Chapter Nine

SUMMER PEOPLE GO NORTH

FAMILY STORIES MADE IT SEEM AS IF MY FOREBEARS HAD lived in Providence forever. There was no shortage of stories because, by an unlikely but verifiable coincidence, both of my parents' families arrived in the New World on the same boat, the good ship *Mayflower*. Life was not perfectly harmonious in the Plymouth Rock neighborhood and in 1630 family member Roger Williams left the Massachusetts Bay Colony and crossed Narragansett Bay to make a new start in a place he called Providence. By the 1870s, the family was headed by John Howe. He was an actor in a troupe led by Edwin Booth, and they were occasionally joined on stage by Mr. Booth's brother, John Wilkes Booth.

In 1872, the mail brought news from a forgotten past. It concerned the French Spoiliation Claims which, though obscure, would loom large in the future. The notice was addressed to Seth Russell & Son, forebears of John's wife, Louise Russell Howe, familiarly known as "Gubba." Her family had been in the shipping trades after the American Revolution, but those were unsettled times. The long run of royalty and absentee rule was destabilized by the American revolution against George III and then by the rising of the French proletariat against Louis XVI, and these shocks left things at loose

ends on several fronts. One popular approach to knitting up loose ends is conflict and the War of 1812 was launched, a curious affair in which the most important battle was held three weeks after the war was over.

Then the several parties to the war gathered for the really useful part, the peace conference. This resulted in the Treaty of Ghent, written in the Belgian city of that name. The first job in any treaty gathering was a sort of bluffing game in which the diplomats put their claims on the table, so our man entered a claim asserting that American shipowners who had lost value to the British should be indemnified by the French.

This is known as spoiliation, and the improbable claim survived the scrutineering phase at Ghent and it was written into the treaty. The mills of the gods may grind slow, but the mills of the nations grind slower. Seth Russell & Son had owned a ship that was put at risk by British raiders after the Revolution, and somewhat more than 100 years later Gubba received a check for damages suffered by a long-forgotten ship named the *Fox*.

The family was already spending summers with Providence friends who had a place in Jackson, New Hampshire. Now Gubba applied the *Fox* money to the purchase of the old Moody property in Jackson so her family could have a summer place of their own. There was a farmhouse with a carriage shed and a large barn and several outbuildings, and it wasn't long before Gubba's family began inviting friends up for summer visits. These friends were from Providence at first, then they began coming from Boston and other outlying districts. This was very much in the summer fashion; for an urban world with no air conditioning in the houses and many horses in the streets, summer in the mountain breezes was irresistible.

The Jackson house was enlarged a bit, then the carriage shed was made livable, then the house was enlarged again. They called it "Overlook" and friends began bringing along their own friends, and the house grew larger. Gubba's older daughter was named Fannie, she was first in line as matriarch presumptive and her first child was born in 1887. This was my father, and before long he had a brother and two sisters, and by the time they were in school they began bringing up their friends. They'd pitch tents in the meadows, and then my uncle dragged some cots out into the field and built a sort of cabin over them for the boys to stay in. The girls soon asked him to exercise his teenage carpentry skills on their behalf, and then regular guests began asking for their own cabins.

By the time I was a child there were nine cabins ringing the property and the barn was partly converted for rudimentary summer living and the old farmhouse had a great many rooms. Once, in the grips of summer *ennui,* I took stock. There were forty-nine spaces I identified as rooms in the main house, but that included bathrooms. Even so, upwards of sixty people could be accommodated in the house and the cabins and the barn, and the stories of four generations of family, friends of family, and friends of friends had grown so numerous and so complexly entwined that I was never exactly sure who was kin and who was not. There was, for instance, a recurring class of guests who were called "loose connections," and to this day I don't know if they were relatives or not.

