

1921

# Mount Katahdin State Park: An Address Given

Percival Proctor Baxter

Follow this and additional works at: [https://digicom.bpl.lib.me.us/books\\_pubs](https://digicom.bpl.lib.me.us/books_pubs)

---

## Recommended Citation

Baxter, Percival Proctor, "Mount Katahdin State Park: An Address Given" (1921). *Books and Publications*. 77.  
[https://digicom.bpl.lib.me.us/books\\_pubs/77](https://digicom.bpl.lib.me.us/books_pubs/77)

This Book is brought to you for free and open access by the Special Collections at Bangor Community: Digital Commons@bpl. It has been accepted for inclusion in Books and Publications by an authorized administrator of Bangor Community: Digital Commons@bpl. For more information, please contact [ccoombs@bpl.lib.me.us](mailto:ccoombs@bpl.lib.me.us).

974  
.12  
.32

*Mount Katahdin State Park*

AN ADDRESS GIVEN BY

Hon. Percival P. Baxter of Portland

PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE

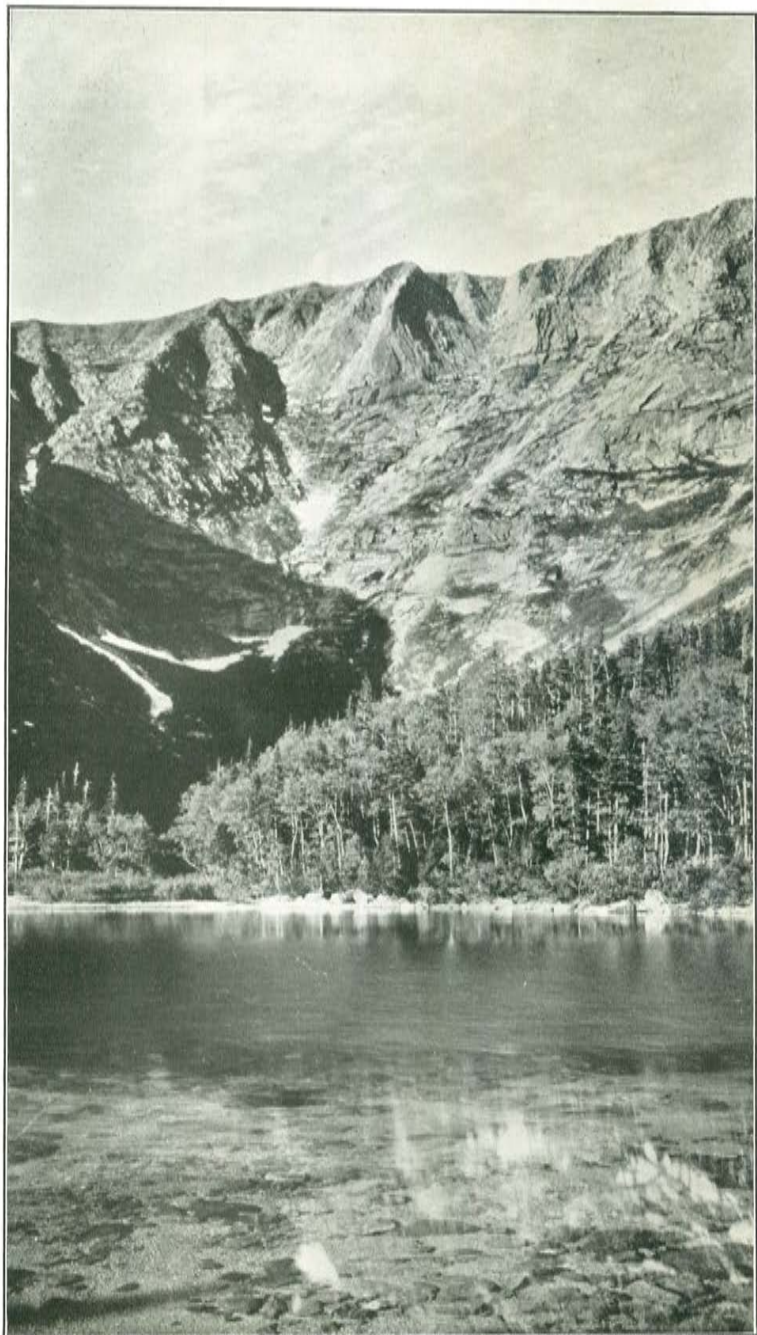
At the Annual Meeting of the  
Maine Sportsmen's Fish and Game Association

Hall of Representatives, State Capitol  
Augusta, Maine



January 27, 1921

Bangor Public Library



*Copyright. By permission of William F. Dawson.*

MT. KATAHDIN—CHIMNEY POND AND SOUTH BASIN

# *Mount Katahdin State Park*

AN ADDRESS GIVEN BY

Hon. Percival P. Baxter of Portland

PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE

At the Annual Meeting of the  
Maine Sportsmen's Fish and Game Association

Hall of Representatives, State Capitol  
Augusta, Maine



January 27, 1921

In Senate, January 28, 1921.

