

**The Impact of the Tenth Mountain Division on the Development of a Modern Ski Industry in Colorado and Vermont: 1930-1965**

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## Introduction

In 1953 Jim Winthers, a veteran of the famous 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division and ski-school director at the Donner Ski Ranch in Northern California, met with a couple old friends who had both lost their legs during World War II. Using techniques Winthers had learned in Europe on a ski vacation, he taught his friends how to ski on one leg, and soon opened up the Donner ski school to amputees. For almost than a decade the Donner Ski Ranch was the only place in the United State an amputee could go for ski lessons. Winthers embodies the characteristics of the typical 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain veteran who returned from the war in Italy eager to get back on the slopes and teach as many people as possible the joys of skiing.

The ski industry in Vermont and Colorado moved from a local, community oriented activity into a national multi-million dollar business between 1930 and 1965. The increased popularity of downhill skiing before World War II led to the centralization of ski resorts and ski towns designed to accommodate the growing number of winter enthusiasts. The ski industry continued to promote the growth of large, self serving ski resorts as a growing middle class and a booming post-war economy brought more skiers to the mountains, while returning members of the 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division helped to promote the sport through a shared passion for skiing and not out of a desire to capitalize on the emerging market.

Originally created to protect against a possible invasion, the 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division attracted some of the country's most experienced skiers and outdoorsmen into a specialized group trained to fight in mountain and winter warfare. Following World War II, the ski industry in Colorado and Vermont exploded as more Americans took up the sport after 5 years of serving the nation either at home or abroad. Many soldiers from the 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division returned to the mountains of Colorado and Vermont where they had skied before the war and trained during the war in hopes of establishing their careers in the ski industry. Following the war, 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain veterans managed or directed ski schools of 62 ski areas, while an estimated 2,000 became full or part-time ski instructors. This paper examines to what extent the members of the 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division spurred the growth of the modern ski industry after World War II and whether the experiences of winter training and war added to their drive to become involved with the ski industry.

Tenth Mountain veteran Richard M. Wilson compiled a roster of the 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Veterans who contributed to the growth of skiing in the United States after World War II. Wilson claimed in his introduction that "Veterans of the 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division went on to create the nation's post-WWII ski boom" in a number of different ways and that almost every major ski resort across the country can attribute much of its successful development and growth to veterans of the 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division.<sup>1</sup> Charles J. Sanders in *The Boys of Winter* states that, "Those lucky enough to return home from the Division's victorious but bloody struggles in the mountains of northern Italy literally founded the U.S. ski industry."<sup>2</sup> Ben Duke, who helped with the founding of Vail Mountain in Colorado claims that the 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division "accelerated and shaped

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<sup>1</sup> Richard M. Wilson, "U.S. Skiing-and Men of the 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division," November, 1992.

<sup>2</sup> Charles J. Sanders, *The Boys of Winter: Life and Death in the U.S. Ski Troops During the Second World War*, (Boulder, Colorado: University Press of Colorado, 2005), p. xvi.

ski-industry growth, particularly in the west and specifically in Colorado,” while Pete Seibert said that the ski industry probably would have developed 10 years later if not for the actions of the 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division.<sup>3</sup> The returning members did have a more pronounced impact on the ski industry in Colorado than in Vermont due to the fact that centralized ski resorts in Vermont developed earlier than those in Colorado and because of experiences training in the Rockies during the war. Driven by a love of the mountains and a love of skiing, 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain veterans capitalized on an emerging ski industry that had been set in motion during the late 30s and early 40s, and then halted because of World War II.

The first chapter focuses on the growth of the ski industry in Vermont and Colorado during the 1930s by examining who took part in the sport, and how ski resorts moved away from catering to a strictly local community. The sport of downhill skiing saw tremendous change during the 1930s, especially in Vermont. Downhill skiing barely existed in Vermont until colleges such as Dartmouth started ski teams in the late 1920s and early 30s. Wealthy urban skiers who normally only traveled to the Alps to ski began looking at ski hills in Vermont as weekend destinations. The development of snow trains leaving urban centers and the growth of uphill transportation popularized the sport and led to the beginnings of centralized ski areas. Once a landscape dotted with community oriented ski hills, places such as Woodstock, Bromley, and Stowe began developing a network of trails and uphill transportation to accommodate the growing number of skiers while the towns provided restaurants and accommodations. By the start of World War II, skiing in Vermont had changed from to provide regional service to a growing number of

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<sup>3</sup> H. Benjamin Duke, “Skiing Soldiers to Skiing Entrepreneurs: Development of the Western Ski Industry,” August 2, 1989, p. 15 and Peter Shelton, *Climb to Conquer: The Untold Story of World War II’s 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division Ski Troops*, (New York: Scribner, 2003), p. 229.

tourists. Mount Mansfield quickly emerged as the destination resort in Vermont equipped with a chairlift, easy train access, and a ski school. Wealthy entrepreneurs helped the development of a couple larger ski resorts as they turned skiing into a business before the attack on Pearl Harbor ended the ski industry's growth.

In Colorado, skiing during the 1930s progressed more slowly than in Vermont. Skiing took place on a completely local level for most of the decade until train service provided access to places like Winter Park and Berthoud Pass. In 1936 Sun Valley in Idaho provided a model for how to develop a destination ski resort, as Averell Harriman poured money into the mountain in a successful attempt to recreate glamorous European alpine resorts. The introduction of rope tows across the state popularized the sport as in Vermont, but a major resort such as Stowe did not emerge. Two partners attempted to create a resort like Sun Valley in Aspen during the late 30s, but a lack of money and accessibility never let the project get off the ground. However, in both Vermont and Colorado, ski resorts began to emerge with the sports growing popularity, technological advances, and the investment of entrepreneurs. If World War II had not intervened, the ski industry would have continued along the same path as ski resorts became businesses rather than just place to provide local residents a place for winter enjoyment.

