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Expedition to Honor the First Climbs by Women Mountaineers

Boston, MA — Inspired by the compelling true stories in *Women on High: Pioneers of Mountaineering*, by Rebecca A. Brown (Appalachian Mountain Club Books, 2002), six women will recreate the historic first female ascents of Mont Blanc by Maria Paradis in 1808 and Henriette d'Angeville in 1838. This team of six accomplished women will summit Mont Blanc, Europe's highest peak, during the third week of April 2004.

“The women who first summited Mont Blanc contended with tremendous social and physical obstacles,” says Rebecca Brown, author of *Women on High* and a member of the expedition.

“Social norms dictated that a woman's place was in the home. Many of them wore corsets that exerted as many as seventy pounds of pressure on their midsections as they climbed. Paradis and d'Angeville not only overcame these enormous challenges, they triumphed over them and showed the world what women were capable of achieving.”

Several team members will adopt period attire in order to demonstrate one of the most significant physical challenges faced by these first female climbers: the dangerous unsuitability of their conventional wardrobe. Not only did these historic first female mountaineers climb in skirts, but their climbing dress frequently weighed more than twenty pounds—about three times the weight of the technical clothing worn today.

Like the women profiled in *Women on High*, each member of this team has pushed the envelope in her own life, and each has a unique and personal reason for committing to the expedition. The team hopes to draw attention to the often-overlooked contributions of women to the sport of mountaineering.

“The expedition will highlight the challenges women mountaineers faced,” says Alison Gannett, champion extreme skier and expedition leader. “By re-enacting these important climbs we hope to honor these women and show just how far women have come in the nearly two centuries since Paradis and d’Angeville first summited Mont Blanc.”

The expedition members will model their period climbing outfits on firsthand descriptions from the women’s accounts of their climbs. Other members of the expedition will be decked out in cutting-edge gear donated by sponsors.

The expedition team members are: Alison Gannett, expedition leader; Rebecca Brown, author of *Women on High: Pioneers of Mountaineering*; Beth Krusi, Publisher, Appalachian Mountain Club Books; Susan Medville, Director of Crested Butte Mountain Heritage Museum and current North American extreme skiing champion; Ulrika Asp, aspirant guide at Ecole Nationale de Ski et Alpinisme in Chamonix, France, and manager of Patagonia Chamonix; V. V. Tutt-Pyk, French photographer and mountaineer.

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