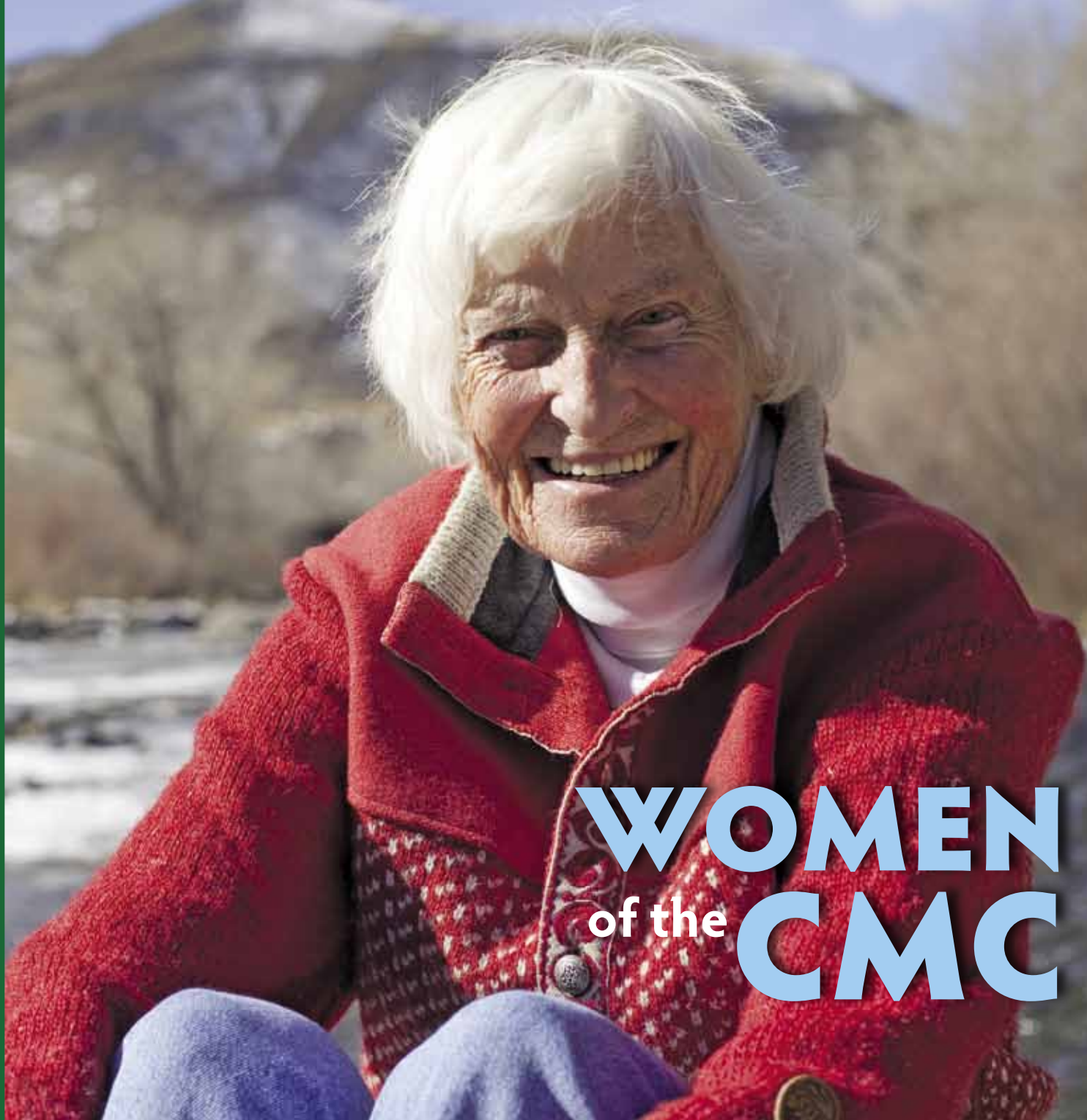


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WOMEN
of the **CMC**

FOLLOWING IN THEIR FOOTSTEPS

CLIMBING WITH COLORADO'S MOUNTAIN WOMEN

BY BRENDAN LEONARD



IT WAS A WOMAN, Katharine Lee Bates, who made Colorado's "purple mountain majesties" famous in the lyrics of *America the Beautiful*, written following her 1893 summit of Pikes Peak. But the history of women in Colorado's mountains began long before Bates. Bates wasn't even the first woman to climb Pikes Peak—Julia Archibald Holmes was, 35 years earlier, in 1858—and several women had climbed Longs Peak and other Colorado fourteeners by 1893. Over the past 150 years, other women, whether members of parties with men, or on their own, explored some of Colorado's wildest and highest places, some long before guidebooks existed.

