

# Rocky Mountain

National Park Service  
U.S. Department of Interior  
Rocky Mountain National Park



## Cultural History of Rocky Mountain National Park Teacher Guide





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## Rocky Mountain National Park

Rocky Mountain National Park (RMNP) is defined by the rugged Rocky Mountains that cut through the heart of the park from north to south. These mountains have shaped the landscape and created the conditions for the ecosystems we find within the park. Three of the park’s ecosystems, the montane, subalpine, and alpine tundra are delineated by elevation, with the montane ecosystem comprising the lowest elevations in the park (5,600 – 9,500 ft.) and the alpine tundra ecosystem comprising the highest elevations in the park (11,000 – 14,259 ft.). This fragile alpine tundra, which comprises 1/3 of the park, is one of the main scenic and scientific features for which the park was established and is one of the largest and best preserved examples of this ecosystem in the lower 48 states.

Environmental Education was formalized at RMNP with the inception of the Heart of the Rockies program in 1992. Our curriculum is built on the principles of RMNP’s founding father, Enos Mills. Mills felt children should be given the opportunity to explore and learn in the outdoors, for nature is the world’s greatest teacher, a belief that is kept alive today through every education program.

*Lessons Written and Compiled By  
Rocky Mountain National Park Environmental Education Staff*

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*Teacher Guide Created by Nicole Wardo 4/2016 and Kayla Sullivan 11/2016; Updated by Christie Wilkins 4/2021. All Photos are Copyright the National Park Service unless otherwise stated.*

# Teacher Guides

Teacher guides have been developed by the education staff at RMNP and each focus on a topic of significance to the Park. These guides serve as an introductory resource to the topic, and the information provided is used by park educators to develop curriculum-based education programs. Guides benefit teachers by providing the background information necessary to build a strong foundation for teaching students about specific park-related topics; they may also be used as a resource for preparing students for field trips to RMNP. Each guide contains a resources and references section to provide for more in-depth study.

## Rocky Mountain National Park Education Program Goals

1. Increase accessibility to Rocky Mountain National Park for students from our gateway communities and under-served students who otherwise would not have the opportunity to visit the park.
2. Develop a variety of internal and external partnerships with other park operations, school districts, universities, professional educational organizations, agencies, friends groups, and various funding organizations.
3. Conduct workshops to train teachers to take a larger role in their students' experience at Rocky Mountain National Park.
4. Develop distance learning opportunities to serve students from outside our visiting area.

## Schedule an Education Program with a Ranger

Field trips to national parks offer unique opportunities for studying and experiencing natural and cultural resources. Field trips are a great way to make abstract concepts from the classroom concrete. RMNP is an ideal outdoor classroom. It has a diversity of natural resources, easy spring and fall access, and is in close proximity to Front Range and Grand County communities.

Rocky Mountain National Park, like many national parks, offers ranger-led education programs. Heart of the Rockies, Rocky's education program, provides free field and classroom-based education programs, aligned to Colorado education standards. School groups should make reservations at least 6 months in advance. National Park entrance fee waivers may also be available for school visits. For further information or to schedule a program, please contact the Education Program Manager, at (970) 586-1338.

A variety of ranger-led education programs are offered seasonally. Programs in the spring and fall are generally similar focusing on a variety of park topics; programs in the winter are limited to snowshoeing programs and classroom programs focusing on winter. To see a list of the latest available programs please visit <http://www.nps.gov/romo/forteachers/planafielddtrip.htm>.

# Cultural History of Rocky Mountain National Park Background Information

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## Shaped by Humans

Today, Rocky Mountain National Park (RMNP) spans 415 square miles of lands that hold some of America's most beautiful scenery. This land was formed from geologic forces and is well known for sweeping mountain ranges and a variety of flora and fauna. While these lands may have been shaped by natural forces first, they have been shaped in the human mind by a series of behaviors and ideas going back thousands of years. The human history of RMNP has shaped it as much as a glacier or a flood. The choices that humans have made over time have contributed to the RMNP we know today in sometimes surprising ways.



The snowcapped Continental Divide has lured humans to the Estes Valley for centuries.

While this land was shaped physically by humans as they hunted, lived on, and traveled through, it also became a space shaped by ideologies. These ideas changed the way that people interacted with this land and the uses they put it towards. All these factors shaped this land into what we now know as Rocky Mountain National Park.

## Humans First Arrive on the Land

Humans appeared in the RMNP area about 12,000 years ago when the glaciers receded from the Rocky Mountains leaving an unprecedented opportunity for ancient humans. The wide meadows of glacially carved valleys provided habitat for many large animals that Paleo-Indians hunted, such as mammoths and other Ice Age fauna. As the climate changed, these human groups followed their prey to higher elevation.



**Game drives** along the Continental Divide were constructed of long rock walls about knee-height that converged to form V's. Once the animals moved into a concentrated area, hunters would throw spears or shoot arrows at the game, harvesting only a small fraction.

Like all peoples, these ancient hunters constructed tools and created structures. The culture that roamed across western North America is commonly known as the Clovis culture. They lived from around 11,500 – 11,000 BCE. The name Clovis comes from the city of Clovis, New Mexico, where their characteristically fluted projectile points were first found in 1929 by archeologists. A Clovis point is usually a medium to large lanceolate (spear-shaped) point. They are generally thicker than Folsom points which ancient North American peoples made around 9500 – 8000 BCE. The Clovis people are considered to be the ancestors of many of the indigenous cultures in North America.



Examples of **Clovis points** found in Rocky Mountain National Park by archaeologists. If you ever find an artifact in the park, leave it there! Let a ranger know so a trained person can document and protect these items for the future!

