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Women in History

Women of Adventure

Historically, we think of men as the great discoverers. Forging new paths, finding new lands, tackling great problems and solving them. But there were more than a few women who went out into the world and made their own way, too. Keep reading to find out more about some of the world's great women explorers.

AGE OF DISCOVERY

The Age of Discovery or the Age of Exploration lasted from the 15th century into the 18th century. European explorers ventured out and discovered new lands and peoples. It was marked by great overseas exploration, but also by European colonialism. It was during this time that Christopher Columbus sailed across the ocean blue and also saw the first circumnavigation of the globe.

NOT JUST MEN

But it wasn't just men venturing out in the name of science. Jeanne Baré (1740-1807) became the first woman to circumnavigate the globe, disguised as a man aboard Louis Antoine de Bougainville's ships *La Boudeuse* and *Étoile* from 1766-1769. She was a botanist who traveled with Bougainville's naturalist Philibert Commerçon.

Other women made their name as travel writers. Isabella Bird (1831-1904) was an Englishwoman who traveled by herself through several continents and countries, including North America and Asia. And there's the incomparable Nellie Bly (1864-1922), who became the first person to circumnavigate the globe in 72 days.

AND NOT JUST THEN

Women are still blazing trails even though the Age of Discovery has sailed beyond the horizon. Laura Dekker, 23, became the youngest person to sail around the world solo when she made the trip in 518 days at the age of 16. And Cassandra DePecol traveled to all sovereign nations on a trip from July 24, 2015 to Feb. 2, 2017, and holds the Guinness



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Dekker



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Bird

World Record for Fastest Person (Female) to Travel to All Sovereign Nations. She's the first documented woman, fastest American and youngest American to complete the trip.



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Baré



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Beckwith and Fisher

American photographer Carol Beckwith and Australian photographer Angela Fisher have racked up more than 300,000 miles across 45 countries, meeting more than 200 African cultures in their 40 years of work together.

The pair have published 16 books, and their work has appeared in National Geographic, Time, Life, Vogue and more, with exhibits at The American Museum of Natural History, The Explorers Club, the Smithsonian, and the Royal Geographic Society.

Beckwith and Fisher teamed up in 1974 during a hot air balloon ride over Maasai country in Africa. Their first project together was a Maasai

warrior ceremony. Since then, they've been granted access to ceremonies and cultures usually closed to outsiders, including the royal masquerade dances for the Kuba King in the Democratic Republic of the Congo; the Famidhana, the rewrapping of the dead in Madagascar; mask dancing festivals in Burkina Faso; and ritual lion hunting with the Maasai.

Their latest work focuses on tradi-

tional African cultures that are rapidly disappearing. Beckwith and Fisher say that as much as 40 percent of the cultures they've documented over the years no longer exist. The pair want to document traditional ceremonies in the 13 African cultures they've not covered.

"We feel privileged to photograph these cultures that possess a wealth of knowledge that should be celebrat-

ed, shared, and honored," the pair said in a news release. "It is our life's passion to document and create a powerful visual record of these vanishing ways of life for future generations."

They also started a foundation, African Ceremonies Inc., a charity that aims to preserve African tribal traditions through photographic ceremonies and customs.

Marianne North

Born into a wealthy English family in 1830, North was a biologist and botanical artist known for her plant and landscape paintings, 833 of which adorn the Marianne North Gallery at the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew in London.

According to Kew, North ventured unaccompanied into areas the establishment thought a Victorian lady shouldn't visit, attracting considerable attention from the British press. After her father's death in 1871, when North was 40, she embarked on 13 years of travel that would take her to North America, Jamaica, Brazil, Tenerife, Japan, Singapore, Sarawak, Java, Sri Lanka, India, Australia (at the suggestion of Charles Darwin), New Zealand, South Africa, the Seychelles and Chile. In Brazil, Kew says, North spent 13 months traveling the interior of the country over rough terrain.

She had no training in illustration and, unlike traditional Victorian flower painting, preferred to paint plants in their natural setting. In the field, North sketched in pen and ink on heavy paper, then painted the finished work in oils straight from the tube.

Her gallery at Kew, which she paid for herself, opened in

1882 and the works are arranged in geographical order of her travels. The building was designed by architect



JULIA MARGARET CAMERON / PUBLIC DOMAIN

James Ferguson and is reminiscent of a Greek temple. It includes an apartment North

intended for use by a gardener and a studio for her own use. The works there depict more than 900 species of plants

In 2008, a 1.8 million-pound grant allowed for the restoration of both the gallery and North's artwork, during which a conservator discovered an 120-year-old hidden painting behind another painting in the gallery.

Several plant species are named for the intrepid North, including *Areca northiana*, *Crinum northianum*, *Kniphofia northiana*, *Nepenthes northiana*, and the entire genus *Northia*.



