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American Mountaineering Museum to be Named After Bradford Washburn

Pioneer of mountain photography and mapping honored at 95

Golden, Colorado—May 30, 2006—Over pleasant lunch at the Washburn home in Boston, Mark Richey, former president of the American Alpine Club, informed Bradford and Barbara Washburn that the American Mountaineering Museum was to be named for Mr. Washburn. “They were delighted,” reported Richey.

The Bradford Washburn American Mountaineering Museum, a joint venture of the American Alpine Club and the Colorado Mountain Club, will open in Golden, Colorado in winter 2008. It will detail the history of mountaineering and the role that Americans have played in it, as well as current achievements and issues facing contemporary climbers. It will also help educate the non climbing public on a range of issues such as “Why do people climb?” and “How do they get those ropes up there?”

Both Clubs have long histories and are in possession of the artifacts, oral histories, and engaged members necessary to tell this story well. Washburn, for many years director of the prestigious Boston Museum of Science, is just the right namesake for the new facility. He has helped many understand and find their way to the mountains by making aerial photos with large format cameras. His first camera was a 5” x 7” Fairchild F-8 purchased in 1934. “My partners and I relied on those photos for our new route explorations in Alaska. We owed so much to Brad that we named a route after him, the Washburn Face on Denali, which we climbed in 1988,” says executive director of the American Alpine Club Phil Powers.

Washburn’s name will help elevate the museum to a national attraction. Washburn, who is an honorary member of the AAC, was an active mountain climber and made a number of first ascents with guides in the Alps and with friends in North America. He is far more well-known, however, for his well documented explorations, his photography and his mapping. His scale model of Mount Everest, which measures fourteen feet square, will be a centerpiece of the new museum. He received the Cuthbert Peak Award and Cherry Kearton Medal from The Royal Geographic Society and the Franklin L. Burr award from the National Geographic Society.

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