

# Women in Mountaineering

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Women came to prominence early in the sport of mountaineering. The sport has its origins in the early part of the nineteenth century and became established by the early 1850s. By 1860 women were beginning to play an important role in the sport, and they continued to contribute significantly to developments in mountaineering until the turn of the century.

A great deal of attention has been paid to cycling and its role in the emancipation of women, but women's involvement in mountaineering predates and subsequently parallels women's involvement in cycling. Their achievements were accomplished in spite of a deep-rooted chauvinism and the problems with attire that also affected cycling.

In the first part of our paper we plan to document these achievements, the difficulties, and their resolution and relate them to achievements in other sports and the changing role of women in Western society. The second part of the paper will comprise an attempt to explain the dramatic decline in involvement that occurred during the early years of this century and continued until the 1960s. Apart from a few notable exceptions, women did not figure prominently in the sport for over sixty years and are only now beginning to contribute again to mountaineering. Our explanation will be grounded in social changes in the status of women.

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