People and Nature on the Mountaintop

A Resource and Impact Study of Longs Peak in Rocky Mountain National Park

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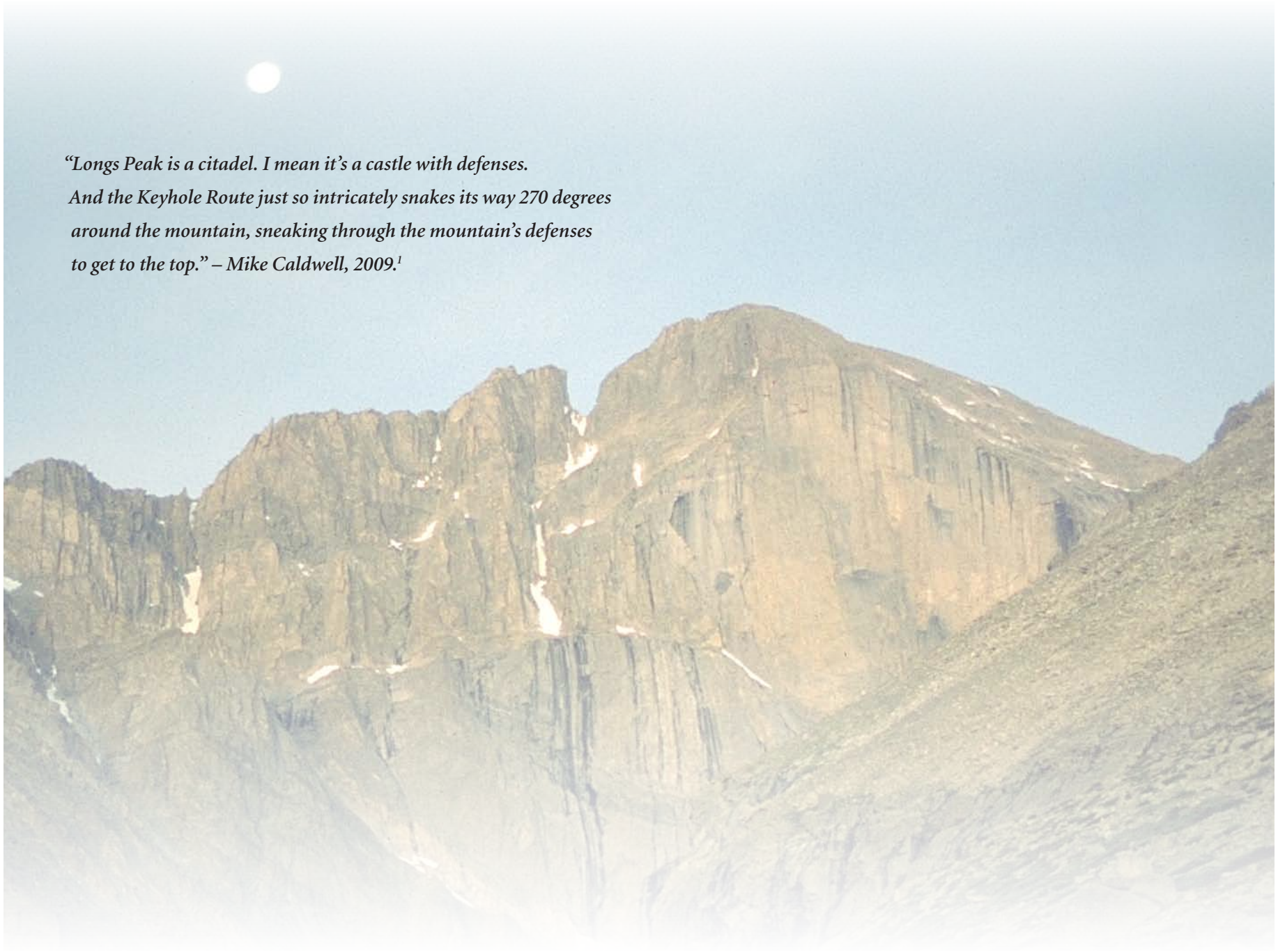


"Longs Peak is a citadel. I mean it's a castle with defenses. And the Keyhole Route just so intricately snakes its way 270 degrees around the mountain, sneaking through the mountain's defenses to get to the top." – Mike Caldwell, 2009.[1]

Introduction

This study examines the history of Longs Peak from the 1920s to the present, providing a narrative that traces over time the values and practices of individuals who climbed the peak, their impact on its natural and cultural resources, and the efforts of park rangers both to facilitate climbing and protect the peak from harm.[2] Longs Peak is an icon of the Rocky Mountain West. It is one of Colorado's tallest mountains, the only fourteener in Rocky Mountain National Park, and a peak that has for more than a century inspired adventuresome men and women to test themselves against its bouldered slopes, sheer rock faces, and severe alpine weather. Longs Peak is "a castle with defenses" that does not readily open itself to intruders. Even the non-technical routes to its summit involve long stretches of scrambling over unstable rock and along exposed ledges; the technical routes up its East Face and nearly vertical Diamond wall present expert rock climbers with some of the most challenging alpine ascents in North America.[3]

Longs may be formidable, but it is also a stunningly beautiful peak widely visible to residents and visitors all along the northern Front Range. It captures the eye and the imagination. Rangers throughout the park's history have recognized its powerful allure to those wishing to experience simultaneously its aesthetic splendors and the challenges of its granite fortifications. In the first years after Rocky Mountain National Park was founded in 1915, hundreds of mountain enthusiasts annually climbed Longs Peak via non-technical routes and, by the 1920s, the peak was attracting a growing number of ambitious rock climbers to its daunting East Face. During the Depression decade of the 1930s, nearly 2000 people climbed to the summit of Longs annually. The popularity of the peak continued to grow such that, by the late 1960s, nearly 4000 climbers ascended to the summit via non-technical routes each year while hundreds of technical climbers made their way up the East Face and onto the Diamond, a nine-hundred foot wall of vertical cracks, chimneys, waterfalls, and overhanging rock. During the 1970s approximately 7500 people summited the mountain each year and in recent decades the typical number of climbers making it to summit of Longs – via technical and non-technical routes – has exceeded 10,000 annually. Many thousands more climb part way up the peak each year,

View of the East Face and Diamond on Longs Peak from Chasm Junction. This iconic view of the East Face has been encountered by the hundreds of thousands of visitors who have hiked the East Longs Peak trail to the mountain over the past century. *Image courtesy of Rocky Mountain National Park.*

1 Mike Caldwell, interview with Ruth M. Alexander, August, 12, 2009, transcript, ROMO Archives.

2 The author wishes to acknowledge the generous assistance of Cheri Yost, Tim Burchett, Mark Magnuson, Jeff Connor, Mark Pita, and Ron Thomas, all of Rocky Mountain National Park, in the preparation of this report. Thanks are also due to Maren Bzdek, Josh Weinberg, and Leslie McCutchen , Center for Public History and Archaeology, Colorado State University, Fort Collins, Colorado. Cori Knudten, also with the CPHA, generously shared documents and insight from her own research on automobile tourism and Longs Peak. Jason Sibold, Department of Anthropology, Colorado State University, offered timely assistance in the preparation of ArcGIS mapping.

3 For those readers with orthographic interests, I wish to note that Longs Peak has been spelled in two ways: Longs, and Long's. In this study, I generally use Longs, the spelling that became most common over the course of the twentieth century. I use the peak's alternative spelling when it appears that way in titles I reference or in passages that I quote directly.

going to Chasm Junction, Chasm Lake, or the Boulderfield. Throughout the past century most people have climbed during the months of July and August when all routes to the peak's summit are reasonably free of snow and ice. June and September can also be busy months on Longs Peak, depending on weather conditions. During the harsh winter months a smaller number of skilled ice climbers, skiers, and snowshoers have sought exhilaration on the peak's ice walls and snowy slopes.[4]

While Longs offers exhilarating physical challenges and stunning vistas to climbers, its alpine environment is fragile: rocks, plants, and wildlife are vulnerable to damage wrought by the presence and action of humans. And in their own way, the spirited humans who climb Longs Peak are also fragile: they're vulnerable to accidents and lightning strikes, to high winds, rain and snow, to unwelcome or unpleasant encounters with other climbers, and to the results of their own poor judgment and inadequate preparation.

Because Longs Peak has been a destination of enormous popularity but is also a site of extraordinary grandeur and vulnerability – human and non-human – it offers an unusually important opportunity to study the history of park managers' efforts to balance the twofold mission of the national parks. According to the National Park Service Organic Act of 1916, the parks must "conserve the scenery and the natural and historical objects and the wild life therein"; but they must also "provide for the enjoyment of the same in such manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for future generations."[5] The National Park Service's mandate "to protect and preserve" extends simultaneously to the parks and to the people who visit them.

The Organic Act imagined and sought to encourage through wise management a mutually beneficial relationship between the undeveloped natural world and human society. It was signed into law at a time of growing concern among men such as Teddy Roosevelt, John Muir, Frederick Law Olmstead and others that urban industrial society was harmful to humans' moral and physical well-being. Cities and factories provided compelling evidence of human energy, ambition, and ingenuity, but their filth, disorder, and suffering also offered proof of human imperfection.

4 The non-technical routes to the summit of Longs are classed as technical routes when snow and ice are present. Park rangers monitor the peak to determine when to open these routes to non-technical climbers. The number of climbers on Longs Peak in any given year can never be determined with precision. Climbers who reach the top of Longs Peak may sign the summit register, but it's likely that many don't see the register, don't bother to sign it, or find that no space remains on its pages for more names to be added. Moreover, the summit registers, dating from about 1915 and maintained by the Colorado Mountain Club, offer only the names of those who reach the top of Longs, not the names of those who go only part way up the mountain. Many climbers don't intend to go all the way to the summit; others hope to make it to the top but turn back because of fatigue, bad weather, fear of heights, altitude sickness or injury. All non-technical climbers have long been encouraged to sign registers at the various trailheads leading to Longs, but many do not bother to do so, and park rangers have never tried to capture the numbers of total climbers on Longs from the trailhead registers.

Dr. George Wallace's 2002-2004 study of the number of hikers using the East Longs Peak Trail to reach the summit of the peak revealed that from May 30 to October 14, 2002 an estimated 35,000 people hiked the East Longs Peak Trail, and approximately 9600 of those hikers reached the summit via the Keyhole route. See "Climbing the Longs Peak Keyhole Route," a one-page summary of Dr. Wallace's project available at http://www.nps.gov/romo/parkmgmt/research_publications.htm#CP_JUMP_366914.

The summit registers for the years up to 1945 are in the ROMO archives. Summit registers since 1945 are held in the Colorado Mountain Club archives at the American Mountaineering Center, Golden, Colorado. Park staff (or Colorado Mountain Club volunteers) have not consistently tallied the figures in the summit registers, though totals are available for some years in the park's superintendent reports, in the CMC Peak Register files, and in Paul W. Nesbit, *Longs Peak: Its Story and a Climbing Guide*, first published in 1946 and now in its eleventh edition. For this report, I have consulted both the eight edition of Nesbit's book (Boulder, CO: Norman L. Nesbit, 1972) and the eleventh edition, revised and updated by Stan Adamson (Boulder, CO: Grey Wolf Books, 2005).

5 The National Park Service Organic Act, 16. U.S. C.1. http://www.nps.gov/legacy/organic-act.htm

Americans assumed that European "high culture" offered a viable way to offset some of the demoralizing and enervating effects of urban-industrial life, but the United States, a relatively new nation, had little in the way of an architectural or artistic heritage on which to lean. It could, however, treat its glorious mountains and rivers as "monuments" of nature and as sources of inspiration, vitality, and moral uplift. If the nation had "no old cathedrals, to develop that capacity for worship" that were "the priceless treasure[s]" of western Europe, it had "something older, more beautiful, and more instructive still in her snow mountains" and other wild places. Previous generations of Americans had worked to tame and subdue undeveloped nature, believing that wildness was the work of the devil's hand. Now, they sought to save the wild from exploitation by foresters or miners and to celebrate and benefit from its ennobling forces. Building on these sentiments, the Organic Act sought to preserve wild nature and encouraged "civilized" humans communion with it. It did not hurt, of course, that national parks would stimulate the tourist industry and America's insatiable quest for wealth.[6]

The Act, however, said nothing about the tensions or problems that might arise as Americans began to define wild nature as something outside of human society yet essential to human betterment, began to recognize the essential order and perfection in undeveloped nature yet to declare disordered humans responsible for its protection. Nor did the Act offer guidance to park rangers who must juggle the preservation of natural or historic wonders with the promotion of human enjoyment. The Organic Act raised at least two vexing philosophical questions: first, did Americans (or any humans), imperfect as they were presumed to be, have the capacity to assume stewardship of the sacred and sublime "wild" places in the national landscape? Second, what, exactly, was "wilderness?" Did it exist in purely scientific terms and deserve preservation as such, or, was "wilderness" a place, a "scenic" form of nature, that humans imagined, marked off, and defended to satisfy their moral and aesthetic needs? The Organic Act raised as well a host of practical issues for Americans and the National Park Service: how substantially might rangers modify natural landscapes to facilitate their enjoyment by park visitors? Was tourism as benign as many park advocates initially assumed? What were rangers to do if park visitors, in their enjoyment of nature, harmed the very landscapes that rangers were obliged to protect? Finally, how were rangers to take into account changes over time in perspectives on environmental harm, wilderness preservation, and backcountry recreation?

Even the passage of the federal Wilderness Act in 1964 did not alter rangers' fundamental obligation to find a balance between protecting resources and facilitating human recreation on Longs Peak. The passage of the Wilderness Act prompted park officials to manage Longs Peak as a wilderness site where "the imprint of man's work [is] substantially unnoticeable" by the late 1960s, long before it gained formal wilderness status in 2008. But while the Act was clearly intended to protect wild nature from human misuse, it also stressed the need to preserve for humans "outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation."[7] This landmark legislation defined wilderness as a place in nature with ecological integrity and intrinsic value in scientific terms, yet also as something of great benefit to

By the late-nineteenth century, the summit of Longs Peak had become a destination of choice for adventuresome tourists who were inspired by the idea that untamed wilderness was a healthy antidote to the enervating effects of urban and industrial life. This increasingly popular understanding of wilderness helped to foster support for the creation of Rocky Mountain National Park in 1915 and the founding of the National Park Service in 1916. *Image courtesy of Rocky Mountain National Park.*

6 (quote) R.L.G. Irving, *The Romance of Mountaineering* (New York; E.P. Dutton & Co., 1935), 220. See also, Donald Worster, *A Passion for Nature: the Life of John Muir* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008); Alfred Runte, *National Parks: the American Experience* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 2nd edition, revised, 1987), 56-60; C.W. Buchholtz, *Rocky Mountain National Park: A History* (Boulder, CO: University Press of Colorado, 1983) 116-123, 144-145; Alexander Drummond, *Enos Mills: Citizen of Nature* (University Press of Colorado, 1995), 376-386.

7 *www.wilderness.net/NWPS/documents/publiclaws/88-577.pdf*

human society. Not surprisingly, in the decades after its passage, park rangers became increasingly invested in helping visitors achieve a "wilderness experience" in the backcountry, even as they also sought to reduce the impact of visitors on wilderness landscapes. On Longs Peak crowds grew rather than diminished after 1964, prompting rangers and researchers to ponder whether the decision to treat Longs Peak as a wilderness site may have both positively and negatively affected its natural resources and the quality of the experience available to visitors.

This study encourages readers to keep in mind the theoretical questions raised by the Organic Act while it focuses on the history of Rocky Mountain National Park's practical efforts to manage recreational activity and natural resource protection on Longs Peak. The central argument of this study is as follows: During the first years of the park's existence, park officials gave little thought to the management of Longs Peak and its alpine adventurers, being pre-occupied with problems related to under-financing, road building, the re-introduction of deer and elk, and concession licensing. By the 1920s, the dangers of climbing on the peak forced park officials to assume more active control of recreation and resource protection on Longs. Since that time, Rocky Mountain National Park has attempted to fulfill its mandate to protect and preserve both Longs Peak and visitors' enjoyment of it through a system of limited management that has involved displacing a portion of the park's responsibility onto climbers. Wearing its regulatory power lightly and treating recreationists as trustworthy "citizens" of nature, the park has encouraged climbers to assume responsibility for themselves, one another, and the mountain itself. Rangers have assisted and rescued climbers, but the park has kept direct supervision of backcountry visitors to a minimum and has placed relatively few limits on the autonomy of climbers. Park officials have sometimes tried to anticipate the risks that climbers might encounter on Longs Peak, but they have also expected climbers to prepare for danger and to look out for one another. The park has made a variety of improvements to non-technical routes on Longs to enhance visitor safety and enjoyment, but it has not tried to make the climb easy or hazard-free. Especially since the 1960s, rangers have worked hard to reduce damage to the natural resources on Longs Peak, but they have done so primarily by promoting an environmental ethic among visitors. Significantly, the park's managers have assumed that the peak's inherent dangers give it a natural, albeit limited, capacity for self-preservation, and the park's rangers have tried to boost this natural capacity by encouraging people who are unprepared for severe storms, high altitude, or difficult climbing to stay away from the peak. With rangers acting as a fulcrum, the park has tried to achieve a rough balance between natural and human forces, hoping that the harshness of the conditions on Longs would help to protect it from overuse and degradation and that climbers but lightly regulated would use their freedom responsibly and unselfishly.

This story must be set against a backdrop of resource limitations and management priorities that have consistently turned the attention of park authorities away from Longs Peak. Despite the long-standing popularity of the peak among climbers, and the early importance of Longs to the park's promotional efforts, Rocky Mountain National Park has never had the financial or staffing resources to manage this single site as a priority. More importantly, almost from the founding of the park, managers have been far more focused on automobile tourists and on "frontcountry" visitation sites than on backcountry visitors and the less accessible destinations they favor.

Given the park's funding constraints and frontcountry priorities, park managers have grappled with the tensions in the Organic Act as they relate to Longs Peak only in response to specific events and pressures. The first and most important of these developments was the death of the

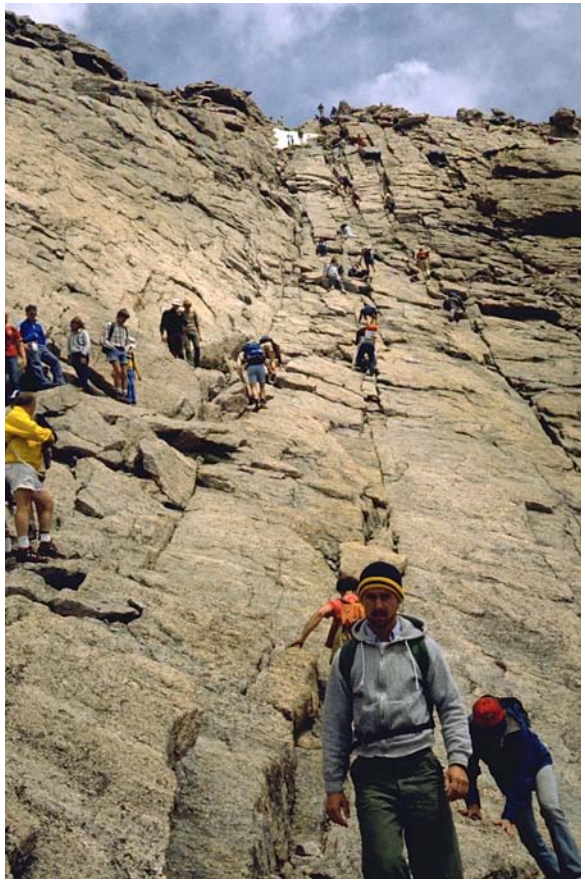
well-known climber Agnes Vaille and one of her would-be rescuers on the North Face of Longs in January 1925. The tragedy of Vaille's death prompted Superintendent Roger Toll to establish the basic conceptual and practical elements of a system of limited intervention and shared responsibility. In later years, park rangers revisited and modified their management of Longs Peak in response to other pressures, always retaining the essentials of Toll's system. These later stresses included: the clamor of technical climbers to "open" the Diamond – the sheerest section of the peak's East Face – in the 1950s and 1960s; the passage of the Wilderness Act in 1964, which underscored simultaneously the value of "wilderness experiences" to humans, the danger that humans posed to wilderness settings, and the tremendous ecological importance of wilderness areas; and, finally, evidence of serious danger, crowding and resource damage on Longs' non-technical and technical routes by the late 1960s and 1970s.

Lacking the resources to engage in expensive oversight, protection or mitigation, the park's system of limited oversight on Longs has consisted primarily of improving means for communication and rescue in the backcountry, route modifications, the development of primitive shelters for climbers disabled by weather, illness or accident, mandatory registration of technical climbers and backcountry campers, and efforts to cultivate a culture of knowledge and responsibility among backcountry visitors. Specific forms of oversight and shared responsibility have not always worked or have not worked indefinitely. Park managers have adjusted particular policies and practices in response to increased numbers of climber accidents and increased damage to the mountain's natural resources, or, when new ways of thinking altered definitions of wilderness protection and wilderness recreation. For example, some of the park's route "improvements" early in the century involved the placement of human-made contrivances on Longs Peak that were later deemed problematic and unsuitable in a wilderness setting. And in the 1970s and 1980s rangers pressed for intensive discussion with the technical and non-technical climbing communities as crowding, safety, human waste, and damage to rock surfaces and plants diminished both the physical integrity of Longs' wilderness and the wilderness experience of climbers. Always, the park has turned to relatively inexpensive and non-intrusive practices as it has tried to reduce the dangers that Longs posed to mountaineers, to limit conditions that might interfere with visitors' pleasure on the peak, and to lessen the negative impacts of recreationists on the peak's fragile alpine environment.

On balance, the park's reliance on limited intervention and shared responsibility has worked reasonably well. Nature on Longs Peak has acted as a check on humans. Humans have checked the potentially deadly forces of nature by assuming responsibility for themselves and others. They have also limited damage to the mountain by acting as a check on one another. In 2010 Longs Peak remains free of serious resource damage and is less littered by trash and human waste than it was thirty years ago. Hikers and technical climbers still find their time on the peak rewarding. The park's "improvements" to trails and facilities on Longs have not substantively altered the physical realities of the climb to the summit; if technical and non-technical climbers find their ascent of Longs easier today than it was for climbers in 1925, they can thank vastly improved information, equipment, and clothing.

Ultimately, an environmental history of Longs Peak does more, however, than reveal the relative success of the park's management practices in handling its complex mandate. Because of the inherent tensions in the Organic Act and subsequent wilderness legislation, and the enormous popularity of this particular mountain as a recreational site, the history of Longs Peak suggests that, at least within the national park setting, "wilderness"

Longs Peak is a site of danger as well as a place of rewarding backcountry recreation. This avalanche on a section of the East Face known as Lamb's Slide offers compelling evidence of the potentially deadly forces of nature present on the peak. Rangers and Rocky Mountain National Park have long expected visitors to Longs Peak to prepare themselves for dangerous conditions. *Image courtesy of Rocky Mountain National Park.*



For many decades the non-technical routes to the summit of Longs Peak have been thronged with visitors during the summer months, raising questions about the extent to which this wilderness site affords visitors a wilderness experience. This photograph from 1982 shows hikers on the Keyhole route, ascending and descending the Homestretch. *Image courtesy of Rocky Mountain National Park.*

is not separable from human efforts to define and give it meaning. Indeed, the history of Longs Peak points to the necessity of accepting fluidity in historical and contemporary definitions of "wilderness protection" and "wilderness experience."

By recent legal definition, wilderness is "an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammeled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain."[8] And by popular definition, a "wilderness experience" is a time of solitude and revelation for people willing to test themselves in a "pristine" yet fickle natural environment. These definitions, however, have never fit Long Peaks particularly well. Yes, Longs Peak rangers and climbers have worked cooperatively, especially since the 1970s, to limit the "trace" of human artifacts and activity on the mountain, including cables and telephone lines, trash and human waste, noise and climbers' bolts, pitons, and chalk. And those who climb Longs Peak know they are powerless to control or alter its harsh alpine weather or severe contours. Nonetheless, contradictions abound. Humans are visitors to Longs, rather than permanent residents, but the peak has "wilderness value" to humans primarily because they can gain access to it, step across its rocky surfaces, challenge and discover themselves through physical engagement with its awesome expanses. The majority of those who visit the peak probably have little scientific knowledge of its ecosystems. And humans' interface with Longs is profoundly a product of cultural forces. Technical climbers engage in an intimate experience of the peak's sheer East Face, but they rarely climb alone. Most often, they climb in teams, putting their lives, and enjoyment, in one another's hands. The evolving values, techniques, equipment, and social relationships of the climbing community have always shaped climbers' intentions and mediated their experiences of nature. And though they are but tiny specks once they are on the East Face or the Diamond, fitting their fingers and bodies to the rock's cracks and chimneys, technical climbers have sometimes had to wait in line to begin their ascent. Winter backcountry skiers and ice climbers have been fewer in number than summertime climbers and have experienced the mountain when natural conditions are at their most unforgiving; still, these adventurers typically ascend the peak in small groups, depend upon one another's technical equipment and skills, and celebrate together on the peak's summit.

Moreover, the non-technical routes to the summit of Longs Peak have for many decades been crowded every summer with visitors, packed with people who are engaged simultaneously in an intense relationship with untamed nature and in an intensely social experience with other climbers. True, the potential for high winds and storms, the narrow ledges and shifting rock, have always surrounded hikers with the uncertainties and dangers of nature. Interactions with other climbers, however, have been unavoidable. In the words of one guidebook author, "Climbing the Keyhole route on a late summer weekend is like walking on a crowded city sidewalk through a construction zone."[9] Careless hikers add to the hazards of the non-technical climb, for example, sending loose rocks in the Trough onto hapless individuals lower on the route. More positively, during the course of a long day's climb up and down the mountain, hikers in one group frequently meet and get to know people in other small groups who set out from the trailhead at about the same time. Non-technical climbers who are perfect strangers help one another, reaching out to steady another climber trying to get his or her footing on a particularly wobbly rock, pointing out handholds on scrambles over ledges,

8 *www.wilderness.net/NWPS/documents/publiclaws/88-577.pdf*

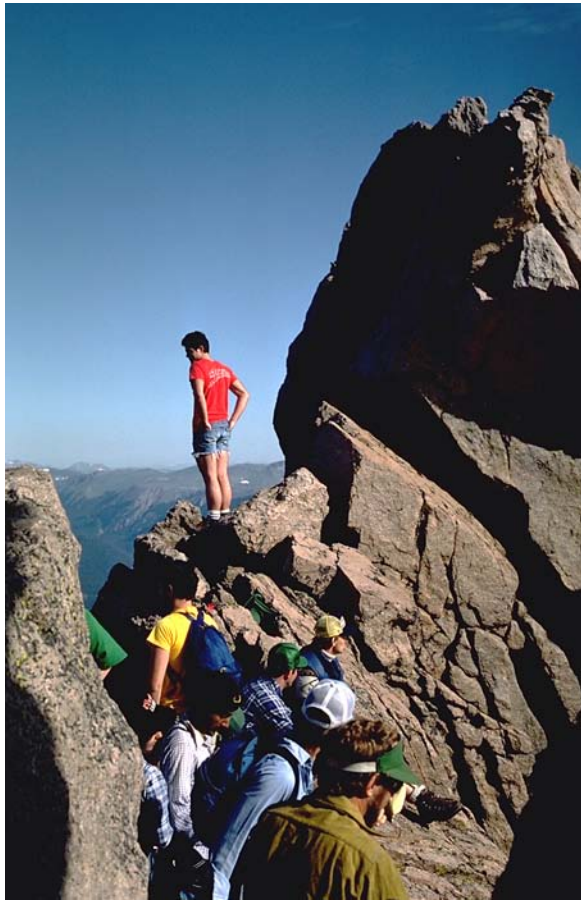
9 Gerry Roach, *Colorado's Fourteeners: From Hikes to Climbs* (Golden, CO: Fulcrum Publishing, 2nd edition, 1999), 3.

sharing information on weather and wind patterns and on distances and terrain still to be covered. They complain about fatigue to one another and share comments about the peak's magnificent views.

If climbers nearly always encounter the "wilderness" of Longs in the company of other climbers, their experience is also mediated by park rangers and managers, whether or not they come into actual contact with them. Trails and signs designed and built by park staff tell climbers where they should go and to what they should give their attention. Rangers offer "interpretive programming" through their face-to-face interactions with climbers and the informational materials they offer them, and in so doing they privilege one way of understanding and experiencing undeveloped nature over others. The National Park Service and its rangers have formal authority in the park and can thereby establish normative values and practices. Of course, the park's powers of enforcement are relatively weak. Staffing in the backcountry is always low. More importantly, the park depends upon visitors for its continued existence, and rangers have long engaged in a process of negotiation with a "public" seeking enjoyment inside park boundaries. Still, even the limited authority and influence of park managers and rangers provides further evidence that climbers' experience on Longs Peak is shaped by cultural forces, as well as by forces of nature.

By their presence on Longs Peak, and through their interactions with other climbers and rangers, technical and non-technical climbers alike thus seem to ask: "what kind of environment is this? To what extent is it wild? To what extent human-made? How should we describe what we are doing here? What can we gain or experience during our time on Longs Peak? Is it possible to have a wilderness experience and a social experience at one and the same time?" There have not been, and cannot be in the present or future, any definitive answers to these questions. Yet park managers must contend with them, and with their intrinsic slipperiness, as they continue working to "protect and preserve" Longs Peak and the experience of those who visit it.[10]

10 Climbers on Longs Peak – technical and non-technical – have been using the World Wide Web for more than a decade to post reports on recent climbs. It is impossible to keep up with the postings and the images that accompany them. Climbing magazines have been published for decades. Magazines such as *Trail and Timberline*, *Climbing*, and the *Alpinist* have included, on an irregular basis, stories about hikes and technical climbs on Longs Peak. These printed and electronic sources demonstrate that climbing on Longs Peak, though described in many different ways, is understood as both a social sport and a test of human capacities in undeveloped nature. For an excellent example of writing that conveys technical climbers' social interactions and their experience of untamed nature on the Diamond, see, Roger Briggs, "Mountain Profile: The Diamond," *Alpinist* 19 (Spring 2007): 22-41.



Non-technical climbers at the Keyhole on a busy summer day, 1982. *Image courtesy of Rocky Mountain National Park.*

Chapter 1. The Early Years of Exploration and Mountaineering on Longs Peak: the 19th century to 1925

Longs Peak was named for Major Stephen H. Long, who first noted the existence of the high peak in 1820 while leading a geographic and natural resource exploratory expedition up the Platte River and into the Rocky Mountains for President James Monroe. In 1868 Major John Wesley Powell made the first recorded climb of Longs Peak as part of another exploratory expedition for the U.S. government, and in September 1873 members of the government-sponsored Hayden survey climbed Longs Peaks, having already summited numerous other peaks in northern Colorado that summer. Both of these early climbs were via the Keyhole route, which wound around the west, north, and east sides of the peak. Anna Dickinson, a famous lecturer, stage actress, feminist, and abolitionist accompanied Ferdinand Hayden to the top of Longs, adding greatly to public and media interest in the survey. These explorers and surveyors were hardly the first to climb Longs Peak; Native Americans of the Ute and Arapahoe tribes had long inhabited northern Colorado, and Longs Peak figured into their hunting practices and cosmology.[11] However, by the mid-1870s the U.S. military and white settlers had forced Native Americans out of northern Colorado. Explorers eager to study unmapped landscapes and resources soon moved on to new terrain, but Longs Peak suffered no inattention, having already attracted the notice of a new breed of intrepid and rather eccentric mountaineers with no connection to the federal government.[12]

Longs Peak thus became the domain of figures such as Isabella Bird, Jim Nugent, Frederick Chapin, and Elkanah Lamb. Isabella Bird, a world traveler who had just completed a climb of Hawaii's Mauna Loa, traveled by horseback and foot to the top of Longs in October 1873, recording the story of her arduous ascent in *A Lady's Life in the Rocky Mountains*. Bird's book, published in England and widely read in the United States, highlighted the rigors of the climb while also romanticizing the image of the mountaineering guide in the person of "Rocky Mountain Jim" Nugent, the first of many local guides to lead climbers to the summit of Longs Peak.[13] Frederick Chapin, a well-known mountaineer and member of the Appalachian Mountain Club (AMC) when he visited the Estes Park area in the late 1880s, climbed Longs and other high peaks in the region. His published accounts of mountain adventure

11 In 1914, Longs Peak guide Shep Husted and Colorado Mountain Club member Oliver Toll accompanied two elderly Arapaho on a two-week pack trip through what is now Rocky Mountain National Park. Toll collected the traditional place names and stories of traditional practices related by the Arapaho. Photographs from this trip are held in several local repositories, including the Denver Public Library and the Fort Collins Local History Archive. See, Oliver W. Toll, *Arapaho Names and Trails: a Report of a 1914 Pack Trip* (Estes Park, CO: Rocky Mountain Nature Association, 2003).

12 William M. Bueler, *Roof of the Rockies: A History of Colorado Mountaineering* (Golden, CO: The Colorado Mountain Club, 3rd edition, 2000, 32; Addie Alexander was the first white woman to climb to the top of Longs Peak, in August 1871. Alexander may have been a resident of the St. Louis-Western Colony, near Greeley. She climbed with other companions and a guide but was the only woman in the small party to make it to the top of the peak. Alexander's ascent was reported in the *Boulder County News*, but Alexander never wrote about her climb, so little is known about her or her experience. Janet Robertson, *The Magnificent Mountain Women; Adventures in the Colorado Rockies*. Introduction to the new Bison Books edition by Arlene Blum (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 2003), 7-11; The most complete coverage of Anna Dickinson's participation in the Hayden Survey's climb of Longs Peak is to be found in F. Ross Holland, Jr. *Rocky Mountain National Park: Historical Background Data* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Office of History and Historic Architecture, Western Service Center, 1971), 28-29.

13 Isabella Bird, *A Lady's Life in the Rocky Mountains*. (London: Virago Press, 1983); Robertson, Magnificent Mountain Women, 11-17.

appeared in the AMC's magazine and in book form.[14] Bird's and Chapin's books went through repeated printings and are still available today. Neither Bird nor Chapin thought of their ascents of Longs Peak as mere recreational jaunts in nature; Bird told her readers it was almost impossible to describe the full meaning – "the glorious sublimity, the majestic solitude, and the unspeakable awfulness" – of her three-day climb.[15] The publication of their books signaled a shift in perception as Longs Peak became a destination for adventurers eager to experience the natural world in all its extremes and unpredictability rather than a place where agents of the federal government inventoried and assessed the value of natural resources for economic development.

Bird and Chapin were only temporary visitors to Longs Peak and the Estes Park area. Others, such as Jim Nugent and Elkanah Lamb, settled in the Estes Park area and treated the nearby mountains as their backyard playground. Best known for his 1871 descent through the permanent snowfield on the East Face of Longs Peak that has been memorialized as Lamb's Slide, the Reverend Elkanah Lamb moved his family permanently to Estes Park in 1873. He gave up his ministerial duties and established the Longs Peak House, a visitors' lodge, near the base of the mountain in 1878. Lamb put in and maintained what became known as the East Longs Peak Trail, which wound its way past timberline to the Boulderfield, went through the Keyhole, and from there followed along the Ledges on the peak's west side, cut sharply upward through the Trough, went out onto the Narrows, and finally went up the Homestretch before reaching the summit. For many years he and his son Carlyle guided parties of adventurers to the top of the mountain. Lamb's importance thus extends not only to his climbing exploits on Longs but to his successful efforts to link an emerging tourism industry to backcountry adventure. Americans' growing fascination with "wild" nature occurred in the context of, and was highly dependent upon, a new consumer industry that served backcountry travelers' need for food and lodging, expert assistance, and specialized camp clothing and equipment. Commercial guides such as Elkanah and Carlyle, and lodges such as the Longs Peaks House, facilitated the development of a late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century sub-culture of mountain adventurers. In turn, guides and lodge owners relied on the nation's new transcontinental railroad to bring them the upper- and middle-class travelers who made possible their livelihoods and backcountry lifestyles.[16]

Lamb's nephew Enos Mills took over the lodge and the guiding business early in the twentieth century. Renaming the lodge the Longs Peak Inn, Mills proved a successful businessman and entrepreneur. Enos had a passionate love for nature and mountaineering, and he personally guided many guests up to the top of Longs Peak. Eventually, his passion for the mountain and its wild surroundings inspired him to call for the creation of a national park in the northern Rockies. Though he was joined by many others in his advocacy of a new national park, Mills became known as the "father" of Rocky Mountain National Park as he travelled and lectured throughout the United States. In 1915 Congress voted to establish the new park, with Longs Peak as its highest summit and centerpiece. As the owner of Longs Peak Inn, Mills stood to gain economically from the certain spur to tourism the new park would provide.[17]

Elkanah Lamb opened the Longs Peak House as a tourist lodge in 1878 and led visitors on the East Longs Peak Trail, which he built during the 1870s. He and his son Carlyle were early figures linking backcountry adventure to an emerging tourism industry. *Image courtesy of Rocky Mountain National Park.*

The re-named and expanded Longs Peak Inn was a popular resting place for visitors in the early-twentieth century. This photo shows in the Inn in 1906, at about the time it was taken over by Enos Mills. Like his uncle, Elkanah Lamb, Mills was a true mountain enthusiast and a successful businessman. He guided many climbers to the summit of Longs Peak. Mills also led efforts to establish Rocky Mountain National Park. *Image courtesy of Rocky Mountain National Park.*

14 Frederick H. Chapin, *Mountaineering in Colorado: The Peaks About Estes Park* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1987).

