

1929

# Atop Katahdin

Bangor & Aroostook Railroad

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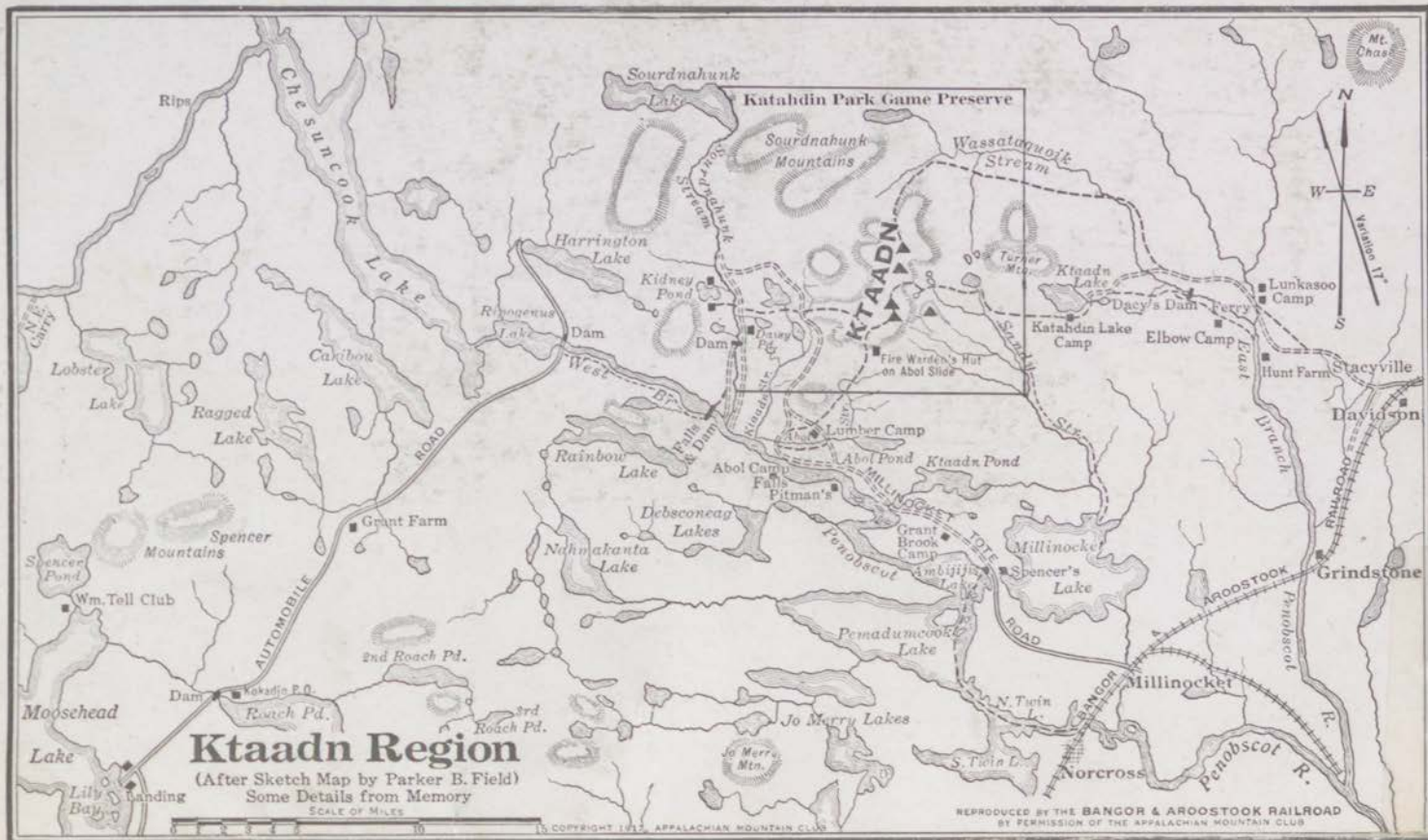
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# Atop Katahdin



Bangor &  
AROOSTOOK  
Railroad



Katahdin Park Game Preserve:—Established by Maine Fish & Game Commissioner on petition June 24, 1921, extended August 1, 1921 and March 31, 1922; approximately 12 miles square; 90,000 acres. All hunting prohibited for four years from May 1, 1922. It is hoped to make this big game sanctuary permanent by act of Legislature.



# Atop Katahdin



The  
Vacation  
Attractions  
offered  
by  
Maine's  
Famous  
Mountain Peak



On the Chimney Pond Trail, Mt. Katahdin

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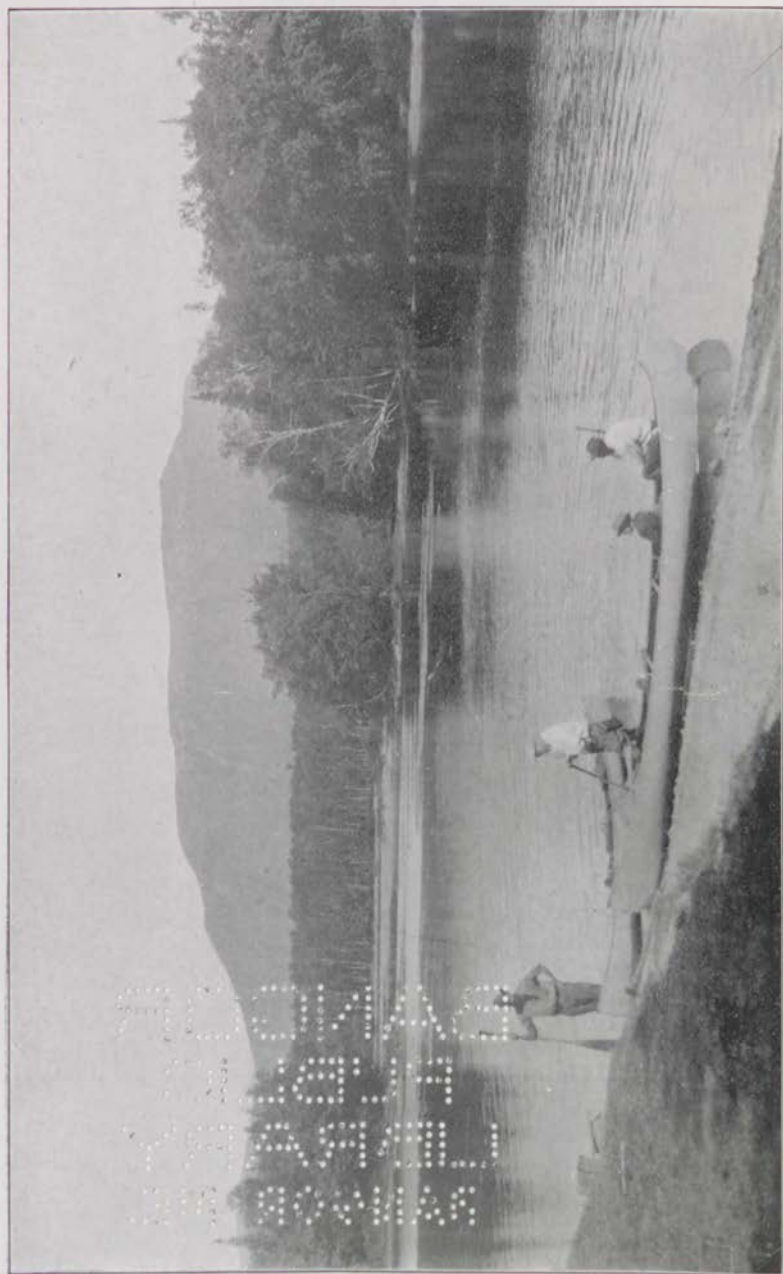


Photo by Call Studio, Dexter, Me.

Mc. Katakhdia from the Katakhdia View Camps on the West Branch of the Penobscot River. A Favorite View with Canoeists.

# Mount Katahdin

## *Facts at a Glance*

*Sund*

Mount Katahdin is 5,273 feet above sea level.

Mount Katahdin is one of the three highest mountains east of the Rockies. *over a score of mts. in N. Carolina are over 6000 ft. high*

Mount Katahdin is reached by the Bangor and Aroostook railroad from Norcross and Stacyville stations.

Mount Katahdin also can be reached by the Bangor and Aroostook railroad to Greenville, thence overland to the Penobscot's West Branch and down the West Branch to Abol stream 12 miles below Ripogenus. Still another route is from Ripogenus dam by road to Harrington Lake; across the lake to Kidney Pond and thence by the Hunt Trail to Mt. Katahdin.

