

Chapter Six

THE GRAND SCHEME

LIFE WAS GOOD IN 1912. THERE HAD BEEN NO EUROPEAN wars since 1871, it was *la belle époque*, and the last generation had brought a dizzying profusion of wonders: electricity, telephones, automobiles, airplanes, moving pictures, pneumatic tires, phonographs, diesel engines, and Woolworth five-and-dime stores. The germ theory of disease, chromosomes, and X-rays were discovered, and the Hague Conventions were established to replace war with arbitration. The North and South Poles were reached, the oceans were being joined in Panama, and Chester Beach invented the first electric motor for use in home appliances. On top of all that, there was a plan to build a new railway to the summit of Mount Washington.

The famous cog railway had been finished in 1869, but by 1912 the pages of *Among the Clouds* announced that "it is safe to say that the little engines and closed cars are becoming insufficient to handle the growing traffic." Further increases in that traffic could be expected because of developments in hotel accommodation on the summit. The great fire of 1908 had destroyed everything but the old Tip-Top House, and the business boom and buoyant optimism of the day made it obvious that a new hotel would be built, grander and more modern than anything previously known or even imagined.

The hotel would be three stories high, it would be star-shaped and made of stone and steel and plate glass, there would be 100 guest rooms and many would have private baths, and there would be a dining room seating 400. There would be a wine cellar, a barbershop, a billiard room, a grand lobby, and a rotunda 150 feet in diameter. There would be an observatory with a circular walkway on the roof, and above that there would be a searchlight so powerful that it could be seen from the ocean. Most remarkable of all, the summit of Mount Washington itself would rise up through the floor of the grand lobby so guests could climb to the top of the mountain without first climbing almost to the top of the mountain.

All of this, however, seemed modest when compared with the new railway that would bring up the guests. The cog railway ran three and a half miles straight up a west ridge of the mountain, but it was small and noisy, it shook in every joint, and it trailed clouds of smoke. Work had started before the Civil War and the train looked old-fashioned even when it was new; now it seemed faintly silly. Clearly, it was time for a conveyance befitting the new century and the new age.

Mr. Charles S. Mellen was ready. *La belle époque* was an age of unrestrained commercial expansion and Mr. Mellen began his climb by taking over the New York, New Haven & Hartford Railroad. He found a willing ally in J. P. Morgan and expanded his influence throughout southern New England, then gained control of the Boston & Maine Railroad and, through that, of the cog railway. Now Mr. Mellen had just the ticket for the new age: he would build an electric trolley line to the summit of Mount Washington.

The power would be carried on overhead wires suspended from poles set in pairs about every 100 feet along the track and the traction drive meant that the gradient could not exceed six percent, so several routes were considered. The most dramatic climbed the walls of Great Gulf from Pinkham Notch, but on reflection this seemed to promise more drama than most passengers could probably endure.

The terrain on the west side of the mountain was more suitable, and it was also available. This area was largely owned by timber companies in Berlin and Conway, New Hampshire, and, since they both depended on the Boston & Maine to move their lumber, they would not be likely to oppose Mr. Mellen's plan.

