

# Appalachia

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Volume 64  
Number 2 *Summer/Fall 2013: The Cost of  
Energy*

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Article 20

2013

## Saddleback Mountain

Parker Towle

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### Recommended Citation

Towle, Parker (2013) "Saddleback Mountain," *Appalachia*: Vol. 64: No. 2, Article 20.  
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### Saddleback Mountain

A night on the floor of the shelter,  
dawn, quick cup of coffee, packs heavy,  
we push between black trunks, tread on  
roots, mud dark as the trees. Two loons  
swim out on a pond. Breathless,  
we stop for breakfast, ahead  
the mountainside looms. A thrush  
flutters through leaves. We lift our  
burdens, breathe crisp air, begin the haul:  
slabs of rock, steep steps, then  
more granite toward the summit cairn—

maze of lakes, peaks, cloud shadows,  
deep green bristle of spruce, blue sky  
over all. At this height a tight breeze  
dries our backs, our faces—ahead  
the granite swell of the Horn drifting. . . .

*Parker Towle*

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PARKER TOWLE has been hiking and canoeing in the mountains of the Northeast and elsewhere for the past 70 years. His first full-length collection of poems, *This Weather Is No Womb*, appeared from Antrim House Books in 2007.

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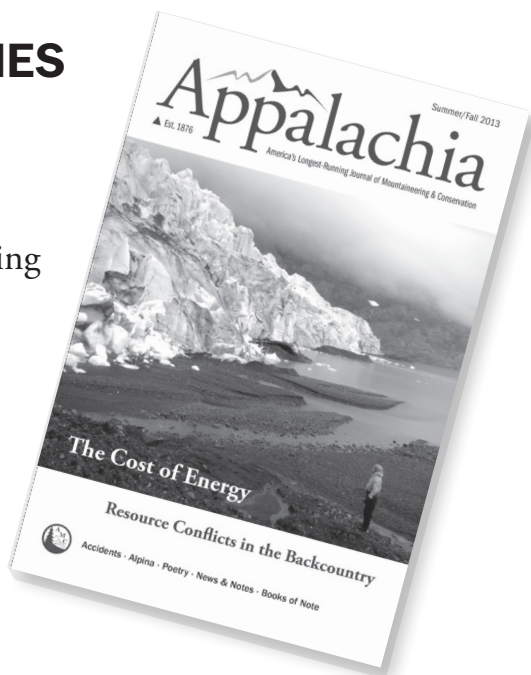
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