

## Mt. Cutler Trails (2021 July) Hiram, Maine

From the bridge over the Saco River in Hiram, the front ledges of Mt. Cutler rise high above the village.

Above those ledges, what appears to be the summit of the mountain is only the end of a long ridge extending more than a half mile to the west. Trails to the ledges and beyond all start from the village and also from the Hiram Hill Road, a half mile further north on the Pequawket Trail highway (State routes 5 & 113).

**Trail heads: North Trail (N** on the map) starts on the Hiram Hill Road (HHR). From the Saco River Bridge in Hiram, drive 0.6 mile north on Pequawket Trl (Rt. 5/113). HHR is on the left just before the bridge over Red Mill Brook. Signs "MT CUTLER HIKING TRAILS PARKING," have arrows pointing to the turn on to the Hiram Hill Road.

Starting up the HHR, cross the railroad tracks and look up the road; the Parking Area is on the left, where the road curves uphill to the right. North Trail starts at the entrance to the parking area. Look for **blue-painted blazes** marking the trail. You will also see a well-house in the woods near the road and trail. (*Avoid the well; this is a private water supply that is still in service.*) **Moraine Trail Link** starts on the opposite side of the parking area.

**NW Trail** (at **O** on the map) is 0.3 mile further up the HHR past the Parking Area for North Trail. Watch for the short plank bridge, the trail sign, and **white paint blazes**. Parking at road side here is rough and very limited.

**Moraine Trail.** (at **M** on the map). From the RR crossing of Hiram Hill Road, walk 1/6 mile south on the RR. A trail sign shows the start of this trail, marked with **white paint blazes**. You can also reach Moraine Trail using the yellow-blaze Link trail from the HHR parking area (at **N**).

**Barnes Trail**, the original trail on Mt. Cutler, starts at the site of the old Maine



Central Railroad Hiram Depot (**P** on the map). At the west end of the Saco River Bridge, start south on River Road, then immediately turn right on Mountain View Avenue. Where the avenue turns nearest to the mountain, cross the first set of railroad tracks, and park in the area between the tracks. There is a kiosk. A sign, "MT CUTLER TRAILS," is across the tracks, south of the parking area. The trail is marked by **red-painted blazes** on trees and rocks and, on ledge areas, with rock cairns.

**Snowmobile Trail** access. The Snowmobile Trail also starts at the Barnes Trail parking area. A short distance up hill beyond the railroad tracks, the two trails diverge. Snowmobile Trail continues straight ahead (south), while Barnes Trail turns right to enter Merrill Park.

