

The Kayaker's Companion

Chapter Notes for Volume 1



Glacier
Bay

DAVID BAHR

The essential Glacier Bay reference.

Chapter Notes for Volume 1

of *The Kayaker's Companion to
Glacier Bay, Second Edition*

Wondering about a reference to some obscure Glacier Bay fact? Need to know which mountain hosted Muir's heavenly angels? Want more information on the salmon cannery in Bartlett Cove or the fox farm in the Beard-slees? Perhaps you're curious about cruise ship lobbying, or the long lost Harriman Glacier, or the missing Mount Reid? These chapter notes give abundant citations and extra information for every detail in *The Kayaker's Companion to Glacier Bay, Second Edition, Volume 1*.

DAVID BAHR is a glaciologist and photographic artist.
He was the 2013 Artist-in-Residence at Glacier Bay.

- ★ **EACH CHAPTER NOTE** gives relevant references
- ★ Adds pertinent information and extra details
- ★ Points out potential confusion and contradictory evidence
- ★ Unmasks occasional mysteries
- ★ Uses references from the accompanying *Annotated Bibliography*

National Park Guide, Science, History, Culture
Glacier Bear Press



ISBN 978-1-7345530-3-1



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of

The Kayaker's Companion to Glacier Bay, Second Edition

David Bahr

GLACIER BEAR PRESS

Nederland, Colorado

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ISBN: 978-1-7345530-3-1

Printed and/or electronically produced in the United States of America

Glacier Bear Press
95 Meadowland Ct.
Nederland, Colorado, 80466

Visit www.bahrimages.com

Front cover: Brown bear cub eating grass, Wachusett Inlet

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Chapter Note Structure

SOME NOTES ARE BRIEF references while others are lengthy disquisitions. The longer notes highlight interesting complications or important context that cannot realistically be covered in a guidebook. In many cases, a note lists multiple references to indicate a pattern of agreement (and occasional disagreements) in the literature.

FORMAT OF CHAPTER NOTES

- (1) The initial page number(s) refer to *The Kayaker's Companion to Glacier Bay, Volume 1, Second Edition*.
- (2) Bold text is a quote from *Volume 1*.
- (3) Subsequent text offers context for the quote and/or provides a reference.

CITATIONS

Each citation is listed in the separate *Annotated Bibliography*. Most references are standard and sometimes stuffy academic-flavored works, but for the more casual reader, I have included popular-level citations as appropriate. Carefully selected, such popular voices can offer a measure of expert opinion and indicate a level of professional consensus.

When reasonable I have included the relevant page numbers within a cited book. This could be counterproductive for John Muir's *Travels in Alaska* (1915) and Samuel Hall Young's *Alaska Days with John Muir* (1915) because contemporary readers will almost certainly have one of the many different modern editions with wildly differing page numbers. For those two books and a few others, I have indicated only the relevant chapter numbers.

ORTHOGRAPHIES

Tlingit orthographies have changed dramatically over the last 200 years and continue to evolve. For

that reason, when quoting an author, I have not indicated typos (with a “[sic]”) for orthographic disagreements. For example, I write “**k**wáan,” but many well-respected ethnographers, anthropologists, and Tlingit scholars use variants such as kwáan (no underline) or kwaan (no underline, no accent). In most instances, these aren't mistakes by the authors, just references to a different orthography. Similarly, historical authors, like Young, Muir, Beardslee, and Scidmore, and early ethnographers such as Krause and Emmons were making phonetic approximations that are wildly different from modern orthographies. These differences are not shown as typos.

