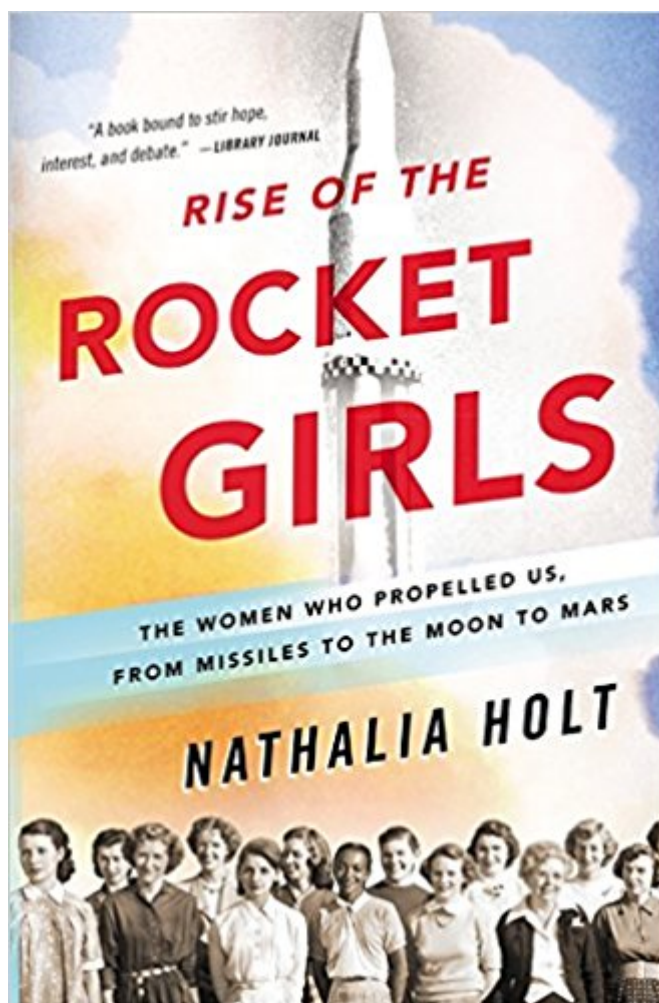


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# Rise Of The Rocket Girls: The Women Who Propelled Us, From Missiles To The Moon To Mars



## Synopsis

"If Hidden Figures has you itching to learn more about the women who worked in the space program, pick up Nathalia Holt's lively, immensely readable history, *Rise of the Rocket Girls*." --Entertainment Weekly

The riveting true story of the women who launched America into space. In the 1940s and 50s, when the newly minted Jet Propulsion Laboratory needed quick-thinking mathematicians to calculate velocities and plot trajectories, they didn't turn to male graduates. Rather, they recruited an elite group of young women who, with only pencil, paper, and mathematical prowess, transformed rocket design, helped bring about the first American satellites, and made the exploration of the solar system possible. For the first time, *Rise of the Rocket Girls* tells the stories of these women--known as "human computers"--who broke the boundaries of both gender and science. Based on extensive research and interviews with all the living members of the team, *Rise of the Rocket Girls* offers a unique perspective on the role of women in science: both where we've been, and the far reaches of space to which we're heading.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

An Best Book of April 2016: Women's history buffs rejoice! Wonderfully told and intrinsically captivating, this is the story about the elite group of women in the 40s and 50s who broke gender and science boundaries to transform rocket design and lay the groundwork for U.S. space travel. Not only did I geek out on the incredible look into the early days of the Jet Propulsion Laboratory, but I also fell in love with these women who quite possibly invented the pant suit, and were vital to

America's space travel. --Penny Mann --This text refers to an alternate Paperback edition.

We take so much for granted now, but in the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s, women who wanted a career other than homemaker were mostly limited to becoming teachers, nurses, or secretaries, and there was no such thing as maternity leave. However, a few smart young women who loved math were hired to be human computers for the Jet Propulsion Lab in California. What we think of as computers now hadn't been invented yet. These women spent their days writing equations and computing numbers with pencils, paper, and slide rules to give the male engineers the information they needed to build rockets, satellites, and space shuttles. This selection will surprise and thrill teens not only because it honors the crucial work of these female scientists but also because it shows their individual humanity—•their favorite fashions, their personal relationships—•within the broader context of the international space race, changes in U.S. society brought about by feminism and integration, and transformations in American daily life brought about by evolving technology. Teen book clubs will enjoy discussing the pros and cons of all-female work groups, the costs and benefits of space exploration, and more. Readers will want to search online for information about the Juno probe, mentioned in the "1970s-Today" section as orbiting Jupiter in July 2016. The extensive notes section details the many first-person interviews conducted by the author, plus the archival materials she used. VERDICT An engaging, inspiring offering that will appeal to fans of history, science, and feminism.—•Hope Baugh, Carmel Clay Public Library, Carmel, IN --This text refers to an alternate Paperback edition.

