

# Trails of Allenspark

Will McPhee

With

"The House that Will Built"

by Dan St. John

Second edition

compiled and edited by

Edie DeWeese

Allenspark Wind

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## Preface to the Second Edition

The chapters you are about to read should be considered stories about hikes more than actual trail guides. We caution you that, while some of the trails are still passable, others cross private property and are off limits without permission.

When Will McPhee wrote these articles in the very early days of our local newspaper, the *Allenspark Wind*, he was writing for a small audience of friends and neighbors. He didn't worry about including full names or explaining events or locations. This made for a very intimate style that, while charming, could be confusing to today's readers. "You had to be there," might be the best explanation for some of his comments.

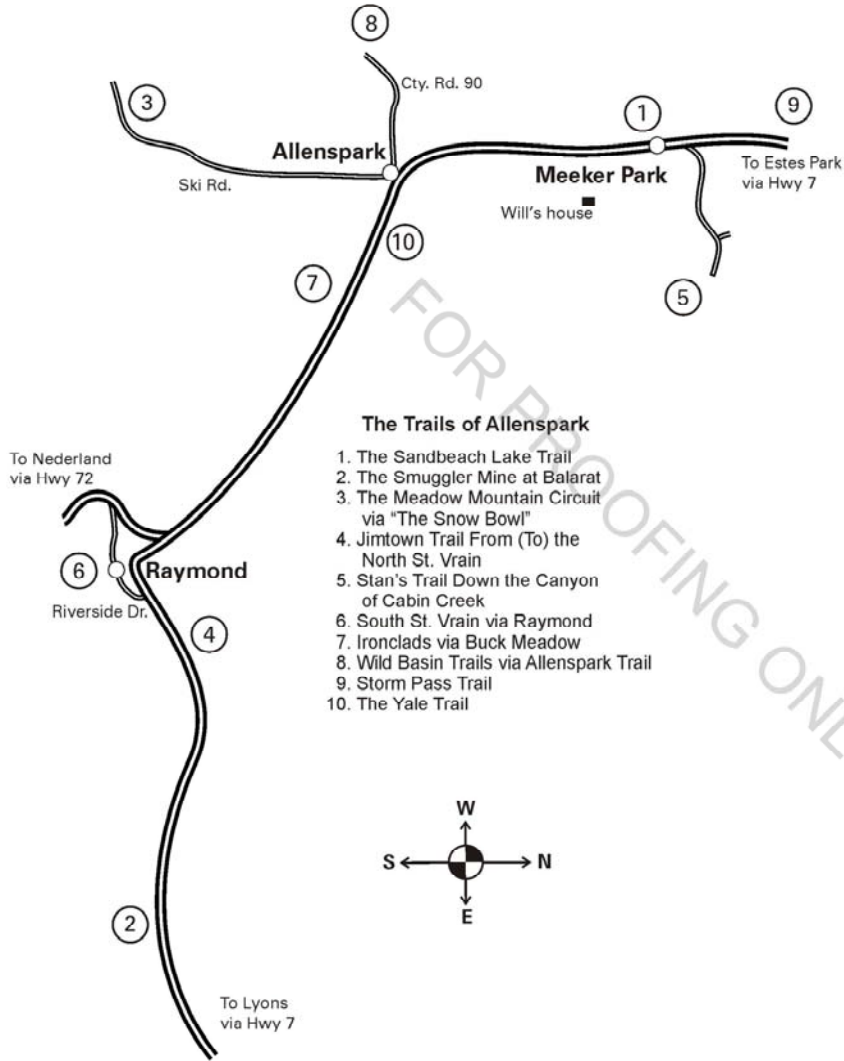
To make Will's stories more enjoyable for present-day readers, I've included "Insiders' notes" for clarification and I've edited a very little, just for consistency. Each chapter begins with its original map by Zitoni Gardens (David and Sharon Bjorkman) drawn according to Will's specifications. The chapters are illustrated with new photos provided by local hikers, as well as a few archival pictures to show the way things were.

For this new edition, I've added to Will's articles because I think Will himself is the bigger story. Danny's "Ode to Will" and his tale of building Will's cabin are new to the book, as are the biographies that Will's son Jock provided. I hope you enjoy these additions.

This has been an exciting, fun, and sentimental project for me. I met Will and Jock in the 1970s—an era when Allenspark was in the throes of a cultural upheaval. Times were changing, young people (hippies!) were moving in, and it put a strain on our community. Will was one of the older generation who was willing and happy to straddle the divide. He was a fascinating man and I'm pleased to help share his words—and him—with a new audience.

Edie DeWeese  
Allenspark, Colorado  
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Trails of Allenspark by Will McPhee



**The Trails of Allenspark**

1. The Sandbeach Lake Trail
2. The Smuggler Mine at Balarat
3. The Meadow Mountain Circuit via "The Snow Bowl"
4. Jimtown Trail From (To) the North St. Vrain
5. Stan's Trail Down the Canyon of Cabin Creek
6. South St. Vrain via Raymond
7. Ironclads via Buck Meadow
8. Wild Basin Trails via Allenspark Trail
9. Storm Pass Trail
10. The Yale Trail

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## Chapter Two

### The Smuggler Mine via Balarat

Here's an historical walk where you can go back a century in about a mile and a half, to the old Smuggler Mine (1875) in the ghost town of Balarat (1876).

Bring your imagination along, however, because you are going to have to walk up the main street of a town that isn't there anymore, and then peer into abandoned holes where you won't believe millions of dollars of gold were found (and still more is in there, right under your feet). Otherwise, the only believable thing you will see is the only thing I find unbelievable: an authentic old powder house which didn't blow up!

Start by going down Highway 7 to the junction of the Middle and South St. Vrain rivers, about three miles below Riverside. The South comes in unobtrusively, but note at its mouth a broken-down dam. And looking still more closely, note signs of a ditch and flume from down around the next bend to the "Belle Vagoy."

All the Belle is today is a concrete foundation, one visible tunnel (there were two), and a small mine dump indicating that they didn't get very far. The building was the "electrical generating plant," run by water wheel, for the Smuggler mine over the hill, south. The tunnel was to connect with the Smuggler. Of all the conjectures I've heard as to why it was never finished, Johnny Mack's wins the prize for proving true: They ran out of money.

Drive on a few hundred yards farther downstream, to a concrete bridge crossing the stream on your right (south). A sign there called "Barking Dog" has been torn down by Allenspark vandals, but you can't miss the old wagon road going up (east) from the other side of the bridge. Park and begin walking there.

On the map accompanying this article, I mark the wagon