

## **The Great Stone Face**

### **Franconia Notch State Park, NH**

Daniel Webster once said, "Men hang out their signs indicative of their respective trades; shoe makers hang out a gigantic shoe; jewelers a monster watch, and the dentist hangs out a gold tooth; but up in the Mountains of New Hampshire, God Almighty has hung out a sign to show that there He makes men." Thus it happens that New Hampshire has her Profile, "The Old Man of the Mountain," sublimely outlined against the western sky; a sign unique, distinctive, and inspirational as to the kind of men the sons of the Granite State should be.

The 40 by 25 foot Profile is a natural rock formation composed of Conway red granite that formed by a series of geologic happenings that began an estimated 200 million years ago. Hovering majestically 1,200 feet above Profile Lake, the Great Stone Face is made of five ledges, that when lined up correctly give the appearance of an old man with an easterly gaze, clearly distinct and visible from only a few places in the area. When viewed from other locations in Franconia Notch State Park, the same five ledges have a very rough and ragged appearance, and there is no suggestion of The Profile. This craggy behemoth, once thought to resemble Thomas Jefferson, is considered THE symbol of the State of New Hampshire.

This photograph of the Old Man of the Mountain was taken in October 2002 on a crisp autumn day during the leaf peeping season from a viewing area off of I-93 Northbound. Nearly 200 years after the profile was discovered in 1805 and six months after this photograph was taken, the Old Man literally fell off the face on the

earth on May 2, 2003 living by the New Hampshire motto of live free and die. It was unclear when the man died since clouds obscured the view for several days prior to the gruesome discovery. Beginning May 3, 2003 New Hampshire awoke to find its stern granite symbol of stubbornness and independence had collapsed into indistinguishable rubble ending nearly a century of efforts to protect the landmark from the same natural forces that created it. May he rest in peace.

### **About the Photographer**

Matthew J. Cook is a researcher, Internet entrepreneur and amateur photographer residing in Hartford, Connecticut. A native Rhode Islander, he spent numerous summers in the White Mountains of the Granite State during his childhood. Matt derives enjoyment from the moment of discovery. Photography provides one venue to share that enjoyment with others.

In 2000, Matt began taking digital photographs as a hobby paralleling his interests in technology, architecture, nature and the sea. He is best known for his ability to capture everyday moments that most people neglect to see during the fast-paced activities of daily life. Matt believes that most good photography does not have to occur in an exotic location; many suitable scenes are available right in our own back yard if we just slow down and pay attention to our surroundings.

Matt's works have earned featured appearances on the State of Connecticut ConneCT website photo gallery and Hartford NBC 30 TV's "Hot Shots." His photographs have appeared in several International Library of Photography hardbound anthologies. Most recently these have included *Life's Gallery* (May 2002) and *Filters of the Imagination* (June 2002). Many of his works are available for purchase through his website at [MatthewJCook.com](http://MatthewJCook.com).