15 Bird, *A Lady's Life in the Rocky Mountains*, p. 83.

16 Sierra Standish, "National Register of Historic Places Registration Form for the East Longs Peak Trail," Rocky Mountain National Park, National Park Service Form 10-900, National Park Service, 2006, 6; Phyllis J. Perry, *It Happened in Rocky Mountain National Park* (Guilford, CT and Helena, MT: TwoDot, an imprint of The Globe Pequot Press, 2008), 11-15; Elkanah Lamb, *Memories of the Past and Thoughts of the Future* (Huntington, IN: Press of the United Brethren Publishing House, 1906).

17 Paul Nesbit, *Longs Peak: Its Story and a Climbing Guide*. Revised and

Enos Mills (3rd from right) in his role as nature guide, circa 1915. *Image courtesy of Rocky Mountain National Park.*

Enos Mills and his brother, Joe, built the Timberline Cabin in Jim's Grove, near the East Longs Peak Trail, in 1908. The primitive shelter was operated as a concession, providing meals and lodging to visitors to Longs Peak until 1925. *Image courtesy of Rocky Mountain National Park.*

In the first ten years of the park's existence (1915-1925), activity on Longs Peak continued to follow the patterns set in earlier years, largely uninterrupted by the presence of new federal land managers. Roger Toll, a Denver native and leader of the Colorado Mountain Club (founded in 1912) wrote *Mountaineering in the Rocky Mountain National Park* to provide essential information about Longs Peak and other park mountains to new backcountry visitors. The guide was published by the federal government and encouraged visitors to think of the new park as a bounded entity given over to the preservation and enjoyment of nature, but it also made clear to visitors that oversight of the backcountry by park managers would be slight. Toll mentioned the existence of park regulations but did not bother to specify them. Rather, he emphasized how mountaineering developed powers of scientific observation, independence, human connection, and civic-mindedness in those willing to try it. It was a powerful route to the betterment of humans and their society. "Mountaineering," he wrote, takes humans into "nature's workshop." It "creates in one a desire to know more about natural sciences." It "promotes the health and strength of the body, it teaches self-reliance, determination, presence of mind, necessity for individual thought and action, pride of accomplishment, fearlessness, endurance, helpful cooperation, loyalty, patriotism, the love of an unselfish freedom, and many other qualities that make for sturdy manhood and womanhood."[18]

Visitors to the new national park continued, as they had in the past, to treat Longs Peak as a premier destination in the northern Rockies. They came from across the country by train and stayed in one of several hotels and inns within the park or in the village of Estes Park. The Longs Peak Inn, the Hewes-Kirkwood Inn, and the Columbine Hotel were all located near the start of the East Longs Peak Trail. Abner Sprague's hotel at Glacier Creek was located to the north of the East trail. Out-of-state visitors usually made the climb accompanied by a commercial guide from their hotel. Local sportsmen and women turned to the Colorado Mountain Club (CMC) to organize and provide leaders for group outings to the summit. In his 1919 mountaineering guide for Rocky Mountain National Park, Roger Toll said of Longs:

> It is probably climbed more frequently than any other 14,000-foot peak in the State, with the possible exception of Pikes Peak. It is an unusually interesting climb by reason of the wide variety of views, its rugged character, and the different points of interest along the trail. The climb is not a dangerous one, but there is no very easy route to the top, as is the case with so many peaks.[19]

As there was no obviously "easy" trail to the summit, mountaineers tried to reach the top of Longs by several different routes. Most climbers used the East Longs Peak Trail or the North Longs Peak Trail, the latter accessible from Sprague's hotel. Whether relying on commercial guides or CMC leaders, parties of climbers using the East Longs Peak Trail often rode horses to the Timberline Cabin, a primitive hut at about 11,000 feet in Jim's Grove that provided a modicum of protection from the fierce mountain weather. It had been built by Enos Mills and his brother Joe in 1908. Named after the intrepid guide, Jim Nugent, the cabin provided overnight shelter and meals for climbers who wished to get an early start to the summit and be safely off the mountain before afternoon storms rolled in. In 1921 the park improved the trail leading from Jim's Grove to Granite

Updated by Stan Adamson. (Broomfield, CO: Grey Wolf Books, 2005), 4-5; Alexander Drummond, *Enos Mills: Citizen of Nature* (Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 1995), 222-247.

18 Nesbit (1972 ed.), 46-47; Colorado Mountain Club, "Trip Reports: Longs Peak," Colorado Mountain Club Archives, American Mountaineering Library, Golden CO; Roger W. Toll, *Mountaineering in the Rocky Mountain National Park* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1919), 10, 12-13.

19 Toll, *Mountaineering in the Rocky Mountain National Park*, 46.

Pass, reducing the grade from 30 and 40 percent to a more modest 15 percent and thereby enabling "tourists to make quicker time and with much less fatigue." Rangers and their work crew deliberately built the trail "to suffer the minimum damage from the rains and melting snows and is so located that there is seldom much of a watershed above it."[20]

Climbers on both trails converged at Granite Pass and then crossed the Boulderfield. From the Boulderfield, they approached the summit either by the North Face or the longer Keyhole route that circled around the west and south sides of the peak. The North Face offered the shorter approach, but it involved climbing extremely steep rock faces and talus (broken rock slopes) that were often still covered in snow and ice well into the summer. The Keyhole route was typically free of snow and ice in July and August and followed a less steeply pitched series of ledges and rock scrambles to the summit. Still, the route from the Keyhole to the summit was long and challenging, and it lacked readily discernable trail markers. Especially on the descent, it was easy for climbers to go off-route and find themselves at a "false Keyhole" that gave way to a dangerous drop into the Boulderfield.[21] The park's superintendent asked the park ranger with responsibility for Longs to put cairns on the route from the Keyhole to the summit in July of 1918; four years later the superintendent asked a ranger to improve the markings on the route from the Keyhole to the Trough by painting yellow circles with red centers on the rocks at regular intervals. These "fried egg" markers were periodically repainted and are still visible today. [22]

Small numbers of experienced climbers accessed Longs by alternate routes. The less popular Loft Route, blazed by Ranger Jack Moomaw in the early 1920s, left the East Longs Peak Trail above Chasm Lake, turned southwest from Chasm Meadow, and climbed broken cliff walls to the saddle between Mount Meeker and Longs, affording a stunning view of Wild Basin.[23] Keplinger's Route, also little used, approached Longs from the south, leaving the Sandbeach Lake Trail at Hunter's Creek and passing the "sheer striated walls of Pagoda Mountain's southern rib."[24]

The summit registers, trip reports, and photographs from this period reveal that Longs Peak was a popular destination for both male and female climbers.[25] The 1915 and 1916 registers, for example, show that approximately twenty percent of all those who summited the peak were women. Among Colorado Mountain Club members and guests who went on outings to Longs Peak from the 1910s to the 1920s, women accounted for approximately half of all climbers; ascents to the summit by moonlight were popular with this adventuresome group of local climbers. [26]

In marking the Keyhole route, re-building the trail leading out of Jim's Grove, and blazing a trail on the Loft route, the park made significant improvements on Longs Peak between 1915 and 1925, but those who climbed Longs Peak had very little interaction with park rangers. Rangers left it to the CMC and local guides to educate, assist, and oversee climbers as they made their way up Longs Peak. The staff at Rocky Mountain National Park numbered fewer than ten people, including administrative staff,

Climbers on the Homestretch of the Keyhole Route, just below the summit of Longs Peak. This image, from 1924, was taken the year before the park installed the Cable Route on the North Face of Longs Peak, offering non-technical climbers an alternate route to the summit. *Image courtesy of Rocky Mountain National Park.*

Sunrise from Longs Peak, circa 1920. Moonlight and sunrise ascents to the summit of Longs Peak were popular outings for the men and women who joined the Colorado Mountain Club, founded in 1912. *Image courtesy of Rocky Mountain National Park.*

20 Drummond, *Enos Mills*, 215; *Estes Park Trail*, 19 August 1921, 1

21 Toll, *Mountaineering in the Rocky Mountain National Park*, 48-49.

22 Superintendent's Monthly Report, August, 1918. Estes Park Trail, August 25, 1922.

23 Jack Moomaw, interview with William Ramaley, June 23, 1955; 4, transcript, ROMO Library.

24 Lisa Foster, *Rocky Mountain National Park: The Complete Hiking Guide* (Englewood, CO: Westcliffe Publishers, Inc., 2005), 233.

25 Longs Peak summit registers, 1915 through 1945, ROMO Archives; Colorado Mountain Club, Trip Reports and Scrapbooks, Colorado Mountain Club Archives, American Mountaineering Center, Golden, CO.

26 Roger Toll, "Analysis of Register on Longs Peak 1915-1916," in file: "CMC Peak registers, Reports of Conditions, 1912-1936" in Colorado Mountain Club archives, Golden, CO; and Paul Nesbit and Norman L. Nesbit. *Longs Peak; Its Story and a Climbing Guide*, (Boulder, CO, N.L. Nesbit, 1972), 8.

Remains of convict cabin, 1940. Rocky Mountain National Park relied on convicts to build Fall River Road in the late 1910s and 1920s, housing them in rough shelters. The park was under enormous pressure to add to its roadways as automobile tourism gained in popularity, but the park's funding resources were meager. Convict crews offered an inexpensive source of labor. The interests of automobile tourists came to dominate the agendas of park managers, diverting their attention from backcountry resources and recreation. *Image courtesy of Rocky Mountain National Park.*

Fall River Road, 1924. The road was a challenging drive to automobile tourists, even after it was widened in the early 1920s. Many drivers found themselves unable to negotiate its steep twists and turns. The park had the resources to assign only one ranger to the east side of the park, including Longs Peak, and he was frequently occupied with aiding frontcountry motorists. Backcountry visitors to Longs Peak rarely encountered park rangers before 1925. *Image courtesy of Rocky Mountain National Park.*

and the single ranger responsible for Longs Peak and the entire eastern portion of the park was frequently occupied with aiding motorists on Fall River Road, a steep, narrow, and dangerous roadway. The first miles of this roadway were built before 1920 by convict crews who cost the underfunded park nothing in wages and lived in extremely primitive park housing. Convict crews continued to extend Fall River Road during the 1920s, and park managers were much involved in supervising their work, even as they also tended to the needs to motorists. The Colorado State Highway Commission held formal responsibility for road construction and maintenance until 1922 but actual supervision fell to the skeleton park staff.[27]

In fact, auto tourism was quickly becoming the focus of park management's attention. Though the automobile industry was still young and its impact hard to predict, growing numbers of relatively affluent vacationing Americans were beginning to turn to cars, often provided by local hotels or rental companies, to carry them into national parks and preserves. Automobiles became these tourists' preferred means of gaining access to undeveloped nature and to restored health and spirits. Thousands of automobile tourists visited Rocky Mountain National Park during its first years, putting constant pressure on managers to add to the park's limited miles of roadway. Park managers had to deal not only with the financial and physical challenges of mountain road construction and the needs of motorists on primitive roadways but also with disputes over who should be permitted to bring autos into the park and for what purposes.[28]

In 1919 the park awarded an exclusive concession for commercial auto tours in the park to the Rocky Mountain Parks' Transportation Company, a firm that originated in Montana to serve Glacier National Park. Local hotel and rental car owners in Estes Park, including Enos Mills and F. O. Stanley, promptly challenged the park's authority, and Mills sued the park and its superintendent, L.C. Way. The controversy centered around two issues: first, whether the park had the right to grant a monopoly that impeded local residents' business opportunities, and second, whether the park had the authority to decide who could use roads within the park boundaries. The State of Colorado had never formally ceded jurisdiction over the roads to the National Park Service, due to the ongoing construction of Fall River Road, a state highway.[29] It was on this basis that Mills and the other owners argued the National Park Service had no right to restrict their access to the park roads. In a larger sense, the conflict was over the appropriate use of park resources and the relationship of national park recreation to entrepreneurial gain and mass consumption, issues that have continued to present critical challenges to Rocky Mountain National Park and the National Park Service to the present day.

Roger Toll assumed responsibility for resolving the roads controversy when he became superintendent of Rocky Mountain National Park in 1919. National Park Service officials hoped that Toll's familiarity with Rocky Mountain National Park and his conciliatory personality would help resolve the issues surrounding park management's authority to control activities within its boundaries. Mills' lawsuit was eventually dismissed, but other jurisdictional issues remained. There were numerous homes, ranches, hotels and inns, mining operations, and water diversions within the

27 Superintendents Monthly Reports, 1915 through 1929, ROMO library; Lloyd Musselman, *Rocky Mountain National Park: Its First Fifty Years, 1915-1965*, (Estes Park, CO: Rocky Mountain Nature Association in cooperation with National Park Service, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1965).

28 C.W. Buchholtz, *Rocky Mountain National Park: A History* (Niwot, CO: University Press of Colorado, 1983), 151-153.

29 Superintendent's Monthly Reports, 1920s; Mills vs. Way correspondence and Mills vs. Toll correspondence, ROMO Library; Musselman, *Administrative History*, 59-76; Newspaper clippings, re: Cede Jurisdiction Controversy, Public Relations files, ROMO archives.

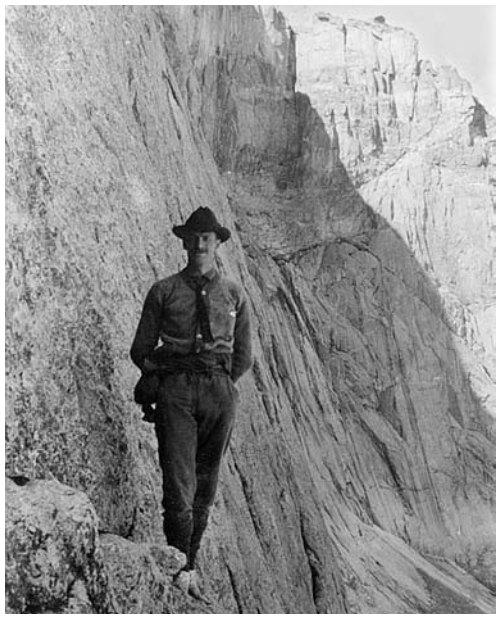
park boundaries, with private roads accessing them. The owners of the private properties worried that the National Park Service meant to take control of their interests within the park and perhaps charge fees or restrict access altogether. While private property owners fretted, Governor Oliver Shoup filed a lawsuit against Toll, claiming that his assertion of authority over park roads might eventually undermine Colorado's control over roads running through U.S. Forest Service land in the state. It took seven years of strenuous public relations work on the part of the National Park Service, and the threat that Congress would withdraw all funding, for Rocky Mountain National Park to settle this dispute. In 1929, the State of Colorado ceded control of the roads to the federal government with the National Park Service as agent.[30]

The roads controversy of the 1920s did not directly involve Longs Peak, yet it is important to the history of Longs precisely because it reveals park managers' focus on the needs and interests of frontcountry automobile tourists and the businesses with whom they interacted. In these early years park rangers could not afford to give much time or energy to matters of backcountry recreation or natural resource management. Moreover, it is important to note that park managers were asserting their authority relative to other players in Rocky Mountain National Park. By the1920s park managers were ready to embrace automobile tourism and doing so brought them into a contest with state and local business interests over the control of park roads and concessions. Just a few years later, they were also ready to say that climbers on Longs Peak needed at least some oversight by a park management that had previously left them to fend for themselves. Why was this the case? By what means were climbers to be managed? And how was the park's chosen means of managing climbers related to its preoccupation with automobile tourism?

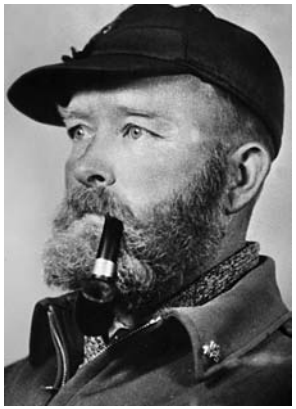
30 Musselman, 49.

Fall River Road, winter, 1923. Keeping Fall River Road open during the winter months required enormous effort on the part of park staff and novel arrangements by local tour companies. Here, a motorized open-air bus filled with park visitors is drawn up the difficult and icy roadway by draft horses. *Image courtesy of Rocky Mountain National Park.*

Automobile camping, 1920s. Automobile tourists needed camping areas as well as roadways. The growth of automobile tourism played a critical role in focusing park managers' attention on the needs of frontcountry visitors. *Image courtesy of Rocky Mountain National Park.*



Professor James Alexander, 1922. Alexander made the first recorded ascent on the East Face of Longs Peak in 1922. His success inspired other backcountry adventurers to attempt climbs on the East Face, marking the start of a new era of alpine adventure on Longs Peak and presenting park rangers with new challenges in the management of backcountry mountaineers. *Image courtesy of Rocky Mountain National Park.*



Ranger Jack Moomaw. Moomaw was the ranger for Longs Peak and other portions of the east side of the park from the 1920s to the 1940s. He accompanied James Alexander during the latter's second successful ascent of Alexander's Chimney in 1922. Moomaw was subsequently involved in the rescue and recovery of numerous climbers on the newly-opened East Face. *Image courtesy of Rocky Mountain National Park.*

Chapter 2. The Agnes Vaille Tragedy of 1925: A Turning Point in the History of Longs Peak

Park managers might have continued indefinitely to pay little heed to climbers on Longs Peak if backcountry visitors had remained content to summit the mountain via the arduous but relatively safe Keyhole route during the summer months. However, climbers had already begun to test themselves on the peak's difficult North Face in the 1910s and, by the 1920s, particularly adventuresome climbers were tackling the nearly vertical East Face, leaving the East Longs Peak Trail before it reaches Granite Pass and traversing Mills Moraine to Chasm Lake, then ascending via snowfields and chimneys with the use of ice axes, crampons, and ropes. The routes established on the East Face during these years were on the lower portion of the face, below the prominent horizontal ledge known as Broadway, and left, or south, of the Diamond, the distinctive sheer wall that dominates the upper face.

Werner Zimmerman, an alpinist from Switzerland, climbed to the top of Longs by a route that was most likely to the left of the main rock wall on the East Face in 1919. Unfortunately the details of his ascent have never been well known. James Alexander, a math professor from Princeton, made a solo climb on the East Face (*Alexander's Chimney* route) in the summer of 1922, the first carefully recorded ascent of the East Face. Walter Kiener, a Swiss mountaineer who came to the Longs Peak region in about 1923, established a route that ascended Lamb's Slide to Broadway, then proceeded up the Notch chimneys and ledges just to the left of the Diamond to the summit (*Kiener's Route*, or *Kiener's Easiest*.) Other mountaineers followed these newly established routes. They usually climbed in the summer, when sudden thunderstorms and lightning, rather than snow, presented the most significant threats, but a few hardy souls attempted winter climbs. Mountaineers who ascended the East Face of Longs Peak still relied on rudimentary climbing equipment that was limited to ropes, ice axes, and crampons or hobnailed boots. Their equipment and skills were often inadequate to the hazards of the climb, and Ranger Jack Moomaw (who made a second climb on the *Chimney* route with James Alexander just two days after the initial ascent) later wrote that he somewhat regretted the opening of the East Face "because for quite a time thereafter many climbers were killed attempting the feat." Moreover, whenever there was an accident on the East Face, Moomaw was assigned to it, causing him "a lot of hard work."[31]

Park managers knew of climbers' ambitious approaches via the East Face of Longs, but apart from the occasional inspection trip, it had been the practice of park rangers such as Moomaw to visit the Longs Peak vicinity only in response to a call from one of the hotel operators advising them of a problem. Otherwise, they left the management of climbers to the CMC and local inn keepers and guides. This pattern changed in 1925 in response to Agnes Vaille's death.

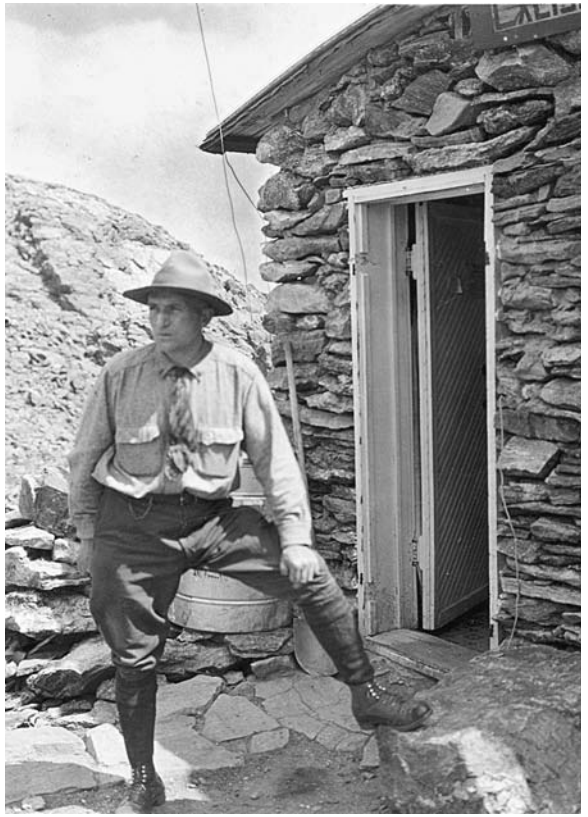
Agnes Wolcott Vaille was born to a prominent Denver family in 1890 and was a cousin of Roger Toll's. She grew up to embrace the identity of the well-educated and independent "New Women" of the early-twentieth century, adding a decidedly athletic twist. After graduating from Smith College, one of the nation's elite all-female

31 Nesbit, *Longs Peak*, (2005) 66; Jack C. Moomaw, *Recollections of a Rocky Mountain Ranger* (Longmont, CO: Times-Call Publishing Company, 1963), 26. Moomaw served as a ranger at Longs from the early 1920s to the early 1940s, during which time there were nine deaths on Longs Peak. See Nesbit, (2005), 77-78, for a list of fatalities on Longs Peak.

liberal arts colleges, Vaille served with the Red Cross in Europe during World War I. She never married, instead supporting herself by working as the secretary of the Denver Chamber of Commerce. Vaille became an avid skier and mountaineer and made a name for herself as one of Colorado's first female technical climbers. She served as the Outing Chairman of the CMC and led numerous CMC non-technical climbs on Longs, often in harsh conditions. An August 1920 CMC climb via the Keyhole route encountered high winds, cold temperatures, and "swirling mists, " yet under Vaille's careful guidance twenty of the thirty two climbers in the party reached the summit, and everyone completed the trip safely. The following year, Vaille led a group of thirty three men and twenty three women on the Keyhole route. Fortunately, rain did not become heavy until mid-afternoon, long after the slowest members of the "fine, game party" had made it to the summit.[32]

In the early fall of 1924 Vaille and Swiss climber Walter Kiener, four years her junior, resolved to climb the East Face of Longs while looking at the mountain wall from atop Mount Evans. Vaille had never attempted a technical climb of such difficulty, but she was apparently confident that Kiener, a veteran of snow and ice climbing in the Swiss Alps, was well-qualified to lead the challenging ascent. Agnes' friend Elinor Eppich Kingery later recalled that Vaille was a firm proponent of the CMC dictum, "Let the leader lead." Once having placed her faith in Kiener, she would have been strongly disinclined to question his judgment. Indeed, according to Kingery "nothing but complete physical exhaustion could have persuaded Agnes to object or renege on the leader's course."As it turns out, Vaille's trust in Kiener may have been misplaced. Vaille and Kiener's ill-fated climb in January 1925 was their fourth summit attempt that winter. Carl Blaurock, a local climber who accompanied Vaille and Kiener on their failed second attempt, had tried to dissuade them from making the climb again before spring, as had other members of the Colorado climbing community. Pressure on Agnes from anxious friends and associates had been especially intense. But Kiener and Vaille could not be discouraged.

On the morning of January 11th they began their ascent of Longs to the south of the Diamond on *Kiener's Easiest*. The climb was far more difficult than anticipated and by four in the afternoon Kiener later recalled "I was greatly perturbed and grieved to note that my companion's strength was about spent." Still far from the summit, "for close to twelve hours I had to cut the steps alone, handle the rope, and pull, lift and assist her until we finally reached the summit about 4 a.m." By then Kiener's thermometer registered fourteen degrees below zero and wind and snow were gusting powerfully. Given the difficulty of the climb, the lateness of the hour, and the worsening weather, Kiener and Vaille decided on a descent via the North Face, thinking it would be faster than going down the route they had already climbed. But Vaille, her face showing "the most appalling lines of suffering and anguish," slipped as she tried to climb over a large rock and fell "a long ways down the smooth snowy slope," and then lay unmoving in the bitter cold while Kiener struggled to reach her. She sustained only slight injuries in the fall, but Kiener knew Vaille was utterly exhausted and close to death even before he started across the Boulderfield for help.[33]



Walter Kiener, circa 1925. Kiener, a Swiss alpinist, was Agnes Vaille's companion during the ill-fated climb on the East and North faces of Longs Peak in January 1925 that led to Vaille's death from exhaustion and hypothermia. Family and friends of Vaille and Kiener had urged the two not to attempt the January climb because of dangerous winter conditions on the peak. *Image courtesy of Rocky Mountain National Park.*

32 Roger Toll, "Report to Colorado Mountain Club on trip to Longs Peak, 14,255 feet," August 20, 1920; "Leader's Report to Outing Committee, Colorado Mountain Club," Trip Number 245, July 30-August 1, 1921, Colorado Mountain Club Archives, Golden, CO.

33 Carl Blaurock, "Tragedy on Longs Peak," *Denver Westerners Roundup* (September-October, 1981). Blaurock was a member of the CMC and a friend of Vaille's, who participated in the recovery of her body. Janet Robertson's account of the Vaille tragedy relies on two important sources, an unpublished manuscript written by Charles Edwin Hewes that records Kiener's narration of the event, and an unpublished manuscript written by Elinor Eppich Kingery. The two accounts are not in complete accord, especially with regard to Kiener's

THE ROCKY MOUNT.

AGNES VAILLE DIES IN STORM AFTER CLIMBING LONGS PEAK

Body of Chamber of Commerce Secretary Found Frozen in Snow.

(Continued From Page One.)

Oscar Brown; Jacob Christy and Herbert Sortland, all employed at the inn. Sortland became exhausted after going about a mile from the house and, suffering from a frozen face and frozen ears, left the party and started back to the shelter. That was the last any of the party saw of the man and it is feared that he fell exhausted in the deep snow and froze to death. Thermometers carried by Kiener showed a temperature of 30 degrees below zero. The heavy snow storm, virtually a blizzard, which raged on the peak yesterday, was accompanied by a strong wind.

Body Found Frozen in Snow.

When the party of men reached the spot where Kiener had left his companion, they found her lying in the snow, dead from the cold and exposure. She had evidently succumbed to her desire for sleep, natural to one slowly freezing to death, and had died but a short time before her rescuers reached her. She had been alone on the mountain saddle from 11 o'clock yesterday morning to 4 o'clock yesterday afternoon, when the men found her body. Kiener's journey to the shelter house and the return trip of the party consuming this amount of time because of the severity of the storm.

AGNES W. VAILLE.

Agnes Vaille, 1925. Vaille, the daughter of a prominent Denver family and a college-educated "new woman" of the early-twentieth century, was an avid mountaineer and prominent member of the Colorado Mountain Club. She was the cousin of Roger Toll, Rocky Mountain National Park's superintendent in the 1920s. Vaille's tragic death in 1925 prompted the park to assume greater oversight of the backcountry climbers on Longs Peak. *Image courtesy of Rocky Mountain National Park.*

While Kiener was trying to descend the mountain, rescuers were already on their way up. Park rangers had received a call from the Longs Peak Inn because Vaille and Kiener were overdue from their summit attempt. A large search party that included Jack Moomaw and a second ranger, Superintendent Roger Toll and Assistant Superintendent Tom Allen, local citizens, and CMC members from Denver headed for the mountain in the midst of the snowstorm to search for the missing climbers. By the time Moomaw and the second ranger arrived at the Timberline Cabin, Kiener had been there and returned to the base of the North Face with a guide from the inn, where they discovered Vaille, dead from hypothermia. It was three more days before the rangers could actually retrieve her body, because of the severity of the storm. Kiener suffered terrible frostbite during the expedition and subsequently lost parts of numerous fingers and toes and part of his left foot. He spent several months recovering in a local hospital.[34] Superintendent Toll noted in his monthly report that the park staff, hotel operator and local citizens had made extraordinary efforts to rescue Vaille. Indeed, one of the rescue party, Herbert Sortland, died in the attempt. No one, he said, should be blamed for the tragedy.[35]

Toll himself had climbed to the North Face in early September 1917 "to see if the north side of the peak could be made suitable for parties by placing ropes in the more difficult places, but we decided that it was too icy to ever make a safe route." The North Face afforded an unobstructed and breathtaking view of Chasm Lake and appealed to climbers for this reason. His report to the Colorado Mountain Club, however, described a "steep ice coated rock face," in which "the hand holes were filled with ice and each step had to be cut." Toll concluded that "this route would be less dangerous in July and August, but it should never be attempted when there is ice on the rocks."[36] Vaille must have been aware of Toll's views on North Face climbing, as she stayed with his wife at a hotel in Estes Park while Toll and two other CMC members attempted their 1917 ascent. Kiener and Vaille's calculated decision to attempt a North Face descent disregarded Toll's assertion that, whenever it was icy, the North Face was dangerous for climbers going up or down the slope. However, attempting an East Face descent would have been even more perilous, especially in their dire circumstances.

In the aftermath of Vaille and Sortland's deaths, Toll realized that park managers must take an active role in managing recreational activity on Longs Peak. The question was how. The hazards on Longs Peak, especially

responsibility for Vaille's death. See Robertson, *Magnificent Mountain Women*, 47-56. Kiener's story, based on the Hewes manuscript, is also included in its entirety in a recent article by James H. Pickering. See "Tragedy on Longs Peak: Walter Kiener's Own Story," *Colorado Heritage* (1990): 18-31. The Vaille tragedy continues to fascinate mountaineers and researchers. See Woody Smith, "Agnes Vaille vs. Longs Peak," *Trail and Timberline*, (Winter 2005), 36-39.

34 *Estes Park Trail*, 16 January, 1916; Moomaw, *Recollections*, 34-39; Blaurock, "Tragedy on Longs Peak," After the Vaille tragedy, Kiener's injuries prevented him from returning to his job as the foreman of a small sausage-making factory. He took a position as a ranger for Rocky Mountain National Park, serving as a fire look-out on Twin Sisters, directly east of Longs Peak. While serving as a ranger, Kiener met some students and faculty from the University of Nebraska and entered the University of Nebraska at Lincoln to pursue a formal education, earning an A.B. degree in 1930, a master's degree in Botany in 1931, and the Ph.D. in Botany in 1939. His master's thesis and doctoral dissertations were well-regarded works on the alpine vegetation of Longs Peak, and Kiener was subsequently hired by the University of Nebraska. Kiener never married and died of cancer in 1955. Walter Kiener, *On the Vegetation of an Isolated Peak in the Rocky Mountains.* Thesis (M.S.) – University of Nebraska (Lincoln campus), 1931; Walter Kiener, *Sociological Studies of the Alpine Vegetation on Longs Peak* Thesis (Ph.D.) – University of Nebraska (Lincoln campus), 1939. Kiener's papers are housed at the University of Nebraska at Lincoln. A short biography may be accessed on the website of the university's Archives and Special Collections. See, http://libxml1a.unl.edu/cocoon/archives/keiner.rg12-07-16.unl.html

35 Superintendent's Monthly Report, January 1925, ROMO library.

36 Roger Toll, Report to Colorado Mountain Club, "Long's Peak from the North Side," September 28, 1917, CMC archives, Golden, CO.

for those wishing to climb the East and North faces, might have induced Toll to place strict limits on climbers' access to the peak. This was not Toll's inclination. Like Vaille, he was a dedicated mountaineer, someone who believed that humans' best qualities and capacities were improved by direct experience of the wild. And though he had recently been absorbed in the particulars of frontcountry development in Rocky Mountain National Park, Toll must have been aware that park managers around the country shared his sentiments about undeveloped nature and were beginning to worry about frontcountry expansion and the threats posed by roads and hotels to the preservation of backcountry environments. The National Park Service's Assistant Director reported in 1922 that the park superintendents "were unanimous in their belief that certain wild sections of every park should be forever reserved from any development except by trails, first because the National Parks are destined to soon be the only sections of wilderness left in America, and second because wildlife thrives best in untouched wilderness."[37] Perhaps hoping to draw more frontcountry visitors into the backcountry to increase their appreciation of wild nature, Toll had already encouraged the expansion of the ranger-naturalist program at Rocky Mountain National Park. Ranger-naturalists visited campgrounds and hotels to teach adults and children about geology, wildflowers, and preservation in the park; they led field trips into the out-of-doors for those who evinced a genuine interest in the park's magnificent landscape.[38]

Given the larger context of the Vaille tragedy, it is not surprising that Toll opted for a system of limited intervention on Longs that would preserve climbers' access to "one of the wildest and most impressive spots in the Colorado Mountains."[39] In choosing to preserve backcountry access to Longs, Toll acknowledged that park rangers could not eliminate poor judgment, bad luck, or accidents among climbers. They might, however, encourage climbers to weigh their options carefully and lessen their exposure to unnecessary harm. Toll thus decided to make modest improvements to climbing routes, communication systems, and shelter facilities on the upper reaches of the mountain. These improvements represented indirect and non-restrictive forms of management and oversight. Toll hoped they would encourage climbers to behave responsibly and find enjoyment on the peak, while increasing their odds of survival.

During the 1925 summer season, Ranger Jack Moomaw and two workers installed two separate sections of steel cable on the North Face of Longs Peak, one 160 feet long, the other 30 feet in length, using single jack-hammers and short rock drills to create holes in the granite rock for the eye-bolts through which the cable was threaded.[40] A later generation of rangers and climbers would conclude that the man-made cables detracted from the aesthetic and wilderness values of the peak, but these ideas did not occur to Toll in 1925. Though Toll had previously insisted that the North Face should never be climbed when icy, he knew the route was appealing and that alpinists were ignoring his admonitions. Moderating his earlier views, his priority, then, was to lessen the risks of the climb.

> An increasing number of visitors have recently climbed the peak by this route, which is often dangerous, on account of weather conditions. The placing of this cable greatly increases the safety of this route, and makes it possible for good climbers, or those with guides, to go up the peak from the north, and then descend by the usual [Keyhole] route. This adds considerably to the interest of the climb, and shortens the time of ascent by an hour.

Roger Toll, 1921. As superintendent of Rocky Mountain National Park during the 1920s, Toll had to contend not only with growing numbers of automobile tourists in the park but, also, with the task of managing increased numbers of climbers on Longs Peak, including a new generation of alpinists determined to tackle the peak's sheer East Face. *Image courtesy of Rocky Mountain National Park.*

Jack Moomaw in front of his patrol cabin. Undated. As a Longs Peak ranger from the 1920s into the 1940s, Moomaw witnessed the dramatic rise in popularity of Longs Peak and understood well the practical difficulties of managing and, when necessary, rescuing climbers on the peak. He was one of the rangers who participated in the attempted rescue of Agnes Vaille. *Image courtesy of Rocky Mountain National Park.*

37 Buchholtz, *Rocky Mountain National Park*, 161.

38 Musselman, 150-153.

39 Toll, *Mountaineering in the Rocky Mountain National Park*, 46.

40 Moomaw, *Recollections*, 66-68.

Climbers on the Cable Route, 1927. In the aftermath of the Vaille tragedy, Superintendent Roger Toll ordered the installation of cables on the North Face of Longs Peak, hoping they would lessen the inherent dangers of the climb. Though Toll assumed the Cable Route would be used primarily by skilled mountaineers, it came to be the preferred route for non-technical climbers who had previously used the longer Keyhole Route to reach Longs' summit. *Image courtesy of Rocky Mountain National Park.*

Boulderfield Shelter Cabin with Telephone, 1927. The Vaille tragedy also prompted Superintendent Toll to order the construction of a shelter cabin in the Boulderfield on Longs Peak and to extend a telephone line to the cabin. The cabin operated as a park concession during the summer season, offering meals and lodging to climbers, and was open for shelter from harsh weather during the winter months. *Image courtesy of Rocky Mountain National Park.*

Quickly, the Cable Route became a more popular means of non-technical ascent than the Keyhole route. Often, it was used for the descent as well. Moomaw and his trail crew also built a spur trail from Mills Morraine on the East Longs Peak Trail to Chasm Meadows, giving climbers more direct access to the East Face, and they rerouted the upper portion of the East Longs Peak Trail from timberline to the Boulderfield. The 1925 trail re-location involved reducing the grade, extending the trail half a mile into the Boulderfield, and making it possible for horses to carry climbers the additional distance. It relied on methods that were damaging to the mountain environment by later standards. A crew of about five men used two tons of dynamite to blast the way for the rerouted trail and then moved enormous amounts of rock and gravel to fill it in, creating pits wherever they removed material.[41] The park also replaced the telephone line to the Timberline Cabin, previously connected to the Longs Peak Inn by a private cable, with one that was connected to the public exchange in Estes Park. Park crews then extended the telephone line, now connected to the public exchange, from Hewes-Kirkwood Inn near the Longs Peak trailhead to the Timberline Cabin and on to the terminus of the trail at the Boulderfield.[42] All of these changes were in response to factors that Toll, Moomaw and others saw as contributing to Agnes Vaille's death: the difficult climb from timberline to Chasm Meadows that tired climbers even before they reached the East Face; the treacherous North Face descent; and the delay in calling for help.