The second chapter examines the creation, training, and wartime experiences of the 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division. The creation of the 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division brought together many of the best skiers from across the country first at the base of Mount Rainer in Washington, then later to Camp Hale, Colorado. These men shared a passion for the outdoors, the mountains, and skiing. Training in Camp Hale introduced many to the Rocky Mountains, while fueling their love of the sport as the men trained on the world's

longest rope tow at the time. Those who loved skiing described their time at Camp Hale as more of a vacation rather than military training. The 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division entered the war in Italy and helped to end the war by breaking through a German stronghold in the winter of 1945. While barely seeing a pair of skis in Italy, the Division used its mountaineering skills to make a surprise attack on the Germans in the middle of the night. The 10<sup>th</sup> fought for 4 months until the German surrender in May of 1945 and incurred some of the worst casualties of any U.S. military division. Many of the men returned to the States determined to make skiing a part of their lives. Their experiences at Camp Hale and in Italy provided them with the motivation to get involved with the ski industry at any level, and after the war, their passion for the sport showed itself around the skiing world.

As the men of the 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division returned home from Italy, they arrived to a post-war climate that suited the growth of a new major recreational industry. The years of a consuming war effort at home and abroad and the growth of the post-war economy led to changing social patterns, especially among the white middle class. The ski industry developed along with the growth of a consumer society. Families possessed more recreational time and more money to buy cars, ski equipment, and lift tickets. An increased reliability in road maintenance and car reliability gave middle class families the freedom to travel to different places while allowing ski resorts to develop off of major highways, without needing the support of train service. Skiing became more socially acceptable as the ski fashion industry grew drawing a wider variety of people to the sport. Ski resorts competed against each other by building or creating new uphill transportation and trail maintenance technology. Trail networks expanded as wealthy entrepreneurs

fronted the capital necessary to build the facilities needed to attract skiers. After the war, community ski hills disappeared from the map as major ski resorts attracted the growing number of wealthy middle class skiers.

The third and final chapter examines the causes of the growth in the Colorado and Vermont ski industries and how much of a role 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain veterans played. In Colorado, 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain veterans had a more pronounced affect on the ski industry than in Vermont as they helped to found three major ski resorts at Aspen, Arapahoe Basin, and Vail. Many men had fallen in love with the Rocky Mountains at Camp Hale and returned to them after the war to make a living. Friedl Pfeifer attempted to build up a destination ski resort in Aspen, but did not possess the financial capabilities to do so. Pfeifer and Larry Jump at Arapahoe basin embodied the characteristics of a typical 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain veteran. Their actions after the war did not stem from a desire to make huge sums of money, but to provide a place where skiing could grow under the supervision of certified instructors. Pfeifer wanted to give all the children in Aspen free skiing lessons and Jump created a family friendly ski resort with plenty of beginner trails and ski instruction. In many ways the legacy of the 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division after World War II is based on the growth of Aspen and Vail which are two of the largest and most successful resorts in the United States. However, without

In Vermont, the ski industry continued to progress as it had before the war. Stowe remained the major attraction during the late 1940s, but by the mid 1950s other major resorts expanded to challenge Stowe's dominance. For the first time ski areas are built from scratch, backed by wealthy entrepreneurs, with a purpose. Before, ski areas expanded to meet the growing demand of skiers, but after the war, places like Mad River



Glen and Sugarbush are built with all necessary facilities in place before a ticket is even sold. 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain veterans returned to Vermont and affected the growth of ski schools around the state. While a couple veterans managed ski areas, the majority took up jobs as ski school directors or instructors. These men shared their passion for skiing as Vermont's winter tourist industry picked up and beginners from around New England traveled to Vermont in order to learn how to ski.

The growth of skiing during the 1930s and experiences at Camp Hale shaped the lives of the soldiers in the 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division. Whether they had been an accomplished skier before the war, or learned on the rope tow at Camp Hale, the 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain veterans who became involved in the post-World War II ski industry did so out of a shared passion for the sport of skiing and the outdoors. After surviving a brutal 4 months of violent fighting in Italy, these men returned to the United States with a new sense of purpose to live their lives to the fullest, and for many that meant skiing. Based on the direction of the ski industry before Pearl Harbor, the ski industry would have progressed into a multi-million dollar industry after World War II without the 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division. However, the impact 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain veterans had on spreading the sport and teaching people to ski through ski schools cannot be calculated.

## Chapter One: The Emerging Ski Industry of the 1930s

In order to fully understand how much of an impact the 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division had on the growth of the modern ski industry after World War II, this chapter examines the transformation of downhill skiing in Vermont and Colorado during the 1930s to show that the development of the ski industry after the war had its roots in pre-war changes that took place. By looking at the development of ski areas, transportation, equipment, and societal values in Vermont and Colorado, a clear picture will emerge showing that the modern ski industry would have arrived if World War II had not intervened and the 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division had never been formed. This chapter will also introduce skiers who enlisted in the 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division in order understand where these soldiers came from and to what extent their training impacted their lives after the war.

### **The People**

Wealthy middle and upper class families in the Northeast represented the best skiers during the late 1920s and early 30s because they could afford trips to the European Alps to receive expert instruction and could send their children to college where skiing had grown in popularity. College students at small New England liberal arts schools took to the slopes as a leisure time activity. Dartmouth College is traditionally held as the foremost promoters of downhill skiing during the early 1930s. In 1926 the Dartmouth

outing club organized the first downhill race in New England.<sup>4</sup> Dirk Durrance, arguably the best American skier during the 1930s once told an interviewer that “collegiate skiing (in the 1930s) *was* skiing in this country.”<sup>5</sup> New England college students possessed both the money and free time necessary to make the sport a worthwhile venture. Without any form of uphill transportation, college students needed all day to hike up the hill before every run in order to train. .

Before Dartmouth College paved the way for downhill skiing in the American Northeast, across the Atlantic, the instructors at the St. Anton ski school in Austria affected the growth of skiing across Europe, and eventually in America as well. In the late 1920s a young ski enthusiast by the name of Freidl Pfeifer slowly worked his way up the ranks as an instructor at the St. Anton ski school. From his first moment on skis at the age of six, Pfeifer remembers feeling the “deepest pleasure” associated with the freedom of flying down the slopes. Pfeifer learned the Arlberg skiing technique under the strict guidance of ski legend Hannes Schnieder who invented the five step program to ski steeper slopes with more fluidity and control. By 1925 skiing has become a social phenomenon in Europe with the St. Anton ski school at the center. Pfeifer’s parents built a small hotel to capitalize on the increased winter tourism as wealthy American skiers traveled to the Alps to learn from the best ski instructors in the world.<sup>6</sup>

However, as the power and influence of the Nazi Party spread across Europe in the late 1930s, a large number of skilled ski racers and instructors fled to America. When

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<sup>4</sup> Albert S. Carlson, “Ski Geography of New England, *Economic Geography*, Vol. 18, No. 3 (Jul., 1942), 307.

