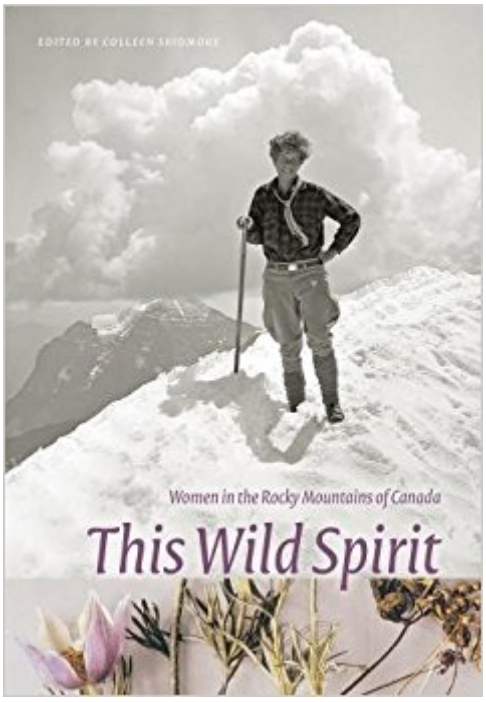
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This Wild Spirit: Women In The Rocky Mountains Of Canada (Mountain Cairns: A Series On The History And Culture Of The Canadian Rocky Mountains)



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Synopsis

In 1912, Mary Vaux, a botanist, glaciologist, painter, and photographer, wrote about her mountain adventures: "A day on the trail, or a scramble over the glacier, or even with a quiet day in camp to get things in order for the morrow’s conquests? Some how when once this wild spirit enters the blood...I can hardly wait to be off again." Vaux’s compulsion was shared by many women whose intellects, imaginations, and spirits rose to the challenge of the mountains between the late-nineteenth and mid-twentieth centuries. This Wild Spirit explores a sampling of women’s creative responses--in fiction and travel writing, photographs and paintings, embroidery and beadwork, letters and diaries, poetry and posters--to their experiences in the Rocky Mountains of Canada.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"In addition to providing interesting and valuable views of the early Canadian Rockies, This Wild Spirit provides an almost equally valuable overview of that small, interrelated group of women who traveled west for their own reasons....[T]his collection is a valuable addition to any shelf of Rocky mountain history. The insights and observations are enjoyable and memorable reminders of a special time in the European ’discovery’ of the blue Canadian Rockies." (Ken Tingley 2006-10-08)"The assorted journal entries, essays, letters, photos, drawings, paintings--even the script of a play--all illustrate the pluck and determination required by women who wanted to push the conventions of the time in pursuit of adventure and knowledge. In an era when independent travel