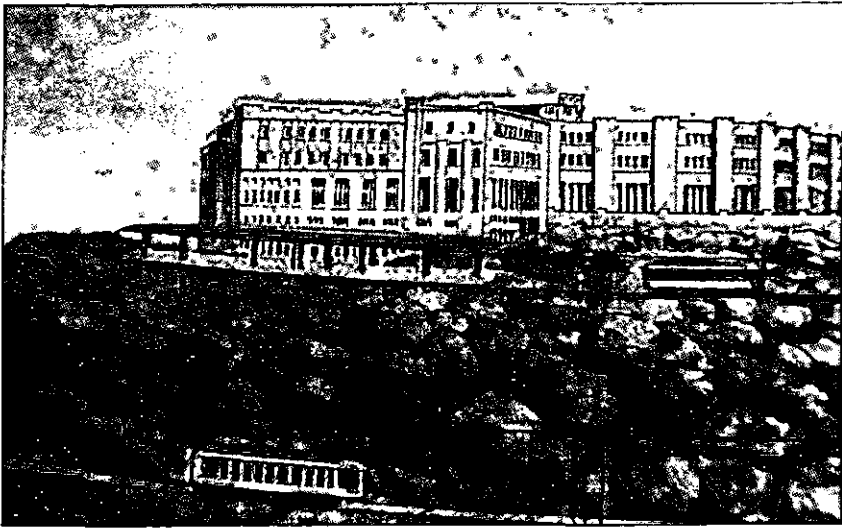
The land rose 4,200 feet from the Boston & Maine connection in Fabyans to the summit; given the limits of gradient, this dictated a rail line of 19.8 miles. It would follow the Ammonoosuc River up to the base station of the cog railroad, then swing left up the flank of Jefferson Notch to cross the lower slope of the Ridge of the Caps and rise across the western slope of Mount Jefferson toward Castellated Ridge. The railroad would tunnel under the ridge, swing back and pass over itself below the lowest Castle, then climb the side of Jefferson again to a switchback, upward to a higher point on Castellated Ridge and another switchback, then across the flank of Jefferson for a fourth time. It crossed Mount Clay below its summit ridge, then circled the summit cone of Mount Washington two and a half times to end at the door of the new hotel. It was an audacious plan, even fantastic, but it suited the age and survey work began, fittingly, on the Fourth of July, 1911. "Soon," the planners said, "Mount Washington will have an electric necklace and a crown of cement."

JOHN KEENAN
SEPTEMBER 1912

In 1912, John Keenan was preparing to make his way in the world. He finished high school in Charlestown, Massachusetts, and secured a position as an elevator operator. Then, in the third week of September, he went north to take a job with the survey crew on the Mount Washington trolley job.

John was an unlikely candidate for such heroic enterprise; he was afraid of darkness and easily frightened by animals and other woodland hazards, and he reported for his first day of work on Mount Washington wearing fashionable street shoes and a pink-and-white striped shirt better suited to a lawn party. That was Friday, September 13, and he was assigned to odd jobs around the base of the cog track. The next Wednesday he was sent up the mountain with the surveyors.

Mr. H. S. Jewell was in charge of twenty-one men, and it was a rough and ready crew. They lived at the base and after dinner they played poker with such passion that Mr. Jewell often had to step in and restore a measure of order by redistributing lopsided pots. The men carried guns all the time and shot at almost anything that moved. One got a huge deer, but, as a thankless beneficiary put it, "You might just as well try to eat your shoes." If live game



In 1908 a fire destroyed most of the summit buildings atop Mount Washington. An astonishing new hotel was planned, shown in this prospectus, to be served by an electric trolley. Survey work for the trolley began in 1911 but was stopped in 1912. On one of the last days of work, John Keenan disappeared in a cloud near the summit and was never seen again.

was not in sight, they'd shoot at improvised targets and bet on their hits. They found the slide boards the cog railway company had confiscated a generation earlier and survived every ride down the mountain on them, and they found a huge but rickety Winton automobile that was rigged with railroad wheels and for a nightcap they'd get this started and drive seventy miles an hour down the Boston & Maine track, no lights. The fresh-faced elevator operator from Boston didn't fit in, and they teased him about his fears.

The valleys around Mount Washington had been unusually warm for September and on the day John went up for his first day of work it touched 81° in the valley, the leading edge of a cell of hot air that would push temperatures into the 90s later in the week. At times like this, the prevailing westerlies drive warm damp air up the windward flank of the Presidential Range, orographic cooling condenses the moisture, and clouds as dense as milk can envelop the rocks with startling speed.

John was to serve as the back-flag man, the one who stands at the last point fixed by the transit party to give them the base for the next angle. The crew was working on the south side of the summit cone and not far from the

summit; the place where William Ormsbee died was just below them and the place where Harry Hunter died in 1874 was further down the cone and a bit to the east. Lifting their eyes, they could see the broad and lovely expanse of Bigelow Lawn and the place where Father Bill Curtis died.

