

**ROCKY MOUNTAIN NATIONAL PARK:  
THE CLIMBER'S GUIDE**

**High Peaks**

**Bernard Gillett**

**Earthbound Sports, Inc.  
Chapel Hill, NC**

**ROCKY MOUNTAIN NATIONAL PARK:  
THE CLIMBER'S GUIDE  
High Peaks**

© 2001 Bernard Gillett. All rights reserved. No part of this book may be used, copied, or reproduced in any manner whatsoever without written permission of the publisher.

Printed in the United States of America

ISBN: 0-9643698-5-0

Published by  
Earthbound Sports, Inc.  
PO Box 3312  
Chapel Hill, NC 27515  
[www.earthboundsports.com](http://www.earthboundsports.com)

Cover photo credits

Front : The beautiful, yet seldom visited Palisades on Longs Peak. Photo: Bernard Gillett

Back (left): Climbers on *Yellow Wall* (the Diamond) with Chasm View Wall in the background. Photo: John Gillett

Back(right): Bernard Gillett on the first ascent of *Olympic Games*. Photo: John Gillett

For my wife Sally, and our children Katie, Claire, and Mary

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank the following people for dedicating time, talent, and information to this project.

Pat Adams, William Alexander, Doug Allcock, Roger and Bill Briggs, Andy Brown, Doug Byerly, Mike and Tommy Caldwell, Chip and Monika Chace, Michael Covington, Jim Detterline, Topher Donahue, Andy Donson, Eric Doub, Randy Farris, Mom and Dad Gillett, Robert and John Gillett, Sally Gillett, Stephan Greenway, Rick Guerrieri, Richard Harrison, Chris and Jerry Hill, Ellen Huber, Hal Huntsman, Kurt Johnson, Brandon Latham, Craig Luebben, Sean McMahan, Steve Muller, Terry Murphy, Don Otten, Tom Pomtier, Alvino Pon, Matt and Shawn Preston, Kath Pyke, Jeff Rickerl, Dean Rhode, Mark Ronca, Gary Ryan, Mike Schlauch, Dave Sheldon, Greg Sievers, Lawrence Stuemke, Pete Takeda, Rick Thompson, Clay Wadman, Kris Walker, Ed Webster, Kris and Randy Whorton, and anyone I may have overlooked.

This work is built on the efforts of earlier writers; it was through their guides that I came to know and love the climbs of the High Peaks. Thanks to Paul and Norman Nesbit, Walter Fricke, Richard DuMais, Chip Salaun and Scott Kimball. Information for a handful of other routes was borrowed from authors Cameron Burns, Peter Hubble, Jack Roberts, and Richard Rossiter.

A special thanks goes out to Ray Northcutt, Steve Komito, Mike Donahue, Billy Westbay, Douglas Snively, Harry Kent, Mike Caldwell, and Roger Briggs. My original intention was to include a short biography for each of these people as a tribute to both their influence on the Estes Park climbing scene, and their influence on my own climbing career. However, by the end of this project, the book had grown so large that much of what I had written needed to be excised. Information from the interviews I conducted with each climber still appears in the history section (found in *Estes Valley Park* volume), and I am grateful to them for sharing their old photographs and stories.

## TABLE of CONTENTS

<b>INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>WILD BASIN .....</b>	<b>13</b>
COPELAND MOUNTAIN .....	13
ISOLATION PEAK and EAGLES BEAK .....	13
PILOT MOUNTAIN .....	15
MOUNT ALICE .....	15
LONGS PEAK .....	20
<b>LONGS PEAK TRAILHEAD .....</b>	<b>21</b>
MOUNT MEEKER .....	21
LONGS PEAK .....	27
Southeast Ridge .....	31
The Palisades .....	33
Ships Prow .....	35
The East Face Cirque .....	42
Lower East Face .....	42
Chasm View Wall .....	54
Upper East Face .....	62
The Diamond .....	65
North Face .....	88
West Face .....	90
<b>GLACIER GORGE .....</b>	<b>93</b>
HALF MOUNTAIN .....	93
KEYBOARD OF THE WINDS .....	96
Sievers' Tower .....	97
Jackpot Tower .....	97
Mrs. Stubbs .....	97
Mr. Stubbs .....	98
Dark Tower .....	98
PAGODA MOUNTAIN .....	100
CHIEFS HEAD PEAK .....	101
Northeast Face .....	101
Northwest Face .....	110
SPEARHEAD .....	115
MCHENRYS PEAK .....	128
ARROWHEAD .....	133
POWELL PEAK .....	145
<b>LOCH VALE .....</b>	<b>147</b>
THATCHTOP and POWELL PEAK .....	147
Lakeside Wall .....	147
Vanquished Buttress .....	149
TAYLOR PEAK .....	151
CATHEDRAL SPIRES .....	151
Stiletto .....	155

