

Katahdin

1.

It was solid
the mountain
as painted on the canvas,
it was clearly made of rock,
Marsden Hartley returning home
to live
in Maine
after years of traveling in abstraction,
the mountain in Maine solid
rising into the sky
rock
and the Maine native painted the mountain true,
it was a creation, with white pine
Mount Katahdin
rising from the earth, forested
cold white with first snow.

Tom Fallon

Mount Katahdin is the highest mountain in Maine at 5,269 feet. It is located in Baxter State Park, which is in east central Piscataquis County, about 25 miles northwest of Millinocket. It is on the drainage divide between the East and West branches of the Penobscot River and is at the north end of the Appalachian Trail.

The mountain was formed around 400 million years ago in the Acadian orogeny when an island arc collided with eastern North America and is part of a laccolith. It includes various rock forms such as Katahdin granite, basalt, rhyolite and sedimentary rock and was shaped by glaciers as recently as 15,000 years ago which carved cirques with eskers and moraines.

Katahdin is horseshoe-shaped with five separate peaks: Howe Peak, with two summits, 4,612 foot North Howe and 4,734 foot South Howe; 4,751 foot Hamlin Peak; 5,267 foot Baxter Peak, the highest point; South Peak, and the 4,912 foot Pamola Peak. The open end of the horseshoe faces northeast. The timberline is at 3,700 feet.

The mountain was named *Katabdin*, which means “The Greatest Mountain,” by the Penobscot Indians,. The name has been spelled *Catabrdin* by Turner and *Ktaadn* by Henry David Thoreau, who wrote of his climb of the mountain in *The Maine Woods*. The mountain’s official name was decided by the US Board on Geographic Names in 1893. American painters Frederick Edwin Church and Marsden Hartley have created significant landscapes of the mountain.

3.

Hartley turned away
from the unfinished mountain the painting
brush in hand
stopped feet away
to see the mountain
to know
what he knew
see
the creation the mountain in its reality
the man looked
still
brush in hand
stepped back to the painting
the creation.

Tom Fallon
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