Ordered, that twenty-five hundred copies of the address of the President of the Senate relative to the Mt. Katahdin Park, delivered before the meeting of the Maine Sportmen's Fish and Game Association, be printed for the use of the Senate.

Read and passed.

L. ERNEST THORNTON, Secretary.

ADONAS  
CLUB  
YHABLL  
EM 208KAS



*Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen:*

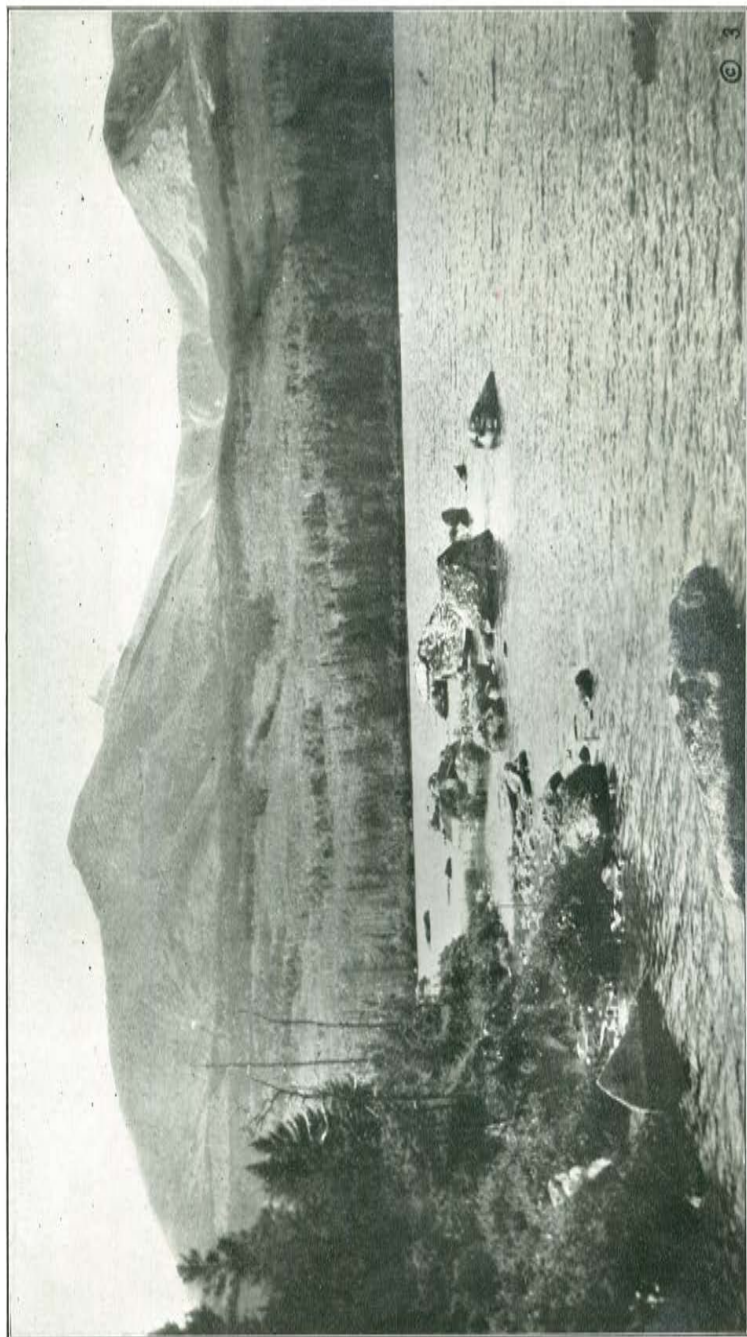
When your Committee invited me to appear before you and speak upon the proposed Mount Katahdin State Park, I accepted the invitation with pleasure, for I well knew there was no organization in our State to whom this project would appeal with more force than to the Maine Sportsmen's Fish and Game Association. You know the out-of-doors; you study the hillsides, the valleys, and the wild life of the woods, and you, of all our citizens, appreciate that spiritual, as well as physical, benefits are to be derived from a close contact with nature.

