

Unification of the White Mountain trails

IN the same two decades of the teens and twenties, when the Long Trail was knitting Vermont together, both White Mountain and Adirondack denizens began to perceive their entire high peaks regions as cohesive trail systems, instead of independent clusters. Both the White Mountains and the Adirondacks became, in effect, single, unified hiking centers.

Up through 1910, the White Mountains were balkanized into the separate summer colonies of Randolph, Wonalancet, Waterville, and other centers. This was before the unified ownership of the White Mountain National Forest, and before the AMC was established enough to command a regional following. But what mainly kept the early trails separated was the slowness of transportation around the mountains. Even after 1876 when the railroads had greatly speeded up the process of getting from Boston and New York to the mountains, it was still a long slow journey to get, say, from Gorham to North Woodstock, or from North Conway to Randolph or Twin Mountain (see figure 36.2). Therefore, hikers of those days wanted circle routes by which they could return to their summer base of operations. The idea of a through-trail system from Pinkham Notch clear to Franconia Notch—the standard milk run for today's mountain vacationers—had to await the Automobile Age. Not until hikers could drive their cars around the perimeter roads to any trailhead they chose did they first begin to think of the White Mountains as one big place to hike, instead of as clusters of smaller ones.

Although no significant *action* was taken to unify White Mountain trails before 1910, the *idea* of unification can be traced as far back as 1901. Louis F. Cutter, mapmaker nonpareil and doyen of the later Randolph trail-building set, became the AMC councillor of improvements that year. Cutter called for viewing the White Mountains as a single trail system:

In general, Club money should not be spent for improvements of merely local interest, but for paths and camps that will be of use to the membership as a whole. This condition is fulfilled by paths joining two or more settlements, and by paths giving access to points of general

interest, such as the principal mountain summits and great ravines. Furthermore, paths that are connected together in systems can be maintained with less expense than can isolated bits of paths.

Cutter proposed as the first goal to connect Waterville trails with the rest of the White Mountains. In James Sturgis Pray he found an eager volunteer. Pray scouted possible routes over the next two years and in 1903 cut a trail up the Swift River valley, following roughly the present course of the Kancamagus Highway, and then down past Greeley Ponds to Waterville (see figure 36.1). Pray was assisted by a young Harvard hiker on whom the significance of linking up local trails to form long-distance hiking routes was not lost: Benton MacKaye later recalled this early experience with Sturgis Pray as planting the seed of the idea of the Appalachian Trail, which finally germinated in 1921.^a

Cutter was councillor of improvements for only one year, but he was succeeded by Pray, who continued what he called "the Club's proposed system of trunk lines," and

advocated the gradual development and subsequent maintenance of a system of interrelated main paths connecting local centers,—the maintenance of purely local paths to be left to local organizations interested.

Though Pray had progressive ideas, his three years in office (1902–4) were hampered by illness and travel. His successor, Harland A. Perkins (1905–7), finally pushed through the Carrigain Notch Trail in 1906, connecting Waterville to the Pemigewasset trails.

Under Perkins, the club's first printed guidebook appeared. The original plan for this 1907 guidebook was, as Perkins assured Waterville trail-builder A. L. Goodrich, "to cover those regions not now covered by local guides." Hence Waterville, the Sandwich and Franconia ranges, and Moosilauke were all omitted from the 1907 edition. But the inclusion of all sides of the Presidential Range in one book showed that Perkins was at least pushing in the direction of perceiving the White Mountain trails as one system. In October 1907 the "Guidebook Committee" was made a standing committee of the club, evidence of the club's commitment to the White Mountains trail system as a whole. Still, before 1910, all this remained largely in the realm of theory.

^aMacKaye was a little hazy on his White Mountain topography at this point, describing the area thus: "It connected the East and the West, the Swift River country with the Waterville country, separated by the quite real wilderness of Carrigain Notch" (Dorothy M. Martin, "Interview with Benton MacKaye," *Potomac Appalachian Trail Club Bulletin*, [Jan.–March 1953] p. 12). Since Carrigain Notch lies several miles north of both the Swift River and the Waterville country and runs unmistakably north-south, it seems likely that MacKaye's memory fused two separate projects, the Swift River–Waterville trail which was cut in 1903, and possible scouting trips into Carrigain Notch, where the trail was not actually cut until 1906 (figure 36.1). As we shall see in chap. 45, MacKaye was a grand strategist and global thinker of tremendous importance, who was never troubled by trivial errors in his supporting documentation.