ACRONYMS IN THE TEXT

ADFG: Alaska Department of Fish and Game
 DOI: US Department of the Interior
 EPA: Environmental Protection Agency
 GAO: Government Accountability Office (2004–present), aka General Accounting Office (1921–2003)
 GLBA: Glacier Bay National Park and Preserve
 IMO: International Maritime Organization
 IPCC: Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
 IUCN: International Union for Conservation of Nature
 NOAA: National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
 NPS: National Park Service
 NSIDC: National Snow and Ice Data Center
 USCG: United States Coast Guard
 USGS: United States Geological Survey
 VIS: Visitor Information Station

Chapter 1 Notes

Introduction

pg. 1 “**Gloria in Excelsis**” Muir (1895, pg. 24; 1915, Ch. 10).

pg. 1 “**15,266-foot**” The USGS reports that Mount Fairweather has an elevation of 15,266 ft (4,653 m), as it has for many years (USGS, 2000e). Fairweather’s height is routinely misreported as its old 1961 value of 15,300 ft, including by the latest Trails Illustrated (2019), by the Park Service (e.g. GLBA, 2025c), and even in online USGS educational resources. Admittedly, the difference is small and possibly within the measurement’s margin of error. Incidentally, the international boundary surveyors in the late 1890’s and early 1900’s carefully fixed the elevation at 15,287 ft (US Senate, 1904c, Sheet 16).

GLORIA IN EXCELSIS: CRILLON OR FAIRWEATHER?

pg. 1 “**snowcapped summit**”

But which summit? Muir (1895, pg. 24; and 1915, Ch. 10) indicates that his ‘Gloria in Excelsis’ alpenglow was on the “topmost peak of the Fairweather Mountains.” This strongly suggests 15,266 ft Mount Fairweather, but in the same chapter of his book, Muir writes “Mount Fairweather though not the highest. . .” and “Crillon, though the loftiest of all (being nearly sixteen thousand feet high). . .” Apparently Muir believed the “topmost” alpenglow summit to be Crillon. His traveling companion Young (1915, Ch. 4; 1927, pg. 202) also identifies the “Gloria in Excelsis” summit as Mt. Crillon which he believes to be the highest.

Many late 1800’s narratives state or suggest that Mt. Crillon is the highest mountain in the

Fairweathers. See for example, Collis (1890, pg. 143 “Mt. Fairweather, boasting . . . over 15,000 feet; . . . Mt. Crillon, reaching . . . almost 16,000 feet”), Peattie (1890, pg. 88, “Mount Fairweather, 13,500 feet; Mount Crillon, 15,900 feet”), and Hyde (1888, pg. 90, “the magnificent panorama . . . including Mount Crillon, raising its snowy crest against the sky to a height of 15,900 feet”). Similarly, from Scidmore (1893b, pg. 100; 1896a, pg. 100), “Mt. Crillon, 15,900, and Mt. Fairweather, 15,500 ft,” and she implies the same in Scidmore (1893a, pg. 51). Bruce (1895, pg. 90) says “the highest of which were Crillon 16,000 feet, Fairweather 15,000 feet.” Badlam (1890, pg. 30) writes that “Mt. Fairweather, her great height of 15,500 feet . . . Mt. Crillon towers in all the sublimity of her 15,900 feet.”

Were all these authors confusing the two summits? Probably not. Traveling north along the outer coast, Hallock (1886, pg. 190) identifies Crillon as visible first, and then later they sail past Mount Fairweather; he correctly identifies the summits but gets their relative elevations wrong. He adds, “It [Mount Fairweather] was named by Cook in 1778, and is generally considered to be a few hundred feet shorter than Mount Crillon.” Likewise, scientist Wright (1887) gets their relative positions correct, saying, “Mount Crillon, opposite the head of the bay, is 15,900 feet high, and Mount Fairweather, a little farther north, is 15,500 feet.” Baedeker (1894, pg. 235) writes of the view when traveling up Glacier Bay, “including (named from left to right) Mt. La Perouse (11,300ft.), Mt. Crillon (15,900 ft.), Mt. Lituya (10,000ft.), and Mt.

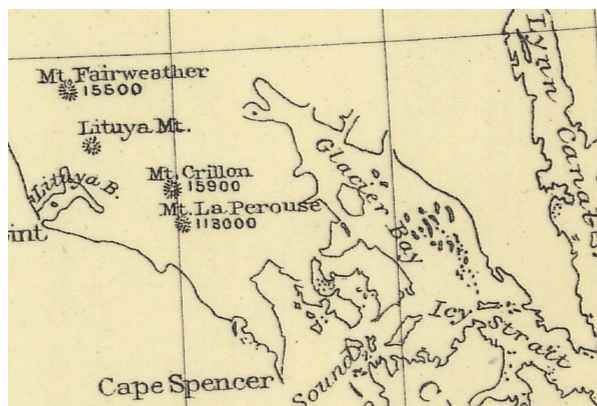
Fairweather (15,500 ft.)” That’s the correct order, just the wrong relative elevations. No doubt many took their lead from an early US Coast and Geodetic Survey (1883) map which shows Crillon and Fairweather in the correct positions but with Crillon at 15,900 ft and Fairweather at 15,500 ft.