These Colorado hikes and climbs celebrate the history of women's adventures in the mountains, and allow you to retrace the steps of these pioneers—and stand upon the same summits they did so many years ago.

1906 VICTORIA BROUGHM NOTCHES FIRST SOLO ASCENT OF A FOURTEENER BY A WOMAN

HISTORY In 1906, Victoria Broughm was on vacation from Michigan and stayed as a guest at the Longs Peak Inn, the hotel at the base of Longs Peak. She was determined to become the first female to summit the peak on a solo climb—against the warnings of the owner of the inn, Enos Mills, who insisted she take his dog, Scotch, to keep her on the trail should she lose the route.

Broughm rode on horseback to the Boulderfield, tied the horse up, and climbed to the summit with Scotch via the Keyhole Route as a storm covered the peak. As she descended through the clouds, she lost the route down the Trough and continued all the way down the gully into Glacier Gorge.

When Broughm didn't return to the inn that night, Enos Mills sent his brother, Joe, along with William S. Cooper and Carl Plitz to find her. They set out at midnight, reaching the Keyhole after 3 a.m., and had to wait out high winds before they could push through those roaring through the Keyhole. Joe Mills descended into Glacier Gorge to search for Broughm and saw Scotch standing on top of a boulder. Beneath the boulder was Broughm, cold and weary, but alive. Joe Mills wrote in a 1927 article in *Boys' Life*, "She was cold, her lips blue and cracked, but she had not given up hope or lost her courage. With her hair blowing like the frayed remnants of a flag, she stood beside the boulder and smiled a brave if twisted smile."

FOLLOW IN HER FOOTSTEPS Access Longs Peak's Keyhole Route via the Longs Peak trailhead, approximately



CHRIS CASE

10 miles south of Estes Park off of Colorado Highway 7. The hike is 7.5 miles to the summit and gains just under a mile of elevation. To fully retrace Broughm's footsteps, arrange for a ride or leave a shuttle car at the Glacier Gorge trailhead and descend the Trough into Glacier Gorge—but only in the spring, when the Trough is still full of snow.

WHEN TO GO The Keyhole Route is usually snow-free by August and stays free of snow until early September. Get an early start to be off the summit by noon, when afternoon weather and thunderstorms roll in.

MORE INFO *Colorado's Fourteeners: From Hikes to Climbs* by Gerry Roach; www.14ers.com

1925 ELEANOR DAVIS COMPLETES THE FIRST ASCENT OF CRESTONE NEEDLE'S ELLINGWOOD ARETE WITH ALBERT ELLINGWOOD

HISTORY Eleanor Davis was one of Colorado's most accomplished early climbers, notching the first female ascent of Grand Teton in 1923, and the first ascent of Crestone Needle with Albert Ellingwood, one of the last fourteens to be climbed in Colorado.

Davis was a member of the CMC, and a teacher at Colorado College from 1914 to 1930. In 1916, she accompanied Ellingwood on a trip to climb the remaining unclimbed fourteens, in the Crestone Group of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains. It was on



COLORADO MOUNTAIN CLUB COLLECTION

► FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: ALBERT ELLINGWOOD, BARTON HOAG, AND ELEANOR DAVIS ENJOY ANOTHER SUMMIT IN COLORADO'S HIGH COUNTRY.

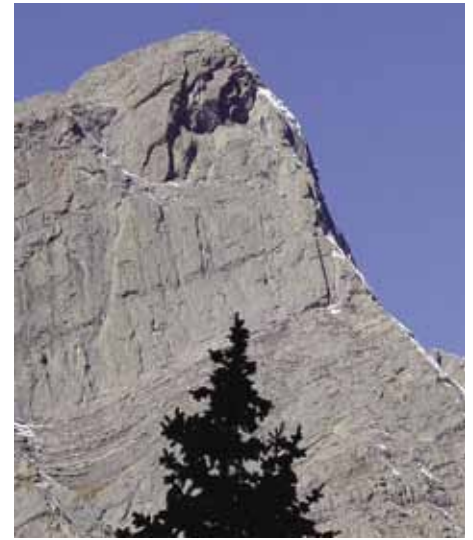
this trip that Ellingwood spied the aesthetic line he would return to climb with Davis in 1925—"the Eastern Arete of the Crestone Needle," as he called it in the November 1925 *Trail & Timberline*. Robert Ormes later named it Ellingwood Ledges, and the name evolved into Ellingwood Arête. The route, 2,000 feet of technical rock climbing up to 5.7, was a bold line in Colorado in 1924, and remains one of the state's classic alpine climbs.