Mount Katahdin is located in the very heart of the great timberlands of Maine, the "wild lands" as they usually are called, and in view of this it is fitting that in my remarks I should outline to you the history of these wild lands, in which we are now beginning to take an interest. The history of these lands is fascinating. It is a story of violent speculation in which fortunes were lost and men's reputations ruined, and in which fortunes were won and great timber-owning families were established, and made wealthy for generations to come. It is a story of intrigue and corruption, where powerful and selfish men often took that to which they had no right, from those too weak to defend themselves and their property. It is a story in which the rights of the people in a princely inheritance were given away or bartered for a song, for the folly of which future generations forever will pay.

There are today in Maine about 14,000,000 acres

of timberlands of which 9,100,000 comprise the so-called "wild lands" which are situated in unorganized townships and in plantations. The greater part of these lands was once the property of the people of this State, and, had our forefathers handed down to us this great domain, what a transformation would have been wrought in the life and institutions of our State!

In the early years these lands were sold for trifling sums per acre to pay current expenses of the State Government, to build roads, to pay ministers of the gospel, and in 1828, twelve townships were sold in order to raise funds with which to build the State House. From 1836 to 1839 these lands were sold by the State so freely that no taxes were levied, because a sufficient number of townships were disposed of to provide the revenue necessary for State purposes. In 1793 the State sold the so-called Bingham lands, comprising 2,100,000 acres, and the price paid for them was twelve and one-half cents per acre. As late as the year 1813 the people of the State of Maine owned more than 11,000,000 acres of the finest timberland. The final act in this tragedy occurred in 1868, only 53 years ago, and this was the crowning calamity of all. This transaction has been known as the "State Steal." The Legislature of that year passed an act to "aid in the construction of the European and North American Railway" and for the munificent consideration of "one dollar paid by said Railway Company," granted to that Company "all the timber and lands belonging to the State and situated upon the waters of the Penobscot and St. John rivers to be used by said Company to aid in the construction of its contemplated line of railway," which was to provide



Copyright. By permission of William F. Dawson.

MT. KATAHDIN FROM SANDY STREAM POND



means for the defense of the Northeastern frontier. In this deed it is recited that about 1,000,000 acres of land "more or less" are conveyed to the railway "for the purpose named in the act." A careful estimate shows that about 2,700,000 acres were given away by that deed, which the Governor of the State signed. The railroad, as a matter of fact, was constructed for a distance of about twelve miles, but the deed had been signed, sealed and delivered, and thus ended the rights of the people in all that was left to them of a great inheritance.

These facts are of the past; they are incidents of a by-gone day, and regrets are fruitless. Today it is necessary for us to face the situation as it now exists, so that we may plan to build for future generations better than our ancestors built for us. Today the State of Maine, out of this vast area of millions of acres of timberland, is owner of but the paltry amount of 330,837 acres. This land is situated in what is called the "Public Lots" scattered all over the forest area.