So again, which summit? In 1879 Muir and Young had no maps other than Vancouver’s 1794 exploratory chart which did not include Glacier Bay (Young, 1915, Ch. 3; Young, 1927, pp. 184 and 197). Writing years later from increasingly vague memories, Muir could have been referring to either mountain, mistakenly assigning the name Crillon to the peak we know today as Fairweather, or correctly identifying Crillon but mistakenly believing it to be the highest peak in the Fairweather Range. However, given Muir’s most likely location at the southern end of Russell Island, his view of today’s Mount Crillon would have been blocked. Muir and Young were almost certainly looking at today’s Mount Fairweather, which—most convincingly—would be the first to capture the morning’s new light.

pg. 1 **“our burning hearts were ready for any fate . . . this glorious morning would enrich our lives forever.”** From Muir (1915, Ch. 10). See also Muir (1895) in which he writes very nearly the same.

pg. 1 **“This wonderfully glorious”** Merritt (1892).

pg. 1 **“Words are insufficient”** From Ballou (1896). See also Hyde (1888, pg. 89, “A recent visitor to this indescribable scene”), Muir (1891, pg. 4; 1893; 1915, Ch. 2; all identically saying “scenery so hopelessly beyond description”), Denman in the Pacific Coast Steamship Company’s brochure (1892, pg. 28 “beautiful beyond description”), Scidmore (1893b, pg. 1 “sublime beyond description”), Wolfe (1938, pg. 312, “beyond description glorious”), and many others who fail to find



A close-up of Glacier Bay from an 1883 US Coast and Geodetic Survey map. Mount Crillon has a higher elevation than Mount Fairweather, a common mistake of that era. (From US Coast and Geodetic Survey, 1883.)

words and then wax logorrheic. Campbell (2007, pg. 213) notes the “peculiar nineteenth-century literary convention of claiming to be speechless.”

pg. 1 **“Superlative abuse is not a new problem”**

In addition to the many relevant original sources—notably Hallock (1886), Hyde (1888), Merritt (1892), Muir (1891), Pacific Coast Steamship Company (1888, 1892), Ballou (1896)—also see the analysis in Campbell (2007, Prologue and Ch. 3).

pg. 1 **“Inside Passage became a trendy adventure”** See Hinckley (1965), and for an analysis see Campbell (2007, Ch. 3). Even Chief Justice M. R. Waite of the Supreme Court of the United States traveled the route in 1886, stating in a letter that “the excursion will soon become one of the most popular on the continent” (Pacific Coast Steamship Company, 1892, pg. 31). The New York Times (1890) notes that the trip had been taken by so many tourists that a new book on the subject could not be original. Nevertheless, the books kept coming. See, for example, the surfeit of travelogues and guidebooks by

Scidmore (1885a, 1893b, 1896a), Hallock (1886), Schwatka (1886), Ingersoll (1887), Field (1888), Hyde (1888, 1889), Ballou (1889, 1896), Woodman (1889), Badlam (1890), Collis (1890), Peattie (1890), Merritt (1892), Baedeker (1894), Bruce (1895, 1899), Roberts (1895), Morris (1901), Higginson (1906, 1908), and Rickard (1909) among others.

SOUTHEAST ALASKA: BETTER THAN EUROPE

pg. 1 “wanted something more exciting than the same-old European castles.” See for example Hallock (1896, pg. 10) who writes that the American tourist “will regard the tour as imperative, as they have done the stereotyped tour of Europe, now becoming a familiar and effete experience.” In other words, that old, worn out cliché of European travel is ineffective and overdone; instead, “I would fain divert a portion of the travel which habitually goes to Europe to this new field of commerce and adventure” (pg. i).

