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**Mount Katahdin – March 1853:  
the mysteries of an ascent**

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Maine Sporting Camp History: Piscataquis River Watershed

Mountain Explorations (Katahdin and West Branch of the Penobscot River history)

## Mount Katahdin – March 1853: the mysteries of an ascent

Abstract: While working on another project using 19<sup>th</sup> Century Newspapers search engine, I immediately became curious when my eyes picked up the word “Katahdin” in a Cleveland, Ohio newspaper. I was even more curious when I saw the date, March 1853. A check of key sources pertaining to nineteenth century Mount Katahdin ascents revealed no reference to this ascent. The writer’s focus was not about the climb and he did not sign his work, but he did provide clues to his route and who he was. In this document I used those clues in making a circumstantial case for a particular route and the climber’s identity. Perhaps someone at a future point-in-time will solve the mysteries of the person’s identity and the nature of spending a night near the summit of Katahdin in winter in 1853.

March 24, 1853 – Daniel White’s logging camp, West Branch of the Penobscot River

“... I [“T”] sighed for language to describe the sunrise I beheld this morning. I stood almost upon the summit of Mount Katahdin, 5,000 feet above the waters of the Penobscot and beheld the ‘King of Day’ crouching like a world of fire at my very feet. Rising majestically from its bed of snowy down, he draws his golden robes around him and walks the blue vault of heaven with a more than reverential tread....” (“T,” “Down East Rambles No. 5,” *The Cleveland Herald*, April 7, 1853)

On March 19th three men took the stage, one with runners to accommodate the snow, from Bangor north and reached the Daniel White logging camp on the West Branch of the Penobscot River on March 20th. (“T,” “Down East Rambles No. 4,” *The Cleveland Herald*, April 1, 1853)

“T” did not describe the party’s two-day route to White’s camp. However, in 1853 three stage routes went north from Bangor; one to Greenville, the second to Milo and the third to Medway.<sup>1</sup> To travel beyond the stage line to the logging camp “T’s” party used a packed tote road and a private conveyance that had to be horse drawn; any ox drawn supply sled would have been too slow given the two day travel time. From Milo the Nahmakanta Tote Road was the loggers’ major supply route to the West Branch between Ripogenus Lake and North Twin Dam. The road went through the forest to South Twin Lake, crossed it, North Twin, Pemadumcook, and Ambejejus lakes to reach the West Branch. No logging supply tote road followed the West Branch from the stage line on the east side of the Penobscot River at Medway, the junction of the East and West Branches of the Penobscot River.

“T” provided two hints about the location of the White Camp on the West Branch: 75 miles from the main road and, at most, a four day round trip from the camp to the Katahdin’s summit. Given “T’s” reference to other travel in “Maine Correspondence” (Ramble No.1) (*The Cleveland Herald*, March 19, 1853), the 75 miles was probably the distance from either Bangor or Orono to a camp that was roughly between Pockwockamus Deadwater and Nesowadnehunk Falls. White would have calculated the mileage so he could determine supply delivery schedules and costs.

The camp location suggests “T’s” party used the Abol Slide route that Henry David Thoreau and others hiked from the confluence of Abol Stream and the West Branch to the top of Mount Katahdin. Whether at this time the Native American guides were following a route from Pockwockamus Deadwater to Abol Slide as they were in the 1890s is unknown.<sup>2</sup> From the White camp to the top of the mountain the party would have snowshoed an unbroken trail with substantial heavy gear; a straight-line distance of about five miles. The steep terrain would have made for slow going and taken up to four days for the round trip. They started on or after March 21 and were back in White’s camp on March 24.

“T’s” “Rambles” provided no other information about the trip.

“T” did not identify himself or his two New Hampshire traveling companions, Bill and “the governor’s son.” *The Cleveland Herald* editors did not provide “T’s” name elsewhere in any of the four issues. However, they often used the initial of a writer’s first name as the identifier at the end of a letter or article.<sup>3</sup>

“T” offered hints about his identity in his series of five letters to *The Cleveland Herald* in March and April 1853. The texts of each letter included elements of a transcendentalist’s philosophy: a focus on the capability of individuals to generate new insights as opposed to collecting knowledge put forth by others, the goodness of people and nature, and the value of the independence and self-reliance of people.

In Ramble #1 “T” wrote that his trip would proceed from “*superficial*” New York City to “*erudite*” Boston to “*profound*” Portland to “*orthodox*” Bangor, before heading to a logging camp deep in the Maine woods. He named eight representative learned men of New York City as being “known for their extensive information and

not depth of thought.” The men of Boston, citing examples, he claimed to be exactly opposite. “Portland’s literary characters are equal to those of its sister city Boston ... and they too are possessed with that deep profound knowledge.” “Bangor is transcendently orthodox... and has two classes of citizens, the extremely religious and the extremely rascally... with three rascals to one priest...” From 1835 to 1850 the conservative transcendentalist Frederick Henry Hedge, a first generation Harvard transcendentalist, was the pastor for the Unitarian Universalist Society of Bangor. Amory Battles, a second generation Harvard transcendentalist, succeeded him.