On the alpine tundra they hunted bison, elk, bighorn sheep, and other prey using a system of structures called game walls and hunting blinds constructed from stones. A game wall is intended to funnel a herd towards waiting hunters in a blind, which hides them from the animals view. A game wall does not have to be tall to be effective : modern animals can still be seen today following these ancient paths the Clovis people constructed.

For thousands of years, this land was a seasonal home for humans. The tradition of seasonal occupation continued with the Ute and Arapaho peoples who also used the glacial valleys in the warmer months of the year.

The Ute were the first modern peoples to make use of the area that is now part of RMNP. Not unlike the Clovis people, the Ute made use of the area during the warmer months of the year and retreated to the lower elevations during the harsh Rocky Mountain winters. Archeological evidence in the form of fire circles, tool artifacts, and wickiups suggest the Ute arrived around 1200 CE, following in the footsteps of previous groups of humans. To compare to other parts of the world, this was the medieval time period in Europe, the Crusades were occurring in the Middle East, and Genghis Kahn was beginning his conquest of Asia.



A **wickiup** is a temporary shelter used by Native Americans in mountain environments. They are formed by dozens of tree trunks, often lodgepole pines, that can be transported and moved from place to place.

Things changed in North America after the establishment of permanent European settlements on the east coast of present-day Canada and the United States, as well as in present-day Mexico and Central America during the 1500s and 1600s. The forceful taking of land by European Settlers, among other factors, created a mass human migration that brought the Arapaho people west into the area from their home on the Great Plains. A combination of oral histories and archaeological evidence suggests the Arapaho entered the area seasonally just like the groups that had come before. In some areas of RMNP, a visitor can see Arapaho influence on the names of places, like the Kawuneeche Valley (Kawuneeche means coyote in Arapaho).



RMNP actively works with the following tribes today: Ute Mountain Ute, Southern Ute, Northern Ute, Comanche, Northern Cheyenne, Southern Cheyenne, Northern Arapaho, and Southern Arapaho. These tribes and many others share ideas with the park as representatives of their sovereign nations to celebrate the land we all love.

## Euro-Americans Move West

Another transient human group emerged in the early 1800s called the mountain men. These men would travel alone or in small groups seeking hides that could be sold in Europe. Often, they would carry European goods like spun cloth, beads, metal works, and other items they traded with Native American peoples. These men were most active from about 1810-1840. Many became romantic figures that would bring stories of amazing natural places back to the people on the east coast. These stories would inspire another wave of Euro-American exploration.

In southern Colorado, Spanish settlers were building ranches and trading posts to move goods across the Atlantic or to other parts of the empires. While some mountain men would travel north from locations like Bent's Fort in present-day southern Colorado and Sante Fe, New Mexico, the Spanish settlers did not travel that far north due to conflicts with Native American tribes.

In 1803, President Thomas Jefferson, and others, negotiated the purchase of the Louisiana Territory from France. This expansion included most of the western United States, including the land that would become RMNP and much of northern Colorado. The United States government wanted to survey the purchased land and sent several expeditions over a period of years. In 1820, the men on the Stephen H. Long expedition were the first Euro-Americans to record the existence of Longs Peak and Mt. Meeker which they could see from the eastern plains of Colorado. Stephen Long named Longs Peak for himself, although Mt. Meeker would not gain a Euro-American name until 1911. Before their English names, these two iconic peaks had other names like "The Two Guides" by the Arapaho and "Les Deux Oreilles," which means "the two ears, by the French



Birestadt Lake in Rocky Mountain National Park was named to celebrate Albert Bierstadt and his portrayal of the West.

preserve the scenery and identity of the American West would lead to the protection of RMNP about fifty years later.

continue to serve as landmarks for the United States flowed east through the stories of mountain men and fur trappers and through sketches and paintings from artists that traveled with the western expeditions. A notable name for RMNP was Albert Bierstadt. He was a celebrated landscape painter who traveled with western surveys and brought back paintings of a sublime, idealized western landscape. The ideas of the American West became a part of American life to the point that Abraham Lincoln took time during the American Civil War to sign the Yosemite Park Act giving protection of Yosemite Valley to the state of California in 1864. The effort to

## A Place Called Estes Park

One of the first permanent Euro-American inhabitants of the Estes Valley was the man it was ultimately named after – Joel Estes. In 1859, after first exploring the valley the year before, he started a homestead. By 1863, he moved his family to the area and began living year round. They were soon joined by several other Euro-American families spread across the landscape. The Homestead Act of 1862 opened millions of acres in the American West for settlement, including the land that would become RMNP. The stories about a beautiful place in the mountains west of the fledgling city of Denver brought many intrepid souls off the plains.

By this time, many of the Native American peoples in the area had moved to more remote locations or been forced to live on reservations. Joel Estes and his son note in their writings that they never saw any Native Americans in what would become Estes Park. According to oral histories, some indigenous people still traveled through but were unable to utilize the land the way they had in the past. A paradigm shift about land ownership resulted from this clash of cultures.

The Colorado Territory really began to develop after gold was discovered at Pike's Peak in 1859. Not long after, other minerals were discovered in other parts of the Colorado mountains leading to communities like Leadville and Silverton, named for what was found there. Prospectors tried their luck in several places in the RMNP area. On the slopes of Long's Peak the Eugenia Mine can still be seen, although it did not yield much benefit to its builder. On the western slope of the Continental Divide, Joe Shipler had a bit more success in 1879 by finding silver on the mountain that



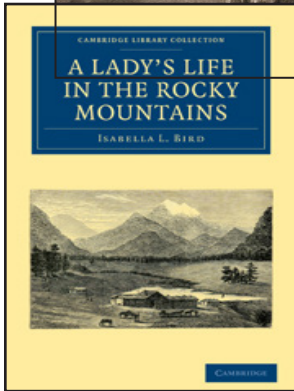
The remnant of a log cabin at Lulu City circa 1930.

today bears his name (Shipler on the west side of RMNP). He was able to gain financiers in Fort Collins to build Lulu City as a mining town. Lulu was the name of one of the financier's daughters. By 1881, there were forty cabins and several businesses in the small town. Conflicts between the Anglo-American residents of Lulu City and Dutch immigrants led to the establishment of Dutchtown to the west of Lulu City. Despite this growing community, it became apparent that the silver was low quality and the cost of operating the mines was too high. The town was abandoned by 1885 by all but Joe Shipler who continued to mine for the next 30 years.

