

Women of the Wild: Women, Outdoor Sport, and Changing Gender Roles

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Today, a quick Internet search will reveal that shooting, hunting, fishing, mountain climbing, and camping are all recreational activities that fall into the category of “outdoorsman” sports. As the name “outdoorsman” suggests, people did and do associate these activities with masculinity. In such sports, men supposedly distance themselves from cities and homely comforts. Some activities demand extreme physical exertion as well as the exercise of violence and power. Despite such stereotypes, plenty of women today enjoy these pastimes. Women’s involvement in outdoorsman sports suggests a trend of women who defied gender norms and associations and whose participation over time made the idea of an “outdoorswoman” more commonplace. So when did women become involved in these recreational activities? Who were these trailblazers and how did they justify their participation in such masculine pastimes? As it turns out, women have long participated in these recreational activities. In some sports, such as mountain climbing, women were involved from the inception of the sport in the United States. As outdoorswomen, their actions challenged Victorian gender ideals which emphasized domesticity for women. The rise in popularity of women’s outdoor sports both reflected and helped to develop a new gender ideal, the New Woman.

To tell the story of the predominantly white, middle- and upper-middle class women who participated in these sports between 1858 and 1930, this paper focuses on the lives and writings of just four representative women. Julia Archibald Holmes was a feminist and the first white woman to climb Pikes Peak. Isabella Lucy Bird was an English writer and world traveler. She climbed Longs Peak with the aid of male guides but without the aid of a husband. Annie Oakley was a sharpshooter and celebrity. Never one to wear bloomers, Annie beat men in shooting competitions and always

looked like a Victorian lady as she did so. Finally, Lou Henry Hoover was a First Lady who loved to camp and who worked to bring a love of the outdoors to other young women through her work with the Girl Scouts. Representative of a larger movement of women in outdoor sport, these four figures participated in a transition of gender ideals from True Womanhood to the New Woman. Rather than reject True Womanhood entirely, they embraced aspects of Victorian femininity and used them to help justify their activities as outdoorswomen.

During the nineteenth century, the prevailing gender ideal for white women centered around the home. In her seminal article, the historian Barbara Welter refers to this Victorian feminine ideal as “The Cult of True Womanhood.”¹ She notes, “The attributes of True Womanhood, by which a woman judged herself and was judged by her husband, her neighbors and society could be divided into four cardinal virtues—piety, purity, submissiveness, and domesticity.”² For the purposes of this article, the two most relevant virtues are submissiveness and domesticity. Many Americans in the nineteenth century saw men as “the movers, the doers, the actors” while women were “passive, submissive responders.”³ While men went out into society to be leaders, women ideally acted as virtuous followers. Therefore, the proper “sphere” for women was the private sphere of the home. Women contributed to society through their roles as “daughter, sister, but most of all as wife and mother.”⁴ In other words, women made contributions in relation to their male family members. Society expected women to perform domestic tasks that corresponded to what people perceived as their delicate and nurturing nature. They were nurses to the sick, housekeepers, and seamstresses.⁵ They were also “expected to have a special affinity for flowers” and for letter writing.⁶

¹ Barbara Welter, “The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860,” *American Quarterly* 18, no. 2 (Summer 1966): 151.

² *Ibid.*, 152.

³ *Ibid.*, 159.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 162.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 164-5.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 165.

Although Welter sees True Womanhood as a description of nineteenth-century women's reality, other historians conclude that public and private spaces overlapped. Women of color and lower-class women were not confined to the home because they worked.⁷ Additionally, Welter's description fails to take female institutions and organizations into account. These groups used the language of domesticity to participate in politics. By doing so, they blurred the lines between the public and private spheres. Historians now recognize that True Womanhood is a gender construct, rather than an absolute description of the limitations society imposed on women. The idea of "spheres" is a metaphor for describing networks of power and the way power is distributed.⁸ The historian Nina Baym describes public and private distinctions as a metaphor for "different ways of behaving in the same space."⁹ Additionally, the urban and environmental planning scholar Daphne Spain argues that "separate spheres" refers to the way space is gendered. Institutions that hold knowledge and power are gendered male. Together with biological justifications, men use this gendering to deny women access to important social spaces. Restricting women's access to knowledge perpetuates the unequal distribution of power.¹⁰ Although Spain makes this argument in relation to constructed spaces, such as medical and law schools, naturally occurring spaces are also gendered. Outdoor recreational sites were masculine spaces. Together, masculine outdoor space and arguments about women's biological weakness denied women mobility and the ability to exercise and display power over their bodies.

Although historians reject the idea that separate spheres described women's reality, nineteenth- and twentieth-century

⁷ Monica M. Elbert, introduction to *Separate Spheres No More: Gender Convergence in American Literature, 1830-1930*, ed. Monika M. Elbert (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2000), 6.

⁸ Linda K. Kerber, "Separate Spheres, Female Worlds, Woman's Place: The Rhetoric of Women's History," *The Journal of American History* 75, no.1 (June 1988): 28.

⁹ Nina Baym, *American Women Writers and the Work of History, 1790-1860* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1995), 11.

¹⁰ Daphne Spain, *Gendered Spaces* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992), 5.

Americans were familiar with the metaphor. The English scholar Monika M. Elbert explains that it “is not to say that a separate sphere for women did not exist, or to suggest that the middle class ideology of the cult of domesticity was not emulated by the underclasses to some degree, but that an essentialist, reductionist position is dangerous in coming to terms with the diverging experiences of different kinds of women.”¹¹ Separate spheres ideology prescribed patterns of behavior for women which society labeled as “proper.” When women deviated from the True Womanhood gender construct, they had to justify their deviance to avoid social censure. However, the historian Estelle Freedman notes, “those few women who explicitly rejected [True Womanhood’s] inequalities could find little support for their views.”¹²

Outdoorswomen deviated from “proper” Victorian femininity because they acted in masculine ways in male spaces. Although the historian Carroll Smith-Rosenberg has demonstrated that separate spheres presented women with a positive opportunity for female bonding and community, notions of True Womanhood limited nineteenth-century women who had an affinity for the outdoors.¹³ Their decision to leave the domestic sphere and participate in demanding physical activity clashed with the belief that women were the weaker sex. Likewise, women’s participation in outdoor sport was frequently done in association with sporting clubs. Like other groups during the Progressive Era, many of these clubs lobbied for political reform. For example, the Sierra Club participated in the growth of environmentalism by demanding the preservation of wild spaces.¹⁴ Therefore, the sporting clubs that women joined presented them with institutional frameworks that helped them to participate in public discourses. Additionally,

¹¹ Elbert, introduction, 1.

