



# Climber's Paradise: Making Canada's Mountain Parks, 1906–1974 (Mountain Cairns: A Series on the History and Culture of the Canadian Rocky Mountains)

By PearlAnn Reichwein

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The Alpine Club of Canada imagined the Rockies and neighbouring ranges to the west and the north as a "climber's paradise." Through a century of adventure and advocacy, the ACC led the way to mountain pursuits in spectacular regions. Historian and mountain studies specialist PearlAnn Reichwein's research is informed by her experiences mountaineering and by her interest in mountain culture. She presents a compelling case for understanding wild spaces and human activity within them as parts of a whole. A work of invaluable scholarship in the areas of environmental history, public policy, sport studies, recreation, and tourism, *Climber's Paradise* will appeal to many non-specialists, mountaineers, environmentalists, and travellers across Canada and beyond.

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## **Editorial Review**

### Review

"There has been a definite need for a finely crafted book on the relationship between the Alpine Club of Canada (ACC) and Canada's Mountain Parks: Climber's Paradise tells the tale in an exquisite manner and, in doing so, reveals much about the complex paradise of Canada's mountaineering history and ethos.... Reichwein has certainly emerged...as one of the primary keepers of the distinctive Canadian mountaineering tradition, and Climber's Paradise confirms yet again why this is the indubitable case." [Full review at [bit.ly/1nYxnCK](http://bit.ly/1nYxnCK)] (Ron Dart *Highline Magazine* 2014-10-01)

"The social and cultural history of mountaineering can go far beyond the simple understanding of history as a fixed chronology of great ascents in a progressive evolution of 'important events,' writes Reichwein in her preface. The history of leisure and sport, she argues, can be brought together with environmental history and conservation philosophy. In this book, illustrated with rarely seen historical images, she explores how Alpine Club of Canada members helped shape the policies and sensibilities of western Canada's mountain parks, as the Club imagined and advocated on behalf of those parks to create a climber's paradise in the Rockies and neighbouring ranges." (Lynn Martel *Gazette* (Vol 23. No 3) 2014-11-01)

"As Reichwein explores how the ACC worked to protect what they had come to value, Climber's Paradise becomes much more than a book about climbing or climbers, but a much broader look at the history of the Rocky Mountains and Canada's national park system. She deftly walks a narrow ridge to ensure that Climber's Paradise is as much about the balance of people and wilderness as it is a story about the ACC, a move that allows a wider audience to understand how people can be agents of positive cause and effect, rather than a negative force." [Full review at <http://bit.ly/1dYjXTm>] *Rocky Mountain Outlook* (Rob Alexander *Rocky Mountain Outlook* 2015-03-12)

"With many photos taken by early mountaineers, it's a good read--mixing theories and politics with the stories of people whose forethought, physical labour and ideology have allowed us to preserve the natural landscapes of these portions of our mountain heritage for all to enjoy." (Karen Probert *The Sherwood Park-Strathcona County News* 2015-05-26)

"A history of the Alpine Club of Canada from 1906 to 1974 and the role played by the club in promoting recreation, conservation, and tourism in Canada's Rocky Mountain parks. Documents the entwined histories of mountaineering groups and the formation of national parks in Canada. Also explores the varied relationship between humans and wilderness, and how mountaineering sheds a new perspective on environmental and recreational history." *Environmental History*, Volume 20, Issue 2 (*Environmental History* 2015-03-20)

"The Alpine Club of Canada was formed in Winnipeg in 1906 by surveyor Arthur Wheeler and journalist Elizabeth Parker, with support from the Rev. J.C. Herdman of Calgary... The goals of the club included the promotion of scientific study and exploration of Canada's alpine regions; to promote mountain arts and crafts; to preserve the natural beauty of the parks; and to educate Canadians to appreciate their mountain heritage... This is a weighty book, providing extensive data on national parks with the perspective of the Alpine Club of Canada." (*Alberta History* 2014-03-01)

Canada's national parks have a complex history in which sport-oriented nature tourism is a key element. PearlAnn Reichwein. Climber's Paradise provides a detailed account of the Alpine Club of Canada (ACC) and its entwined relationship with Canada's mountain parks. This history focuses on western Canada and a western Canadian sport heritage. It is a valuable addition to social, environmental, and sport historiographies..." (Elizabeth L. Jewett *University of Toronto Quarterly* 2016-07-05)