Mount Katahdin has attractions that provide a program for a prolonged stay by the enthusiast. The minimum trip is two days, a day in the ascent, overnight on the mountain and return the second day. The Mt. Katahdin country, the vast expanse over which Katahdin dominates, is one of the outstanding sections of the Maine woods for fishing and hunting and canoeing and for general vacation pleasures.

Mount Katahdin offers opportunities for exceptional sport for the devotee of mountain climbing. Its variety of approaches and routes offer relatively easy traveling or some sporty scrambling, depending upon choice of the mountaineer planning to make the ascent.



Photo by J. Earle Bacon

Snow-Covered Mt. Katahdin From Abol Pond. A Striking Contrast with the Katahdin of the Canoeing Season.

# Mount Katahdin

## *How To Get There*

**M**OUNT KATAHDIN is the o'ertopping feature of the state of Maine which stands conspicuously among the states because of its wealth of natural attractions. It is the center of a vast forest expanse which stretches forth from the mountain's base, and Katahdin's domain is rich in lakes and streams and lesser heights. Katahdin, or Ktaadn as the mountain's name sounds in the pronunciation of the Indian dialects, means "the greatest mountain," and no more appropriate title could be given it.

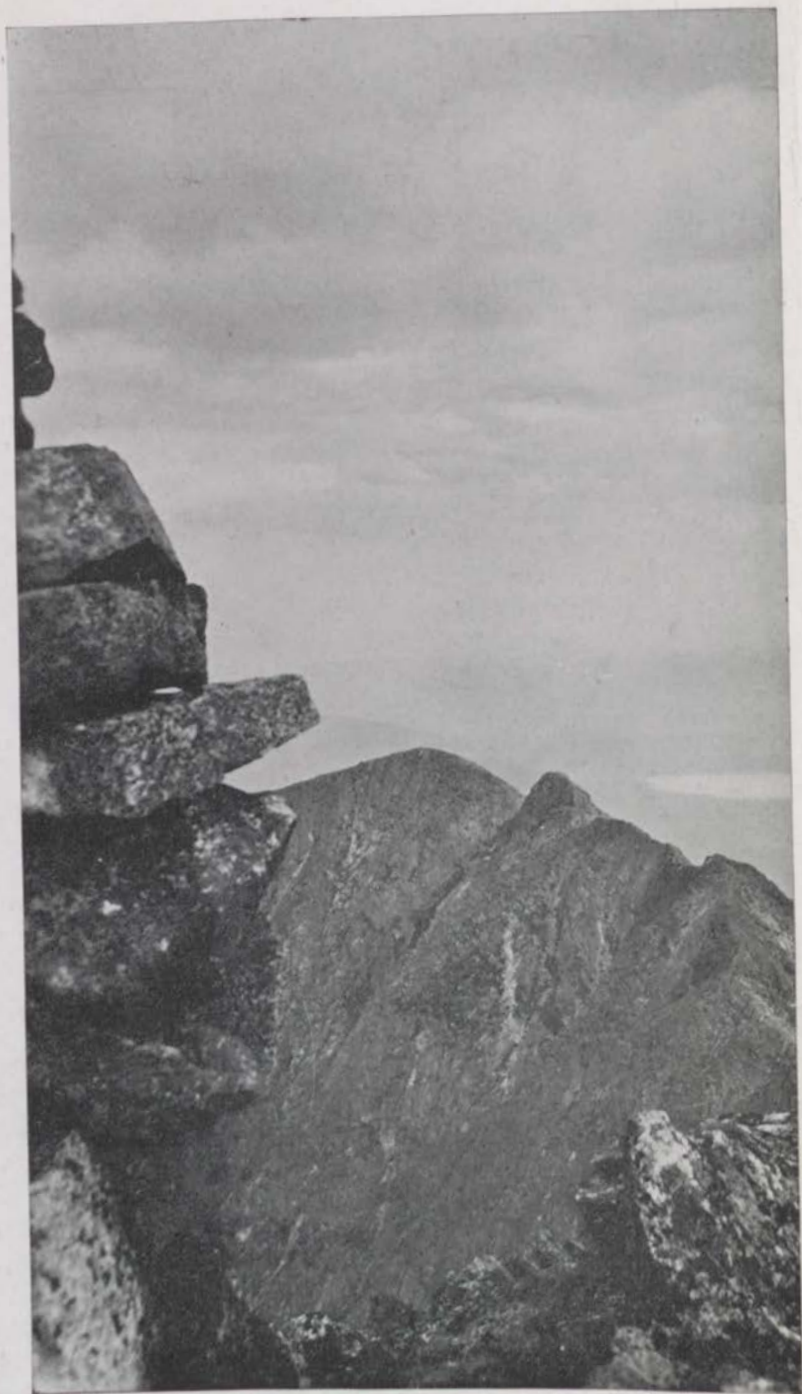
The shortest route for an ascent of Mt. Katahdin is the Abol Slide Trail. This leads in from Abol Stream, which can be reached by the canoe route down the West Branch, Abol Stream being about twelve miles below Ripogenus. If the start is from Norcross, the approach is by way of North Twin, Pemadumcook and Ambajejus lakes, and thence up the West Branch to Abol Stream.

Leaving the canoe at Abol Stream, the trail leads up the mountain. The distance from the West Branch, where canoes are left, is a little less than six miles, while to reach the top of the slide is another mile and a half, and a good eight miles to the plateau. The distance from the West Branch to South Peaks is about nine miles.

Hunt's Trail is another popular route. For this ascent the canoes are left at the mouth of Sourdnahunk Stream, two miles above Abol Stream, and then the tote-road is taken to York's Camp on Daisy Pond, a distance of four miles, or to Kidney Pond Camps, conducted by Bradeen & Clifford, on Kidney Pond. From Kidney Pond Camps to the table-land the distance is about six miles and from York's it is a mile less. The distance from Sourdnahunk Stream to the plateau is about eleven miles, and two miles brings the climber to Katahdin's summit.

The third route for ascending Katahdin is by the way of Stacyville. This route gives opportunity for some of the finest and also sportiest mountain climbing this side of the Rockies. The trip from Chimney Pond to Pamola, by way of the Knife Edge, for instance, is one of the very best of mountain-climbing stunts.





Along the Knife Edge on Mt. Katahdin, the Crossing of Which Is Admittedly One of the Sportiest Mountain-Climbing Feats to Be Had East of the Rockies.

# Maine's Highest Climb

## *Katahdin's Twin Peaks*

By LeRoy Jeffers, F. R. G. S.

**A**MONG the leading peaks east of the Rockies, Mount Katahdin remained the only one which I had not climbed. Its isolation in the Maine wilderness has prevented its being frequently visited, and has hindered the attempts made to arouse public interest in its preservation as a national or a State park. No accurate map exists of the mountain and its approaches, and one who would view its great eastern cliffs must travel afoot with sleeping bag and provisions. Surrounded by forests diversified by many lakes and streams, the great mass of Katahdin is crowned by four principal summits, of which the two southern are the highest—West Peak 5,473 feet, and East Peak 5,260 feet.

Desiring to view the great eastern cliffs of the mountain, which involves the longest trip across country of any approach, I left the Bangor and Aroostook Railroad at Stacyville at dusk on the last day of July. Shouldering a 25 pound sleeping bag and pack I walked for some distance along the old tote road which penetrates the forest. It had been raining frequently for days, and the mud holes and boulders were difficult to avoid in the darkness, so I finally crawled into my bag and waited for morning. Although the material was new and guaranteed rainproof it had evidently not been tested in the Maine woods, for it failed to keep out the moisture.

About 4 A. M. I started for Metagama on the east branch of the Penobscot, where I crossed the river in a canoe. Thence my way was through the dripping woods. I was accompanied by swarms of mosquitoes. Unfortunately the route to Katahdin is not marked by signs to assist one. Guides are available for that purpose. At an abandoned camp the tote road turns from the stream and goes up hill to a deserted lumber camp. Here I explored every lead before returning to find that the hidden trail continued through bushes along the stream. Turning at last toward the mountain I followed a recent forest trail, marked only by an occasional blaze, from which there is a fine



Photo by J. Earle Bacon

Looking Across the Snow Barrens, Into Mt. Katahdin's Great Basin, Five Miles Away.

glimpse of distant Katahdin. This cut-off trail finally joined the overgrown tote road which reaches Katahdin Pond. Crossing the dam to the southern side of the lake I reached Cushman's Camp and kept on to Sandy Stream Pond, about twenty-eight miles from Stacyville, where I spent the night.