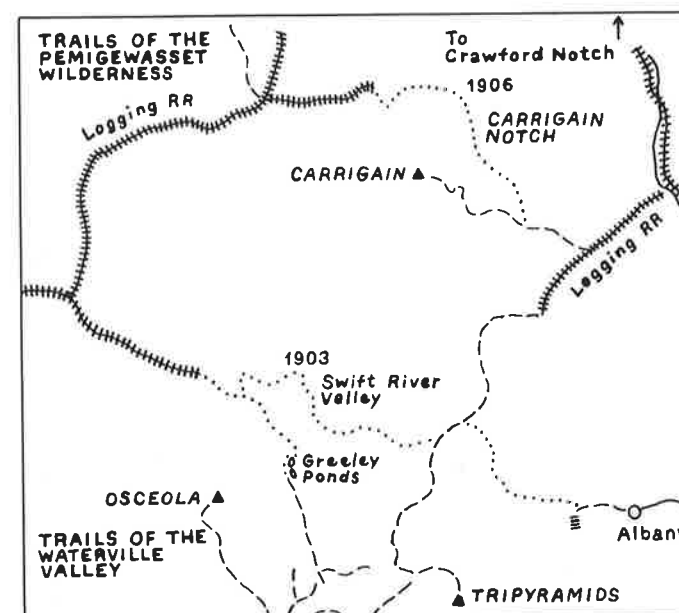


Figure 36.1. White Mountain trails: Strategic links, 1903–1906 In the late nineteenth century, White Mountain trails were built in isolated clusters around the leading vacation centers of the area. In the early 1900s, a few far sighted AMC leaders envisioned linking up all these clusters to form a single White Mountain trail system. The first moves toward this objective were small but strategic links that joined east to west over the future route of the Kancamagus Highway (1903), and that joined the trails of Waterville Valley in the south to those of the Pemigewasset Wilderness in the north, going through Carrigain Notch (1906).

Back around that time, three of the Waterville Valley summer residents most interested in trail work were Paul R. Jenks, Charles W. Blood, and Nathaniel L. Goodrich. In 1912 Jenks transferred his summer base to a farmer's house in the town of Whitefield. That season he enjoyed climbs of Webster and Jackson but lamented the lack of a trail between those two, making a pleasant one-day circuit (see figure 36.2). In the summer of 1912, Jenks cut a trail from Webster to Jackson, the first step in what grew into a relentless nineteen-year campaign to hook up all the trails of the White Mountains into one unified system.

It occurred to Jenks next that a trail from Jackson on through to Mount Clinton would connect with the Crawford Path, thereby opening up a variety of circular day-hikes and through-trips. In 1913 he persuaded fellow Watervillian Charles ("C.W.") Blood to join him in cutting the Jackson-to-Clinton hookup.

In 1914 Jenks and Blood observed that from the top of Webster they could cut a scenic route along the sweeping cliffs on its western flank (the eastern wall of Crawford Notch) and then carry the route down into the