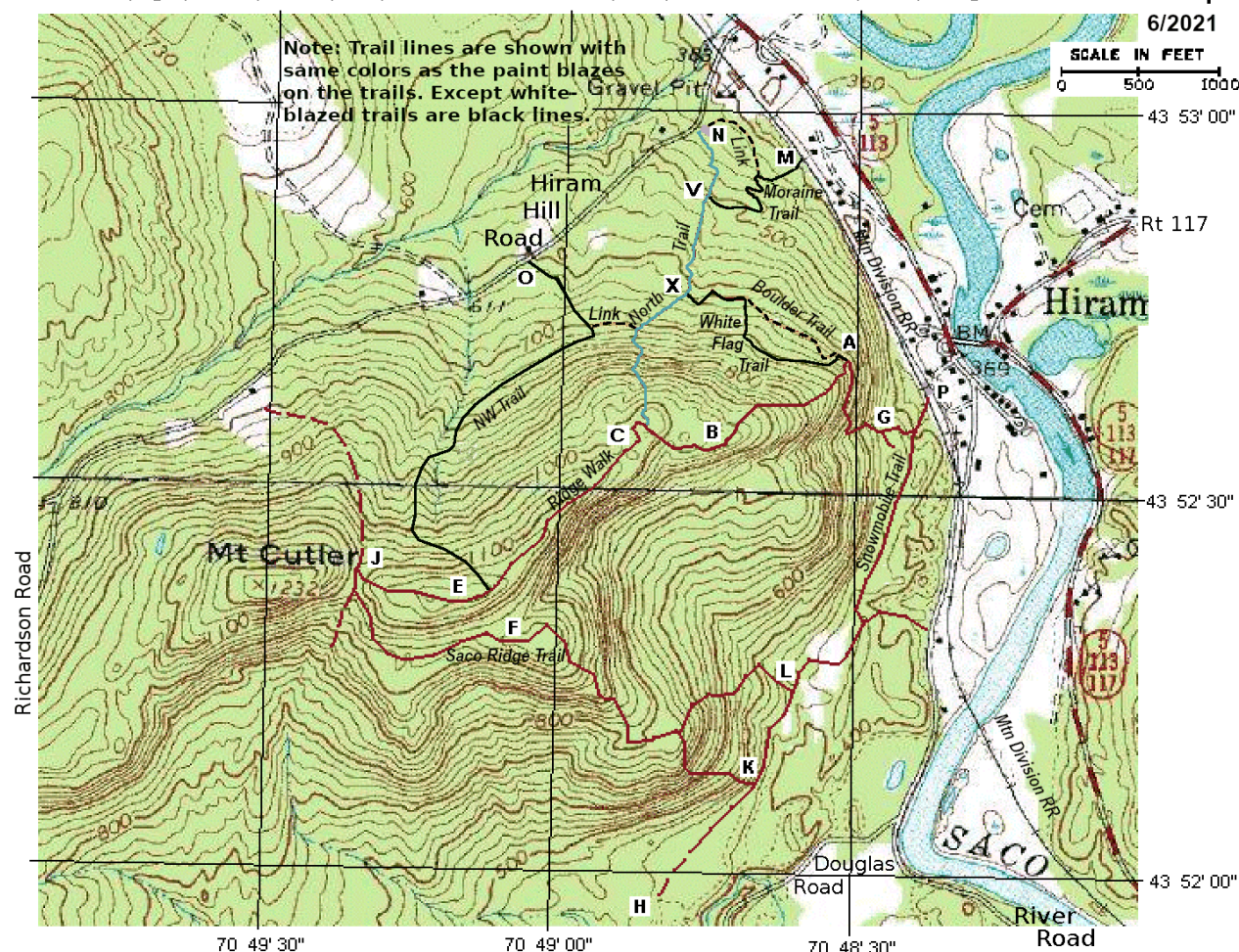
**No Other Access Points!** The four trail heads named above are the **only** allowed trail access points! Although the Snowmobile Trail (**H**) continues south, do **not** seek other access to trails from either the River Road or the Douglas Road. *Land owners want you at the trail heads!*

## Mt. Cutler Trails Sketch Map

Revised July 2021

This map is a general description of trails on and near Mt. Cutler. The map does not locate trails with GPS accuracy, but the map does give a good summary of landmarks, trail routes and junctions. Trail descriptions give details not clearly shown in the map. Note that some man-made features on this map have changed since 1964. Some changes: the Saco River Bridge was replaced (as shown in this edited map), many new homes (not shown) were also built on the Hiram Hill Road, and 2 homes built near the Snowmobile Trail.

USGS Topographic Map 1964 (1988) - Grid marks estimated, except 43 52'30" from topo map image. **Trails Sketch Map**



Some visitors ask why the trails do not continue to the true summit of Mt Cutler (Shown as "X 1232" on the map). The reason is that much of this mountain is on private property. For many trails, the land owners have given permission for the trail development. The owners of the land at the true summit have also given permission for developing trails in that area. Although a new trail has not yet been marked, you are free to find your own way to this highest summit. There is a good view from western ledges of this peak.

The Mt Cutler Park and Conservation Area is 173 acres of public park owned by the Town of Hiram. This includes most of the Main Ridge of the mountain from **A** to **E** on the map and most of the north slope areas. Merrill Park (**G**) is 25 acres of public land adjacent to the Mt Cutler Park. Together the two parks provide about 200 acres for public use.