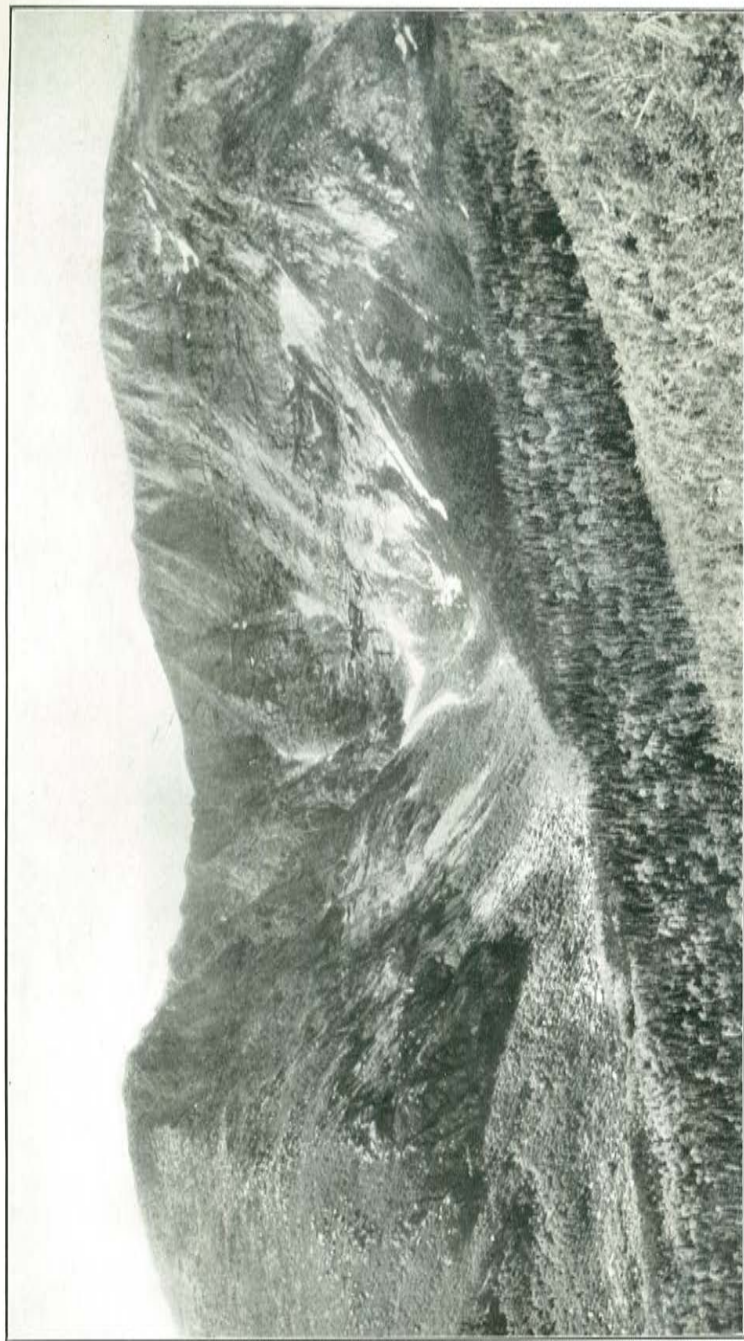
The timberlands of Maine are fast passing into the control of a few large corporations and individual holdings. One company today owns more than 1,000,000 acres of land, and as there are about 19,000,000 acres in the entire State, this great company owns one-nineteenth of the whole State of Maine. Thirty-one timberland ownerships own 5,800,000 acres in Maine, which comprise 30% of the entire acreage of the State, or 64% of all the wild lands of the State. This concentration of ownership prevails in other New England States, for the United States authorities show that fifteen ownerships in Maine, New Hampshire and Vermont own more than 15,500,000 acres of timberlands, or

one-fourth of the combined forest areas in those three states. These large ownerships create a great monopoly, which controls prices, dictates terms to the owners of small areas, stifles competition, and at times dominates State legislation by means of their arrogant lobbies. The powerful business and political connections of these great corporations, together with their undoubted control of the supply and distribution of news print paper, gives them a position of extraordinary influence over many of the activities of our State.

Having in mind the fact that the people of Maine once owned these great areas of timberland, is it not fitting that, upon payment of a fair price therefor, the grandest and most beautiful portion of all this great area which the people of the State once possessed, should again become their property?

The Mount Katahdin National Park project was under consideration by Congress for some years. Ex-Congressman Frank E. Guernsey of Dover when a member of the National House, introduced an act providing for the creation of a Federal Forest Reserve in the Katahdin region, but this failed of passage. In 1919 I introduced into the State Legislature an act establishing a State Park in the Katahdin region. I believed that the State of Maine should establish the policy of acquiring waste and burned-over timberlands, in order to make a beginning toward maintaining and increasing the supply of timber and pulp, and in order to provide a recreation ground in the most picturesque region of the State. If this policy is established and continued, the State in the years to come will acquire large areas of lands which are now practically worthless, but which in the future will yield a





*Copyright. By permission of William F. Dawson.*

MT. KATAHDIN—GREAT BASIN

harvest that will bring to the State an annual income on the investment. This land can be bought at a low price today, as much of it is of little use to its owners, and the State can afford to carry it until it is ready to be cut in a proper and scientific manner. This purchase by the State will prove a profitable investment, and a direct income will be derived from it when the crop of timber is harvested, while an indirect income will be obtained from the tourist travel that is bound to come to these forest areas if this land is purchased in mountainous and rugged regions, such as that of Katahdin. In addition to these advantages, protection will be afforded to the sources of the waterpowers of the State.