Septima Collis (1890, Preface) says, “if I succeeded in inducing my country-women to follow my example and postpone Paris and London, Rome and Vienna, the Rhine and the Alps, to some future day, they will always have reason to be grateful to me, and I shall always have reason to be satisfied with my effort.” And in a separate preface to the same book, the famous General William Tecumseh Sherman writes that the book will convince readers to “visit our own sublime regions in America before going to Europe.” Peattie (1890, pg. 1) writes,

It was the merest chance that took me westward. I had never previously been 500 miles from New York—except, of course, to Europe. Everyone goes to Europe.

In other words, how boringly trivial to go to Europe; the real deal is in the Last Frontier of Alaska. Stationed in Sitka but exploring Glacier Bay, the Navy Captain Beardslee (1881a) wrote

to his east coast readers, “A visit to this strange country would be worth all it would cost to those who have already exhausted the resources nearer home.” In other words, if you’re tired of those same old vacations, try exciting new Alaska.

And Alaska’s glaciers were considered far superior to those elsewhere in the world. Scidmore (1884) tells her *New York Times* readers that “foreign tourists and scientists have exclaimed in wonder that any American should go climbing among the insignificant glaciers of Switzerland when there were these vast and comparatively unknown glaciers of Alaska within the United States boundary.” Ballou (1889, pp. 276–277) wrote that “Neither Norway nor Switzerland have any glacial or arctic scenery that can approach this bay in its frigid splendor.” And Roberts (1895) writes essentially the same: “It may be said with truth that Alaska has more natural grandeur than any other State or territory, while many of its aspects are superior to those offered by Norway and Switzerland, two countries hitherto supposed to possess unrivaled scenic attractions.” Baedeker (1894, pg. 235) concurs, writing that the Muir Glacier has “blue and white ice, which forms a striking contrast to the dirty terminal moraines of European glaciers.” Similarly, Schwatka (1886, pg. 88) says that an acquaintance, a professor, “has devoted much of his attention to glaciers, and especially these of Alaska, compared with which he pronounces those to be seen in Switzerland and other parts of Europe to be ‘babies.’” Russell (1897, pp. iii and iv) avers that glaciers in the Alps are not nearly as good for study as the much better ones in Alaska, especially Southeast Alaska.

See also Catton (1997, pp. 17–18, 37) and Campbell (2007, pg. 233). Discussing the era’s prevailing attitudes about Alaska, Campbell writes, “America may have lacked the sublime ruins of antiquity, but its vast landforms surpassed Europe’s Alps.”



Early tourists at the Muir Glacier. (From Hazard, 1891a.)

pg. 1 **“travel brochures”** Pacific Coast Steamship Company (1888, 1891, 1892).

pg. 1 **“Having arrived home . . . your avoirdupois increased anywhere from five to thirty pounds.”** Pacific Coast Steamship Company (1888, pg. 14; 1892, pg. 25).

pp. 1–2 **“Charles Hallock’s popular but near-nonsensical”** Hallock (1886). Although Hallock is an unreliable author (see *Vol. 3*, Ch. 35), it’s worth reading some passages to get a sense of his severely taxed and heavily abused prose. Highly amusing.

pg. 2 **“By the time reporter Miner Bruce and Glacier Bay resident Dick Willoughby took their**

turn in the late 1880’s” Willoughby started this scam in 1885 (Rickard, 1909, pg. 63), and Bruce added his voice in 1889 (pg. 87). See also the discussions in *A Western Amateur* (1889), Jordan (1897), Bruce (1895, pp. 86–89; 1899, pp. 140–144), Peattie (1890, pg. 91), Pacific Coast Steamship Company (1892, pp. 61–62), Rickard (1909, Ch. 7), and many others who variously support or dismiss the outrageous Silent City hoax.

pg. 2 **“‘world unknown’ with ‘mules of apparently twice the normal size . . . and large dogs with lion like heads and manes.’”** The quote is from the Pacific Coast Steamship Company tourist brochure (1888, pg. 62), and they in turn are quoting an 1888 Alaskan Free Press article.