It didn't matter, because the elders and their heroics were recorded in a pile of black photograph albums in what we called The Big Living Room. The pictures showed gentlemen in suits and ladies in skirts that swept the ground and boys in white shirts and ties and girls in middy blouses and bloomers and black stockings, all of them up there on the mountain heights with blanket roles over their shoulders. Those of us in the rising generation would study those pictures through many a rainy afternoon, and we understood that, as it is said in Genesis, there were indeed giants in the earth in those days.

The Big Living Room had a large bay window that faced the north meadow. A sofa faced the window and that's where we sat to look at the photograph albums and when we looked up we saw Mount Washington rising at the end of the meadow, and even as children we knew that people died up there. We thought about them and we thought most about Lizzie Bourne; she reminded us of the ladies in the photograph albums as they went striding across the heights in skirts that swept the ground. Closer to the moment, we thought about Jessie Whitehead.

JESSIE WHITEHEAD
JANUARY 1933

Jessie Whitehead was a notable person. We knew that, because she was at the head of the list of notable persons who stayed at Overlook. Charles Evans Hughes stayed with us, he was Chief Justice of the Supreme Court; there were Rockefellers; there was Curt Chase, commanding general of the First

Jessie Whitehead was a scholar, early champion of high-achieving women, and an ardent mountaineer. In January 1933 she fell 800 feet down Huntington Ravine and lived, which did not surprise people who knew her.

Light Cavalry Division, and there was a large and energetic family from Boston named Kennedy whose father was the ambassador to the Court of Saint James. But my father always told us most particularly of Jessie Whitehead and her terrible fall in Huntington Ravine.

We knew Jessie because of her stutter. It wasn't that she had an occasional stammer, that she stumbled over a word now and then—Jessie could hardly talk at all. Father said she'd broken her neck in the fall, and that was why she stuttered. Grandmother Howe ran Overlook in the summer and she took it for granted that children should not be heard. She believed that we shouldn't be seen very often, either, and the children of my generation stayed in our various families' cottages at the perimeter of the property. This reduced our contact with the notable people to zero, but we did know one way we could see Jessie Whitehead.

Overlook had a back porch that had been made into a room. It was called the Trough, and this was where employees, disreputable relatives, and children of my generation were fed at a long trestle table. The Trough had windows on the outside wall and also the old windows on the inside wall. One day Jessie sat down for dinner at the end seat of the biggest of the dining room tables and we could see her through the inside windows of the Trough.

At the beginning of a meal the waitresses always went around their tables saying, "Tea, coffee, or milk?" and they'd take the orders on their fingers. They'd hold their hands behind them and count on one hand for tea and the other hand for coffee. Back in the kitchen, they'd subtract the total number of fingers from the total places at the table and the remainder would be milk.

We could see the waitress's fingers when she took Jessie's order, and as the choking, gasping sounds began to sound like "Tea," one finger began to record the message; then as the sounds veered away toward "Coffee," a finger on the other hand would move. We watched through the back windows and we were fascinated. We understood that Jessie's fall in Huntington Ravine must have been terrible indeed.

We knew about Huntington Ravine. When we looked out past our croquet lawn, Mount Washington rose directly in front of us: Tuckerman Ravine was hidden behind Boott Spur, but we could see straight into Huntington Ravine. There was a huge boulder at the corner of the croquet lawn that we called Mount Washington Rock. It had the same general shape we could see on the skyline and there was a deep cleft for Huntington Ravine. We'd look at that and think of Jessie Whitehead.

Jessie had a wider fame. She was the daughter of Alfred North Whitehead, a leading member of the last generation of great philosophers, the last generation of scholars whose ideas were on the front pages of newspapers. He was British by birth, but he made his career at Harvard and Jessie had an elevated childhood, she'd say, "I grew up in a cloud of Huxleys," meaning the most powerful family of intellectuals of the age.

