The question of the moment in 1907 among the male majority of the Alpine Club of Canada (ACC) involved the proper attire for women for climbing. They ruled, after little debate, that “no lady climbing, who wears skirts, will be allowed to take a place on a rope. … Knickerbockers or bloomers with puttees or gaiters and sweater will be found to be serviceable and safe.” In camp, however, skirts were the order of the day.

This incident serves as a reminder of how shifting mores change, even while the ACC, which has a present-day membership of ten thousand, played a central role in the political, environmental, and economic concerns during the development of the nation's mountain parks. A significant change has been from an emphasis on serving the pretensions of the elite, with exclusive lodges and the like, to the interests of the so-called common man, who is on a short budget and yearns for family camping.

Reichwein, a professor at the University of Alberta and a mountaineer herself, traces not only the history of the ACC, but also gives an account of the nation's evolving attitudes toward wilderness, along with a great deal about the geography and the appeal of the mountainous Canadian West.

The book is scholarly—meticulously and exhaustively researched, replete with quotes from journals and government reports—and its appeal may be limited to readers familiar with the ACC. There are eighty pages of appendixes, notes, and references, which most readers may skip after getting past the bloomer thing.

THOMAS BEVIER (Winter 2015)

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