



NPS Women Cartes de Visite Collection



Ruth Ashton at Rocky Mountain National Park, 1925. (NPS History Collection Photo, courtesy of Ruth Ashton Nelson).

Ruth Elizabeth Ashton

Rocky Mountain National Park

1924-1931 & 1946-1947

- Born in Boston, MA on November 29, 1896 and grew up on Martha's Vineyard Island.
- First visited Rocky Mountain National Park in 1905 as a child.
- Earned a B.A. in English from Mount Holyoke College in 1924.
- Hired as an information clerk at Rocky Mountain National Park during the 1925-1927 and 1930-1931 seasons but wanted to be a naturalist.
- Took the naturalist exam and also attended naturalist training at the Yosemite Field School in 1928 but still could not get a naturalist position.
- Expressed her frustration by saying "the best way to get into the Park Service is to marry a ranger."
- Earned a Master's Degree in Botany at Colorado Agricultural College in 1930.
- Her thesis, *Plants of Rocky Mountain National Park*, was the first comprehensive plant list for the park and was published by the government in 1933.
- Married Aven Nelson, a botany professor at the University of Wyoming, on November 29, 1931.
- Earned \$1.00 per year as NPS collaborator to study plants at Mt. McKinley National Park from 1939-1941.
- Hired at Rocky Mountain as a naturalist in 1946 and 1947 to complete updates to her plant book.
- Published *Plants of Zion National Park* in 1976.
- Died on July 4, 1987, age 91.

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