

A Peak Named Woolsey



Always easily seen, Woolsey Peak is one of the most dominant mountains along the entire Gila River. South of Interstate 10, north of the Town of Gila Bend, and west of the Gila River, this table-top shaped mountain marks the horizon from all directions.

Woolsey Peak is outlined by dark-colored, wash machine sized, basalt boulders. These steep slopes of weathered debris surround a volcanic core made of ash, tuff, and rhyolite.

Over 2,400 feet above the surrounding desert floor, there's no doubt this pillar (3,270' elevation) has always been a guide post along the Gila River. Considered part of Gila Bend Mountains, it is more closely related to its volcanic sisters like Signal Mountain, Fourth of July Butte, Saddle Mountain, and the Palo Verde Hills.

Recently as 1949, it was tagged Gila Peak before being renamed for the Arizona Pioneer - King Samuel Woolsey (1832-1879).

Arriving in Yuma 'almost penniless' immediate hard work meant that in 1860 he purchased a ranch along the Gila River named Agua Caliente (hot water); near present day Hyder. There he dug a canal to supply water to hay fields and power a flour mill. Soon King S. Woolsey was financially successful in farming and ranching along the Emigrant and Butterfield Stage Coach trails.

His second ranch, named Agua Fria (cold water), was on the Woolsey Trail between Prescott and Pima Villages (Gila River Indian Community) via Black Canyon. This trail became the first route established in the Territory of Arizona (parts are now Interstate 17).

Today, Woolsey Peak is known as one bead on a geologic necklace of mountains that is a constant backdrop to our region and it provides valuable wildlife habitat. Plus, the peak is known for a Territory of Arizona pioneer who "...braved dangers and hardships of frontier life for 19 years with success".

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*Compiled from Arizona Historical Foundation Pioneer Biography's & Arizona Names X Marks the Place, by Byrd Howell Granger.

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