Another clue to “T’s” identity was his interest in women’s rights issues, a topic in three of the five letters. “T’s” route to Bangor included a stop in Great Falls, New Hampshire, where he visited a large cotton mill and wrote about the conditions pertaining to female mill workers (“T,” “Down East Ramble No. 3,” *The Cleveland Herald*, March 25, 1853). While “T’s” group was in Orono (next to Bangor) he observed and remarked on the role of the women due to the absence of husbands and other men during the logging season (“T,” “Down East Ramble II,” *The Cleveland Herald*, March 21, 1853). In “Ramble No. 5” he extolled women’s capabilities through a description of an 1849 first ascent of Katahdin by two women whom he did not name, Elizabeth Oakes Smith of New York City and Nancy C. Mosman of Bangor, Maine.

“T’s” use of the word “Whig” and affirmation of George Evans, a Maine United States senator (1841-1847) elected as a Whig, indicated he was supportive of the Whig Party principles (“Maine Correspondence” (Ramble No. 1)).

His description of the Katahdin sunrise suggested he was a writer. Furthermore, in his first paragraph of Ramble No.5 he referenced Shakespeare and Milton and lamented that writers, who are overcome by some scene, repeatedly used the most powerful variations of each other's "Anglo-Saxon" lexicon to describe the sight and left nothing for "Niagara [Falls]."4 While "T" sighed and perhaps struggled for words describing the Katahdin sunrise, what he wrote was transcendent.

Since the greater Boston area was the center of the transcendentalist's movement, and since "T" asserted that Boston was superior to other localities and used it as the primary focal point of comparison among the cities, it seems likely "T" lived in the Boston area.

Another clue to "T's" identity involves his mentioning the Katahdin ascent of the first two women. He could have personally known Mrs. Smith or learned of her trip from Boston area transcendentalists like Henry David Thoreau and Ralph Waldo Emerson, both of whom knew Elizabeth Oakes Smith. If that was not his source, then Bangor's transcendentalist Unitarian ministers Frederick Henry Hedge or Amory Battles could have informed him of the ascent, or he could have read about the climb in any of one or all of four different articles. *The Bangor Daily Whig and Courier* of Wednesday August 29, 1849 had a short article that noted Mrs. Smith and a female friend from Bangor had just made the first woman's ascent of Katahdin. A letter from Marcus R. Keep to the editor of the same paper appeared in the Saturday September 1, 1849 issue and announced his party, which included five women, had climbed Katahdin and found a bottled note with Mrs. Smith's name near

the summit. Using the pseudonym "A Pilgrim," Mrs. Smith wrote a four-part trip account that appeared in the September 12, 15, 26, and October 8, 1849 issues of *Portland Daily Advertiser*. She identified her companions as a guide and "Mr. and Mrs. M."<sup>5</sup>

"T" began his trip after visiting "the city of Churches," presumed to be Brooklyn, New York. By 1853 Mrs. Smith had moved from Portland, Maine to Brooklyn. She was a Unitarian, a respected writer, a politely outspoken and highly regarded Lyceum lecturer (1851-1857) focusing on women's rights and abolition, both matters of interest to transcendentalists. Such noted men as Henry David Thoreau and Ralph Waldo Emerson commended her work and supported her successful Lyceum lectures. In late December 1851 she spoke in Gloucester, Massachusetts and soon after that in early 1852 she spent considerable time at the Emerson home in Concord, Massachusetts. When living in both Portland and Brooklyn she enjoyed meeting notable writers and regularly hosted them and similar friends for social entertainment. Given that the circle of transcendentalists and those advocating women's rights was relatively small it is likely Mrs. Smith and "T" knew each other.<sup>6</sup>

"T's" planned route to Katahdin may have been the same as used by Mrs. Smith's party, but whether or not he set out for Maine with the expressed purpose of climbing the mountain is unknown. His text only revealed that he planned to visit a logging operation on the East Branch of the Penobscot River. The Smith party went from Bangor north along the Penobscot and its East Branch to the Hunt Farm and the start of a route Marcus Keep had blazed to the summit of Katahdin in 1848.

Perhaps the lumber camp “T” group’s intended to visit was in the Hunt Farm area that was near the major supply tote road north of Medway.

“T” had contact with an East Branch logging camp owner prior to starting the trip and that person was either Daniel White or a friend of White’s. While the “T” party was in Orono, they met Daniel White, whose home and well established logging and mill business was in that town. White also owned a considerable amount of land near the Hunt farm and East Branch.<sup>7</sup> As a lumberman White would have known who was logging where on the Penobscot watershed and may have advised “T” to not go as planned to the East Branch logging camp for some unknown reason, but instead to visit his logging camp on the West Branch.

