

The University of Maine

DigitalCommons@UMaine

---

Maine History Documents

Special Collections

---

12-1881

## Routes to Ktaadn

Charles E. Hamlin

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.library.umaine.edu/mainehistory>



Part of the [History Commons](#)

---

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by DigitalCommons@UMaine. It has been accepted for inclusion in Maine History Documents by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@UMaine. For more information, please contact [um.library.technical.services@maine.edu](mailto:um.library.technical.services@maine.edu).

Pamp  
2030  
c.2

# ROUTES TO KTAADN.

BY CHARLES E. HAMLIN.

---

REPRINTED FROM THE APPALACHIA, DECEMBER, 1881.

J. J. Hubbard, Esq.

with regards of

C. E. Hamlin

[*Reprinted from the Appalachia, Vol. II., No. 4.*]

## Routes to Ktaadn.

BY CHARLES E. HAMLIN.

Communicated Oct. 20, 1881.

MT. KTAADN is so inaccessible that practically it is remote even to New Englanders. It is probably true that a greater number of eastern men now annually visit Pike's Peak than penetrate to the Maine mountain, and a hundred Bostonians have been among the Alps for one who has climbed Ktaadn. Of the few who have published narratives of their excursions to this unique mountain, some have presented more or less definite accounts of the routes by which they reached it. Thus the delightful article of Thoreau, entitled "Ktaadn," is mainly a circumstantial description of his journey thither, rather than of the mountain itself, of which, since it was capped with clouds during his ascent, he neither reached the summit nor saw the most noteworthy features. But as the reading of all that has been written relating to Ktaadn would yield distinct information upon only two of the four possible routes to it, it seems desirable to present at one view, and in narrow compass, the leading characteristics of all,—their relative lengths, advantages and disadvantages. It is the purpose of the present paper to furnish such a summary; and while the writer would hope that it may not prove useless to persons who take to mountaineering for pastime and as part of their summer recreation from business, his special desire is that it may serve, in some small degree at least, to turn eastward the attention of the Appalachian Mountain

Club, so that he may not much longer count as being, of its some hundreds of members, one of only four who have visited Ktaadn.

Mt. Ktaadn is situated between what are usually termed the East and West branches of the Penobscot River. As a single step toward accomplishing a very desirable change of nomenclature which has been suggested, but scarcely to any extent adopted, let it here be said that the so-called West Branch, being the main river, and having many branches of its own, should be called the Penobscot; while what has been known as the East Branch is so important a tributary as to deserve the separate name, long since proposed, of Mattagamon, derived from one of the lakes which lie at its source. No further proof of the necessity of such a change will be needed than to note a single consequence of persistence in using the present names. Thus, if one should attempt to describe by them the course he would take in going from Moosehead Lake up the Penobscot to the head waters of the River St. John, he would be compelled to say that he travelled up the Northeast Branch of the North Branch of the West Branch of the Penobscot.

Ktaadn is crossed near its centre by the Monument Line, so called because it starts from the monument erected at the point where the head waters of the St. Croix River cease to be the eastern boundary of Maine, which northward from the monument is a straight line. It runs westerly, about four miles south of the parallel of  $46^{\circ}$ , across the State, which has here a width of 125 miles.<sup>1</sup> The portion of the line, seventy miles in length, which lies between Ktaadn and the western boundary, traverses an unbroken wilderness; while the part which runs from the mountain to the eastern border, fifty-five miles, forms the south line of Patten and the north line of Sherman. These townships corner upon each other, and are the

<sup>1</sup> The greatest width of the State, on the parallel of latitude from Quoddy Head to New Hampshire, is about 200 miles; while a diagonal line drawn from Kittery Point to One Hundred and Forty-four Mile Corner, the northeast angle as claimed by the United States before the treaty of 1842, was estimated to measure no less than 360 miles. Terminating now at the northernmost bend of the River St. John, the length of the line is about 300 miles.

only incorporated towns touched by the Monument Line. The town nearest to the mountain, and the only one visible from it to the naked eye, is Patten, 22 miles distant in a straight line. From Ktaadn to the northern extremity of the State is 110 miles; the entire region, westward from the Aroostook settlements, being uninhabited. The nearest town on the south is Brownville, forty-two miles away, — measuring on the meridian. The intervening district is entirely unsettled.

It will be seen from the foregoing statements that Ktaadn lies in an immense wilderness. The whole country that is within view from the summit, except the clearings around Patten, and others to be distinguished along the Aroostook Road farther south, is a continuous forest, interspersed with lakes estimated, great and small, at upwards of one hundred in number. The general surface to the south has an elevation of not more than 50 feet above that of Pemadumcook Lake, which is set at 500 feet. In the north and east, beyond the heights adjacent to Ktaadn, the elevation can be but little greater; but on the west there is a gradual rise to Moosehead Lake, forty miles distant, and 1,071 feet above the sea. Viewed from the mountain, however, the whole expanse, in all directions, appears to be a great plain, broken, except by Ktaadn and its immediate lower neighbors, only by scattered and distant mountains; but as none within a circuit of fifty miles radius attain an altitude of more than 3,000 feet, Ktaadn, seen from the level of the country and standing apart, towers in most majestic style above the whole region round. Not a few summits, in themselves picturesque and striking, dwindle in the presence of their superior. None, near or remote, presents itself in any degree as a rival; but all, like dwarfs around a giant, serve, by the strong contrast they afford, to proclaim Ktaadn<sup>1</sup> undisputed monarch of the great wilderness he overlooks.

<sup>1</sup> The spelling *Ktaadn* has been here adopted in accordance with the opinion of the most eminent living authority upon Indian dialects, as presented in the following communication, addressed to the writer: —

HARTFORD, May 27, 1881.

DEAR SIR, — The name *Ktaadn*, or *Katahdin*, is formed from an adjectival, meaning "principal," "pre-eminent," and, so, "greatest," and a generic or

From Boston the tourist can reach Ktaadn with least delay by taking a night train, which leaving at seven o'clock is due in Bangor, 245 miles, at 5-30 next morning. After breakfast he can proceed at once upon his journey, whichever of the four routes to the mountain he may choose, by the European & North American Railway, or its branch, the Bangor & Piscataquis Road. If he takes either of the two more eastern routes, he continues on the former road fifty-eight miles to Mattawamkeag, situated at the junction of the river of that name with the Penobscot. If he decides upon one of the two western routes, his train quits the first named road for the second at Oldtown, twelve miles from Bangor.