## Explorations and Mountaineering

Two more government expeditions from the United States Geological Survey (USGS) traveled through – the Powell expedition in 1868 and the Hayden expedition in 1873. Ferdinand Vandever Hayden was surveying overland from Denver, Colorado, to Santa Fe, New Mexico, and John Wesley Powell wanted to track the Colorado River from its headwaters to its outlet in





Isabella Bird's letters made her one of the most distinguished female travelers of the 19th century.

the Gulf of California. Both parties made a climb of Longs Peak during their expedition. Powell's party was accompanied by William Byers of the Rocky Mountain News who publicized the climb and added his voice to others that expounded the beauty of Longs Peak and the surrounding area. Hayden's party was made more notable by the presence of Anna Dickinson, the first Euro-American woman to climb Longs Peak.

The next Euro-American woman to climb Longs Peak was Isabella Bird, an Englishwoman traveling through Estes Valley. She had been encouraged to visit the area by British friends while traveling in the Sandwich Islands, now known as Hawaii. She was told that it was one of the most "beautiful places in all of the Americas."

She traveled from Hawaii across the western United States writing about her travels which were later compiled into *A Lady's Life in the Rocky Mountains*. Her imagery of the 1870s American West, Estes Valley, and Longs Peak in particular are still highly influential to the way people view RMNP as a place of wondrous peaks and fascinating wildlife. Thanks to her travels in the United States, as well as China and Japan, she was the first woman ever inducted in the Royal Society of Explorers in England.

Today, Bird's Longs Peak climb is the topic of legend in Estes Park due to her association and possible romance with Jim Nugent, more commonly known as Rocky Mountain Jim. Nugent had a reputation as an outlaw and was not popular with the wealthier citizens of Estes Park. He was famously in conflict with dude rancher Griff Evans who had purchased Joel Estes's homestead when the Estes family moved from the area. During the 1870s, interest had grown in the area as an outdoor paradise and attracted both Americans and people from abroad. One of these individuals was Thomas Whyndham-Quin, the fourth Earl of Dunraven, who was a wealthy Irishman. Like many of his class, he wanted to own large areas of land for his personal use. Jim Nugent and many others protested this accumulation, and ultimately Dunraven was thwarted in his ambition to make the valley into his personal hunter's paradise. Many of the lands were put up for sale or given back to their original owners.



The Griff Evans Ranch with Longs Peak in the distance.

## The Rise of the Dude Ranch

The decades leading up to the twentieth century saw many dreams for the valley, and these dreams really gained momentum around 1900. Land owners discovered that

### What is a 'dude'?

A 'dude' is someone from the eastern United States or abroad in western slang. Its origins are unclear, but are often attributed to the German word *dude* which means fool, or a shortened form of "Yankee Doodle."



After building a modest homestead cabin, the Spragues were run into the resort business which led to the construction of a three-story log hotel.

guests as people traveled through the valley on their way to prospecting, hunting, and later, touring. The Spragues began to charge room and board to these guests and built additional lodging. This operation got so large he needed help and offered a partnership to his wife’s cousin, a man from dairy cattle country named James Stead. The business successfully expanded and began offering guided excursions leading visitors around the area. However, there were challenges amongst the owners. Alberta Sprague and Mrs. Stead had many differences of opinion regarding operation of the ranch. This led to Sprague selling the business to Stead and building a new lodge in Glacier Basin. He dammed the creek and created a fish pond which today bears his name. Sprague Lake is still a popular destination for anglers and other visitors.

it was more profitable to wrangle “dudes” - people that would be called tourists today - than it was to wrangle livestock on the dynamic Rocky Mountain landscape. One of these individuals was Abner Sprague. He had first come to the Estes Valley in 1868 as a surveyor and by the late 1870s had made the Moraine Park area his home. Sprague wore many hats during his life and is a significant figure in the story of RMNP and Estes Park.

Abner Sprague was a surveyor, prospector, rancher, amateur geologist, naturalist, and lodge owner. He and his wife, Alberta, found themselves entertaining



Abner Sprague with an orphan elk.

## New Lives in the Clear Mountain Air



The Stanley Steamer was an auto powered by steam. It was a common early sight in RMNP. Image from Smithsonian Auto Collection.