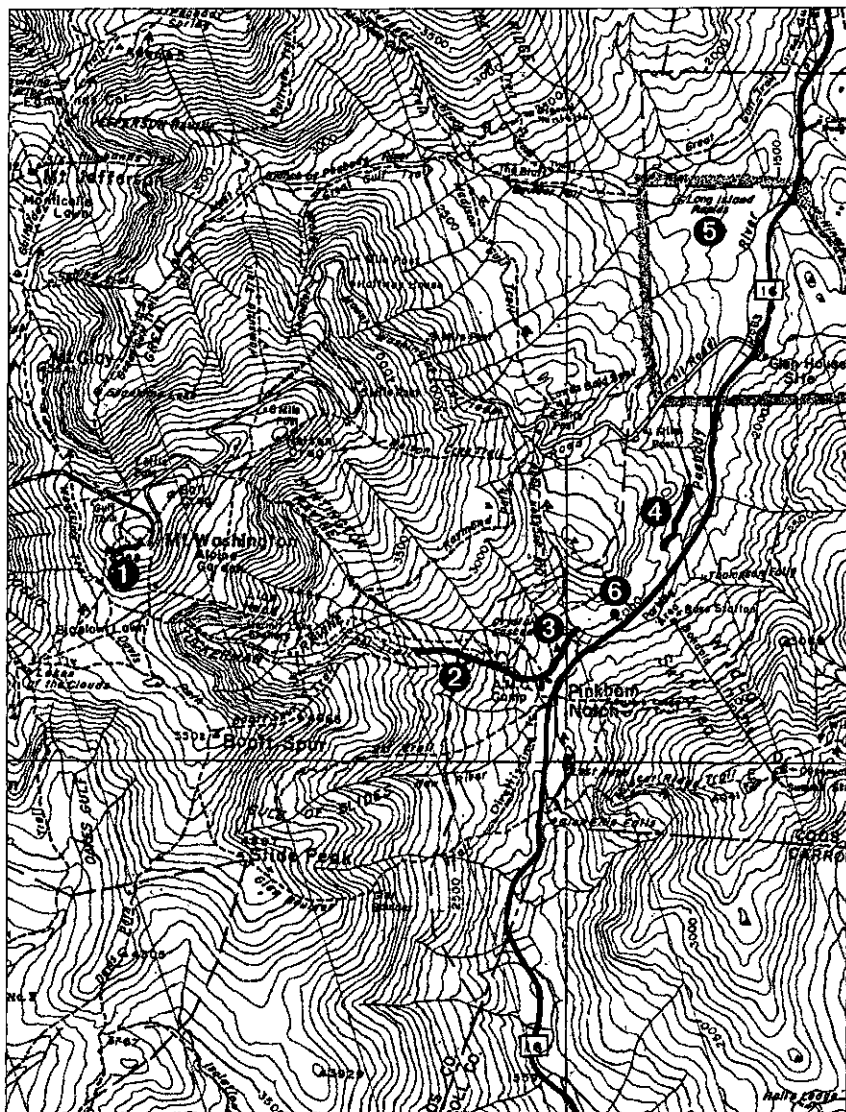
John Keenan's first day on the heights was not pleasant. The wind on the summit was blowing more than 50 miles an hour, the sky was overcast, and the temperature was about 40°. This was not uncommon for September and the survey crew went to work, first warning their new man that the clouds could close in very quickly and if this happened he should stay where he was and they'd come to get him. By mid-morning the transit crew was near the Ormsbee marker and facing the Lakes of the Clouds, and John had the back flag about 100 feet away. At ten o'clock a sudden cloud enveloped them and he disappeared.

The crew waited half an hour for the cloud to lift. It didn't lift, it grew thicker. The crew yelled for John to come in, but he didn't. One of the men went to the place where they'd left him and he wasn't there. They all fired their guns, still with no result. Then one of them went to the summit and telephoned the base. "Jewell," he said, "that new fellow you sent up here, we lost him." Mr. Jewell said, "Well, stay up there until you find him."

The survey crew searched the area until nightfall and found no trace of him. There was a large bell on the summit and that was rung steadily all night, there was a steam plant at the base station of the cog railway and Mr. Jewell arranged to have a whistle blast sounded every minute all night long, and the base crew strung lanterns all around their dormitory by the river in case young Keenan used his head and followed the Ammonoosuc stream down. Mr. Jewell sent a telegram to the B&M headquarters in Boston and the reply came back, "Spare no expense. Find the boy."

That evening calls went out to the principal hotels in Fabyans, Randolph, Gorham, and Bretton Woods, the four tourist centers around the Presidential Range. A strong wind continued to blow all night on the heights, but by the next morning the air was almost calm, with the same chill.