MARIANNE NORTH/PUBLIC DOMAIN

Kate Rice

Canadian Kate Rice (1882-1963) was a prospector and adventurer from Ontario who made her home and her living in northern Manitoba. Born to an upper-class family in St. Marys, Ontario, Rice graduated from the University of Toronto in 1906.

According to the Manitoba Historical Society, she staked out a homestead with her brother, Lincoln, near The Pas, Manitoba, near the confluence of the Pasquia and Saskatchewan Rivers. Lincoln joined the Canadian Expeditionary Force during World War I, and Kate stayed on the homestead alone, teaching herself about mining and geography. She also learned to shoot, trap and speak Cree, traveling the northern wilderness by canoe and dogsled.

Rice partnered with retired British army officer Dick Woosey in prospecting, eventually claiming an island in Wekusko lake where they discovered copper and nickel. The Canadian Press reports she found the first nickel deposits in Manitoba and made headlines as the first Canadian woman prospector. She eventually sold

the island for much less than she thought it was worth and, after Woosey died, continued to

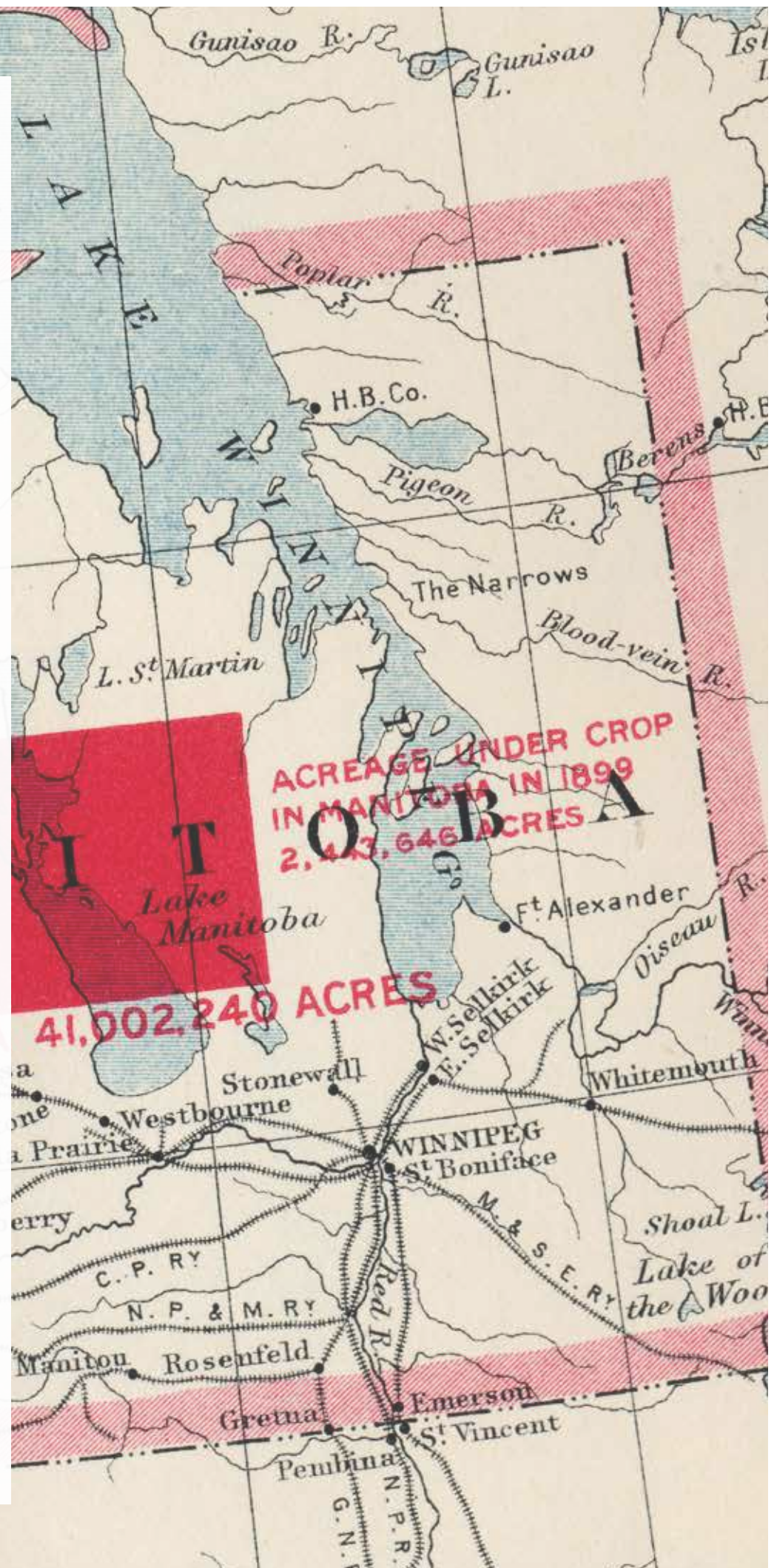


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live in the Canadian bush on her own for 20 more years. A few years before her death, the Press reports, she was admitted to the

Brandon Mental Institution, but was kicked out. She died in a nursing home at age 80. Eventually, the owner of the Snow Lake newspaper paid for a gravestone, which reads "Extraordinary Woman of the Wilds."

