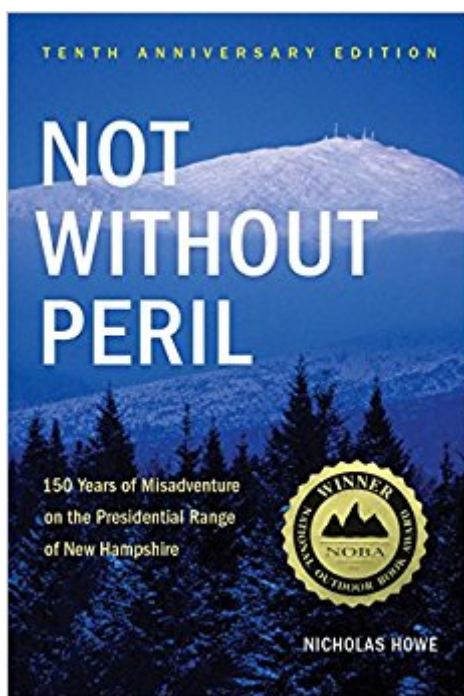


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# Not Without Peril: 150 Years Of Misadventure On The Presidential Range Of New Hampshire



## Synopsis

Among the most dangerous mountains in the world, Mount Washington has challenged adventurers for centuries with its severe weather. From the days when gentlefolk ascended the heights in hoop skirts and wool suits to today's high-tech assaults on wintry summits, this book offers extensive and intimate profiles of people who found trouble on New Hampshire's Presidential Range, from the nineteenth century through present day. Veteran journalist Nicholas Howe draws on his investigative skills and familiarity with the mountains of his childhood to create this gripping collection. The result is a compelling story about our changing relationship with the mountains we love and the risks they pose. This Tenth Anniversary Edition includes a new afterword by Nicholas Howe, with commentary on how our relationship with the Presidential Range has evolved over the last decade.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Like a piece of granite chipped off a Presidential peak, veteran journalist Nicholas Howe's assessment of misadventure in New Hampshire's rugged mountains has a crisp, puritanical feel that fairly rasps New England. Take his description of the near-vertical (and now well-skied) slope that nearly killed Max Engelhart in 1926: "Tuckerman Ravine is a sort of twin to Huntington Ravine, a left-hand punch into the side of Mount Washington by the same primordial giant that made Huntington with his right." Underlying *Not Without Peril* is the not-so-subtle message that the Presidential Range, topping out at just over 6,000 feet, is as uncompromising as any other mountain range. After all, these mountains--named for Washington, Lincoln, Madison--are home to some of

the most vicious weather recorded on the planet. Howe makes no judgment about those whose misfortunes he chronicles; there are tender moments that manage to stay faithful to a crusty Yankee sensibility, as in the tale of Lizzie Bourne, who died in a snowstorm while huddled in a makeshift lean-to. Howe quotes her uncle George: "She was dead--had uttered no complaint, expressed no regret or fear, but passed silently away." Such sober tales, scrupulously researched, tell the history of a mountain range and its climbers, some of whom are immortalized for their ill-fated treks. It's a gritty read, a touch morbid, but more than compensated for by sharp writing and compelling drama.

--Tipton Blish --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

A catalog of death in the New England mountains. Although not high by world standards, New Hampshire's Mount Washington is home to howling winds and monstrously cold temperatures, often the coldest in the Lower 48. For years, mountaineer and freelance journalist Howe has been haunting the mountain and nearby summits of the Presidential Range, a place where furious storms, hypothermia, and occasional bears take their toll on human visitors at all seasons. Howe catalogs the errors of the unfortunate victims and silly mistakes which seem always to come into play whenever Americans head outside, whether the date is 1849 or 1994. (The most common of them, Howe's evidence suggests, is the simple omission of appropriate cold-weather gear, for although the summertime temperature may approach 90 at Mount Washington's base, the wind chill may take it down to freezing at the peak.) Few of Howe's pointed tales end happily. Some of his protagonists slip easily into death, having made some misjudgment or another; others wander around for days in the woods, running from lightning and wild animals in scenes that would fit right into a sequel to *The Blair Witch Project*, before meeting their unhappy fate; a few others even make it off the mountain alive, but minus toes and fingers. Since there are only so many ways to die on a mountainside you can fall, freeze, or get munched the narrative tends to be repetitious, and a little judicious paring would have been welcome. Still, all these deaths lead up to a well-taken moral: It is not so much that Mount Washington is a killer, but that people approaching it need to take better care than many of them do. Fans of outdoor disaster and unpleasantness, as well as collectors of New England mountain lore, will find Howe a generally satisfying guide to New Hampshire's dark side.