High-elevation weather continued bad on Thursday, but Mr. Jewell led a search party of survey workers, cog railway crews, and the staff of *Among the Clouds*. They spent the whole day groping through the dense clouds above timberline and found no sign of their back-flag man. The weather turned



1. John Keenan's only known time on Mount Washington was here
2. Probably reached road by lower Cutler River
- 3, 4. Seen twice on road
5. Milliken's Pond drained
6. The Darby Field

sharply colder on Friday and the enveloping fog was glazing the rocks with ice. Search parties widened their scope and still found nothing. Mr. Jewell called Burge Bickford, the famous one-armed guide in Gorham, and asked him to gather a crew of all the woodsmen he could find and head for the Glen House. Mr. Jewell said, "I saw fifty men go into the woods and I saw fifty come out." Burge Bickford's men had searched far and wide and had no words of hope.

Friday was marked by one of the weather contrasts which so often complicate hiking on the Presidential Range; the surrounding valleys enjoyed what residents thought was one of the finest days of the season, with bright sun and sweet warm airs, while fog and ice beset the searchers on the heights.

At about 11:00 that morning, Fire Warden Briggs was making a tour of some of the skid roads left by the many logging operations that had been pursued in the White Mountains. This one led to the Pinkham Notch road near the Darby Field, a clearing around a lodging house two miles south of the Glen House. Warden Briggs heard a noise in a thicket of spruce slash and stopped to listen. Then he saw a man and they both said hello. The stranger climbed up to Warden Briggs and asked what day it was. Learning that it was Friday, he said that he'd been out for two days, that he was lost, and that he was looking for the Keenan farm.

Then he said that he'd been working for a survey party on Mount Washington and his boss was Mr. Jewell and he had fallen down a ravine thirty feet deep, but he did not say that he was hungry, he just asked for a piece of spearmint gum. Warden Briggs thought it was an unsatisfactory exchange; the man's talk was rambling and incoherent, the clearest part having to do with his search for the Keenan farm. Warden Briggs had further doubts. For one thing, the man was wearing a fancy pink-and-white striped shirt. Beyond that, the warden did not believe the account of Mr. Jewell's survey party because he knew that Mr. Jewell ran a livery stable in Gorham. He thought the stranger could not be a surveyor or have any other kind of work on the mountain because no person would go to the heights wearing the clothes this fellow had on.

Warden Briggs knew the territory as well as anyone could and he knew that there was no family named Keenan anywhere in the Glen, so he decided that the stranger was sound of limb, but failing in his mind. Warden Briggs brought him out to the road and directed him to the Glen House two miles

north along the road, then he went to his own camp half a mile away in the opposite direction to attend to other duties. The incident was certainly unusual, but Warden Briggs was a man of experience and he took unusual incidents in stride.

That day, Honorable George Turner and Dr. Gile were driving the roads around the Presidential Range. Mr. Turner was familiar with the area; he lived in Bethlehem, just west of Mount Washington. Now he was a representative to the state government in Concord and a member of the Governor's Council. Dr. Gile was a representative from Hanover, and on Friday he and Mr. Turner were inspecting the state roads in the north country, roads which at this time were little more than one-lane rocky tracks.

Shortly before noon, they were on the Pinkham Notch road and they passed a young man who made an odd impression on them. They were driving slowly in their open car, but he did not call out to them; he seemed to have a vacant expression on his face and he waved his arms and pointed up at Mount Washington looming above them. The two inspectors did not know that a man was missing, so they continued their drive along the road.

There was a second car in the inspection party that day. It was driven by a Bethlehem chauffeur named Howard Lightfoot, who had been engaged to carry the luggage of Honorable Turner and Dr. Gile. Mr. Lightfoot had fallen some ways behind them, and later in the day he reported that about noon he was flagged down by a young man who asked for a ride. This was on Darby Field hill, a little less than two miles south of the Glen House, but the story was soon contradicted by men in more authority than the chauffeur.

The inspectors were lodging at Fabyans, fifty miles away on the opposite side of the mountain, and when they arrived that evening they learned that a man was lost and that his description matched the apparition they'd seen in Pinkham Notch. Honorable Turner called the base station of the cog railway with the news.