¹² Estelle Freedman, “Separatism as Strategy: Female Institution Building and American Feminism, 1870-1930,” *Feminist Studies* 5, no.3 (Autumn 1979): 515.

¹³ See Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, “The Female World of Love and Ritual: Relations between Women in Nineteenth-Century America,” *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 1, no. 1 (Autumn 1975): 1-29.

¹⁴ Susan R. Schrepfer, *Nature’s Altars: Mountains, Gender, and American Environmentalism* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2005), 25.

women's successes in outdoor sport challenged the notion that women should be submissive to men. As outdoor sports became more popular, women began competing against men or competing without their aid. Annie Oakley frequently beat men at shooting competitions when women were a minority in the sport. Likewise, female climbers popularized the "manless climb" because they believed that the presence of men prevented them from reaching their full potential. Male climbers often disregarded designated climb leaders if they were female or otherwise undermined female climbers' efforts.¹⁵ Therefore, some female climbers rejected Victorian expectations of submissiveness and left men behind altogether.

Nevertheless, changes to gender ideals are gradual rather than immediate. Too much change at one time produces backlashes against nonconformist behavior. Therefore, while the actions of outdoorswomen challenged the Victorian feminine virtues of domesticity and submissiveness, women had to justify deviant behavior. They did this by drawing upon aspects of Victorian femininity. As they did so, they blurred the delineations between male and female spaces and behavior. Perhaps the use of True Womanhood was calculated, or perhaps it stemmed from their personal preferences. In any case, the lives and actions of outdoorswomen provide insight into the way Victorian femininity was challenged and altered over time.

The Climbers

Of the four women discussed in this essay, Julia Archibald Holmes was the first to make her name as an outdoorswoman. She was born in 1838 in Noel, Nova Scotia to John and Jane Archibald. However, early in her childhood the family moved to Massachusetts and then to Kansas. Growing up, Holmes's parents introduced her to politics. Her father was a staunch abolitionist and her mother was both an advocate for women's rights and a friend to Susan B. Anthony. The Archibalds provided their Lawrence home as a site for

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 116-17.

abolitionist meetings and as a stop on the Underground Railroad.¹⁶ This politicized upbringing influenced Holmes as an adult. In 1858 she and her husband joined a group of gold seekers headed to Colorado. To make the trip, Holmes donned a pair of bloomers. Both supporters and opponents of women's rights considered this "American costume" to be the "official uniform of suffragists in the 1850s."¹⁷

It was on this trip west that the couple decided to climb Pikes Peak. They packed six days of provisions and set out on August 1, 1858.¹⁸ In between hours of climbing, they camped on the slopes of the mountain until, on the morning of August 5, they reached the summit.¹⁹ Holmes and her husband left their names on a nearby rock to commemorate their ascent, which had been to an elevation of some 14,110 feet.²⁰ Male climbers had already explored the summit of Pikes Peak. It is also likely that Native American climbers had reached the top, although there are no records of who these people may have been. However, as she stood at the peak and gazed around her, Julia Archibald Holmes became the first white woman to experience the view.

Although not the first white woman to scale Longs Peak, another Colorado mountain, Isabella Lucy Bird became its most famous female climber following the publication of her travel letters. Bird was an English writer and world traveler. In Britain, "she had been destined to follow the life of reticent seclusion and social benefaction deemed fitting for the daughter of a Victorian cleric."²¹ However, Bird suffered from a chronic spinal injury and doctors prescribed touring as the cure. Following their advice, Bird "escaped to the mountains" and eventually became a prominent

¹⁶ Janet Robertson, *The Magnificent Mountain Women: Adventures in the Colorado Rockies* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1990), 2.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 3.

¹⁸ Julia Archibald Holmes to Lydia Sayer Hasbrouck, Fort Union, 25 January 1859, in *Covered Wagon Women: Diaries & Letters from the Western Trails, vol. 7: 1854-1860*, ed. Kenneth L. Holmes (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1995), 206.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 210.

²⁰ Robertson, *The Magnificent Mountain Women*, 5.

²¹ Ernest S. Bernard, introduction to *Isabella Lucy Bird's "A Lady's Life in the Rocky Mountains": An Annotated Text*, ed. Ernest S. Bernard (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1999), 3.

travel writer.²² Before arriving in Estes Park, Colorado, in 1873, Bird traveled to Australia and then Hawaii where she spent her time climbing and horseback riding before sailing for California.²³ Bird recorded the details of both her stay in Estes Park and her climb up Longs Peak in letters to her sister Henrietta, which she later edited and published as the travel book *A Lady's Life in the Rocky Mountains*.²⁴ In it, Bird detailed how she scaled Longs Peak on the back of "a very old, iron-grey horse" named Birdy while wearing what she called "a Hawaiian riding dress."²⁵ She also described Rocky Mountain Jim, her strange climbing guide. Bird wrote that Jim was "the queerest figure of all . . . With his one eye, his gaunt, lean form, and his torn clothes, he looked more like a strolling tinker than the honest worthy settler that he is."²⁶ Together, Bird and Jim walked and rode in a party with two other men and "probably gained a total of at least five thousand vertical feet."²⁷ After the climb, Bird wrote twelve more books and traveled "to Tibet, China, Japan, Korea, India, Turkey, Persia, and Morocco."²⁸

Holmes and Bird's mountain climbing challenged ideas of True Womanhood because it positioned them as active women operating outside of the domestic sphere. Before setting out on the climb, Bird's host in Longmont asked whether she "feared cold, if [she] could 'rough it,' if [she] could 'ride horseback and lope.'"²⁹ Although Bird rode a horse up the mountain, the host's questions demonstrate that climbing was connected to the idea of physical hardship. He implied that one must be physically capable and willing to face nature and one's own fears in order to reach the summit. Bird herself echoed this idea. She wrote, "We left the softer world behind, and all traces of man and his works, and plunged into

²² *Ibid.*, 3.