Jessie lived in an apartment near Harvard Square and she almost always had one or two cockatiels with her. They're small parrots from Australia and during the harshest winter storms she'd be out there striding along the sidewalks of the Square and smoking a pipe, with her birds sitting on her shoulder and ruffled out to twice their normal size to hold off icy blasts their homeland never knew. She liked to take her meals at the popular and economical Hayes-Bickford restaurant on Harvard Square and the Bick did not allow animals to mingle with the diners, but Jessie was a person of character and of consequence, and the management of the Bick let her bring the birds to her regular place at one of their front window tables. Jessie was a scholar in ancient Arabic languages and she worked at Harvard's Widener Library in her academic specialty. One day the hushed precincts of Widener were

suddenly rent by a great cry: "Oh God, if there is a God, what does it all *mean*?" It was Jessie, whose own long silences were occasionally broken by questions like that.

Perhaps it was those silences that had made Jessie a devoted hiker and a serious rock climber long before anyone thought such a calling would include women, and she was not afraid of anything. She and three men made the first ascent of the northeast ridge of the Pinnacle in Huntington Ravine, considered unclimbable until her group climbed it in October 1928. She was a relentless champion of what she called "manless climbing," and she and three other women spent the summer of 1931 on the major peaks of the Alps. Inevitably, they went to the Matterhorn. The weather was bad, but they reached the highest hut on the mountain and found it filled to the rafters with hikers from every point of the compass, an alpine Tower of Babel. Jessie couldn't make out any of the tongues, so she stood up and called for attention, then she addressed the multitude in Latin. Two climbers answered and those were her friends for the evening. The bad weather persisted and they were turned back from the top of the Matterhorn four times, so they went to Africa and took a fleet of camels into the desert.

Jessie was an early skier and a literate reporter of her outings. "In nothing is Katahdin more praiseworthy," she wrote, "than for the enjoyment it affords to bad skiers." She had a hike-to cabin on the slope of Mount Chocorua and she was a year-round habitué of Pinkham Notch, where Joe Dodge regarded her with affection and respect. Jessie was thirty-eight years old in 1932 and she went to Pinkham to spend the Christmas season with Joe and his family.

Winter had not taken hold in Pinkham. There was only four inches of snow on the ground and it had been raining for several days, but on December 31 the temperature was dropping from 51° to 8°, the wind was gusting up to 40 miles an hour, and late in the afternoon the drizzly rain turned to snow flurries. Undaunted, Jessie left Pinkham by the trail called the Old Jackson Road, reached the Mount Washington auto road after two miles, hiked six more miles up the auto road to the summit, and spent the night in the frigid shelter of Camden Cottage.

During the night, the wind veered from the southeast into the northwest, the sky cleared, and the temperature dropped below zero. The next morning, New Year's Day, Jessie descended by way of Boott Spur to the AMC cabins in Pinkham Notch. Later she wrote, "Nowhere had I seen snow conditions