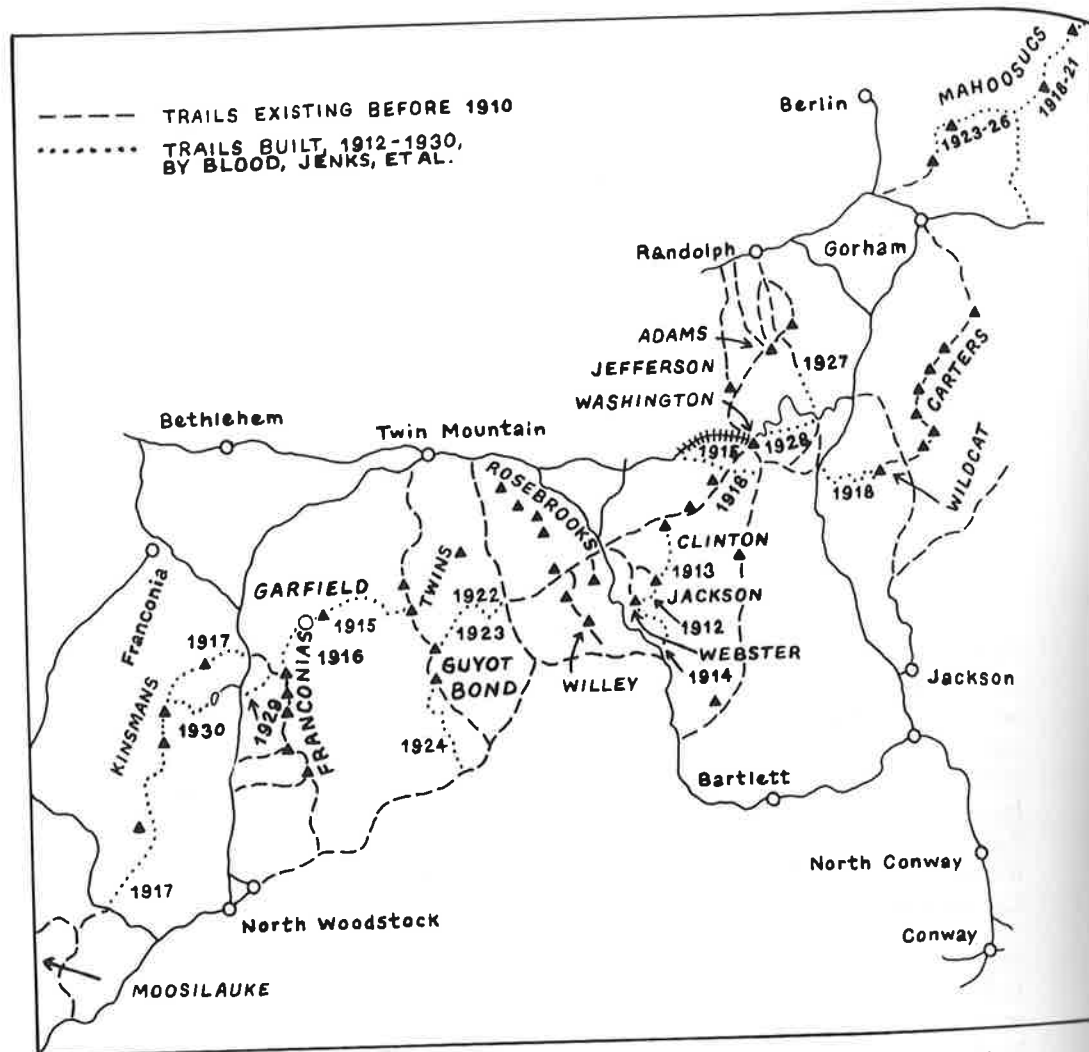


Figure 36.2. White Mountain trails: Unification, 1912-1930 Between 1912 and 1930 the systematic unification of White Mountain trails was planned and executed, a few miles each year. The architects of this achievement were four men: Paul R. Jenks, Charles W. Blood, Nathaniel L. Goodrich, and Karl Pomeroy Harrington. In this map, note how almost every new trail built after 1910 served to link together previously unrelated clusters of trails. For sustained and significant trail work over two full decades, Jenks and Blood especially were remarkable in their impact on the White Mountains hiking world.

notch to meet the trail up Willey and into the Pemigewasset region on the other side. For this task they roped in another old Waterville crony, Nat Goodrich, and went to work. Louis Cutter recalled going by to visit them early in the job and being amazed at the speed and efficiency with which the three made progress. Cutter and the older AMC trailsmen had

assumed they would "spend the whole week locating the trail, leaving it to other groups to cut it later." Instead they completed the entire Webster Cliffs Trail, one of the handsomest hiking routes in the Northeast, in four days (August 3-6, as Europe stalked into World War I). The old guard was finding out what kind of trail work to expect from Messrs. Jenks, Blood, and Goodrich. "It was our first step," later wrote Blood, "in the development of a unified trail system across the White Mountains."

At the end of that summer Blood and Jenks, with three others from Waterville Valley (Ed Lorenz, Fred Crawford, and Nat Goodrich's brother, Hubert), went over to Mount Garfield, set up a base camp at Hawthorne Falls, on a trail now abandoned, and began to scout the possibility of a trail connecting the Twin Range to Garfield, and Garfield to Lafayette. They only laid out the approximate route in 1914. The Garfield Ridge is rugged up-and-down country, bristling with dense, coniferous growth, a trail-builder's nightmare. Back in 1876, Moses Sweetser had sampled the terrors of the Garfield Ridge and described it as "surpassingly difficult, leading through long unbroken thickets of dwarf spruce." Shortly thereafter, the redoubtable Eugene Cook had found tough going through "the serried ranks of spruces, which stood with open arms to receive us and to prove their strong attachment." Blood noted, "It was evident then that this new trail was going to be a big undertaking."

In 1915 Blood, Jenks, Goodrich, and a couple of others cleared the trail from South Twin to Garfield Pond. In 1916 they hit the worst of the spruce, trying to push the route from Garfield to Lafayette. Their first attempts were defeated:

But further way found none, so thick entwined,
As one continued brake, the undergrowth
Of shrubs and tangling bushes had perplexed
All path of man or beast that passed that way.

Goodrich wrote of the epic struggle:

I recall in point the famous hump between Garfield and Lafayette. We just had to get through to Lafayette that week. And the hump was one solid blowdown. It slopes gradually on the north, breaks off in a small cliff to the south. The trail runs east and west along the ridge. We ran a line over the top—a horrible mess. We tried to contour on the north slope—just as bad. We tried between the two—no better. We knew that under the cliff to the south was too low down and bad footing. We had now crawled through that awful tangle six times and were desperate. Also there were bugs. Finally as a forlorn hope, I went through just at the very edge of the cliff and found a delightful narrow corridor of good going.

This Garfield Ridge Trail was completed in 1916, a major step to unifying the mountains, linking Franconia Notch to the Twin Range, from which by turning south over Bond and down, one could hike through to Crawford Notch via Ethan Pond, and there connect with the Webster Cliffs Trail and the entire Presidentials. Wrote Blood: "The idea of a series of connecting ridge trails maintained by the club across the mountains was beginning to take shape."

The AMC made Blood councillor of improvements in 1914. He served three years and was succeeded by Jenks, who was succeeded by Goodrich, who was succeeded by the fourth man in their dynasty, Karl Pomeroy Harrington, and, recalled Blood, "for more than twenty years . . . our group continued opening new trails, having what we liked to call 'trail sprees' almost every year." The roll call of their trail work accomplishments between 1915 and 1930 reads as follows (also see figure 36.2):

In 1915, aside from the South Twin-to-Garfield section, Blood reopened the completely obscured Ammonoosuc Ravine Trail, and the outlying Mahoosucs first drew their attention, with cutting of the Success Trail.

In 1916, besides the Garfield Ridge, the group cut the Notch Trail in the Mahoosucs.

In 1917 they began the long Kinsman Ridge Trail, to link the Franconia Ridge and Cannon with Moosilauke. The triumvirate laid it out, but the bulk of the actual cutting was done under the direction of Harrington, by what is sometimes regarded as the first paid AMC trail crew. As was noted in chapter 28, a single worker had been employed as early as 1911, but the 1917 crew was the first group of students hired for most of the summer, and the first in an uninterrupted chain of annual summer crews employed ever since. The leader of the first crew was a young Dartmouth woodsman with a future ahead of him, Sherman Adams. More on the growth of the AMC trail crew will unfold in chapter 43.

In 1918 they laid out the Wildcat Ridge Trail, linking Carter Notch directly to Pinkham Notch at the base of the Tuckerman Ravine Trail. (Anticipating the sentiments of many an exhausted hiker today, Blood noted, "Considering its length, the route is much harder than would be expected.") They also put the Camel Trail across the Presidentials, providing a direct route from Lakes of the Clouds to Boott Spur, the Davis Path, and Pinkham Notch.

