Now days the Washington Pass area offers relatively easy access to some of best technical climbing opportunities in the state of Washington, thanks to Highway 20.

Prior to the existence of the North Cascades Highway (Highway 20) in 1968, there were four logical approaches to the Washington Pass area that Beckey used. From the end of the Twisp River Road, one could begin hiking westward on the Twisp Pass Trail for 1.7 miles, then branch off on the Copper Pass Trail in a north westly direction. At about the two-mile mark, one can take a cross country route into a basin south of Kangaroo Pass. This was and still is a logical approach to climbs peaks on the south end of Kangaroo Ridge, such as Kangaroo Temple. And it is feasible to cross over Kangaroo Pass, to tackle peaks on the northern extent of Kangaroo Ridge, along with South Early Winter Spire that is westward across the headwaters of Early Winters Creek, which is what Beckey and company did in 1942.

![A picture containing text, map

Description generated with very high confidence]()

**Washington Pass area south, prior to construction of Highway 20.**

Map by Dee Molenaar. From *Challenge of North Cascades*, page 48. Beckey, Fred. Mountaineers Books. 1969. Reprinted with permission from the publisher.

A second approach from the northeast, was from the end of the road near Cedar Creek. It was an 11-mile hike to Tom’s Cabin, located beyond Cutthroat Creek on the east side of Early Winters Creek, almost due west of Burgundy Col. Another five miles of walking on the Early Winters Trail brought you to Washington Pass.

![A picture containing text, map

Description generated with very high confidence]()

**Washington Pass area north, prior to construction of Highway 20.**

Map by Dee Molenaar. From *Challenge of North Cascades*, page 204. Beckey, Fred. Mountaineers Books. 1969. Reprinted with permission from the publisher.

Another approach that Beckey used, was via the Cedar Creek trail, which put him into position to climb Burgundy Spire from the east side. Later approaches via Silver Star Creek were used.

Of course, with the completion of Highway 20, a lot of the climbs in the Washington Pass area can now be done in one or two days.

But when Fred Beckey and his climbing companions, Jim Crooks and Ed Kennedy, visited the Washington Pass area for the first time in the August 1940 it was a different story. They took a variation on one of the approaches mentioned above, from the end of the Twisp River Road. They hiked westward over Twisp Pass then continued to the junction with the Bridge Creek Trail, then northward to the Rainy Pass area. From there they climbed Cutthroat Peak, a little over two miles west of Washington Pass.

In the fall of 1941 Beckey returned with Jim Crooks, along with Walt Varney. They approached the Washington Pass area from the end of the Twisp River Road, but the group’s climbing ambitions, were stymied by poor weather.

In preparation for an attempt on Mt Waddington in the summer of 1942, Fred returned to Washington Pass, again from the end of the Twisp River Road, with is brother Helmy and Walt Varney. Over a period of about a week during late June, they compiled an impressive list of first ascents and a new route, some climbs involving challenging technical rock climbing. There climbing activity paid dividends for the Beckey brother’s six-week trip into the Waddington Range shortly thereafter.

At the end of Fred Beckey’s American Alpine Journal (AAJ) Report titled “Climbing and Skiing in the Waddington Area”, published in 1943, the editor of the AAJ included the following footnote.

Note: Italicized words inside parenthesis and bold text, were added by me for clarification and emphasis.

1 The author *(Fred Beckey)*, although but nineteen years old, is a mountaineer of experience, and writes of training for the Mt. Waddington expedition, as follows: “Between June 16th and 21st, 1942, Helmy Beckey, Walt Varney and I made first ascents of seven rock spires on Kangaroo Ridge, in the N.E. part of the Cascade Mtns in Washington. Four of these, Big Kangaroo, The *(Kangaroo)* Temple, Half Moon Peak and Mushroom Tower, were technical climbs. **To reach the summit of the latter (8300 ft.), we had to overcome a pitch a good deal more difficult than anything encountered on Mt. Waddington.”**

In late September 1946, Fred returned with Jerry O’Neil and Charles Welsh, this time using the Early Winters Creek Trail. This was the trip where they accomplished the first ascent of Liberty Bell, along with four other first ascents along Snagtooth Ridge.

In the year 1952, Beckey climbed in the Washington Pass area twice. On the first trip in late May /early June, they approached via the Early Winters Creek Trail. The group of four sub-divided to share the spoils on Vasiliki Ridge. Beckey and Herb Staley climbed five towers, all first ascents, while Don Wilde and Joe Hieb claimed three first ascents, including Vasiliki Tower.

They all re-grouped at Burgundy Col. In doing so, Beckey by-passed Vasiliki Tower.

I found no evidence that Fred climbed Vasiliki Tower during his long climbing career. According to Beckey’s book *Challenge of the North Cascades*, Herb Staley came up with names for the towers on the ridge north of Burgundy Col, most of the names based on Greek or Roman mythology.

The group went on to climb both the west and east peaks of Silver Star Mountain on this trip too. Beckey’s trip report in the 1953 Mountaineers Journal, refers to the group descending from the col “onto the glacier and circled beneath the four spectacular unclimbed Vasiliki Spires to the slope leading to the saddle between the two summits of Silver Star.”

