



FACT Sheet

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

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HIKERS GUIDE TO PILOT PEAK

The following information is from Karl Libsch of Salt Lake City. Karl and his group made the hike to the top of Pilot Peak in mid-June 1994. Karl put together the following description of their route since no hiking guide is available. Thanks Karl for the use of this information.

Our party of two "20 something's", two "30 something's" and one 50 yr. old made it to the top. And we thought starting in Miners Canyon was a good approach. We camped in Miners Canyon about 1/2 mile above the mine Friday the 10th of June and were on our way up the mountain at 7:30 a.m. Utah time. We **did not** go up the canyon marked Miners on the topographic map. Rather we went up the somewhat "S" shaped canyon to the northeast. On the way up we hugged the outcroppings on the east side. That way we were able to avoid the talus - or at least some of it. The top of the canyon has a cliffy sort of outcropping on the east side. You can see this on the topo map just east of the end of the intermittent stream. It's a significant enough knob to relocate for the return trip. It's good to look for it and not get confused with the knob at the 9,113 ft. elevation (to the west).

We left the knob at the head of the "S" canyon and headed toward the knob at 10,182 ft. elevation. The 10,182 knob can be easily viewed during the transit/climb. We went under the 10,182-elevation knob and climbed up the ridge to the Peak. The route to the top can be easily seen. It took the "20 something's" about 3 hours to get to the top. The "30 something's" and 50 yr. old took 5 hours. I'd advise most normal non-athletes to plan on the 5 hours.

The top was very interesting. I counted 5 ruins of possible signaling stations**. The logbook in the "mailbox" at the top started with a guy in 1963. It is about 60 pages long and has about 5 pages left. At 6 people per page - most people left notes and comments - I'd estimate 300 people have climbed the peak in the last 31 years. About 10-12 per year. We coincidentally met another party of about 5 on top. They indicated they had come up the ridge that almost due East of the Peak. They indicated it was tough. All talus.

The way down took us the same time as the way up because we had to do talus the whole way. The "20 something's" had a six-hour hike. The others had a 10-hour hike.

Recommendations:

- I like the route up the "S" canyon.
- Because of the talus, the "normal" estimates of 1 hr. / 1,000 ft. elevation gain work on the way up. But 1/2 of that doesn't work for the way down. Plan on a 10 hr. trip.
- Carry extra water. At least 1 gallon per person. Two-quart water bottles just aren't enough.

The road to Miners Canyon turns off just **BEFORE** the 2nd cattleguard after Leppy Pass. This good road isn't marked on the map. Maybe it is a 4WD trail. I think it's been improved since the map was drawn.

Access to Miners Canyon:

- From Interstate 80, take the Bonneville Exit (Exit 4) in Utah. It is 4 miles east of Wendover UT/NV.
- Fuel and food are available at the truck stop at this exit. Continue north on the pavement until the road curves to the right to go to the Salt Flats. Take the left fork (gravel road).
- Stay on this main bladed road (there are no good roads turning off of it) and continue north. After crossing Leppy Pass, the western edge of the Salt Flats and Pilot Peak will be clearly visible.
- When you cross the first cattleguard, you will be in NV. Continue north about another 11 miles, skirting the edge of the Salt Flats, until you come to a second cattleguard. The road that Karl refers to is on the south side of this cattleguard.
- Turn left onto this road, and continue NW about 4.5 miles. Miners Spring is the only water in this canyon and will be quite evident when you reach it. Karl and his group started their hike in the canyon just east (about 1/4 mile) of Miners Spring.

Wildlife on and around Pilot Peak:

On the lower elevation benches surrounding Pilot Peak, pronghorn antelope are a common site. Look for them from Leppy Pass north to the Miners Canyon turnoff, and along the Miners Canyon road until you enter the canyon where the pinyon-juniper forest begins.