Respiratory illnesses brought many people to the Colorado mountains hoping that the clear air would cure them. F.O. Stanley was one of these travelers and became so enamored with the area that he was willing to finance a road from Loveland to bring more visitors to the area, particularly friends and acquaintances to a hotel he was building. His Stanley Steamer became an integral part of the tourism to Estes Valley in the form of the Estes Park Transportation Company. This provided Stanley Steamers to transport visitors and their freight from the train stations in Lyons and Loveland. During the early 1900s visitors would often arrive by train and then contract a wagon or automobile to bring them into the valley. This sort of travel was expensive, and visiting Estes Park was an elite activity. Beyond the Stanley Hotel, Sprague’s

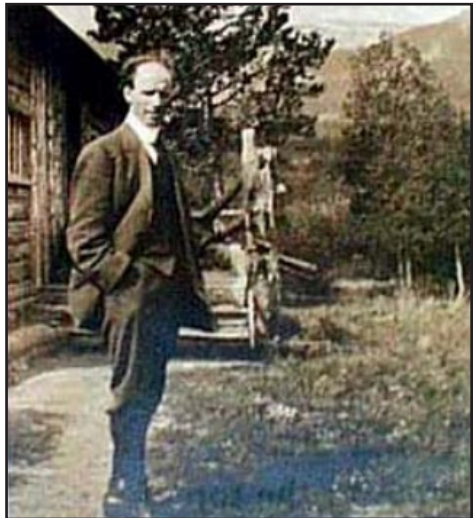




The Stanley Hotel cost over a half-million dollars to build. Early guests who stayed at the hotel included J.C. Penney, Harvey Firestone, and Theodore Roosevelt.

In 1884, a fourteen year old boy traveled from Kansas to stay with his relatives who lived on a homestead near the base of Longs Peak. He had grown up sickly, and his family hoped that the Colorado air would improve his health. This teenager was Enos Mills, who would become a central figure in the story of the creation of RMNP. Upon arrival in the area, Mills became enamored with the nature and landscapes of the Longs Peak area. On a trip to California, he had a chance encounter with John Muir, the famous naturalist of the Sierra Nevadas. Muir inspired Mills to take up the pen and begin writing about the land and wildlife that he loved so much. He published fourteen books about the Longs Peak area during his life and was a vocal activist for its preservation. As the owner of the Longs Peak Inn, he joined many other lodge owners in their support of a national park.

Lodge, and Stead's Ranch there were many hotels in the area such as the Elkhorn, the Baldpate, the Moraine Park Lodge, the Horseshoe Inn, the Fall River Inn, and dozens more throughout Estes Park and nearby towns. During this time, Moraine Park was a functioning town complete with its own post office, school, livery, eating establishments, as well as the many options for lodging. Near Grand Lake there were many hotels and inns available as well for visitors coming from Granby.



Enos Mills stands outside his Longs Peak Inn.

**The Frontier is CLOSED! The Turner Thesis**  
In 1893, historian Frederick Jackson Turner declared an epoch of American History had ended with the achievement of Manifest Destiny, of spreading American civilization from coast to coast. The idea that the "Frontier" defines American culture and identity is integral to the history of the American West.

## Protecting Outdoor Opportunities and National Parks

The idea for RMNP came from many different sectors of society: businesses, preservationists, politicians, and private citizens. This momentum for national parks began in the 1890s when it was declared that Manifest Destiny had been achieved and the Frontier was closed. This kicked off a wave of cultural concern of how Americans would define themselves. Until that point in history, the United States invested a lot of national identity with the wildness of the Frontier and the process of "civilizing" it.

With concepts like Theodore Roosevelt's "rugged individualism," there was an increased interest in outdoor skills, bringing more and more people into the mountains.

Organizations like the Colorado Mountain Club, which started in 1912, made a central focus on “bagging peaks,” a distinction a climber could achieve by reaching the summit of a mountain. They also placed books at the top of many popular climbs, like Longs Peak, where parties could sign their names for posterity.

In 1914, a pack trip brought two Arapaho elders into the area of RMNP. Oliver Toll accompanied the men and later compiled his notes into *Arapaho Names and Trails*. The elders traveled within what is now the park and provided names for landmarks from their childhoods. Places like the Kawuneeche Valley were restored to their historical names.



Eager visitors gather for the dedication ceremony in Horseshoe Park.

The Rocky Mountain National Park Act was signed on January 26, 1915, establishing RMNP. It exempted the lands from further settling, hunting, and other activities as written into the law. At this time, the interest in national parks nationwide had reached a new high point. Not long after RMNP was established, a National Park Conference was held in Berkeley, California. One of the speakers, Mary Sherman, was the president of the League of Colorado Women’s clubs and spoke about the importance of RMNP and an agency to manage our existing national parks. On September 4, 1915, she was photographed with Enos Mills, F.O. Stanley, Colorado Congressman Ed Taylor, and Colorado Governor George Carlson at RMNP’s dedication ceremony. From that day, the trajectory of the people that lived in and around RMNP was changed.



Pictured at the dedication from left to right: Enos Mills, F.O. Stanley, congressman Ed Taylor, Mary King Sherman, and Colorado governor George Carlson.

## The National Park Service is Formed

It would take another year before the National Park Service (NPS) was created on August 25, 1916, with Stephen Mather as the first director of the NPS. The NPS was a long-running effort of many people to create an overseeing agency for the growing collection of national parks. Prior to the NPS, the parks were protected by government entities like the U.S. Army. The first “rangers” in parks like Yellowstone and Yosemite were cavalry soldiers. The early days of RMNP was a continuation of many of the previously existing activities, like hiking and camping, but with some activities now outlawed, like hunting inside of





At RMNP's dedication from left to right: Stephen Mather, NPS Publicist Robert Stirling Yard, Superintendent Charles Trowbridge, NPS Photographer Herford T. Cowling, and Horace Albright.

the park boundaries.

Stephen Mather and Horace Albright, Mather's assistant, felt it was important to create a professional corps of park managers. The first superintendent of RMNP was Charles Trowbridge, followed by Claude Way. Superintendent Way worked with the first park rangers and naturalists in RMNP. The job of those early park rangers was challenging. Every ranger needed to be able to ride a horse, shoot a gun, build a trail, repair buildings, teach visitors, and do all of the jobs today's rangers specialize in. Beyond that they often had to provide

their own uniforms and worked under social restrictions, such as not expecting to go to barn dances. During this time, rangers fit into a certain idea about American masculinity. Albright, who would become the second director of the NPS, even had appearance qualifications for park rangers. However, there were many other people who worked in national parks, despite the fact they were not allowed to call themselves rangers.