“T” was perhaps Thomas Wentworth Higginson. Both men were transcendentalists, supported Whig Party interests including abolition and women’s rights, and were writers and physically active men who apparently came from the greater Boston area and had contacts in Bangor. Higginson was born and raised in Concord, Massachusetts, educated at Harvard University when transcendentalism was a focal point of study, became a Unitarian minister, was a transcendentalist, was an abolitionist and women’s rights champion, and, at the time of this trip, was pastor of Free Church in Worcester, Massachusetts. He was a prolific essayist and book author who advocated for a broad spectrum of women’s rights, better working conditions, equal pay, and the right to vote, and became actively involved in the regional and national women’s rights movement. He was also a man who exercised regularly, took nine to ten mile walks with friends, hiked in the White Mountains of New Hampshire, skated and played cricket, and was president of an athletic club.<sup>8</sup>

“T” and Higginson had either friends or interests in the New York City area. “T’s” first “Ramble” was from Brooklyn where he was visiting. In spring 1853 Higginson’s friend, Harvard Divinity School classmate, and fellow women’s rights and abolitionist champion, Samuel Longfellow, youngest brother of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, became the pastor for the Second Unitarian Church in Brooklyn, where “T” began his journey to Maine. Mrs. Smith, who lived in Brooklyn at the time, knew the Longfellow family; she grew up in the same area, Portland, Maine and they attended the same church. Longfellow and Higginson co-edited *Thalatta: A Book for the Seaside* (poetry) published in Boston in 1853. In September 1853 Higginson was in New York City for a New York region woman’s rights movement gathering. Mrs. Smith, who had similar interests, probably attended that same meeting.

Higginson and “T” were both a friend of Ralph Waldo Emerson. About 1851 Emerson and writer Elizabeth Oakes Smith had a conversation at Emerson’s home in Concord, Massachusetts about the differences between New York City and Boston. Emerson stated: “Perhaps for that reason society in New York is more shallow and the knowledge more superficial.”<sup>9</sup> In Ramble No.1 “T” used the same word, “superficial,” and stated learned New York City men have “no depth of thought.” He could have heard that language in a conversation with Emerson or been part of a conversation that used the same words at Emerson’s home. Higginson, also a sharp critic, was a frequent guest at the Emerson home and would have likely discussed the differences between Boston and New York intellectuals.

The knowledge Higginson and “T” had about the first woman’s ascent of Katahdin prior to the 1853 ascent was perhaps from Smith or Emerson or Thoreau. Both “T” and Higginson were advocates for women and were in Brooklyn where Smith lived before their ascents. Both men knew Emerson who was the person who encouraged Smith’s participation in the Lyceum Lecture circuit. Thoreau first met Smith on December 30, 1851 when he came to her lecture at the Concord Lyceum.<sup>10</sup> She probably read about his 1846 Ktaadn and West Branch trip in *The Union Magazine of Art and Literature* (New York) through five installments between July and November 1848. Thoreau’s trip was, in part, a transcendentalist’s exploration, and perhaps, had an influence on Smith. Higginson, who loved Thoreau’s work, *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers*, and read it yearly<sup>11</sup> wanted to meet Thoreau, so he went uninvited and unannounced to see Thoreau at his family’s pencil factory in 1850 and that initiated a long lasting relationship.<sup>12</sup>

“T” and Higginson were perhaps both influenced by Thoreau. On his 1846 trip Thoreau developed a fascination for the logging process. He could have influenced “T” to visit a logging camp by encouraging such a trip in winter, the only season in which loggers cut and the camps were open.

Their writing contained two similar elements, woman’s focus and word choice. In “Going to Katahdin,” Higginson, the anonymous writer who confessed his authorship in later years, used a feminine voice in writing about the excursion.<sup>13</sup> As “T” had done, Higginson proudly proclaimed the capabilities of women who climbed Katahdin in 1849 using a similar descriptive tenor.

Higginson's article and "T's" "Ramble No.5" both contained a description of the sight from Katahdin's summit. While each description was different, each used the context of heaven and a nearly alike specific phrase, "blue vault of heaven" ("T") and "blue dome of heaven" (Higginson). Another commonality was "T's" use of "raising majestically" and "reverential," and Higginson's "to be lifted" and "blue dome receives us." Higginson wrote: "...How strange it was to be lifted, at a gigantic height, with a narrow pedestal beneath one's feet, shear up into the blue dome of heaven; but very kindly that blue dome receives us; one soft white cloud encircling the whole heavens near the horizon and nothing else to mar the absolute and perfect hue. Such simplicity of coloring, blue sky, white cloud, and beneath, one sea of green..." "T" wrote: "... Rising majestically from its bed of snowy down, he draws his golden robes around him and walks the blue vault of heaven with a more than reverential tread...."