This was the day of heavy clouds and ice on the upper elevations and the search party was going to spend the night in one of the summit buildings. Word was passed along that they should go down to the Glen House early the next morning, Saturday, and join Mr. Bickford's men.

Reporters from the Boston newspapers had gotten wind of the story and soon they were everywhere. There was no news to report, so they began making up their own. One of them offered Mr. Jewell a large sum of money

to go off for a week so he could write that even Mr. Jewell had gotten lost and came struggling out of the wilderness a week later. One of them made himself the hero of his own news story, saying he'd joined the search party and been attacked by a wildcat.

Saturday was a day of mixed weather in the Glen, by turns sunny and gray with temperatures in the 70s and afternoon showers. The newly formed search party at the Glen House soon found Warden Briggs. The searchers told him that a man was missing from the heights; they described John Keenan, and asked the warden if he'd seen anything out of the ordinary.

He had indeed. Warden Briggs said that the previous morning he'd met a crazy man coming down the old logging road at the Darby Field, very near the place on the state road where the inspectors had seen a person of the same description, and Mr. Briggs provided so many details that the searchers knew it was John Keenan. Now they knew that John had been started along the road toward the Glen House the previous morning and that Warden Briggs thought he was in good physical condition, so they decided that he must have gotten most of the way to the hotel before nightfall. On the basis of these assumptions, they spent all of Saturday searching the area between the Glen House and the Darby Field, but they found no sign of hope.

This day, Lawrence Keenan took the train north from Charlestown to attend the search for his son. He went to the base station of the cog railway and spent the night at the surveyors' camp, then on Sunday morning he took the train to the summit and rode down the carriage road to the Glen House and joined the search party there.

This was September 22, and the first stretch of tolerable weather since John disappeared four days earlier; it was almost 20° warmer, but steady rain began in the afternoon. By now, more than 100 searchers had gathered at the Glen House, including photographer Guy Shorey. They made a detailed search of the land between there and the Darby Field, they pushed into the woods for a mile on either side of the road, they waded through the Peabody River running beside the road, and they even drained Milliken's Pond, still without effect.

Mr. Keenan pronounced himself satisfied with the effort and that night he went back to Charlestown, stating that he had given up all hope of seeing his son again. The next day the search party was disbanded, though a small

group of guides and surveyors continued to look for difficult places they might have missed.

Later that week, Howard Lightfoot returned to the Glen and pressed his story on whoever would listen. He said that on Friday he was driving through Pinkham Notch with the inspectors' luggage and about noontime he was half a mile from the Glen House and he came upon a man waving his arms wildly, as if to stop the car. Then the man got in with the chauffeur.

Mr. Lightfoot said that his passenger was about twenty years old and was wearing a pink-and-white shirt with attached cuffs from which the cuff links had been lost. He said that he remembered this in particular because it was not something he'd expect to see on a tramp or a mountain boy, and because the fellow was not wearing a coat or an undershirt despite the inclement weather.

The chauffeur carried this strange person about two miles along the road and when they reached the old lumber camps near the Darby Field the stranger said, "I think I want to get out here. Yes, this is the place I want to get out." Then he asked where the Keenan farm was and how far it was to Charlestown and how far it was to Franklin. Learning that it was more than 150 miles to Charlestown, he said, "Yes, I guess it is quite a ways." Mr. Lightfoot was struck by his rambling talk and how he didn't seem to be much bothered by his situation even though it was cold and raining hard. But time was wasting and Mr. Lightfoot was anxious to catch up with the inspectors, so he drove away down the road without even looking to see where the fellow went.

In fact, Mr. Lightfoot already knew that a man was missing from a survey crew on Mount Washington, but he did not believe he'd met that person because, as he put it, "I would have looked for a bright-looking fellow dressed as you might have expected a surveyor would. This fellow was not bright looking. He had a slightly receding chin and, if I remember right, his nose was a little larger than the average man. He drooled at the mouth, which might have been due to his being cold and wet, although he was apparently suffering from neither cold nor hunger."

When the chauffeur got home the next day he was shown a copy of *The Boston Post* with a picture of the lost man, but it did not seem to be the person he'd met on the road. Then he was shown a picture in *The Boston Herald*, and he decided at once that it was Keenan who had been his passenger.