<sup>5</sup> Charles J. Sanders, *The Boys of Winter: Life and Death in the U.S. Ski Troops During the Second World War*, (Boulder, CO, University Press of Colorado, 2005), p. 9.

<sup>6</sup> Friedl Pfeifer and Morten Lund, *Nice Goin’: My Life on Skis*, (Missoula, MT: Pictorial Histories Pub., 1993), p. 7, 28.

the Nazi Party arrested Hannes Schnieder in 1937, it only reaffirmed beliefs that America held the future of skiing.<sup>7</sup> Freidl Pfeifer left Europe before the Nazi occupation of St. Anton and took a job coaching the U.S. women's ski team at the newly developed and highly popular Sun Valley Ski Resort in Idaho where he lived until Pearl Harbor pulled America and Pfeifer into war.<sup>8</sup>

Not many Europeans promoted the sport of skiing in the Eastern United States during the early 1930s more than German Otto Schniebs. As coach of the Dartmouth ski team from 1930 to 1936, Schniebs coached many of the best American racers of the day while turning out six championship teams in his six years there. After his departure from Dartmouth, the school recruited one of the world's greatest ski racers, Walter Prager, who continued to teach the most dominant group of young American racers.<sup>9</sup> Schniebs, Prager, Schnieder and Pfeifer represented a growing trend of American and especially Eastern ski resorts to recruit knowledgeable instructors from overseas. As skiing continued to grow in popularity through the 1930s, certified European instructors brought over new skiing techniques and provided a safer learning environment. Throughout the 1930s European ski instructors shaped the growth skiing on the East Coast and taught young men such as John Litchfield, Larry Jump, and Bob Parker how to ski.

As a boy John Litchfield grew up in a small town in Maine during the 1920s. Scandinavian immigrants brought both cross country skiing and ski jumping to the attention of John's father who became "a pioneer of skisport in Maine."<sup>10</sup> Although recreational skiing barely existed in Maine during the 1920s, John's father had him on

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<sup>7</sup> Schnieder eventually escaped Nazi custody and ended up as the ski school director at Mt. Cranmore New Hampshire

<sup>8</sup> Pfeifer, p. 57, 65.

<sup>9</sup> "Diplomas for Masters," *Time Magazine*, Dec. 13 1937.

<sup>10</sup> John Litchfield, phone interview by David M. Leach, 12 December, 2004.

skis as early as age four. By high school, John competed as one of the best junior skiers in the state of Maine for cross country, downhill, and ski jumping. Litchfield then became a member of the Dartmouth ski team in the mid 1930s where, as part of what many argue to be the best ski team of the 1930s, Litchfield was selected for the 1937 Pan American Winter Games in Chile. In addition he qualified compete in the 1940 Winter Olympic Games in Sapporo. However, due to the outbreak of World War II, he never got a chance to compete.<sup>11</sup> In 1939 Litchfield decided to continue skiing and moved to Sun Valley where he supported himself by cutting trails in the summer and working in the ski school in the winter. After Pearl Harbor Litchfield and Pfeifer enlisted as two of many Sun Valley skiers who entered the 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division. With them enlisted Eastern skiers such as Larry Jump, Bob Parker, and Walter Prager. Only a few years after coaching Litchfield at Dartmouth, Prager found himself standing next to his pupil as a fellow soldier.

Many Eastern colleges such as Williams, Middlebury, and the University of Vermont followed Dartmouth as they started their own ski programs. The highest respected New England private schools such as Phillips Exeter that fed these colleges began skiing programs of their own during the '30s. While many of the schools still focused on cross-country and ski jumping, upper and middle class teenagers took an interest in the growing sport. In a 1935 article in the *American Skiing Annual*, the author points to these schools as representing a “marked growth of skiing” as a sport in New England. This growth in private schools took place in the late 1920s and early 1930s just as colleges began competing regularly in organized races.<sup>12</sup> Students such as Larry Jump

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<sup>11</sup> “Colorado Ski Hall of Fame: Class of 2002,” *Skiing Heritage*, Vol. 14, No. 2, June 2002, p. 23.

<sup>12</sup> Wayne Davis, “Skiing in Private Schools,” *American Ski Annual*, 1935, p. 92.

at Phillips Exeter learned to love skiing at an early age as the sport fueled his interest in healthy outdoor recreation. Jump followed the natural progression from a prestigious boarding school to Dartmouth where he raced on the ski team.

Along with John Litchfield and Walter Prager, Larry Jump and Bob Parker entered the 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division after the bombing of Pearl Harbor. As young men, these skiers fell in love with the mountains and the thrill of downhill ski racing. Growing up during a time where the face of skiing changed year to year, young college graduates such as these men would have been the ones to push the sport to new limits if World War II had not intervened. All these men enlisted with the 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division because they were united by common passions that would come to represent the unique nature of the “ski troops.”

While collegiate students are credited as some of the finest downhill skiers on the East Coast during the early 30’s, not only those with means enjoyed the sport. During the early 30s a ski trail had been cut into Mount Greylock, the highest peak in the Berkshires just outside Adams Massachusetts. The Thunderbolt trail, considered to be one of the most technically difficult trails in the country became the home of young thrill seekers such as Rudy Konieczny and Fred Neuberger, both who would later serve with the 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division. A member of the Dartmouth ski team described the run: “It just scared the hell out of you. Steep, icy, and full of nasty surprises. It was the toughest run we had to ski.”<sup>13</sup> Up into the mid 1930s no form of uphill transportation had been installed on Mount Greylock forcing those who wished to conquer the densely wooded run to hike forty-five minutes up to the summit.

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<sup>13</sup> Sanders, p. 4.

Rudy Konieczny, a local Adams boy, put himself on the skiing world's map in early 1938 when he set a new record on the Thunderbolt. As one of the earliest, youngest, and best skiers to come out of Adams, he possessed a dedication unlike any other. Rudy refused to work during the winter months in order to train for the upcoming race season. After dropping out of school at the age of fifteen, Rudy would save his earnings from factory work in order to support his skiing habits during the winter. Occasionally he would even face the dangers of skiing the Thunderbolt alone when no one else could be convinced to join him.<sup>14</sup> After forming the Ski Runners of Adams, Konieczny competed against some of the best skiers in the country as Dartmouth and other colleges traveled to Adams to race on the Thunderbolt.