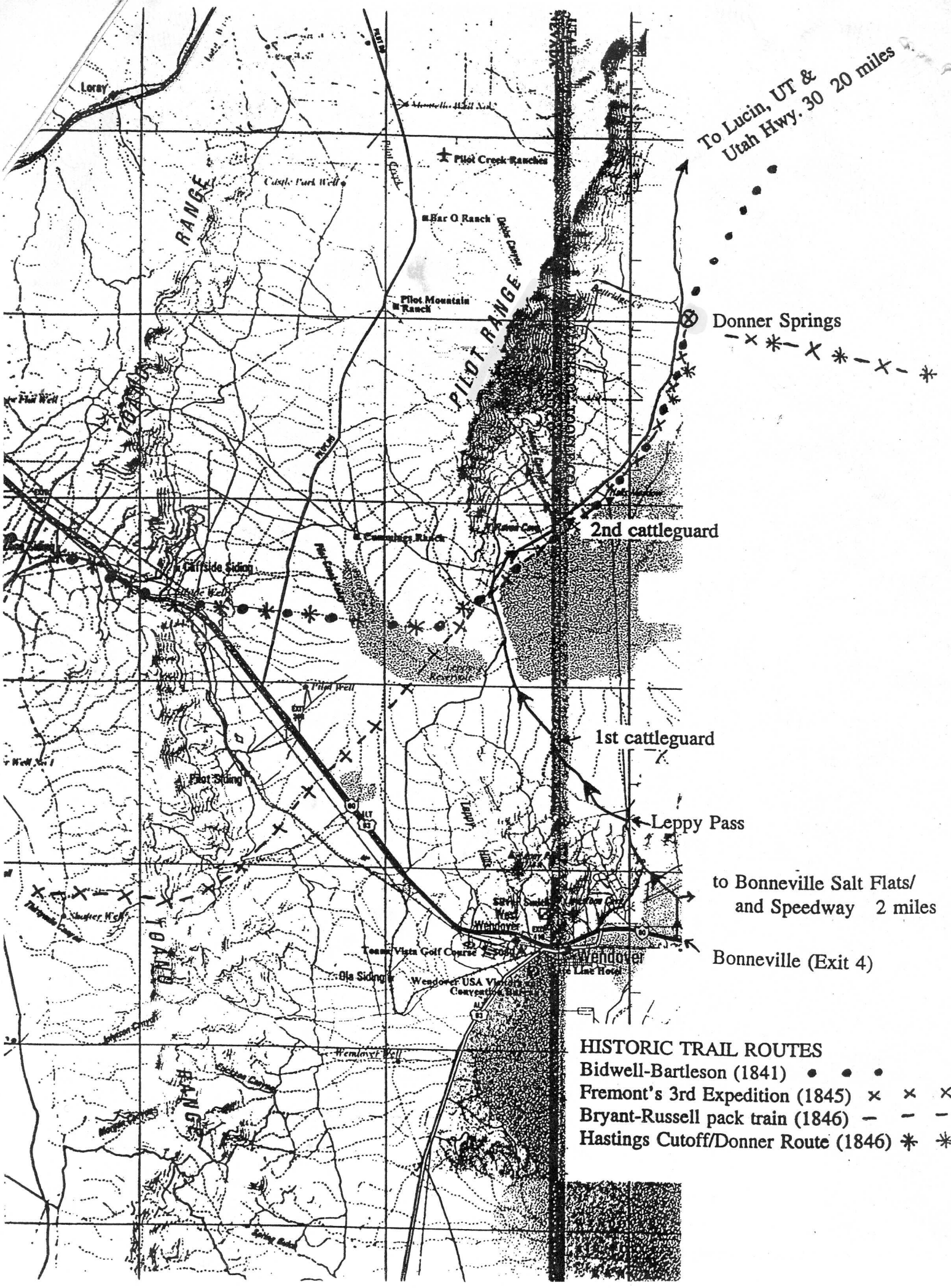
Within the pinyon-juniper forests, mule deer may be found. They will generally be in close proximity to Miner Spring or any of the other small springs on the east side of the mountain. Rocky Mountain elk were released onto Pilot Peak in the 1930's. A thriving herd of over 200 elk make their home here, primarily on the north and west sides of the mountain. They will typically be encountered in the pinyon-juniper forest also.

Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep were re-established on Pilot Peak with a release in 1987. The release site was at Miners Spring. The bighorns will typically be encountered near the top of the pinyon-juniper treeline or above.

History:

The name "Pilot Peak" is attributed to Capt. John C. Fremont. In 1845 during Fremont's 3rd Expedition, the explorer and his party were traveling west along the south shore of the Great Salt Lake, searching for a shorter route to the central Great Basin and onward to California. From the summit of the Cedar Mountains in Utah, Fremont's party could see one very high peak to the west beyond the expanse of the salt desert. To cross the desert with the whole expedition and not know if they would find water was much too risky. Fremont sent famed scout Kit Carson along with three other men ahead on the best horses with extra supplies. Nearly 24 hours later, Fremont was able to see with his telescope the smoke from the signal fire built by Carson and the advance scouts. Fremont and the remainder of the expedition made it safely across the salt flats to the life saving waters and abundant grass at the base of Pilot Peak. The water they came to is at Pilot Ranch, about 8 miles north of the turnoff to Miners Canyon. In 1846, the ill-fated Donner Party followed this same route. The large spring at the ranch is called Donner Springs. An interpretive site and information is at Donner Springs, and the public is welcome to the site.