Over carpets of scarlet bunch berries and low bush blueberries and through thickets of ripe raspberries, I found my way upward into the heart of the mountain. On its eastern side there are two basins, the southernmost of Great Basin being the most interesting. Tracks of moose and deer were plentiful, and further up there were tangles of spruce and pink laurel. I finally reached Chimney Pond where the Appalachian Club had camped in 1916. Here is a fine glacial basin with a semicircle of rugged cliffs rising abruptly above the water for 2,300 feet to the summit of the main peak. One may ascend Pamola Peak on the left by as steep a route as he chooses and traverse the Knife Edge to Katahdin, which affords as good a climb as anything east of Colorado. Or one may slowly work his way over the tops of thick spruce and along the boulders of a dried-up brook to the Saddle Slide, where there is a forty-five degree slope of 800 feet to the saddle and a mile of gradual ascent to the highest peak.

From the summits of the two highest peaks of Katahdin I viewed a vast expanse of forest in every direction, dotted with lakes as far as the eye could reach. To the southwest lay Moosehead Lake, with its many arms, while the smoke of a train at Greenville, on its southern shore, marked the distant point where I was to reach the railway. From the summit of the second peak I descended the tumbled granite slope and traversed toward the Abol trail, which leads south for twenty-five miles to Millinocket. Deciding to leave the mountain at its western extremity I crossed the very extensive tableland and started down the Hunt trail, which clings to a rugged spur and offers views into the depths on either side. There is good exercise in winding around, over and beneath the gigantic boulders, but a lingering cloud of black flies does not add to one's enjoyment. Down through thick spruces, where it is just possible to pass, and then to the south along the slope, this romantic trail at last joins an abandoned spur of the Millinocket tote road.



I wished to reach York's Camp on Daisy Pond, and from my sketch map the trail appeared to go more to the west. Fearing that I might have passed a direct route to camp, I reascended the mountain for some distance to survey the country. Finding no other way I returned to the road, where I slept that night.

In the morning a steadily increasing rain forced me on, and, reaching the main tote road, I realized at once that I was on the right route. In a dismantled cabin occupied by a porcupine, who was chewing up the floor, I built a fire to dry off; but the hot, old stove pipe collapsed into rust in my arms, so I again hit the trail. At Daisy Pond one should cross to camp in a canoe, but, failing to get a response to my call, I followed the shore over almost impassable windfalls. It is about thirteen miles from York's to Ripogenus Dam, where one may secure transportation to Lily Bay on Moosehead Lake. Unfortunately there is no direct trail, and one must follow two sides of a triangle. Not long after leaving camp I crossed the dam over the Sourdnaunk, which was in a very bad state of repair, and then followed the stream toward its junction with the Penobscot. Fine, white birches towering above the spruces enlivened the way. Crossing to the west branch of the Penobscot, I came to the dam which affords the only means of reaching the west bank of the river and my destination at Ripogenus.

Instead of a pathway across the dam I was greeted by a volume of water, which rushed and foamed with great velocity and depth across its entire length. I went up stream a couple of miles to see if there was other means of crossing, and then returned to the dam. A floating log boom extended diagonally from the shore above to the central gate of the dam, and another boom appeared to reach the opposite shore in like manner from the watergate. Walking out on the logs, I climbed over the gate and stood facing a break in the other boom of twelve or fifteen feet, from which the logs had been carried away by the great force of the current.

It was probably thirty-five miles by trail to Millinocket, and my feet were already blistered, as it was my first hike of the season. I must make Ripogenus that night if it was humanly possible. Stretching from the top of the watergate to the end of the boom was a single rope that sagged close to the water. It was useless to hesitate, and no one was within miles to assist

me. Removing my clothing, I rolled it in my sleeping bag, which was secured by a pack strap. Fastening the strap around the rope I started the pack downward, hoping to shake it across to the boom. In spite of my efforts it sagged in mid-stream, rapidly taking in water. I had placed my valuables in my shirt around my neck and, glancing at the cheerful information carved on the gate, "Frank Sevoy drowned here July 5, 1917," I stepped into the torrent, trusting myself to the rope. If it broke I had hoped to climb one end of it, but I found this would hardly have been possible, for the force of the current instantly grasped my body and held it outward, almost over the main fall, that poured through the open watergate. It was rather slow work getting around my bag and then pulling it and myself up the rope to safety. I was almost submerged, but my foot finally touched a timber, which helped me to rise out of the flood.

As I walked the logs toward the shore, my water-soaked bag burst open, and I effected a lively rescue of my equipment. If my climbing boots had been lost, it would have been a serious problem how to continue over seven miles through the forest to Ripogenus.

I shouldered my sagging pack and followed a very confusing trail through the yellow birch, beech and hemlock. Ancient blazes and old wood roads led only into bad tangles. I afterward learned that the trail was submerged by the high water. As twilight closed in, I reached a lumber road leading to Ripogenus. Ducks flew low along the river, and startled deer bounded away through the water, while two large owls watched my progress from the overhanging limb. Forcing my pace, though my feet were weary, I reached shelter at Ripogenus Dam at 9 P. M. Owing to variations on my route, my trip had totaled about sixty miles, which I might reduce another time to fifty miles from Stacyville to Ripogenus. Building a fire I dried my things until midnight.

In the morning I took an auto truck for thirty-five miles to Lily Bay on Moosehead Lake, where a steamer took me to Greenville Junction on the railway. The scenery of Moosehead Lake, with its wooded shores and hills over which peer distant mountains, is very lovely. The bold ridge of Mount Kineo rises impressively in the north, while over the lake are scattered a multitude of charming little islands.