While the STEM debate rages, *Rise of the Rocket Girls* shatters the American stereotype that girls can't do numbers. *Rocket Girls* tells the story of California's JPL (Jet Propulsion Laboratory) from the early days (1940s) when the main goal was to strap a rocket onto a plane to make it go faster, to the present time of space exploration. In 1940, when the guys were shooting rockets out of a dry canyon in southern California, one of them just happened to be married to a girl who was good with numbers. Barbara calculated speed, trajectory, combustion, and other factors for rocket and propellant development, and she set the tone for future projects. As the work grew, and young JPL expanded, the number of women "computers" (they computed! The term predates the machines) grew. The woman who was in charge of the "computers," Macie Roberts, hired only women for the department, because she wanted to preserve the camaraderie and team spirit so essential to this critical work. Thus, in a benevolent form of gender discrimination, JPL developed a sterling team of brilliant women. Macie often reminded the women, "In this job you need to look like a girl, act like a

lady, think like a man, and work like a dog."As we learn about the development of rocketry, the author, Nathalia Holt, weaves in cultural developments, such as the invention of pantyhose and the rise of the women's liberation movement. She also includes snippets from the women's personal lives (like the fact that pregnancy meant instant termination--until the program realized it was dead without the women computers, and adapted flexibility to accommodate them).The women went from pencils and notebook paper to making history. Their calculations put the first man on the moon. Their formulas became code, and they became the first computer programmers. As Holt says, "You can write a lot of programs in five decades. The code that (the women) wrote would continue to work its way into spacecraft, navigation systems, climate studies, and Mars rovers. It would get spliced up and repurposed, pasted into different missions, sent out into space, driven on far-off planets...to (currently orbiting Mars and Saturn spacecraft)...to future Earth-orbiting instruments designed to study our own world."If you are one of those who believes females aren't geared toward math and science, you owe it to yourself and your loved ones to read this engaging, compelling book. It will tell you of a time when women, using only their minds and pencils, rendered the complex calculations that allowed the United States of America to have a space program at all.

As a former 'Rocket Girl' (General Dynamics/Convair Launch Vehicle Engineering), I found this book fascinating and thoroughly enjoyable. By degree a mechanical engineer, I wrote and ran computer code (on punch cards) to determine heat loads on the rockets and their payloads. I remember the engineering challenges of correctly modeling laminar and turbulent air flows over payload cover structures and how much I enjoyed the work. It was a short career - I was tempted away by a High Temperature Gas Cooled Nuclear Reactor - but my most vivid memories will always be my first job out of college on the Atlas (work horse of the century) and Centaur launch vehicles.

I have read this book twice already. I honestly loved it in so many ways. It's one of those rare, well-written, well-researched books that serves as a great tribute to these women; a tribute to the women pioneers of space flight. Nathalia, thank you for sharing their story!

I would give it 10 stars if I could. This is a FANTASTIC book - Very readable and enjoyable - I have no doubt if it were not for these ladies, we'd still be thinking the world was flat! Anyone with a student in a STEM program should get this book for them - to realize that there was life before "electronic computers". I have purchased copies for family and recommended it to bunches of people. You will be astonished when you read it, then you'll want to read it again.

I highly recommend this book! The author clearly put her heart into this book and took the time to deeply research these amazing women. It has been a long time since I found a book that I could barely put down.

Wow! Fantastic non-fiction read! In telling us the story about the women of the Jet Propulsion Lab, Holt brings us a the bonus of another angle of the rise and development of the space exploration era. This one peers at the history from outside Cape Canaveral/Kennedy, and thus provides a fuller understanding of how widespread the industry has been - there is so much more than "just" NASA. This book will appeal to a broad spectrum - men and women, older and youthful. While containing trivial memoir-style anecdotes that infuse the more technical discussions with personal interest and keep the book from getting heavy, it's not a Chick Lit piece that would bore someone like my husband (in fact, he's reading it now). (And don't take my words to indicate that he's a chauvinist, because he's no such thing, and he loves strong female characters - just, living in a house of all women and girls, he sometimes feels that certain books or movies have "too much estrogen for me right now". This book definitely will not do that for him.) The writing is very engaging, so no yawning over Holt's work. Rise leaves me wanting to find recent books about the planets and their moons, and wanting to find out more from my father about his time working on the Space Shuttle programming. The only way this book could be better is if the title used "Women" instead of the diminuizing "Girls," as these were all very much adults, and highly accomplished and respected ones at that. Oh yeah, and now I'm going to play the recordings from Voyager's gold record while I make some minestrone soup. . . Thank you, Nathalia Holt, for one of those reads that pull your mind into its zone long after you've turned the last page. :)

I had no idea about these women working at JPL! I wish I had studied to be an engineer also. As it is I worked in telecommunications from 1973 to the present not understanding even my part in a technical field. When you are in it it's exciting and fun and you don't know the history you are making. In my small career I can guess the feelings these women had for their work. I learned so much history from this extraordinary book!

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