



# MAUCH CHUNK

*"The Switzerland of America"*

VIEWS  
and Historical Sketch of  
**Mauch Chunk**  
Pennsylvania

“The Switzerland of America”

including

THE SWITCHBACK,  
*The Oldest Railroad  
in America*, Flagstaff  
Park and Glen Onoko,  
and Table of Distances



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Nineteen Hundred and Sixteen

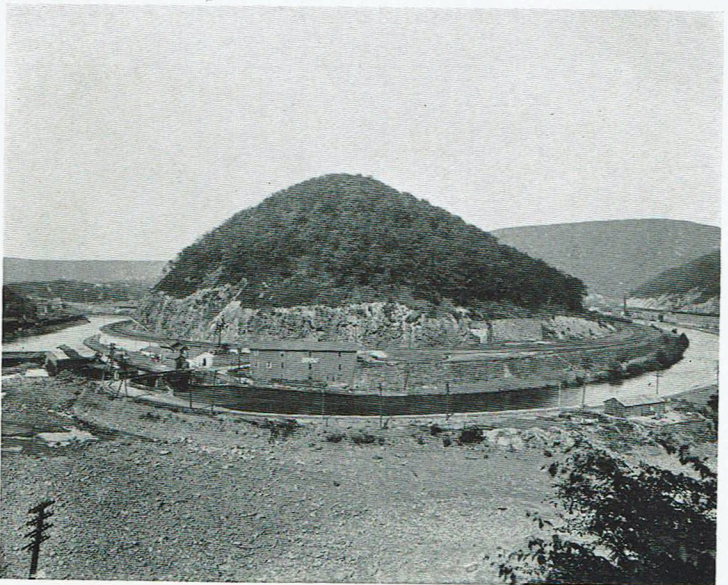
## MAUCH CHUNK SWITCHBACK RAILWAY

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**M**AUCH CHUNK, the county seat of Carbon County, Pennsylvania, is situated on the Lehigh River, one hundred and twenty miles from New York, via the Central Railroad of New Jersey and the Lehigh Valley Railroad, and eighty-nine miles from Philadelphia, via the Philadelphia & Reading Railway, which connects with the Central Railroad and the Lehigh Valley Railroad at Bethlehem.

Over these routes the journey is made without any change of cars, passing through the beautiful valley of the Lehigh.

Mauch Chunk is doubtless the most truly picturesque town in America, and has often been called the "Switzerland of America." It lies in a narrow gorge between high hills, and is so compact among the hills that its houses impinge upon its narrow streets and stand up against the rising ground, with no space for gardens except what the owners can manage to snatch from the hillside above their heads.



Bear Mountain, Mauch Chunk

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The Indian name of Mauch Chunk is "Machk Tschunk," the Indian name for Bear Mountain, which is a peculiarly shaped elevation immediately opposite the main town, and in front of which the passenger trains land travelers or tourists who design stopping there.



Mt. Pisgah Plane

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One View of Mauch Chunk from the Switchback<sup>3</sup>

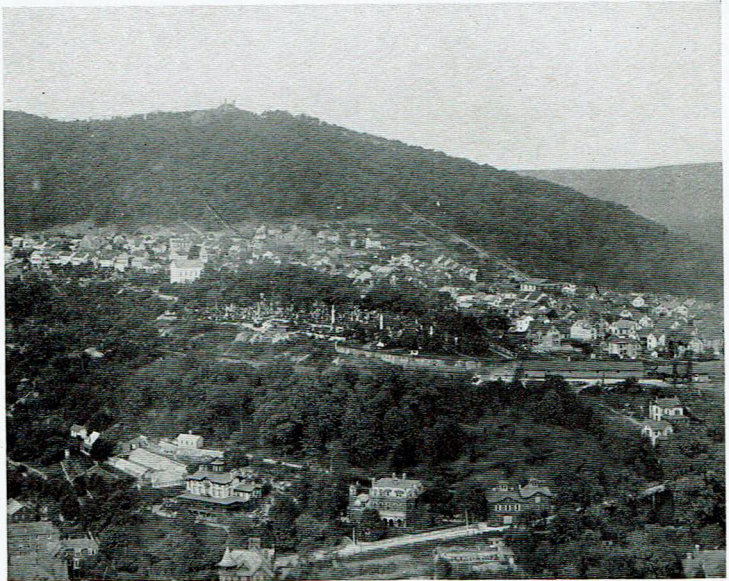
The Lehigh River wends its way through almost a complete circle around the base of Bear Mountain, and the railroads and canal follow corresponding curves along the river, so that the tourist, having reached Mauch Chunk, finds it difficult to know from which direction he came, how he got there or how he is to get out, as he seems to be entirely surrounded by mountains.