Both "T" and Higginson used initials or pseudonyms to disguise identities of most people. Letters Higginson wrote to other newspapers were nearly always signed "T.W.H."<sup>14</sup> The common practice of the editors at *The Cleveland Herald* at this time appeared to be the use of the contributor's first initial, so perhaps they left off "W.H."<sup>15</sup>

Higginson's 1855 account and his first book suggested he might have previously been to Katahdin. The 1855 article began with "Last night I dreamed of Katahdin... The railroads were choked with snow, but in five minutes I had traveled three hundred miles and was in those happy woods again. ...For more than a year we had clearly resolved to go to the top of Katahdin." His use of the words "dream,"

“railroads,” “snow,” “again” and “for over a year” could suggest he was previously at the mountain.

Higginson’s first book, *Outdoor Papers* (1863), included two essays with text that suggested he was “T.”<sup>16</sup> The essay “Snow” revealed that he loved winter and he included passages that are reminiscent of “T’s” winter morning view from the top of Katahdin: “... all winter the pile of ice grows larger, glittering organ pipes of congelation... who can despair before the iciest of human life, when its unconscious symbols are so beautiful.”<sup>17</sup> In “Physical Courage” (originally written for *The Atlantic Monthly* November 1858) he shared: “...on the other hand I have known a black-bearded backwoods man, whose mere voice and presence would quell any riot among lumberers<sup>18</sup> .... Do you shrink from the dizzy height of yonder magnificent pine? Then climb it, and ‘throw down the top’ as they do in the forests of Maine.”<sup>19</sup> In 1853 Maine loggers cut primarily pine and worked only in winter. He perhaps observed his “backwoods man” and “throwing down the top” while at the White logging camp.

Both “T” and Higginson knew people in Bangor before they made their respective journeys. At a minimum “T’s” contact was Daniel White. Higginson’s 1855 article informed the reader that “H” had been in frequent contact with a Bangor person over the past year. The clue to the Bangor person’s identity was in the other trip account, “A Trip to Katahdin,” which was written by “A.B.” and appeared in the *Bangor Daily Whig and Courier* on September 29 and October 1, 1855. “A.B.” was Amory Battles, the Unitarian minister in Bangor, Maine beginning in 1850. Battles, entered Harvard Divinity School the year after Higginson

graduated. Higginson also knew Battles predecessor Hedge, who was in Germany the year of the Smith ascent.

Another circumstantial factor linking “T” to Higginson is in the string of Katahdin excursions between 1837 and 1856; those not living in Maine had Harvard and Boston area connections and they all knew each other. “T” was perhaps one of this group in the greater Boston area. In 1837 Charles T. Jackson, who was a Harvard graduate and whose sister Lydia married Emerson in 1835, led a group to Katahdin as Maine’s first state geologist. William Francis Channing and Edward Everett Hale, who were Harvard graduates, made their trip in 1845. Channing was on Jackson’s first New Hampshire geological survey in 1841-1842 and made long trips through the New Hampshire wilderness. He along with Frederick Cabot and Henry I. Bowditch started as editors of Boston’s *Latimer and North Star Journal*, an anti slave publication, in late 1842. Hale was a Unitarian preacher who was trying to develop, with Emerson’s help, a deeper understanding of transcendental philosophy. A year after the Hale – Channing 1845 ascent a friend of theirs Thoreau, a Harvard graduate and transcendentalist made the trip, following the route Channing and Hale had originally planned. In 1849 Elizabeth Oakes Smith, known to Thoreau and Channing, made the climb. “T,” a Whig, transcendentalist, and, at the very least, knowledgeable of these men and other Massachusetts transcendentalists, traveled to Katahdin in 1853. Two years later Higginson, a Harvard graduate, transcendentalist, and Unitarian preacher, made his sojourn with five women and carried the Hale and Channing journal from their trip of 1845. In 1856 Channing’s colleague and Harvard graduate, Henry I. Bowditch, the ardent abolitionist and

Boston's well know medical clinician and public health advocate journeyed to Katahdin.<sup>20</sup>

Bangor was the starting point for each of these journeys. Emerson went to Bangor in July 1834 to preach. He was there long enough to develop opinions of the community and to visit Orono where he met Mr. Neptune, perhaps the same Neptune who was Thoreau's guide in 1846. Three years later Emerson's colleague and co-leader of the transcendentalist movement in America, Frederick Henry Hedge, the Unitarian pastor and Harvard graduate, moved to Bangor to become pastor for the Unitarian Universalist's Society. Amory Battles, another Harvard graduate, followed him in 1850.

