



Colorado Biographies



JULIA ARCHIBALD HOLMES
About the time she moved to Washington, D.C.
in 1870

Julia A. Holmes 1838-1887

Julia was born February 15, 1838, in Nova Scotia, Canada to John and Jane Archi-

bald. She moved to Massachusetts with her family in 1848.

- In 1854, Julia's family moved west to Kansas with a group of abolitionists who were trying to keep Kansas free of slavery.
- She married James H. Holmes, a fellow abolitionist, on October 9, 1857.
- Soon after their wedding, Julia and James left with a group going to Colorado to prospect for gold.
- On her trip and once in Colorado, she wore the "Reform Dress" which included bloomers and a shortened skirt so that she could walk more easily and in more comfort.
- (Women and children walked along with

the men and did not ride in wagons. This practice was very controversial at the time because women still wore cumbersome petticoats and long dresses.)

- Julia strongly believed that women had a right to the same privileges as men.
- On August 5, 1858, Julia A. Homes became the first white woman to reach the summit of Pikes Peak, a feat that Zebulon Pike believed "no human being could" do given the conditions the Pike party endured.
- By climbing Pikes Peak, Julia showed that a woman could "take her place beside a man."
- She taught school in New Mexico after leaving Colorado.
- She spoke at the first women's suffrage convention in 1869 urging women to fight for the right to vote. Julia died at the age of 48 on January 19, 1887.

Great Resources on Julia A. Holmes

Shirley, Gayle C. *More Than Petticoats: Remarkable Colorado Women*. Connecticut: Globe Pequot Press, 2002. pp. 16-24. Print.

Bueler, Gladys R. *Colorado's Colorful Characters*. Golden, Colorado: The Smoking Stack Press, 1975. pp. 91-92. Print.

Spring, Agnes Wright (editor) *A Bloomer Girl on Pike's Peak 1858*. Western History Dept., Denver Public Library,

Photo courtesy of Julia Archibald Holmes, ca. 1870. Photograph appears in A Bloomer Girl on Pike's Peak, 1858 by Agnes Wright Spring (Denver: Denver Public Library, 1949).