Sisters Elizabeth and Esther Burnell were two early naturalists in RMNP. They had come to Estes Park to go to Enos Mill's nature guide school near Longs Peak. Esther Burnell fell in love with the area and purchased a homestead not long after she arrived. She would eventually marry Enos Mills and help run the Longs Peak Inn. She was a major force in helping Mills get his message about RMNP to the world, supporting his books and other activities. Elizabeth Burnell led hiking parties all over RMNP. She often led hikes on the tundra and over the peaks even though Superintendent Way insisted that women should not lead hikes above the treeline without the company of a licensed male guide.

In the summer of 1928, Margaret Fuller Boos became Rocky Mountain National Park's first female ranger-naturalist. Women were not allowed the title of Park Ranger until several decades later. She had recently earned her PhD in Geology and had done research for a comprehensive geology guide for the Front Range. Superintendent Roger Toll hired her because of her speaking and teaching experience, and because he hoped she would add to the park's collection of lantern slides for interpretive programs.



Elizabeth Burnell was the first woman nature guide on Longs Peak.

She worked the summers of 1928 and 1929, running Rocky Mountain National Park's interpretive program. She led dozens of hikes and taught evening programs wearing the same uniform as the men. She wrote over twenty articles for Nature Notes, a park publication that discussed many natural science topics. During her time as a ranger-naturalist, Boos also created a geology guide for the park. She was offered a permanent position in 1929, but she turned it down to work with her husband elsewhere. Later in her life, she helped establish the Geology Department at the University of Denver.



A group of early rangers in Rocky Mountain National Park. Circa 1930. Jack Moomaw, chief ranger for nearly 20 years between 1920 and 1940 is front row, center.

There were many notable park rangers, both men and women, who worked in RMNP and helped shape it into the special place it is today. With their passion for the job and their values regarding the environment and history, they still inspire today's rangers and visitors. The focus of the first few decades of RMNP was supporting recreation and maintaining these opportunities. Operations such as the Deer Ridge Chalet selling curios at the junction of US 34 and US 36 were a norm. Stead's Ranch sported a golf course and swimming pool in the heart of Moraine Park. A winter recreation area complete with short lifts and a bus taking skiers up Trail Ridge Road sprung up in Hidden Valley, in an attempt to drive revenue into the Estes Park area.



Automobiles are dwarfed by snowdrifts as they drive over Fall River Road in June of 1926.

connect Grand Lake on the west side of the Continental Divide to Estes Park on the east. Before the road, that journey would be made on foot or horseback, or by taking an alternate route by automobile. Construction of Trail Ridge Road began in 1919 and was finished by 1932. The Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) was integral to the completion of this project. The CCC

The condition of roads was a problem in the early days of RMNP. The first road to reach the tundra was Fall River Road, now called Old Fall River Road. This two-way dirt road was filled with hairpin turns and carefully carved into the mountainside of the Fall River Canyon. In some areas the road was so steep that early cars, which lacked fuel-injection technology, had to drive up backwards to keep fuel in the engine. As motor vehicle traffic in RMNP increased, designs were collected for a new road to the top of the divide. The new road would be more gradual and far easier to plot. It would



had a camp in Little Horseshoe Park in RMNP and filled a variety of roles including trail builders, carpenters, and exotic vegetation management crew. Their work can still be seen today in many of the rock walls on Trail Ridge Road and in the routes of the trails.

## The Post-War Era and the Rise of the Great American Road Trip

The start of World War II brought big changes to RMNP. Many park rangers at the time were young men who were eligible to serve in the military. Across the country, national parks quieted and fell into disrepair as park rangers left to become soldiers and tourists stayed home due to rationing. However, when the war ended, visitors came back to the national parks in numbers never before seen. The visitors in the 1940s and 1950s found an unprepared RMNP. During the Great Depression many private land owners had sold their lands to the park, and the remaining dude ranch and lodge owners did not have the space to accommodate waves of new arrivals. The NPS was still functioning on the reduced budget levels of World War II, and Congress had not allocated additional funds.



Hidden Valley was the only ski area with easy access from northern cities along the Front Range and was very popular with locals.



Visitors enjoy a ranger talk in Glacier Basin Campground in 1956.

RMNP also saw a change in the way visitors wanted to experience the area after World War II. Before cars had become common, people visiting Estes Park, Grand Lake, and RMNP would spend weeks in the area. They would spend the summer at the Stanley Hotel or roughing it in cabins or tents. As cars became more affordable and roads easier to navigate, many people came for day adventures, often driving over Trail Ridge Road or visiting the Hidden Valley Winter Recreation Area which was in operation until the 1990s. The new RMNP visitor often had specialized equipment for their activities whether that be camping, backpacking, hiking, skiing, etc.

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their existence to the construction efforts of Mission 66.

In 1963, a document was published by the National Park Service titled “Wildlife Management in the National Parks”, more commonly known as the Leopold Report. This document envisioned national parks as “vignettes of primitive America” where scientists could study plants and animals in a non-developed state.



Beaver Meadows Visitor Center (BMVC) in 1967. BMVC was designed by architects mentored by famous Mid-century Modern architect Frank Lloyd Wright.

In RMNP, and most existing national parks, recreation development had already occurred. In order to create a more natural landscape, RMNP managers made many decisions. One of these decisions was to begin the process of purchasing remaining inholdings within the park boundaries. An inholding is a piece of private property that was under personal ownership from before a national park was created. For RMNP, many of these owners sold their property to the park, but maintained a life lease which would allow them to continue occupying the property for 25 years. On properties already owned by RMNP, they began removing the buildings and other signs of human presence. This was not without controversy, as many people saw it as erasing important history from the area. The intention behind these purchases and removals was to create more wildlife habitat and produce that “vignette of primitive America” that the Leopold Report suggested.