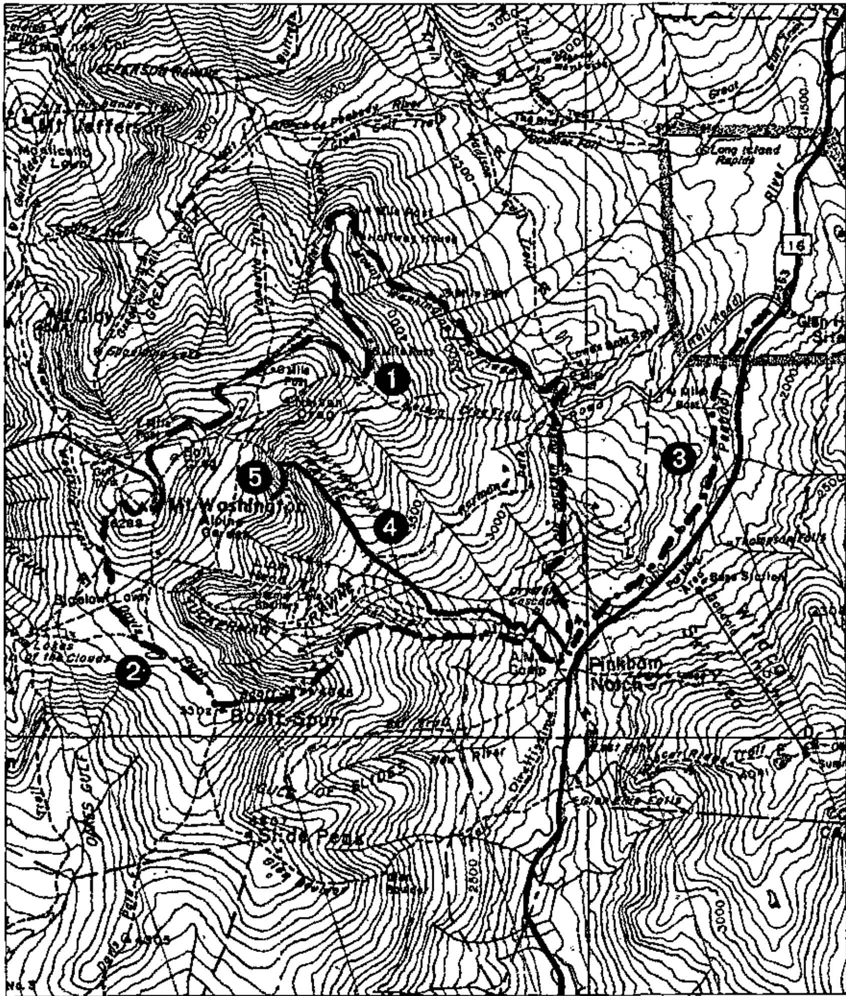
that seemed to make solitary skiing a desirable proposition for the next day. I had worn crampons the whole time and did not feel that an elementary acquaintance with stem turns would avail me very much on the hard crust of the trails."

The AMC encampment included the house Joe built for his family in 1928 and the two log cabins that were not yet rearranged and joined to form the Trading Post of later years. Jessie had supper with Joe and his family, then she walked three miles down the road to the Glen House; the caretaker kept a few rooms open for winter hikers and she knew that a group from the Harvard Mountaineering Club was there. Jessie hoped to find some Harvards to accompany her up to Huntington Ravine the next day and have a look at the gullies, and Walter Sturges agreed to go with her. After breakfast the next morning they started up with crampons, ice axes, carabiners, two ice pitons, and 120 feet of rope. There are seven climbing gullies in the ravine: Escape, South, Odell, Pinnacle, Central, Yale, and Damnation. Jessie and Walter decided that Odell Gully offered, as she put it, "a tolerable problem."

The first winter ascent of the gully was less than four years past. It was led in March 1929 by Noel Odell of the Harvard Mountaineering Club, who had already earned his place in mountaineering history: he'd been on the epochal British Everest Expedition of 1924 in which Mallory and Irvine disappeared in the mists just below the summit and were never seen again. Odell Gully in Huntington Ravine had been the goal of AMC groups since 1929, and Jessie had been a member of two of them. All those trips had been in March or April, when there was better snow and more tolerant weather.

Odell Gully is on the left side of the ravine and the approach rises over a broad scree slope, then winter climbers find a steep narrow ascent with several frozen waterfalls. A three-man rope from Yale had climbed here the day before and they did not like what they found; the ice was brittle and they thought the snow was dangerously unstable. Now Jessie and Walter agreed that they would not force the issue. This policy was further recommended by the fact that they had never climbed together and neither knew the habits or capacities of the other.

They climbed the snow-covered scree to a prominent rock just at the beginning of the serious terrain. They had lunch and then roped up. They decided that Jessie would select the route on the basis of her greater experience,



1. Jessie Whitehead climbed auto road first day (dash line)
2. Descended by Boott Spur second day (dash-dot-dash)
3. Walked to Glen House after supper (dash-dot-dash)
4. Up Huntington Ravine third day
5. Fell in Odell Gulley

and her first decision was that they should change leads often because the day was cold and a strong wind was blowing down the gully. Jessie knew from experience that a person standing on belay would get chilled quickly. She also felt that this would allow each of them to become familiar with the way the other one moved.