A passage to Bangor, attractive for the views it affords of Penobscot Bay and River, may be made by steamer leaving Boston daily at 5 P.M., and reaching Bangor the following noon. The traveller will stop there for the night, or take the afternoon train, according as his route and its stage connections may render desirable.

class-name for "mountain." Neither of the two elements could be used as an independent word, but both were of frequent occurrence in composition, in the eastern Algonkin dialects. Rasles, in his Abnaki dictionary, spelled the adjectival *ketté*, the generic, *adene*; but the vowel sound between *k* and *t* of the first syllable was obscure and guttural, and hardly, if at all, definable by an English ear. Eliot wrote *keht*, and occasionally *keiht*; Roger Williams, *kut*-, and *kaut*-; Zeisberger, in Delaware, *kita*-, *kit*-, *kid*-, *get*-, etc. There was, in fact, so slight a separation between the *k* and *t*, that the two consonants seemed to combine, and the former was lost to Europeans generally. Thus Captain John Gyles — who had been a captive among the eastern Indians, and appears to have had a good knowledge of their language — wrote of "the White Hills called the Teddon at the head of Penobscot River;" and the modern *Titicut*, on Taunton River, is the *Cotuhtikut* of the early settlers, and *Ketchtukgut* of Eliot. I do not find that any writer, whose ear has been trained to Indian sounds, has represented this prefix by *kat*, except in the name *Katahdin* and one of its equivalents, *Cata-tonk*, in Tioga County, N. Y. In another equivalent, *Kittatinny*, "the greatest mountain," of the Blue Mountain chain, it has settled into *kit*. . . .

One of the party whose "Camps and Tramps" [referred to in a letter to which this is a reply] were chronicled in "Scribner's," has a good ear for Abnaki sounds, and was at some pains to acquire the native pronunciation of this mountain name. He was not at all satisfied with *Katahdin*; and I agreed with him, on the whole, that *Ktaadn* is, of the two, the better Penobscot.

Yours truly,

J. HAMMOND TRUMBULL.

THE FIRST ROUTE, *via* MATTAWAMKEAG AND THE  
PENOBSCOT.

The oldest route to Ktaadn, and consequently the one most fully described, follows the course of the Penobscot all the way from Bangor to the point where the ascent begins. From Mattawamkeag a stage runs the first eleven miles to a little village at the mouth of the Mattagamon, formerly designated upon the maps as Nickatow (the *forks*), but some years since incorporated as the town of Medway, its significant Indian name being dropped for one threadbare and unmeaning. Here highways at present end and roughing begins.

At Medway, guides may be obtained, who, for the brief and rapid trips to the mountain usually made by visitors, prefer to use birch canoes, — the guide and one man, sometimes two, with their outfit, occupying a birch. When more time is to be taken, with greater weight of supplies and more than two persons to a boat, the light wooden *bateau*, pointed at both ends and much used upon the inland waters of Maine, is preferable as being stronger and more durable than the frail birch. Since from Medway to the Grand Falls the river is full of rapids, boating is there exceedingly difficult, except at unusually favorable stages of water. It is therefore advisable to take boats and baggage from Medway upon a strong team-wagon over the rough cart-way which follows the river thirteen miles to "Old Fowler's," the last house upon the route, situated up the Millinoket Stream, two miles from Shad Pond, the lowermost of the lake-like expansions of the Penobscot. A little below Fowler's the low water of summer allows the stream to be forded, and the load is drawn two miles more, across the rock-obstructed Fowler's Carry, to the river above the falls. This portage has been in use since the earliest travel by white men began, and undoubtedly follows the course of an ancient Indian carry. As late as 1871 the writer found only a blind trail over the four miles next below Shad Pond, where navigation of the river was the only resource; but in 1878 a rude road

had been cut and was, as now, in use for the transportation of boats and outfits for parties.

From Fowler's the journey is made by boat on the waters and for the distances to be named. After a short run through rapid water in the river, the way lies through Quakish Lake, two miles; thence one mile through furious rapids, that require all the strength and skill of practised boatmen to ascend them by poling, to North Twin Dam; thence a mile more of river, or — as a reach of running stream connecting two lakes is here termed — of "thoroughfare," leads into North Twin Lake, four miles long, from which another of a few rods only opens into Pemadumcook Lake, largest of the chain and ten miles in length. About three miles of boating in this lake reaches a part of it called Deep Cove, two miles long and terminating in a passage into Ambejjjis Lake, which is two miles long. It may be approached also by running on Pemadumcook about four miles, nearly to Gull Rock, opposite the outlet of Lower Joe Merry Lake; and thence by a channel, sometimes troublesomely shallow, two miles to the entrance into Ambejjjis. Here on a point stands a log camp, dignified with the name of the Ambejjjis House or Boom House, from the boom that stretches across the passage. This and a similar one at the North Twin Dam, are the only roofs between the Head of Chesuncook and "Old Fowler's," a distance of more than sixty miles. They were built and are kept up for the accommodation of passing lumbermen and river-drivers, and are familiar points from which distances up and down the Penobscot are reckoned.

A more direct course from Fowler's to Ambejjjis Lake is in rare instances taken up Millinoket Stream, six miles, to the lake of the same name; and through that, some seven miles, to a portage of four rods over a bush-grown sand-flat which separates Millinoket from a lagoon extending eastward from Ambejjjis. The stream is sluggish and unobstructed through its lower half, but extremely rapid and rocky for two miles or more below the lake. The experience of a party, of which the writer was a member, while descending the stream in 1871, and that of another party in 1878, do not lead him to advise navigating Millinoket Stream as a short cut to or



from Ktaadn; and the lagoon between the two lakes, through which light boats could barely be thrust in '71, becomes in dry seasons, like that of '80, an expanse of mud passable neither by boat nor on foot.

