

IOWA HISTORY



Courtesy Library of Congress
Medicine Bow Mountains, 1868

Heroine of Hot Springs

“She emptied her revolver into the elk and laid him low at her horse’s feet,” a Massachusetts newspaper described how an Iowa woman named Maggie Foreman brought down the “king of the mountains.”

It was the summer of 1879; and Maggie, a Chariton, Iowa, resident was visiting her sister and brother-in-law, Jim Adams, in Hot Springs, Wyo., where Adams made his living as a hunter and scout. Another scout had come from Fort Steele carrying dispatches for a survey party in the Medicine Bow Mountains. When Jim was invited to join the scout for a few miles just to chat, he couldn’t turn down the offer. He decided to ride his bronco for the short jaunt, leaving his favorite horse, Billy, back at the camp with his wife, sister-in-law and the rest of their group of visitors.

Maggie had her eye on the “handsome horse” Jim had left behind and expressed her desire to go for a ride. Her sister said she had often taken a gallop on Billy and that he was perfectly safe. The horse was saddled up and Maggie mounted. All was fine as Maggie rode around the camp site. Suddenly, everything changed.

In the distance Jim Adams appeared in pursuit of a black elk. Having hit the animal with one bullet, Jim tried to overtake his prey. But his bronco was no match for the elk that showed no signs of injuries. However, Billy eagerly joined the chase—with Maggie clinging to his back. As the chase headed to the mouth of a canyon, everyone in the camp feared for Maggie.

Several men hitched a wagon and prepared to go after her. Until they saw Maggie aim a Colt revolver at the elk and shoot. It soon became apparent she was “after the meat,” as the *New York Times* reported. With four shots Maggie accomplished her goal. The mighty elk lay on the ground.

When the group arrived at the scene, they found Adams sitting on the body of the “fallen monarch of the mountain.” Maggie, “flushed and triumphant,” stood nearby as the group showered her with praise.

“These Iowa girls are business every time,” Jim said. “I’m from Iowa myself, and I know a few of ‘em.” But he couldn’t let Maggie take all the credit.

“She can’t pack off all the praise, for there ain’t another horse in the mountains could have hugged up to that elk like Billy did.”

It was estimated the elk weighed between 900 and 1,000 pounds.

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Sources

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