

Wind River Peak lies on the Continental Divide in the southern Wind River Range in Central Wyoming at 13,197 feet (according to published data). As for the up-close visit, it remains to be seen if we can find the ambition and/or the time off work to make the trip.

Five Months Later

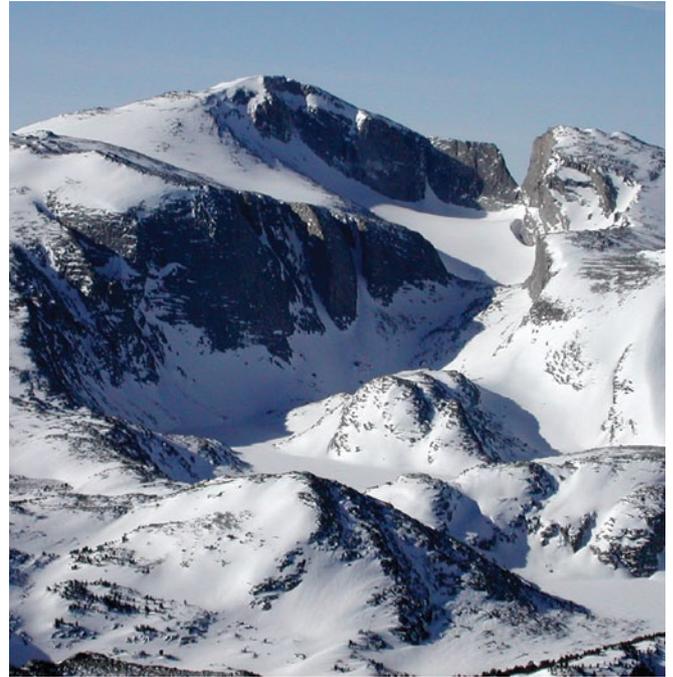
I held up okay on the trip, though I know I'm the weak link—a bit long in the tooth, with those old high mileage knees. Jay Drake did okay in spite of spending way too much time behind his desk. No problem for Kyle Johnson—when he's not helping us with surveying and drafting in the summers,



Southern division, Geological Survey, with A.D. Wilson in charge. He is pictured here with Endlich and Rhoda, 1874. Photo by William Henry Jackson. Courtesy USGS online photo library.



The team's descent from Wind River Peak afforded this view of the glacier and glacial lake that lie below Surveyor's Notch.



Surveyor's Notch and Wind River Peak in early spring, as seen from Chupka's Cessna 172.

he's playing rugby at the University of Wyoming where he's pursuing a degree in civil engineering. Tom Axthelm, local civil engineer (and the only one of us who had been there before) joined us for the initial part of the trip. It's 12 miles plus to Deep Creek Lakes where we camped and fished for golden trout. Tom had to be back to work and couldn't join us on the walk to the top of Wind River Peak, which was just over three miles (feels like straight up) from our camp. Everyone could see the excitement on Tom's face to revisit this awesome landscape he hadn't seen in decades. He told of coming in on cross-country skis as a young man late December on a "low snow" year. He said they easily made it to the top and remembers the mild temperatures (no colder than 30-below zero). Thanks, Tom for making us mere mortals feel like wimps. We took a full day and did a lot of extra walking to take advantage of numerous angles from which to gaze at and photograph Surveyor's Notch. We also looked for a USGS monument at the top of Wind River Peak. Our intention was to do a short static session on this monument

just to see how it fit published data. Unfortunately, the monument was not found—we suspect it is in someone's private collection. We did the static session anyway over a half-inch drilled hole I found in the granite at the high point and submitted the data to OPUS. The solution came back about five feet from the published horizontal position and about two feet from the vertical at 13199.5. Mother Nature did her part with perfect weather on our three-and-a-half-day trip. All in all a worthwhile walk in the footsteps. I really wanted a photo of that bronze tablet the USGS set there, though—the record shows it was set in 1951—the year I was born. *A*

Jay Drake is an LSIT employed with Inberg Miller Engineers in Riverton, Wyoming. **Bill Chupka** is an LS, also located in Riverton. For some interesting history and early photos of Wyoming (and some good trail music) visit www.wyomingtalesandtrails.com, or just do a general Internet search for "Hayden Expeditions" for some interesting reading.