While recreational skiing existed among the lower and working class populations, only those who showed complete dedication pursued the sport. After describing a rare and exhausting moonlight ski practice on the farm behind the Konieczny farm, Rudy's younger brother described the feeling by saying, "All was right with the world."<sup>15</sup> People such as Rudy developed an addiction to skiing, and dedicated their lives to the sport. Fred Neuberger grew up in the Mount Greylock Ski Club a couple years behind Rudy. When Rudy set the Thunderbolt course record in 1938, Fred, 15 years old at the time had already begun to develop his own passion for the new sport of skiing. Fred fondly recalled his first experience sliding down the mountain saying, "From the first ride, I couldn't think about anything else." Just before Pearl Harbor launched America into war, Fred described himself as "the best skier on the block" as well as the "only skier on the

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<sup>14</sup> Sanders, p. 9

<sup>15</sup> Sanders, p. 2

block.”<sup>16</sup> Growing up in lower class families, Rudy and Fred represented a smaller proportion of skiers on the East Coast, but their addiction to the thrill of skiing drove them to continue the sport however possible. Both Rudy and Fred saw no other choice than to join the 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division when the war came, and early in 1940, the two joined the ranks of a military unit organized by a single passion: skiing.

## **Vermont:**

### **Snow Trains**

In February of 1932 *The New York Times* reported that “The idea of New England as a winter recreation ground has taken firm possession of the lovers and promoters of the sport.” Stemming from the growing popularity of collegiate skiing and a growing European influence, the popularity of skiing grew from a local to a regional level. In an attempt to capitalize on the growth of skiing, the Boston and Maine Railroad ran its first “snow train” from Boston to the mountains of New Hampshire in 1931 carrying 196 outdoor enthusiasts. By the end of the 1931 season, twelve snow trains brought 8,371 mountain-bound skiers out of Boston.<sup>17</sup>

Snow trains gained popularity throughout the decade as the business expanded to include increased service from Boston and began running trips from New York City in 1934. The snow trains had an immediate and pronounced effect in New York. In 1934 only four stores in New York carried ski equipment while foreigners constituted most of the estimated 3,000 skiers in the city. By 1935, four different railroads planned on running snow trains, while department stores began to carry ski equipment as the

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<sup>16</sup> Fred Neuberger, interview by David M. Leach, 30 November 2004, Middlebury, VT.

<sup>17</sup> F. Lauriston Bullard, “New England Proud of Winter Sports,” *The New York Times*, Feb. 14 1932.



estimated number of skiers tripled to an estimated 10,000.<sup>18</sup> Between January 1<sup>st</sup> and March 1<sup>st</sup> of the 1936 ski season, the Boston and Maine carried almost 70,000 skiers out of New York City while department stores recorded a 250 percent increase in the number of skis sold. The same jump occurred in Boston as the railroad reported that the number of passengers in 1936 jumped 33 percent higher than the numbers during a “thriving” 1935 season.<sup>19</sup>

However, even with the huge increase in number of urban skiers, weekend snow train trips still catered to a growing young, affluent population who valued healthy outdoor recreation. A typical group of skiers leaving Grand Central Station in 1935 had “learned their skiing in the Alps, or at a New England college,” while the environment on board the train consisted of one where chefs prepared hearty dinners, ski experts gave helpful hints to those in need, and one could buy ski equipment or have repairs made. Snow trains created a social prestige associated with entering work on Monday with a tanned face and tales of a weekend on the slopes. Allen described “The difference between a tanned skiing office worker and a pasty-faced colleague separated the two just as it bound together those who knew the camaraderie of a Sunday on the snow.”<sup>20</sup> The snow trains leaving from Boston and New York helped to popularize skiing among upper and middle class citizens. When snow train service combined with the implementation of uphill transportation at ski areas in Vermont, skiing began to change from recreational activity reserved for locals and the affluent into the beginnings of a major business.

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<sup>18</sup> Eugene D. Dois, “New York Learns to Ski, *The American Ski Annual*, 1935, p. 99-101.

<sup>19</sup> Frank Elkins, “Skiing Scores a Record Advance, *The New York Times*, April 5 1936.

<sup>20</sup> Allen, p. 107, and Christopher Janus, “Transport Lines Busy: Better Facilities, Special Rates for Those who Plan Winter Trips,” *The New York Times*, Dec. 11 1938.

## Uphill Transportation

In January of 1934 *The Rutland Herald* claimed that Woodstock had eliminated the unpleasant part of skiing with the debut of the first motor ski-tow in the United States.<sup>21</sup> More than ten years later an article in *Vermont Life* stated that Woodstock's first rope tow "ushered in the modern era in American downhill skiing."<sup>22</sup> While the main purpose of this article was to sell Woodstock to tourists, the increased implementation of uphill transportation after 1934 dramatically changed the ski industry across America. Rope tows, and later chairlift and aerial tramways physically changed ski areas as trails stemmed from a main artery of the rope tow while attracting skiers once deterred by the grueling hike needed to ski down.

Before the first rope tow skiers at Woodstock, for example, needed to hike for at least fifteen minutes with skis in hand to reach the summit. The new rope tow whisked skiers the same distance in only one minute. The tow, powered by an old Model T Ford consisted of "an endless rope which runs over pulley wheels attached to a timber horse guyed to a tree at the top of the hill."<sup>23</sup> *The Ski Bulletin* reported that "nowhere in New England did skiers enjoy so much delightful downhill skiing with so little uphill effort" as in Woodstock.<sup>24</sup> Early rope tows such as the one at Woodstock presented skiers with the challenge of simply holding onto the rope as it traveled up to ten miles an hour, but the sheer number of runs one could achieve in a day prompted the development of rope tows across the state as skiers from local and urban areas flooded Vermont.

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<sup>21</sup> "Skiers' Lift Used on Woodstock Hill," *The Rutland Herald*, January 29 1934.

<sup>22</sup> "Woodstock: Cradle of Winter Sports," *Vermont Life*, Vol. 2, No. 2, Winter 1948, p. 14.

<sup>23</sup> "Skiers' Lift Used on Woodstock Hill," *The Rutland Herald*, January 29 1934.

<sup>24</sup> Allen, p. 110.