These trips to Katahdin were perhaps "transcendental vacations," something more than the wilderness vacation that was starting to become popular.<sup>21</sup> Emerson and Hedge brought together the first like-minded Massachusetts transcendentalists in 1836. Thoreau soon joined the group; many of them were Harvard professors with whom Channing and Hale studied. Hale, who loved climbing mountains and had taken other climbing trips with Channing, finished his divinity schooling with John G. Pulfrey (dean of Harvard Divinity School) in 1842, but continued his theological reading during the summers. While he may have taken the trip as a wilderness vacation it did have a lasting impact on him and it may have been a part of his transcendentalism conversations with Emerson; they took place soon after the trip. A year or two after the trip he described the Katahdin view as "separate from anything else you ever saw in your life"<sup>22</sup>. Thoreau, after planning conversations with at least Emerson, moved to Walden Pond in 1845 to further explore

transcendentalism. His trip to Katahdin was a part of that exploration. When Thoreau returned, he struggled to understand what he observed on Katahdin for it did not fit with his previously developed philosophical construct.<sup>23</sup> Curiously Smith chose to write her account under the pseudonym "Pilgrim;" perhaps for her the trip was in part a pilgrimage.

"T's" planned trip to the Katahdin area, may have been influenced through conversations with Emerson and perhaps any of the following: Hedge, Channing, Hale, Smith and Thoreau; all of whom Higginson knew. Thoreau's work, "A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers," influenced Higginson and Thoreau's fascination with logging could have influenced "T" to visit a logging camp. Hale, was already preaching in Worcester at the Church of Unity when Higginson came to Worcester's Free Church as its Unitarian pastor in 1852 and he loaned Higginson his journal from his 1845 trip.

The other known people leading Katahdin journeys during this same time period were Maine clergy: Marcus Keep (1846, 1847, 1848 and 1849), John Todd (1851), William L. Jones (1853), Joseph Blake (1856), and a group of 12 Bangor Theological Seminary students (1857).<sup>24</sup> Perhaps these clergy were also seeking further understanding in relation to their faith?

"T's" "Rambles" appear to be what might have been entries in a personal diary. Higginson kept a diary from about 1837 through 1911. Many of these along with some of his letters are at the Houghton Library of Harvard University. However, the diaries from 1853 through 1861 are not in the collection, and do not

seem to be in another repository. The 1853 folder contains only a few personal letters, including those to his mother, all are signed "T.W.H."

While Higginson's writings provided suggestive clues that he might be "T," they also contain information that perhaps imply otherwise. In a letter from Bangor, either December 1853 or the winter months of early 1854, Higginson wrote: "Last night I drove from Bangor with a Buffalo coat on, over wonderful sleighing and felt quite like a backwoodsman. Bangor streets are crowded with uncouth sledges and teams, and at the doors of the shops hang abundant moccasins and long red leggings and even snowshoes. To-day I am to have a lesson in these from Mr. L. and ride to where I can see Indians and Katahdin..."<sup>25</sup> Higginson's letter could be interpreted to suggest he has not been on snowshoes or it may have been his way of saying he was going snowshoeing with a person with more snowshoeing experience. It is hard to imagine that "T" made his 1853 ascent without using snowshoes.

In relation to Katahdin, Higginson's second wife, Mary Potter Thatcher Higginson, wrote: "This glimpse of 'the great lonely Katahdin,' as he describes that mountain, led the next year to a nearer acquaintance; for in 1855 the Worcester parson, accompanied by a few of his friends, made the ascent of Katahdin..."<sup>26</sup> Mary's use of "nearer acquaintance" might mean this was her husband's first trip or she did not know of a prior Katahdin experience. She was only nine year old at the time of the 1853 trip and did not marry Higginson until 1879. If Higginson made the 1853 trip he may not have ever mentioned it to Mary and she never discovered it.

Another question is why the "Rambles" apparently appeared only in *The Cleveland Herald*.<sup>27</sup> The newspaper received these short articles by telegraph. The

Herald's editor Josiah A. Harris (1837-1857) was a Whig Party supporter, an abolitionist, and provided space for women to share their "voices." Harris, apparently, was interested in printing a series pertaining to logging in Maine; the topic "T" gave as the focus of the series in Ramble No.1. Both "T" and Higginson were supporters of the Whig abolition platform and may have been familiar with Harris in that context. In the late 1840s and early 1850s the Cleveland area had some highly vocal women advocating for women's rights, a matter of primary interest to "T" and Higginson. One of those women was Lucy Stone, a Bostonian who graduated from Oberlin College (the first woman from Massachusetts to earn a college degree) and a friend of Higginson. Cleveland was the site for the early October 1853 National Women's Rights Convention, an event in which Stone was highly involved and with whom Higginson was sharing ideas.<sup>28</sup> Thus Higginson could have had Cleveland on his mind.

