AFTER JULY 24, 1846

His task he viewed with gentle glance
Dispensed over a wide expanse,
And felt with "moosies from the Mamre".
We view the rocky shore where he
With sudden and patient ear we saw
Under our Hawthorne in the dale
And listened to his Twice Old Tale.

It comes on murmuring to itself by the base of stately
and raised mountains—through dark, primitive woods
—whoseジュース it receives and where the bear still drinks it.
Where the cabins of settlers are still fresh and far
between, and there are few that cross its stream.
Enjoying well its cascades unknown to fame perhaps
tween as yet man—alone by itself—by the long ranges
of the mountains of Sandwich and of Squam with
sometimes the peak of Moose hill on the Haystack &
Kearsarge reflected in its waxes. Where the maple and the
raspberry that love of the mountains flourish amid
temperate climes. Flowing as long and mysterious and
untramimated as its name Pamigawasset. By many a
patroned Pleion and Ossa where unmarked streams haunt,
and receiving the tribute of many an untasted
Helicon. Not all these hills does it love but I have
experienced this to see the sun set behind them as
much as to have travelled in them.

From where the old Man of the Mountains overlooks
one of its head waters—in the Prunonia Notch, taking the
bath and the flame in its way—washing the sites of future
villages—now unimpressed. For every mountain stream is
more than Helicon, tended by creeds dryads Nausa, and
such a pure and fresh inspiring draught gift of the gods
as it will take a newer than this New England to know
the flavor of.

Such water do the gods distill
And pour down shall
For their new England men.
The existing annotation reads

266.26-28 From . . . way: The Old Man of the Mountain is the likeness of a human profile on Mt. Jackson near Franconia, N.H. The Notch is a nearby gap in the surrounding mountains, and the Flume is a deep chasm through which the Pemigewasset River flows.

On May 3, 2003, the rock formation known as the Old Man of the Mountain collapsed. For a photo and a discussion of the history and structure of this formation, see the following from the Mount Washington Observatory web site
<http://www.mountwashington.org/about/visitor/oldman.php>.
Old Man of the Mountain

A Delicate Balance

Geologists speculate that the Old Man of the Mountain, formed by a retreating glacier during the last ice age, looked out over Profile Lake for more than 12,000 years. On May 3, 2003, the delicate balance that had held the "Great Stone Face" in position through the ages came to an abrupt end.

He was universally recognized, that Old Man staring stoically for centuries from his perch atop Franconia Notch. But how many of us really knew him? Most folks stopping beside the road and looking up the mountain, only saw his good side. His stark, stony features only showed clearly when viewed from the north, looking south. Yet, according to Brian Fowler, owner and president of North American Reserve -- a mining engineering company in Laconia, NH -- who studied The Old Man of the Mountain for the state when it was preparing to build Franconia Notch Parkway in 1976, it was The Old Man's south side -- the side few would recognize -- and other flaws he kept hidden inside, that most likely led to his downfall.

The Old Man actually was made of five slabs of Conway granite balanced atop one another. Seen in this view, but hidden in the familiar view from the north, was a cavern, about four feet wide, behind the Old Man's chin (Block 5) that ran almost the entire width of the Old Man's face. About 80 percent of the chin block hung out over the cliff, according to Fowler. Thus, just about two feet of the chin was anchored to the cliff, held there only by the weight of the four slabs above it. Amazingly, the other four slabs were positioned just so, so that the center of gravity of the chin block was within that two-foot span, allowing the entire Old Man to balance on its chin for centuries.

However, through the years, rain and snow, blown through Franconia Notch on southerly winds, was driven into the cavern and the other cracks between and within the five slabs. One property of water is that it expands when it freezes, and water freezing in a crack in a rock will act as a wedge when it expands, making such cracks larger, eventually splitting the rock. Meanwhile, rocks are comprised of minerals, many of which react chemically with water. Those reactions can weaken the rock from within, eventually breaking it down. Conway granite is loaded with the mineral potash feldspar, which is particularly reactive with water.

According to Fowler, the physical and chemical damage to the Old Man's granite through the years, especially in the cavern, eventually wore away enough rock just behind the chin that the center of gravity of that block moved slightly forward, past the cliff face. When that happened, Fowler believes, the chin tumbled down the cliff, and the rest of the Old man quickly followed.