The spread of rope tows across Vermont meant that as a first time skier, one could easily complete ten times as many runs in a day as compared to life before uphill transportation. The learning curve for beginner skiers sharply increased when the time consuming hike became a thing of the past. Before 1935 the only accomplished skiers in the Northeast lived in close proximity to the mountains or lived in urban areas, but possessed the means to travel abroad to Europe to receive the best ski instruction. As the learning curve increased, the idea of a weekend in the mountains appealed to a growing number of urban and suburban workers. By simply increasing the number of runs one could ski in a day, a wider variety of people took up the sport, creating a weekend environment at ski areas in Vermont.

After the success of the first rope tow in Woodstock others quickly sprung up on ski hills around the rest of state. Because of the relative inexpensiveness and ease in which rope tows could be built, ski clubs, individuals, and municipalities could all afford them.<sup>25</sup> For the most part, ski clubs, and individuals built ropes tows in order to spread the sport they had grown to love, and not for economic gain. Between 1934 and 1939 the number of ski clubs in America more than doubled from 111 to 275, and many of these clubs financed and built their own rope tows to service that specific club.<sup>26</sup> The growth of uphill transportation across Vermont reinforced a purely recreational approach to skiing.

The records from the Plymouth Ski Club in 1938 and 1939 showed that in both years the club's expenses actually exceeded its income. With membership to the club costing adults only one dollar, ski clubs such as this one provided those with a passion for

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<sup>25</sup> Blake Harrison, "The Technological Turn: Skiing and Landscape Change in Vermont, 1930-1970, *Vermont History*, Vol. 71, (Summer-Fall 2003), p. 199.

<sup>26</sup> Roger F. Langley, "The Present Statistics of Skiing in America," *American Ski Annual*, 1939, p. 9.

skiing a place to congregate together on the weekends.<sup>27</sup> In a similar situation Ted Cooke personally financed a rope tow in 1935 specifically for the White Mountain Ski Runners, building it close to the farmhouse in which they met. Records from November of 1936 to March of 1939 show that in tow's most profitable month, March of 1937, the expenses cost \$82 while the revenue only amounted to \$127.<sup>28</sup> Two years later, in January of 1937 the *Burlington Free Press* reported, "A group of young winter sports enthusiasts have been devoting their spare time to constructing a Ski-tow," emphasizing the ease in which rope tows could be built.<sup>29</sup> In the late 1930s a young ski enthusiast by the name of Pete Seibert moved to the Northeast and found a wide open slope equipped with a rope tow in his back yard built for nothing more than the enjoyment of the community.<sup>30</sup> Individuals and ski clubs built a vast majority of rope tows around Vermont in order to accommodate the members of their specific community or ski club. The growth of small community and club specific ski hills around Vermont re-enforced the local nature of skiing during the mid 1930s. Not driven to create large profits, those who built rope tows remained content as long as the snow continued to fall and the tows continued to run. However, by the mid to late 1930s, the growing volume of skiers arriving by train to small Vermont towns changed both the physical and cultural landscape of Vermont, centralizing the Vermont ski industry.

### **Centralization of skiing: ski towns, trail networks, and ski schools.**

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<sup>27</sup> Allen, p. 149.

<sup>28</sup> Allen, p. 161.

<sup>29</sup> "New Ski-Tow has been Constructed Outside Brandon," *The Burlington Free Press*, January 14, 1937.

<sup>30</sup> Peter W. Seibert, *Vail: Triumph of a Dream*, (Boulder, Colorado: Mountain Sports Press, 2000), p. 49.

The majority of skiing during the 1920s occurred where enthusiasts could find an open space with enough snow coverage. In Vermont, “Recreational skiing took place on an unorganized and dispersed network of logging roads and pastures, fitting unobtrusively into the state’s preexisting rural structure.”<sup>31</sup> Wherever a snow covered hill existed, whether behind a farm, or on a trail found deep in the woods, skiing existed on an individual or small community level solely for the purpose of healthy outdoor recreation. Many times equipped with home-made skis and boots, skiers needed nothing else besides snow, a hill to ski, and the effort necessary to hike with seven foot hickory boards again and again. Skiing existed on a small, informal local level in Vermont before the appeal of uphill transportation and the influx of skiers from urban areas provided economic opportunity for small Vermont towns.

Throughout the 1930s the Boston and Maine increased its train service into Vermont bringing more and more urban skiers to the four major stops on the railway: Manchester, Brattleboro, Rutland, and Waterbury.<sup>32</sup> The large influx of urban skiers brought promises of economic growth to small Vermont towns that all but shut down during winter months. A quote by a railroad official in the *New York Times* predicted in 1936, “Given any sort of break by the weather man during the next five years, the revenue realized on Winter travel should equal, if not surpass, that made on Summer vacation transportation.”<sup>33</sup> Townspeople started to look forward to the winter months as a source of income. In the early ‘30s farmers rented rooms to weekend skiers, and as the decade progressed, inns, shops, and restaurants once only open in the summer opened

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<sup>31</sup> Blake Harrison, “The Technological Turn,” p. 199.

<sup>32</sup> Harrison, “The Technological Turn,” p. 201.

<sup>33</sup> “Skiing Takes a Jump: Its Sudden Increase in Popularity Last Season was a ‘Boom,’ *The New York Times*, April 25, 1936.

their doors to skiers. A 1938 article describes how, “Farmers who heretofore were content to dig in for the winter now rent their hills for Winter sports and take the fans into their homes as paying guests.”<sup>34</sup> Small Vermont towns adapted during the ‘30s to accommodate and capitalize on the increasing number of winter tourists. Vermont’s first ski towns emerged as snow trains brought more and more tourists to the four major railroad stops and as the physical layout of ski areas changed to accommodate the growing population of skiers.

Small ski hills equipped with a single rope tow servicing one open slope could no longer accommodate the increasing number of weekend skiers in the later part of the decade. A lack of adequate and inexpensive travel from the limited railway stops in Vermont caused ski area developers build larger resorts closer to the train stops and to change the physical make-up of the mountain. A shift from “ski hills” to “ski areas” occurred as planners employed multiple modes of uphill transportation centered on a network of trails that all led back down to a “base area.” Ski areas close to major railway stops grew in the late 1930s marking the beginning of a move toward larger ski areas capable of making a profit rather than small community hills that sometimes broke even.