A perplexing void is that no place in any known Higginson personal papers or his writings or biographies or materials written by others was this 1853 Katahdin ascent ever mentioned, but such sources contain information on his 1855 trip.<sup>29</sup> Compared to other years, little correspondence is available for 1853 so perhaps any mention of it was in what was lost.<sup>30</sup>

It is also interesting that Mrs. Smith did not mention anything of her ascent in her autobiography.<sup>31</sup> For each of them their trips were perhaps simple outings, not necessarily any more important than any other excursion. In 1853 "T" provided no clue that he came to Maine with the intent to climb the mountain; it seems to have been an opportunity that presented itself once he got there. The other reason might

be that neither “T” nor Higginson was particularly attentive to personal accomplishments, a function of their transcendental ideology.

Two years after the 1855 Higginson trip, Thoreau came down the East Branch to Hunt’s farm, abandoned at that time, where he intended to stop and climb Katahdin via the Marcus Keep route, the one Mrs. Smith and Higginson used. However, due to sore feet of his companion they abandoned the plan.

Higginson’s interest in the woods and mountains continued after these trips. Thirty years later in 1885 he became president of the Appalachian Mountain Club. Perhaps he was the stimulus for the 1887 first Appalachian Mountain Club Katahdin excursion, which happened to include a majority of women.

It would be exciting to find the Higginson diary of 1853 and read what he might have written of what would have been a remarkable ascent.

If “T” is not Higginson, then who is he?<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Geller, William W. *Within Katahdin’s Realm: Log Drives and Sporting Camps*. Unpublished manuscript, chapter 1.

<sup>2</sup> Geller, chapter 8, Pre-1894: camps and people

<sup>3</sup> The five “Down East Rambles” that appeared in *The Cleveland Herald* can be read using *19<sup>th</sup> Century U.S. Newspapers* online data base service. The search criteria include: words, Down East; publication dates, 02/01/1853 – 09/01/1853; article type, letters.

<sup>4</sup> I made the assumption that “T’s” use of the word Niagara meant Niagara Falls, which by the 1850s was a vacationer’s destination and described by many writers of the time.

<sup>5</sup> The four-part Smith 1849 account can be read at:  
[www.mainememory.net/artifact/18649/](http://www.mainememory.net/artifact/18649/)

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<sup>6</sup> Kirkland, Leigh. “A Human Life: Being the Autobiography of Elizabeth Oakes Smith:’ A Critical Edition and Introduction.” Unpublished doctoral dissertation. Georgia State University, 1994. This contains an unabridged copy of the autobiography.

<sup>7</sup> Penobscot Registry of Deeds, Bangor, ME and Ancestry.com

<sup>8</sup> Higginson, Mary Thatcher. *Thomas Wentworth Higginson: The Story of His Life*. Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1914.

<sup>9</sup> Kirkland.

<sup>10</sup> Kirkland.

<sup>11</sup> Wineapple, Brenda. *White Heat: The Friendship of Emily Dickinson & Thomas Wentworth Higginson*, New York, Alfred A. Knof, 2008 p.95. This source also tells of Higginson’s visit to meet Thoreau in 1850. Wineapple also places Higginson in Maine in 1853; her footnote implies that Higginson was on the September 1853 James Russell Lowell Moosehead trip that appeared in the November 1853 issue of *Putnam’s Magazine*.

<sup>12</sup> Higginson, Mary Thatcher. In 1847 Higginson married Mary Channing whose brother Ellery Channing was one of Henry David Thoreau’s closest friends.

<sup>13</sup> *Putnam’s Monthly Magazine of Literature, Science and Art* of September 1856 (vol. 0008, issue 45, pp. 242-256)). Can be read at: [ebooks.library.cornell.edu/p/putn/putn.html](http://ebooks.library.cornell.edu/p/putn/putn.html)

<sup>14</sup> I made this deduction based on searches for Higginson authored pieces that appeared in newspapers.

<sup>15</sup> On a tip from Carl Engel, Genealogy and Local History Librarian, Morley Library, Painesville, Ohio, I read a number of *The Cleveland Herald* issues and came to this conclusion. He also suggested that sometimes the editor revealed the writer’s name elsewhere in the paper, such was not the case relative to “T.” Thinking I might find clues to the identity of “T” in old business records and files of *The Cleveland Herald* for 1853, I contacted the following places: Painesville Public Library in Painesville, Ohio; Case Western Reserve Library, Cleveland, Ohio; the Cleveland Public Library, Cleveland, Ohio; and Western Reserve Historical Society, Cleveland, Ohio. No one had any information on any such records.

<sup>16</sup> *Outdoor Papers* was published in 1863 by Tichnor & Fields of Boston and can be read online at: <https://archive.org/details/cu31924022054864>

<sup>17</sup> *Outdoor Papers*, p 370.

<sup>18</sup> *Outdoor Papers*, p 43.

