

# HEZEKIAH SARGENT'S MOUNT

## ORIGIN OF THE NAME OF THE FAMOUS OLD KEARSARGE.

**Not an Indian Word, but Derived from the Name of the Owner of One of New-Hampshire's Granite Hills—Two Kearsarge Mountains for Both of Which the Honor of Naming the Destroyer of the Alabama Is Claimed.**

The loss of the old corvette Kearsarge, which sunk the Alabama in 1864, has caused some newspaper comment as to the origin of the name. By many it has been supposed to be an Indian word. When the ship was christened in 1861 it was supposed that it was receiving an Indian name, for the Secretary of the Navy had invited the Governors of States to suggest such names for the new vessels, and Kearsarge was suggested from New-Hampshire. It was the name of a mountain.

There are in the Granite State two mountains for which is claimed the honor of bearing the name selected for the famous old battle ship. Authorities do not agree as to which is entitled to the distinction, but in discussion which has been drawn out in New-Hampshire enough has been said to develop the origin of the word, which is not aboriginal.

One of the mountains is in Merrimac County, about twenty-two miles northwest of Concord, an isolated mound, whose summit is a solid granite mass, worn smooth and round by the glaciers. Its height is a little less than 3,000 feet. Standing alone in almost the centre of the State, its sides spread with forests of spruce, maple, and beech, its isolation gives it prominence, and for miles out from its base it is known by the people of the little villages as "the mountain." It is an integral part of the every-day life of the people living within a circle having as its centre the mountain and a radius of from fifteen to twenty miles. It has an individuality that few of the many peaks in New-Hampshire can boast.

The farmers for miles around look to "the mountain" in haying time for signs of thunderstorms, for storms are bred up on its rocky sides. The farmers' boys and girls out for a holiday in Summer go to "the mountain," and from its summit get their first definite knowledge that there is a portion of the world which lies outside the county lines. From its granite cap the White Mountains, Ascutney in Vermont, Sunapee, and Monodnock may be seen, while forty or fifty little lakes or ponds, blue as the heavens, with a dozen crooked rivers, whose waters first ran down the sides of "the mountain," gave variety to the stretches of green fields and still greener woods.

Daniel Webster was born in the very shadow of "the mountain," and every schoolboy knows this as well as he knows that spruce gum trees and gray squirrels are thick up on its rugged sides. A carriage road, now badly out of repair, grown up with bushes and washed out of shape by the storms, winds from the town of Warner to the summit of "the mountain," and it is of record in the annals of certain of the "Webster folks"—the town of Webster—that "John Dodge once drove a three-horse team to the old 'tip top house,' " for which feat the said John Dodge was accredited the most daring driver that had been known in that neighborhood for many years.

The other mountain is in the White Mountain group at North Conway, in Carroll County. It is loftier than "the mountain" in Merrimac County, reckoning from the sea level, but because of its proximity to Mounts Washington, Adams, Jefferson, and the others of the white-capped group in the Switzerland of America, it has less of individuality than its less lofty rival far to the south. Forests just as green are spread upon its sides, its summit is tipped with solid rock just as grand and gray, but its glory is overshadowed by its neighbors which stand within a few miles, their heads thousands of feet nearer heaven.

In the debates which have been going on in the country stores, the Post Offices, and other loafing places of the little New-Hampshire villages on occasional Saturday nights ever since the old battle ship made whatever gave it its name a thing to be held in honor the claims of both mountains have been duly set forth. The farmer who lives in Webster has sat on a nail keg "up th' store," and, with drawling emphasis, declared: "Gosh darn it, where is this 'ere other Kearsarge Mountain, any how? I never see it, and I never heerd much tell of it till this naval fight made it wuth something to hev the name."

In all of these statements he was strictly within the truth, while up near North Conway the farmer, equally jealous for the glory of his vicinity, has taken a statistical view of the situation, and, having affirmed that the North Conway Kearsarge is 3,251 feet high, while the one in Merrimac County is but 2,943 feet, that ought to settle it. Of course, the highest one would be the one which was to give its name to the ship. Moreover, the Kearsarge in which the North Conway man is particularly interested ranks as "one of the White Mountains" in the guide books, while the other is in no such distinguished company. So both sides are comfortably sure that they are living in sight of the mountain for which the ship was named.

