

Heritage Center

Old Main
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Board of Regents
University of Colorado
Campus Box 3
Boulder, CO 80309

October 30, 1998

Dear Board of Regents:


In 1878, a young woman crossed the threshold of the University of Colorado to begin a teaching career which would span three decades. Mary Rippon left her mark on this University and the Boulder community as few others have. Professor Rippon pursued knowledge through education despite the constraints of Victorian sensibilities which denied a university education to women, thus forcing her to travel to Europe to continue her studies. Perhaps as a result of being denied a college degree, she dedicated herself to providing successful academic experiences for women at the University of Colorado and to offering educational opportunities to the citizens of Boulder. It gives me pleasure to recommend Mary Rippon for an honorary degree from the University of Colorado. This would recognize Miss Rippon's work as the first woman professor at the University of Colorado and would acknowledge the educational impact she had on students as well as generations of Boulder citizens.

Mary Rippon set a standard for excellence in teaching. In 1887, President Joseph Sewall wrote of her, "She has proved herself to be thoroughly efficient as a teacher, not only possessing an extended knowledge of the languages taught, but a remarkable power of imparting and at the same time rousing an interest - an enthusiasm - in the student." In addition to being the only female faculty member at the University for over 25 years, Miss Rippon served as the unofficial dean of women. Much of the natural beauty of the campus reflects the handiwork of Mary Rippon and Mrs. Sewall, who planted flowers, shrubs and grass on the barren plain.

Mary Rippon served the broader Boulder community by raising funds for a public library and presenting popular lectures and slide programs on Europe. In 1884, she was a co-founder of The Ladies Fortnightly Club. The second oldest women's organization in Colorado, Fortnightly is devoted to the promotion of literary and scientific culture. As a member of this organization, I - along with 34 other Boulder women - continue to enjoy the benefits of her educational vision.

Today, Mary Rippon is remembered at the University through an exhibit at the CU Heritage Center in Old Main, the building where she taught for so many years. Also, she is featured in "A Legacy of Excellence;" a videotape produced by the Heritage Center about teaching excellence. The outdoor theater which is home to the Colorado Shakespeare Festival is **named** in her honor. Her life and contributions to education continue to inspire. An honorary degree would appropriately recognize this distinguished pioneer educator.

Best Regards,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Kay Oltmans". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the typed name.

Kay Oltmans
Director, CU Heritage Center