** The rock alignments on top were thought to be Civil War era mirror signaling stations. A literature search and discussions with historians cannot confirm this.



To Lucin, UT &
Utah Hwy. 30 20 miles

Donner Springs

2nd cattleguard

1st cattleguard

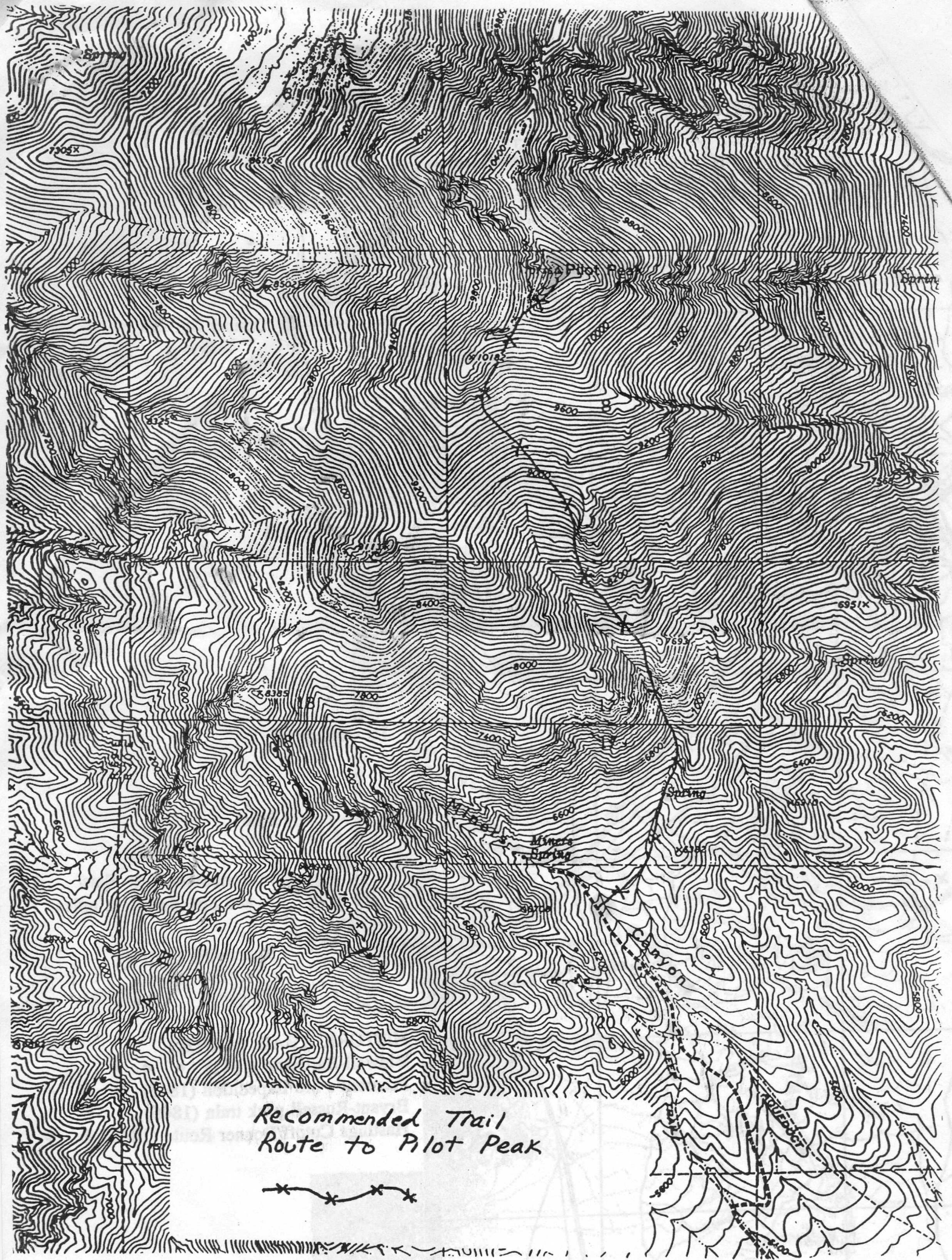
Leppy Pass

to Bonneville Salt Flats/
and Speedway 2 miles

Bonneville (Exit 4)

HISTORIC TRAIL ROUTES

- Bidwell-Bartleson (1841) • • •
- Fremont's 3rd Expedition (1845) x x x
- Bryant-Russell pack train (1846) - - -
- Hastings Cutoff/Donner Route (1846) * *



Recommended Trail
Route to Pilot Peak