At the head of Ambejjis Lake the river is again entered, and is followed for the nine miles of boating that still remain. In this short space occur five falls, requiring usually, at mid-summer, as many portages. Here the river widens at short intervals, as it does all the way from Shad Pond to Chesuncook Lake, into still lakes connected by narrow and rocky thoroughfares, upon which are the falls and rapids. For the twenty-three miles between Ambejjis and Ripogenus lakes, the expansions are of width so moderate that river-men do not style them lakes, but *dead-waters*. There is a fixed order, not destitute of interest, in which the names succeed each other. For the nine miles, at least, now under consideration, a fall, the dead-water next below, and the tributary of the river next above the fall, all bear the same name, as will be seen from the following list of names and distances, which those who pass through this wild district will desire to know. Ambejjis Falls and the portage of ninety rods around them have, for their dead-water, Ambejjis Lake, a few rods below. Next above follows Passamagammet Dead-water, a mile and a half in length, Ambejjis Stream entering from the right. Then come Passamagammet Falls with a portage of twenty rods, or, in very low water, of several times that length. Next is Katepskonegan — often corrupted into Debskoneag — Dead-water, a beautiful but shallow lake, two miles long by half a mile wide, into which Passamagammet Stream debouches on the left. Directly from the head of the dead-water succeed Katepskonegan Falls, longest of the series, occupying about seventy rods of the channel and requiring a portage variously estimated at from seventy-five to one hundred rods in length. Above this lies the comparatively narrow and river-like Pockwockamus Dead-water, from two and a half to three miles long, Katepskonegan Stream coming in on the left. Pockwockamus Falls, next in order, occupy twenty rods of the river's bed, and are passed by a portage of about twice that length. Thence follows Aboljacarme-

gus<sup>1</sup> Dead-water, three fourths of a mile long to the falls of the same name, twelve rods in length, where there is no cleared portage but only a driver's path, boats being, at good pitches of water, poled or warped over the falls. Lastly succeeds half a mile of quick water to the foot of Sourdnakunk Dead-water and the mouth of Aboljacarmegus Stream on the right.

The first men who are known to have ascended Ktaadn went this way. In August, 1804, "seven gentlemen from Bangor and Orono,"<sup>2</sup> with four boatmen, including two Indian guides, passed up the river from Orono, seven miles above Bangor, where roads then probably terminated. Their ascent of the mountain was described by one of the party, Charles Turner, Jr., of Boston, who was employed several seasons by proprietors in surveying Penobscot lands. The ordinary duties of his profession at that early day could not have called him into this then unexplored region. His interesting and valuable account, part of a private letter, was printed in the "Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society," under the title of "Description of Natardin or Catardin Mountain."<sup>3</sup>

The next two excursions to Ktaadn of which accounts exist in print, were made over this route. They were that of Professor J. W. Bailey of West Point, in company with Professors George W. Keely and Phinehas Barnes of Waterville College, August, 1836; and that made in September, 1837, by Dr. Charles T. Jackson, then State Geologist.<sup>4</sup> Jackson's

<sup>1</sup> Written also *Abala-jako-megus* (Willis, Maine Historical Collections, vol. iv.), *Abala-jacko-megus* (Williamson, History of Maine, i. p. 93), *Abawljacarmegas* (Prof. J. W. Bailey, Am. Jour. Sci. [1], vol. xxxii. p. 28). In speaking, the name is habitually shortened into *Aybol*. The term is said to signify Smooth Ledge, and accurately characterizes the rock underlying the falls, from which the name is evidently derived. The stream itself is *Aboljacarmegusquoik*. Thoreau calls it Murch Brook ("Maine Woods," pp. 53, 58), a name probably borrowed from his guides. Another common name for it is Sandy Stream, from the nature of its mouth, — for other parts, an egregious misnomer. The *Abol-jacknagesic* is a stream which enters the Penobscot a few rods above the mouth of the *Aboljacarmegus*. The signification of the term seems not to have been traced.

<sup>2</sup> Williamson, History of Maine, vol. i. p. 92.

<sup>3</sup> 2d Series, vol. viii. pp. 112-116, 2d ed., 1826.

<sup>4</sup> Second Report on Geology of Public Lands, pp. 6-20.

party went by bateau all the way from Oldtown, going above Fowler's through Millinoket Stream and Lake. Bailey and his companions rode to Mattawamkeag, the terminus of highways along the river at that time, and thence followed "a blind path," which they often lost, along the shore to two log-cabins then standing six miles below Grand Falls, whence they proceeded by boat to the usual place for beginning the ascent. A paper relating to this trip, from the pen of Professor Bailey, was published in the American Journal of Science.<sup>1</sup>

In September, 1846, Thoreau pursued the same route, and he, too, found beyond Mattawamkeag only "an obscure trail up the northern bank of the Penobscot, . . . the river being the only highway." Following the trail eighteen miles to the clearing of George McCausland,<sup>2</sup> who with his brother had been, ten years before, guide for Bailey, Thoreau engaged his services. Four miles more of trail brought the party to Shad Pond, where "Young Fowler" was just building his log-house. Going to "Old Fowler's," two miles more, they made the Fowler Carry and followed the course already indicated. Thoreau's narrative of this excursion occupies the first eighty-four pages of his "Maine Woods."

From the mouth of Aboljacarmegusquoik the path up the mountain, now well established and known to guides, lies along the shore of the stream for half a mile, when it turns short to the left and follows a spotted line about four and a half miles to the foot of that part of the great Southwest Slide, of 1816,<sup>3</sup> which is not yet wholly grown up to forest. A trail or path, literally speaking, does not exist; for although most of the travel up Ktaadn goes this way, it is so small in amount and confined to so few weeks of the year that human

<sup>1</sup> 1st Series, vol. xxxii. pp. 20-34, October, 1836.

<sup>2</sup> Bailey's spelling of this name, *McAstlin*, and Thoreau's, that of *McCauslin*, came from a mispronunciation common in Maine, and most nearly represented by the form, *McAstlin*. Should any reader think these details superfluous, Thoreau's words are sufficient answer:—"I am particular to give the names of the settlers and the distances, since every log-hut in these woods is a public house, and such information is of no little consequence to those who may have occasion to travel this way." McCausland's place is still one of the points of reckoning; and he is yet living, and a most interesting character.

<sup>3</sup> Williamson, History of Maine, vol. i. p. 90.

feet have left visible marks at very few spots along the line, so that expert guides direct their steps by the spotted trees. From the junction of the trail the slide<sup>1</sup> is followed to its head, three fourths of a mile over a portion overgrown at intervals with bushes and small trees, and thence one mile and three quarters up the steeper, loose, present slide proper. From the head the ascent is for half a mile over a surface piled with huge bowlders, and having an average inclination of about 35°, but at the upper part of 47°, to the sharp brow of the Table Land, the first summit. Thence a walk of about a mile, half way up on the slightly inclined plateau, and the rest up a moderate slope, brings the tourist to the West Peak, distant about one third of a mile from East Peak, — the two differing in elevation not more than twenty feet. The distance, then, from the starting point of the trail upon the river to West Peak is, according to the estimates here given, nine miles.