This new account reached the Glen House after the 100-man search party had been disbanded, but it was quickly understood that at the time of the great effort on Sunday none of the searchers knew that John Keenan had been taken two miles back to the Darby Field, so their search had not covered some likely terrain. Another group was organized to cover the territory around the Darby Field and the old logging camps, but they found nothing.

A week after the disappearance on Mount Washington, strange nighttime noises were heard near the Glen House, it was as if someone was shouting or crying out. A new search was organized the next morning and concluded before dark. The same week, Mrs. Keenan came up from Boston and visited the spot where her son was last seen, then she went home. A call came to the Glen House one night that week to say that John had been found, but the source of the call was never learned, nor the place of the sighting. Another sighting was reported in Woodstock, nearly 100 miles away at the south end of Franconia Notch, but nothing came of that report, either.

Ten days after the cloud settled over John, his mother had new word for a reporter with *The Boston Journal*: "My son is alive," she said, "and confined in a hospital alongside a river in the west." Pressed for an explanation, Mrs. Keenan said that he'd been picked up by an automobile driver and taken there. Then she began to sob and said, "The lad is in an unconscious condition, and if I only knew the hospital where he is located I would go there immediately." The reporter could not learn where she'd gotten this news, but she said that her in-laws had gotten the same report. Some said that the source was a clairvoyant. By this time, skeptics were denying that John had been seen by anyone at all since he disappeared in the fog.

Two weeks after the disappearance, *The Littleton Courier*, published twenty miles west of Mount Washington, had more plausible news. According to the *Courier*, Mr. O. A. Wood, a guest at Pleasant View Cottage in Twin Mountain, had found a water dipper and a knapsack while hiking on Mount Washington, and it was presumed that John was carrying just such items as these when he disappeared. Closer study showed that it was not a knapsack but a particular type of double-closure bag used only by surveyors, but Mr. Jewell's men said that John did not have one of these on his first day of work. John was wearing a coat and a hat and carrying his back-flag staff when he disappeared, but the man seen by Honorable Turner and Dr. Gile, by Warden

Briggs, and by Howard Lightfoot did not have any of these things and none of them was ever found.

The Keenan family had not entirely given up. They'd been writing to hospitals in the United States and Canada, and on November 26 *The Boston Post* carried a story that a person answering John's description had been found in the hospital of St. Jean de Dieu in Montreal, an asylum for the insane. George Villeneuve was the superintendent at St. Jean and he'd written to the Keenans: "In answer to your letter of November 23 I beg to inform you that the person answering the description you give in this letter has been admitted into this hospital since September. All those admitted since that date are known."

Hope surged, and the Boston & Maine Railroad sent Mr. Jewell to investigate. He was met in Montreal by a driver in a handsome sleigh with a luxurious robe, but he found no basis for the report. Then it was discovered that one word in the letter had been miscopied by the doctor's secretary. "I beg to inform you that the person answering the description you give . . ." should have read, "I beg to inform you that *no* person answering the description you give . . ."

That was the last entry in the story of young John Keenan, but the mystery continued to occupy the citizens of the North Country. Many of them were guides or hunters, or they worked on the carriage road or on the cog railway, and they knew how frightening and disorienting the sudden cloud-bank whiteouts can be even for someone perfectly familiar with the trails and the lay of the land above timberline.

John Keenan knew nothing at all of that world, he was in his first hours on Mount Washington, and he was not on a trail when the cloud covered him. Indeed, he might not even have known that the piled-up rocks marked a trail, and the white paint marks along the trail might have looked like the lichens that grew everywhere above timberline.

That day, rain was being driven by a cold wind at a steady 50 miles an hour from the west, and those familiar with such situations knew that there's an almost irresistible impulse to walk downwind: it avoids a cold face, it takes less effort, and there seems to be a subtle prompting from nature itself that this is the right direction to go.

That wind would have pushed John eastward around the summit cone and toward the terrain funnel leading into Tuckerman Ravine, but the

precipices ahead of him would have been intimidating. The ridges of Lion Head and Boott Spur on his left and right would have been easier going, but he might not have been able to see them in the fog and they would have kept him in the wind for much longer, so the chances were good that John had scrambled down through the ravine. He could have picked up the trail on the floor of the ravine or he could have followed the watercourse of the Cutler River which drains the ravine; in either case he would have come out on the Pinkham Notch road in the near vicinity of the place Warden Briggs had seen the demented stranger.