The Switchback Railroad is said to be the oldest railroad in America. It was graded in 1818-19, and it is claimed that it was the first road ever to have been laid out with an instrument—a level. It was intended for a railroad as soon as business would warrant the expense of placing rails upon it. A pair of horses would bring down about two tons in a wagon. The railroad was commenced in January and was in operation in May following, 1827. The whole transportation of coal upon it was done by gravity, the empty cars being returned to the mines by mules, the latter riding down with the coal in

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their own cars. The mules traveled from thirty-five to forty-five miles per day, and they seemed to like to ride in the cars. About one thousand tons of coal per day were thus transported from Summit Hill to Mauch Chunk, and it was near Summit Hill that anthracite coal was first discovered. Philip Ginter, an old hunter, uncovered the first coal seam and started the business which has grown to such large



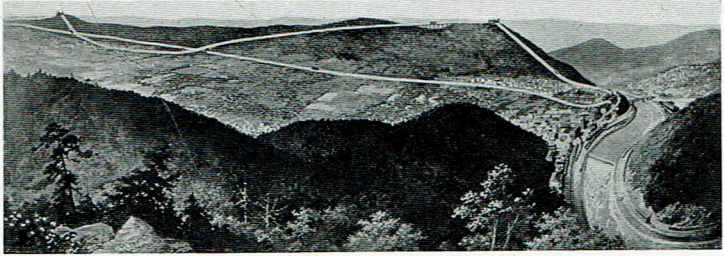
View of Mauch Chunk and Mt. Pisgah from Flagstaff

proportions. For a time, coal was thus transported by gravity and the empty cars returned by mule power; but, in 1844, the planes, namely Mt. Pisgah and Mt. Jefferson, were built in order that the empty cars might be drawn back to Summit Hill by steam power. That is, they were hoisted up these planes and ran the balance of the distance by gravity.

The photograph showing the miniature reproduction, or bird's-eye view, of the entire Switchback shows how it is operated, the starting point being the extreme curve at the right hand of the picture,

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Bird's-eye View of Switchback Railway System

Mauch Chunk at Extreme Right, Summit Hill at Left, Showing Mt. Pisgah and Mt. Jefferson, Cross-over at Five-Mile Tree and Home Stretch

thence running around to the foot and up Mt. Pisgah plane, through the engine house and over the trestle, down the side of the mountain to Five-Mile Tree, where it crosses the east-bound track; thence along the side of the mountain and up Mt. Jefferson incline, through the engine house and on to the extreme left of the picture, which is Summit Hill; thence, turning to the east-bound track, down and under the incline to Mt. Jefferson, on to Five-Mile Tree, where it runs under the west-bound track, and thence to Mauch Chunk, the place of beginning. The only power used while traveling is up Mt. Pisgah and Mt. Jefferson—all the rest of the ride is by force of gravity. This is a most unique problem of engineering, and conceived as it was almost a hundred years ago, still stands as a wonderful feat.

In about 1870, this road was given over to pleasure purposes entirely, as the coal was transported from Summit Hill over the steam railroads by way of Lansford. The distance from Mauch Chunk to Summit Hill is nine (9) miles, making the round trip eighteen miles. Thousands of tourists, even from very distant points, take this ride every Summer and are inspired with the beautiful scenery, the delightful air and the many points of interest along the line of the road.