The base of the mountain is very commonly spoken of as lying several miles from the river. In fact, from the Abol-jacarmegusquoik the trail makes almost immediately two sharp ascents, and the summit of a hill about two miles on the way is 700 feet higher than the river, as determined by means of an aneroid whose readings, throughout a stay of four weeks, agreed closely with those of a Green's barometer. In the course of the next half mile a descent of fully 100 feet is made, followed, in the two miles thence to the junction of the trail with the old track of the Southwest Slide, by a steady rise of 850 feet, or 750 feet higher than the hill-top before mentioned, making an elevation of 1,450 feet above the Penobscot. It is here that the foot of the mountain seems generally considered to be, while the foregoing statements show that the ascent really begins from the shores of the river.

<sup>1</sup> As the Southwest Slide did not come into existence until 1816, Turner, in 1804, reached the Table Land by way of the southwest spur. The writer took the same course in 1869. The slopes of the spur are less abrupt than those of the slide, and would therefore be easier of ascent were it not for a belt of spruce scrub, which at its highest part becomes impenetrable, and can be passed only by walking upon the tops of the interlacing shrubs. If a path were cut for a short distance through this troublesome growth, travel would no doubt be largely deflected to it, though the Southwest Slide should be climbed by the tourist at least once, as being one of the grandest features of the mountain.

Even Turner, the first describer of Ktaadn, who ascended over a more gradual slope somewhat farther west than the present trail, and over ground then recently laid bare by fire, remarks: "Round this mountain on the west, south, and east sides is a table-land,<sup>1</sup> extending about four miles, rising gradually to the foot of the mountain. This table-land is much elevated, and overlooks all the country except the mountains; when viewed from the mountain, however, it appears like a plane." It is the fact expressed in this last clause which so generally misleads visitors with respect to the actual base of the mountain.

THE SECOND ROUTE, *via* BROWNVILLE AND THE JOE  
MERRY LAKES.

What will here be considered for convenience as the second route to Ktaadn, has its last thirteen miles in common with the first. Thirty-two miles of it are known to few except lumbermen and hunters, who almost exclusively travel it. Regarded as beginning at Bangor, the route follows the European & North American Railway twelve miles to Oldtown, and thence the Bangor & Piscataquis Road to Milo, thirty-nine miles. Staging five miles to Brownville, and taking private conveyance five miles more to the limit of highways in that direction, one may go by a wood-road three miles to the log-house of Elisha Norton, the last dwelling on the route, and thence by a loggers' road nineteen miles to the Middle Joe Merry Lake; or, to save land travel in part, he may boat seven miles upon the northern part of Schoodic Lake, and thence strike the road four miles beyond Norton's. For the fifteen miles through the woods from Schoodic, or the whole twenty-two by way of Norton's, boats and supplies must be drawn by horses, upon a rough sled called a *juniper*, to the Middle Joe Merry. About twelve miles is all that a pair of good horses can accomplish in a day, drawing in this primitive style two boats and stores for a party of six; although the road is remarkably level, smooth for a forest road, and kept free from bushes and windfalls by annual lumbering operations. The writer having taken this route, in 1869 *via*

<sup>1</sup> Not what is now styled the Table Land.

Norton's, and in 1880 by way of the Schoodic, can vouch for the loggers' road as one of the best of its kind. From its end, the way lies through the Middle and Lower Joe Merry lakes, through the long and difficult thoroughfare which constitutes their outlet into Pemadumcook Lake, and directly across the latter to the Gull Rock channel leading to Ambejijis Lake, a distance by water of ten miles. The whole distance from Brownville village to the mouth of the Aboljacarmegusquoik is, by this reckoning, forty-seven miles.

Both the routes now described are highly attractive for the beautiful scenery which the ever varying forests, river, and lakes present, the rapid succession of new impressions and experiences; and, to sportsmen, in respect to the facilities for hunting and fishing offered at the proper season. Of this northern wilderness, no more graphic and truthful description can be desired than that which Thoreau has furnished in his "Maine Woods." Interesting views of mountains are to be enjoyed upon most of the lakes, notably from Millinocket, Ambejijis, and Pockwockamus. The southern and southeastern aspects of Ktaadn present it stretched at full length, and though these are not the most "pictorial" views, they convey the strongest impression of its size and mass. None surpass them in exhibiting several of the most remarkable features. One of these is the unusual height of bare and rugged rock-surface exposed above the tree-line, which strikes every observer, and is probably the result of two things combined, — the steepness of the mountain's sides, and its high latitude. Ktaadn is more than a degree and a half farther north than Mt. Washington, its highest peaks, according to the determination of Professor M. C. Fernald, lying upon the parallel of  $45^{\circ} 53' 40''$ , — that of  $46^{\circ}$  running somewhere across its northern base.

The only thing that to any eye can detract from these southern views, is the appearance to which Thoreau refers when, speaking of one of them, he says: "The summit had a singularly flat, table-land appearance, like a short highway, where a demi-god might be let down to take a turn or two in an afternoon to settle his dinner." Photographs taken from various points show that the remark is applicable only to

views had at short distances from the base, whence foreshortening brings the peaks down almost to the level of the nearer linear brow of the Table Land. Still, in a perfectly clear day, the view of the mountain from the nearest stations on the south, can hardly be surpassed for certain fine effects.

Some distant views from considerable elevations are admirable, as, for example, that from Joe Merry Mountain — a height seldom visited. From a lofty hill directly west of Brownville village, Ktaadn is seen to remarkable advantage, though it is above forty miles off in an air line. The intervening country appears to be a continuous forest-clad valley, without a single conspicuous elevation, save the great mountain that fills the northern horizon. It is visible from the very roots, and the slides — white stripes in a surface elsewhere dark and sombre — give a most forcible impression of the steepness and length of its slopes.

The views from Millinocket Lake, and one that can be enjoyed from the road in front of the hotel at Medway, may be mentioned as offering something of the attractions which, as will be shown, are presented by the more eastern aspects of the mountain.