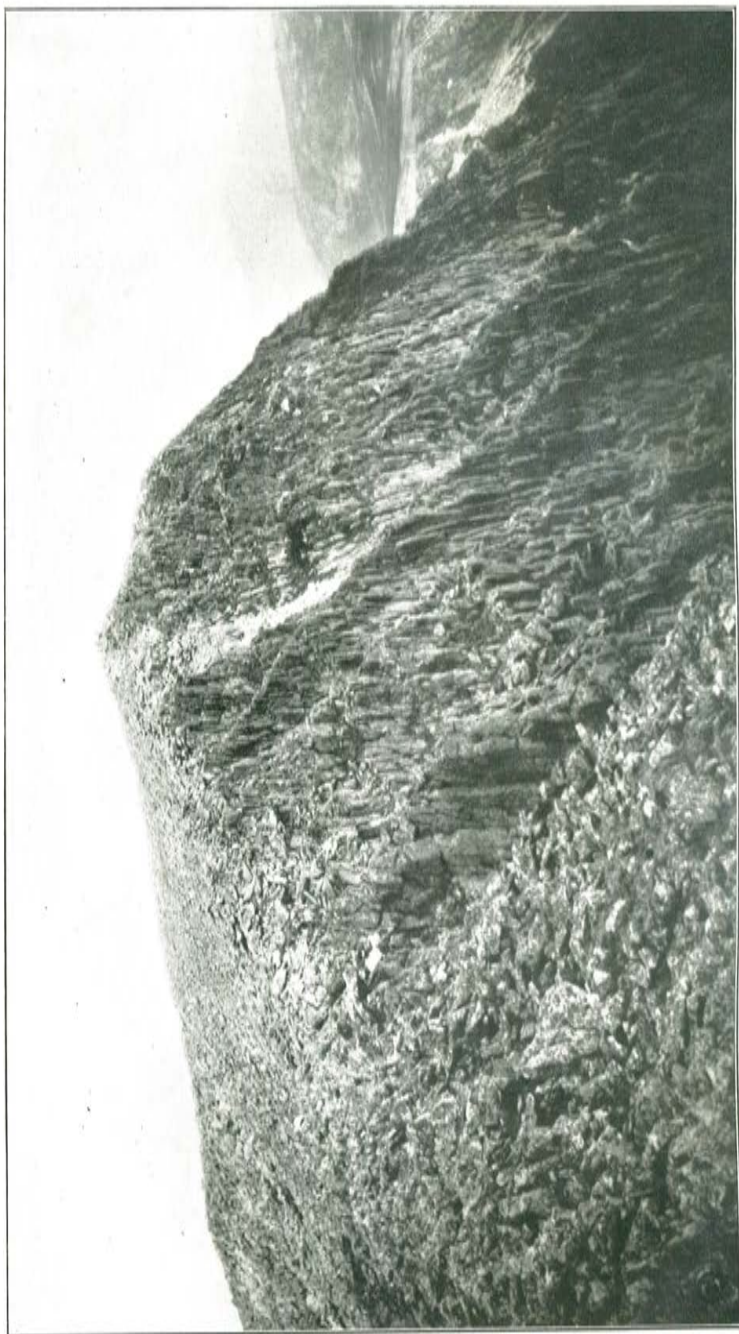
The policy of the State's acquiring these lands is approved by both Federal and State authorities. Notwithstanding today's tendency to decry public ownership, a cry that is often raised by those who seek to perpetuate their long-standing private ownership of natural resources, Mr. H. S. Graves, the Chief Forester of the Federal Government, says: "The States should acquire large forest tracts," and Hon. Forrest H. Colby, Forest Commissioner of this State, a practical forester of wide experience, says: "Federal or State ownership of timberlands particularly of cut-over and neglected lands is to be desired and in a great measure will help to insure a future supply of lumber." Maine with every opportunity and with all conditions favoring such a policy, has done nothing while other states have made splendid beginnings. New York has acquired 2,000,000 acres of timberland and thus controls 60% of the available pulpwood in that state. Pennsylvania has bought 1,000,000 acres, while under the Weeks Act 1,800,000 acres have been purchased



by the United States at an average price of \$5.26 per acre. The Federal Government considers these purchases a good investment and an annual income already is assured from them. Now is the time to establish this policy in Maine, and a trip to the Mountain will convince even the most skeptical. The value of timberlands is increasing constantly, while the owners are becoming more reluctant to sell. In a short time the land we can buy today will be beyond our reach, and Maine will have lost its opportunity. The Great Northern Paper Company was responsible for the defeat of the 1919 act, but that act like many worthy projects, once defeated comes back to the 1921 Legislature with renewed vigor, with a strong and growing public sentiment behind it, and with a fair prospect that those who caused its defeat before may not be able to do so again.