As it happened, he'd been seen by Warden Briggs at about 11:00 A.M., by the road inspectors between 11:30 and noon, and by Howard Lightfoot perhaps fifteen minutes after noon. Warden Briggs was in the best position to help him, but his doubts about the story were confirmed when he heard that the survey party was led by Mr. Jewell. He knew that Mr. Jewell was not a surveyor, he kept a livery stable in Gorham. Warden Briggs did not know that there were two men named Jewell: H. S. led the survey party, W. W. kept the livery stable.

In addition to these many missed connections, there was the condition of John Keenan. By the time he met Warden Briggs he was already in such a distressed state that he did not recognize help when it appeared, nor perhaps even his own need for help. Instead, he tried again and again to make his way back into the perils that had already cost him so much. No trace of John was ever found and no cause of death ever assigned, but a coroner's jury might rule that he died of complications attending the sudden onset of dread.

THERE IS NO MARKER ANYWHERE TO REMEMBER THE DEATH OF John Keenan, and even the tokens of his difficulties are almost gone. There is no water today that could be Milliken's Pond and the name does not register in local memory. Mr. C. R. Milliken built and managed the second edition of the Glen House, 1887-1903, so the pond must have been in the near vicinity of the Glen House and it must have been large enough and deep enough that draining was both necessary and possible. The Peabody River is not a large stream here and its bed near the Glen House does show the footings of an old dam about 100 yards upstream from the crossing of the Mount Washington auto road. But the channel is very narrow and, given the terrain, any ponded

water would have been so shallow as to be transparent to the bottom, not anything that would require draining.

This puzzled me. Then, while looking through an old family trunk for a mid-nineteenth century property deed, I found a panoramic photograph I'd never seen before. Given family habits, it must have been taken by my grandfather in about 1910, and the view was straight up Great Gulf, with Mount Washington on the left, the Northern Peaks on the right, and a lake in the foreground. An hour of bushwhacking established the place where grandfather must have stood, then I walked straight into the picture.

The terrain drops to Route 16 and runs level for about seventy yards beyond the road, then there's a steep drop twenty feet down to a broad flat swale which, by the evidence, is a favorite with moose. Then there's the Peabody River. Not far downstream the stubs of heavy planking rise up through the shallow water and for another 100 feet the rocky bottom is laced from shore to shore with immense square-cut timbers fastened with wrought-iron spikes, all bracing the planks against the pressures of long-gone freshets. This was the dam which formed Milliken's Pond, with a spillway for draining.

Then, in one of the converging surprises that can accompany even the most obscure studies, I came across a framed picture in our house which I'd been looking at for many years without ever really seeing. The back shows that it came from the Cummings & Son art shop in Oberlin, Ohio, and it shows the long prospect up Great Gulf from a point somewhat south of the panorama. There's quiet water in the foreground; it's only a few inches deep and it reflects the tree-framed mountains. This can only be the far upstream end of Milliken's Pond, there's no other flat water in the Peabody River until several miles farther along toward Gorham.

My aunt Harriet was born in 1900, and her first job after college was in Oberlin. So Milliken's Pond provided no help in the search for John Keenan and its very existence was ephemeral, but it gained a much longer life as foreground for our family pictures. My grandfather probably took this one on the same day as the panorama and when aunt Harriet set out to make a career far from home she put the picture in her suitcase; when she reached Oberlin she went to Cummings & Son and had it framed to remind her of the mountains she loved so much.

There's another landmark in the Keenan story. The search parties kept passing what they called The Darby Field and contemporary texts suggest

that they did well not to stop there: it was a large but ramshackle hostelry serving hunters, fishermen, and other travelers and run by "Hod" Reed, a man well known for his close association with Demon Rum. This, the old accounts say, was just past The Darby Field hill. Now the Wildcat Ski Area is at the crest of a long hill and a little farther along is the state road camp, the place where snowplows and sand are kept waiting for winter storms. Mr. Reed's establishment stood on this spot in the days before snowplows and even before most automobiles, excepting the small caravan of road agents who narrowly missed saving John Keenan. Today, a metal sign stands across the road from the state camp announcing that it was near this spot that Mr. Darby Field began his historic first ascent of Mount Washington in 1642. Denizens of the notch must have chuckled at the tidy little play on words that let them call this mountain pasture The Darby Field.