The first pitch resembled the frozen snowpack that Jessie had found in previous late-winter climbs up here. She thought she'd be all right on crampons, but approaching the first steep pitch she chopped a few steps as a test. Walter Sturges led up to the first frozen waterfall. He kicked steps to a rock at the extreme right side of the steep ice, then as he moved to his left Jessie drove her ice axe into the snow to see if there was underlying ice which might increase the danger of a slide.

Walter cut handholds and footholds across the ice, and when Jessie followed him she cut some of the holds deeper and was surprised to find hard water-ice. She set a piton here, then led over the next pitch of ice. This was hard work and complicated by a bitter wind sweeping down the gully, but she reached a sloping shelf of glare ice and stopped to consider their situation. She was a rather small woman, she didn't consider herself to be very strong, and she realized that she could not hold Walter from the stance she had, so she drove in a piton before he started up.

Odell Gully forks at this point, and they started up the right side on a rather easy ice slope to the second frozen waterfall. This was not as steep as the first one but it looked higher and more complicated. Jessie was surprised by this, too, she'd never seen ice here nor had she ever heard of any. Wisps of cloud were blowing down the gully and she wondered if she and Walter would be able to see each other if the clouds got much thicker. Nevertheless, she wanted to get to the second pitch of ice because she thought it might be wiser to move to the right at that point and go up the rocks, even though this route would not be much easier on the glaze that covered them.

While she was considering these factors and the time they had taken so far, she chopped a stance for Walter and called down to him to knock out their lower piton and bring it up. Still thinking of the difference in their size, she decided he should drive that piton at the stance she was cutting and she'd set the next one when she was out on the severe section of ice, or near the rocks if she decided to go up that way. Then, she thought, they'd be secure even if the clouds thickened and they lost sight of each other.

The lower piton was about halfway across the ice toward Jessie's stance and Walter reached to take it out. He hit it quite hard, and it came out easily. The disparity between his large effort and the piton's small resistance threw him off balance and he slipped out of his step and slid down the ice on his face. Up above, Jessie saw the rope begin to run out and she realized that something had happened at the other end.

She dropped her ice axe and lunged for the rope, hoping at the same time that he hadn't pulled out the lower piton. Walter felt a slight pop in the rope as Jessie took the strain. It seemed for a moment that his fall had stopped, then Jessie was torn off her stance. In the slow motion of a dream she felt herself sailing down the 50-degree face, never touching anything until she hit the lower pitch of ice about 140 feet below the shelf she'd been standing on. Jessie hit the ice upside down, taking the force of the blow on her head and shoulder.

Moments like this divide us into two camps. It's a matter of time: some will say later that everything seemed to happen at once, others find that time slowed down, everything appeared in bright detail and the mind provided extended observations. As Jessie hurtled headfirst down the gully, she thought, "This is grotesque, if true." Then she took inventory of her physical sensations and thought, "It probably is true." In fact, her neck and shoulder were broken, there were five fractures in her jaw, and severe lacerations in her neck and head.

Then Jessie concentrated on slowing down. She was falling headfirst and on her back and she found it difficult to get much traction with her elbows and crampons, but she tried. Then she was swept with anger and humiliation at the thought that she'd dropped her ice axe and could not remember where it was. As she wrote later, "I also knew that my subsequent moments of consciousness were to be quite limited. In fact, I rather hoped they were."

She thought of Walter and decided that he was dead, forgetting at the moment that he hadn't necessarily taken the same fall as she had. Then she thought that a body making such a strong pull on the rope could not be lifeless and she decided that he was alive and he probably had his ice axe, and if this was true, he could probably start slowing their fall when he got to the snow-covered scree slope. She wanted to tell Walter that the rest was up to him, though she wasn't sure if he could do anything to stop their fall. "Still, I longed to tell him that he could no longer count on any cooperation from

me. I thought he ought to be told, I longed inexpressibly to tell him, but as I reached the fan I passed out." As Jessie feared, Walter did lose his ice axe and they both were finally stopped by the bushes at the bottom of the scree slope. They had fallen 800 feet.