by women was virtually unheard of, these pioneers achieved a series of significant milestones, from botanical fieldwork to cross-cultural friendships to the traversing of glaciers and high passes...often while wearing an ankle-length dress and bustle." (2007-02-01)"The editor has made an excellent selection for this book, providing a most readable and inspiring account of women and their relationship to the mountains.""Skidmore...examines women's encounters with the Rocky Mountains by investigating a diverse collection of material spanning the years from 1887 to 1993, most of which dates from the years 1907 to 1912....[She] has created an important resource and gives voice to the women who were drawn to the Rockies....Skidmore shows that women sought out the Rocky mountains for their own reasons, and on their own terms." (Amy L. McKinney)"[This Wild Spirit] is both a good read and a welcome contribution to the history of Canadian Mountain literature....The collected materials of these women botanists, painters, essayists, novelists, photographers, glaciologists, geologists, teachers, physicians, hikers, climbers, cooks and lodge managers constitute a necessary and enlightening base camp, from which I ardently hope Skidmore will attempt an ascent on volume two, tracing the period from 1963 to the present." (Pamela Banting 2007-03-01)"Many of the excerpts represent published works, but there are some private and previously unpublished writings such as Catharine Robb Whyte's letters to her mother. They impart a touching, personal impression of life in the mountains, and, alongside the many photographs, stand as a complement to the more official depictions of Rocky Mountain women of that time." Mari Sasano, Legacy, Summer, 2007."During this period when Rocky mountain travel was in its infancy (from the late 19th to the mid-20th century), women strove to capture their impressions of a very challenging yet inspiring area. They did this using many literary and visual forms, including diaries, plays, poetry, essays, letters, photography, paintings, and beadwork. The result is a 'creative and cultural legacy' unequalled in its richness. This anthology is a 'portable archive,' organized into six groupings: Metis and Aboriginal women, botanists, explorers, mountaineers, mountain culture and wilderness, and literary travellers. The issues of racial difference and women's rights permeate the collection. Substantial excerpts from diaries, letters, and other literary works are supplemented with archival documents, photos, and samples of CPR advertising posters that used images of women to promote travel in the Rockies. The collection lends itself to browsing and sampling, enjoying short extracts at random as a way of experiencing a little-known piece of Canada's social history." Janet Arnett, Canadian Book Review Annual 2007"It is clear that women have been a shaping force in our understanding of the mountains and their inhabitants. This book sets out the early history with respect, enthusiasm, and a treasure of illustrations." Joanna Dutka, University of Toronto Quarterly, Winter 2008"Best ambient fireside reads." Westworld, February 2008"This Wild Spirit is a valuable

and captivating anthology about women in the Canadian Rockies, from the opening of the CPR until the mid-twentieth century. This collection of primary sources--seemingly all by white, relatively affluent Britons and North Americans--is divided into six sections, each contextualized with critical introductory essays by Skidmore.... The richness and variety of the sources are compelling. This Wild Spirit incorporates letters, diaries, maps, poetry, photographs, paintings, portions of novels and plays, and reproductions of dried flowers.... Where This Wild Spirit is most valuable, however, is in its recovery of obscure archival records. These include Glacier House scrapbook entries, Catharine Robb Whyte's private letters, and the unpublished diaries of Schaffer's travelling companions.... This book certainly deserves to find a wide and varied audience. ... Since its contributors continually brushed up against gendered, racial, and physical boundaries, This Wild Spirit brings issues of colonialism, feminism, and space to the forefront in a deeply personal way, while tracing the history of a changing landscape that continues to attract and to fascinate." (Karen Routledge 2008-03-01)"This book brings together little-known writing by Mary T.S. Schaffer, Millie Adams and others who journeyed through the Canadian Rocky Mountains in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.... The theme of turn-of-the-century women's spiritual and physical journeys ultimately serves to unite the book.... It makes a significant contribution to the literature on historical Canadian women." (Susan Butlin)"This spirit of adventure, defiance, and appreciation for a landscape big enough to bury the pain and limitations of the past and to birth new dreams and trails inspired Walcott and SchÃƒÂ¤ffer and drew these and many other talented women to the Rockies in the early years of the twentieth century. This Wild Spirit brings together many of their previously unpublished impressions, letters, essays, entries from diaries, artwork, and historical material from public and private archives.... Although many of the records of the MÃƒÂ©tis and aboriginal women are secondhand--told through the voices of white women--Skidmore takes pains to highlight the influences and inspiration these females had on the living and lasting culture of the Canadian Rockies and on their white visitors. By doing so, she encourages future scholars to pursue further research into all these women's lives and cultural output. This Wild Spirit offers new insights into the complexity of the female experience in the West and should be of interest to readers searching for newly unearthed voices and experiences in the North American West." Carmen Pearson, Western American Literature, Spring 2009 [Read full review at DOI:10.1353/wal.0.0008]# 10 on the Edmonton Journal's Bestsellers list (Edmonton Nonfiction) for the week of May 9, 2014

In 1912, Mary Vaux, a botanist, glaciologist, painter, and photographer, wrote about her life's passion: "A day on the trail, or a scramble over the glacier, or even with a quiet day in camp to get

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