²³ *Ibid.*, 4.

²⁴ Robertson, *The Magnificent Mountain Women*, 16.

²⁵ Isabella Lucy Bird, *Isabella Lucy Bird's "A Lady's Life in the Rocky Mountains": An Annotated Text*, ed. Ernest S. Bernard (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1999), 74-5.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 75.

²⁷ Robertson, *The Magnificent Mountain Women*, 15.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 17.

²⁹ Bird, *A Lady's Life in the Rocky Mountains*, 89.

the Rocky Mountains."³⁰ With this sentence, Bird implied that they were far from the domestic sphere. Not only were they outside the home, but also they were outside the man-made city as a whole.

Additionally, one of the most visible ways in which Holmes, Bird, and other mountaineering women challenged the ideals of Victorian femininity and separate spheres was by their adoption of bifurcated garments for active wear. Victorian dress was heavily gendered; women wore floor-length skirts, hoops, and corsets as well as high collars and tight sleeves.³¹ These restraining elements discouraged physical activity for middle- and upper-class women. Victorian women's fashion valued modesty over mobility and "Pants were associated with dress reformers, children, laborers, and even prostitutes."³² However, during the 1840s and 1850s a diverse group of women tried to change Victorian fashions in order to normalize pants or shorter skirts.³³ Holmes actively participated in this dress reform movement when she climbed Pikes Peak in bloomers, or the "American costume."³⁴ Her outfit consisted of "a calico dress, reaching a little below the knee, pants of the same, Indian moccasins for [her] feet, and . . . a hat," which she found to be "beyond value in comfort and convenience, as it gave [her] the freedom to roam."³⁵ Because of her outfit, Holmes wrote that her travel letters would be of interest to her "sisters in reform."³⁶ Rather than call her climbing attire a bloomer costume, Bird called her outfit a "Hawaiian riding dress."³⁷ This outfit "consisted of full Turkish trousers worn under a skirt that reached to her ankles."³⁸ However, some in her party could not identify the difference

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 94.

³¹ Sarah A. Gordon, "'Any Desired Length': Negotiating Gender Through Sports Clothing, 1870-1925," in *Beauty and Business: Commerce, Gender, and Culture in Modern America*, ed. Philip Scranton (New York: Routledge, 2000), 26.

³² *Ibid.*, 27.

³³ Gayle V. Fischer, "'Pantalets' and 'Turkish Trowsers': Designing Freedom in the Mid-Nineteenth-Century United States," *Feminist Studies* 23, no. 1 (Spring 1997): 111.

³⁴ Julia Archibald Holmes to Lydia Sayer Hasbrouck, 25 January 1859, 194.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 195.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 193.

³⁷ Bird, *A Lady's Life in the Rocky Mountains*, 75.

³⁸ Robertson, *The Magnificent Mountain Women*, 16.

between bloomers and a Hawaiian riding dress. Bird's mortification upon discovering this fact indicates that Bird wanted freedom of movement but did not wish people to associate her with radical women's rights activists.³⁹ To avoid social censure, many female climbers wore skirts while traveling to the mountain and then removed their skirts to reveal bloomers once they were on the slopes.⁴⁰

Women's adoption of male garments threatened the Victorian gender system and produced a backlash against the dress reform movement. Critics of the new dress warned of the problems they believed bloomers would cause in media such as political cartoons. One political cartoon, "Women's Emancipation," appeared in *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* in 1851. In it, three central female figures are depicted in bloomers. However, they have also incorporated other elements of male dress, such as bold plaid and check patterns, top hats, bowties, and walking sticks. One of the women even smokes a cigarette in public.⁴¹ The cartoon suggests a popular critique of the dress reform movement: women who donned male garments would not stop with pants. They would adopt other male dress and even masculine behavior until women resembled men. As the historian Gayle Fischer notes, by wearing pants "women appropriated male dress, and, by association, male privilege and power."⁴² This was highly threatening, especially in a political atmosphere where women activists were demanding the right to vote. For this reason, critics quickly marginalized the dress reform movement.⁴³

Nevertheless, sport increasingly allowed women to justify their adoption of pants. The historian Sarah A. Gordon argues that "the idea that the clothes were only for play made them less of a threat to anyone who perceived them as challenging women's

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 11.

⁴⁰ Schrepfer, *Nature's Altars*, 102.

⁴¹ "Woman's Emancipation (Being A Letter Addressed to Mr. Punch, With A Drawing, By A Strong-Minded American Woman)," *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, August 1851, 424.

⁴² Fischer, "'Pantalets' and 'Turkish Trowsers,'" 112.

⁴³ Gordon, "'Any Desired Length,'" 25.

traditional styles."⁴⁴ Because there was no precedent for female sports clothing, women adopted clothing innovations which seemed practical and appropriate to them.⁴⁵ For example, E. Butterick Co. sold patterns for "gymnasium suits, walking and biking skirts, and knickers" to wear underneath outdoor attire.⁴⁶ As active women adopted and adapted these patterns, they created new notions of femininity that revolved around movement and autonomy. However, they still drew upon notions of Victorian modesty in their clothing designs. As women increasingly participated in sport, they "began to ask what could be worn to preserve modesty and femininity, yet allow for ease of movement and comfort."⁴⁷

By the early years of the 1910s, bloomers were commonplace clothing for mountain women. Pictures of mountaineering parties reveal that both women and men donned pants when they climbed. Often, it is nearly impossible for viewers to tell men from women.⁴⁸ Additionally, by 1905 Enos Mills, the Longs Peak innkeeper and an advocate for the creation of Rocky Mountain National Park, insisted that women should not climb in long skirts because they "impeded the wearer and were dangerous to everyone in the party."⁴⁹ Rather, Mills advised lady mountain climbers to wear bloomers.⁵⁰ Therefore, by donning pants, Holmes and Bird participated in the beginnings of a movement for sports clothing reform.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 25.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 25.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 33.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 30.