Toll's official monthly reports described these improvements in some detail, but made no reference to Vaille at all. Anyone with knowledge of Vaille's death, including National Park Service directors in Washington, DC, would have recognized references to the incident in Toll's reports. Toll apparently wanted to focus on the merits of the new improvements rather than on the human tragedy that prompted them. Certainly, he did not want to discourage climbers from attempting the ascent on Longs. Thus, in speaking of the re-routing of the Longs Peak trail into the Boulderfield, Toll emphasized the "three spectacular viewpoints" within a half mile of the trail's new terminus, and the ease with which horseback riders could walk to them after dismounting. Toll also noted that rangers' "special trip above timberline, for the purpose of repairing the Boulder Field telephone line" meant that the phone line could be "kept in use during the winter months," thereby helping to safeguard winter climbers.[43]

Toll also ordered the construction of new shelter cabins for climbers. Several existed in other areas of the park, and in past years Enos Mills had operated the Timberline Cabin in Jim's Grove near the East Longs Peak trail under a concession license with Rocky Mountain National Park. After his death in 1922, Enos' widow continued to keep the cabin stocked with food and supplies during the summer climbing season, which climbers could use for a fee. But in the aftermath of the Vaille tragedy, Mrs. Mills chose not to continue the concession, and park managers decided not to staff the cabin or seek a new

41 Moomaw, *Recollections*, 45. Jack Moomaw also described work on the upper portion of the E. Longs Peak Trail in a 1955 interview with William Ramaley: "then the trail used to end way down at the lower end [of the Boulderfield]. Used to be flat rocks and iron rings and cement and rock – people tied their horses there and then – but I built that trail clear across the Boulder Field up to that Boulder Field cabin when it was there and right across…the expenses there – you just wouldn't realize how much money that would run into." Jack Moomaw, Interview with William Ramaley, 4, ROMO Library.

42 Superintendent's Monthly Reports, summer of 1925, ROMO Library.

43 Superintendent's Monthly Report, June 1925. Though Toll was optimistic about the usefulness of the Boulderfield telephone, Jack Moomaw claimed it was nearly impossible to keep the phone line working during the winter and that he was forced to make frequent repairs to it during its first winter of operation. Repairs to the line from Moomaw and other members of the "telephone patrol" lessened over the next several winters and were virtually suspended by the winter of 1930. Presumably, the phone worked more smoothly, and was better maintained, during the warmer months of the year. Moomaw, *Recollections*, 40.

concessionaire to take over the license.[44] Located at the eastern side of Jim's Grove, and two miles by trail from the Boulderfield and the East Face, the Timberline Cabin was a long distance from where most accidents were likely to occur.[45] The Timberline Cabin continued to be used, even as it fell into disrepair, but the park wanted to build more conveniently located shelter cabins. Mindful not only of Vaille and Sortland's deaths but, also, of the experience of Herrman Buhl, an expert climber injured in a storm-related fall on Longs Peak in 1926, Toll remarked, "Such accidents emphasize the need for shelter at Boulder Field and other points on the Longs Peak Trail."[46] Toll may also have been thinking of the potential for harm among some of the more resolute but aging climbers on the Keyhole Route. Civil War veteran William Butler of Longmont climbed Longs for the fourth time on his 85th birthday in September 1926, setting the pace for two young friends. According to a report on this remarkable achievement in *The New York Times*, Butler was determined "to spend at least one more birthday on the mountain top."[47]

Between 1926 and 1927 park workers finished constructing a stone shelter cabin and horse barn in the Boulderfield and arranged with Robert Collier Jr., a Denver teacher, Colorado Mountain Club member, and frequent Longs Peak guide, to operate it under a concession as a primitive hotel during the summer months. The stone building was small, "fourteen by eighteen feet inside dimension – and walls two feet thick at the base and eighteen inches at the top" with bunks for about ten visitors.[48] Collier and his wife (who was paid by the park to be a fire lookout) provided food and overnight lodging for a fee, and guides were available at the cabin to lead climbers to the summit. The cabin opened in mid-June each season and closed on Labor Day. In the winter, though it was not staffed, the unlocked cabin provided valuable shelter to alpinists.[49]

In addition to the Boulderfield cabin, Agnes Vaille's father funded the construction of a small cone-shaped memorial emergency shelter built of granite (which still stands) at the far side of the Boulderfield near the Keyhole. The park built a third stone cabin near Chasm Lake in 1931. It contained rescue supplies and was available for climbers to use as a shelter, but it was not regularly staffed and had no telephone until 1970.[50] Finally, park trail crews made another round of improvements to the East Longs Peak Trail, rerouting the lower portion of the trail to the south of the historic route, which began at Longs Peak Inn, to its present alignment beginning at the Longs Peak Ranger Station and campground, both constructed in 1929, just above the Hewes-Kirkwood Inn.[51] When finished, the improved trail was 7.5 miles in length from the trailhead to the Keyhole and summit, and it had an elevation gain of just under 5,000 feet.

These physical improvements, in addition to greater attentiveness on the part of park rangers who now had a station at the East trailhead, made a real difference to climbers. Joe and Paul Stettner, German brothers with considerable climbing experience in the European Alps, became acquainted with rangers' improved oversight of climbers as they prepared to make the first full ascent of the East Face in September 1927. Joe Stettner noted in his

Agnes Vaille Memorial Shelter Cabin. Vaille's family paid for the construction of a memorial emergency shelter at the Keyhole on Longs Peak. The cabin still stands today, though it is now missing the door that is shown in this photograph from the 1930s. *Image courtesy of Rocky Mountain National Park.*

Rocky Mountain Climbers Club at the Keyhole on Longs Peak, circa 1927. Club outings to Longs Peak grew in popularity throughout the 1920s, despite the Vaille tragedy. This large group, probably made up of both experienced and novice climbers, may have used the Cable Route for its ascent and the Keyhole Route for its descent. *Image courtesy of Rocky Mountain National Park.*

44 Superintendent's Monthly Report, June 1925.

45 D. Ferrel Atkins, "Longs Peak Timberline Cabin" in "Historic Sites and Buildings Survey," 1964, ROMO library.

46 Superintendent's Monthly Reports, February 1926, May 1926.

47 "Aged Veteran Scales a Peak," *The New York Times*, 3 October 1926

48 Robert Collier, Jr., interview with Merrill Mattes and Chet Harris, November 21, 1961, transcript, ROMO Library, 1.

49 A 1934 park report included a notation that climbers on the East Face of Longs Peak reported as overdue had been found unharmed after spending the night at the Boulderfield cabin. Superintendents Monthly Report, January 1934.

50 Nesbit, *Longs Peak* (1972), 64, 68.

51 Atkins, "Longs Peak Ranger Station and Campground – Historic Sites and Buildings Survey"; Superintendent's Annual Report, 1929.

Ranger with visitor at Keyhole, 1925. This photo, taken just months after the Vaille tragedy, provides evidence of Superintendent Toll's interest in getting more rangers onto Longs Peak and into direct contact with climbers. The ranger shown here was helping a non-technical climber identify peaks and other natural features of the park landscape; he was also available to offer guidance on safety and route-finding. *Image courtesy of Rocky Mountain National Park.*

Joe Stettner during the first ascent of Stettners' Ledges, 1927. Joe and Paul Stettner were skilled German American alpinists who used pitons and belay maneuvers during their climb, the first to extend the entire vertical length of the East Face on Longs Peak. The brothers may not have made it to the East Face had they not been encouraged by a helpful ranger to seek shelter from a severe storm at the Timberline Cabin the night before their scheduled climb. *Image courtesy of Rocky Mountain National Park.*

journal that on the afternoon he and Paul set out for the peak, a ranger came to find them just as they were putting up their small tent and suggested they go to the abandoned Timberline Cabin where they would have "decent quarters." The hike to the Timberline Cabin from their campsite was three and a half miles long, and the cabin itself "was in a powerful state of disorder," with broken windows and a leaking roof. Still, the Stettners soon realized they were lucky to have reached it. A powerful storm broke overhead shortly after their arrival and raged all night, with winds so powerful the brothers feared the cabin might "be blown off its foundation." They did not sleep well, but the two men – and the cabin – survived the night.[52] A night in their "pup" tent would not have ended as happily.

The next day the Stettners set out to climb the full vertical length of the East Face on a route south of the Diamond. Joe and Paul Stettner were exceptional among climbers in the United States, not only in their level of skill but in their use of specialized equipment. On Longs, they used the belay maneuver to arrest falls, a technique still virtually unknown among Americans, and relied on the felt-soled climbing shoes and iron pitons familiar to European climbers. The piton was a malleable iron spike with an eye at one end; hammered into a crack in the rock, it molded to the rock contours, providing a firm anchor for the safety rope looped through the eye. They had also expected to use specialized climbing rope, of the sort used by alpinists in Europe, but could not find any for sale in Estes Park. And the staff at the Longs Peak Inn refused to loan their climbing rope to the brothers, on the grounds that it was too late in the season to make the climb. Despite having to settle for a length of sisal livestock rope, the Stettners climbed the East Face in less than seven hours. They found the ascent hard almost to the point of impossibility and knew they could not have succeeded without the pitons they hammered into the rock and the rope that connected them. Joe fell once in an overhanging section but "Paul had a good belay place and was able to hold me well." By the time they reached the summit of Longs, the brothers were very tired and it was snowing, nearly dark, and freezing cold. Fortunately, as they began to descend Longs via the North Face, they discovered the Cable Route entirely "by chance." They had not known of its existence; now, the steel cables allowed the brothers to descend rapidly and without incident.[53] Their route on the East Face, Stettner Ledges, was considered the most difficult climb in the United States for the next twenty years, and there was only one other successful ascent on the route before Joe Stettner climbed it again in 1942.

At the time of their climb and for decades thereafter, neither rangers nor other climbers raised questions about the Stettners' pounding of pitons into the rock face of Longs; rather, the brothers won acclaim for their extraordinary skill. The Stettners were also thought to have made reasonable and judicious use of the improvements on Longs.[54] Other climbers, however, quickly took advantage of the presence of shelters and rescuers in ways that park managers never intended. The Colliers, from their building site in the Boulderfield, were called upon to play a central role in aiding climbers who had accidents or needed rescue, and they had reason to question the good sense and common decency of quite a few of the people they assisted. Robert Collier described one such rescue involving three boys from Iowa in August 1927. Admonished by a ranger not to attempt the dangerous East Face, the inexperienced boys made their way to the summit, probably by the Cable Route. Having reached the top, they began to descend the East Face, ignoring the warnings of the park ranger, and

52 John D. Gorby, *The Stettner Way: The Life and Climbs of Joe and Paul Stettner.* (Golden, Colo: Colorado Mountain Club Press, 2003), 63-64.

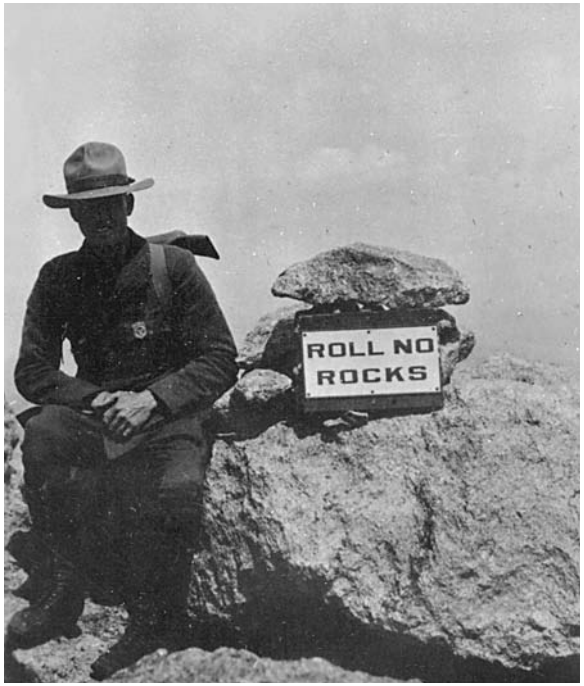
53 Ibid., 64-68.

54 54 Ibid., 72-73.

soon found themselves stranded on a three-foot ledge two hundred feet below the summit: "they got to hollering for help. So, we…took up ropes" and got above them onto an overhang. "We had to swing the thing – a pendulum – back and forth – and dropped the rope – landed on this – place where these [boys] were. They'd taken their shoes off and were fixing to head on down the way – we recovered the shoes about seven years later." Collier and his helpers pulled the boys up with their rope, took them down to the cabin, fed them, and let them sleep. After waking up, the boys went off down the trail "and didn't say thank you for saving their lives."[55]

Agnes Vaille's death in 1925, and the death of rescuer Herbert Sortland, were the sixth and seventh recorded fatalities on Longs Peak. Three more occurred before 1931 when the park completed the last of the post-Vaille improvements to Longs Peak, that is, the completion of the shelter cabin at Chasm Lake. These improvements obviously did not end the loss of human life on Longs Peak. Nor did they guarantee responsible behavior and good decision-making on the part of climbers. Still, they signaled park managers' decision not to restrict climbers' access to Longs but, instead, to assume the trustworthiness of most, and to improve climbers' access to protection, assistance, and communication. The boys whom the Colliers rescued were undoubtedly foolish and ungrateful; perhaps their rescuers and other park rangers held out the hope that they would learn a lesson or two from their misadventures.

55 Robert Collier, interview with Merrill Mattes and Chet Harris, 21 November, 1961, transcript, ROMO Library, 7.



Hiker on Summit of Longs Peak, 1927. Improved signage on Longs Peak, intended to promote safe climbing practices, was another of Superintendent Toll's innovations after the Vaille tragedy. *Image courtesy of Rocky Mountain National Park.*

Winter Skier on Longs Peak, 1927. Though Longs Peak is known primarily as a destination for hikers and climbers, it has attracted backcountry skiers since the early- twentieth century. This skier may have been pleased to know that emergency shelter was available on the mountain. *Image courtesy of Rocky Mountain National Park.*

John S. Mclaughlin, 1931. This photo of Chief Ranger Mclaughlin, on the summit of Longs Peak, was taken at a time when Rocky Mountain National Park was promoting the ascent to the summit of Longs Peak as a magnificent outing in the alpine backcountry. The climb was "strenuous" but "by no means forbidding." The national parks were an important source of national pride during the hard years of the Great Depression. *Image courtesy of Rocky Mountain National Park.*

The non-technical Cable and Keyhole routes to the summit of Longs Peak, from the Boulderfield, circa 1935. By the 1930s nearly 2000 visitors were climbing Longs Peak annually. This image, produced by the park, helped to orient climbers when they reached the terminus of the trail in the Boulderfield. *Image courtesy of Rocky Mountain National Park.*

Chapter 3. Longs Peak during the Great Depression and World War II

The patterns of recreation and management on Longs Peak that were set in the 1920s – increased climbing activity; rangers' modest intervention and promotion of self-reliance among climbers; the park's preoccupation with automobile tourism – persisted into the 1930s and 1940s, even as the nation confronted economic depression and world war. The Great Depression produced enormous hardship, yet Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal also focused attention on the national parks as uniquely American treasures and sites for the employment and rehabilitation of previously idle workers.[56] In this context of national trial and renewal, Rocky Mountain National Park promoted Longs Peak as a site offering strenuous but awe-inspiring adventure and advertised the Boulderfield shelter as the gateway to several spectacular mountain vistas easily reached by a short walk after a horseback trip to the cabin. The park also completed the building of Trail Ridge Road, which was described as one of the "scenic wonders of the world," and made a host of improvements to frontcountry facilities. Park managers supervised a dramatically enlarged workforce while also managing increasingly distinct – and growing – populations of backcountry and frontcountry visitors.

The 1931 edition of the Rocky Mountain National Park information guide, the cover of which featured a photo of Longs Peak and Chasm Lake, described a climb to the summit of the mountain as an experience that ought to appeal to large numbers of park visitors:

> Of the many fascinating and delightful mountain climbs, the ascent of Longs Peak is the most inspiring, as it is the most strenuous. The great altitude of the mountain, 14,255 feet above sea level and more than 5,000 feet above the valley floor, and its position well east of the Continental Divide, affording a magnificent view back upon the range, make it much the most spectacular viewpoint in the park … And yet the ascent is by no means forbidding. One may go more than halfway by horseback. A thousand men and women, and occasionally children, climb the peak each season.[57]

In the same year the guide was published, 2132 visitors climbed to the summit of Longs Peak, perhaps because they had been motivated by the park's promotional literature. This was the greatest number of climbs ever in a single year (not surpassed until 1954) and the peak continued to draw large numbers of visitors throughout the 1930s. There is no doubt that climbers took advantage of the improvements made by park management after the Vaille tragedy. The East Longs Peak Trail, substantially rerouted in the late 1920s and early 1930s, eased the rigors of the climb for both horses and hikers. The spur trail to Chasm Lake, built in 1926, made the difficult East Face routes more accessible to skilled climbers. The installation of cables along the steepest section of the North Face encouraged visitors lacking expert climbing skills to attempt the summit, often without the assistance of commercial guides. The Boulderfield cabin provided both skilled and novice climbers with inexpensive lodging and meals, albeit in very rustic style, and the Chasm Lake and Keyhole cabins offered primitive shelter to climbers who got caught in unanticipated storms or needed an overnight refuge.[58]

So appealing was the notion of Longs' accessibility, that non-technical climbs to the summit became popular

56 Neil Maher, *Nature's New Deal: The Civilian Conservation Corps and the Roots of the American Environmental Movement* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007).

57 "Circular of General Information Regarding Rocky Mountain National Park, Colorado," National Park Service, 1931, 21.

58 When the Boulderfield cabin opened in 1927 it charged climbers $2.00 for a night's lodging and $1.25 to $1.75 for meals. See *Estes Park Trail*, June 3, 1927; D. Ferrel Atkins, *Historic Sites and Buildings Survey*, 1964, ROMO Library

for young people at several summer camps in the vicinity. The summit registers for the 1930s show that groups of adolescent campers reached the summit nearly every day of July and August.[59] Indeed, sometime during the decade, "Baker Armstrong of Camp Audubon near Brainard Lake led a party of 50 boys to the summit…and got them all back without mishap." A five-year-old girl, the youngest climber yet, made it to the top of the peak in 1930, and a five-year-old boy reached the summit in 1933. Guides escorted only about a fourth of all adult climbers in the 1930s, but they were busy nonetheless, often making two summit climbs a day during the summer season.[60] Most adult climbers made the ascent in small parties via the Cable Route without benefit of a commercial guide or a club leader, and many of these climbers probably completed the entire trip from trailhead to summit and back in one long day. Others made a two-day trip, camping overnight in Jim's Grove or at the Boulderfield cabin to get an early start on the summit leg of the trip. Since lightning storms were frequent on summer afternoons, well-informed hikers tried to be off the summit by noon and below timberline before the storm clouds rolled in.

The Stettner brothers returned to Longs twice in the 1930s, using belay maneuvers and pitons to ascend the peak, but most climbers on the more challenging East Face routes still relied on little more than climbing ropes, ice axes, and hobnailed boots to aid their ascents to the summit. As in previous decades, however, the determination to achieve new "firsts" continued. In 1939 a twenty-three-year-old man from Denver, Edwin Watson, became the first person to climb the East Face alone during the winter in what was described as "the most remarkable feat of solo climbing in the country's history." Hailing Watson's courage and remarkable performance, *The New York Times* reported that Watson "battled his way through deep snowdrifts covering crevices and precipices, crawled over glaciers and clung to rocky ledges in his ascent to the wind-whipped summit of the peak in Rocky Mountain National Park." The ascent was "an entirely different matter from the trek up the tourist [Keyhole] trail," which, "although a stiff test of wind and muscle, has been made by 8-year-old children." Incredibly, Watson's "Winter conquest" had required climbing "vertically more than 2,800 feet from the edge of one of the numerous black glacial lakes which dot the region, with hardly a crevice or a ledge to break its surface and provide a handhold." The young man used no unusual equipment but "gave much credit to the homemade spikes he wore on his shoes."[61]

Though visitors may have gladly traded their pressing economic worries for the strenuousness of a day's alpine hike or climb, the growing popularity of Longs Peak during the Depression years was not without problems. The Boulderfield cabin, built to accommodate only ten or twelve guests, was frequently overcrowded, as more than fifteen hundred people made use of it over the course of each summer. The cabin itself was very unstable, because it had been built on a shifting glacial field. To keep the cabin's walls and roof from separating, Collier weighted down its roof with additional rocks. In addition, rangers and climbers did not yet realize that the presence of the cabin in the Boulderfield was mostly likely harmful to the fragile natural environment. The cabin relied on coal for heating fuel (transported by burro) which surely polluted the mountain air. Moreover, though the written record is silent on the matter of sanitary facilities, it is unlikely that Robert or Betty Collier, the cabin's proprietors, carefully managed the disposal or transport of human waste. And for several years Robert Collier set off huge fireworks displays each

59 Longs Peak Summit Registers, 1930s, ROMO Archives.

60 Nesbit, *Longs Peak*, (2005) 66; Longs Peak summit registers.

61 Gorby, *The Stettner Way*, 75-78; "Tops Long's Peak, 14,255 Feet, Alone" *The New York Times*, 3 January 1939; "Long's Peak Conquered," *The New York Times*, 8 January 1939.

Joe Stettner with family and friends on Longs Peak, 1933. The return of Joe and Paul Stettner to Longs Peak in the 1933 helped to draw the public's attention to Rocky Mountain National Park's highest peak. *Image courtesy of Rocky Mountain National Park.*

Boulderfield Shelter Cabin, showing evidence of structural damage, 1936. The Boulderfield cabin, though popular with climbers and often filled beyond capacity, was quickly breaking apart because of the shifting glacial field on which it was built. The cabin was taken out of service and dismantled by the end of the 1936 summer climbing season. *Image courtesy of Rocky Mountain National Park.*

Rescue party on North Longs Peak Trail, 1935. The growing popularity of Longs Peak among technical and non-technical climbers in the 1930s was not without problems. Accidents were a worrisome issue for Rocky Mountain National Park, involving rangers in numerous rescue missions. *Image courtesy of Rocky Mountain National Park.*

fourth of July from the summit of Longs, paid for in large part by Columbine Lodge and the Estes Park Chamber of Commerce. The fireworks posed no fire damage to the surrounding rock, but they were extremely loud and must have disrupted wildlife over a long distance. They could be seen from Longmont. The Colliers reported seeing ravens on Longs, but no mammals except for marmots and pika, though deer, mountain lions, black bears, elk , porcupines, and golden-mantled ground squirrels are all indigenous to the sub-alpine and alpine zones on Longs Peak.[62]

Accidents were among the most worrisome of issues for the park. Eight months after his successful solo climb on the East Face, Edwin Watson was involved in an East Face climb with two other expert alpinists during which the lead climber died of exposure. Thirty-year-old Gerald Clark had been hammering a piton into the rock face when the head of his hammer flew off. His climbing rope was too short to reach Watson and the third climber, and Clark was left stranded on Longs while the others went for help. By the time rescuers reached him in a narrow trough hours later, he was terribly weakened. The rescue took an additional five hours as rangers lowered Clark down the rock face in snow and sleet, and he died minutes after his unconscious body was placed on the ground at the base of the East Face.[63]

It was inexperienced climbers rather than experts like Clark, however, who accounted for most of the accidents on Longs Peak, and their need for rescue or emergency medical assistance put a serious strain on the Colliers and park rangers. Many novice climbers found the Cable Route to be harder and more frightening than they anticipated. Roger Toll had considered the Cable Route suitable for inexperienced climbers aided by commercial guides but, in the 1930s, cash-poor visitors to Longs often eschewed the hiring of expert guides and climbed the Cable Route on their own. There were no regulations preventing them from doing so. A New Yorker climbing the peak encountered a rock slide and "was struck in the back by a heavy boulder." "The blow paralyzed his arms and legs" and he had to be lowered from the peak by a rope and then transported to a hospital by park rangers."[64] Robert Collier participated in numerous rescues of inexperienced climbers who tried to climb Longs without commercial guides or club leaders: in one he helped save teenagers lost in a lightning storm in the middle of the night as they tried to reach the Cable Route for a North Face descent; in another he was called upon to aid a young woman who, during a midnight climb, lost all the fingers on one hand when her male companion inadvertently shoved a large rock over her extended arm. By the 1930s the phone in the Boulderfield worked very intermittently, so it could not have been easy for the Colliers or park rangers to call for additional help. Still, following the practices and thinking of the post-Vaille years, park managers chose not to treat the injuries or falls as reason to limit or restrict climbers on Longs Peak. Nor did publicity, official reports, or memorabilia from the 1930s suggest that park managers wanted the public to think of Longs Peak as a mountain so dangerous that it could not be climbed.[65]

Rather, the CMC and some of the park's rangers, responding to the increased number of accidents and five fatalities on the popular mountain in the 1930s, urged visitors to assume greater responsibility for their own safety and to prepare more diligently for alpine adventures. The CMC publicized new climbing guidelines and

62 Robert Collier Jr. interview with Merrill Mattes and Chet Harris, November 21, 1961. Tape 1. ROMO Library; "Jim' Grove – Natural Area," Jim's Grove File, Office of Jeff Connor, Resources Stewardship Division, ROMO.

63 "Rockies Climber Dies on Rescue in Snow, *The New York Times*, 8 August 1939.

64 "New Yorker Hurt on Long's Peak," *The New York Times*, 1 September 1939

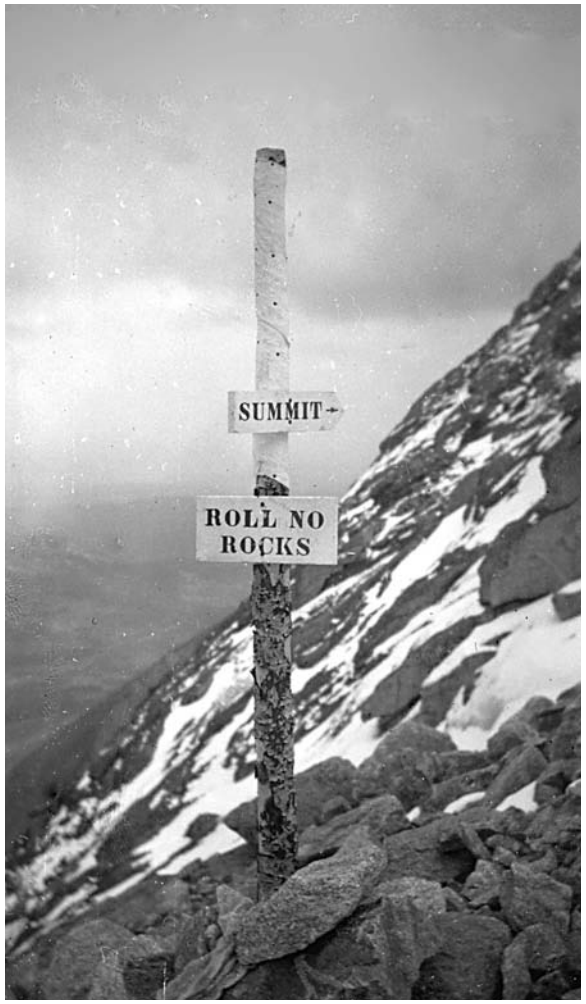
65 Robert Collier Jr. interview with Merrill Mattes and Chet Harris, November 21, 1961. Tape 1. ROMO Library.

attempted to bring climbers into closer association with rangers, now portrayed as expert guides on climbing. *Trail and Timberline* magazine, the publication of the CMC, urged "ambitious beginners" to train before trying to rock climb on the North or East faces of Longs Peak. Sharing "a ranger's side of the story," the magazine also tried to impress upon climbers the need to consider the well-being of frantic family members when an inexperienced climber went missing and to contemplate the hazards to rangers who were called upon to attempt rescues and recoveries in extremely dangerous terrain and conditions. Ranger John S. McLaughlin seemed to be speaking for the entire park in 1934 when he asked climbers to practice "sane mountain climbing" by informing rangers of their plans and expected time of return and by turning around if they discovered that "time was running short." In 1938 the park assigned Ernie Field to the newly-created position of seasonal (summer) Longs Peak ranger. Two years later *Trail and Timberline* announced the creation of a poster informing mountain climbers that it was well worth the effort involved to "play safe." By consulting local rangers about their route and asking for advice regarding weather, natural hazards, and the adequacy of their equipment and clothing, alpinists could avoid needless injury or worse.[66]

Leaders in the climbing community also tried to explain to the less experienced among them that mountaineering was not a mere sport. Joseph Bosetti, writing for *Trail and Timberline* on the "philosophy of mountaineering," wanted to help his audience understand that "alpinism" was not about "dangers and risks for their inherent thrills." Rather, authentic alpinism involved "pragmatic curiosity for a palpable reality." Alpinists climbed so that the reality of mountains would be revealed to them. They tested their own capacities for initiative, alertness, and good judgment. Alpinism offered spiritual insight and inspiration. And though alpinists sometimes competed against one another, mountaineering "obliterated" differences of culture and class and brought people together, relieved of the "hypocrisy of conventionalities," on the mountaintops.[67]

Finally, during a decade of human distress in cities and on dust-blown plains, the editors of *Trail and Timberline* published numerous articles that asked climbers who loved the out-of-doors to consider what humans' thoughtless degradation of the natural environment meant to their own well-being. For example, W. Walter Pesman asked readers to ponder how humans' economic actions had caused soil erosion and dust storms, over-grazing, the loss of fish and wildlife, deforestation, and the proliferation of invasive weeds. "Man, the Troublemaker," was "the only animal that can reason and won't," Pesman opined, but humans could not continue their "thoughtless spoils system" indefinitely. They were destined to find that nature "is a pitiless avenger if we try to beat her at her own game." Francis Ramley asked local climbers to support the setting aside of new preservation areas at the local, state, and national levels. And Earl Davis urged the Colorado Mountain Club to use education and lobbying to lessen the destructiveness of "economic progress" and promote the preservation of "unspoiled" nature.[68]

As more people were drawn to the summit of Longs Peak in the 1930s, and as the CMC and a few field rangers attempted to foster responsibility in the climbing

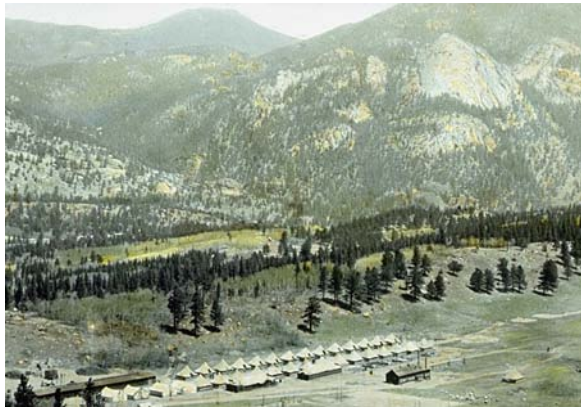


Marker Post on the Upper Cable Route, Longs Peak, 1938. Many of those who ascended Longs Peak via the Cable Route were inexperienced climbers. Clear signage helped to keep them on track, especially when weather conditions limited visibility. This sign also reminded climbers to avoid rolling rocks, which could easily hurt climbers lower on the route. *Image courtesy of Rocky Mountain National Park.*

66 Clerin Zumwalt, "Is Rock Climbing Dangerous?" *Trail and Timberline* (May 1933): 65-66; John S. McLaughlin, "A Ranger's Side of the Story," *Trail and Timberline* (March 1934): 36. See also, Ernest K. Field, "Rock Work on Long's Peak," *Trail and Timberline* (June 1939): 71-72; "Attention Mountain Climbers," *Trail and Timberline* (May 1940): 78-79; Nesbit, Longs Peak (11th ed.) 67.

67 Joseph Bosetti, "Philosophy of Mountaineering," *Trail and Timberline* (February 1937), 22-24.

68 M. Walter Pesman, "Man, the Troublemaker," *Trail and Timberline* (June 1935), 67-68,73; Francis Ramaley, "The Preservation of Natural Areas," *Trail and Timberline* (June 1935), 69; Earl Davis, "Nature Protection," *Trail and Timberline* (June 1935), 68,74.



Civilian Conservation Camp at Little Horseshoe Park, circa 1935. CCC workers provided critical labor power in Rocky Mountain National Park during the 1930s, though most were used on frontcountry projects. The park made relatively few improvements to trails or structures in the park's backcountry. *Image courtesy of Rocky Mountain National Park.*

Emergency Conservation Workers Loading Boulder Truck, 1936. Like CCC workers, EC workers devoted a great deal of time to the construction and improvement of roads and bridges in Rocky Mountain National Park. *Image courtesy of Rocky Mountain National Park.*

community, the managers of Rocky Mountain National Park were attending to other pressing issues. They found themselves forced to give most of their time and energy to the park's frontcountry and to supervising local men hired through the Emergency Conservation Work program and the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC). Men in the two public works programs lived in several CCC camps in the park, and they were generally assigned to frontcountry work projects. They built and improved roads and bridges; constructed buildings, campgrounds and amphitheaters; put in sewer treatment plants, sewer collection lines, water lines, and utility lines; built reservoirs and fish ponds; and engaged in landscaping and maintenance.[69]

CCC workers were sometimes required to go into the backcountry to fight forest fires, and they occasionally worked on improvements to backcountry trails and facilities. It was the CCC that performed trail work on Longs Peak in the 1930s and CCC workers rebuilt the approach road to the trailhead campground.[70] New poles for the Longs Peak telephone line were also installed in 1934-35, most likely by CCC crews. CCC workers also assisted with backcountry rescues on Longs Peak. The park superintendent reported in August, 1934: "It is no mean job to move a person nine miles over a rough mountain trail on a stretcher. However, Rangers Moomaw and Ratcliff and eighteen C.C.C. men did a splendid piece of work when they carried Mr. Thomas to the Long's Peak Campground on August 16." Mr. Thomas had fallen on the East Face of Longs Peak, suffering bruises and shock.[71]

69 William B. Butler, "The Archaeology of the Civilian Conservation Corp in Rocky Mountain National Park." Internal study by the park archaeologist for Rocky Mountain National Park, Estes Park, Colorado, 2006.

70 Atkins, "Longs Peak Ranger Station and Campground – Historic Sites and Buildings Survey," n.p.; Superintendent's Monthly Report, July 1934, n.p.

71 Superintendent's Monthly Report, "Accidents," August, 1934, n.p.

The superintendent's reports throughout the 1930s and early 1940s suggested that the park would have liked to use CCC workers to build additional shelters on the East Longs Peak Trail and North Longs Peak trail, but the remote locations and the difficulty of setting up work camps and bringing in equipment made it impossible to move these projects forward. CCC workers did, however, participate in the demolition of the Boulderfield shelter cabin in 1936. According to Robert Collier, the cabin and barn were "built on a rock glacier and you could go down anywhere in that field in the middle of the summer and strike ice. The constant melting and the freezing of the…ice would move the rocks and spread the walls and…the Park Service felt [it was] better to tear it down before something fell down and hurt somebody." The barn was left standing, and its remains were not removed until 1959.[72]

The assignment of CCC crews primarily to frontcountry sites was directly related to the construction of Trail Ridge Road, which extended across the continental divide, opening a new alpine corridor to automobile tourists. Auto tourism had been a focus of park management in Rocky Mountain National Park since its inception, but the first road to traverse the park from Estes Park to Grand Lake, Fall River Road, was a treacherous drive and too steep for many passenger autos. The park opened Bear Lake Road in 1930, giving visitors access to scenic areas in the eastern portion of the park below treeline. It also began building a new transmontane route in 1929 and opened the entire length of Trail Ridge Road – from Estes Park to Grand Lake – to visitors in 1933. The new mountain road had a modest grade, never exceeding seven percent, and was twenty-four feet across, giving motorists room to pass one another and maneuver safely. Ten miles of the new roadway were

72 Robert Collier, Jr. interview, Tape 2; Atkins, "Longs Peak Shelters – Historic Sites and Buildings Survey", 3.

at an altitude above eleven thousand feet, affording motorists panoramic views of the Rockies. Improvements to the road, including the building of scenic overlooks, continued throughout the decade. The road marked the start of a new era in park visitation, with important implications for Longs Peak. Trail Ridge was a tremendous draw and the numbers of automobile visitors rose sharply, from 292,000 people traveling in 83,000 automobiles in 1933, to 660,000 visitors in 200,000 cars by 1938. Though the financial hardships of the Great Depression may have required visitors to watch their spending carefully, local businesses in Estes Park and Grand Lake nonetheless "reaped a harvest of tourist dollars" and began to create new job openings for the region's unemployed. On Trail Ridge Road, visitors might observe wildlife, grand alpine vistas, and spectacular wildflowers. They need never leave the comfort of their cars. If they chose to do so, they could stop at the numerous turnouts built on the roadway for scenic viewing and take short strolls on roadside trails.[73] In fact, the building of Trail Ridge Road marked the start of the de-centering of Longs Peak by park officials and businessmen promoting Rocky Mountain National Park. Postcards and other promotional literature began to highlight the magnificent views to be seen all along Trail Ridge Road. In the new promotional materials, Longs Peak was but one indistinct point in a vast mountain vista, losing importance as a scenic and recreational site.