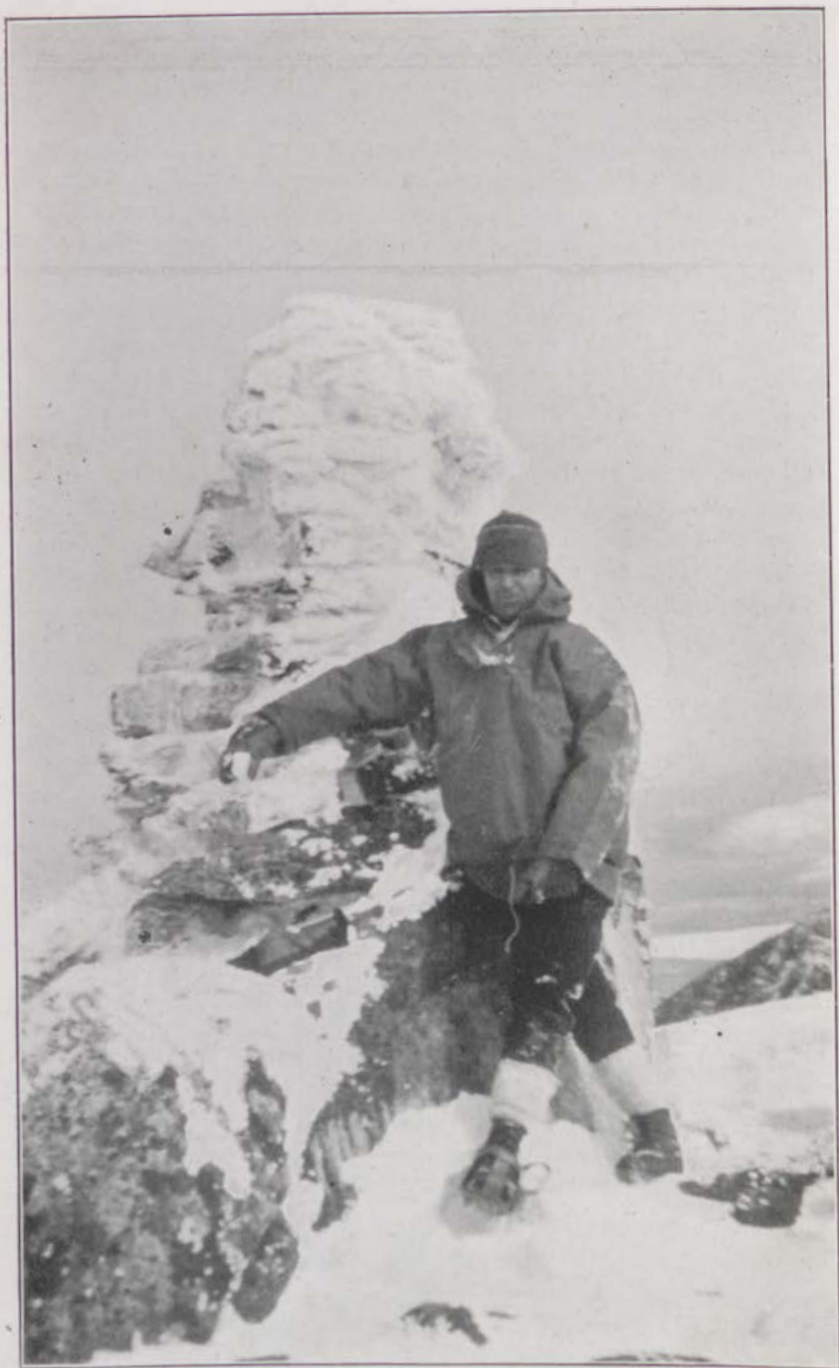


Photo by Arnold T. Hampson

**Frost Crystals at Monument Peak—A Remarkable Katahdin  
Photograph**

# A Winter Climb

## *of Katahdin*

By J. Earle Bacon, Providence

**I**NASMUCH as several of my correspondents seemed interested in the detail of a winter ascent of Mt. Katahdin, I have been constrained to write a sort of circular letter. The reader is absolved from any obligation to read it all.

My companion, Mr. Arnold T. Hampson and I reached Millinocket, Maine, February 10, 1922, at 6 A. M., breakfasted, picked up our sled at express office, loaded onto it our 200 pounds of duffle and at eight o'clock, with traces drawing well, set out over the Sourdnaunk Tote Road. The sled, by the way, excited great interest and favorable comment, several guides signifying their intention to at once construct similar ones.

It consisted of the body of a flexible flyer attached to a pair of skis by wood blocks and thumb screw bolts so that it could be demounted in five minutes, releasing the skis for use as such. The attachments of sled to skis were rugged but not rigid, giving great flexibility under load. It wormed its way over uneven surfaces, one runner up and one down, and also allowed play of the longitudinal flexibility of the skis themselves.

We first hitched in with one man pulling and the other pushing with pole. We found this latter to be killing work as the position of arms constricted the chest and on upgrades forced a bent position of body. So we hitched for double pulling, tandem. This worked better, but later we attached a pole to side of sled so that outer end came at hand height for the "wheel horse." This was the last word as the sled then followed perfectly.

Still, two hundred pounds is two hundred pounds, or even more and we were soft. Also even a slight grade makes a world of difference and that is an up and down country with the average grade ever upward, the rivers running turbulently in the opposite direction.

As to the two hundred pounds of dunnage, we quite realize how that must sound to a go-light campaigner, but two months study in preparation had failed to reduce it. The only kick-



shaw we could pounce upon was my six ounce pair of sheep-lined bed slippers.

We wished to be prepared for camping at forty below if necessary, to be totally independent of fixed camps or food supply sources. We planned to be warm on the mountain top under adverse conditions, should such occur, and finally the indefinite duration of our trip plus extra food and allowance for forced possible delay in getting out, all contributed.

We bit off quite a chunk to provide both for the mountain and the camping. Sled hauling is not popular and the guides we met and the lumbermen frankly told us we probably could not hire a man who would help *hand-haul* that sled and go thru the trip. As we did not want such a man it was perfectly agreeable to us.

To go back to the log of the trip we found nine miles fully satisfied our lust for exercise the first day out.

We camped on five feet of snow in tent, not needing the tent stove. Second morning got away rather late and leisurely pulled on to Grant Brook Camp three miles further. We were by no means fully rested from the day before, so said "Time is but a stream to go a'fishin' in," loafed the afternoon away and stayed the night.

The next morning we started for the deserted lumber camp at Abol, alleged to be either ten or twelve miles. We believe either estimate to be over conservative and a crow's flight at that.

The road over which toting had been done left us four miles out and we then hit the unbroken trail.

For men three days out of an office it was grilling work, but as good toughening exercise was what we were after we certainly got it.

We reached the camp just before sunset having been on the move all day except for minute stops for breath.

The scribe was so tired that as we looked the camp over from a distance of fifty yards and located the usable building by the stove pipe, as the *third* one, he said to himself—"Gosh! why couldn't it have been the *first* one."

We hustled a splendid hot supper, got in some balsam by moonlight and slept the unbroken sleep of the weary except for a visitation of weasels (or ermine). We identified their

lightning-like trips around the room by bug-light and turning over, sleepily agreed that if they wished to run over our faces they might for all us.

The next day we spent in shovelling out of the camp about seven cartloads of tin cans, bottles and miscellaneous accumulations of ten years of over-nighters. We made a creditable broom of a young balsam, improvised a weasel-proof safe for our food, cut wood on snow shoes for three hours (finding our sled a great convenience in getting it to camp), cleaned out the stove, scoured the table, patched a number of broken windows, located the open spring back of the camp, hung out our thermometers,—and many times stood at gaze, thinking of nothing much in particular but conscious nevertheless of the peace, the beauty of the snow-laden untracked woods, the exultation of absolute independence and the far-away-ness of the buzzing phones, the clacking typewriters, the infernal adding machines of our busy office.

The camp was about thirty by thirty-five feet, running up to the roof, a good deal of the stuffing between logs was minus and the old cook stove had about as much effect on the general temperature as a candle in a cold storage freezer. Water frequently froze on table four feet away from the going-strong stove and the pile of drift snow in one corner never melted so much as a drop.

Temperatures ranged below zero each night, one night with a gale shaking the old shack reaching minus thirty. On a warmer night a thermometer just over our heads showed minus two at six A. M.

This does not mean we were cold as we lived and slept in perfect comfort.

It was far better for us than a warm camp as we were in and out often and less likely to contract colds. We at no time felt the chill the writer has felt on leaving home for the office at twenty above in our city of Providence.

We really needed more clothes inside camp, however, than when exercising outside, and often chopped wood at zero temperatures with hands bare of either glove or mitten.

The writer took a bath standing in an old dishpan placed on two narrow boards on top of the stove, in which was a slow fire. More modest than it sounds as an impenetrable fog en-

veloped him during the entire function, tho' the water was only lukewarm.

Our food list will show not only concentrated foods, dehydrated vegetables and emergency rations, but the "makin's" of many palate-pleasing camp dainties. Mr. Hampson made a prune pie with a crust (rolled with a spruce log) as flaky and tender as a Connecticut housewife's.

Apricot dumpling, rice pudding with raisins, hot biscuit, johnny-cakes, oatmeal and cream (dry milk makes pretty good), hot chocolate, graced our board and completed our satisfaction with life,—while Salami, beans, dried beef, bacon, corn beef hash (dehydrated), potatoes, mixed vegetables, mushrooms (all dehydrated), spaghetti, pancakes, butter and sugar in plenty furnished the main fuel.

Next day we started to look out Abol trail to firewarden's hut, part way up the Slide. The distance, about six miles we judged to base of mountain, mostly up hill was very bad going. The preceding days had convinced us that to pack bedding, food and mountain equipment up to the hut and break trail at same time would doubtless prove almost impossible. So our intention had been to break trail one day and pack over it the next. We had reckoned without a full knowledge of how bad snow conditions *can* be.

Snow shoes sank nearly to the knee at every step and the sides of the hole promptly ran in on top of them like very fine meal.

We persisted for several days to find that our trail of the day before had been obliterated by new snow, wind, or both.

It was a day's work in itself to cover the twelve miles, without packs, to say nothing of the actual climb up to hut, as about one and one-half miles per hour was all we could average and it was very tiring, as well.

No day while we were in camp was a climbing day, as we had no twenty-four hours during which it did not either snow or blow.

One crystal clear morning the mountain was a perfect maelstrom of blowing snow. A marvelously beautiful sight, but with the temperature at minus 15, inspiring no eagerness to be up there where it may have reasonably been 25 degrees lower and dense wind driven snow is suffocating in effect. By noon of that same day it was again snowing.



Photo by Arnold T. Hampson

Looking Southeast From Monument Peak, Mt. Katahdin



So we said it's time to laugh and agree that the fates are against us. "This is a recuperative vacation, not an endurance test."