Between 1918 and 1921 they pushed trail through the first major section of the anguine Mahoosuc Range, from Old Speck to Gentian Pond, where it connected with logging roads to the valley. With trails coming off the northeast end of the Carter-Moriah range, the

hiker could now continue from the Presidentials across the Carters and on through the Mahoosucs. Earlier work had been done in the Mahoosucs by Arthur Stanley Pease, but mostly just scouting possible routes.

During 1922 and 1923 Blood and Gray Harris laid out a trail from Zealand Notch up the steep side of Zeacliff and on to Mount Guyot, where it connected with the Twin Range Trail. The actual cutting was done by an AMC trail crew.

In 1924 Harrington restored the route south off Bond to its present Bondcliff location, providing more useful access to the southwest.

From 1923 to 1926 attention returned to the Mahoosucs, where they completed the route from Gentian Pond southwest to Mount Hayes and Gorham. By the end of 1925 "the whole splendid trip of twenty-seven miles" was open. The following year they added access trails.

In 1927 the Madison Gulf Trail was extended from its bottom end in the Great Gulf to connect with the auto road on Washington near where the Old Jackson Road from Pinkham also joined. This made a new direct connection between Pinkham Notch and the hut at Madison.

In 1928 the Nelson Crag Trail was put in, providing a new option for connecting Mount Washington with the valley.

In 1929 Jenks, Blood, and the trail crew resurrected the oft-rebuilt-and-as-often-lost Old Bridle Path up Lafayette. This was its final reincarnation—it has been maintained continuously ever since.

In 1930 Blood and others opened the Fishin' Jimmy Trail to connect the Kinsmans directly with Lonesome Lake, and thereby with Franconia Notch and the various peaks of the Franconia Range.

The result of all this was that the White Mountain hiker who chose among a variety of different and largely unrelated trail clusters in 1910 was confronted, by 1930, with a single unified trail system extending across the state of New Hampshire, from Moosilauke to Maine. All the great peaks and passes of the Northeast's highest range were now linked together to form one great hiking center.

In addition, the pattern of White Mountain hiking was very much affected by two related institutions that evolved during the 1920s and 1930s. One was structural: the AMC hut system. Expanded to nearly their present scope by the early 1930s, the huts have been fundamentally unchanged (physically) for more than fifty years. The other institution was personal and thus mortal, though it seemed as if he would go on forever at times: Joe Dodge. We'll get to him in a few pages—no way to get around that compelling presence in White Mountain history.

But first the AMC huts. In the terminology of northern New England, the words used to denote backcountry buildings have taken on more or less precise meanings. Three-sided overhanging-roof constructions, with or without floors, are usually called *shelters*, or less often *lean-tos*, or generically *Adirondack lean-tos*. Four-sided closed buildings, with a door and window(s) are called *cabins*, *camp*s, or (especially the larger ones in Vermont) *lodges*. All of these, however, presuppose self-sufficient hikers, carrying their own food and usually, though not invariably, their own cook-gear and bedding. In New England the term hut is normally reserved for that unique backcountry building where a resident crew provides the food and does the cooking. They are, in effect, primitive off-road inns. The principal examples are those of AMC in the White Mountains, described in this chapter. Johns Brook Lodge in the Adirondacks (chapter 37) is an essentially similar facility—in New England terminology, it is more a *hut* in the AMC sense than a *lodge* in the Vermont sense.

The first full-fledged hut was built during the 1880s in the high col between Mounts Adams and Madison. AMC members had often camped in this col, to such an extent that they were having a noticeable impact on the pristine alpine vegetation there. Litter was getting to be a problem. Laban Watson, manager of the nearby roadside inn, the Ravine House, had constructed "Camp Placid," a very substantial shelter off the Air Line Trail in 1885. The idea gradually formed of establishing a more permanent structure for camping in the col.

The motivation for building Madison Spring Hut is hard to pin down from the distance of a century away. Later chroniclers of the AMC hut system have emphasized its function as a refuge in bad weather, but contemporary accounts do not mention this concern. The convenience of a high base for tramping excursions seems more likely to have been the primary motivation. The example of Swiss huts was probably in the minds of club members who had climbed in the Alps.

In the summer of 1888 work began on what was recognized at the time as "the most considerable single undertaking on which the Club has yet ventured." The original structure was built of flat stones, with walls 2 feet thick, pointed with cement, two windows, and a single door. The inside dimensions were 16.50 by 12.25 feet, constituting a single room, though one end could be curtained off for ladies' privacy. The work was performed by paid labor from Randolph and Gorham. All materials were carried by horses to treeline, under Laban Watson's direction, but were hand-carried from there. Ill luck provided the builders with an especially rainy summer in which to work, but the building was ready for occupancy nonetheless by the following summer (1889).

One century, one major fire, several reconstructions, and many changes in management techniques later, Madison Spring Hut continues to serve club members and the public. The modern, comfortable, full-service facility of today, however, is a far cry from the original, simple,

one-room stone dungeon, dank and dark, equipped with stove, bunks, and cook-gear. Back in the 1890s, visitors did their own cooking and otherwise took care of the building. A caretaker and later a full crew were unknown in that first decade.