⁴⁸ See "In the Olympic Mountains, August 2 to 23, 1913," photograph, ca. 1913, *Mountaineers Collection online*, University of Washington Libraries, <http://digitalcollections.lib.washington.edu/cdm/compoundobject/collection/mtn/id/1987/show/1513> (accessed March 27, 2015); and Frank Jacobs, "Album 08.110 - Hiking party on Stevens Glacier, with Gordon pole straddling a crevasse, June-August 1919," photograph, ca. 1919, *Mountaineers Collection online*, University of Washington Libraries, <http://digitalcollections.lib.washington.edu/cdm/singleitem/collection/mtn/id/2460/rec/45> (accessed March 27, 2015).

⁴⁹ Robertson, *The Magnificent Mountain Women*, 25.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 25.

Women also justified their climbing in part through the way they described nature. Outdoor sport involved leaving the home and traveling to a masculine and public space. The historian Linda Kerber notes, "Men's space normally included the central community meeting place and the fields" while "Women's space, by definition, is what is left: sleeping enclosures, gardens."⁵¹ Masculine outdoor spaces allowed men to reinforce notions of men's strength and personal achievement through their nature writing. By the late nineteenth century, masculine sublimity was the convention in this genre.⁵² Male alpinists wrote that mountains were "foreign, exotic, desolate, and mysterious, if not grotesque" as well as "chaotic, raw, barren, irregular, and frightening."⁵³ Men portrayed successful ascents as a triumph over a feminized nature.⁵⁴ Rather than merely replicate these conventions, women displayed a different gendered understanding of the environment in their nature writing. The historian Susan R. Schrepfer argues that nineteenth- and twentieth-century women "reshaped the masculine versions of sublimity" by "using their own historically constructed, metaphoric ties to nature, the study of botany, and powerful Victorian visions of domesticity and motherhood."⁵⁵ These new "feminine sublimes" instead emphasized the "warmth, life, intimacy, freedom, and comfort provided by the natural world."⁵⁶ The feminine sublime connected women's subjectivity to nature and justified women's presence in outdoor spaces. It also justified women's participation in the discourse concerning those places.⁵⁷

The feminine sublime is present in both Holmes's and Bird's accounts of their ascents. Their descriptions of the landscape and their interactions with it echoed the comforts of home. Holmes and her husband camped in a place that they dubbed "Snowdell." She described this campsite as "a little nook we are making our

⁵¹ Kerber, "Separate Spheres, Female Worlds," 31.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 41.

⁵³ Schrepfer, *Nature's Altars*, 41.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 55.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 6.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 6.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 6.

home in for a few days."⁵⁸ Later in her account, she again referred to Snowdell when she recorded, "Today we remain at home resting, writing and admiring the mocking landscape."⁵⁹ Although her description of the peak as "mocking" echoes representations of masculine sublimity, it is a far cry from other accounts that portray landscapes as barren, strange, or frightening. Rather, the description has the overall effect of incorporating the mountain within accepted female space. The domestic rhetoric convinces readers that Holmes's presence on the mountain felt as natural to her as being in the home because she performed the same activities in both locations.

Additionally, Holmes's preoccupation with flowers extended female space to the mountain. Upon observing some "little flowers," Holmes wrote, "it has the effect to carry me back in imagination to the days of my childhood, in my Eastern home."⁶⁰ Her focus on flowers echoed gendered divisions within the sciences in the Victorian era. The historian Vera Norwood writes, "Certain areas [of the sciences], such as botany, appeared completely feminized."⁶¹ In the mid-nineteenth century when Holmes and Bird were writing, botanical study was "linked to women's domestic responsibility."⁶² The flowers might have been growing on the side of the mountain, but they also suggested descriptions of gardens and other homely manifestations of nature. This further associated Holmes's description of her climbing experience with female space and by doing so legitimized her actions in relation to Victorian femininity.

While traditions of masculine sublimity in nature writing influenced Bird's account of her own ascent, there are unconventional descriptions in her book which more closely reflect feminine sublimity. Although Bird often emphasized the dangers of

⁵⁸ Julia Archibald Holmes to Lydia Sayer Hasbrouck, 25 January 1859, 206.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 209.

⁶⁰ Julia Archibald Holmes to Jane Archibald, vicinity of Pikes Peak, 2 August 1858, in *Covered Wagon Women: Diaries & Letters from the Western Trails*, vol. 7: 1854-1860, ed. Kenneth L. Holmes (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1995), 214.

⁶¹ Vera Norwood, *Made From This Earth: American Women and Nature* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1993), 47.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 59.

nature like "the Rocky Mountain lion, the grizzly bear, and the cowardly wolf" as well as "the chasms of immense depth, dark with the indigo gloom of pines," she also described her surroundings using the language of domesticity.⁶³ She wrote that she saw "parks so beautifully arranged by nature that [she] momentarily expected to come upon some stately mansion."⁶⁴ As they used images of home to describe the wilderness, women justified their participation in outdoor sports by both broadening female space and by minimizing the dangers of the wilderness.

Bird and Holmes not only described mountains using domestic imagery, but also they associated nature with protection. True Womanhood assumed that a proper woman submitted to the male figures in her life. While men portrayed nature as an opposing force that they expended all their strength to conquer, women described nature in terms of comfort. This suggested that women were not being active or dominant by heading to the mountains. Climbing was not a struggle because nature protected them. After their time at Snowdell, Holmes and her husband camped in a bear den. Holmes wrote that this den had spruce trees outside of it which "stretch[ed] their protecting arms over our heads."⁶⁵ Likewise, Bird noted that she received protection and comfort from life on the mountain. She wrote, "a group of small silver spruces away from the fire was my sleeping place. The artist [God] who had been up there had so woven and interlaced their lower branches as to form a bower, affording at once shelter from the wind and a most agreeable privacy."⁶⁶ These descriptions imply a way in which women could be both properly submissive and successful outdoorswomen. Because nature provided protection and comfort rather than opposition and struggle, women climbers like Holmes and Bird minimized the focus on physical achievement in their own writings. Nature took an active role in helping them and compensated for women's supposed weakness. By emphasizing the

⁶³ Bird, *A Lady's Life in the Rocky Mountains*, 95.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 95.