Please be thankful for ALL private land-owners who also allow you to have access for hiking, hunting, and sight-seeing on other lands on and around Mt Cutler. Be considerate of these land-owners: *Whatever you carry in, please also carry out.* Also, please do **not** try to use any other access to the trail system except the trail heads through Merrill Park (**G**) and near or on the Hiram Hill Road (**M** or **N** or **O**). Access from River Road, Douglas Road, and Richardson Road should be used **ONLY for emergencies such as rescue from injuries or for fire-fighting.**



## Mt. Cutler Trails – Trail Descriptions 2021

**North Trail (N)** starts at the entrance of the Parking Area on the Hiram Hill Road. This trail is marked with **blue-paint blazes**. Leaving the parking area, the trail is parallel to the road for a short distance, then turns sharp left, where it passes a well-house uphill from the trail. (*An active water supply. Do NOT approach or tamper with the well.*) At about 100 yards, the trail crosses a small stream next to a property corner marker. (*Do not disturb iron pins and flagging tape used to mark property lines.*) The trail continues at moderate uphill grade through hardwood forest in a southerly direction towards the mountain. At about 1/8-mile, at crest of a small ridge, the **Moraine Trail** forks to the left (**V**). North Trail follows the west side of a small valley with another stream, then ascends a steep ridge notched by this brook. The trail parallels the brook for 150 yards. At about 1/4 mile, the trail turns left, crosses the brook in a grove of large hemlocks, and ascends to SW away from the brook. A short distance above the brook crossing, the **White Flag Trail** diverges to the left (**X**). After another 150 yards, the North Trail reaches the foot of a steep, rocky slope, turns left, starts uphill, passing the junction with the **Link Trail**, connecting to the **NW Trail**, and ascends into dense hemlock woods. Climbing higher, through narrow passages in thick hemlocks, the trail emerges on sloping, open ledges with excellent views to the north and northeast. *Use caution on these ledges, especially in wet weather; moss and lichens covering the rocks can be slippery and have caused sliding injuries!* Passing through hemlocks, the trail re-emerges to continue up sloping ledges to join **Ridge Walk Trail** at a cairn marker (**C**). [Hiram Hill Rd (**N**) to Ridge Walk (**C**): 0.5 mi.]

**White Flag Trail** forks off North Trail at 0.3 mile (**X**), a short distance above the highest brook crossing. After crossing a small ridge, it ascends gradually to the SE through long-ago overgrown pastures. Approaching a stone wall, the White Flag Trail turns sharp right, while the **Boulder Trail** continues ahead to the left. Keeping a stone wall to left, the White Flag Trail ascends a steep section, then turns sharp left, and slabs across gentle ledges until rejoining the Boulder Trail shortly before intersection with the **Barnes Trail** near the Front Ledge (**A**) with excellent views over the village. [North Trail (**X**) to Barnes Trail (**A**): 0.25 mi.]

**Boulder Trail** is an alternate route, passing large boulders, two stone walls, remains of pasture fences, and ascending several short ledges. At about mid-way, it passes a corner boundary marker (*Not to be disturbed!*) in a stone wall. It re-joins White Flag Trail a short distance before the Front Ledge overlook.

**Yellow blazes**. [White Flag Trl to Barnes Trail (at **A**) 0.15 mi.]

For descent, if having hiked up the Barnes Trail: Just above the Front Ledge, Barnes Trail makes a sharp left turn, and White Flag Trail is straight ahead. Follow **white blazes** to descend.

**North Trail, White Flag Trail**, and the eastern part of **Ridge Walk Trail** is a nice loop of about 1.5 miles.

**Moraine Trail (M)**. **White blazes** and signs mark this trail that begins at side of the RR tracks about 1/6 mile south of the Hiram Hill Road. Ascending thru hardwoods with two S-curves, the trail climbs to the east end of a fascinating ridge (a glacial moraine) at a stone wall, then follows this ridge to the junction with North Trail. [RR tracks (**M**) to North Trail (**V**): 0.15 mi.]