The Wilderness movement during this time prompted RMNP to seek a Wilderness designation under the Wilderness Act of 1964. After many years, RMNP created several Wilderness areas within its boundaries, leading the park to be over 90% designated Wilderness by 2009.



Downtown Estes Park inundated by floodwaters from the failure of the Lawn Lake dam in 1982.

## Paving the Way to the Twenty-first Century

It is important to note that not only were there private homes in RMNP, there were also structures that were owned by cities before the park was established. One of these dams, the Lawn Lake Dam, infamously broke during the early morning hours of July 15, 1982 releasing 30 million cubic feet of water at once. It scoured



the creek bed of the Roaring River, carrying large boulders and debris quickly towards Horseshoe Park and then continued on towards Estes Park. A park employee called in the emergency which allowed the evacuation of the Aspenglen Campground, Estes Park, and the Big Thompson canyon. Due to the quick response time, many lives were saved, though three lives were lost. Many of the businesses and homes in Estes Park nearby the river were damaged and it led to a rebuild of the town that would make it even more appealing to tourists. Similar events happened in a 2013 flood, which was caused by an excess of rain over a short period of time.



A group of park rangers and ranger-naturalists circa 1960.

Other changes came to RMNP during the rise of the modern environmental and wilderness movements. During this time the profession of being a park ranger became more specialized than it had been in previous decades. In the early NPS, a park ranger needed to be a jack of all trades. In the burgeoning modern NPS, rangers are professional naturalists, resource protection officers, scientists, carpenters, stonemasons, and more. A new era arrived and, it became reflected in the NPS uniform.

## The Next Century of RMNP and the NPS

In 2015, RMNP celebrated its 100th Anniversary with special programs and events. In 2016, the National Park Service celebrated its 100th Anniversary nation-wide. These two events mark the start of the next century of human history on this landscape. Ideas will shift and change as they always have, and every visitor to a national park can be a part of making that future by protecting and learning about its history.



Park rangers gather in Horseshoe Park on September 4, 2015 to celebrate the 100 year Anniversary of Rocky Mountain National Park.





# Cultural History of Rocky Mountain National Park Resources

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# Appendix A: How to Research Rocky Mountain National Park

Please note that the sharing of these resources does not constitute an endorsement by the National Park Service.

## Read a book!

See appendix D and the References section to find a list of books about Rocky Mountain National Park and the surrounding areas. Most books are targeted towards advanced (adult) readers, but there are some offerings for younger students. Enos Mills's books are available in digital form for free online. The Rocky Mountain Conservancy (Rocky Mountain National Park's philanthropic partner) maintains a catalog of books about the park and surrounding areas.

## Read an old newspaper!

The Colorado Historic Newspapers Collection has created a database of newspapers published before 1926. These newspapers can be searched by keyword, date, and location. Historical copies of the Estes Park Trail can be a valuable primary source to discover the day to day happenings of Rocky Mountain National Park's gateway communities in the past. You can access the Colorado Historic Newspapers Collection here: <https://www.coloradohistoricnewspapers.org/>

## Ask a Museum or Historical Society!

Rocky Mountain National Park maintains its own collection of archaeological and historical items and documents. To get in touch with Rocky Mountain National Park's Museum Curator, contact Rocky Mountain National Park's Info Office with a specific question! They can be sent a message from here: <https://www.nps.gov/romo/contacts.htm>

Grand Lake and Estes Park also have local historical societies that collect objects, photographs, and documents. Local historical societies are often a wealth of information. Find out more about them at: Grand Lake Historical Society: <http://www.grandlakehistory.org>  
Estes Park Museum: <https://www.colorado.gov/pacific/townofestespark/museum>

## Check out the National Archives online!

The National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) is the federal repository for many artifacts and documents, including records relating to Rocky Mountain National Park like land claims and images. You can access the NARA database here: <https://www.archives.gov/research/catalog>

## Visit Rocky Mountain National Park!

There are multiple historic properties in the park such including the Holzwarth Historic Site. While the exterior of the buildings can be viewed year round, during the summer many of the buildings are opened to the public and the story of the Holzwarth family and dude ranches in Rocky Mountain National Park are interpreted. While there is little structural evidence left, it is also possible to hike to Lulu City and the Eugenia Mine and walk in the steps of miners. The Ute Trail follows some of the game trails that Native Americans and prehistoric peoples followed on the alpine tundra.



# Appendix B: Example Inquiry Questions

How does Rocky Mountain National Park and the National Park Service fit into the history of Colorado?

What was happening in the United States that created an interest for designating Rocky Mountain National Park and other parks?

How has the human history of Rocky Mountain National Park affected the activities that people do there today?

Read a newspaper article from the Estes Park Trail in 1915. What are some activities visitors did back then? How does it differ from today?

What was the effect of the Gold Rush on the area that would become Rocky Mountain National Park?

Why did people move to Estes Park in the 1800s? How did their lives change with the creation of a national park?

What were some of the motivations of the people who proposed Rocky Mountain National Park?

How did the rise of the automobile affect Rocky Mountain National Park?

Why did the Arapaho move to the Colorado area in the late 1600s?

Pick a historical person in the Estes Park or Grand Lake area. How did they affect the development of Rocky Mountain National Park?

How did events like World War II change the way people visited Rocky Mountain National Park?

The CCC was an important part of President Roosevelt's New Deal. How did they support the mission of Rocky Mountain National Park?