"As PearlAnn Reichwein shows, Wheeler's ACC was instrumental in creating and promoting the Rockies as a "climber's paradise." In doing so, it worked both with and against the federal government's Parks branch over the course of the twentieth century, pushing for conservation and preferred access as well as negotiating the changing landscape of outdoor recreation. Inspired by the British Alpine Club, the ACC can be thought of as an ethnic institution, one that sought to encourage an appreciation for the mountains and the promotion of mountain recreation as well as scientific exploration. It also acted as a political lobby group..." [https://muse.jhu.edu/article/621168] (Tina Loo and Meg Stanley *The Canadian Historical Review* 2016-06-06)

"PearlAnn Reichwein provides a rich and absorbing history of the Alpine Club of Canada (ACC ), beginning at the organization's birth in Winnipeg in 1906 and ending with the club's conservation work in the 1970s.... Climber's Paradise is both an informative and entertaining read. It makes a good companion book for specialists wishing to learn further details about national park history, the history of mountaineering, the making of Canadian nationhood, and other topics. Due to the accessible nature of the text, it also provides an enjoyable gateway into Canada's past for nonspecialists." [DOI: 10.3138] (Jessica M. DeWitt *Canadian Journal of History* 2015-08-12)

"The study includes national parks in Alberta, British Columbia, and the Yukon Territory, and includes climbing expeditions made over the years.... This is a weighty book, providing extensive data on national parks with the perspective of the Alpine Club of Canada." (*Alberta History* 2014-03-01)

"This book by historian Pearlann Reichwein is a series of vignettes into the lives and explorations of the Alpine Club of Canada members.... At the beginning, the club's interests were solely in climbing peaks previously unrecorded as climbed.... As the well-placed adventurers used their experience and political will, the fruits became a system of national parks with access to many wilderness areas." Canadian Field Naturalist, Vol. 129 (Jim O'Neill *Canadian Field Naturalist*)

## Review

"At a time when civil society and environmental organizations are being vilified in the media as 'special interest groups,' it is important to understand the crucial roles played by the Alpine Club of Canada not only in the creation of our magnificent mountain parks but in shaping the Canadian identity." (John Bennett, Executive Director 2014-07-31)

"Wilderness. Symbol of nationhood. Playground. Sanctuary. Revenue source. Over the last century Canada's mountain parks have been imagined and reimagined through a spectrum of meanings and contending desires. PearlAnn Reichwein's history of the Alpine Club of Canada explores these incarnations and tells the fascinating stories of the people who cared fiercely for the mountains and struggled over their use and value. Just as importantly, Reichwein traces out the less visible tracks of class, race, and gender that weave through the grand narratives of adventure and conquest. This is vital reading for anyone who cares about our vanishing wild heritage." (Thomas Wharton, award-winning author of *Icefields* 2014-07-31)

"This is a remarkable story. It's about how a small group of urban, middle-class, Anglo Canadians, working through the Alpine Club of Canada, sought to assert their narratives of alpinism, the environment, nation,

and interpersonal relations on Canada's western Canadian mountain parks, and the conditions they faced, the institutions they created, the political victories they achieved, and the struggles and setbacks they encountered.

Professor Reichwein tells it brilliantly, bringing both a climbers' love of the mountains and a social historian's critical distance and research to her subject. Her analysis is illuminated with mini-biographies of the key players, grounded in their speeches and personal correspondence resourcefully dug out of archival collections, and an extensive collection of photographs.

It's an important contribution to the history of Canadian sport and recreation and a telling case study of volunteering, but anyone who has ever holidayed or even contemplated a hike in a mountain national park would enjoy and benefit from this book." (Bruce Kidd, University of Toronto historian and Olympian)

All the various design decisions contribute to an expansive, light, airy feel befitting of the book's content. The typography is clean and precise and creates an inviting reading experience." (Renate Gokl *Juror, AAUP Book, Jacket, and Journal Show 2015-07-02*)

#### About the Author

PearlAnn Reichwein is Associate Professor at the University of Alberta, in Edmonton, where she teaches Canadian history, environmental history, and philosophy. Her early work with Parks Canada as a research historian, cultural resource planner, and heritage interpreter living in Banff and Yoho National Parks enriched her understanding of mountain landscapes.

### Users Review

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