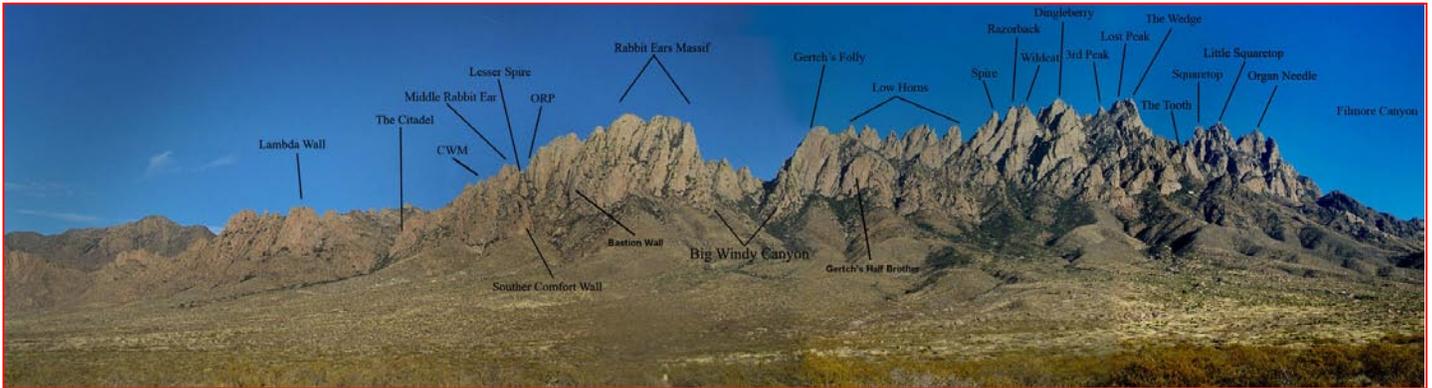


## Know what you're looking at when you eye the Organs

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**LAS CRUCES** - If you have ever stood upon the majestic Orp or surveyed the Mesilla Valley from The Wedge, then you are one of the select few who probably know the exact names of all the peaks and formations in the Organ Mountain range.

Las Cruces Greg Lennes, 63, is one of those people. For seven years, he has enjoyed a clear view of the Organs from the living room of his house in the Las Ventanas subdivision off Roadrunner Parkway. But it bothered him that other than a few well-known names such as Baylor Canyon Pass, the Rabbit Ears, and the Needle, he did not know the exact names of every peak and formation on the mountains.

In a moment of serendipity, Lennes, who studied history in graduate school at the University of Illinois at Chicago, found an out-of-print book at a sale at Branigan Library about five years ago. It was "*A Guide to the New Mexico Mountains*" by Herbert E. Ungnade, a 1965 publication of the University of New Press. The guide includes a section on the Organ Mountains with a set of black-and-white close-up drawings of various formations such as the Orp, Gerch's Folly, Razorback, Wildcat, the Dingleberry and the Wedge.

In a footnote, Ungnade said he was "indebted to Dick Ingraham for most of the information on Organ routes, for his kind hospitality, and for an interesting climb of the Wedge."

R.L. Ingraham's "*A Climbing Guide to the Organ Mountains*", which was first privately published and is now available online at the website of New Mexico State University, was in preparation when Ungnade's book was published. The information in Ingraham's guide is listed as "circa 1965." Most of the information in the two books is the same. However, what Ungnade calls "The Rabbit Ear Plateau" Ingraham calls "The Rabbit Ear Massif."

A website called MountainProject.com replicates photos and names from Ingraham's peak locator, and also includes names for some of the lower formations such as *Fun in The Sun* and *Southern Comfort Wall*.

As he sits at his kitchen table, Lennes is wearing a T-shirt with a picture of the Organ Mountains on them. He thumbs through the books and the piles of paper he has downloaded from the Internet. While he is happy to know that the peaks and other formations "actually have names," he is still puzzled.

"What people don't seem to know, even these writers, are the origins of these names," he said. "It's kind of a mystery."