#### THE THIRD ROUTE, *via* MOOSEHEAD LAKE AND PENOBSCOT RIVER.

For this route a morning train runs from Bangor to Oldtown, and thence sixty-three miles on the Bangor & Piscataquis Railway to Blanchard, twelve miles from Greenville at the foot of Moosehead Lake, which is reached by stage, — the whole distance being eighty-seven miles from Bangor. On his way from Boston, the tourist may take at Newport, half-way between the Kennebec and Penobscot rivers, a branch train to Dexter, fourteen miles, and ride thence thirty-eight miles by stage to Greenville, reaching the lake by either course early in the afternoon. The stages run daily, and make close connections with trains and the lake steamers. In good weather the stage ride is enjoyable. The Piscataquis range of mountains, which runs north of the river of that name and nearly in its direction, exhibits several

prominent summits, of which Boarstone, on the east, and Russell, on the west, are chief.

The distance from Greenville to the head of the lake is called forty miles, but is believed to be something less. The mountain and island scenery, in view from the southern half of the lake, is rich and varied. The principal mountains are bold, but graceful in outline. They are Squaw Mountain, at the southwest extremity, Misery Mountain, distant in the west, the two noble Spencer mountains and Kineo, on the east. These, with the Lily Bay mountains and other minor elevations, add varied interest to what would otherwise be a monotonous landscape of forest continuous around the whole lake. It is broken only on the edge by the little village of Greenville at the foot, a single house at the head of Kennebec River—the outlet—the Kineo House, midway of the east side, half a dozen farms scattered along the shores, at great distances from each other, and a hotel at the head. But of all the mountain views that of Ktaadn, forty miles distant, is grandest, if seen from the right points and by the best light. Such an one, enjoyed by the writer near the close of a clear day of September last, with the aid of a glass, from the steamer's deck, while running from the Kennebec Dam in the direction of Spencer Bay, impressed itself as one of the finest of very many which he has seen from numerous points. By forenoon light the view of Ktaadn from the lake is far less striking. The landscape visible from the north half of Moosehead is comparatively tame, and is relieved only by changed aspects of the mountains already mentioned. Ktaadn and Kineo are hidden from each other by the intervening Spencer mountains.

Guides are usually engaged at Greenville, or the Kineo House. They furnish canoes, tents, and cooking utensils, their employers providing their own blankets and food for the whole party. Preliminaries settled, passage is made by steamer to the Northeast Carry, at the head of the lake. Here teams are at hand to convey boats and baggage across the carry, two and an eighth miles, to the Penobscot. Launching upon the river, the course lies twenty miles in a northeast direction to Chesuncook Lake; through that, six-



teen miles southeast to its outlet; and again, more easterly down the Penobscot, about seventeen miles, to the mouth of Aboljacarmegusquoik, where terminates the third as well as the first route. The most northerly point of this course, the junction of the river with Chesuncook, lies about five miles north of the parallel of  $46^{\circ}$ , if the published maps may be trusted.

The twenty miles between Northeast Carry and Chesuncook Lake are in great part dead-water, nowhere, however, expanding to greater width than thirty rods. The sluggish water is at intervals interrupted by the usual shallow rapids. At a medium pitch of water, these *rips* and Pine Stream Falls require no carrying, a birch being ordinarily lightened of its passengers, and then run or, if the water is scant, led down by the guide wading alongside. The shores are low, as are also those of Chesuncook Lake, which has no islands, and is commonly estimated as eighteen miles in total length, and a mile and a half in average width. From Chesuncook nearly to the little Ripogenus Lake, three fourths of a mile, the river makes a constant succession of falls, wholly impracticable for boats. The portage around them is mainly smooth as a turn-pike, and in beauty is worthy of fairy-land. Ripogenus is a miniature lake, between one and two miles long. The elevation of Moosehead Lake above the sea is estimated as 1,071 feet; and that of the Penobscot, at Northeast Carry, as forty-eight feet less, or 1,023 feet; while Ripogenus Lake has an elevation of 878 feet, a descent of 145 feet in about thirty-seven miles. From the foot of Ripogenus begins a narrow gorge, three miles long, and walled on each side by cliffs, in some places vertical to the height of fifty feet or more. Through the whole length of this ravine the river rushes in continuous falls and rapids, making a descent of 215 feet in the three miles, down to the level of 663 feet. The portage past the gorge, upon its upper half, could be traversed by wheeled vehicles, but the other half is piled with granite boulders, and exceedingly difficult, so that Ripogenus Carry has the bad reputation of being both the longest and hardest portage upon the Penobscot.

Below Ripogenus Carry the river is comparatively smooth

for two and a half miles, and then widens into the beautiful Ambajemackomus Dead-water, about a mile long by a fourth of a mile at its broadest part. Next follows a portage half a mile long, at the foot of which the Penobscot plunges ten feet over a perpendicular granite ledge, constituting Ambajemackomus Fall, followed immediately by the dangerous rapids known as the "Horse Race." Below these a canoe can run safely three or four miles to the series of rapids styled Sourdnahunk Falls, which require a portage of forty rods. Just above them comes in the Sourdnahunk Stream on the left, while below follows Sourdnahunk Dead-water, into which, at the distance of two and a half or three miles open, by mouths only a few rods apart, the Aboljacknagesic and Aboljacarmegus streams, in the order of their names.

Seen by favoring light, Ktaadn shows well from the whole length of Chesuncook Lake, but to greater advantage from the walls of the nearer Ripogenus Gorge. Winthrop's panegyric<sup>1</sup> of Ktaadn, as viewed from the latter, is not extravagant. Here, and from Sourdnahunk Falls, the relation of the Table Land to the chief peaks, and to the northern mountain, is best exhibited.

#### THE FOURTH ROUTE, *via* SHERMAN AND THE WASSATAQUOIK STREAM.

This route requires special notice, as being the one over which the tide of visitors that must soon set towards Ktaadn is destined to flow. It may be travelled with least delay by taking, from Bangor, the morning train of the European & North American Railway, fifty-eight miles north by east to Mattawamkeag, and thence northward by a connecting stage twenty-four miles to Sherman. For the first seven miles, to Molunkus, the stage runs upon the Military Road, built by the United States in 1834, for the movement of troops and supplies to the frontier post of Houlton. At Molunkus, where passengers stop to dine, the Aroostook Road begins, which the route follows, through the wild township Number One of the Fifth Range, and the Irish town of Benedicta, to

<sup>1</sup> Life in the Open Air, pp. 76 and 83.

the "Third of the Fifth,"—to use the abbreviated expression current in Northern Maine,—known as the town of Sherman since its incorporation during the late war. Arriving here at from 4 to 5 P. M., according to the condition of the roads, it is convenient to stop for the night at the Aroostook House, kept by Mr. Boyington. At this house the Aroostook Road is left; and the way, turning directly west, four miles farther on, in the Third of the Sixth (now the plantation of Stacyville), changes from a smooth highway to the worst of cart-tracks. The author of the article, "Going to Mount Katahdin," published in "Putnam's Monthly" for September, 1856, wrote that it "made Pinkham Notch [as it was then] look smooth, and the North Conway paths appear like English lawns." Six miles of such a road leads through the unsettled Third of the Seventh to the Mattagamon.