**Moraine Trail Link** (at **N**) is a short trail that connects from the Hiram Hill Road Parking Area to the Moraine Trail. **Yellow blazes**. Besides being a pleasant walk-in-the-woods, this avoids

walking down the road and walking the RR to get to the Moraine Trail trail head. [Parking (**N**) to Moraine Trail: 0.1 mi.]

**NW Trail** has trail head on the HHR (**O**), at 0.3 mile from the Parking Area, but the trail can also be accessed at 0.35 mile up **North Trail** by following the 0.1 mile **Link Trail** connecting the two trails. Starting on HHR (at **O**), the trail ascends with marked property lines on each side, crossing a small stream about half way to the **Link Trail** junction. A short distance above that junction, the trail turns sharp right and continues with gentle ascent in a mix of hemlock and beech with the north ledges of Mt Cutler always to the left. Crossing a small ridge the trail turns left, to follow a fairly steep old logging road. Turning right, off the old road, the trail ascends a larger ridge, then makes a steady ascent into thick hemlocks, eventually emerging onto the **Ridge Walk**. **White blazes** [Hiram Hill Rd (**O**) to Ridge Walk: 0.65 mi.]

**Barnes Trail**, established by Dr. Lowell “Bud” Barnes in the 1950s, is the original trail to the front ledges of Mt. Cutler. *Sections of this trail are very steep and eroded!* **Red blazes** mark most of this trail. At the Hiram Depot parking area, cross RR tracks to the trail sign, **Barnes Trail** and **Snowmobile Trail** stay together up a steady grade. At about 100 yards the trail divides. The **Snowmobile Trail** continues straight ahead. **Barnes Trail** forks to the right and enters **Merrill Botanical Park (G)** on the map), a grove of large pines. Before leaving the Park, a short trail branches to the south, through an opening in a stone wall, leading to the “Gold Mine” described in some local publications. Barnes Trail makes a slight dip as it leaves the SW corner of the Park and crosses the (usually dry) outlet of a large vernal pool. Historical dug wells are found in this small valley. The trail ascends quickly to enter the ravine between Mt Cutler and the shoulder south of the mountain. Stay on the south side of the seasonal stream, and follow the steep ascent up the ravine over rough rocks. After about 100 yards westward and upward, the trail turns sharp right and crosses a very rough boulder area (*Caution!*). The trail passes under an overhanging ledge and makes a very steep ascent of the ledges. *Extra caution here, especially when descending!* At the top of this ledge, the trail turns sharp right, and runs northerly to top of the Front Ledge (**A**) overlooking Hiram Village.

[RR tracks (**P**) to Front Ledges (**A**): 0.4 mi.] **Ridge Walk (A to J)**, a continuation of Barnes Trail, gradually ascends the long east-west ridge of Mt. Cutler. The South View Ledge (**B**) is the eastern end of a long ridge, with the west end at a notch (**J**), just below the true Mt. Cutler summit. On the ridge are alternating viewpoints with excellent views to the northwest (the Presidential Range) and to the south (the Saco River Valley to Saco Estuary & Casco Bay). Cairns and some **red blazes** mark the trail, although it is usually discernible without markers.

NW of the Front Ledge, **Barnes Trail** becomes **Ridge Walk** at the junction with the **White Flag Trail**. From there, **Ridge Walk** enters a hardwood forest, and steadily ascends toward the west. *Some steep sections require extra caution!* Before entering a hemlock grove there are good views to the NE (Pleasant Mtn, etc.). Above hemlocks, the trail continues a steady, not-too-steep ascent. It emerges from a small evergreen grove onto the open, South View Ledge (**B** on the map) with a spectacular, panoramic vista. This view point is not actually a summit, but it appears to be so when viewed from the village. [**A** to **B**: 0.2 mi.]

