



NPS Women Cartes de Visite Collection



Polly Mead, 1931. (NPS Photo).

Pauline "Polly" Mead
Grand Canyon National Park
Ranger-Naturalist, 1930-1931

- Born January 30, 1904 in Longmont, Colorado.
- Moved to Chicago c. 1920 to live with her aunt and uncle and attend the University of Chicago High School. She graduated in 1924.
- Earned B.S. (1928) and M.S. (1930) degrees in botany from the University of Chicago.
- First visited the Grand Canyon on a university trip in the summer of 1927 and decided to focus her graduate thesis on the Kaibab Plateau.
- Spent the summers of 1928 and 1929 in the Grand Canyon conducting research on the North Rim.
- Applied to be a ranger-naturalist with the Forest Service but was denied because they did not hire women in that position.
- Later applied to the NPS and was accepted.
- On August 1, 1930, she became Grand Canyon National Park's first and the NPS' second woman park ranger-naturalist.
- Her duties included guiding hikes of the South Rim, delivering campfire lectures, leading auto caravan tours, planting wildflower gardens, and continuing research and writing on the area.
- Married Preston P. Patraw, the park's assistant superintendent, on May 1, 1931, the same day that her temporary ranger-naturalist position expired.
- Continued as a "park wife" until her husband retired in 1955.
- In 1951, her *Flowers of the Southwest: Mesas* was published.
- Died on March 18, 2001 in Santa Fe, NM.

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