In mid-June, Beckey returned with another set of climbers to attempt to ascend a couple of the Vasiliki Spires, which they named after different types of wines: Chablis, Pernod, Chianti and Burgundy Spires. Beckey had to return in September to successfully complete the ascent of Pernod Spire.

In 1953 Beckey made three trips into the Washington Pass area, with the grand prize on the last trip being the first ascent of Burgundy Spire.

In a single trip in 1955 Beckey and party climbed two peaks, one of which was a first ascent and the other a new route. From 1956 and on, nearly all Beckey’s trips into the area were one and done. This trend occurred before the highway official opened in 1968 and is common practice by climbers now days.

Beckey repeated the now famous Beckey Route on Liberty Bell in May 1986. And to complete the circle, Beckey’s climbed South Early Winter Spire via the South Arete in October 2006, some 64 years after he pioneered this route with his brother Helmy and Walt Varney.

According to my research, the only significate technical climbs in the Washington Pass area that Fred Beckey did not climb were: Chianti Spire, Lexington Tower and The Needles.

Instead of naming a peak in Washington State in Fred Beckey’s honor, I think it would be an appropriate to build an exhibit at the Washington Pass Overlook. The exhibit would include a panoramic display that identified all the peaks in the pass area that Fred Beckey climbed.

Below is table listing Beckey’s climbs and attempts in the Washington Pass area.

**Abbreviations**

AT: Attempt S: Succeeded U: Unsuccessful N: No attempt made on summit. FA: First Ascent   
NR: New Route