Other than Baylor Canyon, named for the Confederate Civil War general who went through the pass in 1861 to capture Union troops (according to Ungnade), Lennes said there is nothing in the books or websites he has found that explain how any of these names came to be.

The guides explain a lot of things, he said. The geology of the Organs. Good routes to get to the various places. And some interesting facts: for example, the first documented climbing of the Organ's highest summit, the *Organ Needle*, was in 1904. Ungnade gives the height of the Needle as 9,012 feet. A couple of students - W.I. Isaacks and O.B. Metcalfe - from the nearby A&M College were given credit for that, he said. A professor of theirs wanted a flag at the summit, according to Ungnade.

But who came up with *Dingleberry*, Lennes wondered. It certainly wasn't the Conquistadores, he said.

### 'No committee'

According to local climbers, the names were most likely passed on over the decades by generations of climbers. Rarely is the origin of the name assigned to a specific person, they said. Most of this lore was collected by R.L. "Dick" Ingraham, and his guide has been the main source for names ever since. Local climber Aaron Hobson, 30, who writes a blog for MountainProject.com, said that Ingraham was part of a group of climbers called the *Southwest Mountaineers*, and these climbers might have named some of the peaks. However, other names might have been handed down by word of mouth, and could have been named by earlier generations of climbers, he said.

"The names get passed on," he said. "There's nothing formal. No committee. No rights. You don't make any money off of this stuff. Climbers just name things. It's a way for people to communicate."

Sue Williams, who has been an officer with the Organ Mountain Technical Rescue Squad for 10 years, said some names are in general use for years before they start to become well known. For example, along the *Southern Comfort Wall* she enjoys the *Black Velvet* route.

"The names are pretty much used within the climbing and mountaineering community," she said.

While Ingraham's guide is well known among climbers, said Hobson, the out-of-print book by Ungnade is not. According to Ungnade, on "old maps" the Organs were called "*La Sierra de la Soledad*," which he translated into '*The Mountains of Solitude*.' He writes that "*Sugarloaf*" was climbed by a "local party" in the 1930s and the south *Rabbit Ear* earlier than that. Some of the steeper walls were climbed by German rocket scientists who were brought to the White Sands Proving Ground in 1946-47, he writes.

Across the nation, Hobson said, climbers have a tendency to come up with "crude" or "crass" names sometimes, which he suspects might be behind a name such as "dingleberry," he said.

"Sometimes people give things crazy names like that," he said.

Climbers are still coming up with names for new routes and smaller formations, he said. Usually, a climber will post a suggested name on MountainProject.com, or they will ask if anyone knows if there has been a name for a certain place, he said.

"If you talk to the old climbers, they might say 'we didn't bother naming it because we didn't think it was worthwhile,'" he said.

Hobson said he was on the *Orp*, north of the *Rabbit Ears*, just last week. There's a story about that name, he said, but it cannot be printed in a family newspaper.

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### On the Web

- "A Climbing Guide to the Organ Mountains" by R.L. Ingraham, edited for the web by Ronald Hahn  
<http://web.nmsu.edu/~amato/ingrahamguide/index.html>

- Organ Mountains Peak Locator:  
[http://web.nmsu.edu/~amato/ingrahamguide/LOcator/Locat\\_or\\_master.html](http://web.nmsu.edu/~amato/ingrahamguide/LOcator/Locat_or_master.html)

- Northern Section of Organ Mountains Labeled:  
[www.mountainproject.com/v/new\\_mexico/las\\_cruces\\_area\\_climbing/organ\\_mountains/106338431](http://www.mountainproject.com/v/new_mexico/las_cruces_area_climbing/organ_mountains/106338431)