⁶⁵ Julia Archibald Holmes to Lydia Sayer Hasbrouck, 25 January 1859, 211.

⁶⁶ Bird, *A Lady's Life in the Rocky Mountains*, 108.

feminine aspects of their behavior, Holmes and Bird made their presence in male spaces seem less threatening.

When nature was not enough to protect them, men stepped in. To an extent, both Holmes and Bird remained properly submissive because neither one climbed alone. Holmes climbed with her husband while Bird climbed with Mountain Jim. Bird even depended on Jim to reach the summit. She admitted that she “had no head and no ankles, and never ought to dream of mountaineering.”⁶⁷ She confessed, “I am only humiliated by my success, for ‘Jim’ dragged me up, like a bale of goods, by sheer force of muscle.”⁶⁸ The historian Janet Robertson argues that this really occurred because “Bird was no shining example of cardiovascular fitness; she was overweight and flabby from riding horses rather than walking.”⁶⁹ Although this episode corresponds to physical realities, Bird’s athletic inability also makes her actions less threatening to Victorian gender norms. She portrayed herself, not as a single woman boldly climbing a mountain, but as a woman whom men guided and who did not realize what she had gotten herself into. Bird would not have been able to finish what she started if not for the men around her. Because Holmes and Bird relied on men as companions and physical aids, they still adhered to Victorian notions of women’s dependence on and relative weakness in comparison to men.

While the portrayal of mountains as places of comfort suggested that there was no reason why True Women could not climb, the association of mountains with spirituality provided a reason as to why they should. True Women were the home’s moral center because Americans expected women to be more pious and virtuous than men. The writings of Holmes and Bird reflect this belief because they imbued nature with religious importance. Holmes wrote, “Everything on which the eye can rest fills the mind with infinitude and sends the soul to God.”⁷⁰ Likewise, Bird and her party witnessed a sunrise while climbing the mountain. She recalled, “The

⁶⁷ Ibid., 112.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 112.

⁶⁹ Robertson, *The Magnificent Mountain Women*, 14.

⁷⁰ Julia Archibald Holmes to Jane Archibald, 2 August 1858, 215.

sun wheeled above the grey line, a light and glory as when it was first created. 'Jim' involuntarily and reverently uncovered his head and exclaimed, 'I believe there is a God!' I felt as if, Parsee-like, I must worship. . . . The earth and heavens were new created. Surely 'the Most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands!'"⁷¹ By drawing on religious imagery, these descriptions implied that women's climbing was more than just permissible. Rather, due to women's association with piety, Bird and Holmes suggested that climbing was proper behavior for women because it brought them closer to God.

Although they made their ascents more than a decade apart, Holmes and Bird were pioneer women in the sport of mountain climbing. Whether calculated or an unconscious reflection of the times during which they lived, their writings identify mountains as public female space and describe a distinctly female way of behaving there. This behavior justified female mobility and adventurousness by employing rhetoric that emphasized their adherence to characteristics of True Womanhood.

The Sharpshooter

Rather than climbing mountains like Bird and Holmes, Annie Oakley made her name by hunting and sharpshooting. Born in Ohio in 1860 as Phoebe Ann Moses, Oakley grew up in poverty and began hunting in order to feed her family.⁷² In 1865, her father Jacob was outside when a hard blizzard hit their home. Frostbite caused him to lose the ability to use his hands and the damage eventually proved fatal. His death further impoverished the already poor family. It was around the time of this catastrophe that Oakley took down her father's hunting rifle and killed her first game to feed her mother and siblings.⁷³

Oakley improved her skills and eventually began entering shooting competitions. Just fifteen years old on Thanksgiving Day

⁷¹ Bird, *A Lady's Life in the Rocky Mountains*, 109.

⁷² Glenda Riley, *The Life and Legacy of Annie Oakley* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1994), 3.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 5-6.

1875, she participated in a match against the sharpshooter Frank Butler, who had been appearing at both the Cincinnati theater and the Coliseum on Vine Street. It was Oakley's first time on a shooting range as well as her first time shooting at targets from a mechanical trap. Nevertheless, she won. While Butler "missed his last shot," Oakley "scored twenty-five out of twenty-five."⁷⁴ Frank and Annie made a connection that day; they later married.

As a team, Frank functioned more as a manager and agent while Oakley became the face of the act. Together they worked the vaudeville circuit until they made the career decision which cemented Oakley's connection with the American West. In 1885, Oakley traveled out to audition for a spot in Buffalo Bill Cody's Wild West Park. After seeing Oakley practice her shooting, Nate Salsbury, Cody's business partner, hired her on the spot.⁷⁵ Until her retirement in 1913, Oakley traveled around the country and even to Europe with Cody's Wild West show.⁷⁶

Oakley's participation in shooting and Wild West shows reworked gender norms because these activities associated women with guns and power, which were masculine elements. Because guns were mechanical tools that lessened the importance of physical stature, the slight Annie Oakley was able to beat men at shooting competitions and take the lead role in shooting shows. In her act, she utilized men "as assistants" and shot objects out of their hands.⁷⁷ Oakley's relationship with firearms and her male assistants worked alongside her enormous success as a performer to force the public to reevaluate notions of women's weakness as well as women's relationships to violence.

Her participation in shooting sport opened the door for other women to shoot and be accepted as capable of handling guns. Oakley was aware of this and she used her celebrity to try and draw other women into the sport. When Oakley gave shooting exhibitions, she frequently extended invitations that explicitly

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 15-16.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 31.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 62.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 55.

welcomed the attendance of women shooters.⁷⁸ As a consequence, large numbers of women went to see her shoot. Some even formed clubs in her honor, such as the ladies of “the Annie Oakley Rifle Club of Newark.”⁷⁹ Oakley also maintained friendships with women shooters who worked in the show circuit.⁸⁰ She even gave shooting lessons to young female shooters.⁸¹ Therefore, increasing women’s involvement was one of Oakley’s biggest political causes. It was important to her because she considered physical activity to be “pleasant and healthy” for women.⁸² Additionally, she argued that women should learn to shoot because women were physically weaker than men. Therefore, they needed to know how to handle firearms so that they might have protection when faced with danger.⁸³

Oakley’s involvement in the Wild West shows also defied Victorian femininity because it gave her physical mobility. As the historian Virginia Scharff notes, we understand movement “in fundamentally gendered terms. Movement belongs to men. Women, supposedly, move seldom and reluctantly, and when they do, it’s a departure from their real stories, not a central plot line. The freedom to move is a marker of social power and legitimacy.”⁸⁴ For Oakley, shooting was more than just a recreational activity; shooting was employment. Oakley was a workingwoman who traveled both around the country and across the Atlantic for her work. In a time when society expected women to be homemakers, Oakley’s work meant being away from home, out of doors, and on the road. Although in her private life Oakley advocated for female domesticity, she did not follow her own advice. Because she traveled so frequently with the Wild West show, she was rarely at

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 85.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 67.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 66-67.

