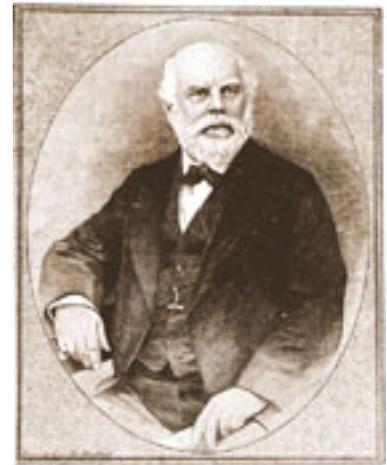


Engelmann Peak (or Crater Mountain)

Engelmann Peak sits in Clear Creek County and can be seen from several places along US Highway 40. The U. S. Geological Survey (USGS) has given it a Latitude of 39°44'44"N and a Longitude of 105°48'02"W with an elevation of 13,376 feet. The website *13ers.com* shows the elevation as 13,362 ft and lists its rank as 349 of 637 in the State and 25 of 59 in the Front Range.

The mountain is named for George Engelmann (1809-1884) a famous botanist responsible for describing and naming flora in the Rocky Mountains. He was born and educated in Germany and received his medical degree there. In 1832, he sailed to America. His financial backing had come from relatives in Germany who wanted him to invest in the lands of the new country so he explored areas in Illinois, Missouri and Arkansas. He completed his business transactions for his family in 1835, at which time he moved to St. Louis and began his medical practice. He would also continue his botanical studies and collections which would be a life long passion. In 1840, he would return to Germany to marry his cousin, and then both would return to the United States, landing in New York City. Here during this stop, he would meet Asa Gray, an already famous botanist, and their friendship would last until Dr. Engelmann died. As he grew older, more and more of his time was spent with his botanical collection, which contained many original specimens of western plants that he had named and described. Some of these specimens had been collected by C. C. Parry, another botanist, who spent several years in Clear Creek County collecting flora specimens for Dr. Engelmann and Dr. Gray. Dr. Christopher C. Parry would name this mountain for his friend, George Engelmann. The Engelmann spruce was also named for him.



G. Engelmann
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And as they say, now for the rest of the story...



Photo by author

Dr. C. C. Parry wrote in the *American Journal of Science and Arts*, 2nd Series, Vol. XXXIII. No. 97, of January, 1862 the following...

“In my solitary wanderings over these rugged rocks and through these alpine meadows, resting at noon-day in some sunny nook, overlooking waters of snow and crystal lakes girdled with midsummer ice, I naturally associate some of the more prominent mountain peaks with distant and valued friends. To two twin peaks always conspicuous whenever a sufficient elevation was attained, I applied the names of *Torrey and Gray*; to an associated peak, a little less elevated but in other respects quite as remarkable in its peculiar situation and alpine features, I apply the name of *Mount Engelmann*.”



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Historic Society of Idaho Springs
Idaho Springs, Colorado
Date – not known

In the book, *The Saga of Upper Clear Creek* by Erl H. Ellis and Carrie Scott Ellis, published in 1983, they write: “It is stressed that the authors believe that this is the mountain that Parry named Engelmann in 1861.” They would be referring to the mountain Kelso that is connected to Torrey’s Peak. Visitors passing the Bakerville Exit on Interstate 70 often assume that they are seeing Grays and Torrey as they pass by. Grays is not visible, the mountain they are seeing is Kelso.



Engelmann Spruce
Photo by author

In checking the USGS Geographic Names Information System (GNIS) *decision card* for Mount Sniktau (a mountain located near Eisenhower Tunnel on Interstate 70), it reads “Said to have been so named in the (18)60’s by Prof. Parry, after Prof. Engelmann. The Geo. Bd. on recommendation of the Colorado Geog. Bd. gave the name Engelmann to another peak 6 mi. N. W. of this. Map of Clear Creek Co. by P. P. Barbour, Engr. 1924” This card is dated June 24, 1925 and also list other names as “Big Professor” which would fit the historic description of Dr. Engelmann.



Engelmann Peak is in the upper left corner of this photo.

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Gregg Gargan: Colorado Department of Transportation Photographer

To add to the confusion, the USGS *decision card* for Engelmann Peak is dated August 5, 1912 and it reads... “Believed to be the Mtn so named by Dr. Parry” The card also lists “Local usage” as “Cowles Mtn”. Henry DeWitt Clinton Cowles was an important early leader of Empire, Colorado.

Refer to P. P. Barbour, 1924 map. It shows Engelman (one “n”) where Mount Sniktau now is and Cowles Mt. where Engelmann Peak is now.



Photo taken from the top of Engelmann Peak – looking at Berthoud Pass

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Richard & Kurl Engelmann