Following the Curtis-Ormsbee tragedy of 1900, a second refuge was built in the Presidentials, intended for emergency use, as described in chapter 27. As hikers made regular use of it anyway, the AMC built a more permanent and spacious stone building at the Lakes of the Clouds in 1915. By this time the AMC had already built a hut in Carter Notch, not for emergency refuge, but because that scenic location had been a favorite camping spot for club members and other hikers.

Thus by 1916 the AMC had three huts in the high mountains. Beginning at Madison in 1906, resident caretakers were provided seasonally, but most visitors still expected to bring their own meals.

Meanwhile, the club had also leased from a lumber company some land in the heart of Pinkham Notch, including two favorite attractions, Crystal Cascade and Glen Ellis Falls. Originally the area was secured to prevent logging from desecrating these picturesque spots. After the acquisition of the area by the White Mountain National Forest, the club put up two log cabins in 1920 in the notch below Crystal Cascade. By then it was evident that, as at the high huts, a resident caretaker was needed. In 1921 a Natick, Massachusetts, man named Bill Loker spent the summer as Pinkham Notch's first full-time hutmaster.

With a network of four huts now to supervise (see figure 36.3) and hiking traffic starting to grow fast, the AMC needed a manager for what was, for the first time, perceived as a "hut system." Into that job in 1921 stepped Milton "Red Mac" MacGregor, a wiry Scot from Rhode Island. He ran the system for seven years and continued to be a well-known figure around the Presidentials well into his nineties. Red Mac was a colorful personality, but the man he hired as Pinkham hutmaster in 1922 put him and everyone else in the north country in the shade. Soon after he arrived in the notch, Joe Dodge preempted the central role in the White Mountains.

Joseph Brooks Dodge was born on the Massachusetts seacoast on December 26, 1898. During World War I he saw submarine service as a wireless operator, acquiring a lifelong love of radio. On June 9, 1922, he started work as hutmaster at Pinkham Notch. That summer was a bountiful one for the porcupines that infested those primitive log cabins in the notch, and a truck driver working under Joe christened the establishment "Porky Gulch," which became the insider's name for Pinkham Notch from then on.

Joe Dodge was mayor of Porky Gulch, "poobah of the Presidentials," and "master table thumper of them all." A large and powerful man, with strong jaw, stentorian voice, and an infamous repertoire of blue language, Joe built an image for Porky Gulch and himself which made both the notch and its mayor the chief magnets for hikers in the 1920s and

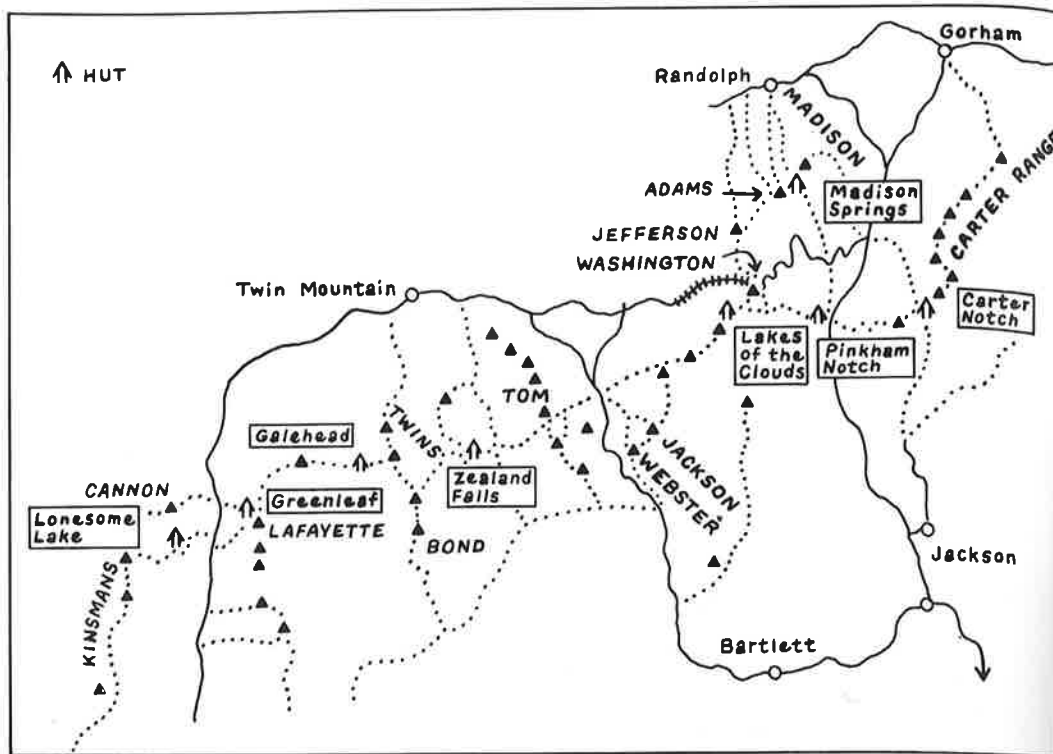


Figure 36.3. The AMC hut system, 1930s During the early 1930s construction of several new overnight facilities in the mountains west of Crawford Notch created the modern AMC hut system. This system reflected the fact that the trail system was already fully linked up (figure 36.2.). The chain of huts symbolized the unification of White Mountain trails which had been accomplished by Jenks, Blood, and the trail-builders of the two decades before 1930. During the 1960s another high hut was added at Mizpah Springs, between Mount Clinton and Mount Jackson.