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<sup>19</sup> *Outdoor Papers*, p 49.

<sup>20</sup> Neff, John. *Katahdin: An Historic Journey*. Boston: Appalachian Mountain Club 2006. This book has excellent information on the early climbs of Mount Katahdin.

<sup>21</sup> Stowe, William W. "Transcendental Vacations," *The New England Quarterly* vol. 83, No. 3 (September 2010), pp 482-507.

<sup>22</sup> Hale, Edward E. Jr. *The Life and Letters of Edward Everett Hale, Volumes 1 and 2*. Little, Brown, and Company, Boston, 1917 (p 88).

<sup>23</sup> Blair, John G. and Trowbridge, Augustus. "Thoreau on Katahdin." *American Quarterly* vol. 12, no. 4 (Winter, 1960), pp 508-517.

<sup>24</sup> Neff, pp 21-40.

<sup>25</sup> See note 26

<sup>26</sup> Higginson, Mary Thatcher, p 161

<sup>27</sup> One question is: did any one or all of these "Rambles" appear in any other newspapers? Searches using 19<sup>th</sup> Century Newspapers, New York Times Index, and Newspaper Archives.com yielded nothing. A second question is: was this Katahdin ascent ever mentioned any place else other than in "Down East Rambles No.5?" So far my answer is no. Given that Higginson published anonymously in *Putnam's Monthly* I digitally searched all its issues with key words and nothing surfaced.

<sup>28</sup> Higginson's letter was dated September 15, 1853 Worcester and appeared in *Proceedings of the National Women's Rights Convention*, which was held in Cleveland, Ohio October 5, 6, 7, 1853.

<sup>29</sup> Source of Higginson journals and correspondence. A key document is Higginson's 1853 journal. Not trusting my findings through library search engines, I communicated with Harvard's Houghton Library, Boston Public Library, Worcester Public Library, Worcester Historical Museum, and Concord Public Library about the journal and other correspondence in 1853. The Boston librarian checked some other likely sources (Boston Athenaeum and Library of Congress) and turned up nothing.

The Concord librarian provided me with contact information for Sandra Harbert Petrulionis, who has been working with the Higginson correspondence at Houghton Library. She does not know if the 1853 journal exists or where it is. She, being as curious as I am, searched through her extensive amassed Higginson material and found no references to an 1853 lumber camp and Katahdin excursion. Petrulionis is Distinguished Professor of English and American Studies at Pennsylvania State

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University – Altoona, writer, and Higginson researcher. I appreciate her time and interest in helping me.

<sup>30</sup>The Higginson personal 1853 correspondence and 1855 correspondence dated September, October, November, and a pre-trip letter to his mother that mentioned the 1855 Katahdin trip can be read on OASIS at Harvard University’s Houghton Library, Higginson letters files of 1853 and 1855 in bMS Am 784. There are other Harvard OASIS documents including “MS Am 1162-1162.9 that contain Higginson materials.

<sup>31</sup> Kirkland.

<sup>32</sup>Who else might “T” have been? “T” may not have been the initial for a first or middle or last name of the actual person, but what follows are notes on people who have a “T.” Another avenue to “T’s” true identity is perhaps through his two traveling companions, Bill and the governor’s son, but these too might be pseudonyms. The following notes on these two threads may provide some guidance to future researchers.

Given my assumption that “T” was a transcendentalist:

I combed through sources on transcendentalism and noted names with a “T.” My list included: Timothy Shay Arthur, Theophilus Brown, Edward Tyrrel Channing, Theodore Parker, Thomas Treadwell Stone, and Henry David Thoreau. I also considered wilderness travelers and included Charles T. Jackson and Theodore Winthrop. Given that William Davis Tichnor published the *Atlantic Magazine* and books by transcendentalist I added him to the list. Assuming the person was a prominent writer of the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century I looked for established writers with a “T” initial, but I only came up with Mark Twain, who seemed too young and a search of Maine correspondence in his personal letters housed at the University of California Berkeley revealed nothing. I also assumed “T” was a theologian or a member of the ministry, and a writer. A search of that category took me to transcendentalists.

In researching each of these men I looked for information pertaining to the following: presence in Maine in March 1853, abolitionist interests, writings, women’s movement involvement, Boston area connections, a Maine connection, age and health.

Timothy Shay Arthur, born in 1809, grew up in Newburgh, NY, lived in Baltimore as a young man, and moved to Philadelphia in 1841. He was a prolific writer who wrote for the public’s enjoyment. He was not an ardent transcendentalist or a preacher or vocal advocate for the women’s movement.

Charles Timothy Brooks, born 1813 in Salem, MA, was the pastor at the Unitarian church in Newport, RI from 1837 to 1883. He studied and wrote about theology and did translations. For reasons pertaining to ill health he set out on an 11-month voyage in 1853. The information is available in “Brooks Memorial – Communications on the Death of Charles T. Brooks of Newport, RI.” The authors were E.B. Willson, C.W.