Fred Pabst, who inherited his fathers Milwaukee brewing company, financed many different rope tows across the east and Midwest only to see one at Bromley Mountain in Manchester Vermont succeed. Located at a stop on the railway and only 200 miles from New York City, Pabst correctly realized that skiers wanted to be able to ski as many runs as possible during their two free days on the weekend.<sup>35</sup> In 1936, “an emphasis had been laid upon the creation of big skiing areas, so as to enable the handling

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<sup>34</sup> Christopher Janus, “Transport Lines Busy: Better Facilities, Special Rates for Those Who Plan Winter Trips,” *The New York Times*, Dec. 11, 1938.

<sup>35</sup> Pat Harty, “The Story of Bromley Mountain,” *Vermont Life*, Vol. 7, No. 2, Winter 1952-52, p. 24.

of thousands of personas at one time, to increase safety, and to permit more downhill running.”<sup>36</sup> By December of 1937, four years after Woodstock introduced the first rope tow to the country; they had built six more tows, and could accommodate about 700 skiers on any given weekend.<sup>37</sup> At Pico Peak, a ski area located near the Rutland train stop, founders Brad and Janet Mead took multiple trips to Europe during the 1930s to research different forms of uphill transportation because they felt that skiing would become such a popular sport that they would need to be able to handle the crowds.<sup>38</sup> Only larger ski areas equipped with more rope tows and more runs could support the growing number skiers traveling to Vermont each weekend. Ski areas and their respective towns located at the four major railway stops all grew during throughout the decade, but Mount Mansfield at Stowe, located close to the Waterbury train stop, soon emerged as “the ski capital of the East,” and a precursor to Vermont’s modern ski resorts.

The growing popularity of snow trains combined with more reliable uphill transportation attracted more first time skiers to the sport than ever before. As Hannes Schneider observed, “it is the speed that is the lure.”<sup>39</sup> The overcrowding of ski trails with beginners caused nothing but problems and ski area owners realized the need for qualified instruction to promote safety on the slopes. Just as Dartmouth College recruited experienced instructors from Europe, so did emerging ski resorts. While in Europe researching ski lifts, Brad and Janet Mead also hired Swiss Instructor Karl Acker as Pico Peak’s first ski school director. In 1936 a young Austrian by the name of Sepp Ruschp wrote a letter inquiring about setting up a ski school at Stowe. Ruschp arrived in Stowe

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<sup>36</sup> Frank Elkins, “New Trails Abound for Skiers,” *The New York Times*, Dec. 13 1936.

<sup>37</sup> “Sport Aid in Vermont,” *The New York Times*, Dec. 26 1937.

<sup>38</sup> Janet Mean, “Pico,” *Vermont Life*, Winter 1946, Vol. 1, No. 2, p. 32.

<sup>39</sup> Allen, *From Skisport*, p. 100.

in December of 1936, and in his first season as ski school director, gave an estimated 1,000 lessons.<sup>40</sup> When Pearl Harbor pulled the United States into war, Acker entered the 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division, and returned to manage Pico Peak at the end of his service. Ruschp's ski school helped to put Stowe on the map as "the ski capital of the East," and he continued to teach there throughout the war.

European ski instructors greatly influenced the growth of downhill skiing in America as well as defining the culture of the sport. Ski manuals for beginners in the late 30s defined German words regularly spoken by the large number of foreign ski instructors. With their language, instructors also brought an attitude of skiing as a serious business, and not as a care-free recreational activity.<sup>41</sup> During the growth of downhill skiing in the 1930s, the United States relied on the teaching of certified European ski instructors who brought with them their own ski culture. The rise of Nazi Germany and the outbreak of World War II turned America's focus away from skiing and the influence of European instructors. When the U.S. ski industry regained its footing after the war, American's brought their own style and culture to the sport as 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain veterans taught skiing all across the country.

### **The Growth of Stowe**

A *Burlington Free Press* article asked in 1937, "Can Vermont be leaders in ski resort traffic?" The article pointed to the "sophisticated" individuals traveling to Vermont from metropolitan areas who represented a majority of winter tourism business. Representing a growing number of Vermonters who believed that winter tourism could

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<sup>40</sup> Peter Oliver, *Stowe: Classic New England*, (Boulder, CO: Mountain Sports Press, 2002), p. 62-63.

<sup>41</sup> Allen, *From Skisport*, p. 122.



increase the economic and cultural situation in rural Vermont, *The Free Press* questioned whether, “will we improve the facilities and accommodations to their liking and desires, which are ahead of ours no doubt, or will we continue to try to get by with unheated rooms, hard beds, poor bathroom plumbing-in general accommodations not up to scratch?”<sup>42</sup> This article called for Vermont ski areas to “sell” their mountains to vacationers from major metropolitan and suburban areas. Not only did this mean providing a place to ski and a rope tow to drag one to the top, but comfortable accommodations and entertainment off the ski slope. The idea was a simple: the ski area with the best terrain, most efficient uphill transportation, and the most comfortable facilities would not only attract a greater number of skiers, but the skiers with the greatest wealth. By 1937 the idea of creating a “destination resort” in Vermont had already begun to take hold in Stowe.

Craig Burt, C.E.O. of Burt Lumber Company owned much of the non-state land around Mount Mansfield located in Stowe, Vermont. During the first fifteen years of the 1900s he experimented with different homemade skis on the logging trails cut by his company. As a growing number of locals took interest in the sport, they held the town’s first Winter Carnival in 1921 focusing its attention on ski jumpers from local ski clubs and colleges.<sup>43</sup> Two factors during the first half of the 1930s led to the dominance of Stowe as the premier ski area in the east. First, the state played a large role in both granting rights to the land and helping with construction. Second, wealthy entrepreneurs interested in expanding the sport and making a profit invested capital into the mountain.

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<sup>42</sup> Howard H. Frestwich, “Can Vermont Be Leaders in Ski Resort Traffic?” *The Burlington Free Press*, 14 January 1937.

<sup>43</sup> George T. Mazuzan, “‘Skiing is not merely a schport’: The Development of Mount Mansfield as a Winter Recreation Area, 1930-1955,” *Vermont History*, Vol. 40, No. 1, 1972, p. 49-50.