Rocky Mountain National Park was juggling with numerous competing pressures in the 1930s. It needed to publicize its natural offerings to a depressed and demoralized nation, manage its New Deal workforce, and meet the needs of both automobile tourists and backcountry visitors. As its challenges became increasingly complex, the park attracted the attention of a local academic. In the summer of 1939 Associate Professor John V.K. Wagar, head of "The Ranger School," (the Forestry Division of Colorado State College, now Colorado State University in Fort Collins), undertook a study "to find possible correlations between the outdoor abilities and interests of visitors to Rocky Mountain National Park and their educational, occupational, avocational, family, and residential backgrounds."[74] The national parks had become a symbol of the nation's greatness, whatever its economic troubles, and the study hoped to provide future rangers with information about park visitors' attitudes regarding conservation, and "to find in what respects people need teaching to increase their appreciation of and profit from the richness of outdoor America."[75]

Members of Wagar's research team talked with nearly 600 adult visitors from more than 30 states in locations throughout the Rocky Mountain National Park, including trails, fishing spots, parking lots, campgrounds, and hotels. Analyzing the visitors' responses, Wagar found a striking correlation between occupation and visitorship, noting that teachers had the greatest presence among visitors to the park, followed by students, farmers from Colorado and neighboring states, engineers, mechanics, and clergy. Presumably, Wagar realized that teachers were advantaged by a school-year schedule that left them freer than most adults to travel in the summer. More than 60.7% of the respondents were either in college, college graduates, or married to college graduates, suggesting that educational level was a significant factor in park visitorship. "Well educated and generally intelligent people predominate among those who use the park."[76]

Wagar noted that "hiking interested most park

73 Buchholtz, 174-178.

74 J.V.K. Wagar, "Visitor Concepts of National Park Policies and Conservation Needs," Colorado State College, Fort Collins, CO: January, 1941, "Introduction,"1. Wagar Collection, CSU Archives and Special Collections.

75 Ibid.

76 Ibid., 3.

Construction of Trail Ridge Road, 1930s. The construction of Trail Ridge Road was the most important development in Rocky Mountain National Park in the 1930s. The road signaled the park's growing commitment to serving automobile tourists. The road quickly became the new centerpiece of the park, lessening the significance of Longs Peak. *Image courtesy of Rocky Mountain National Park.*

Automobile on Trail Ridge Road, 1930s. Automobile tourists delighted in the spectacular mountain vistas to be seen from Trail Ridge Road, and few had the time or energy for hikes in the backcountry. For automobile visitors, Longs Peak was probably an obscure and distant peak, just one among many beautiful mountains observable from the new transmontane roadway. *Image courtesy of Rocky Mountain National Park.*

Ranger measuring distance on trail, circa 1940. Though frontcountry tourists were far more numerous than backcountry visitors at Rocky Mountain Park in the 1930s and 1940s, rangers continued to maintain trails and provide information on the length and condition of trails to climbers and hikers. Such information was essential to visitor safety. *Image courtesy of Rocky Mountain National Park.*

visitors, and a great number claimed skill in this activity, no matter from what region they came." His research team also found that "all ages participated in it, and the consensus was that Rocky Mountain National Park is particularly adapted to hiking and is best enjoyed by those who do hike."[77] But hiking, in Wagar's study, was not the same as mountain climbing. Hiking meant walking on an unpaved trail. Beyond that, Wagar seemed to imply that many visitors who hiked attempted only short distances on trails that were close to the frontcountry and paved roadways. In contrast, another group of visitors "made long pilgrimages to climb mountains," and "claimed skill in mountain climbing." This group came primarily from the East Coast and the Western states, and "as a rule these were a special group of young to middle age folk noticeably concentrated within the park during the time of the summer encampment of the Colorado Mountain Club at Loch Vale."[78] In pointing to a distinction between hikers and mountain climbers, Wagar was essentially suggesting that the park's automobile tourists enjoyed short walks on unimproved surfaces but were not inclined to venture far into the rugged backcountry. They were the majority of park visitors. Only a smaller "special group" of visitors were ambitious enough to attempt "long pilgrimages" to mountain destinations such as Longs Peak.

Whether they were frontcountry or backcountry visitors, those surveyed by Wagar overwhelmingly expressed support for the recreational, scenic, and wilderness values of the national parks. About 74 percent wanted more national parks, though "most people stated we should have more national parks only if truly outstanding areas could be found." Park visitors from highly agricultural and industrial areas were less concerned than the majority about "outstanding" scenic and natural features. These overworked visitors "stressed a need for open recreational areas even where lands of national interest were unavailable." And "when asked concerning the proper distribution of roads, trails, and wild areas , 90 percent thought the diversified arrangement in Rocky Mountain National Park ideal….A few enthusiasts desired that all roads should end at park boundaries" but admitted, when pressed, that some roads were needed for the infirm. "3 percent wanted all parts of the park reached by roads, including the top of Long's Peak," but most of these replies came from "inexperienced visitors, inactive folk and from those who sold real estate."[79] A few of the visitors who interacted with researchers were observed "thoughtlessly disregarding" park regulations that forbade "collecting specimens or bursting rocks with geology hammers" but most park visitors seemed to behave responsibly and spoke in favor of preservation. Seventy eight percent of respondents rated "Preservation of Scenic Wonders" as the most important purpose for the national parks; 94 percent "favored the preservation of primeval forests," and 92 percent "favored setting aside wilderness areas to be used for primitive means of travel."[80]

Wagar's study investigated the values of park visitors at a time of increased visitation, growing segmentation of the visiting population, and renewed emphasis on the park system as a source of national identity. It seemed to suggest the possibility of future overcrowding by citizens eager to experience simultaneously stronger connections to nature and the nation. Though the visitors whom Wagar interviewed appeared to understand that they bore some responsibility for supporting the preservation of nature, neither Wagar nor his respondents were yet inclined to discuss explicitly how visitors to national parks might, by their presence or behavior, adversely affect the

77 Ibid., 5.

78 Ibid., 6.

79 Ibid., 8.

80 Ibid., 10.

environment. This study suggested as well that Wagar, and many park visitors, may not have recognized that elements of the "richness of outdoor America" existed even in the nation's bustling cities or that nature in these settings also deserved to be nurtured and preserved. He, and some of the visitors whom he interviewed, may indeed have thought that crowded cities were unnatural, inhabited by people quite different from themselves, and virtually beyond redemption. Certainly, Wagar was inclined to see the educational and professional backgrounds of visitors, combined with their appreciation of wilderness and the national parks, as proof of social, class, and ethnic superiority. He was impressed by the "general intelligence" of park visitors and the fact that 77% "were from families in which one or all ancestors had migrated to the United States before 1860," (that is, well before the surge in immigration from Eastern and Southern Europe and Asia between 1880 and 1914). "Most of the visitors were from pioneer families associated with opening American wilderness." The fact that people of "pioneer" heritage appreciated the national parks could be attributed to the fact that they were "professional men rather than laborers," he said, "or some may wish to see in it what they believe to be racial tendencies."[81]

World War II brought new hardships to Rocky Mountain National Park. The park operated on a skeleton crew during the war years, as several of the permanent staff, including Superintendent David Canfield, enlisted in the armed forces. The CCC camps were dismantled in 1942, with equipment and buildings transferred to the Army, and some of the park's heavy equipment and vehicles were loaned to the military as well.[82] Visitation to the park and to Longs Peak declined, with only 644 recorded climbs in 1944, the lowest since 1920. Still, Longs Peak remained a popular destination for local climbers. The CMC lost membership but its local chapters led climbs to Longs Peak for juniors as well as adults throughout the war, and *Trail and Timberline* published reports on their adventures. *Trail and Timberline* also published "hints for beginners" contemplating non-technical climbs on Longs Peak and advice to mountaineers wanting to learn rock-climbing techniques. The campground at the East Longs Peak trailhead accommodated the early start required for a summit attempt, and climbers still camped on the mountain itself. Acknowledging the continued popularity of the peak for climbers, the park reconstructed the Longs Peak telephone line in 1942.[83]

In fact, members of the Colorado Mountain Club took the position that mountaineering was an antidote to the pessimism and hardship of war and boosted "civilian

Lineman engaged in telephone repair, 1946. The park continued to maintain a phone line to the Boulderfield throughout the 1930s and 1940s, though adverse weather conditions meant that the line needed frequent repair. This photo may not have been taken on Longs Peak, but it provides an image of a type of maintenance work that was commonplace in the park's backcountry at mid-century. *Image courtesy of Rocky Mountain National Park.*

81 Wagar, "Visitor Concepts," 6.

82 Superintendent's Monthly Reports, January 1943.

83 Nesbit, *Longs Peak*, (11th ed.) 67; Hugh E. Kingery and Elinor Eppich Kingery, *The Colorado Mountain Club: The First Seventy-Five Years of a Highly Individual Corporation*, 1912-1987 (Evergreen, Colorado: Cordillera Press, 1988), 25; Dorothy Sethman, "Long's Peak or Bust," *Trail and Timberline* (October 1943), 129; Molly Sethman "Junior Journeys, *Trail and Timberline* (October 1943), 127-128; Harold M. Dunning, "Climbing Longs Peak – Hints for Beginners," *Trail and Timberline* (August 1945), 100-101. See also, Roy R. Murchison, "Some Observations on Climbing," *Trail and Timberline* (August 1945), 98-99; Superintendent's Monthly Reports, July, 1942. Though the park lacked resources for improvements to front or backcountry sites, park staff attempted to improve interactions with hotel owners, guides, and other local tourism operators, resolving the previously contentious relationship between the park and local business owners. The park consolidated control over businesses offering lodging, guiding, or other services by placing them also under concession licenses and by establishing standards for equipment, services, and rates. However, the park did not exercise very tight control, generally acting only in response to a visitor complaint. During the lean years of the 1930s and early 1940s, some of the businesses in the park were unable to keep up with maintenance and service levels to meet the standards set by the park and closed their doors. RMNP acquired the properties, demolished some structures, and converted others to park use. Buchholtz, *Rocky Mountain National Park*, 178-179; Musselman, *Administrative History*, 95-110.

Rescue Cache and Climbing Equipment, 1940. Even during the Great Depression and World War II, when resources were scarce, rangers at Rocky Mountain National Park had to be well-prepared and well-trained for rescue missions in the backcountry. Longs Peak, a popular but hazardous alpine destination, was the site of numerous accidents. Inexperienced climbers sometimes found the Cable Route to be difficult and frightening. *Image courtesy of Rocky Mountain National Park.*

morale" in a fighting nation. Civilians needed to work harder and more efficiently in wartime, but they could do so only if they had "periods of relaxation and recreation." Mountaineering strengthened the body, "and in the mountains one finds it hard to worry, which is excellent for the mind." The rationing of gasoline and tires made it all the more imperative that the CMC sponsor trips, allowing mountaineers to share precious resources.[84] Given this positive and patriotic interpretation of mountain climbing, it is not surprising that Longs Peak gained the attention of the movie industry and a broad popular audience. Joe Stettner was featured in a Fox Movietone Company motion picture filmed in the park in 1942, and "an Associated Press feature, pictures and story, describing an east face ascent of Longs Peak by Ranger Ernest K. Field" was released in 1943.[85]

In the midst of war and destruction, local mountaineers also pondered their responsibilities as individuals for protecting fragile alpine environments. M. Walter Pesman, writing for *Trail and Timberline*, reminded readers that the state's more accessible mountain tops and passes were losing their rarer plants because visitors did not stop to think about the dangers of picking large numbers of wildflowers. Though Pesman was most concerned about the danger to "dainty alpine plants" on mountains with summit roadways (i.e., Pike's Peak and Mount Evans) he also deplored the trampling of wildflowers near Trail Ridge Road, urged club members to refrain from picking wildflowers on backcountry hikes, and stressed the value of nature protection programs, especially for schoolchildren.[86]

84 Henry Buchtel, "And So Endeth the Last Lesson," *Trail and Timberline* (January 1942), 179.

85 Gorby, *The Stettner Way*, 109. Superintendent's Monthly Report, January 1943.

86 M. Walter Pesman "Does Nature Need Protection?" *Trail and Timberline* (May 1943), 69-70.

Chapter 4. Longs Peak in the Post-War Era of Automobile Tourism and "Technical" Climbing

With the end of the war, there was a tremendous increase in the number of visitors to the national parks, and Rocky Mountain National Park was no exception. Yearly visitation to the park had been 31,000 in 1915; 240,966 in 1920; 255,874 in 1930; and 627,847 in 1940. In 1950 1,265,988 visitors entered the park, and the numbers kept climbing.[87] The education and home-mortgage benefits of the G.I. Bill led to a dramatic expansion of the white middle class, with more Americans than ever before working in "white collar" occupations, living in suburbs, and enjoying discretionary income, the ownership of automobiles, and paid vacation time. Middle-class Americans also reproduced at an astonishing rate and, as the Baby Boom became national news, the demographics and interests of park visitors began to shift noticeably from earlier decades. In the 1910s and 1920s visitors to Rocky Mountain National Park had been well-heeled members of the social and economic elite who vacationed for several weeks at a time at lodgings in Estes Park and at resorts in the park itself. During the Depression years the park attracted both social elites and a newer group of professional men and women intent on relatively inexpensive outdoor pleasures. Regardless of their class background, many Depression-era visitors probably traveled without children as the nation's marriage and birth rates were sharply suppressed by economic hardship. In contrast, the postwar visitors were mostly suburban parents with young children, planning to spend just one or two nights in the park before driving to another vacation destination. They stayed in the park's campgrounds or camped alongside the road rather than in the hotels and inns that had survived the depression and war, and they planned to visit numerous places during each day's driving tour of the park.[88] The new generation of frontcountry visitors to the park wanted to have fun in the out-of-doors and see stunning scenic vistas from Trail Ridge Road, but these young families lacked the time, inclination, or stamina for a strenuous one- or two-day ascent of Longs Peak, even on a non-technical route.

Longs Peak may have been ignored by the majority of park visitors, but a substantial minority of those visiting the park were backcountry enthusiasts for whom the peak held tremendous appeal. In fact, human pressure on the peak mounted as more and more non-technical climbers sought the summit of Longs via the Cable and Keyhole routes. Brochures, advertisements, and tourist guides produced by Estes Park businesses for out-of-town visitors touted the splendor and accessibility of the peak, even for relatively inexperienced hikers.[89] The Colorado Mountain Club preferred to characterize Longs as a destination for seasoned hikers and probably thought Estes Park businesses oversold Longs to novice climbers, yet the organization surely added to the crowding on Longs. Its local chapters led non-technical climbs to the summit on a regular (often annual) basis. Likewise, the National Park Service recommended Longs only to experienced hikers but vividly described the panoramic views that awaited those capable of making the climb. This was a mountain that "loomed up on clear days in massive proportions on the skyline." By the 1950s it had

Trail Ridge Road, 1950s. The nation's return to prosperity after World War II prompted the growth of a middle-class with sufficient income and leisure time to vacation in national parks. Most post-war visitors to Rocky Mountain National Park traveled by private car in family groups and spent only a day or two in the park before moving on to some other vacation spot. Postwar automobile tourists crowded the park's roadways and campgrounds, placing pressure on the park's infrastructure, but they did not venture far into the backcountry. *Image courtesy of Rocky Mountain National Park.*

87 Rocky Mountain National Park has collected statistics on annual visitation since its founding and posts them on the park website. See http://www.nps.gov/romo/parkmgmt/statistics.htm

88 Ethan Carr, *Mission 66: Modernism and the National Park Dilemma*, (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2007); and "Rocky Mountain National Park Mission 66 Prospectus," Bill Butler files, ROMO archives.

89 Cori Ann Knudten, "A Diminishing Shadow: Longs Peak and Auto Tourists in Postwar Rocky Mountain National Park" (M.A. Thesis, Colorado State University, 2009), 34-35.

Winter Climb. Chasm View Wall, East Face of Longs Peak, 1949. Longs Peak attracted a new generation of ambitious technical climbers to its East Face in the post-war era, and some tackled the peak's rock walls during the harsh winter months. *Image courtesy of Rocky Mountain National Park.*

decades of history as a climbing destination, was centrally featured in climbers' guidebooks and accounts of Colorado mountaineering, and beckoned powerfully to those with any interest at all in a true alpine experience.[90] The park's annual reports for the years 1950-1953 show that 1300 to 1850 climbers obtained the summit of Longs Peak each season, most on non-technical routes. In 1954, 2189 people reached the summit on Longs Peak, surpassing the annual record set in 1931.[91]

The number of technical climbers on Longs was also growing. Between seventy and one hundred and fifty alpinists reached the summit by way of an East Face technical ascent each year during the early 1950s.[92] Longs was becoming an important climbing destination for an emerging community of highly-skilled technical climbers intent on tackling the high peaks and sheer rock faces of Colorado, California, Wyoming and other states. As mountaineering chronicler James Ramsey Ullman remarked about postwar climbers: "among climbers who take their sport seriously it is no longer simply a matter of going up Longs Peak or the Grand Teton. It is whether you did Longs by the East Face or 'The Cable,' the Grand from the north or the south."[93] Members of the new generation of climbers relied on improved equipment and well-honed technical skills to make ever more challenging ascents on the East Face of Longs. As their daring exploits came to the attention of the public, the publisher of Webster's Dictionary wrote to Rocky Mountain National Park, requesting help in defining several terms "hitherto not recognized by lexicographers," but "in common usage by alpinists" including "crampon," "piton" and "rappel."[94]

Perhaps the most important, and obvious, changes in climbing technique involved rock-climbers' use of newly-available synthetic rope, belaying maneuvers, and mountain hardware. For the postwar generation of aggressive climbers, nylon rope was used not as a mere precaution but as "an active protective device…its proper use limit[ing] the movements of the group to one man at a time…with the protective maneuver known as the belay."[95] While one climber remained at the bottom of a rock face or pitch as the "anchor" and prevented the rope from developing any slack, the lead climber, with rope securely attached to his or her body, moved up the rock, hammering pitons or bolts into cracks, affixing carabiners and rope for protection, and sometimes standing on the pitons and bolts or attaching slings for footholds. The new hardware, ropes, and maneuvers enabled climbers to ascend over longer and more difficult spans of rock. If a climber slipped or lost a hand or foothold, belaying limited the distance and danger of his or her fall. When climbers used pitons, bolts, or slings for direct hand or foot support they were "aid climbing"; when they used equipment only for protection in the event of a fall and otherwise ascended using the rock's natural hand and footholds, climbers were "free climbing." On most of the difficult new routes of the 1950s climbers used both free climbing and direct aid techniques, moving up a rock face one pitch at a time. That is, the lead climber would ascend what seemed a manageable distance, stop after finding a place for a secure stance, and then belay the second climber to the top of the pitch. The second

90 National Park Service, "Rocky Mountain National Park," 1957, Box 14, Folder: ROMO 21542, ROMO Archives; Dwight Hamilton, "Long's Peak, An Old Friend, *Trail and Timberline* (July 1950) 99; Paul Nesbit published the first edition of *Longs Peak: Its Story and a Climbing Guide* in 1949, drawing on an extensive range of printed sources, from newspaper articles to memoirs and guidebooks.

91 Superintendent's Annual Reports, 1950, 1951, 1952, 1953, ROMO library; Nesbit, *Longs Peak* (8th ed., 1972), 65.

92 Superintendent's Annual Reports, 1950, 1951, 1952, 1953, ROMO library.

93 James Ramsey Ullman, *The Age of Mountaineering* (Philadelphia and New York: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1941, 1954), 90.

94 Superintendent's Monthly Report, June 1942, 5.

95 Ullman, *Age of Mountaineering*, 306.

climber removed at least some hardware as he or she climbed, so it could be used in subsequent pitches.[96]

Acquiring technical climbing skills took time and careful instruction. A Denver Technical Climbing Committee formed within the CMC to offer "thorough and competent instruction on technical climbing." The committee followed the doctrine that "a little knowledge is a dangerous thing," and proposed to put its students through a graded series of lectures and field trips that would result, in successful cases, with students gaining the club's certification to climb and instruct others in subsequent years.[97] Men accounted for approximately two thirds of those who completed the new training. Reporting in August 1950, the Technical Climbing Committee listed five women and seventeen men among the graduates of that season's Beginner climber course; four women completed the Advanced climber course along with ten men.[98]

As the popularity of Longs Peak continued to increase, along with the skill of technical climbers, the most ambitious members of the rock climbing community began to put up new and difficult routes on the peak's East Face. Among them was *The Window*, a route put up by Bill Eubanks and Brad Van Diver in 1950 that went through the hole in a K shaped formation in the buttress on the south edge of the Diamond. Some of the route involved delicate slab climbing and terrific exposure; other portions of it required Eubanks and Van Diver to work their way up chimneys and around unstable chockstones. Exceptionally skilled climbers put up several additional routes on the lower part of the East Face between *Alexander's Chimney* and *Stettner Ledges* in subsequent years. The long stretch to the right of *Stettner Ledges* below Broadway was not climbed until 1959, when Ray Northcutt and Layton Kor, two talented and competitive climbers, put up the *Diagonal* route, then the most difficult climb in Colorado.[99] As the best climbers in Colorado put up new routes on the East Face, lesser climbers repeated their ascents, often assisted by commercial guides. Commercial guides had been losing clients since the 1930s, but guiding revived in the 1950s, thanks to the postwar growth of technical climbing. Paul Nesbit reported that in 1952 only eleven percent of all ascents on Longs were led by commercial guides, but of the total number of guided ascents, more than half were technical climbs on the mountain's East Face.[100]

For climbers searching out difficult technical routes, the nearly vertical Diamond on the upper East Face of Longs Peak beckoned like a Holy Grail. Postwar rock climbers were already scaling vast multi-pitch rock walls in other national parks, especially Yosemite. They were impatient to test themselves on Longs' Diamond. Though the Diamond was about a third the size of some of the big walls in Yosemite, its alpine environment made it uniquely challenging. Throughout the 1950s, technical climbers submitted requests to the park, asking permission to climb the Diamond. Park officials turned down all the appeals, convinced that the Diamond could not be climbed and that any attempt was likely to result in the need for an alpine rescue that was far beyond the abilities of park staff. According to climber and author Jeff Achey, rangers were also concerned that aid climbers' expansion bolts would deface the rock wall.[101] When Layton Kor and Ray

First ascent, *Chasm Cut-off*, 1950. Bill Eubanks, Brad Van Diver, and Tom Horbein performed the first ascent of the Chasm Cut-off, a route with exposed rotten rock on the traverse, at a time when technical climbers were acquiring new equipment and skills. The men probably paid little attention to the plant life visible on this ledge traverse; it was not until the 1970s that climbers were urged not to trample on or remove fragile alpine flora. *Image courtesy of Rocky Mountain National Park.*

96 Ibid, 301-308; Nesbit, *Longs Peak*, (2005), 43-44.

97 Lewis V. Giesecke, "Report of the Denver Technical Climbing Committee," *Trail and Timberline* (September 1946), 186-187.

98 John Devitt, "Education for Thrills," *Trail and Timberline* (August 1950), 115-117.

99 Jeff Achey, et al, *Climb! The History of Rock-Climbing in Colorado*, (Seattle, WA: The Mountaineers Books, 2002). 24-25.

100 Nesbit, (2005), 5.

101 "Minutes of Staff Meeting, August 30, 1955, Protection Division," Temporary Box 44, ROMO Archives; Achey, *Climb!*, 25. In 1949 seven seasonal rangers participated in a one-day mountain-climbing and rescue school conducted by the park's assistant chief ranger, but records for the park do not indicate subsequent trainings. See Superintendent's Monthly Report, July, 1949, 4.

View of the East Face and Diamond from the edge of Chasm Lake. By the 1950s a number of technical climbers believed they had the skills and experience necessary to climb the Diamond, but park officials were unwilling to grant climbers' access to the sheer rock face. *Image courtesy of Rocky Mountain National Park.*

Automobile congestion on Trail Ridge Road, May 30, 1958. As automobile tourism grew in popularity, the roadways in Rocky Mountain National Park became sites of serious congestion and frayed nerves. Many of the automobiles in this photo were empty, the occupants having left their cars to witness the Trail Ridge Road Opening Ceremony, a late Spring event. *Image courtesy of Rocky Mountain National Park.*

Northcutt put in the *Diagonal* route in 1959, they did so in the hope that "their success would convince the park service to lift the ban" on the Diamond.[102]

The park's unwillingness to allow technical climbers onto the Diamond was no doubt linked to serious strains on its resources as automobile tourism skyrocketed. Throughout the nation, national park managers were realizing that their park's frontcountry facilities, mostly unchanged since the 1930s, were wholly inadequate to meet the needs of the greatly expanded "visiting public." At Rocky Mountain National Park, rangers were particularly worried about pressures on the park's frontcountry campgrounds, which got more crowded each season. Camping and sanitary facilities were "greatly overtaxed" and visitors were finding it difficult to enjoy their time in the park. Trail Ridge Road was often terribly congested, with cars backed up for many miles. In the single year of 1956, nearly 1.6 million visitors entered the park, putting enormous pressures on its outdated resources. Of equal concern, most park visitors had no opportunity to learn about the landscape through which they traveled by car. They might be awed by the park's scenic views but were given no assistance in understanding them. Eighty percent of all visitors to the park stayed only one to three days, "and these visitors had no contact with the interpretive field trips…and scarcely any contact with the balance of the [park's interpretive] program." If the park was to serve its auto tourists well, it must have increased staff for "roadside information duty…[a] central museum at a strategic point on the main highways…and orientation stations near the park entrances."[103]

The problems in Rocky Mountain National Park matched those in other national parks, but for a time the National Park Service struggled to figure out how to align its mission with postwar America's consumer society and its legions of automobile tourists. Without a clear focus, the park service had difficulty obtaining funding from Congress for maintenance and repair, let alone new infrastructure, and no individual park could attempt ambitious improvements on its own.[104] By 1955, however, the park service had devised a plan to deal with the new patterns of postwar visitation. National Park Service Director Conrad Wirth introduced Mission 66, named in anticipation of the fifty-year anniversary of the National Park Service in 1966. The service-wide, ten-year program sought to renovate and reinvigorate the national parks, focusing on the needs of auto tourists, most of them young families, who planned to spend only a day or two in any one park. The parks devised plans to lessen the negative impacts of crowding by channeling automobile tourists smoothly through the frontcountry, assuring them access to visitor centers and interpretive programs, scenic vistas, rangers, and comfortable campgrounds. At Rocky Mountain National Park, Mission 66 projects included the construction of the Beaver Meadows Visitor Center and Administration Building, the Alpine Visitor Center, and the building of new entrance stations at Beaver Meadows, Fall River, and Grand Lake. The park also bought out remaining private "in-holdings" in the park and then demolished the resorts and lodges that had long stood in these areas. In Moraine Park, the site of a number of old resorts, the park put in a new campground. Elsewhere, the park upgraded existing campgrounds. It also built new comfort stations throughout the park and enhanced the overlooks for scenic viewing on Trail Ridge Road. All of these "improvements" were intended to ensure that the park functioned as "an outdoor museum

102 Briggs, "The Diamond," 26.

103 1952 Master Plan for Rocky Mountain National Park, ROMO archives; Buchholtz, *Rocky Mountain National Park*, 201-203, 206.

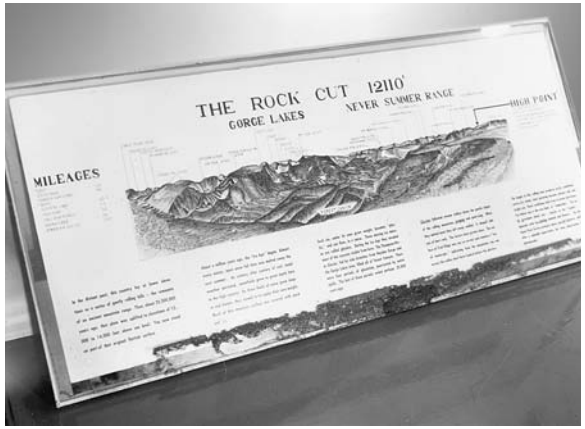
104 Ethan Carr, *Mission 66: Modernism and the National Park Dilemma* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 2007).

with unsurpassed accessibility." Some critics decried the destruction of historic old hotels and other structures, but park managers were eager to buy up the remaining pockets of private property in the park and convert land formerly used by privately-run resorts into modern campgrounds or areas for scenic viewing. The replacement of lodges with campgrounds helped ensure that most visitors would stay in the park for only one or two nights at a time.[105]

As Rocky Mountain National Park implemented Mission 66 and tried to serve and manage the growing number of auto tourists who never went beyond the park's frontcountry corridor, Longs Peak moved further to the margins of rangers' field of vision.[106] The park's Mission 66 prospectus identified Bear Lake as "the natural destination of at least 60 percent of visitors on the eastern side of the Park."[107] Automobile tourists enjoyed this destination because they could drive very close to the lake, park their cars, and stroll along an easy trail around the lake's perimeter. Visitors who arrived at the park's new entrance stations without knowing for certain what they wanted to see or where they wanted to go were unlikely to end up at Longs Peak, as its trailhead could be reached neither from Bear Lake Road or Trail Ridge Road, the two main arteries in the park. To reach it, visitors on the east side of the park had to turn around, leave the park's boundaries, and drive along Highway 7 to the East Longs Peak Trailhead. And though architectural designs for the park's new Beaver Meadows Visitor Center wanted the building to showcase a view of Longs Peak, park staff overlooked the designer's intent and recommended drawing visitors' attention to the scenic beauty of the entire Front Range. Showcasing mountains all along the Front Range made sense in a park where most visitors considered sightseeing by car a priority and did not plan excursions into the backcountry. Opportunities for climbing in the park found little place in the park's Mission 66 interpretive programming or public relations. During a 1957 interview with Radio KCOL, Assistant Superintendent George B. Hartzog and Park Naturalist Norman Herkinham spoke enthusiastically about the "alpine vistas of glacier-carved mountains and tundra plateaus" that awaited visitors to Trail Ridge Road, but they said nothing about the climb to Longs Peak or the park's long history as a place of backcountry adventure.[108]

Rocky Mountain National Park's commitment to serving the interests of automobile tourists – a trend that had been underway since the earliest years of the park's development – had occasionally provoked sharp criticism from preservationists who worried about tourism's potential damage to fragile natural landscapes. In the 1930s landscape architect Charles Eliot warned that Trail Ridge Road would cut through and destroy precious wild areas of the park. Other critics began in the 1930s to condemn plans for a ski resort in the park, claiming that downhill ski runs would require clearing large swaths of trees and scar the park's alpine terrain. Eliot's voice barely registered among the chorus of voices who believed Trail Ridge Road would offer visitors a new way to see the glories of the park and boost the local tourist industry. Park officials made sure that road construction methods did nothing to harm the visual aesthetics of the terrain through which the road travelled, but they evinced little concern for the landscape's ecological well being. Plans for a ski resort were delayed first by World War II and then by a handful of park rangers beginning to worry about natural resource damage. Still, the Hidden Valley Ski Resort opened in the mid 1950s, having won the enthusiastic support of park officials,

Visitors at Rock Cut, Trail Ridge Road, July 1960. These automobile tourists had stepped a few feet from their car to enjoy a panoramic view of Rocky Mountain National Park, but the park had not yet installed significant interpretive signage to guide their understanding of the view before them. *Image courtesy of Rocky Mountain National Park.*



Roadside Interpretive Sign, Rock Cut, March 1961. This photo, taken in the spring of 1961, shows the new interpretive sign for Rock Cut, ready for installation. The new sign, a product of the Mission 66 commitment to offering automobile tourists a meaningful experience in the national parks, identified the peaks, lakes, and other land features visible from Rock Cut on Trail Ridge Road. *Image courtesy of Rocky Mountain National Park.*

105 "Mission 66 Prospectus, Rocky Mountain National Park," ROMO Archives; Buchholtz, *Rocky Mountain National Park*, 205-206

106 Knudten, *A Diminishing Shadow*, 30-55.

107 ROMO, Mission 66 Prospectus, 16.

108 "Radio KCOL, Fort Collins, Colorado, Interview by Dorothy Collier of George Hartzog, January 26, 1957," transcript in ROMO library; Knudten, "A Diminishing Shadow," 52

Beaver Meadows Visitor Center, 1967. The Beaver Meadows Visitor Center was an important innovation of Mission 66 and was designed to provide automobile tourists with views of Longs Peak and offer a setting in which frontcountry visitors might listen to park rangers offer interpretive programming about Rocky Mountain National Park. *Image courtesy of Rocky Mountain National Park.*

the Estes Park business community, and skiers along the Front Range. By this time, Mission 66 had come into play and was reinforcing the entire park service's dedication to serving automobile tourists. Mission 66 incited criticism from national leaders in the Sierra Club and Wilderness Society who feared the plan would overdevelop, modernize, and urbanize the entire national park system, but Wirth countered that the new plan was intended to "preserve wilderness values," by using development to control the public's movement through the parks and thereby prevent the degradation of nature.[109]

It would take time for the critics of Mission 66 to gain any traction, and Rocky Mountain National Park quickly implemented its own Mission 66 plans. The park existed to preserve nature and forge a bond between nature and visitors, but the enormous popularity of the park among postwar automobile tourists induced park managers to favor innovations meant specifically for those who wanted to experience nature from the comfort of their cars or on the skating rink and ski runs of the park's new winter resort.

Park managers responsible for implementing Mission 66 could not entirely ignore problems or pressures on Longs Peak, but they lacked the resources for anything more than a handful of stop-gap measures, regulations, and unfulfilled proposals. Despite the proven skill and determination of the new generation of technical climbers, park staff issued a regulation that kept them off the Diamond throughout the 1950s, leery as rangers were of becoming involved in high-wall alpine rescues. The park noted the desirability of new shelter cabins at Jim's Grove and the Boulderfield in its Mission 66 prospectus, but the new cabins were never built. One at the Boulderfield might have been especially useful for rescue operations, but staff were forced to acknowledge that the "strong winds and adverse weather conditions at that location" made a building, however desirable, unfeasible.[110] Responding to the increased numbers of non-technical climbers on the peak, rangers rebuilt the hitching rack used by those who rode horses to the Boulderfield and replaced the Cable Route's frayed cables with new ones.[111] The park also assigned a second ranger to the ranger station at the East Longs Peak trailhead. The park's overworked managers proved unable, however, to consider the full implications of increased crowding on Longs' non-technical routes, even though climbers on the Cable Route and were beginning to complain to park authorities about their lack of access to expert assistance. Commercial guides gave most of their attention to technical rock-climbers, and the park was assigning most of its field rangers to frontcountry sites and visitors, leaving many inexperienced climbers on their own to negotiate the rigors of the cables on Longs' North Face.[112]

With little oversight coming from the park, the CMC continued to lead many non-technical climbs to Longs Peak and other mountains and found it necessary, perhaps because climbers had little contact with park rangers, to give quite pointed advice to novice mountaineers about appropriate backcountry conduct. *Trail and Timberline* published articles urging CMC members and guests to act responsibly and give greater thought to the interests of others on group trips. Apparently there were a small but

109 Buchholtz, *Rocky Mountain National Park*, 176-177, 188-191, 194-198; Richard W. Sellars, *Preserving Nature in the National Parks* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1997), 181-191.

110 "Minutes of Staff Meeting, October 6, 1955," p, 5. Temporary Box 44, ROMO Archives. A difficult two-day rescue on the Cable Route just days before the October 6th staff meeting prompted Assistant Chief Ranger Hart to remark that "the accident on Sunday pointed out the need for a shelter at the Boulder Field…a rescue party returning from the cable route would nearly always involve an overnight operation, as was the case this time, and if the weather is bad it could prove very rough on everyone involved," p. 5

111 "Minutes of Staff Meeting, August 30, 1955, Protection Division," Temporary Box 44, ROMO archives; Walter W. Fricke, Jr., *A Climber's Guide to the Rocky Mountain National Park Area* (Boulder, CO: Johnson Publishing Co., 1971), 29; Superintendent's Monthly Report, July 1953.

