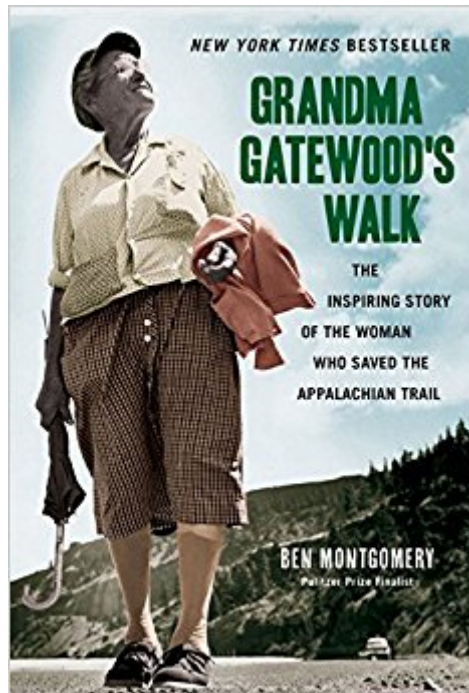


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Grandma Gatewood's Walk: The Inspiring Story Of The Woman Who Saved The Appalachian Trail



Synopsis

Emma Gatewood told her family she was going on a walk and left her small Ohio hometown with a change of clothes and less than two hundred dollars. The next anybody heard from her, this genteel, farm-reared, sixty-seven-year-old great-grandmother had walked 800 miles along the 2,050-mile Appalachian Trail. By September 1955 she stood atop Maine's Mount Katahdin, sang "America, the Beautiful," and proclaimed, "I said I'll do it, and I've done it." Driven by a painful marriage, Grandma Gatewood not only hiked the trail alone, she was the first person "man or woman" to walk it twice and three times. At age seventy-one, she hiked the 2,000-mile Oregon Trail. Gatewood became a hiking celebrity, and appeared on TV with Groucho Marx and Art Linkletter. The public attention she brought to the trail was unprecedented. Her vocal criticism of the lousy, difficult stretches led to bolstered maintenance, and very likely saved the trail from extinction. Author Ben Montgomery interviewed surviving family members and hikers Gatewood met along the trail, unearthed historic newspaper and magazine articles, and was given full access to Gatewood's own diaries, trail journals, and correspondence. Grandma Gatewood's Walk shines a fresh light on one of America's most celebrated hikers.

Book Information

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What is there about little old ladies that they seem to get typecast in our minds, and then when an author like Ben Montgomery tells her story we are gobsmacked by this woman, and her life. We live

in a time when the Appalachian Trail is a fixture of the nation, a trek attempted in whole or in part by hundreds of thousands. That wasn't always the case. When this "Grandma" did her walk, (1955) there was only a vague notion of the Trail, so much so that it shifted around a bit before settling into the route that so many know well. And it's really to this Grandma that we owe the trail. Her walk made her famous, and by contact, it made the then almost-unknown trail famous. When I first got the book, the cover photo really got me: there's no air-brushing this level of "truthiness." She's wearing a skirt, for Chrissakes, and granny stockings that I haven't seen in a long, long time, and tennis shoes. (TENNIS SHOES! Have you seen how we kit ourselves out these days for an hour-long walk in the woods??) But her face is lifted towards the light, and the jaw, well, it seems quite a determined chin to me. And you think, "You GO, girl!" For the trek, of course, she wore pants "dungarees" but still, those tennis shoes, and carried her supplies in a drawstring sack she made herself. And in that sack she stuffed: "A tin of Band-Aids, a bottle of iodine, some bobby pins, and a jar of Vicks salve. She stuffed in a warm coat, a shower curtain to keep the rain off, some drinking water, a Swiss Army knife, a flashlight, candy mints and her pen and a little Royal Vernon Line memo book that she had bought for twenty-five cents at Murphy's back home.

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