When Stowe completed their plans for a set of trails in 1933, they approached the head of the Vermont State Forests with plans for Mount Mansfield and were met with “warm approval.”<sup>44</sup> Formed under the legislation of Franklin D. Roosevelt, The Civilian Conservation Corps started construction on a series of beginner and intermediate trails in the fall of 1933 and by 1934 and 1935 the CCC began construction on expert trails located at higher elevations. The Nose Dive trail cut into the upper portion of Mount Mansfield soon became the premier racing trail on the East coast. A German ski star who won the United States National Downhill competition on the Nose Dive in 1939 traveled home to Germany and described it as “one of the outstanding racing runs in the world.”<sup>45</sup> Those planning the mountain wanted terrain that would attract the best skiers on the East coast as well as first time skiers. The network of trails developed for both beginner and intermediate skiers combined with the nearby snow train stop of Waterbury dramatically increased the flow of skiers from New York and Boston, and by 1935 a rope tow been installed to service the lower trails.<sup>46</sup>

Roland Palmedo, founder of the Amateur Ski Club of New York, climbed Mount Mansfield during the summers as a member of the New York National Guard and introduced the mountain to the largest ski club in New York. After repeated visits to ski the mountain, The Amateur Ski Club of New York ordered and paid for a two and a half mile long trail at Stowe completed for the 1937 season.<sup>47</sup> By the end of the 1937 ski season nearly 4,000 passengers rode the ski train up to Stowe, and the region had become

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<sup>44</sup> Mazuzan, p. 52.

<sup>45</sup> “Beutter, Ski Champ, Extols Nose Dive,” *The Burlington Free Press*, January 5, 1939.

<sup>46</sup> Harrison, p. 201.

<sup>47</sup> Marshall Sprague, “In Vermont: Stowe Prepares for Big Ski Season,” *The New York Times*, Nov. 21, 1937.

a “mecca for celebrities.”<sup>48</sup> Visiting Stowe to ski in the mid 30s, Palmedo constantly needed to hike up from the top of the rope tow to reach Mount Mansfield’s expert terrain such as the Nose Dive trail located at 3550 feet. Wealthier skiers such as Palmedo often took trips to the European Alps and he returned after one trip with a strong desire to bring a chairlift Mount Mansfield after witnessing how it could bring more skiers greater distances up a mountain. Palmedo had made his fortune on Wall Street and found no difficulty in securing others to invest in the project. Along with industrialists such as Godfrey Rockefeller, Gilbert Colgate Jr., and Earl Pratt of Standard Oil, Palmedo founded the Mount Mansfield Lift Company in November of 1939.<sup>49</sup>

The \$90,000 Mount Mansfield Ski Lift opened on November 17<sup>th</sup>, 1940 putting Stowe on the map with resorts such as Sun Valley, Idaho, and St. Moritz in the Alps. The chair marked Mount Mansfield’s rise to “a leading position among Winter sports resorts.” As the longest lift in the United States at the time, the chairs carried 200 skiers an hour on a twelve minute ride 2,030 feet higher than rope tows, exposing skiers to a wider variety of expert terrain.<sup>50</sup> Expecting a large increase in the flow of skiers to Vermont’s first destination resort, New York’s airlines advertised “Ski plane” trips to Vermont. Catering to the most affluent of winter tourists, skiers boarded a plane in New York for an hour and forty-five minute flight to Burlington followed by “a special limousine transport” to the sixty miles of trail served by the new lift.<sup>51</sup> After its first year in operation the

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<sup>48</sup> “Ski Trains to Mount Mansfield Carried 4,000 Winter Sports Enthusiasts During 1938,” *The Burlington Free Press*, Dec. 1 1938.

<sup>49</sup> Mazuzan, p. 57

<sup>50</sup> Marshall Sprague, “For Vermont Skiers,” *The New York Times*, Nov. 17 1940.

<sup>51</sup> “Ski Planes to North,” *The New York Times*, Dec. 15 1940.

Mansfield Lift company grossed \$3,840, and by the end of the 1941-42 season made \$31,530 even though the United States had been pulled into war.<sup>52</sup>

The first chairlift in the East, the financial backing of entrepreneurs like Roland Palmedo, and the easy accessibility of Stowe all contributed to the growth of Mount Mansfield into the first destination resort in Vermont. Stowe, in the first couple years of the 1940s, represented the future of ski resorts in Vermont. New lift technology, easy accessibility, terrain for all skiing abilities, and financial investment led to the dominance of Stowe as the “ski capital of the East.” When the war intervened, ski areas such as Stowe struggled just to maintain the status quo, but as the war ended in 1945, the trend toward the expansion and centralization of ski areas continued with the added help of a thriving post-war economy and returning 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division veterans.

### **Sun Valley: America’s First Destination Resort**

In 1935 Averill Harriman, owner of the Union Pacific Railroad, hired Austrian Alpine expert Count Felix Schoaffgotsch to locate the perfect location for America’s first destination resort. Harriman sought a mountain far enough away from major metropolitan areas in order to force skiers to travel, close enough to the Union Pacific railways to monopolize travel profits, and complete with physical features that would rival the famous St. Moritz of the European Alps. After traveling to more than a dozen locations in the American West during 1935, the Count finally stumbled upon the old mining town of Ketchum, Idaho, where he found “more delightful features than any other

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<sup>52</sup> Mazuzan, p. 59.

place I have seen in the U.S., Switzerland or Austria for a winter sports center.”<sup>53</sup>

Arriving in a private car ten days later, Harriman agreed that the area was perfect for a ski resort, and quickly hired Steve Hannagan, the “publicity genius” who had previously created Miami Beach for the northeastern public. Hannagan took control over the development of the resort naming it Sun Valley, and convincing Harriman to invest in a one million dollar luxury hotel. He then released a press image of a young muscular man, stripped down to his waist skiing through powdery Sun Valley snow. Ironically, Hannagan shot the advertisement over and over again in a Manhattan studio until perfect. During Sun Valley’s first weekend a number of celebrities filled the 250-room lodge and dined on caviar and champagne. From the grand opening of Sun Valley until World War II, if you had the money to ski, you went to Sun Valley.<sup>54</sup>

Harriman possessed the capital, the vision, the connections, and the control of transportation, to successfully transform a small mining town of 270 residents into America’s first destination resort. Spending almost three million dollars in the first two years, Harriman spared no expense while building Sun Valley.<sup>55</sup> During the late 1920s and early ‘30s he skied in European destination resorts such as St. Moritz, and believed that a similar type of resort had potential to increase Union Pacific railway traffic in the American West. In 1936, one could only reach Sun Valley on the Union Pacific. Harriman owned a monopoly on reliable transportation to the resort, and with connections through people like Steve Hannagan, Sun Valley replaced the Alps as the winter destination for America’s upper class. With train service, a wealthy clientele base,

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<sup>53</sup> John Jay, *Ski Down the Years*, (New York: Universal Publishing and Distributing Corporation, 1966), p. 103.