112 Superintendent's Annual Report, 1953; Nesbit, (11th ed.), 68

troubling number of climbers who ignored instructions and expected the group leader to offer them "effortless" trips through the mountains. These people eventually caused real problems as they often had sloppy climbing habits, faulty equipment, tended to become lost, injured or ill, and held the group leader responsible for their rescue and for "all their difficulties."[113] In addition, the Colorado Mountain Club took responsibility for educating its members about existing wilderness laws and regulations and problems in wilderness protection, and the CMC Board of Directors and CMC Conservation Committee supported a variety of preservation measures around the state, reporting on their actions in *Trail and Timberline*.[114]

Focused as park rangers were on the challenges of Mission 66, they may not have realized that the growing numbers of climbers on Longs Peak represented a form of resistance to the postwar embrace of automobile tourism. Technical climbers' daring forays up the vertical walls of the East Face mocked common notions of physical comfort and safety. And according to writers for *Trail and Timberline*, avid non-technical climbers also thought of themselves as quite different from the masses of auto tourists. One female writer said she wanted something different than "the person whose idea of enjoying the mountains is to ride through them, dressed up in fashionable clothes, in an expensive automobile … stopping at a conventional tourist spot – the more popular and expensive the better – to order the most luxurious meal on the menu, and admire the mountains while sipping a dry martini." She loved the "beauty and bigness" of mountains, the "chance to be… one's own self…not merely somebody's employee, spouse, parent or child." Climbing provided the companionship of people with shared ideals and gave those who were "not completely civilized" real opportunities for adventure and self-reliance. This woman's male co-author admitted to "height fever." He was ambitious and looked for harder and harder challenges. He and his companions liked to "knock ourselves out so we can revel in it in retrospect. It's the particularly tough trips that we remember; they're impressed on our mind." While *Trail and Timberline* playfully drew attention to the gender differences in the two writers' motives for climbing, the authors themselves stressed how little they had in common with the tourists who were content to experience mountains through the glass of a windshield or restaurant window.[115] Backcountry climbers were themselves tourists and consumers: they used motorized vehicles to reach trailheads and bought equipment, guidebooks, and specialized clothing produced for a niche market. Their sport was closely tied to America's consumer culture. Still, climbers were motivated by, and felt pride in, their physicality and love of direct experience in the mountains.

At the end of the 1950s it might have seemed that automobile tourism had won out in Rocky Mountain National Park, to the detriment of Longs Peak and its backcountry adventurers. Climbers on Longs seemed unable to claim the attention of rangers, and park managers apparently believed they were adequately preserving the park's natural resources by moving automobile tourists carefully and quickly through a frontcounty corridor. The CMC had informally assumed responsibility for educating climbers about backcountry conduct, climbing

Hidden Valley Ski Area, Tunnel and Upper Slopes, 1954. Hidden Valley was not formally part of Mission 66, but it reflected a similar commitment to developing recreational facilities in frontcountry portions of the park. *Image courtesy of Rocky Mountain National Park.*

Non-technical climber entering name in summit register, Longs Peak, 1955. The numbers of climbers on Longs Peak continued to grow in the 1950s and may have represented a form of resistance to the postwar embrace of automobile tourism. *Image courtesy of Rocky Mountain National Park.*

113 Henry Buchtel, "Don't Be An 'X' Climber," *Trail and Timberline* (July 1949), 101;

114 See for example, Raymond R. Lanier, "Some Wilderness Area Problems in Colorado," *Trail and Timberline* (September 1958), 120-121; E. H. Brunquist, "Wilderness Areas – Pros and Cons," *Trail and Timberline* (December 1958) 169, 175. For a summary of conservation actions taken by Colorado Mountain Club Between 1954 and 1961, see "CMC Conservation Action" *Trail and Timberline* (September 1961), 159. Each action listed in this report was reported in greater detail in earlier issues of *Trail and Timberline*.

115 C.A. and R.R. "Fourteens or Foothills – Why Do We Climb Them? The Feminine Viewpoint – Enjoy the Trip; The Masculine Idea – Get to the Top" *Trail and Timberline* (April 1956) 60-61,66.

technique, and natural resource preservation, but it was an organization without real authority. Within a few years, however, a rapid reversal took place. The park abandoned its prohibition against technical climbing on the Diamond and technical climbers began to put up new routes on the sheer rock face. Their successes occasioned a revival of media and public interest in Longs. Simultaneously, resistance to Mission 66 and automobile tourism grew as many postwar Americans began to re-think their love affair with material consumption and embraced new wilderness values and legislation. Some park administrators continued to defend Mission 66 as an appropriate way to preserve nature and promote visitors' enjoyment of it, but numerous rangers and park biologists allied themselves with a wilderness perspective that took issue with Mission 66. In combination, these changes inspired greater numbers of people to climb Longs Peak and complicated the difficulties of managing it. Rangers debated how to cope with crowding, reduce accidents, and mitigate resource degradation, wanting to protect both the "visitor experience" and natural resources on Longs. The park decided that Longs should be managed as a wilderness site in accordance with the 1964 Wilderness Act, but what this meant in practice was not altogether obvious. The peak's natural grandeur, unusual popularity with climbers, and unique history presented challenges to managers at Rocky Mountain National Park that plainly revealed the tensions in both the Organic Act of 1916 and the new wilderness legislation.

Campers at Stillwater Campground with park ranger, May 1960. The campers in this photo were sitting and standing just a few yards away from their automobile. The ranger speaking to them may have considered service to automobile tourists the unquestioned priority of Rocky Mountain National Park for the foreseeable future, but within a few years, new wilderness values and legislation would challenge that viewpoint. *Image courtesy of Rocky Mountain National Park.*

Chapter 5. The Diamond, the Cable Route, and Wilderness Values on Longs Peak in the 1960s

In the summer of 1960 Bob Kamps and Dave Rearick, two young climbers from California, traveled to Rocky Mountain National Park amidst "feverish" speculation that officials were finally ready to open the Diamond. Kamps, a Los Angeles teacher, and Rearick, a newly-minted math Ph.D. from Cal Tech, were just two among a number of Californians with big-wall climbing experience in Yosemite who were eager to put up the first route on the Diamond. Various Colorado climbers were also vying to be first on the virgin wall. In July the park began to solicit applications from technical climbers, ending its prohibition on access to the Diamond. Kamps and Rearick filed one application and were turned down, but a second application demonstrated to the park's satisfaction that the two young men had the technical experience, route plans, and support and rescue teams necessary for the daunting climb. They would scale the sheer upper portion of the East Face before anyone else, since the plans of the other contenders had fallen apart. The park gave Kamps and Rearick permission to climb the Diamond during the month of August 1960.

It helped the California climbers' case that they were "fresh from a month of climbing in Yosemite" and had proven their skills locally by climbing the Diagonal on Longs. But technical skills were not enough. The park's letters to Kamps and Rearick explained that the men would have to rely on their own rescue party if they needed to be saved because the park had yet to "fabricate a cable-winch rescue device" suitable for an operation on Longs. Initially, the two had some difficulty assembling the requisite support and rescue parties, as they were "outsiders" and local climbers "were not interested in supporting Californians." It took "seven frantic days" and the help of Roy Holubar, a venerated Boulder climber and a manufacturer and retailer of specialized climbing equipment, for Rearick and Kamps to recruit four local climbers for support and rescue and gather needed gear. On July 31st, 1960, the four members of the support party "were promptly rewarded with the task of lugging a litter and 1,200 feet of rope up the mountain" to a base camp at Chasm Lake.[116]

In truth, Dave Rearick was not a newcomer to Colorado climbing or Longs Peak. He had vacationed in Estes Park with his family as a boy, worked at the YMCA camp in Estes as a teenager, and climbed Longs Peak (both the non-technical routes and the East Face) a total of nine times before he and Kamps ascended the Diamond in 1960. Bob Kamps, on the other hand, had never been to Rocky Mountain National Park before 1960 and thought of himself as someone who preferred friction climbing on slabs of rock at steep angles rather than aid climbing on vertical walls. Still, both he and Rearick were climbers with very high standards and, according to Bob's wife Bonnie, they knew there was a lot riding on their climb. It had to be done well and safely. If they "screwed up" not only might they be seriously hurt, but the sport of rock climbing would pay a steep price.[117]

The climb itself took two and a half days, following a route the climbers had been pondering for years that went

The Diamond, East Face of Longs Peak. Dave Rearick and Bob Kamps were the first climbers to ascend the Diamond, putting up D1 in 1960 after gaining permission from park officials. D1 went up the center of the Diamond but required the climbers to negotiate blocks, overhangs, and ice-filled chimneys. *Image courtesy of Rocky Mountain National Park.*

116 Briggs, "The Diamond," 22-24; Robert Kamps, "The Diamond Climbed," *Trail and Timberline* (September 1960), 123-124; Dave Rearick, interview with Ruth Alexander, June 9, 2009 transcript, ROMO Archives; Letter from James V. Lloyd, Superintendent, Rocky Mountain National Park, to Robert F. Kamps, July 20, 1960; Letter from James V. Lloyd to Robert Kamps and David F. Rearick, July 27, 1960. The original letters are in the possession of David R. Rearick and were shared with the author.

117 Rearick interview; Bonnie Kamps, phone interview with Ruth Alexander, August 26, 2009.

Bob Kamps (left) and Dave Rearick, checking equipment before the first ascent of the Diamond, July 1960. *Image courtesy of Rocky Mountain National Park.*

straight up the center of the Diamond. It was named D1 (or the Ace of Diamonds.) On the first day Rearick and Kamps climbed well above Broadway, using direct aid and free climbing. For a time they were "drenched by water falling free from the chimney near the top of the Diamond," and by four in the afternoon they were ready to retreat from their highest bolt. They spent the night back down on Broadway: "Our waterproof gear protecting us from the constant spray, we spent a reasonably comfortable night perched on our two by seven foot ledge, and talked over the remaining aspects of the climb." In the morning the men used stirrups attached to the fixed line with prussik knots to climb quickly to the top of their line. They then moved onto a ramp, discovered another ledge (that they used that night as a bivouac) and began aid climbing a section of loose and fractured wall that leaned outward. For nearly four hundred feet they climbed behind a cascade of falling water. The rest of the day involved more direct aid climbing "up a series of blocks and overhangs." Kamps and Rearick reached the top of their eighth pitch before dark, placed a bolt, and returned to their two-foot bivouac ledge for the night. The next morning there wasn't much distance left to climb after they prussiked back to the high point of the previous afternoon, but the climbers were worried that the "water-flowing upper chimney was impassable." Happily, they were able to negotiate the chimney, even though it had "several huge blocks of ice" and "was wet and sloppy throughout." The final (eleventh) pitch was a free climb up the chimney to the summit. "We made our entry in the register and dragged our weary bones back to the shelter hut at Chasm Lake."[118]

According to the Yosemite Decimal System, Rearick and Kamps' climb was rated a very severe V, 5.7, A4.[119] Their equipment included about 35 of the chrome-moly pitons recently developed by Yosemite climber Yvon Chouinard, most of which they removed. These were far more durable and came in a wider range of sizes than the soft steel pitons used by Colorado climbers, and they became the pitons of choice for subsequent Diamond climbs. Rearick and Kamps also used four expansion bolts as belay anchors and left them in place, and six ropes, of which two were left in place for rescue purposes during the climb and removed later by the support party. They pulled a pack stuffed with extra clothing, food, and water up behind them after each pitch of the climb. Trying to keep the weight and volume of their supplies as low as possible, the men chose foods with low water content and concentrated calories, sustaining themselves on a diet of salami, pepperoni, canned chicken, raisins, and chocolate.[120]

There had been no advance publicity about the climb but, by the second day, word got out and people in the local area headed for the mountain. The *Rocky Mountain News* reported that "the narrow little trail up to the

118 Kamps, "The Diamond Climbed"122-123.

119 Climbers created the Yosemite Rating System during the1960s as they realized the necessity of rating the distinct elements of a climb. For a full description of the system, modified only slightly since the late 1960s, see Walter W. Fricke Jr., *A Climbers Guide to the Rocky Mountain National Park Area* (Boulder, CO: Paddock Publishing, 1971), 2-6.

The V, 5.7, A4 rating for the D1 climb translates as follows:

Grade describes the general magnitude of the undertaking and takes into account time, number of leads/pitches, and number of feet of hard climbing. Grade V on a scale of I to VI = a climb requiring more than one day and involving over 5 leads/pitches and more than 400 feet of hard climbing.

Class describes the severity of the pitches. Class 5.7 on a scale of 1 to 5.10 = a climb requiring protection for pitches of very severe difficulty. All Class 5 climbs require protection.

Aid Difficulty describes the difficulty of placing protection and the trustworthiness of the protection. Aid difficulty A4 on a scale of A1 to A5 = a climb involving the very difficult placement of aid; pitons may (or may not) hold body weight.

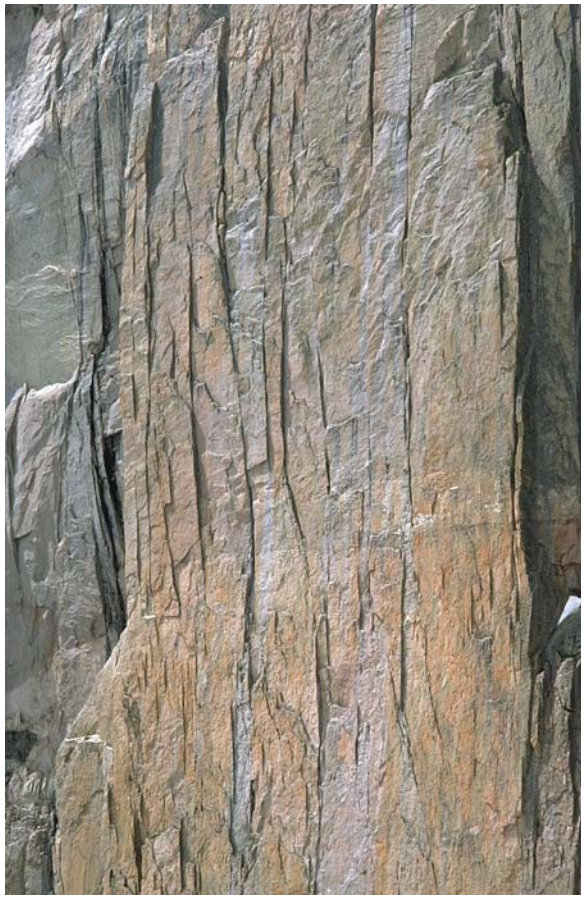
120 Briggs, "The Diamond"; David F. Rearick and Robert F. Kamps, "Report of the First Ascent of the Diamond East Face of Longs Peak," *Trail and Timberline* (September 1960), 125-126. This report was initially sent to Rocky Mountain National Park and subsequently published, unedited, in *Trail and Timberline*; Achey, *Climb!*, 39.

foot of Longs Peak began to resemble a thoroughfare." Motorists stopped their cars along both sides of Highway 7 and "peered upward with everything from opera glasses to telescopes."[121] On August 4th, Rearick and Kamps rode in the annual Estes Park Rooftop Rodeo parade as celebrated guests. Their feat was written up in newspapers and magazines across the country, and the two young climbers also appeared on television. Yet, according to the understated Rearick, "that was about it. The excitement died down as quickly as it started. And nobody tried it again that summer, or the following summer."[122]

The lack of interest, however, was short-lived. The success of the first Diamond ascent convinced park authorities that it would be reasonable to grant permission to other rock climbers eager to ascend the Diamond, so long as they met the same standards as Rearick and Kamps. In 1962 Dale Johnson, a Boulder, Colorado, businessman, and John Wharton, a Princeton, New Jersey, school teacher, were given permission to repeat the D1 ascent, but they were driven off the big wall by high winds and freezing temperatures.[123] Later that summer, Rearick recalled, "Layton Kor showed up on the scene and … he's not gonna fail." Rearick , by this time a math professor at the University of Colorado at Boulder, had taken a summer job as a Longs Peak ranger that year, and it was he who inspected Kor's climbing equipment for the Diamond ascent. Kor, was a climber with "tremendous drive" and big ambitions. A Boulder bricklayer, he had put up the tremendously difficult *Diagonal Route* in 1959 (V, 5.9, A3) as well as two other East Face routes earlier in the decade. He had also proven himself in California. In 1957, Royal Robbins, an elite California climber, had "lured" Kor to the big walls in Yosemite Valley, thinking he would be outdone by the experienced climbers there. But to Robbins' surprise, in that "hotbed of rock climbing…this Colorado climber demolished any Californian pretentions to superiority, climbing our hardest routes in record time, and, even more annoyingly, without comment. He never talked up his own climbs or belittled the efforts of others."

Now back in Colorado and determined to put up a new route on the Diamond, Kor lined up a couple of men as possible partners, but they both "turned up sick." Kor was not about to abandon the climb so he recruited Charlie Roskosz, a member of his support party (who had also served in this capacity for the Rearick-Kamps climb), to be his partner. Neither Kor nor Roskosz thought to inform the park (or even Roskosz's wife) of the last-minute change in the team's make-up, and Roskosz was eventually assessed a small fine for climbing the Diamond without permission. But that happened after the men's success in putting up *The Yellow Wall*. The new route was 150 feet to the left of D1 on a section of smooth slightly yellowed rock. Compared to D1, it had fewer overhangs and was less steep with more solid rock, but "the crack system… [was] not as continuous and more delicate traverses were necessary." Kor and Roskosz had to use both ordinary chrome-moly pitons and short pitons designed for hairline cracks (the latter were known as RURPS – Realized Ultimate Reality Pitons, made and named by Yvon Chouinard). They completed the climb after spending twenty eight and a half hours on the Diamond, nineteen in actual climbing. *The Yellow Wall*, was rated a very severe V, 5.8, A4.[124]

Though both the aborted Johnson and Wharton climb and the successful Kor and Roskosz ascent relied on support and rescue teams that the climbers themselves



The Diamond, East Face of Longs Peak, *The Yellow Wall*, a route put up by Layton Kor and Charlie Roskosz in 1962, went up the section of rock shown in this photo. Kor and Roskosz' climb, 150 feet to the left of *D1*, was the second successful ascent of the Diamond. *Image courtesy of Rocky Mountain National Park.*

121 Rudy Chelminski, "Two Start Climb on East Face of Longs Peak," *Rocky Mountain News* Tuesday, August 2, 1960.

122 Rearick interview; "Two Climbers Triumph Over An Unscaled Cliff," *The New York Times*, 4 August 1960.

123 Al Arnold, "Climbers May Quit Diamond," *Denver Post*, 9 August 1962; Rearick interview.

124 Rearick interview; Nesbit, *Longs Peak* (2005), 55-56; Briggs, "The Diamond," 27-28.

Technical Mountain Rescue Training, 1963. The opening of the Diamond to technical climbers eventually required park authorities to prepare for rescue operations on sheer rock faces. Dave Rearick was hired as a summer ranger in 1962 to help the park prepare for difficult technical rescues. *Image courtesy of Rocky Mountain National Park.*

assembled, it was becoming obvious to park authorities that rangers needed to prepare for involvement in rescue operations on the Diamond. Indeed, Dave Rearick was hired as a summer ranger on Longs "because…the park authorities saw there were going to be some more climbs on the Diamond,…and so they wanted to have first-hand knowledge in case there was a rescue or something." Rearick climbed a number of the technical routes on Longs "on company time" to increase his familiarity with various routes on the East Face, and he and other rangers practiced rescue techniques that might be needed on the Diamond. According to Rearick, the 900-foot rock wall presented unusual difficulties, even for a big wall, because it "overhangs a little bit; it's not easy to reach somebody up there." As it turned out, no rescues on the Diamond were required in 1962, but Rearick was asked to help with a number of rescues on the lower East Face and with the recovery of two climbers who fell to their deaths, in separate incidents, from the North Side near the summit.[125]

The next summer Kor returned to Longs with Royal Robbins as his partner and the two men repeated D1, before going on to put up another new route, the *Jack of Diamonds*, in a single day. Kor also climbed with Floyd "Tex" Bossier, of Boulder's Colorado Guide Service, putting up five other new routes on the East Face and Diamond. That same summer, several other climbers put up new routes rated 5.7 and harder on the lower East Face or other flanks of Longs Peak. Longs Peak was becoming a mecca for elite rock climbers.[126]

By this time park managers had converted the application process for climbers on the Diamond into a mandatory registration system for all technical climbs in the park and climbs above 11,000 feet anywhere on Mount Meeker or Longs Peak, including the lower East Face, the Diamond, and the North Face. The new system also required registration for backcountry winter excursions in the park, whether they involved climbing or not. The mandatory registration system was more streamlined than the earlier system, which required that letters of interest, application forms, and letters of approval go back and forth in the mail. It also modified the role of rangers in their relationship with climbers, divesting them of the formal authority to approve or disapprove technical climbs and returning them to the more familiar role of expert educator. Under the new system, rangers filled out a form for climbers during a face-to face interview or phone conversation, taking down personal data for each climber in a party and gathering information about the climbers' experience, equipment, routes, and bivouac plans. Their intent was not to "hinder" climbers' plans but, rather, to use "persuasion…to keep obviously unqualified parties off of difficult routes." Rangers informed climbers about "pertinent regulations," including the park's prohibition on solo climbing and the requirement that climbers notify a park ranger promptly when they returned from a climb. Rangers also gave climbers suggestions about safety and "back-country manners." Climbers on the Diamond were no longer required to provide their own rescue teams, as the park had by now added this site to their park-wide search and rescue operation. Instead, rangers expected cooperation from all technical climbers and hoped they would appreciate the fact that registration "facilitates rescue operations greatly, at no real sacrifice of the climber's time or independence."[127]

125 Rearick interview.

126 Nesbit, *Longs Peak* (11th ed.), 63-64. According to Roger Briggs, The *Jack of Diamonds* has been climbed only rarely since 1963 and "it is uncertain whether anyone has again made a one-day ascent." Briggs, "The Diamond," 30.

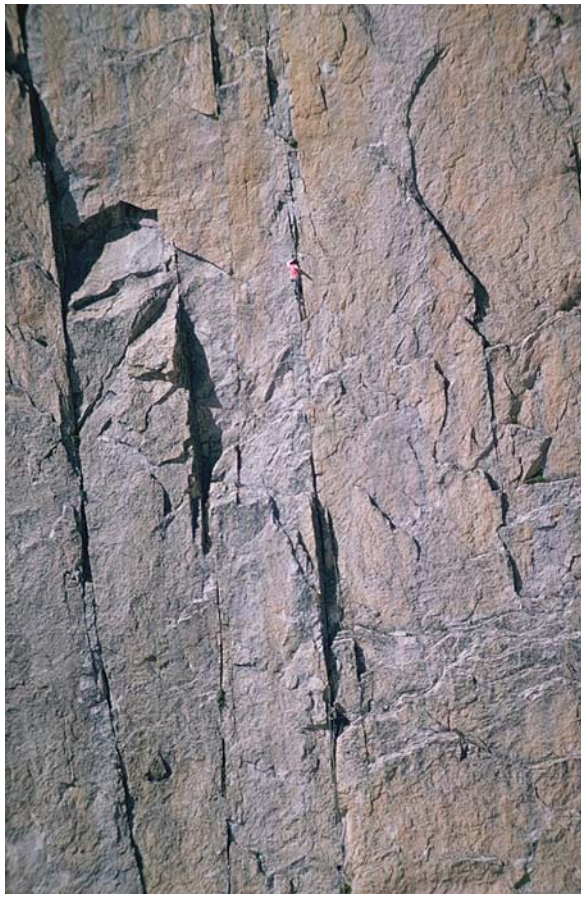
127 "Summary of Annual Mountaineering Reports from Areas Administered by the National Park Service, 1963," 2-5; Folder A26 Reports – Annual 6/1954 – 7/1963, NRG-079-97-534, Box 39, National Archives and Records Administration, Lakewood, CO; Fricke, *A*

Park managers were quick to praise the registration system for helping to bring about a reduction in the park's fatality rate – the park reported four fatalities in 1962 (two of them on the North Face of Longs) but none in 1963.[128] They subsequently incorporated the system into the park's 1964 Master Plan, noting the efficacy of "a reasonable and prudent registration and screening procedure for visitors desiring to engage in recognized hazardous outings such as mountain climbing, winter back-country trips, etc."[129]

It's certainly possible that some technical climbers resented the park's mandatory registration system, but there's no evidence that it acted as a deterrent. The number of technical climbs on Longs rose sharply over the course of the 1960s. In 1964 one hundred and ninety people climbed the East Face of Longs Peak, the greatest number for any year thus far. Just two years later, five hundred and ninety people registered for technical climbs on Longs in 1966, many of them on the East Face.[130] That same year, Larry Dalke, George Hurley and Wayne Goss put up *D7*, a moderate aid route requiring no A4 pitches, making it possible for people who were "competent but not daring on aid" to climb the Diamond. This new route began "to ease the Diamond's forbidding image." 1967 was a particularly important year, as there were twenty-one technical climbs on the Diamond, eleven of them successful, and the first successful winter ascent of the Diamond, by Layton Kor and Wayne Goss.[131]

In 1968, there were three hundred and seventy nine technical climbs on Longs, again, mostly on the East Face. By this time there were nine routes on the Diamond. *D1* was still the hardest and most dangerous route; *D7* was the easiest and most frequently climbed. Twenty-four different parties had climbed the Diamond successfully by 1968, while thirty-one parties had failed in their attempts to summit Longs via a Diamond route. In addition to chrome-moly pitons which greatly facilitated the placement and trustworthiness of aid, big-wall climbers benefitted from the introduction of Jumar rope clamps. These replaced the prussik knot and made the process of climbing fixed lines much faster than before. Longs Peak continued to draw elite climbers excited by the prospect of putting up new routes on the Diamond, but technical climbers with merely solid skills were beginning to repeat the already-established routes, especially *D7*; they were also climbing shorter and less-difficult routes on the lower East Face. Some of these climbers probably hired professional guides, though two of the three mountain guide concessionaires leading climbs on Longs in the mid-1960s cancelled their contracts in early 1967, leaving the park with a "definite need" for this service. It's not clear when the park was able to rectify this deficiency.[132]

As the most daring technical climbers put up new routes on the Diamond and East Face and scores of skilled climbers tried to repeat their climbs, the number of hikers on the peaks non-technical routes also increased. Hikers were a growing presence on the East Longs Peak Trail, the Cable Route, and the Keyhole Route during each summer season in the 1960s. The park reported 1,155 people ascending Longs Peak in 1961, 1,985 in 1962 and 2,050 in 1963, counting both technical and non-technical climbers.[133] In 1966 2643 people signed the CMC summit register; 2245 did so in 1967.[134]



Unidentified Rock Climber on the Diamond, August 1965. The number of technical climbers on Longs Peak rose sharply over the 1960s, though the great majority chose routes on the East Face that did not go up the Diamond. *Image courtesy of Rocky Mountain National Park.*

Climbers Guide, 8-10.

128 "Summary of Annual Mountaineering Reports from Areas Administered by the National Park Service, 1963," 5.

129 "Master Plan," Rocky Mountain National Park, 1964, 9, ROMO Archives.

130 Fricke, *A Climbers Guide*, 66; Briggs, "The Diamond," 30; Nesbit, *Longs Peak* (2005), 69.

131 Superintendent's Monthly Report, March 1967, ROMO Library; Nesbit, *Longs Peak*, (2005), 69-70.

132 Nesbit, *Longs Peak* (2005), 69-70; Achey, *Climb!*,103.

133 "Interpretive Prospectus," 1961, 12, ROMO Library; Summary of Mountaineering Reports, 2.

134 Fred J. Novak, Superintendent, Rocky Mountain National Park, "High Point in the Park," *Trail and Timberline*, January, 1968, 3.

Graffiti on park aspen. Increased climbing activity on Longs Peak in the 1960s coincided with a new nation-wide appreciation for backcountry wilderness and concern about the degradation of natural resources. This photo reflects Rocky Mountain National Park's interest in documenting human impacts on park resources. *Image courtesy of Rocky Mountain National Park.*

By 1968 the total number of climbers had shot up to 4,226, the highest number in any year so far. Of that number 379 had registered for technical climbs, the highest number in any year so far but, clearly, the great majority were non-technical climbers.[135] Some of the non-technical climbers took advantage of the stables within the park that offered guided trips on horseback to the Boulderfield, at which point they dismounted and climbed to the summit. The Cable Route was the most popular ascent route, but most people descended via the Keyhole Route because traffic on the cables was so heavy. Continuing the pattern that was established after World War II, the professional guide companies holding permits for Longs Peak worked almost exclusively with technical climbers, leaving the hikers on the non-technical routes without expert assistance.

A variety of motives and interests seem to have propelled climbers toward Longs Peak in the 1960s. Technical climbers were obviously drawn to the Diamond and East Face by values generated and sustained within the climbing community. They were participants in a sport that encouraged high levels of skill and ambition, while also demanding fortitude and determination under daunting high-altitude conditions. Some in the climbing community deliberately embraced extreme levels of risk. Tackling the Diamond seemed a logical step for climbers who had acquired big-wall skills and wanted to test them in an alpine environment. Many of the non-technical climbers who scrambled to the summit of Longs via the Keyhole Route or Cable Route had probably been inspired by photos and stories that appeared in newspapers and magazines across the country after Rearick and Kamps, and then Kor, Robbins, and others put up astonishingly difficult routes on the newly-opened Diamond. The non-technical climbers, knowing they could not attempt the Diamond, adjusted their aspirations accordingly and settled for the Keyhole and Cable Routes.

Increased climbing activity on Longs in the 1960s was also prompted by a new environmental consciousness and an appreciation for backcountry wilderness that was spreading across the nation. Americans in the 1950s and 1960s encountered growing evidence of environmental damage and hazard, in both the landscapes of ordinary life – suburbs, cities, small towns, farms – and in wilderness settings where they sought refuge and renewal. They began to worry about the harm to humans and nature that might be caused by industrial toxins, mining, and the testing of atomic weapons. Many gained first-hand experience of the damaging effects of pollution and deforestation in and around their own suburban developments. They became aware of public debates about the chemicals used in modern lawn care and industrial agriculture, and about the harm to waterways and freshwater species caused by the building of dams. Prompted by the publication of Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* in 1961, and by the media campaigns of Howard Zahniser of the Wilderness Society and David Brower from the Sierra Club, Americans debated whether or not to curtail the use of chemical pesticides and fertilizers and pondered the merits of proposed new wilderness legislation. They considered how best to restore landscapes and rivers already damaged by development. So too, they worried about the state of their national parks and questioned the extent to which Mission 66 could be reconciled with the new environmentalism.[136]

Though the advocates of Mission 66 believed it effectively balanced the park's obligations to protect

135 Nesbit, *Longs Peak*, (2005), 70. Nesbit does not indicate whether these numbers reflect all attempted ascents or all successful summits.

136 Rachel Carson, *Silent Spring*. Introduction by Linda Lear, Afterword by Edward O. Wilson. (Boston and New York: Mariner Books, a division of Houghton and Mifflin, 40th Anniversary Edition, 2002); Kirkpatrick Sale, *The Green Revolution: The American Environmental Movement, 1962-1992* (New York: Hill and Wang, a division of Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1993), 12-24; Sellars, *Preserving Nature in the National Parks*, 173-191; Adam Rome, *The Bulldozer in the Countryside: Suburban Sprawl and the Rise of American Environmentalism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

nature and promote human enjoyment in the park, the National Park Service's development plan provoked a hostile response in the growing environmental movement. While National Park Service Director Conrad Wirth and his staff believed Mission 66 would protect the wilderness by channeling visitors to frontcountry destinations and limiting their stay to one or two days, others saw it as the means by which unlimited numbers of visitors would gain access to parks that were already crowded beyond capacity. Critics had begun to complain in the 1950s that Mission 66's willingness to accommodate motorists would end up destroying more of the nation's precious parkland and utterly distort the meaning of wilderness. David Brower, the Sierra Club's executive director, charged that Mission 66 was compromising the national parks by creating a wholly inauthentic "roadside wilderness." It tried to connect humans to nature through artifice, bringing development into the parks and using man-made products and settings: automobiles, roads, campgrounds, visitor centers, cafeterias, laundromats, boat-docking facilities, and winter resorts. The results, Brower said, were altogether fraudulent.

Brower was deeply suspicious of tourism and recreation, though not altogether consistent in his opposition to it. During the Echo Park Dam controversy, which began in 1949, he and other conservationists encouraged recreation in Dinosaur National Monument as a way to bring attention to what would be lost if the dam at Echo Park was built and the national monument's canyons and rivers were inundated by water. Conservationists also conveniently overlooked the fact that Mission 66 funds subsequently improved the road that brought recreationists to Echo Park and helped to safeguard its future. Regardless, Brower, Zahniser, and others, had begun to push hard for a wilderness bill in 1949, and they continued even after the Echo Park Dam was conclusively defeated with the passage of the Colorado River Storage Project Act of 1956, which stated that "that no dam or reservoir constructed under the authorization of the Act shall be within any National Park or Monument." In the era of Mission 66, conservationists saw new wilderness legislation as critical to the protection of vast tracts of public land from alteration by humans and, thus, to a defense of the national parks.[137]

Critics of Mission 66 had not gained much of a hearing in the 1950s, but by the early 1960s public sentiment opposing Mission 66 was becoming widespread. National Park Service officials were surprised and unprepared to handle the negative response; they underestimated the strength of the environmental movement and the degree to which its anti-development message resonated with the American public and contributed to skepticism about Mission 66. By 1962 the park service knew it had a problem on its hands. In September of that year, National Park Service Assistant Director Daniel Beard of the Office of Public Affairs acknowledged the impact of the environmental movement on public support for Mission 66 projects. Speaking to a gathering of park superintendents at Rocky Mountain National Park about the impact of the environmental movement's criticism, Beard lamented especially the loss of support from women's organizations that had long been loyal champions of the park service: "The emotional appeal that they put out – that Mission 66 was harming the parks – actually got some of the women's organizations going away from us."[138] Indeed, the National Jaycees and the Federation of Women's Clubs, the latter an organization with thousands of member clubs, had become allies of Bower and Zahniser. Beard went on to argue for a stepped-

Trail Ridge Road Opening Ceremony,1968. By the late 1960s there was growing criticism among environmentalists of automobile tourists, such as the visitors in this photo, who drove into national parks and looked out onto wilderness areas but showed little inclination to leave the roadside. *Image courtesy of Rocky Mountain National Park.*

137 Mark Barringer, "Mission Impossible: National Park Development in the 1950s," *Journal of the West*, (1999): 22-26; Carr, *Mission 66*; Sellars, *Preserving Nature in the National Parks*, 177-194; Mark W.T. Harvey, *A Symbol of Wilderness: Echo Park and the American Conservation Movement* (University of Washington Press, 2000).

138 "Public Affairs, Don [sic] Beard, September 16, 1962," 8; transcript in ROMO library.

up public relations campaign, hoping that such a campaign would restore the public's confidence in Mission 66 and preserve the "integrity of the National Parks."[139]

The architects of Mission 66 at the top levels of the National Park Service insisted that their plan was true both to the Organic Act and to authentic wilderness protection, though among some biologists and superintendents skepticism about Mission 66 was growing. Park biologists supported the environmental movement's legislative efforts and, especially, its push for greater attention to scientific data and ecological principles. These skeptics within the service were advocates of a new concept of wilderness, different from the landscape aesthetic that underlay the first fifty years of the National Park Service's policies as well as Mission 66. Rather than viewing wilderness in terms of the pleasure or uplift it brought to humans, a new generation of wildlife biologists and ecologists argued that wilderness needed to be understood in terms of the biological and ecological integrity that sustained it, and needed to be protected because of its scientific value. Howard R. Stagner, Chief of the park service's Branch of Natural History, argued that the parks were "complex organisms" that were "rapidly becoming islands" in a nation of mixed land use and management. He believed the park service needed to do a better job of studying the ecological relationships and processes in the parks, the unnatural pressures upon them, and the impact of visitors upon fragile park environments.[140] Historian Ethan Carr describes the shift in thinking this way: "the social functionality of wilderness did not entail tourism or enjoyment. Its value to society was its intrinsic biological integrity, and that integrity was understood in scientific, not scenic, terms."[141]

The new environmental movement continued to gain momentum and, with the support of Congress and President Lyndon Johnson, the Wilderness Protection Act became law in 1964. The Act defined wilderness as areas of public land where "earth and its community of life are untrammeled by man." It further specified that except as necessary for emergencies, there shall be "no use of motor vehicles, motorized equipment or motorboats, no landing of aircraft, no other form of mechanical transport, and no structure or installation within any such area."[142] The Act created some areas of wilderness and provided a process by which additional public lands could be so designated.

At Rocky Mountain National Park (as in the National Park Service as a whole) managers expressed initial skepticism about the Wilderness Act, believing the legislation was unnecessary because the park already treated all but its frontcountry corridors as wilderness. The managers did not initially realize that the Wilderness Act entailed a new way of defining the wilderness. Over the course of the 1960s, however, park staff began to recognize the significance of the bill and started to manage wilderness areas of the park according to the standards of the new law. The park created new staff positions in resource management, and rangers began to develop a "coordinated plan for all of the park's undeveloped areas, keyed to the ecosystems of the park." They also planned for the inclusion of vast areas of the park (eventually over ninety percent) in the National Wilderness Preservation System (NWPS). Anticipating the designation of Longs Peak and other areas of the park as part of the NWPS, park managers at Rocky Mountain National Park discussed

139 Don Beard, Transcript of Public Affairs presentation to Superintendents Meeting. 1962. Rocky Mountain National Park Library, 13.

