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## FIRST WHITE WOMAN TO CLIMB PIKES PEAK

ON JULY 29<sup>TH</sup>, 1858, JULIA ARCHIBALD HOLMES SUMMITTED PIKES PEAK AND GAZED OUT ON THE KANSAS PLAINS, HER VIEW HEMMED ONLY BY THE BLUE HAZE OF THE ATMOSPHERE. SHE DESCRIBED THE BEAUTY SHE OBSERVED AS “A WONDROUS SCENE EXTENDING AS FAR AS THE EYE CAN REACH.”

IN 1806, THE EXPLORER LIEUTENANT ZEBULON PIKE FIRST SIGHTED THE PEAK THAT CARRIES HIS NAME AND STATED THAT “NO HUMAN BEING COULD HAVE ASCENDED TO ITS PINICAL [sic].” NOBLE L. PRENTIS, A MEMBER OF THE ASCENDING PARTY, DESCRIBED MRS. HOLMES ASCENT BY SAYING, “SHE CLAMBERED ON HER LITTLE WOMAN’S FEET OVER ROCKS, THROUGH SNOWS, UP INTO THE RARE, COLD ATMOSPHERE — UP HIGHER THAN THE BIRD’S WINGS BEATS THE AIR, UP TO THE VERY CREST, AND THERE SAW WHAT NO WOMAN’S EYES EVER SAW BEFORE.”

MR. AND MRS. HOLMES WERE ACCOMPANYING THE LAWRENCE PARTY, SEARCHING FOR GOLD IN THE ROCKY MOUNTAINS, WHEN THEY PAUSED TO MAKE THE CLIMB. ALTHOUGH MOST MEMBERS OF THE PARTY APPEAR IMPRESSED WITH MRS. HOLMES’ ACCOMPLISHMENT, ONE MEMBER, MR. WILLIAM B. PARSONS, WROTE TO COMPLAIN ABOUT THE SO-CALLED REFORMS HE OBSERVED IN MRS. HOLMES. IN HIS LETTER TO THE LAWRENCE REPUBLICAN, DATED OCTOBER 28, 1858, MR. PARSONS WRITES, “SUFFICE IT TO SAY, THAT THE PRINCIPLES OF THE WEAK-MINDED MEN AND ‘STRONG-MINDED’ WOMEN OF TODAY, HOWEVER CORRECT THEY MAY SEEM TO THEIR SUPPORTERS WHEN MODIFIED AND RESTRICTED IN SOCIETY BY THE CUSTOMS THEY SEEK TO UPROOT, WHEN TRANSFERRED TO THE PLAINS, AND STRIPPED OF THEIR SURROUNDINGS, ONLY SERVE TO DISGUST EVEN MEN, WHO ARE NOT EASILY DISGUSTED, AND ASTONISH MEN WHO HAVE SEEN THE WORST EVILS OF SOCIALISM, AGRARIANISM, MORMONISM, AND KINDRED ISMS, IN THE USUAL FOR YEARS.”

MR. PARSONS, A QUASI MORALIST, MAY HAVE OBJECTED TO MRS. HOLMES FEMINIST VIEWS AND HER MODERN MODE OF DRESS. MRS. HOLMES, A STRONG SUPPORTER OF WOMAN’S RIGHTS, BELIEVES THAT A WOMAN SHOULD TAKE HER PLACE BESIDE A MAN AND CAN EXCEL AT PHYSICAL TASKS JUST AS ANY MAN. SHE ALSO HIGHLY APPROVES OF THE “REFORM DRESS” BEING WORN BY THE LEADERS OF THE WOMAN SUFFRAGE MOVEMENT AND THEIR FOLLOWERS. HER STANDARD OUTFIT DURING HER TRAVELS, CALLED “THE BLOOMER”, WAS A CALICO DRESS THAT REACHED A LITTLE BELOW THE KNEE, PANTS OF THE SAME, INDIAN MOCCASINS ON HER FEET, AND A HAT ON HER HEAD, AS SHOWN BELOW.

OF HER IMPRESSIVE FEAT, MRS. HOLMES WRITES: “I HAVE ACCOMPLISHED THE TASK WHICH I MARKED OUT FOR MYSELF ... NEARLY EVERYONE TRIED TO DISCOURAGE ME FROM ATTEMPTING IT, BUT I BELIEVED THAT I SHOULD SUCCEED.”



THE “REFORM DRESS” OR “BLOOMER” WORN BY JULIA ARCHIBALD HOLMES IN 1858

1. *A Bloomer Girl on Pikes Peak, 1858: Julia Archibald Holmes, first white woman to climb Pikes Peak, Julie Archibald Holmes.*