1930s. Joe had personal contact with most of the hikers: "Though he knows only 2000 visitors by name or face, friends estimate that 250,000 Easterners are acquainted with him," reported the *Saturday Evening Post*. Legends grew of his capabilities as mountaineer, cook, builder, repairman and improvisational mechanic, skier, fisherman, weatherman, and master of the swearword:

Joe ran a good show. He was a showman, there's no question about it. . . . He knew they liked to hear him swear so he would accommodate them.

One of his former employees observed, "I don't believe any one ever found it necessary to say to Joe, 'Sorry, I didn't quite catch that.'" This

same former employee recalled, "For thirty-six years, he *was* Pinkham, and for those of us who worked with him and for him, he always will be."

For the first four years he was at Pinkham Notch only in the summer. Beginning with the winter of 1926-27, Pinkham remained open, with Joe battling the worst of the storms, talking to himself when no one else was around (which was most of the time), snowshoeing up to check on his three huts, Madison, Lakes, and Carter, and eventually concluding that his life would henceforth be inextricably bound to the White Mountains. From that winter of 1927, the AMC's Pinkham Notch Camp remained open year-round, and for the next third of a century the man in charge of this wintry outpost was Joe.

On January 1, 1928, Joe Dodge succeeded Red Mac as manager of the AMC hut system. Under his forceful leadership, common sense, and aggressive (sometimes abrasive) drive, the system grew from three small refuges to a chain of seven full-service inns and spread from the immediate area of Porky Gulch all the way across the White Mountains westward past Crawford Notch and Franconia Notch. In 1927, at Lakes of the Clouds, a separate crew room was built. In 1929, at Madison, major renovations and new construction resulted in five separate rooms: dining room, kitchen, men's and women's bunkrooms, and crew quarters. The same five rooms were provided in the new huts that began to spring up in 1929 (figure 36.4). This had more than architectural significance. It signaled that the new huts aimed to provide a different level of service and thereby an altogether different mountaineering experience from what had been envisioned by the builders of Madison Hut in 1888. In 1929 Greenleaf Hut was erected on a bluff high on a shoulder of Lafayette. Across Franconia Notch, in the same year, two long-standing fishing camps around Lonesome Lake, acquired by the state of New Hampshire, were added to the growing AMC system. In 1931 and 1932 respectively, the ridges between the Franconias and the Presidentials were provided with two more huts, Galehead and Zealand Falls, so situated as to fashion a chain convenient for nightly stops on a continuous hike across the unified trail system that Blood and Jenks had fashioned (see figure 36.3).

As implied by the size and floor plan of the newly built western huts and the greatly expanded Presidential pair, the AMC huts now provided much more than minimal protection from the weather. With a dependable flow of mountain walkers, augmented by large parties from summer camps, business now required staffing by more than a single caretaker. Teams of two to four "hut-men" were recruited from the colleges, with a strong Dartmouth bias. The young men welcomed the special life of hard work, clean air, and spectacular surroundings. The "croos" (or, more strictly rendered, "Da Croo") provided clean blankets and hot meals, the latter soon acquiring hearty renown among hikers. White Mountain travelers grew accustomed to a level of comfort, though scarcely of luxury, that was not available in the Green Mountains or Adirondacks. The

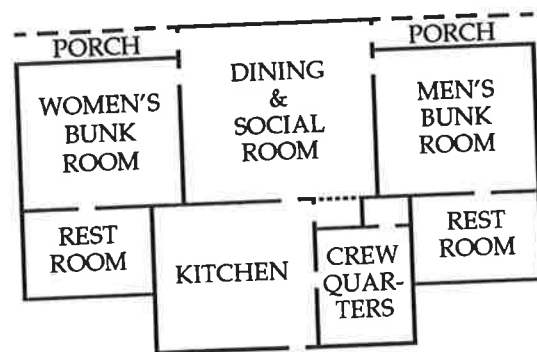


Figure 36.4. Typical AMC hut floor plan, 1930s The three western huts built during the 1930s—Greenleaf, Galehead, Zealand Falls—were designed in a similar way, as shown in this floor plan. There were minor variations in each hut. In postwar years the sex barrier was broken in the bunkrooms, so that men and women occupied either side. Another postwar trend in some other huts was toward separate buildings for bunkhouses.

accommodations had a special flavor and appeal to large numbers of AMC members and others but earned a measure of disdain from more primitive campers, some of whom resented these "hotels" in the mountains. Certainly they had come a long way from that simple stone refuge at Madison Spring in 1888.

For all his colorful self-promotion, Joe Dodge also proved a stunningly successful business manager of the expanding hut system. He understood his market, the hikers of the 1920s, 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s. He was a natural genius at devising workable solutions to the physical problems of maintaining facilities in such remote and difficult settings. On the people side, though his bombastic and domineering style might not have worked in the 1960s and 1970s, it was just right for his time. Many who worked under him attested his "amazing gift of getting the very best out of all those who worked for and with him." One of his employees recalled, "Joe had the art of taking boys and getting men's work out of them."

Though Joe Dodge stepped down in 1959 after thirty-one years, the system he built has lasted and remains a distinctive characteristic of White Mountain hiking. Changes have been introduced since World War II, such as the hiring of women on crews, the addition of an eighth high hut (at Mizpah Springs—to reduce the gap between Lakes and Zealand Falls), and the opening of two huts for winter use. The summertime volume of guests has greatly increased since the quiet days of the 1930s. But the basic system is surprisingly little altered from that which Joe Dodge put in place more than fifty years ago.