About this time Howard Wood, chief game warden, paid us a call, on his way to Sourdnahunk. He listened to our tale, laughed, and said, "Yes, it can't be done, we've *had* no snowshoeing this winter, no January thaw, and there's no bottom to the stuff." Also he told us that the hut had been abandoned by the State since summer before last.

It might be well to touch on the subject of snowshoes. The writer had bearpaws of medium size (the lumberman said "they are too little.") Mr. Hampson had a pair of five foot Alaskans with fine web caribou stringing. His shoes did not sink as deeply into the soap-suds snow, but the difference was not as great as the difference in area would seem to justify, especially as he was thirty pounds lighter in weight. Furthermore, the scribe's claim is that he (Hampson) lifted more snow on top of his shoe each step and that it did not run out as quickly owing to the fine mesh. The bearpaws were certainly better for mountain work and my controversial antagonist admits their superiority for slopping around with an axe in the brush, after firewood. It is admitted that taking the trip as a whole the Alaskans seemed to have a bit the better of the bargain, but we are still arguing about it as no two people ever did or ever will agree about snowshoes. Actual experience seems to so often refute logic.

On Thursday night we entertained. At about 7.30 we heard a noise and found the yard full of horses and five very cold men. They were taking out twelve horses from a camp at Sourdnahunk and had been since early morn at the rate of about a mile per hour floundering through the snow belly-deep. As they had thought to reach the going camp at Grant Brook they had no lantern nor bedding and only the left over food from their lunch.

Our lighted window looked good to them as they expected to find a deserted camp, and stabling the horses and getting wood in the dark and five feet of snow would have been a merry job. The wind was blowing a gale, temperature minus ten and they were nearly all in. We poured some very rich hot chocolate made with dry milk into them and next morning an

old Frenchie said "By guy zat wus se finest *coffee* me ever drink" and we let it go at that. After supper with extra sweaters we loaned them they crowded around the stove and sat out the night. It was no hardship to spend most of the night with them as the lights flickered and played grotesquely thru the cracks of the old stove over their weather-beaten faces, on the grimed walls and the pile of drift snow along one side of the room, while the wind shook the shack with its howlings and the mercury outside steadily retreated to its minus thirty mark at 6 A. M.

Gently prodded from time to time they waxed eloquent of the old big log days of the West Branch Drive, memories or traditions of John Ross, Jean Sabbattus and other great drivers of a bygone time. The scorn of the old Frenchie (who was nearly seventy) for the pulp log stuff was so vividly expressed it cannot be quoted here. He told us also of Jean Sabbat whom he claimed to have known. Said Jean actively participated as, "Key man" in the icy-water of jam breaking days (at which he was past master) till well beyond seventy. Someone asked him how long he'd been driving and he replied "Mee Jean Sabbat drive ze logs on ze ol' West Branch sence Mt. Kataadn *l-e-e-tle* hill *s-o-o* high!" They were an oddly assorted group. A Frenchie, a Polack, a Lithuanian horse handler, a Maine sub-contract jobber (also nearly 70 and looking 45) and a New England camp "pencil pusher."

We had been hearing about the new camps of the Great Northern Paper Co. "in the Sandy Stream Country" "in beyond Togue Ponds," etc., but curiously enough Howard Wood was first to tell us they had a going camp three miles from Basin Slide. We pricked up our ears at this and five hours later were all loaded on sled except our bedding and the makin's for breakfast.

The next morning we hit the road over which had recently gone thirty unharnessed horses. We nighted again at Grant Brook camp, left our camping equipment and with about thirty pounds each started back up the line for the Great Basin at 5.30 A. M.

We came in full view of the mountain just before sunrise

and as his majesty began to peek out from under the bed-clothes sending level beams of light thru the diamond clear air, the entire snow covered bulk of the mountain turned before our astonished eyes to a deep vivid rose pink. It seemed to magnify and jump at us with a sort of gasping shock to five miles distance (it really being twenty) and loomed *immense*, clear cut as a cameo, on its wooded base, the latter still clothed in the most *delicious* mauves, opals, amethysts and purples. From just below top timber spots of the bright pink snow showed between the sparse small trees, these trees themselves tinted with a light gray blue. No artist could paint it and outlive the ridicule and perchance no reader credit it, but our description has done meagre justice and to quote Kipling we have "let a plain tale suffice." Certainly will the remembrance remain with us full many a year.

The going up (for they were up) the twenty lumberman's miles to Great Basin Camp was none so good, the last five miles beyond their depot camp being a virtual climb of part of the mountain. We got in at about four o'clock, and were tired, we admit it, that is the writer does. Hampson doesn't but then he is some years younger.

At sunrise the next day we were directed to "go thru the cuttings" "pick up A. M. C. trail" "follow brook." The said cuttings were here, there and yonder, the said trail had been obliterated by said cuttings and the said brook wasn't there apparently. So we made our own tedious way thru thick spruce to Chimney Pond. We were then able to follow trail for a short distance as here and there a blaze showed above snow. We soon lost it, the blazes dipping out of sight. The lumbermen told us that "up in there there's thirty feet of snow" and at times we were really forcing our way thru the interlocking branches of the trees. It took more out of us than the ascent and descent from foot of Basin Slide, which we reached at ten o'clock. The snow was very soft and we were constantly sliding off the actual tops of smaller trees just under the snow, up to our armpits into the porous snow between them. This was all "worse luck" for from up the slide we could see the course of the brook and did follow it on our return with comparatively good going nearly all the way to the Basin Pond. The day could hardly have been better. Clear

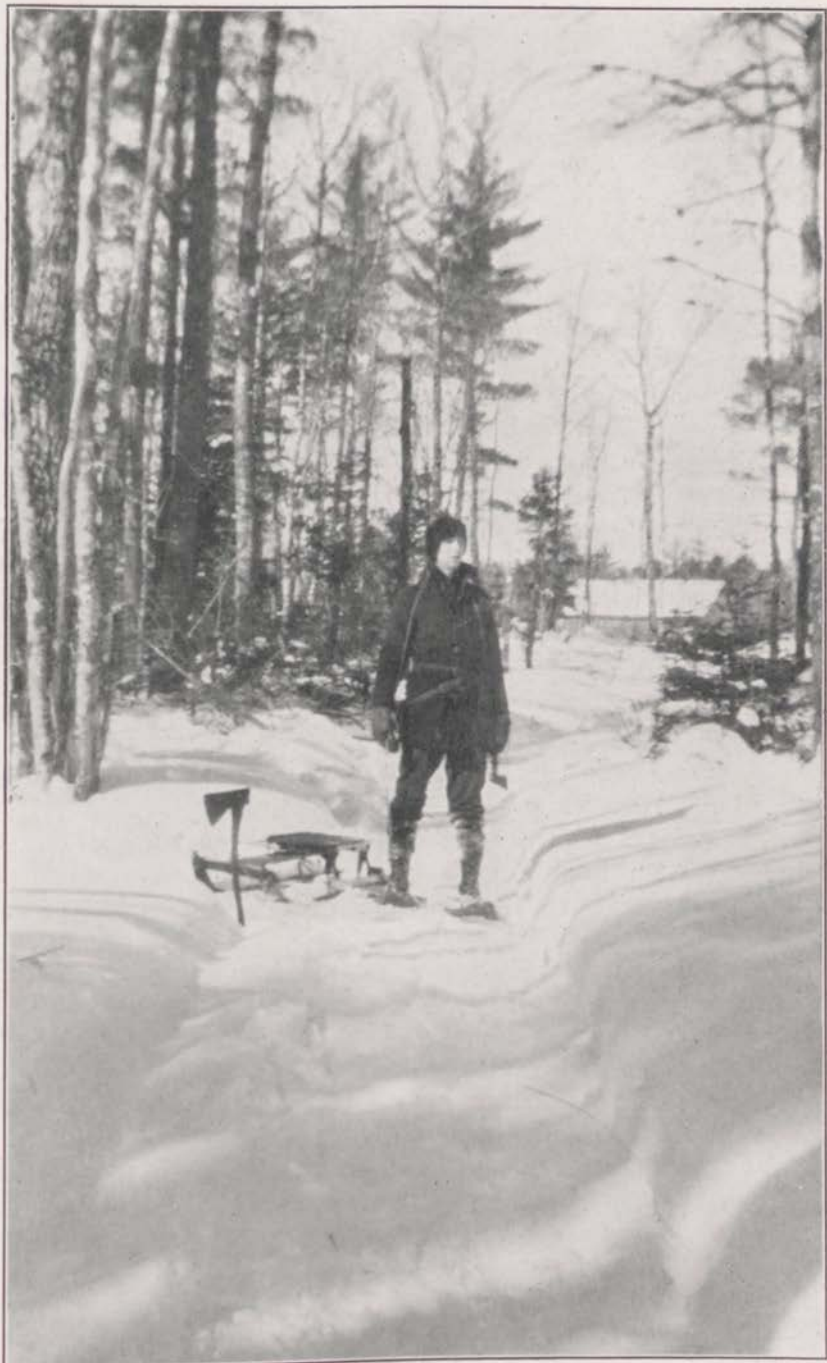


Photo by J. Earle Bacon

**Mr. Hampson After Fuel—and More Fuel**



at sunrise with a slow overcasting. Clouds showing as such in contrast to the general dullness being very high.