Why was Mission 66 an important period of development for the national parks? What was happening nationwide to make Mission 66 necessary?

In the 1960s, many laws were passed to help protect nature, like the Wilderness Act of 1964. How did these laws help shape the current Rocky Mountain National Park?

# Appendix C: Timeline of Events

- 10,000 B.C. Earliest known inhabitants, Paleoindian hunters enter the area that is now Rocky Mountain National Park as the glaciers recede.
- 1200-1300 Ute enter the Estes Valley and Rocky Mountain National Park.
- 1600-1700 The Arapaho make their first appearance to the Estes Valley.
- 1820 Stephen H. Long Expedition arrives on the plains and become the first Euro-Americans to describe Longs Peak.
- 1820-1840 Peak of the Rocky Mountain fur trade in Colorado and the American West.
- 1843 Rufus B. Sage is the first explorer to enter the Estes Valley and write about his findings.
- 1858 Joel Estes, a Missouri native, enters the area and begins a homestead. Has moved his whole family to the area in the early 1860s.
- 1858-1861 Colorado Gold Rush peak years.
- 1868 John Wesley Powell, William Byers, and others make the first ascent of Longs Peak. Byers, a newspaper editor with the Rocky Mountain News, details his ascent of Long's and this begins to publicize the Estes Valley as pristine wilderness.
- 1868 Abner Sprague first arrives in the Estes Valley.
- 1867 Griff Evans comes to Estes Park with his family to take care of the former Estes ranch. Seeing the potential in tourism, he builds accommodations for travelers and becomes the first dude ranch in the valley offering guided hunting, fishing, and mountaineering trips.
- 1870 Rough roads begin to be constructed from new Front Range communities to Estes Park.
- 1872 Lord Dunraven begins visiting the Estes Valley. He eventually opens the first resort in the area, the Estes Park Hotel.
- 1873 Alexander and Clara MacGregor establish their homestead in the valley, one of the first homestead ranches in Colorado.
- 1873 The U.S. Geological and Geographical Survey of the Territories, led by Ferdinand Vandever Hayden enters the Estes Valley. First Euro-American woman, Anna Dickinson, climbs Longs Peak.
- 1874 Abner Sprague homesteads in Moraine Park, builds Sprague's Ranch, and establishes tourism and dude ranching in the area that today is Rocky Mountain National Park.

- 1876 The State of Colorado is created by Congress.
- 1884 Enos A. Mills comes to the valley at 14 years old. The next year he makes his first ascent of Longs Peak.
- 1895-1935 Grand Ditch is built to bring water from Never Summer Range across La Poudre Pass and down the Cache La Poudre to the plains for agriculture.
- 1896-1902 Mining on the east side of the park (Eugenia and Meeker Mines).
- 1903 F.O. Stanley comes to Estes Valley.
- 1906 The Antiquities Act is passed, allowing the President to create national monuments.
- 1907 Enos Mills, James Grafton Rodgers, F.O. Stanley, Abner Sprague, Mariibel Sherman and others lobby for the establishment of Rocky Mountain National Park.
- 1909 The Stanley Hotel opens on July 4th.
- 1914 The Arapaho pack trip takes place, and a new understanding of the area's history and topographic features is uncovered.
- 1915 Rocky Mountain National Park's legislation is signed on January 26, and the park is dedicated on September 4.
- 1920 Crews working from the west and east met in September 1920 to complete Fall River Road, northern Colorado's first automobile road over the Continental Divide joining the towns of Grand Lake and Estes Park.
- 1931 The Horseshoe Inn was constructed by Willard Ashton.
- 1935 Work on Trail Ridge Road is completed, making the road the highest continually paved highway in the United States and creating another wave of tourism allowing visitors to get closer to the mountains.
- 1936 Moraine Park Lodge is remodeled by the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) to become the Moraine Park Museum. CCC crews also build the amphitheater which signifies a new era of park interpretation and education programs.
- 1939 Abner Sprague is the first visitor to pay an entrance fee of \$1 to access Rocky Mountain National Park. Fees were implemented to support infrastructure needed by the increased interest in the national park.
- 1940 RMNP experiences 600,000 visitors during this year, one of the highest until that date.
- 1945 World War II ends and tourism in the valley increases due to more leisure time and access to automobiles.



- 1955 Operated from 1955-1991, winter recreation in the Estes Valley is changed by the establishment of the Hidden Valley Winter Use Area located inside Rocky Mountain National Park. The winter use area was part of an attempt by Estes Park to increase visitation to Rocky Mountain National Park and increased revenues.
- 1964 Congress passed the Wilderness Act allowing federal lands to propose protected Wilderness areas nationwide. Rocky Mountain National Park would use this Act to declare over 90% of its lands as Wilderness by 2009.
- 1965 Rocky Mountain National Park celebrates its 50th Anniversary with commemorative objects and special programs.
- 1966 The National Historic Preservation Act is passed. This Act required that federal agencies must consider effects on historic buildings (buildings more than 50 years old). By this time, Rocky Mountain National Park had already removed much of its historical infrastructure.
- 1970 The National Environmental Policy Act is passed by Congress. This Act requires that all major actions on federal lands must have public input.
- Late 1970s A housing boom happens along the Front Range and Rocky Mountain National Park begins to experience higher visitation.
- 1982 Lawn Lake flood occurs. This forces business to rebuild, and new modernized tourism emerges in the valley.
- 1992 Visitor Survey reveals a transition in Rocky Mountain National Park visitation from out-of-state visitors to majority of in state residents.
- Late 1990s Modern tourism in the Estes Valley is redefined with a variety of events and a better understanding of Front Range visitors.
- 2007 Rocky Mountain National Park enters into a sister park relationship with High Tatras National Park in Poland and Slovakia. Through the sister park program, American national parks can help spread park management techniques around the world for the preservation of natural and cultural places. Rocky Mountain is also sister parks with Tusheti Nature Reserve in Georgia and Monteverde Cloud Forest National Park in Costa Rica.
- 2009 The Rocky Mountain National Park Wilderness Area is designated.
- 2015 Rocky Mountain National Park celebrates its centennial on January 24, 2015.
- 2016 The National Park Service celebrates its centennial on August 25, 2016.