The transition from isolated trail clusters to a unified trail system in the White Mountains had an interesting side effect in the Pemigewasset Wilderness: the tilting of the trail axis from north-south to east-west.

In 1910 the orientation of the fledgling trails in the Pemigewasset was north-south. The major mountaintop trails were the Franconia Ridge on the western edge, a trail up Garfield (east of the present trail), the Twin Range Trail, the roadbed of the abandoned Zealand Valley logging railroad, the ridgeline trail along the Rosebrook Range (now abandoned), and the Willey Range Trail over Willey and Field (see figure 36.5). Note especially the decided north-south orientation of the Twin Range Trail, running from the town of Twin Mountain over North and South Twin, Guyot, Bond, and down to the logging railroad (by a more easterly ridge than that used today).

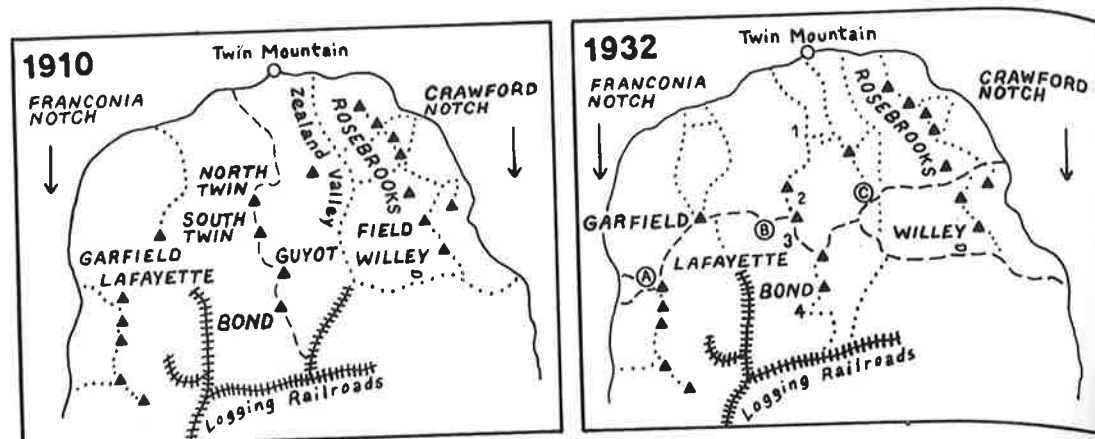
East-west trails were confined to the perimeter. No one wanted to go west from the Twins over the uninviting lanate humps of the Garfield Ridge, nor east from Guyot over the shapeless Zealand Ridge. Indeed, twenty years after it was first cut, even the Twin Range Trail was so little used that it was hard to follow and had to be cut afresh.

Today, what was built originally as one north-south trail goes by four different names for each of four segments: North Twin Trail, North Twin Spur, the Twinway, and the Bondcliff Trail. Why? Because today's hikers perceive that range as part of an east-west artery running from Franconia Notch to Crawford Notch, and connecting with other trails farther east and west (see figure 36.5). The Twinway is seen as a way to get between the Galehead and Zealand huts. The North Twin Spur and the upper Bondcliff Trail are perceived as spur trails to reach interesting side attractions, and the North Twin Trail and lower Bondcliff are viewed as access routes to get up onto the main ridge.

Thus by 1932, with the connecting trails built by Blood, Jenks, Goodrich and Harrington, plus the new western AMC huts (Greenleaf, Galehead, Zealand), the orientation of the entire district switched to east-west. The north-south trails took on an aura of side trails.

It is tempting to assume that the opening of the huts played the key role in the new perception of hikers. However, it may be noted that the western huts came only *after* the trail system was basically complete. Virtually all of the key trails were built during the 1920s, the western huts not completed until 1932.

Not all trail cutting in the Blood-Jenks era involved virgin forests like those of the Garfield Ridge. The Pemigewasset Wilderness had by this time seen the worst of the logging, and much of what is now rejuvenated forest was then a wasteland of charred stumps superfused with a growth of brambles, berries, and hobblebush. Elsewhere the woods had somewhat come back, but the old logging roads could still be found and often served as trailbeds. Robert Underhill, editing *Appalachia* during the late 1920s, reflected on the place of the trail makers in the overall scheme of White Mountain topographical history:



Key to symbols in 1932 map

- | | |
|----------------------|---------------------|
| A. Greenleaf Hut | 1. North Twin Trail |
| B. Galehead Hut | 2. North Twin Spur |
| C. Zealand Falls Hut | 3. The Twinway |
| | 4. Bondcliff Trail |

Figure 36.5. The tilting axis of the Pemigewasset trails, 1910–1932 As late as 1910 the Pemigewasset region—the diverse mountain country between Franconia and Crawford notches—had few trails, and they tended to run north-south. After the building of trails and huts, the orientation of hiking in this region shifted to east-west. One consequence was that the Twin Range Trail of 1910 became fragmented and known as four different trails, with the Twinway (no. 3 in the 1932 map) conceived as a link in the east-west route through the hut system. Today most hikers think of the usual route through this area as running east-west, as do the Appalachian Trail and the standard hut-to-hut itinerary.

It reverses the order of nature. Or rather it is as if an older unknown civilization has come and gone, and we had overlaid our newly primitive paths upon its stately remains—like setting tents upon the sites of ancient Babylonian palaces.

