

border, lying between the Wasatch line and the line of the Front Range, is distinctively a *Rocky Summit area*, and peculiar to the United States portion of the chain. A *cordillera* is a combination of mountain chains.

The Coast Cordillera within about 150 miles of the coast includes the Sierra Nevada and Cascade ranges and a range in continuation in British Columbia, which constitute together a Sierra Chain, and have heights equal to those of the Rocky Mountain summit, and a Coast Chain 2000 to 4000 feet high in California, which is continued in the Vancouver Range of British America, — 484 feet high in one Vancouver peak, — and, beyond the islands of the coast, in the lofty Fairweather and St. Elias line of heights. On the terms *range*, *system*, *chain*, *cordillera*, etc., see further, page 389.

PLATEAUS. — A plateau is an extensive elevated region of flat or hilly surface, sometimes intersected by ranges of mountains. Any extensive range of generally flat country that is over a thousand feet in altitude is called a plateau. It may lie along the course of a mountain chain, or occupy a wide region between distant chains. The high land that forms the southern half of New York is generally 1500 to 2000 feet high, and reaching an elevation of more than 4000 feet in the Catskills, is the northern part of a plateau which southward extends through Pennsylvania to Tennessee, and in the latter region constitutes the Cumberland Table-land. It is an example of a *marginal* plateau, connected in origin with a mountain range, — that of the Appalachian Mountains, — and constituting its outer margin. The channeling action of running water has mostly obliterated the plateau character, and converted the region into a group of peaks, ridges, and valleys. In this way high plateaus have often been sculptured into mountain-like forms. The “high plateaus” of southern Utah, which range in height from 7000 to 9500 feet, are properly a marginal appendage to the Wasatch Range, as their elevation was connected with that attending the making of these mountains.

Other plateaus are *intermont* plateaus. They occupy the interval between mountain ranges, chains, or cordilleras, and are the highest and largest of plateaus. Between the Rocky and Sierra cordilleras a broad plateau extends from Mexico northwestward through British America. It is mostly from 3000 to 5000 feet in altitude, but the Columbia River and the Colorado have each cut a way through the Sierra Chain and reduced the level by denudation. There are many high ridges in the plateau, parallel in course, or nearly so, to the mountain ranges of the sides, and in part of Oregon and of British Columbia ridges occupy the whole breadth; but in general the plateau features are well defined.

The portion of the plateau between the Colorado and Columbia rivers is called the Great Basin. It has the Great Salt Lake and the Wasatch Mountains on the east, and the Sierra Nevada and Cascade Mountains on the west, and in this part it is nearly 500 miles wide. Its surface is mostly 4000 to 5000 feet above tide level; but although so high, it has no outside drainage. Its streams are short, and dry up over arid saline plains or end in saline lakes. Great Salt Lake, in Utah, is one of these lakes near its eastern