At about eleven o'clock that morning "Stitch" Callender and John Howell had crossed the floor of Huntington Ravine, and as they put on their crampons near the lower edge of the fan they saw two other climbers coming into view behind them. Stitch and John were headed for Central Gully, and as they started their own climb they saw the other people putting on their crampons. Stitch and John spent two hours cutting steps up the ice in Central before they moved onto the milder slope above and headed toward the rocks on their right. It was just at that point, about one o'clock, that they heard someone calling for help.

Stitch called back, and although he could not see where the trouble was, he and John immediately started down. It took them about half an hour to reach the two people on the snow slope below Odell Gully.

Jessie slid 100 feet farther than her companion, but Walter was still conscious and he heard voices somewhere in the ravine. This was the moment when he shouted, then he began to move down toward Jessie. He could hear her moaning, but at first he didn't realize how badly either of them was hurt. Just as he reached her, two men appeared through the mist and Walter saw that it was his friend Stitch Callender with a companion. Stitch untangled their packs and rope and saw that Jessie was badly hurt. Stitch and John tried to make Jessie comfortable with their extra clothes, but they quickly realized that more help was needed than they could provide, so Stitch started down the ravine at a run, heading for the highway three miles away. Walter Sturges followed, making his way through the rocks on the floor of the ravine, moving very slowly.

The Huntington Ravine Trail soon crossed the Raymond Path and continued downslope until it met the Tuckerman Ravine Trail a mile and a quarter above the highway. These paths were narrow and they had all the humps and twists that the terrain dictated, but travel habits on Mount Washington had just been dramatically changed. The Forest Service had built a new trail from Hermit Lake down to the AMC camp at the highway. Work began in 1930 and now it was a smoothly-graded route, 15-feet wide, a main street in a land of goat paths.

Stitch reached the junction of the Huntington Trail and the new trail and kept running. Three hundred yards later he came upon Bradford Washburn and a group of six other men from the Harvard Mountaineering Club.

Few people knew the area better than Brad. He'd been fascinated by the mountain ever since he was a boy and while he was still in prep school he wrote *Bradford on Mount Washington,* the story of a 1928 climb he and two friends made during their March vacation. Now Brad was twenty-two years old and president of the Harvard Mountaineering Club, and he'd spent the holiday season with six other Harvards working on the cabin the club was building a mile and a half below Hermit Lake.

Brad climbed to the summit the day before and this morning he'd come down over Lion Head in a 60-mph wind, noticing as he descended that the clouds that settled on the summit at sunset were now down to the 4,500-foot level, near the floor of both Tuckerman and Huntington Ravines. He went on to the Harvard cabin to meet his mates and a little after two o'clock they gathered up their gear and started for Boston. Each of them had a Yukon packboard with 30 feet of rope and they also had a dull axe they'd have sharpened in Boston. A Yukon packboard is a wooden frame with two vertical slats and four cross braces, and remarkably heavy loads can be tied on and carried quite easily. They'd just passed the Forest Service work camp at the junction of the new Tuckerman Trail and the Huntington Ravine Trail when they heard Stitch Callender yelling at them from behind.

If Stitch had been just a few minutes earlier or later he would have missed Brad's crew, but now he told them that Jessie Whitehead and Walter Sturges had fallen in Odell Gulley, that Jessie was badly hurt and still in the ravine, and Walter was also in bad shape but making his slow way down the trail. He said that Brad's group should get back up to the ravine and try to find Jessie because Walter had told him she probably wouldn't survive the coming night without help. They huddled briefly and realized that their strengthened party still wasn't enough, so Stitch ran on down to Pinkham for more help while Brad and his crew headed back up to the accident. There's a level stretch on the Huntington Ravine Trail just before it starts through the boulder field on the floor of the ravine and they found Walter Sturges there. By now he was only semi-conscious and not able to tell them exactly where Jessie was, but he was still moving, so Brad left three of his crew to help Walter down toward Pinkham. The three Harvards remaining with Brad still had their Yukons and

ropes and the dull axe, so they cut two slender spruce trees and rigged the trees with their packboards for a lash-up stretcher and started out to find Jessie.