140 Richard W. Sellars, *Preserving Nature in the National Parks*, 168-173, 193, 200-201.

141 Carr, *Mission 66*, 307.

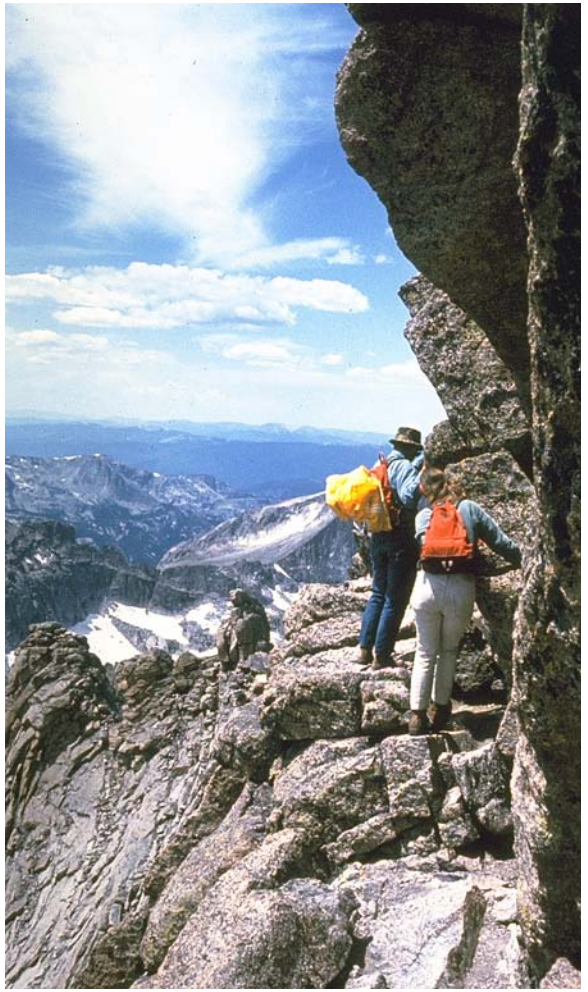
142 Public Law 88-577 (16 U.S. C. 1131-1136), 88th Congress, Second Session, September 3, 1964. Full text available at http://www.wilderness.net/index.cfm?fuse=NWPS&sec=legisAct (accessed August 10, 2009.)

where to remove backcountry buildings and other man-made contrivances and how to reduce the harm visitors caused to wilderness environments when they cut switchbacks, left trash in the backcountry, or cut tree boughs for bedding. They noted the real need for increased education of the public about "vital…rules of the trail."[143]

Managing Longs Peak with the Wilderness Act in mind did nothing to eliminate the practical complexities that had emerged in earlier decades as rangers and park superintendents tried to balance the preservation of undeveloped nature against the need to provide for human enjoyment of scenic vistas and backcountry recreation. Though biologists and other natural scientists were in favor of preserving wilderness for its ecological integrity, rather than for its aesthetic or recreational value to humans, the Wilderness Act retained, and may even have intensified, the tensions of the 1916 Organic Act. While defining wilderness as natural areas "untrammeled" by human beings, it also declared that a critical goal of wilderness preservation was to give humans "outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation."[144] The Wilderness Act, with the help of the media attention that accompanied its passage, generated an appreciation for the preciousness and fragility of wilderness ecologies while also promoting a widespread desire among outdoor enthusiasts for a true "wilderness experience."

The park's efforts to manage and support technical and non-technical climbers on Longs Peak in the 1960s must be understood in relation to debates about the viability of Mission 66 and the passage of the Wilderness Act. Around the nation during the 1960s, backcountry recreation rose sharply as environmentalism merged with athletic and sporting ambitions to stoke visitors' interest in putting themselves in wilderness settings. In Rocky Mountain National Park, even as rangers and park managers began to consider how to protect wilderness areas according to the standards of the new law, they had to contend with sharply increased traffic on Longs Peak that was prompted, at least in part, by visitors' desire to have "wilderness experiences" of their own. Yet most of these visitors had little scientific understanding of wilderness settings and no clear idea as to how to behave responsibly in them. For many, the scenic integrity or aesthetic beauty of a wilderness landscape was probably still more meaningful (because it could be readily observed by the layperson) than the ecological integrity of a natural area. Certainly, the breathtakingly beautiful images of wilderness created by contemporary photographers such as Eliot Porter, and widely distributed by the Sierra Club and other wilderness protection organizations, helped to encourage this perspective.[145]

While the park struggled to figure out how to stretch its modest resources to improve backcountry education and oversight, the Colorado Mountain Club picked up some of the slack. It worked hard for the passage of the Wilderness Act, putting pressure on one of its most significant critics, Representative Wayne Aspinall (D-Colorado), who, as chair of the House Interior and

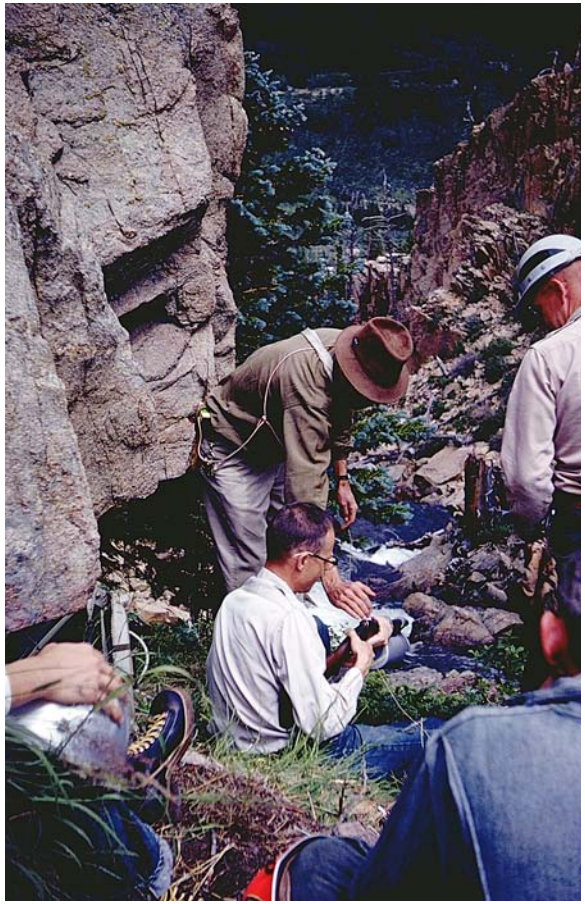


Hikers at the Narrows, Keyhole Route, Longs Peak, 1969. Park rangers at Rocky Mountain National Park began to consider how to protect backcountry areas of the park according to the standards of the Wilderness Act just as traffic on Longs Peak rose sharply in the 1960s. The increased human presence threatened the peak's natural resources while also compromising visitors' experience of undeveloped nature. Greater visitation to the peak also increased the park's involvement in rescue operations. *Image courtesy of Rocky Mountain National Park.*

143 On behalf of Rocky Mountain National Park, President Richard Nixon submitted a formal recommendation to Congress to designate most of the park as wilderness on June 13, 1974. See "Rocky Mountain National Park, Backcountry Wilderness Management Plan and Environmental Assessment," 2001, Section 1, p.8; David B. Butts, Staff Park Ranger Specializing in Resource Management at Rocky Mountain National Park, "Perpetual Back Country, A Turn in the Trail," *Trail and Timberline*, (May 1969) 90-92.

144 *www.wilderness.net/NWPS/documents/publiclaws/88-577.pdf*

145 Eliot Porter's most famous book of photography, "*In Wildness is the Preservation of the World*," (San Francisco: Sierra Club, 1962) explored the scenery of New England through the words and perspective of Transcendentalist and naturalist Henry David Thoreau. Porter subsequently published books of photography that offered stunning images of Glen Canyon, Maine, the Adirondacks, and Baja California, as well as numerous other sites around the world. Porter's imagery emphasized aesthetics rather than science, and his iconic photographs of the wild always showed it as a place without any human presence. See http://www.cartermuseum.org/collections/porter/about.php.



Mountain Rescue Training in Rocky Mountain National Park, 1962. The park's investment in search and rescue training was absolutely essential given the growing popularity of climbing during the 1960s, but the need for backcountry rescue exceeded available park resources. By the late 1960s, when the Kezlan accident occurred, independent search and rescue teams supplemented the rescue teams of the park. *Image courtesy of Rocky Mountain National Park.*

Insular Affairs Committee, would not release the proposed bill from committee until it had been weakened by concessions to land and mining interests. Club members continued, as before, to lead pleasure outings to Longs and other peaks, now with a renewed appreciation for the wilderness. The CMC also began to lead "litter trips," picking up the trash that other hikers and climbers left on backcountry trails during their trips to the peak.[146]

The park was able to increase the number of rangers assigned to the Longs Peak Ranger Station from two to three in 1963, acknowledging the growing traffic on the peak and the need to register technical climbers and offer at least some guidance and assistance to the non-technical crowd. But frontcountry duties remained a priority, as the number of frontcountry tourists continued to grow, far outstripping the number of climbers on Longs Peak. The addition of a single ranger to the staff at Longs Peak probably did little, moreover, to enhance the experience of visitors or protect the peak. Over the course of the decade many hikers visited Longs Peak with minimal or no face-to face interaction with rangers. Comments in the Summit Registers suggest that most people found their experience awe-inspiring, even without any "interpretive" cues from rangers.[147] Occasionally, rangers confronted and sanctioned hikers who were misbehaving in some egregious way. Thus, the park noted in 1963 an "interesting law enforcement case" at Longs Peak: "A party in Rocky Mountain was fined $25 for throwing rocks from Chasm View on Longs Peak, endangering any parties who might have been unseen below them."[148] Growing evidence of environmental damage made it clear, however, that rangers' management of Longs was not adequate to protect the peak, facilitate climbers' understanding of their responsibility for the environment, or ensure visitors an authentic wilderness experience.[149]

Serious accidents among technical climbers may have further strained the park's limited ability to live up to the standards of the Wilderness Act. These accidents absorbed precious resources as some of them required extraordinarily long and complex rescue operations. One of the most complex rescues of a technical climber took place in January1968 when Richard Kezlan tumbled more than four hundred feet down Lambs Slide and across Mills Glacier. Kezlan was part of a four-member party of only modestly-skilled alpinists who decided to abort a climb to their bivouac site on Broadway because two members of the group had become too exhausted to reach the ledge. Carelessly, the party began their descent in the dark without using ropes. Kezlan slid down the steep ice slope and was unconscious and bleeding from a "gaping head wound," by the time the other members of his party reached him, none of them with more than a basic knowledge of first aid. Fortunately, they carried short-wave radios and were able to broadcast the details of the accident over radio station KLOV in Loveland, Colorado. Two local independent rescue groups, Rocky Mountain Rescue and Alpine Rescue, plus a park search and rescue team set out to help the injured climber, but they were at least six hours away from the accident site.[150]

146 Kingery and Kingery, *The Colorado Mountain Club*, 79; Richard A. Baker, "The Conservation Congress of Anderson and Aspinall, 1963-1964," *Journal of Forest History* vol. 29, No. 3 (July 1985): 104-119; Steven c. Schulte, *Wayne Aspinall and the Shaping of the American West*, (Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2002), 130-162; E.H. Brunquist, "Wilderness Areas – Pros and Cons," *Trail and Timberline* (December 1958), 169, 175.

147 Colorado Mountain Club Summit Registers, Colorado Mountain Club Archives, American Mountaineering Center, Golden, CO.

148 Summary of Annual Mountaineering Reports, 4, ROMO Archives.

149 See Rocky Mountain National Park's Backcountry Management Plan (1975), ROMO Library. The plan proposed ways to remediate the "resource and wilderness experience deterioration" that had occurred in recent years as backcountry camping, hiking, climbing and horseback riding in the park increased sharply. It suggests that park staff were becoming acutely aware of these problems by the late 1960s.

150 Dee B. Crouch, M.D., "Midwinter Rescue on Longs Peak," *Trail*

Realizing Kezlan might die before any outside help reached him, another member of the climbing party, James Disney, hiked down to the Chasm Lake shelter cabin where some other climbers were staying overnight and found that one member of the group was a physician. Dr. Dee Crouch climbed to Kezlan and cared for him for the next six hours, though the medical supplies in his pack were wholly inadequate to the task of treating a patient in shock from massive blood loss. To make matters worse, the temperature was ten degrees Fahrenheit and winds were blowing at about fifty miles per hour. When the advance rescue team arrived with another physician, they stabilized Kezlan over a span of several hours and then moved him down to the Chasm Lake shelter. There, Dr. Crouch helped perform "one of the most primitive operations I have ever participated in. Kezlan's massive head wounds were opened and cleaned. Bleeding vessels were tied off. A portion of his skull was elevated to give his bruised brain more room to expand" Kezlan's blood pressure slowly rose from 70/50 – "barely enough to sustain life" – to a normal reading of 120/80. "Until this point I had given the man less than a 10% chance of living, now it was boosted to perhaps 80%." The rescue team still had to carry Kezlan all the way down the mountain, because poor visibility prevented a helicopter from landing near Chasm Lake. He reached Colorado General Hospital and underwent surgery "exactly twenty four hours after his fall. After a six-day stay and an uneventful recovery, Kezlan walked out of the hospital, very thankful to be alive." Thirty-seven people had been involved in his rescue. [151]

Even more arduous and costly was the August 1969 rescue of sixteen-year old Kordel Kor, a nephew of Layton Kor, who suffered serious head injuries and a broken femur and kneecap when he fell from the first lead on the Diamond's *Grand Traverse* route. Kor's rescue took over twenty-four hours and involved a series of potentially disastrous complications: a helicopter with medical support could not land because of mechanical difficulties; a huge boulder crashed down the rock face during the rescue, just missing Kor and his rescuers; finally, while being lowered from the Diamond in a litter, Kor, in shock and agitated, began trying to fight off those who were trying to save him. It took enormous skill and determination for the rescuers to get Kor to the Chasm Lake shelter cabin, where he was finally evacuated by helicopter to a Boulder hospital. Thirty-four members of the park staff and fourteen volunteers took part in the rescue effort.[152]

Rocky Mountain National Park had long been engaged in search and rescue operations, but climbing accidents on the East Face and Diamond in the 1960s put new strains on the search and rescue capabilities of park staff. The park was fortunate that independent rescue teams had begun to form in response to the growing popularity of backcountry sports. The accidents among technical climbers did not appear to prompt park authorities to question the wisdom of their decision to open the Diamond, but they certainly encouraged rangers to re-dedicate themselves to careful monitoring during the mandatory registration process.

The rangers assigned to Longs Peak also had to contend with numerous accidents on the non-technical routes to the summit of Longs Peak in the 1960s, and as they did so they began to consider the issue of climber accidents and climber safety in a broader context, specifically, in relation to wilderness values. Going up and down the Keyhole and Cable Route non-technical climbers were sometimes hurt when rocks dislodged by climbers higher on the route fell onto them. Injuries due to falls on the rocky (and often wet

Climbing the Cable Route on the North Face of Longs Peak, circa 1968. By the late 1960s park rangers were growing increasingly concerned about the potential for accidents on the Cable Route among casual climbers. Rangers were also beginning to suggest that the cables were an artificial installation that compromised the natural beauty of the peak. *Image courtesy of Rocky Mountain National Park.*

and Timberline (March 1969), 41-44.

151 Ibid; Douglas MacDonald, *Longs Peak: The Story of Colorado's Favorite Fourteener* (Englewood, CO: Westcliffe Publishers, Inc., 2004), 153-154.

152 Nesbit, *Longs Peak* (11th ed) 69-71; MacDonald, *Longs Peak*, 150-152.

Congestion on the Cable Route, circa 1968. The line of climbers ascending the cables in this photo would have blocked the passage of any climbers trying to descend the North Face via the Cable Route at the same time. *Image courtesy of Rocky Mountain National Park.*

or icy) terrain were also common. Many injuries were slight, but others were extremely serious. Indeed, as park rangers dealt with more and more climbers, and thus with increased numbers of injuries, they began in 1967 to evaluate the major accidents and fatalities on the Keyhole and Cable routes since 1925. What they discovered was that the six fatalities on the non-technical routes had all been on the North Face's Cable Route. Five of the seven major accidents had also been on the Cable Route, two on the Keyhole route. These findings prompted the peak's rangers to look very closely at the North Face and to identify a host of problems, all related to safety, for those who used the cables:

> They have a reputation of being quite simple, but they negotiate steep and often icy rock. It takes a certain amount of strength to pull yourself up over them, but there are ample resting spots. However, if a person lets go, he falls. The cables create a bottle neck on the route as more climbers ascend to the base only to find a slow party blocking their passage. This concentration of waiting people in a hazardous rock-fall area and in a location virtually surrounded by technical terrain is a deadly combination. There is a steep snow field that is totally unsafe to negotiate without equipment that must be coped with early and late in the season. Descent on the cable route is very hazardous but is often undertaken by the casual climber due to fatigue, sudden storm, and the lateness of the hour. Once above the cables, the route passes through technical terrain that can easily be blundered on by an inexperienced party, particularly during lightening storms. The North Face and the cables themselves attract considerable lightening.[153]

There were obvious safety problems on the Cable Route and these were exacerbated by the inexperience of many "casual" climbers. These problems were even greater than usual in 1967, because persistent ice and snow meant the Cable Route was open only to technical climbers. Yet, as one ranger remarked, all too often, non-technical climbers, "though registered for the Keyhole, turn to the deceptively easy north face once they get to the Boulderfield. This practice is common and terrifying to the rangers at Longs Peak and grows out of the past reputation of the cables being a cinch." With safety in mind, the rangers at Longs Peak argued that the Keyhole Route was a reasonable alternative to the North Face cables, and they recommended to park superiors that the latter be removed because of the hazards they presented to casual climbers. Concerns about the fundamental dangers of the Cable Route were so high that the rangers at Longs Peak did not bother to recommend more of their usual form of intervention – education. Rather, they simply asked that the cables be removed and the route re-classified as a technical ascent.

Significantly, though they focused on safety, the rangers at Longs also thought park authorities should consider the Cable Route in environmental terms. "Esthetically speaking, the removal of the cables will restore some of the park values on the peak 42 years ago." Rangers were coming to see the cables as an installation that simultaneously posed a risk to visitors and compromised the natural beauty of the peak. Though still speaking more about wild nature's scenic value than about its ecological integrity, just four years after the passage of the Wilderness Act, Longs Peak rangers were thinking explicitly about how best to preserve the peak's wilderness while protecting inexperienced climbers looking for a "high mountain experience."[154]

By the end of the 1960s rangers on Longs Peak were just beginning to grapple with the Wilderness Act and its complex implications for managing the popular peak. It did not take park authorities long to decide that all but the trailhead facilities at Longs should be managed as a

153 Memorandum from Longs Peak Ranger Don Bachman to Wild Basin Sub-District Ranger, 27 July 1967, 3-4. ROMO Archives

154 Ibid., 4-5.

wilderness area according to the standards of the new legislation, or that the Chasm Lake shelter cabin and the Vaille memorial shelter should be exempted from removal from Longs for safety reasons, though they were man-made structures.[155] The park was beginning the very long process of seeking approval to place most of its acreage, including Longs Peak, in the National Wilderness Preservation System.[156] But having made these preliminary decisions, there was much left to consider.

Park authorities did not heed rangers' recommendation to remove the Cable Route for six years, and over those years, as the next chapter shows, the framing of discussions about climbing on Longs changed considerably, with growing emphasis on environmental impacts. Many rangers were becoming advocates of backcountry and climbing practices that minimized humans' harm to trails, campsites, and rock faces. They made recommendations and altered policies on the climbing and bivouacking done by technical climbers with new wilderness values in mind. When the Cable Route was finally taken down in 1973, affecting thousands of non-technical climbers, park authorities justified its removal primarily on the basis of "wilderness requirements." Human safety was a secondary consideration. The North Face would be relieved of a man-made contrivance, its natural integrity restored. And casual climbers on Longs would be "conquering" the peak on their own "without artificial aid," thus allowing themselves an "even more meaningful" experience than they might have previously gained.[157] With the removal of the Cable Route, the park made clear its intention to place natural resource protection and restoration on Longs Peak at the forefront of its agenda and to alter its ideas about "visitor experience" to fit the new priority. What served wilderness protection should also define climbers' quest for enjoyment on Longs Peak.

But old tensions and problems remained. It remained to be seen how willingly technical and non-technical climbers would match their ambitions and conduct to the environmental well-being of the peak. Equally important, Longs remained a backcountry site whose popularity seemed only to rise, complicating the park's day-to-day work and rangers' interpretation of its mission. Indeed, crowding made rangers and some visitors wonder if it was possible, after all, to preserve Longs' wilderness ***and*** offer a "wilderness experience" to all the climbers who sought to obtain its summit.

155 I have not yet found park records that reveal how the telephones and telephone poles were handled under the standards of the Wilderness Act. Though man-made, the telephones might have been considered a necessity for safety reasons. According to Nesbit (2005), 71, a new telephone was installed at the Chasm Shelter Cabin in 1970, perhaps in hopes of lessening the difficulty and danger of technical rescues. Eventually, however, all the phones on Longs Peak were removed and the telephone poles were cut down. In recent years, cell phones have enabled technical and non-technical climbers to communicate with emergency assistance.

156 Rocky Mountain National Park submitted a formal application to place most of the park's acreage into the National Wilderness Preservation System in 1974. Formal approval was finally granted in 2008.

157 Memorandum from Ranger Fricke to East District Ranger Hickman, 4 July 1973; Press Release, Rocky Mountain National Park, 16 July 1973, ROMO Archives.

Chapter 6: "Clean Climbing" and "Leave-No-Trace" Ethics on Longs Peak from 1970 to 1990

The Diamond. The 1970s and 1980s were decades of dynamic change on the granite walls of Longs Peak as climbers put up new routes, developed new equipment and techniques, and debated the responsibility they carried for the natural environment in which they climbed. *Image courtesy of Rocky Mountain National Park.*

In 1969 search and rescue training teams at Rocky Mountain National Park completed a trial rescue from the top of the Diamond, descending to their "victim" from the edge of the North Face. "The event used the latest rescue techniques and answered many unknowns involved in evacuating an accident off the Diamond."[158] Perhaps this success was one factor in the park's decision to lift its restriction on solo climbing in 1970. Whatever the park's reasoning, its change of policy allowed Bill Forrest, a local climber, to make the first roped solo ascent of the Diamond in July 1970 on a variation of the *Yellow Wall* route.

The solo climb required two nights on the big wall, and there were numerous times during the long ascent when Forrest toiled to quiet his own anxieties and meet the challenges of the rock. The first such occasion was early on a Saturday morning, in a small bivouac cave on Broadway, as Forrest witnessed the humbling power and splendor of the mountain,:

> Long before dawn, I was awakened by a terrible roar as an avalanche of rock cascaded down the North Chimney. Sparks shot through the darkness and the mountain seemed to groan and lurch, but my anchors held and the bottom didn't rip out of my hammock. I couldn't get back to sleep, and I hung in the chilly breeze waiting for the beautiful sunshine.

A second period of anxiety and concentrated effort began the following afternoon:

> Thirty feet of easy nailing brought me to an evil crack – too wide to jam, to narrow to chimney. I cursed, prayed, chickened out and finally got on with it and struggled. I didn't dare lose my composure but it was awfully awkward. I fought and flailed. The crack took my best but once up it, I was glad it was there; it added zest to the route."[159]

Forrest's successful completion of the solo climb marked the start of a period of dynamic change on the granite walls of Longs Peak. Driven by ambition and competitiveness, by remarkable innovations in technique and equipment, and by their love of vertical nature, elite climbers in the 1970s and 1980s achieved a succession of "firsts" that could not have been imagined in earlier decades. Forrest's ascent was followed by other solo climbs, this time on the right side of the Diamond, which was steeper than the left side and still almost untouched. In 1971 Forrest's good friend, nineteen-year old Kris Walker, put up a right-side route in a solo climb, calling it *Waterhole #3* (V, 5.8, A3). Two years later, Jim Beyer, only seventeen years old, put up *Sunshine* (V, 5.7, A3) in a third solo climb. The flurry of activity on the right side of the Diamond resulted in three other new routes, all put in by teams of climbers between 1971 and 1974. Renewing the quest for new routes on the left side of the Diamond, in 1974 Ron Olevsky and Bob Dodds put in *Pervertical Sanctuary*, which eventually became one of the wall's most popular climbs, with a rating of IV, 5.8, A1.[160] Numerous other new routes went up on the Diamond in subsequent years. Technical climbers (elite and not-so-elite) also continued to make frequent use of existing routes on the Diamond and elsewhere on the East Face.[161]

158 Nesbit, *Longs Peak* (2005), 71. Rescuers involved in the trial included personnel from the park and volunteers with the Rocky Mountain Rescue Group, an all-volunteer association serving Boulder County since 1947. See, http://www.rockymountainrescue.org/history.php. American Alpine Rescue, another volunteer group, also often participated in search and rescue operations in Rocky Mountain National Park, though it's not known if it was involved in the 1969 trial rescue.

159 Forrest's account of his 1970 ascent was originally published in the *American Alpine Journal* (1971) and is excerpted in Achey, *Climb!*, 103-104.

160 Achey, *Climb!*, 104-105.

161 Briggs, "The Diamond," 24-25.

The publication of Walter Fricke's *A Climbers Guide to the Rocky Mountain National Park* (1971) played a critical role in boosting technical climbers' interest in the peak. Fricke had been a summer ranger in Rocky Mountain National Park for four years and was an accomplished climber. He knew many of the climbing routes in the park and on Longs Peak from first-hand experience, and he consulted extensively with other climbers to obtain additional detail and assure the accuracy of his guidebook. Fricke made extensive use of park photographs, marking them to show many of the routes he described to readers. Park staff acknowledged that "with this text of previously unpublished climbs, RMNP climbing activity increased dramatically." According to climber Jeff Achey, Fricke's highly informative guide "transformed the scene" at Longs, attracting droves of climbers to the single alpine peak.[162]

In 1973 there were 1014 technical ascents on Longs, 730 of them successful. Of the total number of attempted technical climbs, 106 were on the East Face and Diamond or other steep ridges of the peak; the others were all winter climbs (thus requiring technical equipment and skills) on the Keyhole and Cable Route. These numbers do not seem particularly high, but there had been only 697 technical climbs in the entire park in 1967. And the numbers continued to increase. In 1977 rangers reported 5956 technical attempts in the entire park, and in 1982 the number went up to 9400. As park managers wrote in 1983, "Where there was one climber back in 1967 there are now about 13." It's likely that at least half of all technical climbs were on the various rocky faces and high walls of Longs Peak.[163]

Admittedly, Longs Peak was only one among a number of great climbing destinations in Colorado. Eldorado Canyon near Boulder, Lumpy Ridge near Estes Park, the Black Canyon of the Gunnison, Garden of the Gods in Colorado Springs, the San Juan Mountains near Telluride, and the Colorado National Monument offered fantastically varied rock to ambitious climbers. Longs Peak actually lost some allure relative to other sites after 1970, especially the North Chasm View Wall in the Black Canyon. But this didn't diminish the fact that it was still the nation's premier site for big-wall climbing in a true alpine setting.[164]

Many of the climbs in these new locations, as well as ascents on the Diamond, were being accomplished by the use of free-climbing methods and equipment. When Forrest did his solo climb on the Diamond in 1970, he mixed aid and free climbing, as was typical at the time, but for the free-climbing moves he used an early version of chockstones (or "nuts") instead of pitons. These were tiny metal wedges threaded on a wire that could be placed (rather than hammered) into a crack for protection and then easily removed. Forrest was an innovator of climbing equipment, as well as an innovative climber. Together with Kris Walker, he created exchangeable-pick ice tools and a single-point suspension hammock. And in addition to developing some of the earliest climbing nuts, the two young climbers "played a key role in the development of spring-loaded camming devices" (often known as "Friends"), subsequently mass-produced by Ray Jardine.[165]Camming devices were more versatile than simple chocks, and they allowed climbers to tackle sections of rock with free-climbing techniques that could previously have been climbed only with direct aid.

162 Climbing Task Force, "Task Force Findings: Climbing in Rocky Mountain National Park," May 1990, Office of Jeff Connor, Resources Stewardship Division, ROMO; Jeff Achey, "Longs Strange Trip," *Climbing Magazine* (June 15-August 1, 1994), 71.

163 "Climbing Activity, Rocky Mountain National Park, 1973." ROMO Archives; "Bivouac Use Management: Overview and Recommendations," December 1983, ROMO Archives.

164 Achey, *Climb!*, Part Three, 80-168.

165 Achey, *Climb!* 103; Matt Perkins, "Rock Climbing Ethics: An Historical Perspective, Part I" *Northwest Mountaineering Journal* (2005), 6 accessed 1 Dec 2009 at http://www.mountaineers.org/nwmj/05/051_Ethics.html.

Even in the 1960s, when it had been impossible to do difficult pitches without direct aid, "good style" on aid climbs "meant minimizing bolt placements and moving fast."[166] When Dave Rearick and Bob Kamps climbed the Diamond in 1960, they removed nearly all their pitons and placed just four bolts. Over time, climbers worked to develop techniques and equipment that allowed them to keep their hands and feet directly on the rock throughout a difficult ascent. Dave Rearick created a set of wooden nuts for his own use "and was one of the first climbers in Colorado to pursue free climbing as a worthwhile end it itself." But unlike Forrest and his climbing partners, or Yvon Chouinard who manufactured some of the first aluminum nuts, Rearick didn't try to fabricate free-climbing devices using mass market technologies.[167]

After several teams made partial free ascents of the Diamond using chocks in the early 1970s, Wayne Goss and Jim Logan succeeded in free-climbing most of *D7* in 1975, exiting at Table Ledge because of bad weather. Jim Dunn and Chris Wood followed just a week later, freeing a variation of the *Yellow Wall*. In 1977 John Bachar, a California climber known for his superbly confident free solos, freed the entire *D7*. And in 1978 Bachar returned to the Diamond with Billy Westbay, and the two men freed a version of *D1*. Roger Briggs and Jeff Achey freed the original *D1* route, put in by Rearick and Kamps, in 1980.[168]

These climbers were part of a generation that was passionate about assessing the meaning of movement in a vertical world. Climbing was about athletic performance, but it was also about who the climbers were, the values embedded in their lives and identities, and what they thought of their relationship to the rocky surfaces on which they climbed. Free climbing practices lent themselves to a "clean climbing" ethic, embraced most publically by Yvon Chouinard, one of Yosemite's most famous climbers and the founder of Patagonia, an environmentally-informed manufacturer and retailer of technical clothing and equipment. Influenced by the new environmentalism, free climbers tried to fit their intentions and athleticism to preservation values. They were increasingly self-conscious about the presence of humans in nature and wanted to believe their motives, actions, and goals were in accord with wilderness protection. The new "clean climbing" ethic conveyed climbers' interest in merging the ambitions and new techniques of their sport with environmental awareness.

Advocacy for clean climbing had actually begun to develop in the 1950s and early 1960s among the nation's elite climbers as they watched peers ascend vast and nearly blank rock faces and cliffs in Yosemite. The climbs were made possible by the use of large numbers of bolts and other direct aid, and to some it seemed "there might be no limits to what climbers could master." But skeptics wondered if these ascents represented "true" climbing. Technical climbers had long debated "fair means" in their sport, and the advocates of clean climbing charged that some aid climbers were gaining unfair advantage from bolting and technical aid. Soon, the debate about bolting moved beyond questioning whether or not direct aid compromised the authenticity of difficult climbs. Yvon Chouinard led the way in broadening the debate when he championed the aesthetic and environmental virtues of "clean climbing" in a 1961 article published in *Summit* magazine. Chouinard was certain that bolts encouraged climbers to attempt routes that were beyond their abilities; more important, he lamented the permanent damage they did to delicate rock faces. Bolts ought to be climbers' last resort, Chouinard declared, and climbers might even consider removing bolts already in place. In 1963, climber Steve Roper heeded Chouinard's suggestion, extracting

166 Achey, *Climb!* 56.

167 Achey, *Climb!* 56; A photograph of Rearick's wooden chocks may be viewed at http://www.needlesports.com/nutsmuseum/morenutsstories.htm.

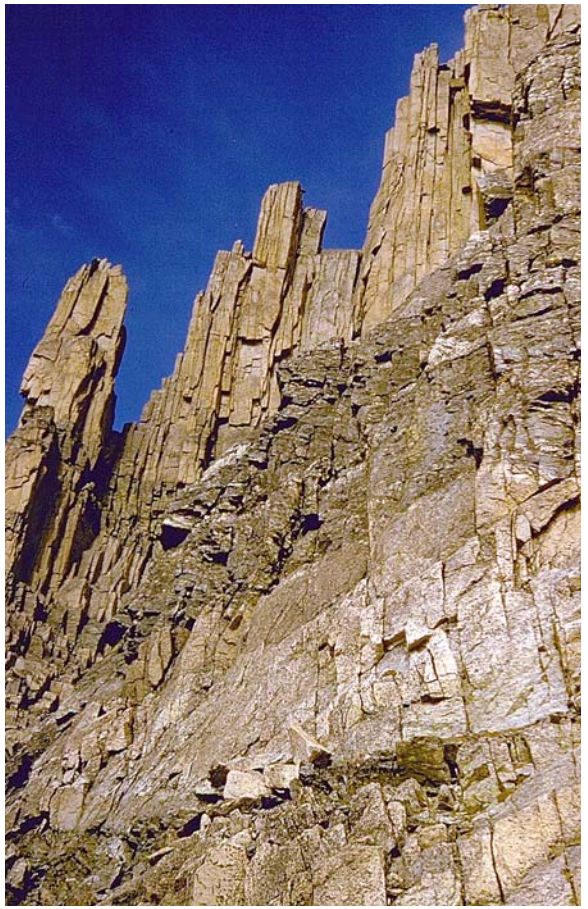
168 Achey, 142-3; Briggs, "The Diamond," 31-34.

thirty bolts from a classic route on Shiprock in New Mexico and publishing a defense of his actions in an article in *Summit* magazine in 1964.[169]

Sometime thereafter, "clean" climbers began to "chop" bolts from established routes, demonstrating a self-righteous disdain for aid climbers. Chopping or cutting a bolt was probably faster than pulling one out, but it left unusable hardware on rock faces and ratcheted up the potential for serious conflict among climbers. Worried that bolt chopping was doing more harm than good, Bob Kamps published an article in *Summit* magazine endorsing a climbing ethic that obligated mountaineers to consider their responsibilities to the mountains ***and*** to other mountaineers. He urged climbers both to use bolts sparingly and to desist from "bolt chopping," which, more than anything else, signaled disrespect for other climbers. Kamps wanted his peers to realize that the efforts of some clean climbers to assert their own superiority through bolt chopping could only harm the entire climbing community in the long run.[170]

By the 1970s many of the new generation of climbers on Longs Peak had embraced a "free and clean" climbing ethic that represented a deepening commitment to pure sport, ethical conduct, and environmentalism. Nuts and other hammerless protection replaced pitons, which, though removable, were perhaps even more damaging to rock than bolts because they were hammered in and pulled out repeatedly, scarring rock surfaces. When the 1972 *Chouinard Catalog* was published, it included a powerful statement by Yvon Chouinard and Tom Frost on the evolving ethics of clean climbing. To a far-flung audience of free climbers they declared, "Mountains are finite, and despite their massive appearance, they are fragile." Chouinard and Frost urged climbers to stay off routes they didn't intend to finish, to abandon the use of artificial aid on free routes, and to use chocks rather pitons. They warned, too, against a "moral deterioration," whereby "advanced gadgetry" threatened to deprive climbing of its fundamental adventure and an "appreciation of the mountain environment itself." They asked climbers to "re-examine your motives for climbing," to "employ restraint and good judgment," and to "remember the rock, the other climber." Chouinard and Frost may have had little knowledge of national park history, but their emphasis on moral restraint and individual responsibility fit well into Rocky Mountain National Park's long history of displacing some of its responsibility for protecting resources and visitors' enjoyment onto backcountry users.[171]

Of course, Chouinard and Frost were not simply voices of environmental stewardship. The fact that Chouinard was an entrepreneur as well as a moralist and would quickly become an enormously successful manufacturer of "advanced gadgetry" revealed the contradictions and tensions that lay at the heart of modern sporting in backcountry settings. It was not simply physical ability and the desire for communion with raw nature that made climbers' experience in a vertical wilderness possible. Rather, technical climbers were utterly dependent upon, and deeply immersed in, a modern mass market. Modern manufacturing and distribution systems had produced over many decades the widespread degradation of natural resources that finally motivated some Americans to clamor for the protection and worship of those pockets of wilderness that still survived. But modern manufacturing also produced the specialized rope, hardware, harnesses, and sticky-soled shoes that made it possible for climbers to engage in a continual search for new vertical challenges. And at least some of that equipment did direct harm to the natural rock that climbers held in awe and wonderment.