To most people Mount Katahdin is but a name. To those who have both seen and climbed the Mountain it is a wonderful reality, and the memories of a trip to its summit remain vivid through the years. At present the great Mountain, weather-beaten by time and scarred by the avalanche, is almost inaccessible, the journey entailing expense, hardship and discomfort. The grandeur of the Mountain, its precipitous slopes, its massive cliffs, unusual formation and wonderful coloring cannot be surpassed or even equalled by any mountain east of the Mississippi river. Katahdin rises abruptly from the plain to the height of 5,273 feet, and, without foothills to detract from its solitary dignity, stands alone, a grim gray tower overlooking the surrounding country for hundreds of miles. It is small wonder that

Sea level 5,267



*Copyright. By permission of William F. Dawson.*

MT. KATAHDIN, MAIN SUMMIT

the aboriginal Indians believed it to be the home of the spirits of wind, storm and thunder.

The scenery of the White Mountains in New Hampshire is tame and ordinary when compared with that of Mount Katahdin and the range beyond, and Katahdin is not unworthy of a place among the great mountains of the world. To reach the base requires a tedious tramp of from fifty to sixty miles over old and abandoned tote-roads, through fords and swamps, with but an occasional well defined path leading over pleasant ridges covered with great trees, that give welcome shade to the weary traveler. At best it requires from six to seven days of steady walking to make the trip from civilization to the Peak and return. There are several approaches to the Mountain, but the most picturesque is that which leads from the East into the South Basin, where is located Chimney Pond, a beautiful sheet of water, which, among ponds, is as unique in its coloring and setting as Katahdin is among its sister mountains. This pond is surrounded on the South and West by a grand amphitheatre of perpendicular cliffs rising from 1500 to 2000 feet. The water in this remarkable pond is so clear and cold that fish cannot live in it, and it is as uninhabited as the salt brine of the Dead Sea. Its surface mirrors the ever-changing aspects of the clouds and the multi-colored cliffs towering around it. These cliffs are gray, blue, pink, or brown, according as the atmosphere changes from hour to hour, or as the position of the sun is altered.

By day man stands spellbound in that solitude where man himself is an atom at the base of one of nature's noblest creations; by night he is inspired by the majesty of the moon as it rises and



moves westward in a stately curve over the serrated peaks, which throw themselves up into the deep blue of the night as though to join the company of the stars.

The climb to Pamola Peak by a rough trail through stunted pine, over great granite boulders that lie spilled in endless drifts on the side of the Mountain, up the steep slope to the summit, down into the "Chimney" where the rush of air threatens to tear one's feeble grasp from the cliffs to which one clings, and then across the treacherous "Knife Edge" to Mountain peak, is both difficult and dangerous.

The passage of the Knife Edge requires a cool head and sure footing, and I am not ashamed to admit that I gladly availed myself of the friendly and reassuring hand of my companion, as I crept gingerly over the rough piles of loose and broken rock. On every hand were countless marks of the lightning's work, which looked like the spattering of lead from bullets that had struck upon the stone leaving a grayish film surrounded by the shattered rock. Lightning has bombarded this Mountain top for ages, but Katahdin, unconquered and unafraid, still holds aloft its noble head.

Here man has provided none of those aids to mountain climbing which one finds conveniently placed in the difficult passes of the Alps, or in some portions of the Rockies. On Monument Peak is heaped up a pile of stones to mark the summit, in the crevices of which is kept a copper box, and those who have the courage and strength to attain that peak are supposed to deposit their names in the box, as proof that at last they are numbered among those genuine mountain climbers who possessed



the endurance to climb the highest and the roughest mountain in New England.

The great plateau extends for miles from the South Peak to the North Peak. It is wind-swept and strewn with huge granite boulders that seem to have been shaken from the clouds by a giant hand. It is covered in places with a dense growth of knee-high scrub spruce and pine, through which it is impossible for man to pass. This plateau once was the home of a large herd of caribou, all of which were killed or driven northward by the relentless hunter. I have talked with woodsmen who distinctly remember these strange animals as they grazed over this elevated feeding ground, or stood on the edge of the Mountain looking over into the great space beyond.