FOLLOW IN HER FOOTSTEPS Plan on one day for the hike to South Colony Lakes and one day to climb the route and descend. The Lower South Colony Lakes Trailhead is 7.1 miles off Colorado Highway 69, approxi-

mately 50 miles south of Salida. Hike to South Colony Lakes, gaining almost 3,000 feet over 6.1 miles on the South Colony Trail, and camp at least 300 feet from the lakes. The climb begins above the southwest side of the higher of the two South Colony Lakes and climbs the blunt arête between Crestone Needle's north and east faces, with the more difficult pitches saved for last, near the summit.

WHEN TO GO Late summer and early fall. Get an early start to avoid afternoon storms.

MORE INFO *Colorado's Fourteeners: From Hikes to Climbs* by Gerry Roach; www.mountainproject.com



1934 ELIZABETH WOOLSEY AND WILLIAM P. HOUSE MAKE THE SECOND ASCENT OF JAGGED MOUNTAIN IN THE SAN JUAN MOUNTAINS VIA A NEW ROUTE

HISTORY In a 1936 article in *LIFE Magazine*, Elizabeth Woolsey was called "the best woman skier in North America"—and the story was about the first ascent of British Columbia's Mount Waddington, so daunting to mountain climbers that it was called Mount Mystery. Two members of the four-person party, all men except for Woolsey, summited. Woolsey followed her bliss, opening the Trail Creek Ranch near Wilson, Wyoming, in the 1940s and guiding skiers down runs off Teton Pass, and living there until her death in 1997.

Woolsey's climbing explorations in the mountains put her on first ascent parties on routes on the Grand Teton, and peaks in Colorado's San Juan Mountains. On a trip to climb Jagged Mountain, one of the most difficult peaks in the Needle Mountains, Woolsey and William P. House sought the second ascent by a new route. They succeeded in summiting, and on their descent, downclimbed a route that was easier than the route they had climbed up (or the first ascent route). Their descent route, the North Face route, is now the standard route to Jagged Mountain's summit.

FOLLOW IN HER FOOTSTEPS The Needle-ton Trailhead, the closest trailhead to reach Jagged Mountain, is only reachable by the



COURTESY OF MOUNTAIN PROJECT, PHIL LAUFEN

Durango and Silverton Narrow Gauge Railroad. From the trailhead, hike north along the Animas River and head east along Noname Creek to Jagged Pass, 9.5 miles and 5,200 feet of elevation gain from the trailhead—look for campsites at about 6.5 miles. From Jagged Pass, the route wanders up Jagged's north face to the right of a deep couloir, and is no harder than 5.2. Take gear

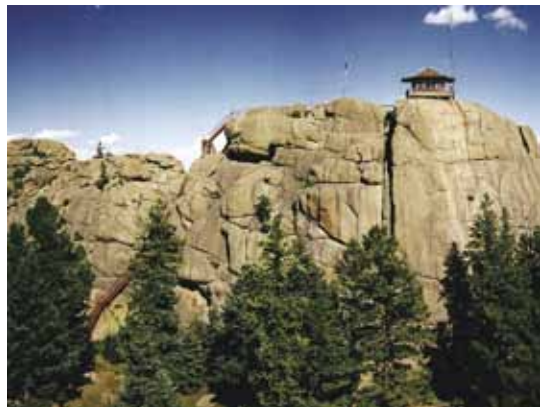
for rappels off the summit.

WHEN TO GO Late summer and early fall; an early start is imperative to avoid afternoon storms on the exposed peak.

MORE INFO *Colorado's Thirteeners: From Hikes to Climbs* by Gerry and Jennifer Roach; www.summitpost.org

1919 HELEN DOWE BECOMES THE FIRST FEMALE FIRE LOOKOUT IN THE HISTORY OF THE UNITED STATES, STATIONED AT DEVIL'S HEAD

HISTORY From 1919 to 1921, Helen Dowe was stationed on 9,748-foot Devil's Head, the highest point in the Rampart Range southwest of Denver. From June until October each year, Dowe watched



over a 7,000-square-mile area of the Pike National Forest, chopping her own firewood.