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Wendt, R.S. Rantoul, and W.P. Andrews. It was printed in Salem, MA for the Essex Institute in 1884.

Theophilus Brown, born 1811, lived much of his life in Worcester, MA. He was an intellectual, gathered such individuals at his home and published some poetry, was a transcendentalist in spirit, but did not embark on a literary career or appear to be outspoken relative to any movement.

Edward Tyrrel Channing, born in 1790 in Newport, RI, taught oratory and rhetoric at Harvard University from 1819 to 1851. He devoted his life to literature, but did not focus on abolition or women's rights and does not appear to be involved with such movements given a digitized search of his lectures. His students formed the core of Boston area transcendentalists. He died in 1856.

Charles T. Jackson, the famous geologist, Maine surveyor and 1837 climber of Katahdin, was brother-in-law of Ralph Waldo Emerson. He liked to be known for accomplishments, the exact opposite of "T."

Theodore Parker, born in 1811 in Lexington, MA, was a Unitarian preacher in Boston and supporter of the abolitionists, temperance, women's rights, and peace movements. On the Sundays of March 6, 13, 20, 27, 1853 Parker delivered a sequence sermons at Music Hall pertaining to the function of women. He titled the sermon on March 27, 1853, "A Sermon on the Public Function of Women." The sermon and related information can be found at:  
[http://www1.assumption.edu/WHW/old/A\\_sermon\\_on\\_public\\_funcnt.html](http://www1.assumption.edu/WHW/old/A_sermon_on_public_funcnt.html)

Thomas Treadwell Stone, born in Maine in 1801, began as a traditional Congregationalist in Andover, ME, served in East Machias, Maine from 1832-1846, moved to Salem, MA where he preached until August 1851 when the congregation fired him and he went to First Boston Parish. He was an ardent abolitionist preacher. Many of his sermons and talks appear in digitized form and they focus on abolition and nothing of women's rights. Given that he lived in both Andover and East Machias he would have known about and visited logging camps. It does not seem that he would have had a need to visit White's logging camp.

Henry David Thoreau was in Concord, MA in March 1853. The information is in *The Writings of Henry David Thoreau: Journal, Volume 6:1853*; edited by William Rossi and Heather Kirk Thomas.

William Davis Tichnor, the successful Boston publisher, was not a writer. He did publish works by the transcendentalists and *The Atlantic Monthly Magazine*.

Theodore Winthrop, who wrote *Life in the Open Air*, a chronicle of a trip that included the West Branch, was in California in March 1853. (Williams, John H., editor. *The Canoe and The Saddle* by Theodore Winthrop, Franklin Ward Co., Portland, Oregon, 1913.)

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I want to thank Jim Logan, an historian and friend, with whom I brainstormed the identity of “T” and who suggested Higginson.

“Bill and the governor’s son:”

I have no idea who Bill might have been. Sandra Harbert Petrulionis kindly searched her notes for any possible “Bills,” but did not find any.

Higginson’s text suggests the “the governor’s son ” is young. A “governor’s son” living in New Hampshire could be the son of a governor of any state. If the governor was one of New Hampshire’s, then Daniel Everett Colby (b.1815), son of Anthony Colby the New Hampshire governor elected from the Whig Party (1846-1847), is the most likely the son. Daniel was living in New London, New Hampshire at the time of the trip. Colby was the only Whig governor of New Hampshire.

At the time of the climb Noah Martin was the New Hampshire governor; he had two daughters. Samuel Dinsmoor Jr., who preceded Martin, had two sons born in 1846 and 1847 and both too young at the time of this trip. Jared Warner Williams, Dinsmoor’s predecessor, fathered two sons who lived their lives in their hometown of Lancaster. The oldest son George Canning Dinsmoor was born in 1827 and only five years younger than Higginson. Jared Irving Dinsmoor was born in 1832 and graduated from Brown University in 1854. Early on he was editor of the weekly newspaper *Coos County Democrat*. He lived his whole life in Lancaster, New Hampshire and worked as a civil engineer and lawyer. Higginson may have known the Williams’ family through his work in Rhode Island and their association with Brown University where Jared Warner received an A.B. in 1818 and an LL.D. in 1852. Another possibility involved Lancaster’s strong Unitarian community beginning in the 1830s and where tensions between two religious factions were high from the 1840s until about 1854 when George Matthias Rice (Harvard Divinity School 1835) became the pastor. Rice had earlier served a number of Unitarian societies in the greater Boston area. Lancaster was also an entry point to New Hampshire’s White Mountains where Higginson hiked. Jared Irving would have been adept at handling cold winter weather.

A similar analysis of Massachusetts and Rhode Island governors yielded no apparent possibilities.