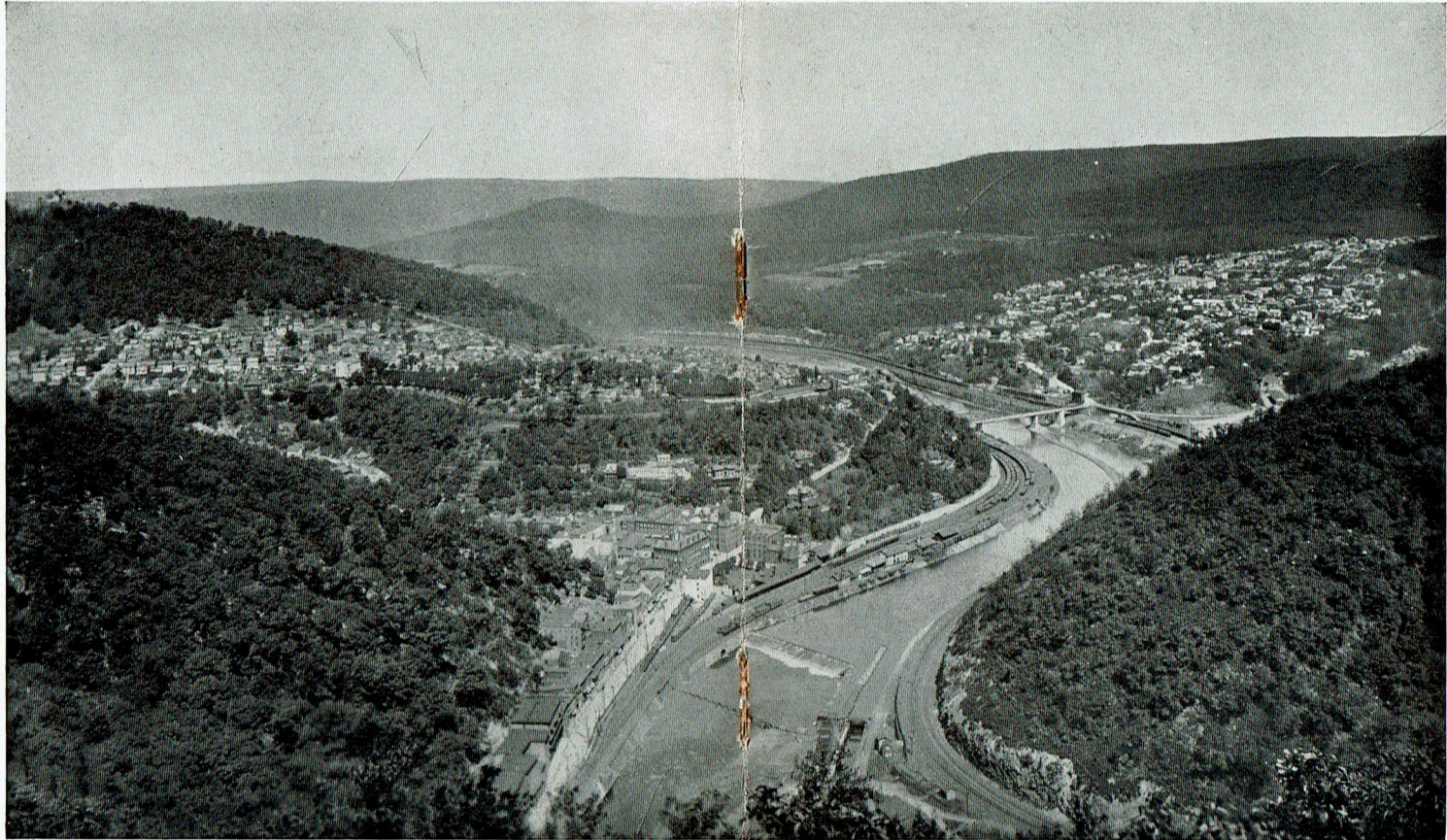
## MAUCH CHUNK SWITCHBACK RAILWAY



Mt. Jefferson Plane

Some sections of rail which were imported from England about the year 1827 are still in existence. These were in segments of about four (4) feet, and are probably the first rails used in this country. They were made in short segments in order to round the curves.





Bird's-eye View of Mauch Chunk, Pa.