Some years ago it was shown in a newspaper discussion that the word Kearsarge is not an Indian word. One of the mountains was once the property of Hezekiah Sargeant. The mountain was known as Hezekiah Sargeant's Mountain. This easily became Kiah Sarge Mountain, and finally Kearsarge. Dwellers may be found near each who say that their particular mountain belonged to Hezekiah Sargeant. Good authorities differ as to whence the ship received its name. Prof. J. H. Gilmore of Rochester University, in a lecture, has discussed this subject.

He says that during the war the Secretary of the Navy asked the Governors to suggest names of Indian origin for naval vessels. Prof. Gilmore's father was then Governor of New-Hampshire, and he turned the task over to the professor. The first name that occurred to him was Kearsarge, and he assumed that it was an Indian word. Afterward he found a geographical reference to Hezekiah Sargeant's Mountain, and he concluded that the name, instead of being of Indian origin, is a combination of Hebrew and Indo-European, Hezekiah being Hebrew and meaning "the strength of Jehovah," and Sargeant being traced back to the Latin "servus." In Johnson's Universal Cyclopedia the glory of having given its name to the battle ship is awarded by G. V. Fox to the North Conway Mountain. Mr. Fox says:

"On the suggestion of the wife of the Assistant Secretary of the Navy, a daughter of Levi Woodbury of New-Hampshire, the Secretary, in 1861, named the vessel which sunk the Alabama in 1864 after this mountain. Another one of the same name, in Merrimac County, formerly called Kyar Sarga—by the Indians Cowisewaschook—height 2,950 feet, has been erroneously claimed for this honor."

Lippincott's Gazeteer makes the Merrimac County mountain the real Kearsarge. Under that word it is spoken of—

"Kearsarge, a mountain of Merrimac County, N. H., about twenty-two miles northwest of Concord; altitude, 2,943 feet. Its summit is naked granite. Another Kearsarge, called also Klarsarge and Pequawket, is in Carroll County."

So there is written authority for calling both mountains Kiahsarge, and possibly this may establish the claims of each to having been "Hezekiah Sargeant's Mountain." Among the New-Hampshire folk now one sometimes hears the Merrimac County mountain called Kiahsarge. It is so spoken of in a religious hymn. Possibly this hymn may be of value in tracing the name back to Hezekiah Sargeant.

That the name of this mountain appears in a sacred song comes about in this wise: About sixty years ago John Osgood, living in the town of Warner, in Merrimac County, became the founder of a religious sect. He gave it his own name, and his followers were known as "Osgoodites." At one time his followers numbered several hundred, a few of whom are still living. They were extremely orthodox, believing in simple habits and plain dress, like the Quakers, while their belief in the future life was essentially that of the Seventh Day Adventists. It was one of their tenets that material affairs might be given equal prominence in religion with spiritual. Accordingly, when a proposition came before the New-Hampshire Legislature for an appropriation to build a road from Warner to the summit of Kearsarge, the Osgoodites made it a religious matter.

To them such a thing was an abomination. If one of their number had favored it he would have been declared a heretic. He might, with equal show of favor in their eyes, have declared that one might wear a bosom shirt with a pearl stud and still have hope of a glorious immortality. Such things were also abominations. They made the "mountain road" an especially vital issue,

and Mr. Osgood, who wrote the hymns for his people to use in their worship, devoted one to the road. It began thus:

We think the people are too large,  
To want a road to Kiahsarge.  
They have the spirit of the maid,  
With a pail of milk upon her head.

A few copies of the book of sacred songs are still preserved in Warner, and when a vigorous newspaper discussion broke out over the origin of the word Kearsarge, about twenty years ago, John Osgood's hymn was brought forward as evidence that the bald old granite peak had once been known as "Hezekiah Sargeant's Mountain."