A December 1920 story in the *Routt County Sentinel* noted: "Following two successful seasons, during which pretty Miss Helen Dowe of this city (Denver), in her capacity of forest fire lookout, has discovered more than a score of incipient blazes, officials of the National Forest Service are convinced that women are equally qualified as men in the art of chasing down the tiny wisps of smoke that sometimes lead to serious conflagrations in the thickly wooded districts of the Rocky Mountains."



U.S. FOREST SERVICE PHOTO COURTESY OF THE FOREST HISTORY SOCIETY, DURHAM, N.C. (2)

The Devil's Head lookout is the last full-time U.S. Forest Service fire lookout in Colorado.

FOLLOW IN HER FOOTSTEPS The 1.4-mile trail to the lookout gains 948 feet of elevation on its way to the summit along the Devil's Head National Recreation Trail, the last few feet up 143 steel steps to the lookout.

WHEN TO GO Spring, summer, and fall. The lookout closes during thunderstorms, so mornings are best.

MORE INFO *Walking Into Colorado's Past* by Ben Fogelberg and Steve Grinstead; fs.usda.gov

1923 FIRST WINTER ASCENT OF JAMES PEAK, AGNES VAILLE

HISTORY Agnes Vaille's name may be most familiar to those who have hiked up to or through the Keyhole on Longs Peak—a shelter was built there in her memory after she died near the Boulderfield after summiting with Walter Kiener in January 1925. In her obituary in the February 1925 *Trail & Timberline*, W.F. Ervin wrote, "She loved to come to grips with the elements, and she had always won—before."

Vaille was a bold Colorado adventurer in her era and was Outing Chairman of the CMC. She made her own sleeping bag for winter outings ("lightweight" in those days at only seven pounds), and used it on the first winter ascent of James Peak—by anyone—in the Indian Peaks south of Rocky Mountain National Park in 1923.



CHRIS CASE

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FOLLOW IN HER FOOTSTEPS Snowshoe or ski to the summit of James Peak from the St. Mary's Glacier Trailhead, on Fall River Road about 9 miles north of I-70 Exit 238. The hike up the Southeast Slopes is 3.5 miles and gains 2,900 feet of elevation along the way. Avalanche danger is generally mitigated by the mellow angle of the terrain.

WHEN TO GO After January, the route has the most snow cover. Get an early start on a clear and calm winter day to ensure you make it down before afternoon winds begin to howl.

MORE INFO *Colorado's Indian Peaks: Classic Hikes and Climbs* by Gerry Roach; www.summitpost.org

1993 JEAN ASCHENBRENNER BECOMES FIRST WOMAN TO CLIMB ALL OF COLORADO'S THIRTEENERS ON PAIUTE PEAK

HISTORY Jean Aschenbrenner has been involved with the CMC as a member and instructor since 1979. Aschenbrenner has climbed mountains all over the world—Africa, South America, Mexico, and the Soviet Pamirs—but has had an almost lifelong love for Colorado's peaks. She began hiking and climbing Colorado's 100 highest summits in the late 1970s, completing them in 1983 with a climb of Little Bear Peak. Then she started on the highest 200, and the highest 300. In 1993, she finished her last of Colorado's 636 "thirteeners" with a summit of Paiute Peak.

In an interview with fourteenerworld.com she said, "I saved it for last because it is nearby and because it is a reasonable climb. About a dozen friends went to the top with me and they helped me celebrate with champagne, a regal crown, and a special sash. Ken Nolan dubbed me 'Queen of the Thirteeners.'"

FOLLOW IN HER FOOTSTEPS The Southeast Slopes route to the 13,088-foot summit of Paiute Peak is a 7-mile, 2,600-foot elevation gain hike, starting at the Mitchell Lake Trailhead, 6 miles west of Ward, Colo., on Brainard Lake Road.

WHEN TO GO Summer and early fall are best to ensure snow-free trails. As always at high altitude, an early morning start is best to avoid afternoon storms.

MORE INFO *Colorado's Indian Peaks: Classic Hikes and Climbs* by Gerry Roach, summitpost.org

Many of the women's stories touched upon in this article (and many more) are covered in depth in Janet Robertson's comprehensive book about women's historical exploits in Colorado's mountains, *The Magnificent Mountain Women: Adventures in the Colorado Rockies* (\$16.95, University of Nebraska Press, nebraskapress.unl.edu).