The operation of the planes is quite interesting. You will notice in the photograph of Mt. Pisgah Plane, in front of the man standing, a pit between the tracks, out of which is drawn, by two steel bands reaching up to the power house, a barney or safety car. When the engine is started at the top of the plane, winding up the bands, this car gradually comes out of the pit and pushes the passenger car up the plane. The wheels and axles on the barney car are so arranged that as they come out of the pit, the gauge of the barney car widens by means of separate axles to each wheel, which work automatically,

so that the barney car runs up the same track as the passenger car. A corresponding barney car comes down the plane on the opposite track, and when it reaches the pit, the automatic axles which were expanded for the wide track converge, and it runs into the pit ready to hoist the next passenger car, which runs immediately over it by gravity. This mechanism has been in operation for about seventy-five years, was designed by the engineers of that time and is pronounced by the engineers of the present day to be quite a marvelous feat. There is in connection with this mechanism an arm reaching out

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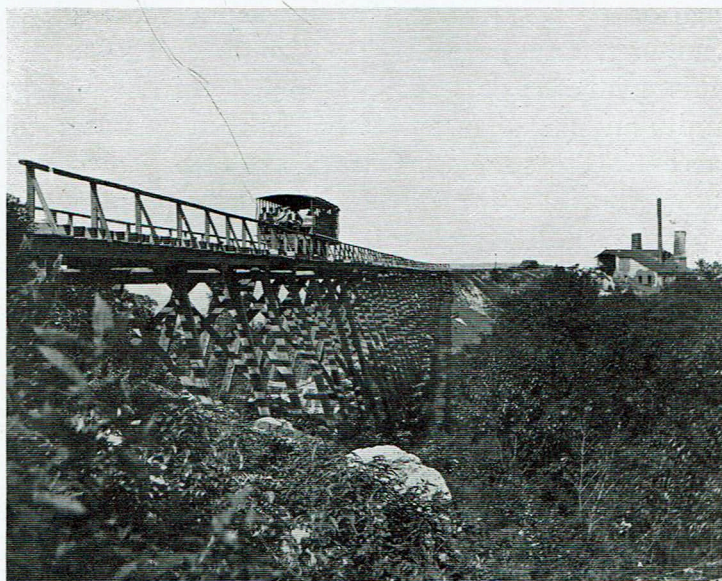
Tourists Boarding Switchback Cars

from the barney car which runs over a ratchet between the two tracks all the way to the top of the plane, and which is so arranged that if anything should happen to the machinery or to the steel bands by which the load is drawn, that any backward motion will set the arm of the ratchet and hold the load in position at any portion of the plane. One of the very unique features of this railroad is that in all of its operation as a pleasure road it has never had a fatal accident. Cars have stopped on the planes for some reason or other, but, in all cases, the safety appliances were adequate for any emergencies.

As the Switchback cars pass over the trestle at Mt. Pisgah, a magnificent view of the surrounding country is obtained, and passengers are always wildly exultant over the scenery. From this point on a clear day, a view of Schooley's mountain, which is near Hackettstown, N. J., sixty-five (65) miles distant, may be had. On the north, about two miles distant, can be seen a gorge in the side of the moun-

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In the Clouds at Mt. Pisgah

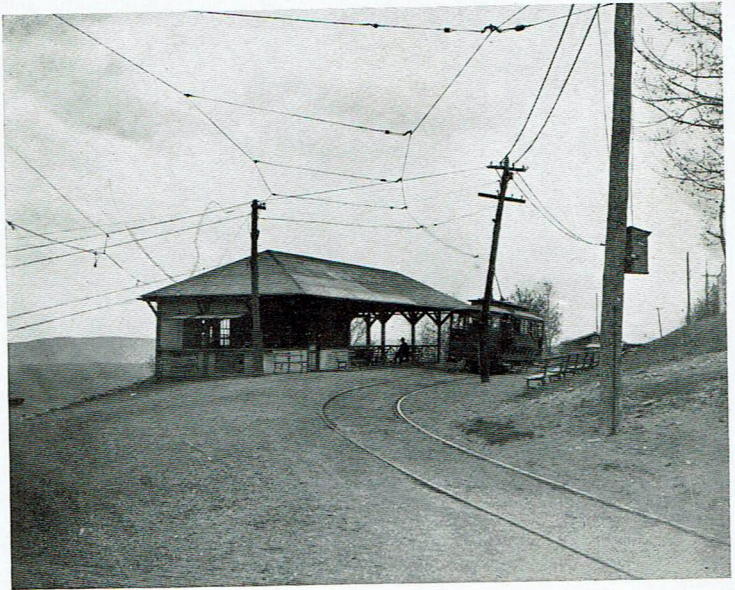
tain known as Glen Onoko. Also, Lehigh Gap and Delaware Gap are plainly seen. The length of Mt. Pisgah Plane is 2322 feet and the height of the plane, from the foot to the summit, 664 feet. Mt. Jefferson Plane is 2070 feet long; height, 462 feet. Mt. Pisgah is 1500 feet and Mt. Jefferson 1662 feet above tide.