⁸¹ “Annie Oakley with an eleven year old pupil,” photograph, ca. 1920, from MS 006 William F. Cody Collection, Buffalo Bill Center of the West, <http://library.centerofthewest.org/cdm/singleitem/collection/BBOA/id/2788/rec/15> (accessed March 27, 2015).

⁸² Riley, *The Life and Legacy of Annie Oakley*, 139.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 141.

⁸⁴ Virginia Scharff, *Twenty Thousand Roads: Women, Movement, and the West* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 3.

home. Therefore, her role as a workingwoman distanced her from accepted female spaces.⁸⁵ In addition to the fact that shooting was associated with the outdoors, her work with the Wild West shows placed her firmly in the context of the masculinized, mythic West. Oakley's act was based on movement, action, and violence. She rode horses, smashed glass targets, sprinted, and did cartwheels.⁸⁶ Therefore, in relation to the actions her audience watched her perform, Oakley adopted elements of masculine behavior within male spaces.

However, unlike Holmes and Bird, Oakley firmly adhered to Victorian notions of femininity in her appearance. Although her actions seriously challenged notions of True Womanhood, Oakley formed her public persona around Victorian femininity in order to help justify her non-normative behavior. Not only did Oakley never seek the vote, but also she never wore bloomers.⁸⁷ No matter the physical activity she engaged in, Oakley did it while dressed like a proper Victorian lady. In one publicity photo of Oakley as a young woman, she wore a fitted jacket which was completely buttoned.⁸⁸ She also wore a white, collared shirt with a ribbon tied in a bow under the collar. Oakley's jacket was tucked into a pleated skirt that reached past her knees. Rather than donning bloomers under her skirt to improve mobility, Oakley wore leggings. She did not wear her hair up, nor did she cover it with anything except a wide-brimmed hat. Instead, her brown hair fell down her back in waves. This made Oakley look girlish. On the whole, her outfit was simple and demure and properly conveyed a sense of middle-class Victorian ladyhood. For viewers, the only indication of Oakley's sportswoman identity is the rifle in her hands. However, the gun appears out of place in relation to her dress. In later pictures, Oakley posed not only with a gun, but also with her many shooting medals

⁸⁵ Riley, *The Life and Legacy of Annie Oakley*, 124.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 52.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 131.

⁸⁸ "Annie Oakley," photograph, ca. 1889, from MS 006 William F. Cody Collection, Buffalo Bill Center of the West, <http://library.centerofthewest.org/cdm/singleitem/collection/BBOA/id/2773/rec/40> (accessed March 27, 2015).

pinned to her chest.⁸⁹ Although this gives yet another indication of Oakley's shooting prowess, she does not appear any less feminine due to her clothes and hair. Oakley's choice in dress balanced the masculinity of her physical activity and mobility. In appearance, the five feet tall, 110 pound Oakley was girlish and pretty but also nonthreatening.⁹⁰ Her dress made her seem like a carefree young girl, rather than a woman in possession of gun power. In her act, Oakley drew on this childish femininity to increase her popularity. She sometimes did cartwheels or stamped her foot and pouted when she missed a shot.⁹¹

Nevertheless, Oakley also participated in the movement for athletic clothing reform. Oakley sewed many of her own show costumes, adopting elements she felt were both ladylike and practical.⁹² She even designed her own cycling outfit to avoid the bloomers that so many other female cyclists wore. The outfit consisted of laced gaiters, knickerbockers, "a skirt extending halfway below the knee, a loose-fitting bodice of white silk, and an Eton-style jacket."⁹³ What made the outfit special, however, was that each gaiter had an eyelet sewn onto it and Oakley's skirt had "a corresponding elastic with a hook" sewn onto the underside.⁹⁴ This allowed Oakley to hook her skirt to her gaiters while she cycled to prevent her skirt from rising. Oakley encouraged other women to adapt and reform their outfits as well. During a tour of England, many women asked Oakley what she recommended ladies wear while shooting. Oakley told them that they would have to design new outfits that were not so tight-fitting and impractical. Long skirts could trail in the mud and damp and shooting was impossible when a tight-fitting bodice limited one's mobility.⁹⁵

⁸⁹ "Annie Oakley holding a rifle," photograph, ca. 1890, from MS 006 William F. Cody Collection, Buffalo Bill Center of the West, <http://library.centerofthewest.org/cdm/singleitem/collection/BBOA/id/3530/rec/2> (accessed March 27, 2015).

⁹⁰ Riley, *The Life and Legacy of Annie Oakley*, 21.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 52, 57.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 21.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 139.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 139.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 114-115.

Although Oakley shunned any connection to the women's rights movement, her actions still fell outside of socially sanctioned female behavior. Even though audiences admired her, Oakley rejected aspects of True Womanhood because she was a sportswoman. Shooting not only gave Oakley power, but also the opportunity for both physical and social movement. Her passion for the sport of shooting provided Oakley with employment, which in turn meant money and travel. In order to offset what many perceived as Oakley's masculine behavior, Oakley considered it imperative that she dress like a Victorian lady. This made her seem less threatening. It therefore helped her to justify women's participation in shooting sports.