As we stood at noon at Monument Peak on the twenty-second day of the second month of the twenty-second year of the century, the mercury of our pocket thermometers showed only about twelve below. Vision was good for long distances. As Hampson said "we saw the world." The wind, while it would have gone thru any number of sweaters but for our water-proof pakaas, was very considerate for that spot and season.

From even a somewhat amateurish mountain climber's point of view the ascent by Basin Slide is a cinch. The mountain is half climbed when one reaches the foot of it. Neither its length nor pitch are comparable to Abol Slide.

Assuredly, dependable snow-shoe creepers and ice shoe-creepers are indispensable, for the crust gets very glary and coming down the lower part of slide we sat on snowshoes *with the creepers still on them* and were able to slide, the creepers tearing their way thru crust and acting as brakes.

The possible peril of ascent by Basin Slide is almost wholly a matter of weather uncertainty rather than actual climbing difficulty. The White Mountains comprise many peaks each of which seems to bear its burden of weather disturbance. Katahdin stands by itself in lonely isolated majesty, in the center of a wilderness and deals out the weather, good, bad and indifferent to the entire region. In the great basin are weather **conditions** especially vicious, for it not only gets *all* the storms, some of which are apparently personal and private matters which old KT keeps to himself, but the following day it gets the wind-blown snow off the top of the mountain. The lumbermen say "It's got all weather anywhere, stopped." They allege that it frequently changes from sun to violent storm in ten minutes.

The main bunk house was entirely snowed under requiring frequent recutting of tunnels to windows and entrance. On this one subject did the natural reserve barrier break, into a willingness, even eagerness to talk. |

"Ain't no sech thing as settled weather, either blows like —ll or snows like —ll" which is somewhat at variance with one's childhood conception of the lower regions.

"Weather? Why the boys up t' the basin didn't get outen the bunk house but two days some weeks."

"Dis ze fust time I ever did see lumberman stop he work for wedder."

Temperature alone never stops him as both in Maine and the northwest forty below is no uncommon condition. Thermometers, however, are not encouraged in camps and as far as we could learn ours were the only ones north of Millinocket.

Every day is vital in a season's clean up and so it *would* appear that when a lumberjack with the acquiescence of his boss is forced to forego many days' pay it must of a certainty be *some weather*.

The morning after our ascent we found a fresh six inches of fine round ball-bearing particles of snow, slippery as grease under foot. The wind blew fiercely from the northeast and the snow fell thickly at a temperature of minus ten. We enjoyed the day as the woods were supremely beautiful, tho' the footing was very bad.

The next morning we "grabbed the air" for the final lap to Millinocket, where we had a royal meal at the Great Northern Hotel with real napkins, tablecloths and cow's cream. We felt our clothes and snow-burned faces must be somewhat in the tradition as we were accosted with "Well, boys! what sort o' winter did ye hev, ben up scaling I 'spose?"

At eight P. M. Friday, the 24th, we bundled ourselves and chattels into a drawing room on the night train for Boston, slammed the door shut from prying eyes of fellow travelers, bathed, donned clean clothes in part, with wiggling toes in only one pair of thin stockings and stretched at ease on the first cushioned seat in sixteen days, the writer lit a cigar. Only one cigar went on the trip (Mr. Hampson does not smoke). This one was a 60c Belinda from S. S. Pierce Co., encased in a large celluloid tooth-brush holder, which it entirely filled. Said holder was sealed and Mr. Hampson was to break the seal for me *only* in case Mt. Katahdin was successfully climbed.

During many a mile of sled-hauling, trail mushing, by many a slow mile post (for they have them if you please on the new tote road) up the icy slopes of the slide and at Monument Peak, imagination played anent the probable flavor of that cigar.

The cigar I lit was I T.

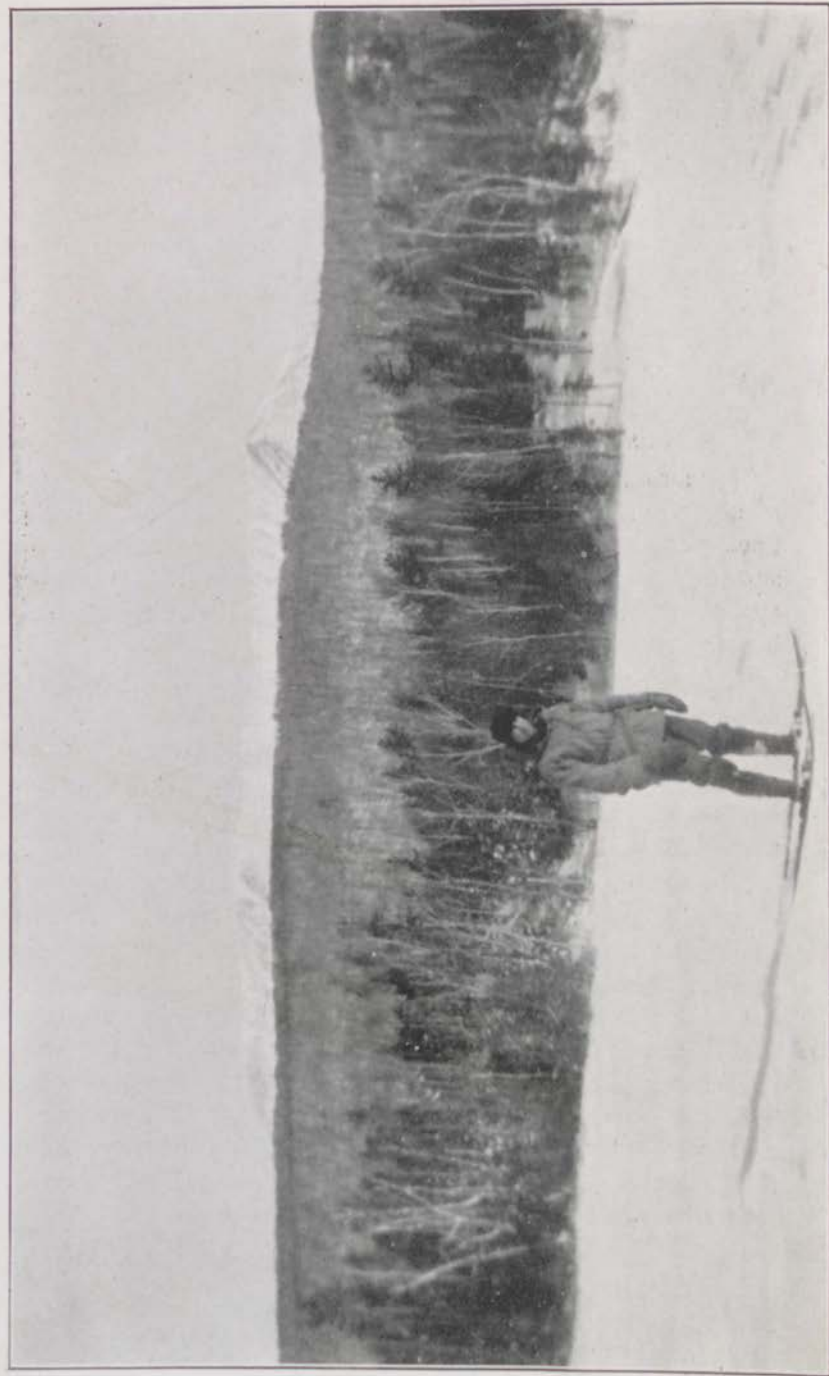


Photo by J. Earle Bacon

The Snow-Covered Length of Mt. Katahdin from Abol Pond

# The Great Basins

## *of Mt. Katahdin*

By William Francis Dawson

NOT to know Katahdin is not to know New England, but not to know the Great Basins is not to know Katahdin. There are two principal basins on the east side of the mountain and it is customary to call the one "North Basin" and the other "South or Great Basin", but who can dispute the right of the North Basin to be classed a Great Basin also?