There is a growth of moss and small plants in places, that gives this area the appearance of the sub-Arctic tundra. Standing here one sees the Laurentian Mountains on the north bordering the St. Lawrence River, and the Atlantic Ocean on the south. At one's feet is a panorama of endless forest, of great lakes that melt away into the distant haze, countless ponds and winding streams with their white markings of falls and rapids, while the dark evergreen growth, here and there outlined by the lighter growth of the hardwoods, extends in all directions. The wilderness of the forest seems endless.

It is interesting to know that on this tableland are springs of water flowing out from the rocks at the height of 5000 feet above the surrounding country, and on the hottest day in summer the water is cool and refreshing. Here in August, 1920, in the shade of a huge boulder and by the side of these

running springs, gathered a little group of tired men, among whom were Charles P. Barnes, Speaker of the Maine House of Representatives, Arthur G. Staples and Sam E. Connor of the Lewiston Journal, Willis E. Parsons, Commissioner of Inland Fish and Game, Burton W. Howe of Patten, Nathaniel C. Howe of Ashland, Charles A. Fogg of Houlton, George A. Houghton of Bangor, and the writer of this address, who discussed the Mount Katahdin Park from every angle and pledged their support to the cause.

In 1903 a huge forest fire, the most destructive in the history of the State, destroyed about 270,000 acres in this mountain region. Of this area 115,000 acres were surveyed recently by the United States Government and it is in this area that Mount Katahdin Park is to be located. Today the conditions for the establishment of this park are ideal. The cost of the land should be low, as its value for timber purposes is trifling. The park is in the very heart of the mountain where the scenery is the grandest and most varied. Whatever timber there is on the slopes of the mountain is so inaccessible as to make it valueless, for its removal is impossible; while at the base of the mountain in one section of the park is a new growth of poplar, birch and other woods, which in a few years will become of value, and when properly harvested will furnish an income to the State. The land will be worth to the State, as land only, all that it costs and will prove a good investment. Unlike certain great institutions of the State that are a constant drain upon its resources with their ever-increasing demands, this project will prove self-sustaining, and of increasing value in the passing years.



*Copyright. By permission Call Studio, Dexter, Maine.*

CLIMBING ABOL SLIDE



The proposed park covers an area of 57,232 acres and comprises the whole of Mount Katahdin, and Katahdin Lake, of itself one of the most beautiful of all Maine's lakes, and which abounds with trout. The boundaries of the park can be extended later if succeeding legislatures deem such extension advisable. This park will prove a great attraction, not only to the people of Maine who will frequent it, but also to those who come from without our State to enjoy the free life of the out of doors. The park will bring health and recreation to those who journey there, and the wild life of the woods will find refuge from their pursuers, for the park will be made a bird and game sanctuary for the protection of its forest inhabitants. Roads, trails, and camps will be built in the most favored locations, and the camps will be rented for nominal sums to those who wish to use them. For those who want hard mountain climbing, trails will be laid out over difficult routes to the top of the mountain, while easier trails will be provided for those who do not desire to make the supreme effort. Katahdin then will become a great recreation center for those who seek the woods that are unspoiled by fashionable hotels with liveried attendants, or by costly club houses frequented by the devotees of tennis and golf.

The establishment of this park is not connected with party politics, but the Republican platform of 1920 endorsed it, and the Democrats of the same year favored State ownership of burned-over and denuded timberlands. Governor Parkhurst in his inaugural message to the Legislature stamped it with his approval; your Fish and Game Association has adopted resolutions supporting it, and all the



while public sentiment is rapidly being crystalized in its favor.

Maine is famous for its 2500 miles of seacoast, with its countless islands, for its myriad lakes and ponds, and for its forests and rivers, but Mount Katahdin Park will be the State's crowning glory, a worthy memorial to commemorate the end of the first and the beginning of the second century of Maine's statehood. This park will prove a blessing to those who follow us, and they will see that we built for them more wisely than our forefathers did for us. Shall any great timberland or paper-making corporation, or group of such corporations, themselves the owners of millions of acres of Maine forests, say to the People of this State, "You shall not have Mount Katahdin, either as a memorial of your past or as a heritage for your future?"

1/2