Rice was inducted into the Canadian Mining Hall of Fame in 2014.



Sophia Danenberg

In 2006, Sophia Danenberg became the first black woman to summit Mount Everest, the world's tallest mountain. She had bronchitis, frostbite and a clogged oxygen mask, but Danenberg pushed on with Pa Nuru Sherpa and Mingma Tshiring to make the top of the mountain at 2 a.m., May 19.

"I didn't train to climb Everest. I was already training constantly," Danenberg said in a 2018 interview with climbing website MelaninBasecamp.com. She was going to climb another mountain in the Himalayas, Cho Oyu, but conditions weren't right and a guide friend encouraged her to do Everest instead. "So I decided to do Everest in January and began my expedition in March. I had already requested the time off from work and I didn't want to waste two months away from work and not go climbing. On this trip, I had to do all of the logistics because I wasn't

going with a guide. So I had to prepare and purchase gear, plan around the weather, and continue training. All while having to work a normal job."

She went on to say that she finds that people in South America, Africa and Asia are happy to see a person of color trekking and showed her hospitality and offered information.

"Climbing in Kenya and Tanzania was like a celebration," she told the site. "They were so happy to see people that looked like them, brown people."

An Illinois native, Danenberg is a

graduate of Harvard University who came to mountaineering in 1999. Her first major climb was at Mount Rainier in 2002. She's also summited Kilimanjaro in Kenya; Mount Baker, Washington; Grand Teton, Wyoming; Mount Katahdin, Maine; Mount McKinley, Alaska; Mount Tasman, New Zealand; and Ama Dablam, Nepal.

Danenberg works with community organizations that promote active lifestyles such as Inner City Outings, the Special Olympics, the Central Connecticut Bicycle Alliance and the Hartford Marathon.



She wasn't born with such a fantastical name. She was born Idris Galcia Welsh in 1906 in Canada.

Wanderwell spent her early life traveling; her father joined the Canadian Expeditionary Force in 1914, and her mother packed up the family and followed him to Europe while he served in World War I. The Welsh family went to England, Belgium and France until 1917, when her father was killed at Ypres, Belgium. Wanderwell also attended boarding schools in Belgium and France.

When she was 16, Wanderwell joined a round-the-world endurance race sponsored by Ford and headed by Walter Wanderwell (Valerian Johannes Pieczynski). Aloha became translator, driver and secretary and eventually marrying Walter in 1925. They had two children but continued their travels, heading to Cuba and Africa, making movies and lecturing along the way.

In the 1930s, Aloha learned to fly and set up camp in Brazil, where the Wanderwells said they were searching for lost explorer Percival Harrison Fawcett. They met the Bororo people and made a 32-minute silent film, "Last of the Bororos." Walter was murdered in late 1931 aboard a yacht the couple intended to take to the South Seas. His murder remains unsolved.

Aloha remarried to Walter Baker and continued to travel and film movies. The couple went to New Zealand, Australia, Hawaii, India, Cambodia and Indochina. Her last films, made with Walter Baker, were "To See the World by Car," "India Now," and "Explorers of the Purple Sage, in Technicolor." While Aloha died in 1996, her footage and films remain in the Academy Film Archive and AMPAS in the Aloha Wanderwell Baker Film Collection.

Ynes Mexia

Ynes Enriquetta Julietta Mexia (1870-1938) was a Mexican-American botanist and explorer who found a new genus of Compositae and more than 500 new species of plants. Over her lifetime, Mexia collected in the neighborhood of 150,000 specimens.

Mexia, daughter of a Mexican diplomat and raised in Texas, was educated at a variety of schools in Philadelphia, Toronto and Maryland. After a life in Mexico on the family's ranch, two unhappy marriages and a nervous breakdown, Mexia moved to California. At 51, she enrolled at the University of California at Berkeley and was introduced to botanical collecting. Her first expedition was in 1925, when she joined a group going to Sinaloa Mexico.

In subsequent years, she

worked in and traveled to Argentina, Chile, Mount McKinley in Alaska, Brazil, Ecuador, Peru, the Straits of Magellan, and Mexico. Mexia canoed up the Amazon River to its source in the Andes and spent three months living with Amazon natives the Araguarunas.

Though her career was short, Mexia was a member of the California Botanical Society, the Sierra Club, Sociedad Geografica de Lima, Peru, and was a life member of the

California Academy of Sciences. She was a popular lecturer in San Francisco and frequently funded expeditions with the sale of her plant specimens and samples.

In 1938, Mexia became ill while on a collecting expedition in Oaxaca, Mexico. She died of lung cancer later that year in Berkeley, California.

Her collections can be seen at the California Academy of Sciences, along with her personal papers and many photographs.