From the point of beginning, namely, Mauch Chunk, to Summit Hill, the vertical lift is about one thousand feet, so that in returning from Summit Hill to Mauch Chunk the cars drop about the same distance; but, as the grade is so uniform, namely about one hundred feet to the mile, the cars run very evenly and safely.

The ever-changing scenery from the tops of the mountains, the curious feeling ascending the planes, the ride propelled only by the wonderful force of gravity, the mountain air, all combine to make this trip one never to be forgotten. The ride down the Home Stretch is two and one-half miles straight-away, and is exceedingly exhilarating, lined by foli-

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age on both sides, delightfully green and fresh in Summer, and beautifully tinted in Autumn. At this point, the cars attain a velocity of about sixty miles an hour. Here nature speaks in no uncertain accent. It was some such scene as this and, on one of the dying Summer days that merge so gracefully, so majestically, and yet so sadly, into Fall, that



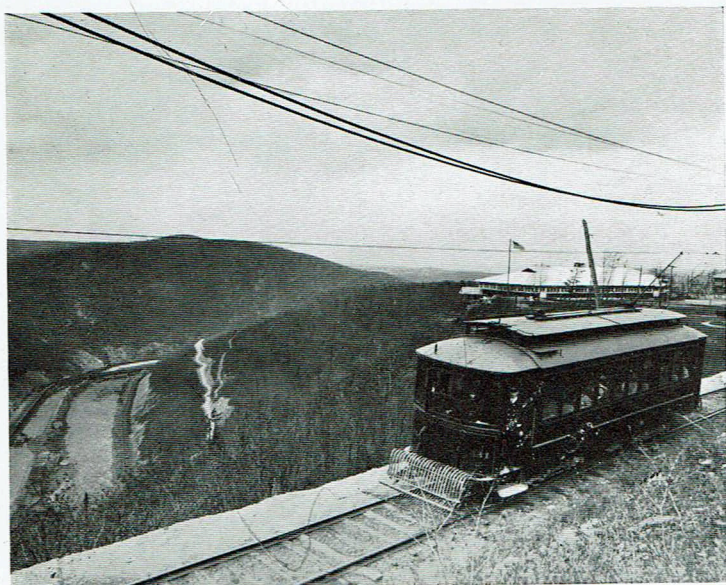
In the Clouds at Flagstaff Park

furnished the inspiration for this description of those doleful, changing days:

“And the same sun that smiled so brightly through all the Spring and Summer now hastens down the western sky and somehow seems to leave behind a tinge of melancholy sadness in the Autumn days, and all the leaves are falling, and, as they flutter down to die in raiment borrowed from the sunset for their shroud, if you listen you can hear them softly calling: ‘Good-bye, Summer, good-bye.’”

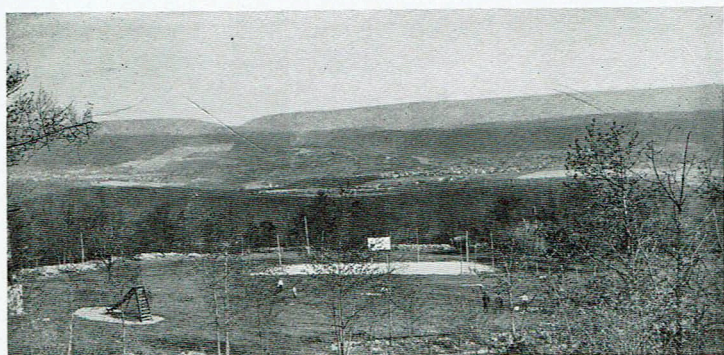
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Flagstaff, Showing Pavilion and Valley Below

Another feature of interest in Mauch Chunk is Flagstaff Mountain, which rises nearly nine hundred feet abruptly from the river opposite Mt. Pisgah and directly across the canyon from the nose of Bear Mountain, on which is located Flagstaff Park, which is perched on the top of the mountain about sixteen hundred feet above sea level, overlooking Mauch Chunk and the grand canyon of the Lehigh on the north and the historic Mahoning Valley on the south.