Here a clearing was made as early as 1835, and a timber house erected for the entertainment of lumbermen, still called "the Hunt House" from its original proprietor, long since departed. A logging-road begins on the opposite bank of the river and, following it up a mile, crosses the Wassataquoik Stream, a branch of the Mattagamon; and six miles farther northwest makes a second crossing of the same stream. From the last crossing, the loggers' road continues five miles to Ktaadn Lake, where it ended till after 1870.

In 1846 Rev. Marcus R. Keep (an historical name as respects Mount Ktaadn), a hardy pioneer preacher of Aroostook County, made his first visit to the mountain and entered the Great Basin, of which he says: "So far as I can learn, I was the first human visitor to this fabled residence of the Indians' Pamolah."<sup>1</sup> In June, 1848, he marked out, and partly bushed from the terminus of the logging-road at Ktaadn Lake, the first path ever opened to the mountain, known as the Keep Path. For this service the Maine Legislature granted him, some years later, two hundred acres of wild land, which he "located" on the south shore of Ktaadn Lake. By his path Mr. Keep went one or more times annually, often at the head of parties, till 1861; when he led his

<sup>1</sup> Springer, *Forest Life and Forest Trees*, p. 193.

last party,<sup>1</sup> that of Mr. C. H. Hitchcock, who was then engaged in the geological survey of the State. The Keep Path ran to the foot of the East Slide where, properly speaking, it ended, since the slide itself was used as a thoroughfare to the top of the eastern spur; and that in turn was climbed to its summit, the First Peak, so called because it was the first one surmounted by comers on this path.

By this course went, in August, 1849, the women who first made the ascent of Ktaadn, Mrs. Elizabeth Oakes Smith (known a few years later as Mrs. Oaksmith), wife of Seba Smith, the once famous Jack Downing, and her companion, a lady from Bangor. They, however, only reached First Peak, which is separated from the highest ones by the most remarkable part of the mountain. Mr. Keep himself claims, in a letter published at the time in the "Bangor Democrat," that five women of a party which he conducted thither, a few days later than Mrs. Smith's visit, were the first of their sex who ever ascended the highest summits. The article in "Putnam's Monthly," already referred to, admits the claims of the two parties mentioned, and records the adventures of the third ladies' party, led by Colonel T. W. Higginson, which, however, like the first, went no farther than First Peak, now styled Pamola. Years ago there was in print a report that Mrs. Lydia Maria Child was the first woman who made the ascent of Ktaadn; but since her death a relative, familiar with her early history, affirms that Mrs. Child's Maine journeys never extended to that mountain.

The Keep Path was travelled by the few who took the eastern route, as late as 1874. In 1872 lumbering was begun beyond Ktaadn Lake, and from it a road was cut five and a half miles to and along a swift mountain torrent which for nearly its whole length tumbles over bowlders. Yet to it lumbermen have attached the misleading name of "Sandy Stream," because, like any other torrent, bearing its finest débris farthest, it has deposited beds of fine granitic sand about its

<sup>1</sup> We had the good fortune this year to induce Mr. Keep, whom we had not before met, to go from his home in Ashland, sixty miles north of Sherman, and tent with us in the Basin, — his first visit since 1861. Acknowledgment for our drafts on his knowledge of the region are due to the veteran explorer.

opening into Millinoket Lake. The lumbering operations at Ktaadn Lake soon badly obstructed the Keep Path with tree-tops left by the choppers; and, as the five and a half miles of new road led directly towards the Great Basin, the old course was abandoned, and in the fall of 1874 some young guides spotted a line thither from Sandy Stream. The new trail has since taken all the travel.

The stagnation of business that followed the close of 1873, brought lumbering in this quarter to a disastrous end, and the road beyond Stacyville, then at its best estate, rapidly deteriorated. The condition in which the writer found it, in the successive years of '79, '80, and '81, will show what tourists going that way to Ktaadn must at present encounter. Traversing a continuous series of rocky hills from Stacyville to the Mattagamon, upon the slopes the road has been washed till, after the lapse of years, little is left but rocks; and the track has been reduced by the washing to a lower level than the surface on each side, and so has become a channel for drainage. Twice the writer has passed over it to the river when water from recent storms was still running copiously, converting the road upon several long hill-sides into the bed of a shallow but rapid brook. Across the swampy valleys between the hills the road is corduroyed, and in '79 was so flooded that the slippery and decaying skids were often afloat. That even a pair of horses accustomed to all the impediments of the woods could draw the team-wagon, on which we rode, over such a way without disaster to themselves and the vehicle, would be incredible to us had we not seen the thing done. The time consumed in going this distance of six miles was above three hours.

Beyond the Mattagamon, rough wagons pass over the seven miles to the second Wassataquoik crossing; but beyond that our luggage was borne sixteen miles, to the mountain, upon the backs of the party and of men hired to assist in the transportation. For the five miles to Ktaadn Lake, portions of the logging-road were in fair condition, but during the years since the lumberers withdrew, a dense growth of bushes had sprung up at intervals, and trees had fallen across the way at all possible angles. This year we found the road bushed and

cleared of windfalls, nearly to the lake ; and on our return, after sixteen days' encampment in the Basin, the road had been so far improved, for the purpose of taking supplies to a crew of men who rebuilt the outlet-dam during our stay at the mountain, that a later party had been able to convey their baggage to the lake upon a jumper, which we, having attempted to use, had been obliged to relinquish after a mile or two.