Sharkstooth .....	155
Forbidden Tower .....	158
Petit Grepon .....	159
Penknife .....	161
Saber .....	161
Foil .....	164
Moon .....	167
Jackknife .....	167
<b>CATHEDRAL WALL .....</b>	<b>171</b>
#1 Buttress .....	171
#2 Buttress .....	171
#3 Buttress — Main Wall .....	172
#4 Buttress .....	174
<b>OTIS PEAK .....</b>	<b>175</b>
Loch Vale Pinnacle .....	175
Wham .....	177
Zowie .....	177
Solar Wall .....	179
Otis Flower Tower .....	180
<b>BEAR LAKE AREA .....</b>	<b>181</b>
<b>HALLETT PEAK .....</b>	<b>181</b>
South Side .....	184
First Buttress .....	186
Second Buttress .....	187
Third Buttress .....	192
<b>FLATTOP MOUNTAIN .....</b>	<b>195</b>
Tyndall Spire .....	195
Dragon's Tail .....	196
<b>NOTCHTOP MOUNTAIN .....</b>	<b>198</b>
<b>LITTLE MATTERHORN .....</b>	<b>206</b>
<b>TOURMALINE SPIRE .....</b>	<b>207</b>
<b>HAYDEN SPIRES .....</b>	<b>207</b>
Hayden Spire .....	208
East Pinnacle .....	208
Hayden Lake Pinnacle .....	208
<b>MORaine PARK .....</b>	<b>210</b>
<b>ROCK OF AGES .....</b>	<b>210</b>
<b>THE LOST WORLD .....</b>	<b>214</b>
Gnome Dome .....	216
Moot Point Apron .....	217
The Colossus .....	217
<b>THE MUMMY RANGE .....</b>	<b>218</b>
<b>ICEBERG LAKE WALL .....</b>	<b>218</b>
<b>MOUNT CHIQUITA .....</b>	<b>218</b>
<b>YPSILON MOUNTAIN .....</b>	<b>218</b>
<b>FAIRCHILD MOUNTAIN .....</b>	<b>223</b>

<b>ICE AND ALPINE CLIMBS .....</b>	<b>228</b>
WILD BASIN .....	231
North Saint Vrain Creek .....	231
Isolation Peak .....	232
Mount Alice .....	232
LONGS PEAK TRAILHEAD .....	232
Chasm Lake Area .....	233
Mount Meeker .....	233
Longs Peak .....	235
GLACIER GORGE TRAILHEAD .....	240
Thatchtop (Glacier Gorge side) .....	243
Arrowhead and McHenry's (Solitude Lake Cirque) .....	244
Black Lake .....	245
Chiefs Head .....	246
McHenry's Peak (East Face) .....	247
Loch Vale Gorge .....	247
Thatchtop (Loch Vale side) .....	251
Loch Area .....	253
Powell Peak Area .....	254
Taylor Peak .....	257
Cathedral Spires and Cathedral Wall .....	259
BEAR LAKE TRAILHEAD .....	259
Bear Lake .....	259
Nymph Lake .....	260
Chaos and Tyndall Creek Drainage .....	262
Emerald Lake Area .....	264
Hallett Peak .....	267
Flattop Mountain (Tyndall Gorge side) .....	267
Odessa Gorge and Notchtop .....	268
Flattop Mountain (Odessa Gorge side) .....	269
BIG THOMPSON ICE .....	269
FERN LAKE TRAILHEAD .....	270
LAWN LAKE TRAILHEAD .....	272
Ypsilon Mountain .....	272
Lawn Lake Area .....	273
Fairchild Mountain .....	273
COW CREEK TRAILHEAD .....	274
<b>SUGGESTED READING .....</b>	<b>276</b>
<b>INDEX .....</b>	<b>278</b>
<b>ROUTE INDEX BY RATING (Free Climbing) .....</b>	<b>284</b>

## ACCESS: It's every climber's concern

The Access Fund, a national, non-profit climbers organization, works to keep climbing areas open and to conserve the climbing environment. Need help with closures? land acquisition? legal or land management issues? funding for trails and other projects? starting a local climbers' group? CALL US!

Climbers can help preserve access by being committed to Leave No Trace (minimum-impact) practices. Here are some simple guidelines:

- **ASPIRE TO "LEAVE NO TRACE"** especially in environmentally sensitive areas like caves. Chalk can be a significant impact on dark and porous rock—don't use it around historic rock art. Pick up litter, and leave trees and plants intact.
- **DISPOSE OF HUMAN WASTE PROPERLY** Use toilets whenever possible. If toilets are not available, dig a "cat hole" at least six inches deep and 200 feet from any water, trails, campsites, or the base of climbs. *Always pack out toilet paper.* On big wall routes, use a "poop tube" and carry waste up and off with you (the old "bag toss" is now illegal in many areas).
- **USE EXISTING TRAILS** Cutting switchbacks causes erosion. When walking off-trail, tread lightly, especially in the desert where cryptogamic soils (usually a dark crust) take thousands of years to form and are easily damaged. Be aware that "rim ecologies" (the clifftop) are often highly sensitive to disturbance.
- **BE DISCRETE WITH FIXED ANCHORS** *Bolts are controversial and are not a convenience—don't place them unless they are really necessary.* Camouflage all anchors. Remove unsightly slings from rappel stations (better to use steel chain or welded cold shuts). Bolts sometimes can be used proactively to protect fragile resources—consult with your local land manager.
- **RESPECT THE RULES** and speak up when other climbers don't. Expect restrictions in designated wilderness areas, rock art sites, caves, and to protect wildlife, especially nesting birds of prey. *Power drills are illegal in Wilderness and all national parks.*
- **PARK AND CAMP IN DESIGNATED AREAS** Some climbing areas require a permit for overnight camping.
- **MAINTAIN A LOW PROFILE** Leave the boom box and day-glo clothing at home—the less climbers are heard and seen, the better.
- **RESPECT PRIVATE PROPERTY** Be courteous to land owners. Don't climb where you're not wanted.
- **JOIN THE ACCESS FUND** To become a member, make a tax-deductible donation of \$25.



### The Access Fund

*Keeping climbing areas open and  
conserving the climbing environment*

PO Box 17010

Boulder, CO 80308

303.545.6772 • [www.accessfund.org](http://www.accessfund.org)