View from the Flagstaff, Looking South

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Switchback Swimming Pool

From Inspiration Point, on Flagstaff Mountain, can be seen the relative locations of Mauch Chunk, Upper Mauch Chunk, Mt. Pisgah, East Mauch Chunk, Bear Mountain and many other adjacent points of interest. Flagstaff Park can be reached by electric cars of the Carbon Transit Company winding up through unique and picturesque West Broadway, which cars connect with the steam railroads and the Switchback. Flagstaff Park is equipped with a dancing pavilion, arcade building containing big carrousel and every kind of modern amusement, romping grounds for children, tennis court, picnic park, lovers' lane, dining room and restaurant, drinking fountain of the purest mountain water and other interesting features.

No photograph or description can adequately portray the beauties of Mauch Chunk and its scenery. They must be seen to be fully appreciated.

At Flagstaff Junction, the connecting point between the Switchback and the Carbon Transit Com-

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pany, is a swimming pool and picnic park, which has lately been built and equipped with tables, benches, etc., which furnishes a delightful, shady spot for a day's outing. From this point cars can be taken to any of the other points of interest in Mauch Chunk or to the stations of the steam railroads.

Glen Onoko is a mountain gorge through which flows a beautiful stream of mountain water, which falls abruptly over the rocks, making most rugged and beautiful scenery. It is about two miles distant from Mauch Chunk and can be reached by the Central Railroad of New Jersey or the Lehigh Valley Railroad. This resort is also equipped with dancing pavilion, swings, merry-go-round, picnic tables and benches, playgrounds for children, etc.

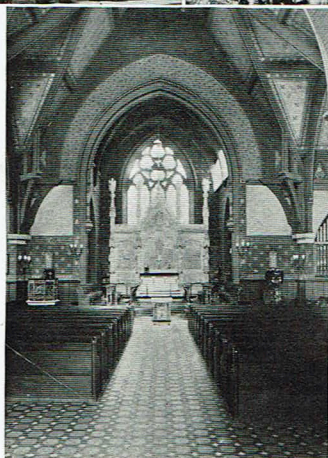
The auto roads between New York, Philadelphia, Wilkes-Barre, Scranton and other nearby cities and Mauch Chunk are now in good condition and many automobile parties visit Mauch Chunk daily during the season. There are ample garage and repair accommodations convenient.

The hotel accommodations at Mauch Chunk are commodious and up-to-date, the New American and the Central being the most prominent.

There are a number of interesting buildings in this quaint little mountain village, such as churches, Y. M. C. A., public library, court house, jail where Molly Maguires were executed, etc.

Mauch Chunk is particularly noted for its good mountain air and pure water, and is a delightfully healthful place for a Summer's outing.

# MAUCH CHUNK SWITCHBACK RAILWAY



Central Hotel

Y. M. C. A.

Interior St. Mark's Church

New American Hotel

Glen Onoko



### TABLE OF DISTANCES

From New York	to Mauch Chunk.....	120 miles
From Philadelphia	to Mauch Chunk.....	89 "
From Summit Hill	to Mauch Chunk.....	9 "
From Flagstaff Park	to Mauch Chunk.....	4 "
From Glen Onoko	to Mauch Chunk.....	2 "
From Lehighton	to Mauch Chunk (R.R.)....	4 "
From Lehighton	to Mauch Chunk (Trolley)..	8 "
Length of Mt. Pisgah Plane.....		2322 feet
Height of Mt. Pisgah Plane.....		664 "
Length of Mt. Jefferson Plane.....		2070 "
Height of Mt. Jefferson Plane.....		462 "

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### ELEVATION ABOVE TIDE

Mauch Chunk.....	550 feet
Summit Hill.....	1617 "
Mt. Jefferson.....	1662 "
Mt. Pisgah.....	1500 "
Flagstaff.....	1600 "

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### FALL

Summit Hill to Mauch Chunk.....	975 feet
Mt. Jefferson to Summit Hill.....	45 "