From the outlet of Ktaadn Lake the road skirts its southern shore and continues, with the usual bush-grown and swampy intervals, about four miles, when suddenly plunging down a steep pitch to Sandy Stream, it turns north, follows the stream a mile and a half, and then abruptly ends at Reed's Upper Dam. Never well cleared, but left originally full of stumps, logs, rocks, and holes, the way upon the shore of the stream is now throughout densely grown up to bushes, which hide from sight the footing ; so that the heavily laden traveller must stumble blindly along, over the obstacles already named, as well as upon many slippery and rotting corduroys. This terminal part of the road, along the stream, is the sorest trial of the whole route, and will not soon be improved for use in lumbering operations ; for although these are to be resumed the coming winter upon the upper Wasataquoik (to flood which in the driving season the Ktaadn Lake dam has been renewed), there are at present no inducements to attempt lumbering upon Sandy Stream. At the end of the road the stream is crossed upon the ruinous Reed's Dam, and the rest of the journey is made along a spotted line. This trail is better and easier than the overgrown road ; but from its beginning one must consider himself to be already upon the mountain, since in the five and a half miles thence to the Basin there is a rise, almost constant, of 1,700 feet, or 309 feet to the mile. For the last two miles, from the lowermost of the three little Basin-mouth ponds into the Basin itself, the whole way is over ridges composed of blocks of granite from the mountain, all the more tiresome because of the rapid ascent.

During the present year a change has been made in part of the old route. Mr. S. B. Gates, the enterprising and gentle-

manly proprietor of the Winn and Mattawamkeag hotels, having bought the Hunt Place, its former occupant, Mr. C. R. Patterson, has removed to the deserted Dacey clearing, — the only one except Hunt's upon the river for many miles, and a mile and a half above that, — and has there built himself a house. Although Mr. Gates has repaired the Hunt buildings, they have stood unoccupied through the season. As a consequence, all the travel connected with preparations for the winter's work on the Wassataquoik, and the travel to the mountain — more than the average for the route — have been turned over the rough road which Mr. Patterson has opened from Hunt's to his own place, and his house has been filled with wayfarers. As it is farther up the Mattagamon than the mouth of the Wassataquoik, a crossing of the river here saves one of the two over the stream, — a thing of importance enough to insure the continuance of travel that way ; which is not to be regretted by visitors to Ktaadn, since they can make their selection between two places of entertainment on the way.

Another deviation at this end of the route, not hitherto often made, — but as travel increases, likely to become more common for the sake of variety, — is a trip by boat down the Mattagamon to Medway, twenty-two miles below Hunt's. We tried this in September last on the return from Ktaadn. The river is strikingly beautiful. For much of the thirty miles, over which we have boated, to its mouth, it has shores clothed to the water's edge with stately hard-wood forest. Except the two already mentioned, there are no clearings along the banks farther than three or four miles upwards from Medway. As usual with Maine rivers, the water is alternately sluggish and "strong ;" but the rapids, including the worst, the Whetstone and Grindstone falls, were run by the loaded bateau at the medium stage of water prevailing when we made the descent, which occupied ten hours of actual running. The upward passage requires double that time. Not a glimpse of Ktaadn is seen in boating the whole length of the Mattagamon ; and, *vice versa*, not a square rod of the water of that river is discernible from Ktaadn ; though the main Penobscot abreast of Medway, a few rods

below the junction of the rivers, is visible from the mountain.

The projected lumbering upon the Wassataquoik promises to make Ktaadn again accessible from a quarter by which in former years a few approached it. Logging-roads opened into that region will make it possible to ascend the mountain at its northern end, as did Rev. Edward Everett Hale and his friend Mr. Channing, in 1845, — an account of whose excursion was published in the Boston Advertiser on their return. As in the cases of Bailey, Thoreau, and Winthrop, rain prevented them from reaching the basins and the higher summits.

The northern slopes have been represented as less abrupt than those on the south, and the ascent from that direction as therefore least difficult. Mr. Hale, on the contrary, found them very abrupt. A recent two days' exploring trip from the Great Basin over the northern ridge and down one of its terminal spurs, followed by the crossing of several others on the way to and around through the valley between Ktaadn and Turner Mountain, back to the Basin, convinced the writer that the slopes of the north are hardly less steep than those of other parts. From the smaller elevation of the north mountain, its slopes are of course shorter than those of the higher south mountain; but to ascend by way of the northern extremity requires several miles of extra travel to reach it, and a return upon the ridge as far to the south before the basins and chief peaks can be attained, — to say nothing of the almost impenetrable scrub which must be encountered at certain levels. Above all, another difficulty renders the northern ascent unadvisable, — the same as that which in less degree is inseparable from ascent by the East and Southwest slides, — namely, the necessity of camping at so great distance from the summits that the visitor is forced to be content with only a few hours upon them, and to make a hasty departure, ordinarily without descending into the Great Basin — the grandest part of the whole mountain. It cannot be too strongly insisted that it is only upon the floor of the Basin, — a central point, in the very heart of the mountain, a little more than 2,900 feet above the sea and not quite



2,300 feet lower than the highest peak, — that a camp can be placed and supplied which will allow of daily ascents and returns, to and from the greater heights and in all directions. For those who visit Ktaadn with the desire really to study and comprehend it, the fact that the fourth, or eastern, route is the only convenient way of access to the Basin is its sufficient recommendation. When it shall be opened by a good road it will be preferred, too, by the majority of visitors, for its exemption from the exposures and fatigues incident to the water routes, which, — and especially that by way of Moosehead Lake, — will always be favorites with persons to whom hunting, fishing, and adventure are the chief attractions of the region, and with whom the pleasure and excitement of canoeing and rapid-shooting outweigh the attendant dangers. Measured from points where public conveyance ends, this route is the shortest, the distance from Sherman into the Basin being thirty-three miles; while the lengths of the others, to the mouth of Aboljacarmegus Stream, nine miles from the chief summit, are as follows: of the first, from Medway up the Penobscot, forty miles; of the second, from Brownville Village *via* the Joe Merry lakes, forty-seven miles; of the third, from Moosehead Lake at the Northeast Carry, about fifty-five miles.

A glance at the accompanying map<sup>1</sup> will show that the shortest highway which can be constructed to Ktaadn from any district now inhabited, must start from Sherman or from Patten, nine miles northwest of Sherman. Under existing circumstances the southernmost point of departure will be preferred, not only as saving several miles of travel, but because by taking the direction of the logging-road up the Wassataquoik and Ktaadn streams, the highway would approach the mountain by the most favorable course. Should a railroad be built from Houlton to Patten it would not touch Sherman, and the coming highway<sup>2</sup> might start direct from Patten to Ktaadn; but any railway to Patten from Mat-tawamheag, as the one contemplated by the directors of the

<sup>1</sup> Plate IX.