The First Lady Girl Scout

Oakley was still an undiscovered child sharpshooter when Lou Henry Hoover was born on March 29, 1874 in Waterloo, Iowa. Due to her mother's asthma, the family moved from Iowa to Texas, then to Kansas, and finally to California. Hoover's father was a country banker who early on instilled a love of the outdoors in his daughter. He taught Hoover to fish and ride horses by the time she was six.⁹⁶ Later on, Hoover would attribute her interest in the Girl Scouts to the days she spent camping with her father. In a letter she wrote:

To me the outing part of scouting has always been the most important. The happiest part of my own very happy childhood and girlhood was without doubt the hours and days, the sometimes entire months, which I spent in pseudo-pioneering or scouting in our wonderful western mountains with my father in our vacation times. So I cannot but

⁹⁶ Nancy Beck Young, *Lou Henry Hoover: Activist First Lady* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2004), 6-7.

want every girl to have the same widening, simplifying, joy-getting influences in her own life.⁹⁷

Hoover's early interest in the outdoors also influenced her choices as a young woman in college. After graduating from the San Jose Normal School, Hoover chose to enroll at Stanford in 1894 in order to pursue a degree in geology. She believed a study of science combined well with her love of the outdoors.⁹⁸ It was in a geology lab class that Lou got to know Herbert, who was studying to be a mining engineer. She was the only girl in the class, and their courtship took place on geology trips.⁹⁹

The opportunities open to Hoover and the actions she took demonstrate the emergence of the New Woman more clearly than the lives of Holmes, Bird, or Oakley. It should be noted that there is danger in suggesting that there was only one sort of American woman. Women were and are a diverse group of people; race and class differences affected their lives. However, there were trends in women's dress and behavior that indicate the emergence of a new gender ideal among women born between the late 1850s and 1900. Men and women must work to maintain belief in gender constructs. When human behavior deviates too far from a construct, a new one must be created or articulated.¹⁰⁰ As women across the nation enrolled in women's colleges and joined women's political and athletic organizations, their behavior drew attention to overlapping gendered space. Because the distinctions between male and female and public and private spaces became increasingly difficult to define, the constructs of separate spheres and True Womanhood no longer applied to women in a believable way. The New Woman emerged as the gender construct that helped people conceptualize

⁹⁷ Lou Henry Hoover Speech, Girl Scouts in Articles, Addresses, and Statements, LHH Subject File, Herbert Hoover Presidential Library and Museum. <http://www.ecommcode.com/hoover/hooveronline/lhbio/archive/women/outing.html> (accessed March 27, 2015).

⁹⁸ Young, *Lou Henry Hoover*, 9-10.

⁹⁹ Virginia Swain, "Weds College Waiter and Laughs at Snobs" *Hutchinson News*, May 15, 1926.

¹⁰⁰ Kerber, "Separate Spheres, Female Worlds," 26-7.

the gendered changes to women's behavior, relationships, and spaces.

While women did not gain equality with men, there was a shift toward women's increased political involvement and social independence. Women born during this time had access to women's institutions, such as clubs and reform groups, which their mothers' generations built. They used these institutions to expand the opportunities open to them. At the same time, a large number of New Women attended women's colleges and professional training programs. Although women had never lived their lives completely within the domestic sphere, these trained and educated New Women increasingly ventured into public spaces and roles.¹⁰¹ Until recently, society had gendered these patterns of behavior as male. However, New Women claimed access to them "by the extension, rather than the rejection, of the domestic sphere."¹⁰² The New Women took their newfound political and social power and advocated for greater sexual freedom. New Women asserted increased sexual independence and equality with men in marriage.¹⁰³ They advocated for birth control and better reproductive healthcare. They also delayed marriage for longer than their mothers' generations. Some forwent marriage entirely. Carroll Smith-Rosenberg summarized the trend: "In short, the New Women, rejecting conventional female roles and asserting their right to a career, to a public voice, to visible power, laid claim to the rights and privileges customarily accorded bourgeois men."¹⁰⁴

Hoover was a part of a generation of women which benefitted from those who struggled before. Although Hoover "ignored the ideological wars within the feminist movement in favor of practical work," the previous generation of women activists made her work possible.¹⁰⁵ Hoover was able to attend Stanford without

¹⁰¹ Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, *Disorderly Conduct: Visions of Gender in Victorian America* (New York: A.A. Knopf, 1985), 176.

¹⁰² Freedman, "Separatism as Strategy," 518.

¹⁰³ See Estelle B. Freedman, "The New Woman: Changing Views of Women in the 1920s," *The Journal of American History* 61, no. 2 (September 1974): 373.

¹⁰⁴ Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, *Disorderly Conduct: Visions of Gender in Victorian America* (New York: A.A. Knopf, 1985), 176.

¹⁰⁵ Young, *Lou Henry Hoover*, 4-5.

accepting the political role of feminist. Nevertheless, Hoover still worked to expand acceptable roles for women. Unlike Holmes, Bird, and Oakley, she relied on large clubs and organizations, such as the Girl Scouts and the National Amateur Athletic Federation, to increase women's involvement in athletic and outdoor activities. These institutions were already operating when Hoover joined them because previous generations had made women's political work through women's clubs acceptable behavior. Her use of clubs, reform groups, and national organizations reflected broader social changes. The second generation of New Women was more active in women's voluntary organizations.¹⁰⁶ Therefore, Hoover used the gains of the previous generation of feminists in both her personal and political lives.

There were still limitations to women's equality with men, however. After Hoover graduated from Stanford with a geology degree in 1898, she could not get a job. Rather than advocate for reform, Hoover married.¹⁰⁷ As a married woman, Hoover still worked. However, the work she did was unpaid and voluntary. As the wife of an independently wealthy, globetrotting engineer and later as the First Lady, Hoover was upper class. Her class status made her career path possible.¹⁰⁸

In her work with the Girl Scouts, depression relief, and women's athletics, Hoover blended politics and domesticity by applying the language of True Womanhood to outdoor sport. Nowhere was this more apparent than in Hoover's work with the Girl Scouts. Girl Scouting was a combination of mobility, outdoor adventure, nature appreciation, activism, and domesticity. Girl Scouting activism at once exemplified the New Woman and embraced elements of Victorian femininity because Hoover and other leaders reformed the Girl Scouts as a national organization that helped girls participate in homemaking, athletic, and community-building activities.