By all means ascend the West Branch of the Penobscot and the Sourdnahunk and scale Abol Slide and Hunt's Trail, but never think you know Katahdin until you have seen the Basins from below and slept under the stars at Chimney Pond.

With food and equipment one can descend the Saddle or Basin Slide from the Plateau to the "floor" of the South Basin, but the approach from the east has many attractions and advantages. There is a rough wagon road from Stacyville and Sherman to the dam at Katahdin Lake, a distance of about twenty miles, but the flat boat ferry at Lunksoos has been removed and Dacy's Dam has been washed out so the East Branch must be forded below Lunksoos and the Wassataquoik above the Dam site. If one goes afoot he can perhaps get ferried across the East Branch at the old Hunt Place or Matagamom House below its confluence with the Wassataquoik and ascending the right bank of the latter avoid fording. There is a convenient abandoned lumber camp near the turn in the river known as the Devil's Elbow. A mile west of the Katahdin Lake Dam on the south shore are the Cushman Camps. One can walk to Cushman's from Stacyville in one day, but the tenderfoot should stop the first night at Matagamom House or Lunksoos and the second at Cushman's. Katahdin Lake has an elevation of 1100 feet and from the Dam one has the first good view of the mountain and also to the right (northwest) Turner Mountain. Four miles more brings one to Sandy Stream Pond (elevation 1500 ft.) whence it is another three and a half miles up a steep grade (400 ft. to the mile) to Chimney Pond with an elevation of





Photo by William Francis Dawson. (Copyrighted 1920.)

**The Great (South) Basin of Mt. Katahdin from the South Ridge of North Basin, Probably the First Photograph Showing the Entire South Basin in a Single Exposure;**

2900 ft. Here there is good water, a stone fireplace and fire wood but no camp. One must pack in all food and camp equipment including blankets and tarpaulin or tent; and remember that at 2900 ft. elevation on the north side of an isolated mountain in northern Maine the nights may be very cold even in summer. The author's tent had a complete coating of ice an eighth of an inch thick in the middle of June. The path is very blind in places and between Cushman's and the Basin, very rough. One who is making the trip for the first time should have an experienced guide and even those who know the way should have a companion.

### THE GREAT OR SOUTH BASIN

This great natural amphitheatre slopes suddenly from the east side of the mountain. It is two and one half miles from north to south and one mile and three quarters from east to west. A rocky "cape" or promontory intrudes half a mile into the basin just east of the main summit, and between this and Pamola lies Chimney Pond. If you have adjectives and exclamations, if you hope some day your heart will beat faster and that you will stand still in awe and admiration, save them for that little Chimney Pond and the two thousand foot wall that backs it. Exaggeration is easy and enthusiasm is expected, but it simply cannot be questioned that this is the grandest sight in all New England. The mighty wall almost perpendicular, makes almost a half circle about the little pond. The tailings or scree from a score of avalanche paths flatten out and focus on its far side, and there is a fine group of fir and hemlock that extends a few hundred yards up the mountain. Then the alder and black birch with some stunted spruce "lock horns" in such a way that it is nearly impossible to penetrate them. One friend said, "you need a can opener." In summer time the brook courses are dry and make fairly good paths, but earlier—I was there June 15, 1920—there is plenty of water and over it varying thicknesses of ice and snow in which condition it is dangerous to walk on it. Once this tangle—I think Thoreau called it "pucker bush"—is overcome one stands almost directly under the cliffs, and they are everywhere. Here they were smooth and rounded until the frost got into them and shelled



Photo by William Francis Dawson

**The Chimney: South Basin of Mt. Katahdin**

them off in layers, here they are rough and jagged and there are great rents a hundred feet deep where the mighty forces of Nature have torn the mountain apart. The greatest of these is the Chimney whence the pond gets its name. It has been scaled (See Appalachia November 1920 p. 55) and once it has been descended (See Appalachia August 1921 p. 153) by two men and a dog, but unless you are completely blasé with rock climbing in foreign land and the Rocky Mountains, it will command your wholesome respect, and it will satisfy you that there is reason for seeing America (and even New England) first. Viewed from below one may easily imagine he is in the Rocky Mountains, above it cleaves the skyline between the Summit of Pamola (4800 ft.) and Chimney Peak which is only a few feet less. Look down and you see a bottomless pit; look across to the main summit (5273 ft.) and you are impressed by the granite walls against which the "tooth of time" has not worked in vain. Layer on layer of rock has been chiselled off by the frost until there are many places where the wall is not perpendicular merely, rocks and ledges stand out beyond the support below. It is no wonder that during those three June days when I camped in the Basin I counted at least five avalanches, one of them lasting a full half minute.

Did you ever hear the legend of Pamola? [There are really two. In one the Indians ascribed to him the head of a man and the body of a gigantic eagle. He abode in the mountain top all winter, god of cloud and frost and storm, and in the spring flew away with loud mutterings. Who that knows the place today can question that it was the many avalanches that gave rise to this myth. The other legend made of Pamola an Indian Lochinvar who rode off with the bride he had been refused and took her up to his residence in the mountain top whence he voiced his independence and his wrath. If you doubt these stories go and see for yourself. You may hear Pamola's thunder any day in the year, and in a great storm the place must be sublime. After a rain or mist the cloud forms will take shape as they rise from off the Pond, weird, wonderful, beautiful. They come and go, they veil Pamola and reveal the Knife Edge, now you see the Chimney and now one of those offset peaks that remind you of the Andes Moun-



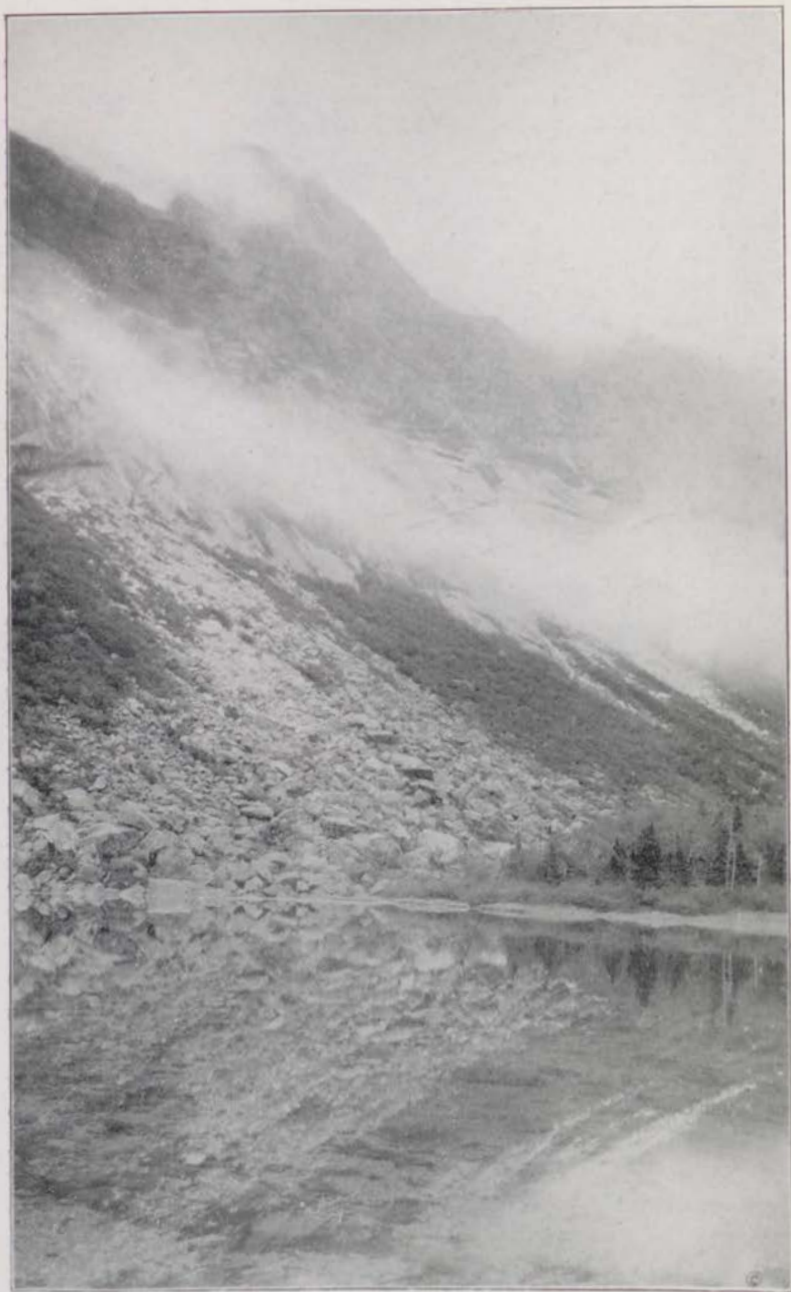


Photo by William Francis Dawson (Copyrighted)

**Pamola After the Storm. From Chimney Pond, Great Basin,  
Mt. Katahdin**

tains. But let not your interest in the clouds engage your whole attention; here at your feet you see it all again mirrored so beautifully in Chimney Pond and you wonder if this is really Maine and New England or one of those fabled, labeled spots three thousand miles away.