# Appendix D: Classroom Book List

These books are not endorsed by the National Park Service. They are intended to serve as classroom resources for students. Please be sure to preview books to ensure that they are appropriate for your classroom. This list is by no means inclusive of every book available on the topic.

## Elementary School Level

*A Baby's Life in the Rocky Mountains* by Esther B. Mills

*A Kid's Look at Colorado* by Phyllis Perry

*C Is for Centennial : A Colorado Alphabet* by Louise Doak Whitney

*Tracks in Time: A Children's History of Estes Park* by Patricia Pickering

## Middle/High School Level

*America's Switzerland: Estes Park & Rocky Mountain National Park, the Growth Years* by James

Pickering

*Around Rocky Mountain National Park* by Suzanne Silverthorn

*A Natural History of Trail Ridge Road* by Amy Law

*Estes Park Beginnings* by Kenneth Jessen

*Mr. Stanley of Estes Park* by James Pickering

*Native American Oral History & Cultural Interpretation in Rocky Mountain National Park* by Sally

McBeth

*Rocky Mountain National Park: A History* by C. W. Buchholtz

*The Story of Estes Park* by Enos Mills

*This Blue Hollow: Estes Park, the Early Years, 1859-1915* by James Pickering

# Appendix E: People, Terms, and Events

**Antiquities Act** – An act passed by the United States Congress and signed into law by Theodore Roosevelt on June 8, 1906 giving the President of the United States the authority to restrict the use of particular public land owned by the federal government.

**Arapaho** – A tribe of Native Americans who utilized the Estes Valley and surrounding area for seasonal hunting grounds and historically lived on the plains of Colorado and Wyoming.

**Bird, Isabella** – English writer, explorer, photographer, and naturalist well known for her adventures and writings about life in the Rocky Mountains.

**Byers, William** – An early settler of Denver, Colorado, Byers was also the founder and editor of the Rocky Mountain News in Denver.

**Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC)** – A public work relief program that operated from 1933 to 1942 in the United States for unemployed, unmarried men from relief families as part of the New Deal.

**Continental Divide** – The line of summits of the Rocky Mountains, separating the watersheds that drain west to the Pacific Ocean from those that drain east toward the Atlantic Ocean.

**Culture** – The distinct ways that people live differently, classify and represent their experiences.

**Dedication** – A ceremony marking the official completion or opening of a public building, institution, monument, etc.

**Estes, Joel** – The first known white man to visit the valley and established the first homestead.

**Explorer** – A person who explores an unfamiliar area; an adventurer.

**Evans, Griffith** – Conducted a hotel, guiding, and ranching business in the Estes Valley.

**Fall River Road** – completed in September of 1920, the 37 mile road is the first route in RMNP over the Continental Divide and a driver of tourism for the towns of Grand Lake and Estes Park.

**History** – An umbrella term that relates to past events as well as the memory, discovery, collection, organization, presentation, and interpretation of information about these events.

**Homestead** – A dwelling with surrounding land and buildings occupied and kept up by the owner.

**Manifest Destiny** - the nineteenth century doctrine or belief that the expansion of the United States throughout the American continents was both justified and inevitable.

**Mills, Enos** – Known as the “Father of Rocky Mountain National Park”, Mills led the campaign to establish RMNP. He was a skilled nature guide, photographer, innkeeper, and lecturer.

**Mountain men** – Trappers and explorers who lived in the wilderness. They were most common in the North American Rocky Mountains from 1810 - late 1880s.



**Native Americans** – Indigenous peoples of the United States.

**Naturalist** – A person who studies and communicates about the relationships between plants, animals, and the natural environment.

**Paleolithic** – A period of prehistoric human history which is distinguished by the development of the primitive stone tools.

**Pioneers** – Someone who is among the first to settle a new area.

**Prehistoric** – The span of time before recorded history or the invention of writing systems.

**Sage, Rufus** – The first explorer to enter the Estes Valley and write about his findings.

**Sprague, Abner** – Surveyor, farmer, rancher, prospector, land owner, and prominent member of the Estes Park community. He and his family were pioneers in the homesteading and hotel business.

**Stanley, F.O.** – American inventor, hotelier, and businessman. Founded the Stanley Motor Carriage Company, which built the Stanley Steamer, with his twin brother. A prominent member of the Estes Park community, he built Stanley Hotel and fought for the creation of RMNP.

**Tourism** – The commercial organization and operation of vacations and places of interest by providing services such as information, accommodations, and transportation.

**Trapper** – A person who explores wilderness and traps wild animals for their fur and to make other products.

**Trail Ridge Road** – completed in 1932, the road connects the towns of Grand Lake and Estes Park and is the highest continually paved highway in the United States.

**Ute** – The primary Native American tribe to utilize the area now known as Rocky Mountain National Park from the 1200s to the late 1700s.

**Wilson, Woodrow** – President who signed the Rocky Mountain National Park Act into law making Rocky the nation's 10th national park.

**Wyndham-Quinn, Windham Thomas (Earl of Dunraven)** – An Irishman who controlled 6,000 acres of the Estes Valley for his private hunting reserve; later, he opened the Estes Park Resort, the area's first hotel.

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