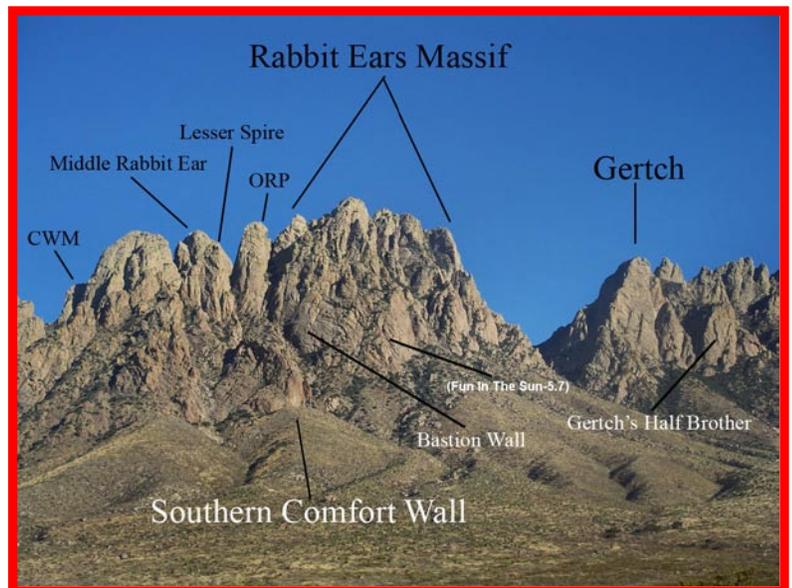
- Entire Organ Mountain Range Labeled and Areas to the North and South:  
[www.mountainproject.com/images/86/39/106338639\\_large\\_4b18b3.jpg](http://www.mountainproject.com/images/86/39/106338639_large_4b18b3.jpg)

- Geology of the Organ Mountains and southern San Andres Mountains:  
<http://geoinfo.nmt.edu/publications/memoirs/downloads/36/Memoir%2036.pdf>

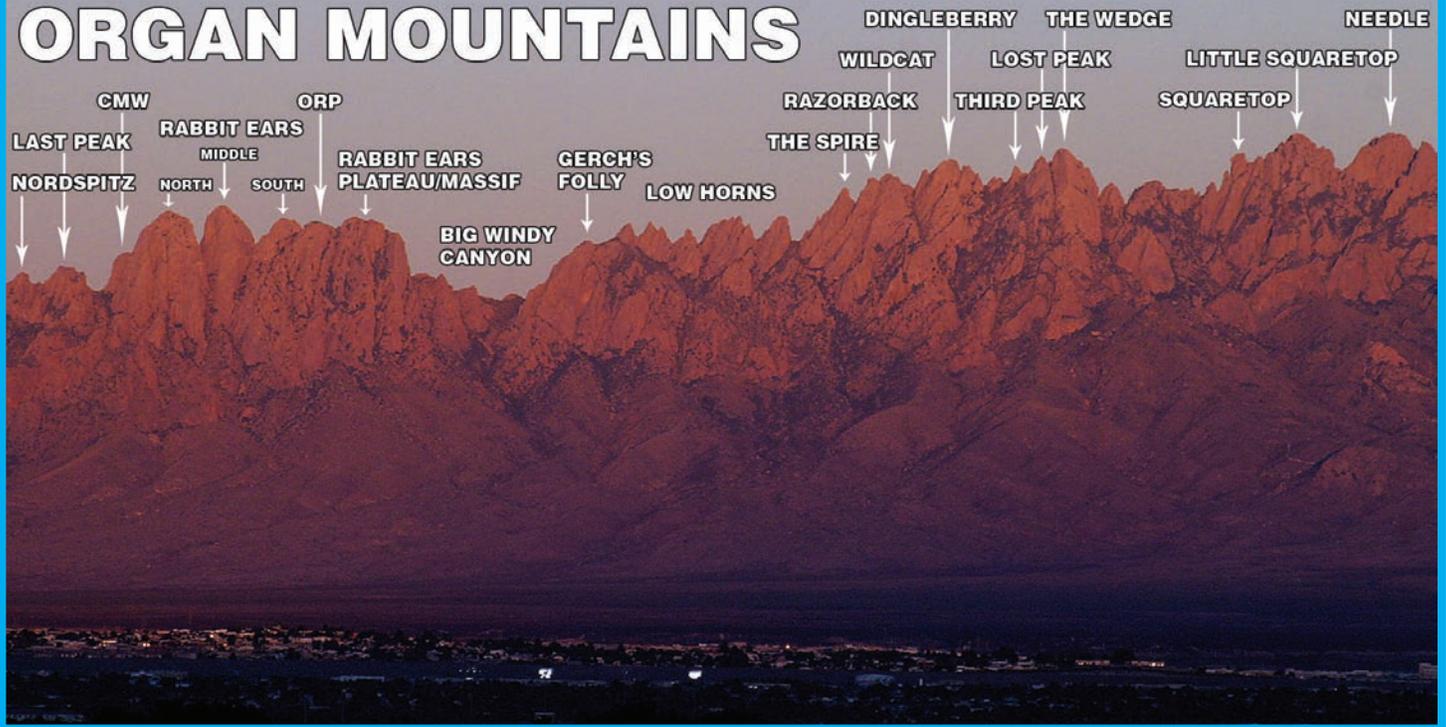
- Blog of Aaron Hobson, local climber:  
[www.mountainproject.com/u/aaron\\_hobson/12435](http://www.mountainproject.com/u/aaron_hobson/12435)