Conditions were not good. After a week of rain the weather had cooled, the rocks were glazed with ice, and new snow had fallen to hide almost everything underfoot. It was this uncertain combination that had persuaded Jessie not to go skiing two days earlier, and Brad found the going more treacherous than even his own large experience would have liked.

Brad's crew found Jessie huddled in the middle of the trail about a hundred yards above the boulder field. In fact, they almost stepped on her, because the wind-driven snow had nearly covered her already. They brushed away the snow and discovered a sight that is still vivid in Brad's memory after sixty-six years: "All the front part of her scalp was bare bone, with her hair upside-down on the back of her skull—a dreadful sight. She shrieked in pain as we untangled her and got her onto our little stretcher, to which we tied her with another of our packboard ropes."

They made Jessie as secure as they could and started down over the boulders and the ice and the snow. Jessie was conscious and in terrible pain, so they were as careful as they could be, but it was very tough going through the boulders. The shortest day of the year was only just past, the sun was long gone behind the ridge above them, and they'd only gotten as far as the trees on the floor of the ravine when night began to fall. They had almost three miles to go.

When Stitch Callender got to Pinkham, "Itchy" Mills and Wendell Lees were just driving out of the parking lot with the AMC truck, headed down the notch to meet the train in Glen. Stitch yelled and they turned around to join Joe Dodge and Johnny Hall in a dash up the mountain. They met Brad and his crew just below Huntington Ravine, moving slowly. Jessie recognized Joe and she said, very clearly, "Joe, give me a drink of milk and take me to the hospital. I'm sick."

The combined forces shifted Jessie to the stretcher that Joe's crew had with them, but the carry didn't get much easier; the terrain was rough, the dense spruce growth was only cleared for single-file hikers, and their wide carry kept crowding them off the trail.

Johnny Hall was coming up behind Joe's group and he had blankets and another stretcher, and when he caught up with Joe and Brad he realized that

they had the situation in hand. He'd passed Walter Sturges on his way up and he decided that his equipment could be put to better use by the three Harvards helping Walter, so he turned around to find them. This left Brad and Joe Dodge and seven other men, enough to shift off as they carried Jessie. Joe's group had flashlights and with this improvement they decided to cut across to the new Tuckerman Trail; it would be somewhat longer but certainly faster than continuing down the old Huntington Trail to the lower junction. As they were working their way through the woods the deep laceration on Jessie's neck hemorrhaged, so Joe stuffed handfuls of snow into the wound and stopped the bleeding. Most of the men knew Jessie and now they were dumbfounded. All through the jolting carry down the mountain, Jessie cursed volubly and loudly, with nary a stammer or a stutter anywhere in her litany of pain.

By now they were out of the wind vortex churning down from the ravine and even though the temperature was approaching zero they felt warm enough to strip to their shirt sleeves. They'd left most of the clouds behind, too, and a quarter moon was showing through. They reached the wide avenue of the new Tuckerman Trail at about 8:30, and now their progress over the thin firm snow was as rapid as anyone could hope for. They reached the lower junction of the Huntington Trail in twenty minutes and found the toboggan and some blankets that Joe's party had left on the way up, so they put Jessie's improvised litter on the toboggan and reached Pinkham at 9:25.

Meanwhile, Walter Sturges had used up the last of his strength, so Johnny Hall and three Harvards carried him more than a mile and a half from the crossing of the Raymond Path down to Pinkham. Teen Dodge, Joe's wife, gave him hot tea and turkey soup and put a hot-water bottle under his feet; then, just as Jessie was brought in, Walter was started down the road to the hospital seventeen miles away in North Conway.