The four leading trail makers of this age—Blood, Jenks, Goodrich, Harrington—were a distinctive quartet. If Joe Dodge preempted center stage, these four were certainly worthy, if less-noticed, side shows. Their prestige in New England trail circles during the 1920s and 1930s was awesome. “The definition of a standard trail by Nat Goodrich,” it was once said, “did more than any other single influence to produce better amateur trails in New England.” They styled themselves the “Old Masters.”

They were all strong personalities. Blood was a Boston lawyer, with a steel-trap mind and an unfailing memory for detail. Jenks and Harrington were teachers of Latin, the former at a Flushing, New York, high school, the latter at Wesleyan University. Goodrich was librarian at Dartmouth College. All but Harrington—back to him in a moment—are

remembered as hard-driving, purposeful men, with little patience for casual or sloppy work. Wrote Goodrich:

There is an edge, a tenseness, about this work. The day is a long strain of keen concentration, of quick decisions, of driving through scrub and blow-downs.

Blood and Jenks were described by a contemporary as “two of the worst trail cranks of those mountains.” Neither one brooked conflicting opinions; fortunately they saw eye to eye on most trail issues until near the end of their long careers, when they had a falling-out. Of Jenks, Blood said, in words that others might have equally applied to Blood,

To him a thing was either right or it was wrong. Unless in his opinion it was right, he would not tolerate it, no matter what his friends thought or how utterly unimportant the matter might seem to some of us.

Goodrich was less assertive than Blood or Jenks, a tall, lean, proper, unsmiling ascetic. Though his writings reveal grace and a subtle sense of humor, his presence did not, according to Sherman Adams, who worked under him both at Dartmouth and on the trail.

Yet these tough-minded men had a warm spot in their hearts for the mountains which glowed with uncommon fervor. The humorless Jenks could reminisce about work on the Mahoosucs, writing,

Of nigh a hundred miles of heavy packing; of nearly as much string paid out through the rough; of forty days’ camping beside high waters; of much bacon and corncake, coffee and cocoa; of some two thousand biscuits baked before the blaze; of a trail varied, interesting, fascinating for every one of twenty-five miles; and withal the outcome of men’s vacations, for the vacations of men to come.

Blood, nearing old age at the Ravine House, could admit:

I am happy, however, just to go into the forest and put a new handrail on a bridge or putter over a few rods of trail, for, above everything, I am a trail man.

The austere Goodrich could reflect:

The trails we have made together, three of us, latterly another, unroll before my eyes, and the thrill comes back. Always there has been the faint spice as of adventure, of exploration; always the keen, joyous concentration as of those enwrapped in a great task to which they were not inadequate—and yet all in a sort of play. So, summer after summer, hot, dirty, redolent of dope, we have struggled through blowdowns and scrub while the white string unrolled behind. Always

there was the odor of balsam, the song of thrushes, the drift of cloud shadows.

Of the lot Harrington alone is remembered with warmth and affection. A short man, soft-spoken, self-deprecating, he has been described as the archetypal absent-minded professor. He wore old suits when in the woods, complete with jacket and tie, finding that "the pockets of the coat were handy for sandwiches." His solitary rambles in the trailless parts of the mountains, including unplanned bivouacs, were legendary around North Woodstock, his summer home. Yet he too accomplished much trail work, and was a guiding light on outdoors matters for a generation of Wesleyan students. One of their number paid Harrington the kind of compliment that, in a measure, is richly deserved by all four of the great trailsmen who between 1912 and 1930 built the White Mountain trail clusters into a single unified system, essentially the trail system that White Mountain hikers know today:

[Harrington] was indeed a patron saint of the Outing Club when I was an undergraduate, and his inspiration meant much to many Wesleyan people who went climbing in the White Mountains.

Chapter 37

The Adirondacks become one hiking center

As in the Green Mountains and the White Mountains, so in the Adirondacks—but a little bit later: hikers finally perceived them as a unified mountain center during the 1920s.

It will be recalled that during the nineteenth century the Catskills had been the premier mountain playground of New York State, thronged with mountain-loving enthusiasts (if only at the Pine Orchard corner of the range), while the Adirondacks were virtually unknown. During the first half of the twentieth century these positions were almost totally reversed.

In 1924 the one-thousand-room Hotel Kaaterskill went up in flames. The Catskill Mountain House was in its final days, a decaying shadow of former glory. The stock market crash of 1929 ruined whatever hopes it had for revival, and when World War II began it finally closed its doors to guests. The Catskills—the mountains, that is, as distinct from the thriving valley-based resorts—were largely bypassed and went into relative eclipse in climbing history. It was said:

The Catskill summer tourist is not a climber. He is a two-week porch sitter or road walker who knows or cares little for the wild peaks and cloves a few miles from his inn.

To the hiking generation of the 1920s, the Catskills seemed "too far from New York for a day trip and . . . too close for a good weekend." By the end of the 1930s they were perceived but dimly, as "perhaps the one mountainous place within four or five hours of New York which is becoming wilder all the time." The hills that had rung with the merry laughter of Mountain House guests for so many decades now lay silent. Some hiking persisted, but well into the 1940s and 1950s it was so light that Ed West, a Conservation Department man who knew the range as well as anyone, could say, "First I heard anything about hiking here in the Catskills was about 1960."

Thus the Catskills replaced the Adirondacks as New York's unknown mountains. Rip Van Winkle slumbered in peace.