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Ascent Date** | **AT** | **Peak** | **Route** | **FA** | **NR** | **Climbing Partners** | **Grade** |
| 1940-08-19 | S | Cutthroat Peak | North Ridge |  | X | Jim Crooks, Ed Kennedy | Class 5 |
| 1942-06-16 | S | The Tomahawk | SE Route | X |  | Helmy Beckey | 4 |
| 1942-06-16 | S | The Fin | SE Route | X |  | Helmy Beckey | 4 |
| 1942-06-17 | S | Wallaby Peak | SW Ridge | X |  | Helmy Beckey, Walt Varney |  |
| 1942-06-17 | S | Half Moon | North Route | X |  | Helmy Beckey, Walt Varney | Class 5 |
| 1942-06-17 | S | Little Finger | South Face | X |  | Helmy Beckey | 4 |
| 1942-06-19 | S | South Early Winter Spire | South Arete |  | X | Helmy Beckey, Walt Varney | 5.4 |
| 1942-06-20 | S | Kangaroo Temple | NW Face | X |  | Helmy Beckey | II, 5.7 |
| 1942-06-21 | S | Big Kangaroo | West Route | X |  | Helmy Beckey, Walt Varney | 5.5 |
| 1942-06-21 | S | Mushroom Tower | NE Route | X |  | Helmy Beckey, Walt Varney | I, 5.10 |
| 1942-06-21 | S | Melted Tower | North Face/North Ridge | X |  | Helmy Beckey, Walt Varney | 5.7 |
| 1946-09-27 | S | Liberty Bell | SW Face (Beckey Route) | X |  | Jerry O'Neil, Charles Welsh | II, 5.7 |
| 1946-09-28 | S | Peak 7800, aka Blue Lake Peak, aka Wamihaspi Peak | NE Route |  |  | Jerry O'Neil, Charles Welsh | 4 |
| **Ascent Date** | **AT** | **Peak** | **Route** | **FA** | **NR** | **Climbing Partners** | **Grade** |
| 1946-09-28 | S | South Early Winter Spire | SW Couloir |  |  | Jerry O'Neil, Charles Welsh | 4 |
| 1946-09-29 | S | Big Snagtooth | SW Face | X |  | Jerry O'Neil, Charles Welsh |  |
| 1946-09-29 | S | Willow Tooth | NW Face | X |  | Jerry O'Neil, Charles Welsh | 4 |
| 1946-09-29 | S | Cedar Tooth | South Side | X |  | Jerry O'Neil, Charles Welsh | 4 |
| 1946-09-29 | S | Red Tooth | NW Face | X |  | Jerry O'Neil, Charles Welsh | Class 5 |
| 1952-05-31 | S | Bacchus Tower | South Face | X |  | Herb Staley | 3 |
| 1952-05-31 | S | Aphrodite Tower | South Face | X |  | Herb Staley |  |
| 1952-05-31 | S | Juno Tower | NW Route | X |  | Herb Staley | 3 |
| 1952-05-31 | S | Jupiter Tower | South Route | X |  | Herb Staley |  |
| 1952-05-31 | S | Ares Tower | NW Route | X |  | Herb Staley |  |
| 1952-05-31 | S | Silver Star Mtn-West Peak | Silver Star Glacier |  | X | Herb Staley, Joe Hieb, Don Wilde | I, 3 |
| 1952-06-01 | S | Silver Star Mtn-East Peak | Silver Star Glacier |  |  | Herb Staley, Joe Hieb, Don Wilde | I, 3 |
| 1952-06-17 | S | Chablis Spire | SE Route | X |  | Richard Berge, Wesley Grande | II, 5.6 |
| 1952-06-17 | U | Pernod Spire | NE Corner |  |  | Richard Berge, Wesley Grande | II, Class 5 |
| 1952-09-14 | S | Pernod Spire | NE Corner | X |  | Richard McGowan, Don Wilde | II, Class 5 |
| 1953-06 | S | Grey Tooth | South Side | X |  | Art Maki | 4 |
| 1953-06 | S | Split Tooth | NW Side | X |  | Art Maki | 4 |
| 1953-06 | S | Cleft Tooth | South Side | X |  | Art Maki | 4 |
| 1953-07-05 | S | Silver Horn | NW Route | X |  | Joe Hieb, Art Maki, John Parrott | 4 |
| 1953-08-17 | S | Burgundy Spire | North Face/North Ridge | X |  | Michael Hane, John Parrott | III, 5.8 |
| 1955-06-12 | S | Kangaroo Temple | SE Buttress |  | X | John Parrott, Louis Pottschmidt, Herb Staley | II, 5.8 |
| 1955-06-13 | S | Concord Tower | North Face | X |  | John Parrott | 5.6 |
| 1956-10-08 | S | Kangaroo Temple | South Face |  | X | Don Gordon | II, Class 5 |
| 1957-10-20 | S | Half Moon | South Face |  | X | Dave Collins, John Rupley | III, Class 5, aid |
| 1958-06-15 | S | Liberty Bell | West Face |  | X | John Rupley | III, Class 5 |
| 1958-08-31 | S | North Early Winter Spire | NE Face |  | X | Joe Hieb | II, Class 5 & aid |
| 1958-09-28 | S | Cutthroat Peak | South Buttress |  | X | Don Gordon | III, 5.8 |
| 1959-07-04 | S | Liberty Bell | North Face |  | X | Ed Cooper | II, 5.8 |
| 1965-03-24 | S | Silver Star Mtn-East Peak |  |  |  | Michael Borghoff | II, 3 |
| 1965-06-17 | S | North Early Winter Spire | West Face |  | X | Dave Beckstead | III, 5.9, A1 or 5.10d |
| 1965-09-11 | S | Half Moon | NW Face |  | X | Tom Stewart | III, Class 5 |
| **Ascent Date** | **AT** | **Peak** | **Route** | **FA** | **NR** | **Climbing Partners** | **Grade** |
| 1966-05-29 | S | Big Kangaroo | South Face |  | X | Dan Tate | III, 5.9 |
| 1966-05-30 | S | Kangaroo Temple | NE Face |  | X | Dan Tate | II, 5.6 |
| 1966-07-10 | S | South Early Winter Spire | West Face |  | X | Jim Madsen | III, 5.8 & aid or 5.10 |
| 1967-07-06 | S | Liberty Bell | Serpentine Crack |  | X | Doug Leen, David Wagner | III, 5.10, aid |
| 1968-07-29 | S | South Early Winter Spire | East Buttress Direct |  | X | Doug Leen | IV, 5.9, A1 or 5.11 |
| 1971-10-07 | S | Kangaroo Temple | East Face |  | X | Tom Nephew | III, 5.8 |
| 1986-05 | S | Liberty Bell | Beckey Route (SW Face) |  |  | Sybil | II, 5.7 |
| 1986-09-05 | S | Silver Star Mtn-East Peak | NE Spur & East Ridge |  | X | Dave Beckstead | III, 5.8 |
| 1988-06 | S | Liberty Bell | Liberty Crack |  |  | Jim Nelson, Bill Liddell | V, 5.9, A2 |
| 2006-10 | S | South Early Winter Spire | South Arete |  |  | Jim Nelson, Dave Whitlaw | II, 5.4 |
| 2012-07 | N | North Early Winter Spire | West Face |  |  | Adam Baylor, Mark Kroese | III, 5.9, A1 or 5.10d |

Below is a table which summarizes Beckey’s climbing activities in the Washington Pass area.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Year** | **# Trips** | **Climbs** | **Succeeded** | **FA** | **NR** |
| 1940 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| 1941 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 1942 | 1 | 10 | 10 | 9 | 1 |
| 1946 | 1 | 7 | 7 | 5 | 0 |
| 1952 | 3 | 10 | 9 | 7 | 1 |
| 1953 | 3 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 0 |
| 1955 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 1 |
| 1956 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| 1957 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| 1958 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 0 | 3 |
| 1959 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| 1965 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 0 | 2 |
| 1966 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 0 | 3 |
| 1967 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| 1968 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| 1971 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| 1986 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 1 |
| 1988 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| 2006 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| 2012 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| **Totals** | **30** | **54** | **53** | **27** | **19** |

He climbed 34 different peaks in the Washington Pass area, 27 of which were first ascents. A staggering 87% of Beckey’s successful climbs in the Washington Pass area were either a first ascent or a new route.

Long live the king of Washington Pass.

Author: Dave Creeden