During the time she was involved with the Girl Scouts, Hoover helped to take an organization geared toward nature

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 11.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 12-13.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 21.

appreciation and transform it into a national organization. She increased the amount of girls participating in outdoor activities by increasing the membership of the Girl Scouts. With Hoover as the Girl Scouts' Honorary President, the leadership implemented a five-year plan to increase membership from 200,000 to 500,000 girls.¹⁰⁹ By 1935, the plan had increased the Girl Scouts' membership by 85 percent, to 382,971 members.¹¹⁰ Hoover also helped create the Lone Scout program, which allowed girls to become scouts even if they lived in rural communities far from Girl Scout troops.¹¹¹ During Hoover's involvement with the Girl Scouts, the organization also increased its membership and involvement among minority girls. As First Lady, Hoover endorsed scholarships for European and Native American girls who wanted to establish troops in Native communities.¹¹² She also indirectly worked to improve the experience of African American scouts by funding camp fees for poorer girls. She did not do anything to desegregate their facilities, although the discrimination did concern her.¹¹³

Additionally, the five-year plan reworked the Girl Scouts' governing structure to make it more democratic and less "cliquish."¹¹⁴ The new Girl Scouts was headquartered in New York City and had four departments for "education, equipment, field, and publications. Regional committees mediated between local councils and the national headquarters."¹¹⁵ The growth and democratization of the Girl Scouts was part of a shift away from women participating in outdoor sport as exceptional individuals, as exemplified by Holmes, Bird, and Oakley. Instead, the Girl Scouts embodied women's mass participation in outdoor sports. This reflected the emergence of the New Woman because the Girl

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 113.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 121.

¹¹¹ Rebecca Christian, "'Don't Forget Joy!': Lou Henry Hoover and the Girl Scouts," in *Lou Henry Hoover: Essays on a Busy Life*, ed. Dale C. Mayer (Worland, WY: High Plains Publishing Co., 1994), 45.

¹¹² Young, *Lou Henry Hoover*, 128.

¹¹³ Ibid., 169.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 115.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 119.

Scouts allowed girls access to public spaces in larger numbers than ever before.

The Girl Scouts also challenged True Womanhood through the institution's emphasis on sport and self-sufficiency. In addition to the fact that camping and nature appreciation demanded that the girls spend time outside the domestic sphere, some connected the history of the Girl Scouts to non-normative gender behavior. Juliette Gordon Low started the organization in 1912 in Savannah. She modeled it on the English Girl Guides which itself was a model of the English Boy Scouts. When the Savannah scouts participated in activities on their athletic field, they wore bloomers. To "keep from scandalizing passersby," they hung a curtain around the field.¹¹⁶

However, when Hoover joined the Girl Scouts in 1917, she engineered a Girl Scout program that justified girl's activism, athleticism, and independence by associating them with domesticity. Hoover's brainchild was the Little House program. Although the Little Houses offered cabins and other facilities for girls to camp and play in, this outdoor appreciation was accompanied by lessons in domesticity.¹¹⁷ At the Little Houses, girls could practice "cooking, housekeeping, and gardening."¹¹⁸ However, the historian Nancy Beck Young points out that this emphasis on domesticity was hardly an unaltered repetition of True Womanhood ideology. She writes, "This domestic philosophy was not about restricting women to the home but about using homemaking skills to bring people together in community."¹¹⁹

Therefore, Hoover blended public and private behavior and spaces by fusing traditional notions of women's domesticity with community involvement. After the five-year plan brought the Scouts a large organizational base to draw upon, Hoover used her position as First Lady to mobilize the Girl Scouts for grassroots community relief projects during the Great Depression. The scouts became part of the "women's division of the President's emergency committee

¹¹⁶ Christian, "Don't Forget Joy!" 41.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 45.

¹¹⁸ Young, *Lou Henry Hoover*, 36.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 126.

for employment."¹²⁰ While their activism, community outreach, and mass organization reflect elements of New Woman gender ideals, the forms their relief efforts took harken back to True Womanhood domesticity. Girl Scouts' depression relief work fell into four categories: "food, clothing, medical care, and Christmas relief."¹²¹ Girls largely focused on clothing the poor, feeding babies and schoolchildren, and making Christmas toys for children without any.¹²²

Hoover's work with the Girl Scouts helped to justify women's participation in outdoor sport as well as their involvement in politics. In addition to the fact that her status as First Lady was a legitimizing factor for the national organization, the direction in which she took the Scouts incorporated public politics within female space.

Conclusion

Gender roles do not change over night. Additionally, the delineations between the public and private spheres are not clear. Frequently, these spheres overlap. Although outdoorswomen pushed the boundaries of acceptable behavior for women by participating in sport, they justified this participation by using the language and behavior of Victorian femininity. For some, this was a calculated decision. For others, the use of the very feminine ideal that their actions were otherwise reworking reflected personal preference or a limited understanding of what it meant to be and behave like a woman. Although outdoorswomen were willing to defy gender expectations when it came to athleticism, this did not mean that they were willing to disregard all Victorian notions of what it meant to be feminine.

Nevertheless, over time women's behavior and relationships changed enough that gender constructs shifted away from True Womanhood and allowed space for the New Woman.

¹²⁰ "Thanks Women for Aid Given Unemployed: Mrs. Hoover Talks Via Radio for President," *Chicago Tribune*, March 24, 1931.

¹²¹ Young, *Lou Henry Hoover*, 136.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 136.

The years between 1850 and 1930 were a time of women's increasing political involvement and social independence. During this period, women such as Holmes, Bird, Oakley, and Hoover negotiated acceptable behavior and appearance for women through their participation in outdoor sport. Some women, such as Julia Archibald Holmes, openly accepted the identity of women's rights activist and broadcasted this identity by donning bloomers. Others did not openly declare themselves to be feminists. Yet, looking back on their actions, we cannot say that they were not feminists. Not content with domesticity, outdoorswomen claimed both public and wild spaces as appropriate spaces for women. They did this by camping and fishing, by shooting and skiing, and by scaling mountains in droves. As they did so, they broke records, bested men, and had fun.

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