You have been at the Summit and straddled the Knife Edge, so I don't need to tell you the upper five hundred to seven hundred feet of the mountain is not the hard gray granite you have seen below and out in the plain where Ice Cap and the Glaciers carried it. It is a soft pinkish granite and the frost has split it up in strange rectilinear prisms. They may be six inches square and a foot or so long, or they may be three or four feet square and twenty feet long, but they are all nicely piled up on end and stand row on row in considerable regularity inside the Basin wall directly under the Main Peak and East Peak. They may stay there a month or a year or a thousand years, but one thing is certain and that is eventually most of them are going to fall down, and geologically speaking, the Main Peak and East Peak will follow before long. Only five years ago we found one of these prisms broken in two across a brook course with fractures so fresh we investigated and found where it had rolled through the alder bushes so recently that the leaves on the broken boughs had not withered. Roughly it was seven feet square and twenty feet long and weighed one hundred tons. That was in August and no rain had fallen in weeks.

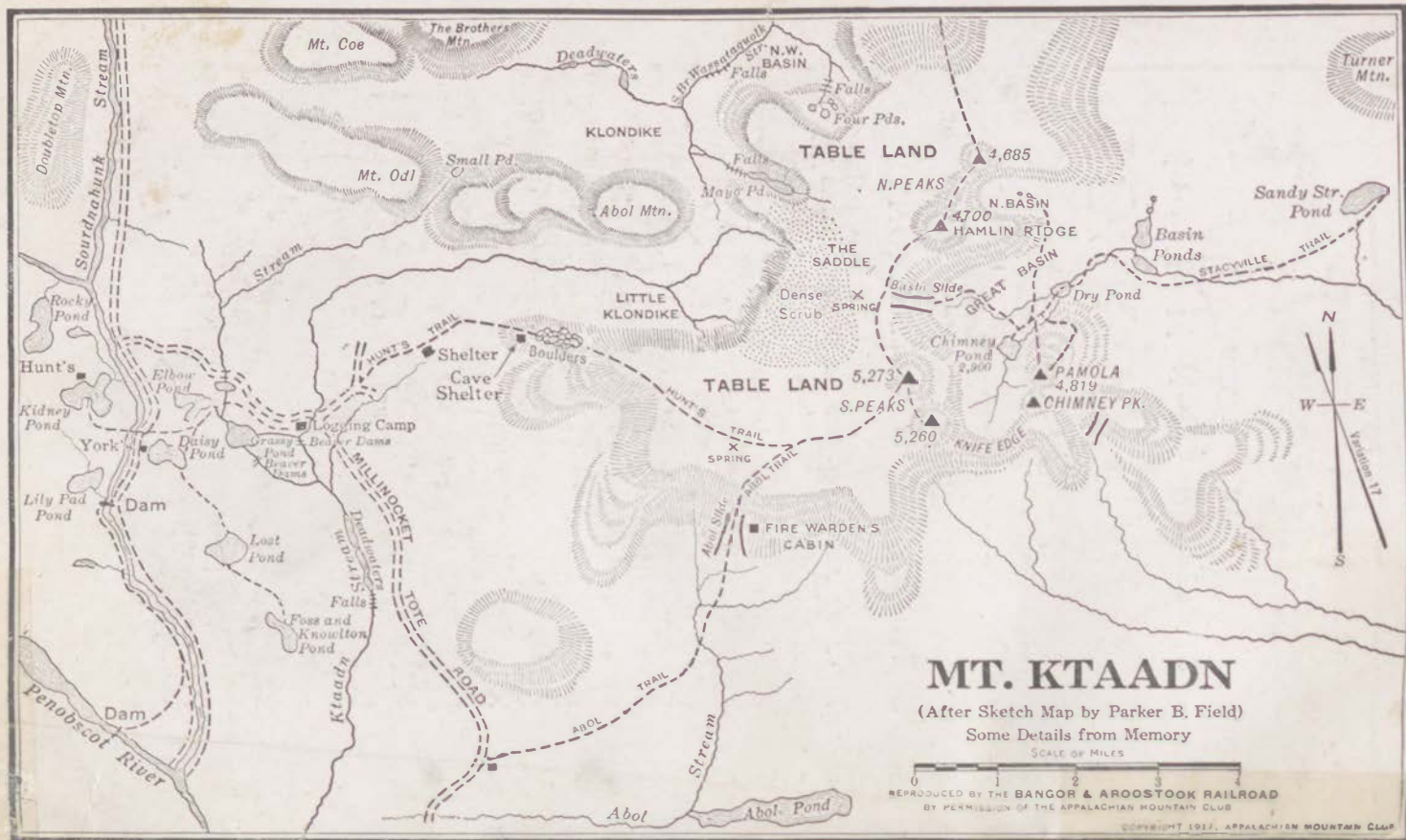
### THE SADDLE SLIDE

A few hundred yards north of the Chimney Pond camp site one comes to a dried-up brook course. A path follows, sometimes alongside, sometimes over the granite boulders of the brook, until it emerges on comparatively flat ground for a few hundred yards. Quickly that is passed and one is ascending the Saddle or Basin path. That is the usual and best way of ascending the mountain from the east. It is almost uniformly steep, about 45 degrees, is recent and contains much loose rock, but if one is careful the plateau 800 feet above is reached in about forty-five minutes. On a clear day the view east (looking backward) is fine and instructive. To the right is Chimney Pond, the long slope leading to Pam-

ola and the Knife Edge. Straight ahead are the Basin Pond, Dry Pond, Sandy Stream Pond, Turner Mountain and Katahdin Lake. To the left is the long ridge that separates the South Basin from the North and North Basin itself. There is a spring part way up this slide but a canteen filled at the Pond below will prove most welcome on this trip.

## THE NORTH BASIN

A fairly well defined trail branches from the Stacyville path about half a mile east of Chimney Pond. When it emerges into the "big burn" of twenty years ago one finds himself amongst granite boulders from which even the ground humus has burned out, but "stag horns", corpses of dead trees abound everywhere. Sometimes they make a convenient bridge to span a nasty chasm, but more likely some unnoticed branch is there to stab you in the chest or to tear your clothes and stockings. In late summer this is one of the finest of blueberry pastures and the slight elevation that occurs at the east end of North Basin has been most appropriately named Blueberry Knoll. This Basin is about a mile from north to south and a mile and one half from east to west. Its plan is almost a perfect horseshoe opening toward the east. The floor is said to have an elevation of 3800 ft., but that has been disputed and as it slopes up rapidly from east to west there is a chance for considerable argument due to what part of the floor is meant. It has been explored but little, but has fine steep walls differing much in character from those of the South Basin. There are smooth faced precipices several hundred feet high, and others just as rough and splintered as in the South Basin, and there are interesting gullies to tempt the most ardent rock climbers. Near Blueberry Knoll is another vanishing or dry pond that runs out rapidly after rain in summer, but whose level is well maintained by the melting snow and gully brooks in the spring. Its outlet is very near its inlet and is subterranean. I only detected it by the enticing sound of water falling over a series of flat stones that were nearly balanced. In June the shore was purple with *Rhodora* and pink with laurel in full bloom. Botanists have found many rare Alpine plants in this Basin, but the field is still fresh and almost untouched.





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