From South View Ledge, continuing westward, at about 0.15 mile the **North Trail** enters from the north (at **C**). At about 0.3

mile, at Gun-Sight Ledge are views to both north and south. At about 0.5 mile, the trail passes the **NW Trail** junction, crosses a mostly-wooded secondary summit (1180 ft at **E**) and descends to a notch (**J**) at a sometimes-used ATV trail. (On the map, the ATV trl is a dashed-line. *The ATV trail is private property. Not for visitor use; only for emergency use.*) [**B** to **J**: 0.7 mi.] The true summit (x1232) is a short, steep climb to west of this notch.

**Saco Ridge Trail** (Also “South Ridge Trail.”) descends from the notch (**J**) down the most prominent southern ridge, and joins the **Snowmobile Trail**. Leaving the notch (**J**) descend a short distance to the south; watch for cairns and **red blaze** marks. The trail bears left and slabs along the south side of Mt. Cutler, gradually descending until it reaches a small notch (**F**) between the bulk of the mountain and the upper part of this ridge. The trail makes a short ascent to an open area with limited views to the east. Near the easternmost edge of this clearing, the trail turns sharp right (at a cairn), enters hardwoods, and descends the ridge. There are good viewpoints looking down the Saco Valley and over the Douglas/Wadsworth/Longfellow Farm.

Before the lowest overlook from Saco Ridge (for the view, continue 100 ft on **Old Saco Ridge Trail**), the trail with **red blazes** turns north in a small clearing with pines. This descends northward, and eventually turns right to descend eastward on an old logging road (**L**) down to the **Snowmobile Trail**. Turn left to return to the trail head and the RR tracks.

Notch (**J**) to Snowmobile Trail (**L**): 0.7 mi.]

It is better to avoid the older trail (**K**) since the last descent of the old trail is very steep and easily becoming eroded.

To ascend Mt. Cutler by the **Saco Ridge Trail**, first follow the **Snowmobile Trail** as described below. At about 0.5 mile, a short distance after crossing a planked bridge over a stream, the red-blazed trail forks to the right at a small cairn (**L**), ascending westward up an old logging road. At a height-of-land, the trail turns sharp left off the logging road and ascends wooded slopes to join the older trail in a small grove of pines. Turn right to continue up Saco Ridge.

**Snowmobile Trail** starts at the same Hiram Depot trail head with **Barnes Trail**. After the initial 100 yards uphill, where the Barnes Trail forks to the right, the **Snowmobile Trail** continues straight ahead. The trail remains nearly level, passing two homes that are on the left, below the elevation of the trail, until a slight descent where it enters open fields. Turning towards the mountain, away from the fields, the trail re-enters woods, turns left and crosses a small stream. Just beyond this stream crossing, the **Saco Ridge Trail** leaves to the right at a small cairn (**L**).

[RR tracks (**P**) to Saco Ridge Trail (**L**): 0.5 mi. or (**K**): 0.7 mi.] Beyond **L**, the **Snowmobile Trail** passes close to a steep shoulder of the mountain, where the original Saco Ridge Trail begins at **K**. *Do NOT continue further west on the Snowmobile Trail; this is private land where you are not welcome.*

**Railroad Tracks**. Walking the railroad can be tiresome, but the railroad (RR) can be used to complete loop hikes, connecting the Hiram Hill Road (HHR) with the original Barnes Trail. Use Moraine Trail to avoid part of the railroad walk.

[HHR to Barnes Trail (**P**) by RR: 0.5 mi.]

- *Town of Hiram Mt. Cutler Park & Conservation Area. (Rev. 2009, 2011-2020. 2021.)* Donations can help us with costs of pamphlets and trail maintenance. Note “for Mt Cutler Park,” and mail to Hiram Conservation Committee, Town of Hiram, 16 Nasons Way, Hiram, ME, 04041.