The many missed connections in this episode contrast with a step into the future that had been made at Madison Spring Hut, less than six miles across the Northern Peaks from the place where John Keenan disappeared. The Ravine House was a large hotel and highly favored by the hiking community that animated the town of Randolph. That summer the hotel contracted with the Coos County Telephone Company and a telephone line was strung 3.7 miles from the Ravine House up the Valley Way trail to Madison Spring Hut above timberline. This was for the convenience of hikers who might want to send messages in either direction and it earned \$7.60 in tolls the first summer and \$13.00 the next year. It was disconnected soon after that, but some of the white china insulators that carried the wire can still be seen screwed into the trees along the Valley Way.

Mr. Mellen's enterprise fared no better than John Keenan. The Boston & Maine Railroad collapsed under his management, and although he spoke vaguely of reorganization, the lumber companies had other straws in the wind. The Weeks Act had just passed and the national forest was being established. Perhaps sensing that the United States was a more substantial partner than Charles Mellen and his amazing schemes, the lumbermen sold their land and the trolley's right of way to the government.

Still, though, it seemed that the survey marks left by Mr. Jewell's rowdy crew must still be in the rocks—it is in their nature to endure. The crew used a $\frac{3}{8}$ -inch drill to make some 6,300 holes about half an inch deep in the rock;

they ran along the center line of the right of way the crew pushed through the woods of the lower elevations, through the almost impenetrable thickets approaching timberline, and across the rocks and ledges of the alpine zone.

The trolley plan called for a double row of utility poles to carry the many miles of electric lines, but the organizers didn't say how and for how long they thought these would withstand the violent weather on the heights of the Presidential Range. Now, eighty-six years and perhaps 20,000 cycles of melt and freeze have passed and even the drill holes seem to have been smudged beyond discovery.

The work of many patient summer days, however, found three sets of marks that do not match the scallop-shaped weathering on the mica schist rocks above timberline on the range. The first to catch my eye was below the point where the Caps Ridge Trail crosses the Cornice Trail on Mount Jefferson; they're aligned in the right direction and they're at the right elevation for the trolley route between its upper switchback at Castellated Ridge and its passage along the col between Mounts Jefferson and Clay. But they weren't neat $\frac{3}{8}$ -inch drill holes half an inch deep, they were rounded squares half an inch deep and I regarded them with caution. I found a pair of similar marks just above the location of the old Gulfside tank beside the cog railway track on the side toward the Great Gulf headwall and these, too, were aligned as logic and terrain suggests they would be. But they still didn't look like the holes I was expecting, two holes do not a survey make, and I rejected them for lack of confirming evidence.

Then I found a contemporary citation indicating an exact spot the trolley would pass on the lower of its two circuits around the summit cone, so I bore down on this area, I studied it on my hands and knees. An alpine meadow starts here and it rises with a moderate grade, just the sort of natural aid a prudent survey crew would favor.

As on the Northern Peaks, the rock of the Mount Washington summit cone is a grainy mica schist and the surface weathers into myriad small dishes overlapping each other on every upturned side. At a point near a corner of the meadow I found a change in the pattern; instead of another scallop, there was a rounded hole half an inch deep and about the size of a small postage stamp, and very much like the holes on Jefferson and on the north side of the summit cone. I'd been looking for $\frac{3}{8}$ -inch holes for six days, but I found

none. So perhaps the work of those 20,000 cycles of melt and freeze did not leave the rock untouched, perhaps the grainy schist flaked away around the small round drill hole and left this larger rounded shape as its descendant.

Seventy rising paces across the meadow there's another one of these marks, and seventy rising paces farther along there's another one. That convinced me. These must be all that's left of the electric necklace that lifted those boardroom hearts at the floodtide of *la belle époque*. Now they reward the attentive eye with a tiny variant in the patterns of ancient weathered rock, and Sylvester Marsh's cog trains still pant and chuff up the western flank of the mountain, neither train nor terrain substantially changed since 1869.