Broadway, the East Face of Longs Peak. When Yvon Chouinard and Tom Frost published a statement in favor of "clean climbing" in 1972, they hoped to convince climbers of the fragility of the rock faces on which they climbed. This photo of the East Face provides evidence that some of the rock on Longs Peak was fractured and susceptible to human impact. *Image courtesy of Rocky Mountain National Park.*

169 Perkins, "Rock Climbing Ethics, Part I 1-2, 4-5, Part II, 3.

170 Bob Kamps, "Bolt Ethics," *Summit*, 1966.

171 *1972 Chouinard Catalog*, 2-3, accessed at http://www.climbaz.com.chouinard72/ch_page2.html on 1 December 2009.

The Diamond. By the mid-1980s climbers on Longs Peak were deeply divided over the ethics and environmental values of their sport, and those divisions played out on the Diamond. Free climbers using removable protection predominated on the left side of the Diamond; sport climbers claimed the more difficult right side as their own and affixed routes with permanent protection. *Image courtesy of Rocky Mountain National Park.*

In truth, the "clean climbing" ethic did not initially have a dramatic impact on climbing practices or environmental awareness at Longs Peak. Some climbers continued to use bolts, and pitons failed to disappear. Moreover, free climbers in the 1970s had a relatively narrow understanding of the environmental impact of their presence on the rock. Chouinard and Frost recognized that "alpine tundra, meadows, trees, lakes and streams are all endangered," but the men admitted that their "primary concern" was "with deterioration of the rock itself." This narrow perspective carried over to Longs where many climbers, whether they used bolts or chocks, left trash at the base of the East Face and on Broadway and "gardened" the rock face, removing alpine plants and soil to improve handholds and the placement of protection. Then too, the simple presence of growing numbers of technical climbers on Longs eroded the rock and paths leading to it, and tended to degrade the wilderness climbing experience.[172]

The growing number and limited environmental perspective of technical climbers on Longs presented park rangers and managers with a host of challenges. In the aftermath of the Wilderness Act's passage, park managers were increasingly attuned to protecting the physical resources of the park, yet they also needed to promote climbers' safety and enjoyment of the peak's wilderness environment. Rangers and managers welcomed the move toward "free and clean" climbing and encouraged peer education and pressure within the climbing community to deepen this trend. Walter Fricke, ranger ***and*** local climber, readily resorted to peer pressure in his self-published climbing guide when he wrote: "Ninety-five percent of all leads in Rocky Mountain National Park can be protected perfectly adequately with natural anchors, nuts, or pitons. Climbers ascending frequently climbed routes simply have no excuse for bringing a bolt kit along, much less for using it. Leave the damn bolts at home."[173]

It was not enough, however, simply to discourage the placement of bolts (or pitons). Complicating matters considerably was the emergence of yet another style of climbing by the latter part of the 1970s, one that competed directly with "clean" methods and values. "Sport climbing" arrived in Colorado in 1977 in the person of Alec Sharp, a British climber who had just moved to Boulder. Sharp brought into Colorado's "free and clean" environment a new method of gymnastic climbing that maximized both the difficulty and safety of climbs. By roping from a summit ***down*** a rock face, Sharp was able to inspect a potential route and use a power drill to install a permanent array of bolts. A fantastically difficult route could then be climbed "free" but not "clean." Sport climbing was also taking off in other climbing areas around the United States, and it was quickly embraced by Colorado climbers looking to establish new routes. "Piton ladders" and bolt-intensive routes became common in many of Colorado's best and most challenging climbing areas. By the mid-1980s the "merely vertical" left side of the Diamond remained in the hands of free climbers using removable protection, but sport climbers had claimed the more difficult right side as their own, affixing routes with permanent protection. According to Jeff Achey, "the overhanging Right Side was like a different wall, off limits to free climbers." Climbers at Longs Peak and elsewhere in Colorado began "warring over the use of bolts to protect new free climbs … The furor that arose over rappel bolting – in Colorado and elsewhere – would be hard to overestimate."[174] To "free and clean" climbers, the practitioners of rappel bolting seemed oblivious to environmental concerns, and their reliance on top-down

172 *1972 Chouinard Catalog*, 2-3; "Task Force Findings: Climbing in Rocky Mountain National Park," May 1990, Office of Jeff Connor, Resources Stewardship Division, ROMO,

173 Fricke, *A Climbers Guide*, 12.

174 Achey, *Climb!*, 187, 198, 206.

inspection and bolt placement produced a fraudulent form of climbing To sport-climbing enthusiasts, free climbers (by this time often referred to as "trad" or "traditional" climbers) seemed sanctimonious and without ambition.

Standing at the base of the East Face with the imperatives of the Wilderness Act in mind and alienated groups of climbers before them, rangers had to look hard for ways to protect the peak and encourage technical climbers' to match their ambitions to environmental values. So too, rangers on Longs Peak confronted continued growth in the number of non-technical climbers on the Cable and Keyhole Routes, inspired in part by a new adventure literature celebrating "Colorado's 14,000 foot mountains…as ideal landmarks in the American national identity."[175] In 1967 J. Powell wrote "14,000 Feet: Where in the World?" for *Summit* magazine, publicizing the "cult of the fourteener." According to Powell fascination and worship of the fourteener "reaches its apex in Colorado, where fifty-three [sic] altars await the worshipper." Three years later Perry Eberhart and Phillip Schmuck published *The Fourteeners: Colorado's Great Mountains*, a coffee-table book filled with stunning photographic images and descriptions of Colorado's highest peaks. Soon thereafter ambitious hikers and climbers began thinking in terms of climbing as many of the state's fourteeners as possible. Their quest to summit Colorado's fourteeners was greatly aided by Walter Borneman and Lyndon Lampert, who published *A Climbing Guide to Colorado's Fourteeners* in 1978. Borneman and Lampert's book offered mountaineers an accurate guide to routes and conditions on Colorado's fourteeners and described climbing every one of the high mountains – achieving a "Grand Slam" – a laudable goal.[176]By 1975 an estimated 7500 climbers were summiting Longs each year, most on non-technical routes. Ten years later, the estimate had climbed to over 10,000.[177]

Rangers responded to the dynamic scene on Longs Peak in the 1970s and 1980s by combining a new emphasis on scientific research with the time-honored equipment in their stewards' toolboxes: educating climbers, displacing partial responsibility for the well-being of the peak's natural resources and its climbers onto climbers themselves, and extending over climbers limited regulation and oversight. By the early 1970s rangers had already begun to evaluate various indicators of wilderness degradation in a systematic manner, gathering evidence of trash and human waste accumulation in the backcountry and of the harm climbers did to soil, water, and trees. Rangers on Longs initially focused their attention on bivouac sites such as those on Broadway (the ledge traversing the Diamond) and backcountry camp sites in the Boulderfield and Jim's Grove, where climbers spent many hours resting and preparing for climbs.[178] Convinced that increased use of these areas was resulting in a "resource and wilderness experience deterioration," the park for the first time began requiring climbers who intended to bivouac or camp in the backcountry to register with rangers. This was a small first step toward gathering information about the level of use at

175 Kevin S. Blake, "Colorado Fourteeners and the Nature of Place Identity," *The Geographical Review* (April 2002), 160.

176 Perry Eberhard and Phillip Schmuck, *The Fourteeners: Colorado's Great Mountains* (Chicago: Sage Books, 1970); Walter Borneman and Lyndon Lampert, *A Climbing Guide to Colorado's Fourteeners* (Boulder, CO: Pruett Publishing Co., 1978).

177 Peter D. Armitage, Memorandum from Longs' Peak Rangers to Backcountry Sub-District Ranger, Re: "Unimproved Trail, Jim's Grove to Granite Pass," 6 September 1976., ROMO Archives., 1; Rocky Mountain National Park, 1985 *Interpretive Prospectus*, 4, ROMO Library.

178 Fricke, *A Climbers Guide*, 10; "Backcountry Management Plan, Rocky Mountain National Park," 1975, ROMO Library, 1. This plan notes that park rangers had studied the steadily increasing impact of climbers and hikers on backcountry bivouac and camping sites since 1967 and had determined a 390 percent increase in overnight backcountry use in the park between 1967 and 1974. See also, "Bivouac Use Management: Overview and Recommendations," December 1983, ROMO Archives.

each site and toward limiting crowding and competition at campsites on Longs Peak and in other backcountry areas.[179]

As rangers and park managers began to examine "resource and wilderness experience deterioration" more systematically, they could find little excuse for the continued presence of the cables on Longs Peak. Park managers issued an order to remove the Cable Route in July 1973, hoping to bring the peak into closer compliance with new wilderness standards and reconcile the experience of non-technical climbers with wilderness values. In a memo to the park's East District Ranger written on July 4, 1973, ranger and climber Walter Fricke noted that all the people with whom he discussed the cables' removal agreed that they should come out, "the major reason for removal" being the "wilderness requirement." "Safety and discouragement of overcrowding" were "accompanying side effects."[180] Fricke represented the growing consensus among members of the park staff that the cables were antithetical to wilderness values. Rangers took them down from the North Face on a snowy July 20th1973, four days after the park issued a press release notifying the public of its intended action. The press release explained that the cables were being removed "on an experimental basis," apparently so the park could evaluate the public's response.[181] The removal of the cables was "in keeping with the purpose and intent of the national parks – to manage them in as near their natural condition as possible." The cables had offered artificial aid, the release also said, allowing people without experience or skill to attempt a climb far beyond their abilities. When the cables were removed and the North Face reverted to a technical climb, "people will be meeting Longs Peak on its own terms." The Wilderness Preservation Act of 1964 supplied "added emphasis for the removal of the cables." Longs Peak could not be considered for wilderness status so long as the cables remained. They were a man-made contrivance, not permissible in wilderness areas.

The park's press release also informed the public that there had been seven fatalities on the Cable Route since 1925, but only one on the Keyhole Route.[182] Staff knew that increased crowding raised the likelihood of even more injuries on the cables. In 1967, the year that rangers first recommended the removal of the cables, 2245 people climbed the summit of Longs via the Keyhole, Cable, and technical routes combined. By 1971, there were 998 summits via the Keyhole route and 5214 via the Cable Route.[183] More so than in 1967, the Cable Route had become dangerously crowded. Casual and technical-climbers descending from the summit via the cables often had to wait in place as ascending hikers slowly worked their way up the steel ropes. There was great potential for confusion and injury when lightning storms materialized quickly and large numbers of people needing to descend in a hurry. Even in good conditions, slips and falls were fairly common

179 "Backcountry Management Plan" 1.

180 Fricke to East District Ranger, re: Rationale for Removal of Cables from Longs Peak, 4 July 1973. ROMO Archives.

181 Though committed to protecting the park's wilderness values, park managers were obviously worried about alienating or angering visitors to the peak. The park's superintendent initially proposed that the park explain to the public that the cables were being removed for repairs and then use the summer of 1973 to assess the public's response. Fricke and others vehemently opposed the use of this rationale, arguing that it was utterly fraudulent. Fricke's memo of 4 July 1973 to the East District Ranger expresses his disgust with the superintendent's plan, and said plan was subsequently dropped.

182 These figures were different than those offered in the memos of 1967 because there had been one additional fatality on the North Face near the cables since then, in April 1973. In this accident, a nineteen-year old man from Boulder slid, in winter conditions, while attempting an unroped climb with an ice axe, and then fell from the North Face over the Diamond. The victim should probably be considered an inexperienced wintertime technical climber, rather than a "casual" non-technical climber. See the list of fatalities on Longs in Nesbit, *Longs Peak* (2005), 77-78.

183 Walter Fricke to Park Superintendent, 8 October 1973, re: "Your Request for Statistics Vis-à-vis Cables Removal," Cable Route files, ROMO Archives.

among casual climbers, as were injuries from falling rocks dislodged by others on the route. When the weather was bad or the rock surfaces and cables were icy, the route could be extremely dangerous for inexpert climbers.

To the park's relief the public's response to the removal of the Cable Route was overwhelmingly favorable. In a report written for the park's superintendent, Roger Contor, Walter Fricke declared: "It is my conclusion from a summer of close contact with Longs Peak users in the Ranger Station and on the trail that removal of the cables has met with overwhelming public acceptance (if not applause)." Formal petitions and letters favoring removal arrived in the park from the American Alpine Club, Colorado Mountain Club, and the Colorado State University Mountaineering Club. Letters from climbers and from individuals associated with hotels and summer camps in the area favored replacement of the cables by a wide margin. As of March 1974, eight months after the cables had been removed, 384 individuals had contacted the park to applaud the park's decision; just 32 favored replacing the cables on the peak.[184]

Those who believed the park had erred in the cables' removal offered various reasons for disagreeing with the park's decision. Some were of the opinion that the cables had offered individuals of limited strength and endurance a way to get to Longs' summit. By removing the cables the park was unfairly limiting access to the peak and, in the words of one writer, "penalizing those who are older or for other reasons do not have top physical ability."[185] Others argued that the Keyhole route was also dangerous when crowded; the park was merely moving its safety problem from one part of the peak to another.[186] Still others thought the park's real motive in removing the cables was to reduce the traffic on the peak as a whole. Bill Gingles, director of the Rocky Ridge Music Center at the foot of the peak, said about a meeting he had with Superintendent Roger Contor and Ranger Walter Fricke, "One thing I learned from this meeting was that the Park Service is definitely trying to discourage people from doing the Longs Peak climb."[187] Finally, some letter writers disagreed with the park's interpretation of wilderness standards. As one writer declared: "Any argument that Long's Peak is a potential 'wilderness area' is ridiculous and founded on ignorance; historically and traditionally it has been a high-use playground area, and this will continue due to its location and fame. Only if one succeeds in cutting its use to about 1/100th of the present traffic can one imagine any "wilderness."[188] The letters written in opposition to the removal of the Cable Route, though relatively few in number, were proof that unanimity of opinion or perspective among park users was an elusive goal.

If some members of the park staff thought overall traffic on Longs Peak might decline after the cables on the North Face were removed, the 1973 season must have disabused them of that idea. Rather, non-technical climbers simply shifted to the Keyhole route, which was the park's announced goal, and the total number of climbers continued to increase. That year a total of 6164 climbers used the Keyhole route to summit Longs while only 868 made technical ascents on the North Face along the old Cable Route. This was a dramatic reversal in the recent flow of traffic: 5214 had climbed the Cable Route in 1971, most of them non-technical climbers, and only 998 climbed the Keyhole route. But, clearly, there was no decrease in

Removal of the Cable Route, July 1973. Park rangers dismantled the Cable Route in 1973 after coming to the conclusion that the cables were not appropriate in a wilderness setting and increased the likelihood of injury among non-technical climbers. With the removal of the cables, non-technical climbers went back to using the Keyhole Route, a longer but safer means of reaching the summit of Longs Peak. *Image courtesy of Rocky Mountain National Park.*

184 Memo from Backcountry Subdistrict Ranger Steven Hickman to East District Ranger, March 7, 1974, in Backcountry Operations files, ROMO Archives.

185 W.R. Downs to the Park Superintendent, 15 August, 1973, Cable Route files, ROMO Archives.

186 Dale McNeal to Roger Contor, Supt., 19 November 1973, Cable Route files, ROMO Archives.

187 Bill Gingles to Swiss Village Inn, 18 August 1973, Cable Route files, ROMO Archives.

188 Karl Gustafson to Rocky Mountain National Park, 21 August 1973, Cable Route files, ROMO Archives.

casual or technical climbers' interest in Longs Peak. And it did not take long for the issue of traffic on the peak to acquire new urgency as park managers tried to assess its relationship to the goal of protecting wilderness values. Visitors' responses to the cables' removal suggested that many climbers were trying to match their own objectives at Longs Peak to wilderness preservation goals. But that did not seem enough, when rangers considered that climbers, regardless of their state of environmental enlightenment, continued to produce crowding and traffic jams, especially on the Keyhole route. Park managers were coming face to face with the difficult problem of trying to figure out how Longs' traditional status as a "high-use playground" could be maintained in the context of park efforts to manage the peak as an area suitable for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System.

Crowding and its impact on both natural ecosystems and visitors' wilderness experience had been of growing concern to rangers throughout the national park system since the passage of the Wilderness Protection Act of 1964. During the 1970s rangers and managers considered the theory that there might be a maximum number of people that wilderness areas could accommodate before both the natural areas and visitors' experience were harmed. This idea, conveyed by the term "carrying capacity" became the focus of studies in national parks and other public lands where managers were eager to discern the maximum human presence beyond which both park resources and visitors' experience would suffer serious harm.

In Rocky Mountain National Park, Richard Trahan, a faculty member at the University of Northern Colorado, led a survey team during the summer of 1976 that tried to assess carrying capacity in relation to visitors' experience. Trahan was well aware of the recent rapid increase in visitor use of backcountry trails: "Since 1968, the visitation rate has tripled in Rocky and the park has lost ten park-wide positions. The staff must deal with over one-half million day hikers per summer and they have faced a 700 percent increase in backcountry use since 1965." Team members queried visitors at six locations in the park, with one site on the East Longs Peak Trail, just above the junction with the Eugenia Mine Trail. There, climbers descending the peak were invited to answer a series of questions on their experience and views about backcountry use. Of the 156 people interviewed by Trahan's study team on the East Longs Peak Trail, more than 60% were repeat visitors and experienced hikers. Nearly 36% of the climbers had gone to the summit of Longs and 30% had been to Chasm Lake; the remainder had gone to intermediate destinations such as the Boulderfield or the Keyhole.[189]

Technical and non-technical climbers were explicitly asked to identify "conditions or reasons [that] would make day-use limitations acceptable to park visitors."[190] Study participants readily identified numerous conditions on Longs Peak that harmed their park experience, such as crowds at the parking lot, crowding and safety hazards in the Trough, congestion on the summit, and disagreement with the new practice of using helicopters to remove toilet vaults from the privies above treeline.[191] Overall, nearly 80% of survey respondents reported that park trails were too crowded. Yet both backcountry hikers and hikers at frontcountry sites such as Bear Lake reacted quite negatively to suggested methods of limiting day use, including lottery and ticketing systems. They seemed only somewhat less

189 Richard G. Trahan, "Day-Use Limitation in National Parks: Visitor and Park Personnel Attitudes Toward Day-Use Limitation Systems for RMNP," 1977, 1-2, 5-4, 5-6, ROMO Library

190 Ibid., 1-3.

191 Vault toilets replaced pit toilets in 1975. The helicopters that removed the vaults were noisy. Mark Magnuson, Chief Park Ranger at Rocky Mountain National Park, noted in his oral history interview with the author that the helicopters also occasionally dropped or splashed waste material from the vaults while removing them. The toilet vaults were a recent innovation, replacing the older system of pit toilets in the 1975 season. See Mark Magnuson interview Ruth M. Alexander, June 11, 2009, transcript, ROMO Archives.

opposed to a reservation system. Park employees, also surveyed in the study, expressed considerable skepticism about day-use limitations, fearing any obvious restriction on visitors would provoke complaints and unhappiness. Given visitors' dislike for all methods of overt restriction, and park employees' uneasiness, Trahan recommended that Rocky Mountain National Park rely on more passive or discreet methods, such as limiting the size of parking areas, to control the number of visitors on backcountry trails. The Longs Peak trailhead parking lot accommodated seventy five vehicles in 1976. Trahan thought the small size of the lot could serve as a de facto method for setting the peak's carrying capacity.[192]

Though Trahan's study dealt only with visitors' experience and not with natural resources, its findings were significant. First, the study found that park visitors, in both wilderness settings such as Longs Peak and frontcountry sites such as Bear Lake, felt their park experience was damaged by crowding. Second, the study documented the disinclination of park visitors and park employees to accept direct limits on the numbers of people who might use backcountry and frontcountry trails. Park visitors and employees could see that crowding was a problem, but limiting visitors contradicted the national park system's history of accessibility. It is also possible that park staff doubted the significance of Trahan's study, which focused entirely on visitors' subjective perception of their experience, rather than on measurable events (such as accidents requiring medical attention or rescue) and their correlation with crowding. Park staff may have understood the fluidity and historical variability of visitor perception; they may also have felt that visitors' perception of crowding was susceptible to education and "interpretive programming" and that these methods were more in keeping with the park's mission than were overt efforts to cut day-use visitation. "Carrying capacity" retained some appeal as a concept, but in the 1970s the park was already demonstrating skepticism about its value in guiding management policies and practices.

While Trahan dealt only with visitor experience on Longs Peak, the park supported a second study in the mid 1970s that examined the physical impact of technical climbers' presence on the flora on Longs' East Face. Though idiosyncratic in method, Milton "Chip" Salaun's study of the East Face reflected post-1964 wilderness values and was largely in accord with subsequent studies, monitoring systems, and policies. Salaun, a local climber, independent ecologist, and the sole investigator of the project, never used the term "carrying capacity." There's no doubt, however, that he became convinced during his study that climbers' presence on the East Face – whether they used aid or free-climbing methods – had already surpassed the capacity of many plants to withstand their presence. Indeed, Salaun found that climbers were causing severe harm, some of it irreparable, to the fragile alpine flora that grew on the rock face. Yet Salaun was far more concerned about the qualitative behavior of humans than about their quantitative presence.

Salaun began his study of Longs Peak flora in the early 1970s, working entirely on his own during weekends and without the formal support of the park. Eventually, with the park's approval, he extended his study into the summers of 1976 and 1977. In explaining his purpose to the park, Salaun made it clear that his intention was not to tell park managers that climbing on the East Face should be prohibited or sharply restricted. Rather, he hoped that improved knowledge and moral suasion would prompt climbers to abandon practices that severely harmed vulnerable alpine ecosystems: "With the recent upsurge in climbing activity on all the high alpine walls in the park it is of utmost importance to educate climbers concerning their impact on these ecosystems and of equal

Broadway, East Face of Longs Peak. Chip Salaun studied the flora of Longs Peak in the mid 1970s, identifying rare and delicate plants on Broadway and in niches all over the East Face. He hoped to use his findings to educate climbers about the need to choose methods of climbing that would do the least possible harm to vulnerable alpine ecosystems. *Image courtesy of Rocky Mountain National Park.*

192 Trahan, "Day-Use Limitation," 13-11, 13-14.

importance to the R.M.N.P. administration to be informed on what has happened or is liable to happen to this unique concatenation of ecosystems within their protectorate."[193]

Interestingly, Salaun's scientific presence on the East Face worried park managers who were already concerned that crowding on Longs' technical routes was harming the climbing experience. Park staff judged the study to be "very worthwhile" and allowed Salaun to exceed the normal limit on backcountry stays and bivouac permits, yet they also cautioned him "that your research activities must not conflict with normal climbing activities."[194] Rangers anticipated having to "defend" Salaun's work and presence to technical climbers who were anxious about congested conditions and competition for routes and bivouac sites. Salaun seems to have been a man who did not mince words, and rangers apparently feared that he might harm the experience of other climbers while studying the harm they did to East Face plant life.

Salaun produced an entirely original study of human impact on the flora on the East Face of Longs Peak. Walter Kiener had studied alpine plants on Longs Peak for his Ph.D. dissertation in the 1930s, but he did not include the East Face in his study and did not focus on human impacts. Salaun's work revealed the presence on the East Face of "members of some 15+ families living in compacted micro-ecosystems. Many rare plants are present as dominant members." The plants not previously known to flourish above 12,000 feet or in a vertical environment included buttercups, mustards, stonecrops, saxifrage, roses, pea clovers, parsnips, primroses, and phlox. But Salaun also discovered that climbing was having a very adverse impact on these plants, noting "Severe damage to 100% is evident in some areas of climbing activity."[195]

Salaun wrote two magazine articles for climbers about his findings, exhorting them to think about and alter their practices. The first article appeared in the June 1976 issue of *Off Belay*, titled "A Hole in the Clean Climbing Philosophy" and the second, "The Diamond – A Different Perspective" appeared in the May-June 1978 issue of *Climbing*. Salaun admonished climbers to cease their practice of "gardening" the cracks on Longs Peak, that is, removing plants, soil, and organic matter to create a cleaner surface for hand and foot holds or protection. For those who knew little about alpine flora, Salaun informed them, "Cleaning a crack is more than just temporarily easing the conditions for your own ephemeral passage. For all practical purposes, once it is done it will be forever." Alpine flora simply could not recover from the destructiveness of "gardening" the rock.[196] Salaun also urged climbers to consider the impacts of littering, of leaving something as organic and innocent as a bit of orange peel on a rocky ledge. "Opaque and fairly dense in a land where no animals will eat it, where microorganisms, moisture and oxygen are scare, it will remain intact for many years. If it lodges above an alpine plant it can kill that plant or portion of it in a season or two by depriving it of sunlight for photosynthesis and warmth."[197]

Most important, Salaun wanted climbers to acknowledge the harm caused by the "human games" they played on the Diamond. Their competitive "games" involved not only "calculated risks" for themselves, but enormous risks to other living things. Too often, climbers with large egos took far more risk on the Diamond than

193 Milton Salaun, "Synopsis and Prospectus," Salaun Research File, Temporary Box 35 – Research, ROMO Archives.

194 "Comments" on proposed study, June 30 [1976?]; Letter from Acting Superintendent James W. Godbolt to Milton Salaun, July 8, 1976, Salaun Research File, Temporary Box 35 – Research, ROMO Archives.

195 Milton M. Salaun, "Investigator's Annual Report," January 19, 1977 and "Taxonomic Table," Salaun Research File, ROMO Archives.

196 Chip Salaun, "A Hole in the Clean Climbing Philosophy," *Off Belay* (June 1976), 37.

197 Ibid., 37.

they should; to save themselves, they ended up using lots of protection and doing a great deal of "gardening," all at the expense of the fragile alpine environment. So too, climbers who tried to prove their superiority through a "free and clean" ascent of a difficult route could actually do more harm than aid climbers. "It might…be preferable," Salaun argued, "to drive an occasional piton or even a bolt than to kill off the area just to hang an environmentally 'clean' nut."[198] For Salaun the bottom line was that "clean" climbers had an obligation to be aware of "all the dimensions of our surroundings," and they must protect the Diamond's rare plants as assiduously as they protected the rock surfaces that sustained their play.[199] He revealed the environmental contradictions in free climbers' advocacy of clean climbing and tried to offer all technical climbers a primer on how to be authentically clean.

The Trahan and Salaun studies took place against the backdrop of an intense debate among wilderness advocates all around the country about recreationists' presence in the backcountry. In the new era of ecologically-informed wilderness protection, some advocates in the Wilderness Society and Sierra Club endorsed the premises of carrying capacity studies and urged the Forest Service and other public land managers to limit visitor access to the backcountry. According to historian James Morton Turner, this position rather quickly lost out to a "new wilderness recreation ethic—minimal-impact camping—that promised to prop the doors to wilderness wide open for a better-educated wilderness visitor."[200] The new minimal-impact wilderness ethic, eventually popularized by the term "leave no trace," was formally endorsed by the U.S. Forest Service, National Park Service, and Bureau of Land Management in the 1980s, as well as by the National Outdoor Leadership School, the Sierra Club, and other major wilderness and outdoor recreation associations. Well before any formal endorsement of "leave no trace" principles, rangers in Rocky Mountain Park were working with minimal-impact ideas in mind.

Campers who adopted minimal-impact ethics used lightweight gas stoves, tents, and sleeping bags. They abandoned older practices of "woodcraft," whereby campers had gathered firewood to cook food and stay warm, and collected tree boughs and other natural resources to construct primitive shelters and beds. Skill in buying and using technical equipment produced in petroleum-based factories replaced skill in using and exploiting the resources of the wild. Minimal-impact ethics exhorted backcountry recreationists to pack out trash, plan ahead and prepare for adverse conditions, avoid harming wildlife or water, and leave all artifacts and natural resources as they found them. "Minimal-impact" ethics extended to day hikers and technical climbers, who purchased and used specialized gear manufactured for their distinct recreational needs.[201]

While rangers on Longs Peak considered the merits and findings of the Trahan and Salaun studies, the whole park was moving toward the adoption of minimal-impact ethics and trying to encourage their adoption by backcountry users. In Rocky Mountain National Park, as in the national park system as a whole, implementing minimal-impact ethics came to be seen as far preferable to adopting strict visitation limits based on the notion that park resources had a capacity to withstand the presence of X number of humans, and no more. Minimal-impact ethics invited rangers and park visitors to see humans as malleable, capable of altering their thinking and conduct to protect wilderness ecosystems and their own experience

198 Salaun, "A Hole in the Clean Climbing Philosophy," 35.

199 Salaun, "The Diamond," 19.

200 James Morton Turner, "From Woodcraft to 'Leave no Trace,': Wilderness, Consumerism, and Environmentalism in Twentieth Century America," *Journal of Environmental History* (July 2002), 473.

201 Ibid., 473-79.

in the wild. Salaun's study and published articles certainly subscribed to this view. The new ethics retained the faith that Superintendent Roger Toll invested in backcountry visitors in 1925 when he refused to restrict climbers' access to Longs after Agnes Vaille's death, instead ordering modest changes to trails and routes while holding climbers' largely responsible for their own welfare. Now, backcountry users were being told that the protection of the park's wilderness was largely in their hands. Still, it's important to note that the park never intended to "prop the doors to wilderness wide open," to educated visitors. Rather, doors to the wilderness opened selectively and partially. Acknowledging anxieties about high-volume traffic in backcountry areas, minimal-impact principles instructed backcountry users to stay on designated trails and camp at designated sites. In Rocky Mountain National Park, backcountry rangers, including those on Longs Peak, made the proper channeling of visitors through the backcountry one of their highest priorities.

In 1975 managers in Rocky Mountain National Park approved a Backcountry Management Plan that set forth a system for improving how the park managed its backcountry day-use visitors, overnight visitors, and horseback riders. It pulled together and elaborated upon values and practices embedded in recently-developed plans for handling trail construction and maintenance, horse use, backcountry patrols, backcountry permit issuance, and fire management. This was the park's first comprehensive effort to establish backcountry management practices that met the standards of the new wilderness act, and the plan clearly revealed a growing commitment to minimal-impact practices.[202]

In creating the new plan, members of the park staff were guided by scientific knowledge about the distinct ecosystems in the park, including the dominant vegetation in each zone, their biological climates, and relative fragility. For the first time, the park required advance registration for backcountry camping and bivouacking, established definite limits on the size of camping and bivouac parties, restricted camping and bivouacking to designated sites, prohibited wood fires on bivouac, regulated the use of firewood at other campsites, and established regulations for disposing of human waste and using soaps and detergents. The plan called for the installation of vault toilets, to be evacuated by helicopter, "at high density use areas such as Longs Peak." The new restrictions, varied for each ecosystem, applied to climbers on Longs Peak, including technical and non-technical climbers staying overnight at Goblin's Grove, Jim's Grove, Chasm Meadows, the Boulderfield, and on Broadway. The new plan also established goals and methods for improving trail maintenance and reconstruction, reducing conflict between horseback riders and pedestrians, and limiting "short-cutting" by park users, which seriously eroded fragile soil and plant life. All of these were long-standing issues on Longs Peak. Managers identified the "possibility of loop trail construction to minimize wilderness encounters" as a "primary concern."[203]

Park managers' goal in devising the 1975 backcountry plan was to maximize resource protection, visitor safety,

202 Rocky Mountain National Park, "Backcountry Management Plan," 1975, ROMO Library, 3-4. The ideas and methods outlined in the backcountry plan were generally endorsed by the park's 1976 Final Master Plan, a "conceptual planning document which, consistent with congressional and administrative policies, establishes the guidelines for the overall use, preservation, management, and development of an area in the National Park System." The master plan recognized the critical importance of restoring and protecting "native ecosystems," and acknowledged backcountry visitors' desire for a "wilderness experience." The plan recommended "education in backcountry use for neophytes," and noted that "human behavior is…a product of cultural conditioning." But "the key to controlling man's impact is to channel use through facilities designed and grouped to insulate the resources." Rocky Mountain National Park, *Final Master Plan* (Denver Service Center, United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1976), 1, 7, 15.

203 Ibid., 6-14.

and visitor enjoyment to the extent made possible by the park's "management capacity." More specifically, the backcountry plan presented visitors' enjoyment and safety as objectives fully compatible with wilderness protection, so long as visitors were properly informed and supervised. The plan called for a regular schedule of trail patrols by rangers who were tasked with day-to-day care of the park's natural resources and constructive interaction with visitors. Rangers assumed significant responsibility for removing litter, repairing water bars, fixing signs, eradicating illegal campfires, keeping trails clear, and cleaning pit toilets. They were to evaluate campsites with an eye to making changes if the sites were being "changed ecologically by human use." Rangers on trail patrol were expected to be "friendly and helpful in nature, with the primary objective being education and ***prevention*** of possible violations … A useful tactic is to offer some form of helpful information; this almost always establishes the friendly rapport that we seek." Helpful information might cover how to gather firewood, wash dishes, clean fish, and dispose of trash, garbage and human waste at a backcountry campsite. "Let the novice know that the days of 'burn, bash, and bury' were outdated over a decade ago." When necessary, rangers were expected to issue written citations to visitors who violated park regulations.[204]

The 1975 Backcountry Management Plan was an ambitious effort to match operations within the park to post-1964 wilderness values and emerging minimal-impact practices. Hoping to ensure its success, park officials increased the budget allotment going to backcountry management and recommended that Rocky Mountain National Park try to obtain yet more funding to increase the number of backcountry rangers. Managers also established a new training program for backcountry rangers. Equally important, they prepared a series of new handouts for backcountry visitors about minimal-impact backcountry ethics and the park's new regulations. Rangers also made plans to meet with local conservations groups. Managers viewed the new backcountry management plan as something that could not possibly be perfect. They urged backcountry rangers to "talk to the people" and "constantly evaluate the system."[205]

In the year after the 1975 plan went into effect, park rangers also met with local technical climbers to discuss the new regulations. The first such meeting took place in March 1976, probably in Boulder. Rangers and climbers talked about climber congestion and trash on Longs Peak, especially on Broadway, along with "technical climbing regulations and bivouac policies." According to rangers who attended the meeting, there had been considerable concern among park staff about "a general state of apathy for regulation compliance among the climbing community," yet the meeting went well. Climbers accepted the park's proposals "to designate specific routes for bivouacs," to implement an "up at dusk, down at dawn policy," and to prohibit non-climbing members of climbing parties from staying overnight at bivouac sites, including Broadway.[206]

Over the next several years, park rangers worked assiduously to match their management of natural resources and backcountry visitors on Longs Peak to emerging minimal-impact wilderness standards, and to track growing evidence of problems related to crowding. They met with climbers again in January 1978 to discuss bivouac regulations and may have also discussed continued evidence of trash and human waste accumulations on Broadway. While on patrol, rangers monitored ongoing problems in the management of technical climbers at bivouac sites, including

Trailhead Sign, East Longs Peak Trail, circa 1980. By the 1970s and 1980s, Rocky Mountain National Park had endorsed "minimal impact" wilderness recreation ethics and created signage that was intended to promote environmental awareness among wilderness visitors. New signs at the trailhead for the East Longs Peak Trail informed hikers and climbers about how to minimize their impact on natural resources and avoid unnecessary hazards to their own health and safety. *Image courtesy of Rocky Mountain National Park.*

204 "Backcountry Management Plan, Rocky Mountain National Park," 1975, ROMO Library, 3-5, Appendix H, 1-8.

205 Ibid.,15, Appendix H-8, Appendix I.

206 "Bivouac Use Management: Overview and Recommendations," December, 1983, Backcountry Operations File, ROMO Archives, 1-2.

Visitors at Chasm Lake, 1986. In the mid-1980s Rocky Mountain National Park established new management plans that prohibited backcountry climbers or hikers from setting up bivouacs in areas vulnerable to environmental degradation, including the area around Chasm Lake. *Image courtesy of Rocky Mountain National Park.*

their competition for sites on the East Face of Longs Peak and adverse impact on water and vegetation.[207]

In addition, rangers studied heavy visitor use, mostly by non-technical climbers, at Jim's Grove on Longs Peak and the "serious problem of resource deterioration along the unimproved trail" that went through it. This was a "very fragile" area "supporting a multitude of alpine plants and wild flowers," with a mean elevation of 12,600 feet. Once harmed, regeneration of soil and plant life was "painfully slow." The original trail to Longs Peak went through Jim's Grove, and Enos Mills had built the Timberline Cabin there in 1908. Rangers re-routed the trail to the south of the grove in the late 1920s and the Timberline Cabin stopped operating as a concession in 1925, but climbers continued to use the old trail as a short-cut and the park still permitted visitors to camp in the grove. Rangers estimated that at least fifty percent "of all hikers…bound for the Boulderfield used this short cut route to Granite Pass," a distance of about one mile. By the mid 1970s approximately 7500 people reached the summit of Longs Peak each year, which meant that at least 3,750 were probably using the short cut through Jim's Grove. Their impact was severe. Unable to follow a clearly marked track or trail, hikers had put in multiple informal trails and widened portions of the original one. "A plethora of use trails have been imprinted on the tundra and trail braiding on the two steep sections of the trail has become a critical problem." The rangers at Longs Peak considered the erosion at Jim's Grove an urgent resource issue and recommended that the park reconstruct and maintain the old trail. "Elimination of visitor use along the route, through the drafting of a regulation and the posting of signs, would be both absurd and impossible to enforce."[208]

It took a number of years of further study before park managers acted to restore Jim's Grove or resolve persisting problems of congestion and trash at bivouac sites on Longs Peak and other climbing areas. Park staff reconstructed the trail to Jim's Grove, probably in 1980 or 1981, and the park issued new regulations prohibiting any travel by horses through the grove in its 1982 Trail Plan.[209] Two years later the park closed Jim's Grove to camping or other "human entry" because of overcrowding and erosion, though it still allowed hikers to use the "single trail transecting its center." The park eventually removed signs leading to the grove, presumably to discourage human traffic.[210]

By 1983 rangers were ready to present updated bivouac use management recommendations to park officials. These recommendations, largely incorporated into the 1984 Backcountry Management Plan for Rocky Mountain Park, offered practical guidelines to park rangers.[211] Most important, they identified the "constraints" on climbers needed to protect both the wilderness environment and climbers' experience at bivouac sites:

> Agree that all bivouacs will be off vegetation, sites need only be large enough for one person, relatively flat, adequate drainage, 100 feet from water, clear of rock fall, that little consideration is given protection from weather, no tents, stoves only, pack out trash, human waste buried 4-6 inches 100' from water or more, evidence of bivouac up no earlier than dusk – down no later than dawn, actual climbers only, no pets. Also, recommended is limiting climbing party size to 4 people.[212]

207 Ibid, 2-3.

208 Peter D. Armitage, "Unimproved Trail, Jim's Grove to Granite Pass," 1-5.

209 *Trails Plan: Rocky Mountain National Park* (Denver, CO: Denver Service Center, National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, 1982) 66, 68.