<sup>2</sup> The opening of which is being seriously considered by several energetic men. Appeal to the State Legislature will be made for help in the enterprise, — not with flattering prospect of success, it is to be feared, judging from the past.

Maine Central Road<sup>1</sup> and now being surveyed, must follow the valley of the Molunkus Stream through Sherman, which would then, as now, be the natural starting point to Ktaadn.

In the twelve miles of logging-road between the Mattagamon, at the Hunt Place, and Ktaadn Lake, there is an increase of elevation of 700 feet, without difficult hills. Of this increase the greater part, 500 feet, occurs in the five miles between the second Wassataquoik crossing and the lake, and the rise is nearly uniform and almost literally without a hill. For the next five and a half miles, to the crossing of Sandy Stream, there is little or no change of elevation. No great inequalities of surface, then, exist to swell the cost of a road over this part of the route, nor is the ground swampy beyond the average of the region; but, as before remarked, in the last five and a half miles from Sandy Stream into the Basin, the ascent is almost constant and generally rapid. It seems probable, therefore, that the first step towards "opening Ktaadn to the public" will be to construct a stage-road from Sherman to Ktaadn Lake, to build a hotel upon a beautiful site a mile beyond the outlet, and thence to establish a bridle-path into the Basin, a cabin being provided there as a shelter for visitors. Later will come a hotel in the Basin, with foot and bridle paths to the summits.

It will be difficult to find in New England a more delightful site for a summer resort than is afforded by the south shore of Ktaadn Lake, which is a beautiful sheet of water, from two to three miles long and half as wide. On the west Ktaadn rises majestic. To the northwest, and near at hand, lies Turner Mountain, a notable feature in the landscape, — named, not as might be supposed from Charles Turner, the original describer of Ktaadn, but for the man who first cut

<sup>1</sup> The proposed extension of the Maine Central Railroad, as originally announced, was to pass from Dexter *via* Dover and Brownville through the forest to Mattawamkeag, and thence to Patten and the terminus at Presque Isle. A more recent report is that the route now under survey avoids Mattawamkeag, striking the Mattagamon some six miles above Medway, and running direct to Sherman and Patten. Should this course be followed, the highway to Ktaadn will probably begin from a station near the crossing of the Mattagamon. But it seems improbable that a railway will actually be constructed through so many miles of wilderness, destitute of population or resources of any kind for the support of a railroad.

timber in the vicinity of the elevation which now bears his name. Beyond the lake, in the north, some twenty miles away, the Traveller, a mountain of fine outlines, terminates the view.

The fourth route, furthermore, presents Ktaadn on what the artist Church has styled its most "pictorial" side. It is only when seen from the east that Ktaadn assumes the conical shape which early associations assign to the ideal mountain, since the sketches on which the child's impressions are formed are usually end views of mountain ridges. Except at one point, in the town of Lincoln, the mountain is not visible from the railway between Bangor and Mattawamkeag; nor is a glimpse of it gained in the stage ride to Sherman, till a hill is mounted near the line between township Number One and Benedicta. From Forty-one Hill, in the last named town, there is a superb view of Ktaadn,<sup>1</sup> which far surpasses any other distant prospect of it known to us. The outlook is across a deep valley, and takes in the southern (highest) mountain from the very base to its loftiest peak. Other fine views are to be enjoyed from Kelly and Stacy hills, on the road through Stacyville. On the way from the last named hill to the Basin, twenty-nine miles, the mountain is invisible, except from Patterson's house and the hill behind it, from Ktaadn Lake, from the crossing of Sandy Stream, and from a ridge at the edge of the little mountain bog, crossed by the trail two and a half miles outside the Basin. The views from Ktaadn Lake and the little bog are emphatically grand. Another from Palmer Hill, two miles south of Patten, on the road from Sherman, is said to be one of the best; but of it the writer can speak only from hearsay, having seen the mountain thence only when it was partly obscured. A nearer and admirable view, from the same direction as the last, may be had from the top of the easily accessible Lunxus<sup>2</sup> Mountain, situated six miles north from

<sup>1</sup> "The best mountain in the wildest wild to be had on this side the continent." — Theodore Winthrop, "Life in the Open Air," p. 59.

<sup>2</sup> Pronounced by woodsmen as if spelled *Lunk-soos*, of which they give as the English equivalent the epithet "Indian Devil." The name refers to a wild beast, real or imaginary, which was the terror of the northern aborigines, — supposed to have been the Panther. Thoreau spells the word *Lunxus*.

Patterson's, on the west side of the Mattagamon, and rising 1,425 feet above it, as measured with the aneroid.

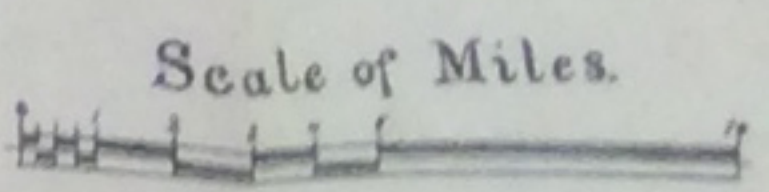
After many inquiries addressed to guides and residents along the different routes, we judge that the number of visitors to Ktaadn, by all the routes, for the last ten years has averaged less than fifty per annum.<sup>1</sup> Ordinarily more have gone by the route down the Penobscot from Moosehead Lake than by any other; the next smaller number have chosen the one up that river from Medway; while, as before stated, fewest have taken the Brownville route. The sum total for all routes varies of course from year to year, as does the number for each route. Thus in 1879 only eight visitors, exclusive of guides, went by way of Sherman; but in 1880 thirty persons took that course, of whom, however, twenty-six went from Patten in one party, the first which for years had made the trip from that town, there being no road from it through the woods to Ktaadn. The same year excessive drought rendered the Penobscot so difficult for boat navigation, that probably not more than a dozen tourists chose the three routes of which that river makes a part. Again, the present year more than the usual number have gone by way of Sherman, while fewer than the average have followed the river routes.

<sup>1</sup> Of the two proprietors of the main mountain, Bangor gentlemen, neither has ever ascended it.



MAP  
OF ROUTES TO  
**KTAADN,**  
to accompany  
Paper in "Appalachia"

J.W. & J. Sewall, C.E.'s.  
Old Town, Me.



Entered according to Act of Congress in the year 1881 by J.W. & J. Sewall in the Office of the Librarian of Congress at Washington, D.C.