Jessie's injuries dictated all possible speed to the hospital. By this time she was struggling against her pain and her restraints, so the rescue party swaddled her in blankets for both warmth and bracing and put her in the back of the AMC truck. Wendell Lees climbed in with her and held her head steady while Joe drove the truck as fast as he could down the Pinkham road, but with the winter conditions, the primitive surface and marginal maintenance, it was about like driving crossways over a farmer's plowed field. Later

Mountain rescues used to be simple. Here an injured woman is being carried in the Great Gulf, circa 1910.

Joe said, "I can't understand it. We were rougher than a son of a bitch with her—had to be. But she lived."

The AMC had no telephone in Pinkham Notch, so someone had gone to the Glen House to call Harold Shedd, the principal doctor in the North Conway hospital. He heard the ring just as he was walking down the steps of his house on his way to visit his wife in Boston.

Dr. Shedd was typical of the medical arts in his day: no matter what the occasion or the details, if care was needed he provided it. After he'd treated Jessie's most threatening injuries he called her family in Cambridge and told them that she was out of danger, but there was one disturbing consequence: when she came out of the anesthesia there was a neurological problem he had not expected: she had a severe stutter. Jessie's family told Dr. Shedd not to worry about it, she'd stuttered all her life.

Jessie was admitted to the North Conway hospital shortly before midnight on January 2 and she was discharged on May 16, a stay of 136 days. The hospital charge was one dollar a day, with home-cooked meals; surgery and various other attentions added about $100 more.

Joe Dodge carries an injured hiker off Mount Washington. He's just passing "Lunch Rocks" in Tuckerman Ravine and has almost three tough miles to go before reaching the AMC base camp at the highway.

Over time, rescue operations evolved. In this particular operation, in which a team of rescuers carries a victim in a Stokes litter, six carriers are required in a shift, with two or three shifts waiting to relieve them.

TWO MONTHS AFTER JESSIE WAS RELEASED FROM THE HOSPITAL she was back up on Mount Washington, looking for her ice axe and anything else she might have lost. She continued to work at Widener Library and she continued her year-round trips to the mountains, sometimes staying in her cabin on Chocorua, sometimes with Joe Dodge in Pinkham Notch, and sometimes with us in Jackson.

When father finished telling us the story of Jessie and her terrible fall in Huntington Ravine, he'd tell about Jessie and the King's Broad Arrow Pine.

The King's Pines were the trees that the quartermasters of George III marked in colonial days. Europe had used up its supply of trees suitable for the masts of ocean-going ships, so the virgin forests of the New World were a critical military and commercial resource. The mast trees were marked with a broad arrow cut into the bark, and if any colonial yeoman used such a tree for his own purposes he was severely punished. It was known that some of these trees survived the age of sail, and it was rumored that even 150 years later they were sometimes found by determined explorers of the deep woods. Jessie was just such an explorer, but she'd never yet found one of the King's Pines in her many lonely hikes. Still, though, she kept trying.

Then the great hurricane of 1938 struck New England. It came ashore on Long Island, it went straight up the Connecticut River, and when it reached Jackson it was still so strong that it lifted our four-car garage off its foundations. Vast tracts of the mountain forests were knocked flat and Jessie was heartbroken; she was certain that there must be a few of the King's Pines still standing in some undiscovered glen and she was determined to find one. Now it seemed obvious that she had lost her last chance.

It was not obvious to Jessie. She was sure that a certain distant corner of the forest still had a colonial relic and the summer after the hurricane she went there and was unreported for many days. The destruction was terrible and one day she was crawling on her hands and knees, trying to get through an endless blowdown. Jessie's sweater snagged on a broken branch and she twisted around to attend to it. As she looked up, she saw above her head the mark of the King's broad arrow.