210 "Jim's Grove – Natural Area," 1, n.d. Typescript in Office of Jeff Connors, Resources Stewardship Division, ROMO; Nesbit, *Longs Peak* (2005), 71.

211 U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service. *Rocky Mountain National Park Backcountry Management Plan*. (Estes Park, CO, 1984)

212 "Bivouac Use Management: Overview and Recommendations," December, 1983, Backcountry Operations File, ROMO Archives, 3-4;

By the time rangers had identified the array of "constraints" necessary to bring technical climbers into compliance with leave-no-trace principles, park managers had taken a significant practical step toward reducing all climbers' impact on Longs Peak, replacing the vault privies at Chasm Junction and the Boulderfield with solar toilets. The vault privies had required the periodic use of helicopters to remove full vaults of waste from the privies "at fair expense and fair risk to the people involved." Dangling from the helicopters on 100 foot-long cables, the vaults occasionally splashed human waste over the mountain landscape and, according to Chief Ranger Mark Magnuson, "on one occasion, there was a bucket that the pilot had to release from the helicopter. There was sewage that went into the resource; there's probably some real green spot up there." The solar toilets were dehydrating; burros could be brought in occasionally to haul out the compacted dried waste.[213]

In 1989 the park reinforced its capacity to manage backcountry bivouac and camp sites according to minimal-impact principles when it approved a "Backcountry Campsite Impact Assessment and Monitoring System (BCIAMS)," prepared by staff in the recently established Natural Resources Management Division. The BCIAMS established a detailed system for measuring climbers' and hikers' impact on the environment. It required rangers to monitor and perform maintenance on backcountry bivouac and camping sites on a regular basis. They were to evaluate the impact of visitor use on each site's natural resources, rating on a four-point scale the human harm to soil, vegetation cover, shrubs, and trees. In addition, rangers were to rate the fire pits, rock and log displacement, evidence of trash, and evidence of human waste at each designated campsite, both before and after maintenance work. When visitor impacts could not be reduced by simple maintenance efforts, the system required managers to make decisions that would protect natural resources from further degradation and preserve the "quality wilderness experience" of campers.[214] The BCIAMS provided a practical means of managing backcountry campsites according to post-1964 wilderness standards and emerging "leave no trace" principles. Examined in terms of the values it endorsed, the backcountry campsite monitoring system clearly demonstrated the park's commitment to making the backcountry experience of visitors wholly compatible with wilderness preservation.

The question remained, however, whether visitors themselves wanted to merge their interests and identities with the ecological well-being of the natural resources on Longs Peak, or with one another. Climbers on Longs remained a varied lot, and there were at least 10,000 of them climbing the peak each year by the mid-1980s.[215] Non-technical climbers arrived at the peak with wide-ranging interests and degrees of experience. Sport and free climbers were beginning to antagonize one another at bivouac sites on Broadway by the early 1980s, and environmental issues were critical to their differences. Yet rangers did not address technical climbers' internal divisions even indirectly in backcountry management plans during the 1980s.

Solar toilet at the Boulderfield, Longs Peak, 1985. Park rangers replaced the vault toilets at Chasm Junction and the Boulderfield with dehydrating solar toilets in the mid 1980s, hoping to reduce the impact of human waste on the backcountry. *Image courtesy of Rocky Mountain National Park.*

Rocky Mountain National Park, Backcountry Management Plan, 1988

213 Mark Magnuson, interview with Ruth M. Alexander, June 11, 2009. Transcript in ROMO Archives. According to Chief Ranger Mark Magnuson "over time," the solar toilets were "upgraded, improved, changed out." A solar privy was eventually installed at Chasm Meadows. He also acknowledges that "some people argue that okay, if you are managing this area as wilderness and you have such high volume of visitor use that you have to install these…fairly high technology toilet systems, maybe you're allowing too many people up there." But clearly, the park has decided against this argument and against the practice of placing direct limits on visitor access to Longs Peak.

214 Resources Management Division, "Backcountry Campsite Impact Assessment and Monitoring System for Rocky Mountain National Park, Colorado," Approved by the Park Superintendent, May 5, 1989, Office of Jeff Connor, Resources Stewardship Division, ROMO, 2.

215 Rocky Mountain National Park, 1985 *Interpretive Prospectus*, 4, ROMO Library.

Trail erosion caused by horses, 1972. The presence of horses on Longs Peak was identified by rangers as an issue of concern in the 1970s and continued to present natural resources management problems into the 1980s. Horses eroded trails and alpine tundra, and their manure offended many hikers. Budget constraints kept Rocky Mountain National Park from building a separate trail for horseback riders on the lower portion of Longs Peak. *Image courtesy of Rocky Mountain National Park.*

Hikers and horseback riders also conflicted with one another in the 1970s and 1980s. Though horse use in the park had begun to decline in the 1970s, there were still over two dozen livery stables operating during the 1980s, with more than 500 horses on park trails each day.[216] Long strings of horses were frequent on both the East Longs Peak Trail and North Longs Peak Trail to Granite Pass, where the trails converged for the last 1.7 miles of trail to the hitching racks at the Boulderfield. Hikers often had to step off the trail and wait for horses to pass. As more hikers became aware of environmental problems such as trail erosion, fragility of the tundra, and deteriorating water quality, the presence of horses – and the manure, dust, and insects associated with them – became sources of contention. To many hikers, horses and their riders seemed an affront to leave-no-trace ethics. In fact, some hikers seemed disdainful of able-bodied visitors who chose to ride rather than walk. The park collected visitors' opinions on the presence of horses from 1982 to 1988, and complaints submitted to Longs Peak rangers clearly revealed the depth of hiker's dislike for horseback riders. One complaint stated: "Horses are fine for handicapped people. Let everyone else walk!" A second was even more emphatic: "the hiker must carefully pick his way through the litter (horse dung) trail, so that some fat-bottom bastard can ride in to see the sights."[217] The park's 1982 Trails Management Plan recommended a new trail for horses from the East Longs Peak trailhead to Eugenia Mine to relieve horse-hiker conflicts and also suggested that guides leading commercial horseback trips receive printed information on how to improve horseback riders' interaction with hikers and the environment. Budget constraints kept the park from implementing these recommendations. Lacking the resources to deal directly with the conflict between hikers and horseback riders, rangers had little chance of pulling both groups into the orbit of minimal-impact ethics.[218]

Over the course of the 1980s members of the park staff confronted the need to evaluate and manage the impacts of climbing throughout the park more effectively, and it was in this context that rangers eventually grappled with the discord between sport and free climbers and their differing relationships to the environment. Before tackling this weighty issue, Longs' rangers re-visited the park's mandatory registration system for technical climbers, and park managers eventually decided the system had outlasted its usefulness.[219] In 1987 park managers

216 Rocky Mountain National Park, "Commercial Horse Use Management Plan," 1994, 16. ROMO Library.

217 "Horse Use on Trails Pros and Cons 1982-1988," Folder A3615 Commendations/Complaints, Temporary Box 42, ROMO Archives.

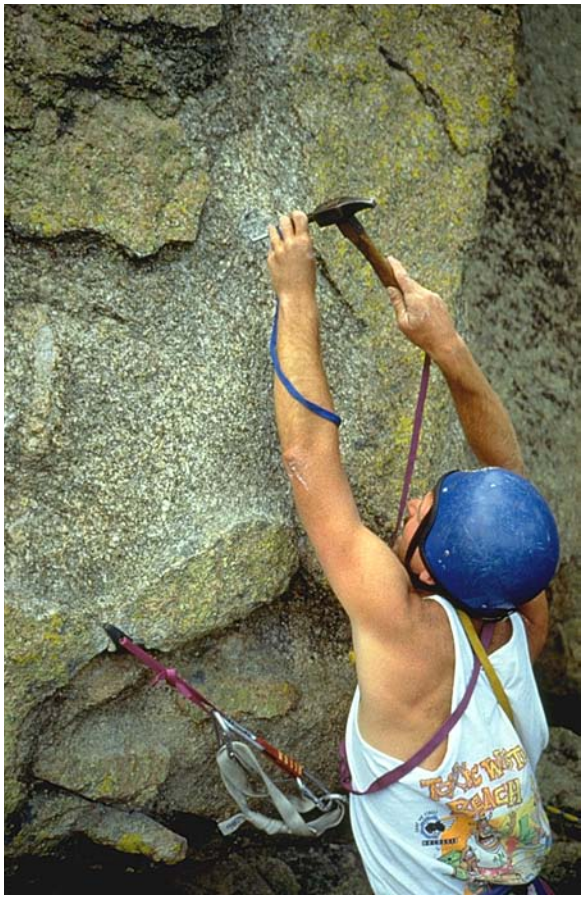
218 Department of the Interior, National Park Service, *Trail Plan, Rocky Mountain National Park*, Colorado (Denver: Denver Service Center, 1982), 11, 19-20.

219 In 1982 park managers apparently proposed that the park eliminate the mandatory registration system. Rangers at Longs Peak responded to the proposal with thinly-veiled hostility, believing the system helped the park keep track of climbers and encouraged climbers to behave responsibly. See Memorandum from Longs Peak Rangers to Dave Essex, re: Suggested Technical Information Sign, September 13, 1982. ROMO Archives. Some rangers suggested as an alternative to simply eliminating the system a "voluntary sign-out system." Others wanted to retain the old system that required climbers both to register and sign out with rangers. Though records offering a rationale for eliminating the mandatory registration system are non-existent or unavailable, park managers may have come to believe that rangers simply lacked sufficient time to meet with and register all the day-use climbers flocking to Longs Peak during the summer months. The original system had been established at a time when technical climbers were few in number and when the park was still skeptical of their ability to ascend the Diamond safely. In the 1960s virtually all technical climbers at Longs bivouacked overnight near or on the East Face and engaged in multi-day climbs. By the 1980s climbing techniques had so improved that many routes on the East Face could be climbed in a single day. Technical climbers had generally proven themselves competent, whether they used aid, free, or sport climbing techniques, and they accounted for fewer accidents than non-technical climbers. Climbers who still bivouacked and used coveted ledges or caves for that purpose were required to register under the park's backcountry management plan. I have been unable to find evidence of a decision to the halt the mandatory registration system for technical

established a Division of Resources Management, "as a… major step in developing a formal long-range resources management program."[220] The new division quickly put together a Climbing Task Force, whose members were acutely aware of the popularity of climbing in the park and the growing impact that climbers and spectators were having on the "limited areas suitable for the sport." Task force members sought to document climbers' impact on the natural environment and "provide a long-term perspective and…the necessary planning…for park policies to be developed." Their goal was to prevent both "serious degradation of natural resources and a reduced quality of visitor experience."According to Jeff Connor, who served on the task force, its members knew that improving climbers' understanding of minimal-impact ethics was a big part of their job. "We tried to better manage the climbing program and promote education and better climbing ethics."[221]

The Climbing Task Force issued its findings in a 1990 report, offering an overview of climbing history in the park, evidence and analysis of climbers' impact on the park's resources and one another, and recommendations for a climbing management plan. The report highlighted the dramatic increase of climbing activity in the park in the 1970s and the development of "nondestructive" protection devices and clean climbing ethics during that decade. But the advent of sport climbing in the 1980s brought climbers with portable power drills into the park. Many of these climbers had trained extensively on artificial climbing walls and had reached "extreme levels" of skill. They were ready to "surpass the earlier standards of difficulty" and interested in "previously unclimbed blank rock faces." Using power drills, the new generation of climbers put up bolted routes on "remote high peaks" and "accessible day-use climbing areas" in the park. Members of the task force acknowledged with understated tact the conflict between clean climbers and sport climbers that ensued: "In the 1980's 'ethics' or the manner in which a route is constructed and ascended, became topical….Climbers often find themselves at philosophical odds with each other. This had occasionally led to confrontation or sabotage of routes."[222]

Rather than take sides in the dispute between climbers, members of the task force relied on environmental and social science, as well as the park's formal commitment to minimal-impact ethics and practices, to make clear their position that all climbers in Rocky Mountain National Park should become "clean" practitioners of their sport. Researchers sent out into the field to collect data found that climbers produced environmental impacts of four different types: through their simple presence in climbing areas; by creating noise; by engaging in activity that eroded resources directly or made them susceptible to erosion; and by depositing foreign matter such as human waste, litter, food, clothing, and bolts around and on climbing sites.[223]



Climber drilling a bolt by hand, 1991. Following the recommendation of its Climbing Task Force, Rocky Mountain National Park prohibited the use of motorized drills for the placement of bolts in 1990 and tried to encourage technical climbers to limit their use of hand-drilled bolts. The new prohibition reflected the park's interest in applying leave-no-trace principles to technical rock climbing. *Image courtesy of Rocky Mountain National Park.*

climbers, but by the end of the 1980s it was no longer in place and went unmentioned in the 1990 report of the park's Climbing Task Force.

220 Superintendent's Annual Report for 1987, February 11, 1988, Folder A2621-Reports, TB-42, ROMO archives.

221 E-mail from Jeff_Connor@nps.gov to Cheri_Yost@nps.gov September 1, 2009, forwarded to Ruth.Alexander@colostate.edu , September 1, 2009.

222 *Task Force Findings: Climbing in Rocky Mountain National Park*, unpublished study, May 1990, Office of Jeff Connor, Resources Stewardship Division, ROMO, 1-2,6.

223 Ibid., 6.

These four types of impacts helped task force members understand the complexity of the specific problems they observed in climbing areas around the park. Climbers disrupted wildlife while moving over rocky walls and ledges, especially the raptors at Lumpy Ridge that used rocky ledges for nesting. Occasionally, angry and aggressive raptors harassed climbers, endangering their safety. There was a real possibility that the presence of climbers "stressed or displaced" other wildlife as well. Climbers degraded water in the park with soil, litter and human waste. They left litter at the base of climbs and on bivouac sites. Exposed human waste, often "concentrated on ledges and at the base of cliffs" presented health problems to other climbers and to wildlife. Climbers' bushwhacking and scrambling to the base of cliffs produced serious "soil loss, trenching, and loss of vegetation" and their technical ascents harmed the rock on which they climbed. Some climbers used wire brushes and toothbrushes to "scrub away loose debris," removing precious vegetation and soil. Others "gardened" by hand. Climbers' chalk "accumulates over time," and task members worried that it might adversely affect lichen, moss, and rock. In some places, climbers "choose to chisel the rock when natural holds are not available." Sport climbers used drills to put holes in rocks and then filled the holes with epoxy and bolts.[224]

Finally, climbers produced noise and visual impacts. Their power drills, audible to other climbers, hikers, and wildlife "can be considered intrusive in a wilderness setting." They also shouted to one another across wide distances, sometimes played loud music on portable audio devices, and created a visual disturbance on the rock. "Bright colored slings, shiny bolts or pitons, white chalk, and the very sight of climbers and ropes on an otherwise undisturbed rock formation can all be viewed as intrusive. The sight of people, shiny metal, or cloth material swaying in the wind could cause some wildlife, such as raptors, to shy away from perches or affect nesting behavior."[225]

According to the task force, climbers in many parts of the country faced loss of access to climbing areas because land managers had decided they could tolerate neither their degrading impact on the natural resources in public parks and forests nor their problematic interactions with each other and other visitors. Staff on the task force hoped to steer Rocky Mountain National Park away from this solution. They recommended further research on climber impacts, the construction of new approach trails to popular climbing sites, limited regulation, and a "rigorous information and education campaign" designed to produce "cooperation through ethics." The task force outlined a proposed system of ethics that meshed "clean climbing" and "leave no trace" principles, including "[accepting] responsibility for yourself and others." The task force recommended only one outright restriction, a prohibition on the use of motorized drills. That recommendation immediately became a park-wide regulation.[226] It was not clear, however, what would become of the task force's other advice. Though members of the task force considered all their proposals fundamental to the integrity of a comprehensive climbing management plan, much depended upon the response from park managers.

By 1990 climbing on Longs Peak was at a crossroads. Since 1970 climbing activity had increased sharply among both non-technical and technical climbers, with the rise in technical climbing accompanied by dramatic, and often controversial, alterations in technology, goals, and perspectives. These changes occurred in the context of the park's growing determination to manage Longs and the rest of the park's undeveloped acreage according to the standards of the 1964 Wilderness Act. Task force members

224 Ibid., 3-5.

225 Ibid., 5.

226 Ibid., 9-11.

hoped to modify climbers' ambitions and behavior on Longs to suit the park's stewardship of wilderness resources; they wanted technical climbers especially to embrace wilderness preservation, to desist from any activity that harmed the environment, and to take responsibility for their own well-being and the well-being of others in wilderness settings. It was not immediately obvious how these goals were to be achieved, or if they could be achieved. Some visitors, and perhaps some rangers as well, appeared to think that Longs Peak was already something other than a true wilderness site.

Importantly, scientific investigation and regular monitoring of natural resources became a critical tool in understanding climbers' impact on Longs Peak and the kinds of experiences that might be possible there still. The information gathered in numerous studies of the impacts of human recreation on wilderness areas in the park, including Longs, helped rangers think systematically about what the park could reasonably do to manage and educate visitors more effectively, mitigate human impacts, and protect the natural resources successfully. Park staff discovered that technical and non-technical climbers had produced a measurable degradation of rock faces, trails, and campsites and had also harmed one another's wilderness experiences on Longs. Technical climbers were always far fewer in number than non-technical climbers, but they were capable of significant harm.

Certainly, park rangers lamented climbers' degrading effects on Longs' wilderness environment. More important, they came to see "leave no trace" ethics, used in conjunction with scientific study and monitoring, as a promising framework for protecting wilderness resources and visitors' experience, even in a crowded backcountry area such as Longs Peak. By 1990 these principles were the basis of rangers' bivouac and backcountry management practices. And though there were outliers and skeptics among the climbers on Longs, support for "leave no trace" backcountry ethics was growing. Throughout the 1970s and into the 1980s the park kept the backcountry reasonably well-staffed with rangers, and rangers on Longs made climbing patrols part of their weekly assignments. They familiarized themselves with technical and non-technical routes on the peak while talking with climbers and offering advice and guidance.[227] Rangers also arranged meetings with technical climbers to exchange views and explain the park's embrace of an ecosystems approach to wilderness preservation. Technical rock climbers were active participants in an internally-generated debate about the values that guided their sporting ambitions, their use of protection, and their treatment of the rock. Most non-technical climbers had accepted the removal of the Cable Route as a reasonable accommodation to wilderness standards and, with the encouragement of a rangers and a host of conservation organizations, many seemed to be trying to minimize their impact on the wilderness.

Much remained to be done. Members of the park staff and rangers on Longs wanted especially to bring technical climbers into fuller compliance with clean climbing and leave no trace ethics. They were hopeful that with appropriate funding for research, backcountry education, and resource restoration and maintenance, they could move their goal forward. They could not be confident, however, that sufficient resources would be forthcoming to carry out this work. Nor could rangers predict how unforeseen external pressures, even more traffic on the peak, or new recreational patterns might affect their efforts to preserve Longs Peak as an authentic wilderness site in Rocky Mountain National Park.

227 Mark Magnuson interview.

Conclusion: Climbing and Resource Management on Longs Peak since 1990

As it turns out, the park did not implement the 1990 Climbing Task Force report. From the late 1980s into the early twenty-first century, backcountry staffing at Rocky Mountain Park suffered because of budget constraints, and the park could ill afford to implement new and potentially costly science-based management initiatives. Park managers tried hard to maintain a "strong presence" on Longs Peak, but from the late 1980s to 2009, there were fewer rangers on Longs Peak than there had been in the 1970s. Meanwhile, estimates on the number of technical and non-technical climbers rose to 20,000 annually in 1995 and 35,000 in 2002.[228] For many years the vast majority of climbers, technical and non-technical, may have had virtually no contact with rangers while on Longs Peak. If they were gaining exposure to leave-no-trace ethics, it was not through interactions with rangers.

The backcountry scenario at Rocky Mountain National Park played out against pressures and patterns that were both national and local in scope. In the early 1990s, the National Academy of Science and the National Parks Conservation Association produced reports sharply criticizing the National Park Service for failing to base management of the nation's parks on sound scientific research and ecological principles. Most visitors to the national parks still behaved like "recreational tourists at a theme park" and park managers seemed reluctant to put preservation values ahead of the public's interest in gaining access to scenic vistas.[229] Rocky Mountain National Park had shown some genuine interest in using science as the basis of back- and frontcountry management in the 1970s and 1980s, but park visitorship was moving ever upward in the 1990s, hovering just below 3 million from 1991 to 1993 and topping 3 million by 1994.[230] The great majority of those visitors were automobile tourists who never went beyond the frontcountry. The park faced tremendous pressure both to serve tourists driving through the park and to protect frontcountry resources from severe harm. As in the past, rangers' concerns about backcountry resources and visitors could not compete with the pressures building along the Bear Lake and Trail Ridge Road corridors. The park's scarce resources were funneled to those areas of the park where most visitors spent their time.

The park's unwillingness or inability to turn the recommendations of the Climbing Task Force into policy does not mean, however, that Longs Peak moved either into a period of stasis, or into a period of unrelenting resource degradation, due to the pressure of growing crowds. The peak remained a recreational destination for backcountry hikers, technical climbers, and backpackers. It was increasingly, however, a site for recreation packed into a single long day. Since the 1990s the great majority of non-technical climbers have ascended and descended Longs in one day, with no plans to stay overnight in the backcountry. Similarly, improvements in climbing technique and equipment have made it possible for most technical climbers to make the hike to Chasm Lake (4.2 miles, 2,400 ft of elevation gain) and their ascent on the East or North Face in just one day.[231] Instead of multi-day climbs, some rock-climbers have actually been doing multi-route days during the past two decades. The most impressive has been Tommy Caldwell and Topher Donohue's feat of five Diamond routes in one twenty-four hour period.[232]

228 Mark Magnuson interview; 1985 Interpretive Prospectus; "Climbing the Longs Peak Keyhole Route," Research Summary, Rocky Mountain National Park, (2002).

229 Sellars, *Preserving Nature in the National Parks*, 283-288.

230 http://www.nps.gov/romo/parkmgmt/statistics.htm

231 Jane Gordon, interview with Ruth Alexander, July 30, 2009. Notes in possession of author.

232 Mike Caldwell interview; Mark Magnuson interview.

Though more people than ever were climbing Longs Peak, perceptions of crowding may have been less acute than in previous decades, since climbers were staying on the peak for only one day. It's hard to know. Hikers intent on reaching the summit set out before dawn, and former ranger Jane Gordon recalled that when she worked on Longs Peak in the mid-1990s, during the summer months "there was ***no*** time when there was no one on the trail, the main trail, any hour of the day."[233] And it was not just hikers who dealt with crowded conditions. On technical routes on the Diamond, Gordon noted that in the 1990s "on a nice day, you're in line for routes up there…On the Casual Route, you'll see parties stopped having to set up intermediate belays because they're all piling up on top of one another."[234]

The shift to day-use may also mean that climbers are never moving far away from trails and are perhaps doing less damage to fragile alpine tundra than in previous decades. The lower part of the trail shows definite evidence of social trails and damage to vegetation, and former ranger Jane Gordon has speculated that because the trail is so wide and well-trodden, visitors may not regard it as an environment that needs protection.[235] But climber and guide Mike Caldwell remarked in 2009 that "the environment is as pristine as it's ever been, particularly around Longs Peak, in the thirty five years that I've been climbing there." He attributes the improved conditions to outstanding educational efforts on the part of park staff and a rising level of support for wilderness preservation in the climbing and hiking communities.[236]

Significantly, though ranger staffing on Longs Peak was below desirable levels for many years, the park has recently been able to hire more rangers with mountaineering, climbing, and search and rescue experience. Mark Magnuson has noted positive feedback from the climbing community as rangers have increased their presence on the mountain.[237] The park places great emphasis on educating visitors (via the park website, handouts, contact with rangers, videos, and guidebooks) to take precautions that will allow them to avoid accident, injury, or illness on the peak. Rangers conduct patrols on the mountain, mostly on the lower trail and in the Chasm Lake and East Face area, and experienced volunteers staff the trailhead ranger station. Despite the numbers of people attempting the ascent via the Keyhole Route, many of them inadequately prepared for the high altitude and adverse conditions, both Jane Gordon and Mike Caldwell have noted the surprisingly small number of serious incidents or fatalities. The sheer number of people on the route means there are many fellow hikers and climbers to assist in an emergency, and experienced hikers will often warn casual visitors of dangerous conditions.[238] The annual number of search and rescue incidents in the entire park has nearly quadrupled since the late 1980s, with more than two hundred such incidents each year since 2000.[239] Some of this increase, however, is due to a change in reporting, with the more recent reports including some minor incidents that were not noted in earlier years

The Climbing Task Force was likely disappointed that its recommendations were not implemented in the early 1990s, but ten years later they were incorporated into the park's 2001 Backcountry/Wilderness Management Plan. The management plan was approved during an era of low funding for the national parks, when the implementation

Search and rescue team on Longs Peak, 1989. There has continued to be a real need for search and rescue operations on Longs Peak in recent decades, though park rangers and managers note that there are relatively few serious accidents or fatalities on the peak, despite the high volume of visitors. The sheer number of people on the peak means there are many hikers and climbers to help in an emergency. *Image courtesy of Rocky Mountain National Park.*

233 Ibid.

234 Ibid.

235 Ibid.

236 Mike Caldwell, interview with Ruth Alexander, August 12, 2009.

237 Magnuson interview.

238 Gordon interview; Mike Caldwell interview.

239 1987 RMNP Superintendent's Annual Report; Kyle Patterson, RMNP Public Relations officer, quoted in "Hurt Hiker Spent Night in Rocky Mtn. National Park," *Denver Post*, August 10, 2009 http://www.denverpost.com/search/ci_13027991 (accessed August 13, 2009.)

of well-thought out proposals still seemed unlikely. Nonetheless, the official plan established a critically important framework for managing the park's wilderness areas, whether in a time of affluence or penury.

The 2001 plan re-stated the park's commitment to managing its backcountry according to the standards of the 1964 Wilderness Act, thus to protecting both the "primeval character" of backcountry areas and visitors' opportunity for wilderness experiences. In addition, it committed the park to science-based management and minimal-impact principles both in monitoring and mitigating harm to wilderness. It similarly committed the park to promoting minimal-impact ethics among backcountry visitors who sought to experience the wilderness. Importantly, the plan noted that if visitors were to seek a wilderness experience "they need to accept wilderness on its own unique terms," with risks, dangers from wildlife, physical features and conditions that are "inherent in the various elements and conditions that comprise a wilderness experience and primitive methods of travel."[240]

The 2001 plan also recognized technical climbing "as a legitimate recreational activity within national parks, including wilderness." It noted the various forms of disruption, erosion and degradation to climbing areas and rocks that the task force had described in 1990, and it committed Rocky Mountain National Park to the promotion of clean-climbing methods and ethics. The plan prohibited not only motorized drills but also gluing and chipping holds and any "aggressive" or "intentional" gardening. It strongly discouraged the placement of any permanent protection except when safety concerns permitted no other option, and encouraged climbers to minimize the deposition of litter and waste, to stay on trails, to climb without undue noise, to avoid the disruption of wildlife, and to use protection and wear clothing and slings that "blend in with the natural surroundings." The plan permitted the use of climbing chalk, but it urged climbers to "be sensitive to visual and environmental impacts that could occur."[241] Finally, in outlining how climbing would be managed, the 2001 plan committed the park to effective and extensive ranger patrol, education, and enforcement.

The 2001 Backcountry/Wilderness plan essentially confirmed the managerial developments of the 1970s and 1980s, which had grafted a new commitment to ecologically-based wilderness protection onto the park's long-standing efforts to protect natural resources while maximizing visitor access to backcountry areas. Visitors' considerable responsibility for themselves, the park's resources, and one another remained a critical element of park management, as it had since the 1920s.

What was quite new about the 2001 plan, and of potential significance for climbers on Longs Peak, was its adoption of a system for distinguishing areas of the backcountry by Management Classes. In effect, the differing classifications attempted to establish the park's tolerance levels for "resource impacts". Equally important, the differing classifications also attempted to establish what park visitors might reasonably expect to find in different parts of the backcountry. Longs Peak was placed in Management Class 3, which accounted for 27,474 acres of the park's backcountry. Management Class 3 areas were essentially formal trail corridors and designated camping sites within backcountry areas of moderate to high use. Within this management class, anthropogenic disturbances would be tolerated only along a 100 foot-wide corridor on either side of the trail, and in a 100 foot-wide radius around each campsite. In Management Class 3 areas, visitors could expect a broad spectrum of physical

240 "Backcountry/Wilderness Management Plan," 2001, 1-9. http://www.nps.gov/romo/parkmgmt/wilderness_backcountry_plan.htm

241 Ibid., Section 2, 37-40.

challenges, from low to high, and opportunities for solitude that were "broad spectrum, low to high, depending on time of year, day of week, time of day, weather etc."[242] With the new system of backcountry management classes in place, the park gave itself an important new tool for dealing with the problem of backcountry crowds on Longs Peak, first by setting a spatial limit to environmental change, second by establishing norms for dealing with the tension between visitor expectations and the realities of the trail. Climbers were essentially told that the park could not take responsibility for ensuring their "solitude" on Longs, as Longs was not considered a wilderness site where solitude was commonplace. Rather, responsibility for obtaining "solitude" was placed squarely on the shoulders of backcountry users. "Those visitors who seek solitude only need to plan accordingly."[243]

The fact that the park superintendent approved the 2001 Backcountry/Wilderness Plan did not guarantee the availability of adequate resources for effective implementation. National park funding has recently improved, after many years of serious underfunding across the entire National Park Service.[244] But it is not yet possible to know what improvements in funding will mean for Rocky Mountain National Park or Longs Peak.

In 2010 and beyond park managers will have to brace themselves for even more crowds. Population growth on the Front Range is expected to be very high over the next twenty-five years. Park managers are also contending with resource impacts that are caused not by visitors themselves but by air pollution migrating into the park from the fast-growing Front Range. High-elevation ecosystems are especially vulnerable to nitrogen depositions, which have already altered forest and soil biogeochemistry in the park and may alter habitats for plant and animal species in the future.[245]

Longs Peak will undoubtedly feel the effects of increased visitation to the park, and the park will likely be pressed to steer some potential visitors to Longs to trails and peaks elsewhere. The Longs Peak area was one of three locations in a 2004-2005 survey of visitor satisfaction with park resources along Highway 7. This survey revealed many Longs Peak visitors would like to see more short trails in the area, though it was unclear if they wanted to use such trails themselves or simply wanted to ease crowding on the existing trails.[246] A project currently in the planning stages would significantly modify the Longs Peak trailhead area, eliminating the campground. The former campground space would be incorporated into an enlarged parking lot, which would be accompanied by new environmentally-sustainable restroom facilities, and a new ranger station to replace facilities almost unchanged since the Mission 66 era. Camping would move to an expanded site at the Mt. Meeker trailhead. It appears that the goal of this plan is not to encourage even more people to climb Longs Peak but, rather, to recognize the fact that the peak has long been accommodating many more people than can park in the 75-car parking lot. Visitors have simply taken matters into

242 Ibid., Section 2-3.

243 Ibid., Section 2-15.

244 National Parks Conservation Association, "Success! National Parks Receive Funding Increase for 2010," http://act.npca.org/npca/notice-description.tcl?newsletter_id=26572903

245 Tamara Blett and Kristi Morris, "Nitrogen Deposition Issues and Effects in Rocky Mountain National Park" Technical Background Document. *www.cdphe.state.co.us/ap/rmnp/noxtech.pdf*

246 Patricia Taylor, et al, "Visitor Satisfaction Along the Highway 7 Corridor to Rocky Mountain National Park," Laramie, WY: Wyoming Survey and Analysis Center, University of Wyoming, 2006. Copy in CPHA office, obtained from RMNP Planning Director Larry Gamble. A 2002 visitor survey focusing on wilderness experience found that most participants were repeat visitors to the park, with a high degree of respect for wilderness and a strong feeling of connection to the wilderness when visiting the park. The survey locations for the study were identified only as wilderness trails, but Longs Peak was the most frequently named place in the participants' photo logs, suggesting that the E. Longs Peak Trail was probably one of the survey locations. Elke Schuster et al, "Wilderness Experience in Rocky Mountain National Park 2002," U.S. Geological Survey, 2003.

their own hands and parked on the road, to the annoyance and inconvenience of adjacent private property owners. The new parking lot would have room for the number of cars that have been parking on the road and in the lot on a busy day. Newly erected roadside barriers would make parking on the road impossible.[247]

As of 2010, Longs Peak remains a complex wilderness setting. Congress placed approximately ninety-five percent of Rocky Mountain National Park in the National Wilderness Preservation System in 2008. According to Chief Ranger Mark Magnuson the new designation has not affected the park's management of the peak demonstrably, since Longs has been managed as a wilderness area for decades. In many ways the park's goal remains, as it has since the early twentieth century "to protect the resource from the people, the people from the resource, and the people from the people." The new wilderness designation situates this goal within a legally-mandated obligation to manage wilderness according to ecological principles rather than aesthetic values. And the 2001 Backcountry/ Wilderness Plan obligates the park to educate visitors in minimal-impact ethics and help them to understand what they're getting themselves into, whether alpine terrain or crowded trails. Yet even with these legal and managerial frameworks in place, it remains hard to characterize what climbers will find on Longs Peak, or what they may want to find. Generalizations don't work particularly well. As Mark Magnuson points out, "a lot of the folks that go up the Longs Peak trail are there to climb Longs Peak or to experience Longs Peak, not to have a wilderness experience. They don't care if they happen to run into another three hundred people along the way." By law, the park is required "to manage it for wilderness values, for a wilderness experience."[248] But now, even more so than in 1964, the meaning of "wilderness experience" is difficult to pin down, especially when one considers the park's classification of some wilderness areas as "moderate to high use."

When asked in 2009 about going to Longs Peak for a wilderness experience, Estes Park climber and guide Mike Caldwell said "that's not what Longs Peak is, Longs Peak is more of a social mountain." Mike's son Tommy, a professional climber who has worked his way up the rock faces of remote peaks around the world, said that Longs Peak "is absolutely a wilderness experience."[249] Both men said what seems true to them. To some extent they may have been speaking about different types of climbs on Longs – a climb via the Keyhole route on a hot August day is quite different than a climb on *D1* or the *Casual Route* on the very same day. But differences of perception are surely possible even about a single climb shared by father and son. The differences in viewpoint are all about how one interacts, on any given day, with two simple realities: Longs is a massive peak in an unpredictable alpine setting. Few climb it without some interaction with other climbers.

In many ways it seems appropriate to end this report with questions that are only slightly different than some of the ones with which it began. By their presence on Longs Peak, and through their many decades of interaction with other climbers and rangers, technical and non-technical climbers alike compel us to ask: "what kind of environment is Longs? To what extent is it wild? To what extent human-made? How should we describe what people have gained or experienced during their time on Longs Peak in decades past? What will be possible in the future? Is it possible to have a wilderness experience and a social experience at one and the same time?"

247 "Highway 7 Recreation Improvements Plan," available online at http://www.nps.gov/romo/parkmgmt/planning.htm (accessed August 18, 2009.)

248 Magnuson interview.

249 Mike Caldwell interview; Tommy Caldwell, interview with Ruth Alexander, August 12, 2009

An environment "untrammeled by man," is harder to find on Longs Peak in 2010 than it was in 1925. Still, the peak continues to draw people to its high-mountain granite summit. The wild allure is still there, as is the challenge of pitting one's skills against nature, and the appeal of sharing nature with human companions. Whatever the variation in how visitors define their goals and experience on Longs Park, park managers will continue to be obligated, by law and tradition, to try to understand what they must do "to protect and preserve" the wilderness environment and humans' enjoyment of that which is wild on Longs Peak.

View of Chasm Lake and Twin Sisters from the summit of Longs Peak. *Image courtesy of Rocky Mountain National Park.*

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