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Since I grew up around the people and in the mountains this is of primary interest for me. For those who are less experienced and are interested this is a great book. Not just the stories but the people

involved. Some of the people mentioned here were my fathers contemporaries and I earned my love of the mountains and the forests from them. There are fewer of that kind of clear thinking and courageous folks now but, this book is a good way to get a sense of what they were like.

Many years ago I spent a week hiking the White Mountains with my father. I remember seeing the crosses along the side of trails where a hiker had died. This book was fascinating to me, but horrifying at the same time, because it explained why and how these deaths occurred. The book makes a strong argument for thoroughly researching the area where you are going to hike and preparing for whatever kind of conditions you MAY encounter. Nature doesn't play games.

I have lived in New England all my life and love the White Mountains in New Hampshire. Not only is the Mt. Washington valley breath taking in its beauty, but it is also home to some of the most inhospitable weather on earth. I hiked there extensively in my younger days, but never tackled the roughest of the trails that really were dangerous. But I did hike there in winter in some of the harshest conditions imaginable. And I really enjoyed immensely this book that relentlessly tells it like it is as to some of the most successful excursions, and a vast array of some of the most deadly and stupidest. There is something truly awesome to read about the successes and tragedies of some place that you yourself have experienced and survived. I couldn't put it down and plan on reading it again and again. Even if you have never even heard of the Presidential range in New Hampshire, the author does a terrific job of relating the story of the unfortunates with good research and a true knack for telling a tale without preaching. Oh make no mistake about it, anyone that has hiked the mountains there has found themselves shaking their heads at the foolishness of some that have never returned, or were found dead because of lack of experience or some other misfortune of not making the smartest decisions to be sure. But it also doesn't dwell on the tragedies with constant advice of what they did wrong and what we should learn from it. It truly just tells it like it is, and does it very well. Most enjoyable, and highly recommended... : )

I read this book because we will soon be setting out in the dead of winter to climb Mt Washington. For me, this book serves two purposes. First, the book provides a significant amount of anecdotal data on the topology of the mountain, its features and its trails. But more importantly, it brings to the gut the extreme conditions and serious dangers that can be encountered while on the mountain. Experienced and prudent climbers understand that living to summit another day is much better than risking death just to prove how manly (or womanly) you are. This book presents in a well written

manner the folly of failing to recognize deteriorating conditions and not turning around. My respect for the mountain is certainly greater than it might have been before reading the well researched and well written book. Aside from this, the stories themselves are fascinating.

The author provides an interesting and factual history of Mount Washington and the mountains that make up the Presidential range by describing how hiking trails were developed using horses and manual labor from the mid 1800's, who cut trails that eventually led to the top of the mountains. The stories of "adventurers" exploits to hike during some of the worst weather conditions imaginable is not only fascinating to read, but tragic. Enough cannot not be said of the volunteers past and present who risked their lives in often unsuccessful attempts to save hikers. I found the book a great read and difficult to put down.

Rating this 5 stars even though I didn't read it. I purchased for my Husband and he enjoyed the book. Said it was a very good read.

Great historical perspective. Great stories with from a detailed and knowledgeable viewpoint. Coming from a professional journalist, I was surprised at the amount of mundane detail, repeated bits of story and at time less than clear and smooth descriptions. Would be 5 stars with some more or better editing. I found it compelling, and it easily maintained my interest.

I admit to a morbid fascination with the subject of human beings pitting themselves against the awesome power and fury of Nature, and losing. Jon Krakauer's Into Thin Air is one of my favorite books. Not Without Peril gave many accounts of ill-fated hikers, skiers, etc., but overall was very long on details about the terrain, the weather, the rescue efforts, and history of the region, and short on the element of human suffering. That's what makes Krakauer's book a stand-out--he was actually there on Mt Everest, for one thing, and he gave a lot of information, both from first-hand experience and from research and interviews with survivors, on what it's really like to experience the mental and physical decompensation of intense exposure to violent conditions. Neccessarily, Howe's accounts are more dispassionate since he was narrating the tales of others, not his own. I get that. But some informed speculation would've made the tales a bit more interesting, in my opinion.

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