### In print

- "Guide to the New Mexico Mountains" Herbert Ungnade (Albuquerque: UNM Press, 1965).



# ORGAN MOUNTAINS



## Peaks and formations of the Organ Mountains

**Rabbit Ear Plateau:** This prominent peak southwest of the main Rabbit Ear group has a series of sharp west ridges, starting from the north, Rogowski's Rib, Long Rib and Knife Rib.

**The Spire:** The Northernmost of the High Horns ... the standard route heads straight up to the summit through the "Obvious Gully."

**The Wedge:** The highest of the High Horns and affords a magnificent view over the Organs ... Warren Gorrell Jr. published his account of the climb of the Wedge in 1954. On top of the Wedge he found a note from S.H. Christensen who climbed the mountain in 1934 and another from McCord, Burwell and Vickers, who made the ascent in 1950. "*Guide to New Mexico Mountains*", by Herbert Ungnade, UNM Press, 1965

**The Needle:** The high point of the Organs, a trifle over 9,000 feet high, marks the southern terminus of the climbing rock. Seen from the west it is (in spite of the name) a broad, blunt tower, bracketed by what appear to be two subsidiary towers, like ears ... The Needle is one of the very few Organ peaks climbed earlier than about 20 years ago, first because it is one of the few major peaks provided with a walk-up route and second, because the Organs have always had the reputation of being "inaccessible," as a talk with any of the local townspeople will reveal.

**Dingleberry:** The massive peak north of Third Peak is Dingleberry, distinguished by its complicated buttress structure on the west. It is recognizable also from many angles by the great block nodding westward which forms its summit. As a typical central Organ peak it lies in the least accessible part of the range and is rarely climbed.

**Squaretop:** Seen from the west, Squaretop is a prominent square cog on that part of the Organ Ridge which descends northward from Little Squaretop. It is recommended for intermediate and talented novice climbers.

**Wildcat:** Wildcat is the inconspicuous summit just north of Dingleberry. Instead of the long west ridges which characterize most of the peaks of the Central Organs, it has a blunt southwest side, terminating in an overhanging face, and a steep, rounded west buttress. (This unclimbed buttress is one of the interesting problems remaining in the Organs.) Relatively inaccessible, it is rarely climbed.

**Nordspitz:** This little peak, just north of Last Peak, marks the north end of the continuous part of the Organ chain, Beyond it, past five or six miles of the smooth hump of Baylor Peak and its outlying spurs, lies only the isolated stronghold of San Agustin Peak.

**The Orp:** Is the great tower which bounds the Rabbit Ears Massif on the north. Seen from Topp Hut, two great towers dominate the scene to the northwest: Orp on the right, the Lesser Spire on the left, framing an exceedingly narrow pass. Behind these two, the two major Rabbit Ears protrude only slightly. The origin of the name is lost in antiquity. "*A Climbing Guide to the Organ Mountains*", R.L. Ingraham, privately published 1965, 1972