<sup>54</sup> Hal K. Rothman, *Devil’s Bargains: Tourism in the Twentieth-Century American West*, (Lawrence, Kansas, University of Kansas Press, 1998), p. 190.

<sup>55</sup> Jay, p. 104.

and the necessary finances, Harriman challenged a group of Union Pacific engineers to design a fast a reliable way to get skiers up the mountain. In December of 1936, Sun Valley unveiled the world's first chairlift, creating only more of a national buzz around the new resort.<sup>56</sup> No ski area anywhere in America saw the nation-wide success of Sun Valley until after World War II.

Harriman sent Schaffgotsch to Austria to hand select a group of expert ski instructors knowledgeable in Hannes Schneider's Arlberg technique. Again, sparing no expense, Schaffgotsch returned to Sun Valley with Hans Hauser, the best alpine skier in Austria, along with seven others. Lasting only three seasons, a young Friedl Pfeifer, originally hired to coach the woman's U.S. ski team, took over as ski school director in 1939.<sup>57</sup> John Litchfield joined Pfeifer at Sun Valley, whose ski school by World War II boasted many of the largest names in the ski industry. Complete with a ski school, the world's first chairlift, and luxurious amenities, Sun Valley became a model for the development of a successful destination ski resort in the United States.

## **Colorado:**

### **Snow Trains and Rope Tows**

In the Colorado Rockies during the late 1920s and early 30s a similar trend toward the centralization of ski areas occurred as in Vermont. In places like Steamboat Springs Colorado recreational skiing emerged during the early 1900s out of a necessity of skis for winter travel. Winter carnivals featuring ski jumpers from around the world

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<sup>56</sup> Peter J. Ognibene, "At the first ski spa, stars outshone the sun and snow," *Smithsonian*, Dec. 1984, Vol. 15, p. 110.

<sup>57</sup> Basil Service, "Sun Valley's Two Ski Schools: America's European Alpine Touring and Alpine Skiing Beginnings," *Idaho Yesterday*, 1994, Vol. 37, No. 4, p. 20.

captured the imagination of locals in the area.<sup>58</sup> However, up until the late 1930s recreational skiing occurred only on a local level. As in the East, dedicated skiers formed attachment to local hills, and formed Ski Clubs around shared passions. For the majority of the decade Colorado ski hills served an almost exclusively local population. A main difference between the growth of skiing in Vermont and Colorado evolved from the existence of a marked urban class. A larger physical and cultural gap separated local Vermont residents from New York and Boston “tourists,” while in Colorado, residents of Denver had close access to the mountains lessening the cultural gap between urban and rural skiers.

However, the growth of the Colorado ski industry in the ‘30s still evolved as more and more Denver residents took weekend trips to small ski areas on the outskirts of the city. Skiing for mountain residents through the first half of the 1930s remained a localized sport. Without the economic means necessary to travel combined with the lack of organized ski areas, residents joined local ski clubs, skied on the most convenient mountains, and competed against neighboring towns. Those skiers from Denver who could afford to travel still chose to ski close to the city so they could go every weekend.<sup>59</sup>

The problem of adequate transportation deterred the growth of the Colorado ski industry during the first half of the 1930s. Wealthy skiers with the means of getting to the mountains during the winter months did not value the “physically taxing outdoor exercise” needed to continuously hike back up the mountain with skis in hand.

Conversely, the ski enthusiasts willing to trade hard work for thrilling downhill runs were

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<sup>58</sup> Rothman, *Devil's Bargains*, p. 173.

<sup>59</sup> Anne Gilbert Coleman, “Culture, Landscape, and the Making of the Colorado Ski Industry,” (P.h.D. diss., University of Colorado, 1996), p. 129.

unable to secure transportation to the various hills around Denver.<sup>60</sup> Centralization of the ski industry in Colorado did not happen until ski areas attracted the large population of potential Denver skiers and provided them with easy and reliable transportation to the mountains. As train service from New York and Boston changed the face of skiing in Vermont, so did the snow train in Denver.

In 1936 the first snow train left Denver and brought urban Colorado to “see what real ‘snow country’ looked like in its majestic beauty.” Within two years most ski areas in the Denver area became accessible by rail, and trains took both weekend and week long trips to the mountains.<sup>61</sup> With the opening of the Moffat Tunnel, which provided a year round link between the intermountain range and the Front Range near Denver, places such as Steamboat Springs attracted day and weekend skiers from Denver. Before train access Steamboat held an annual winter carnival aimed at the locals of the community. Train service turned the event into a regional rather than local attraction.<sup>62</sup>

The popularity of the winter train service in Denver quickly encouraged individuals to capitalize on the growing number of recreational skiers. The first rope tow opened in Colorado at Berthoud Pass in 1937 under the direction of the Arlberg Ski Club. Berthoud Pass, accessible by train and car, “became so crowded that there was scarcely room for skiing” on the weekends or for the 400 cars arriving every Sunday. In its first year, an estimated 20,000 skiers traveled to Berthoud pass, a number that more than doubled to 50,000 the next year.<sup>63</sup> Other rope tows within a day trip of Denver quickly

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<sup>60</sup> Rothman, “Selling the Meaning of Place,” p. 539.

<sup>61</sup> Wildred S. Davis, “Big Rush Is on for Snow Train to Steamboat,” *Rocky Mountain News*, February 15, 1936 in Rothman, *Devil’s Bargains*, p. 181.

<sup>62</sup> Rothman, *Devil’s Bargains*, p. 180

<sup>63</sup> Allen, *From Skisport*, p. 140 and Abbott Fay, “Pioneer Slopes: Early Colorado Ski Resort Development, 1920-1950,” *Colorado Heritage*, No. 1, 1985, p. 5.



sprung up and received large numbers of urban ski enthusiasts from Denver. The success of small ski areas around Denver in the late 1930s led to the attempted development of Aspen as a Colorado's first destination ski resort.

### **The Failure of Aspen.**

Aspen Colorado thrived in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century during the silver boom in Colorado. Around 8,500 people lived in mining town during 1893 hoping to make their fortune. However, as the silver ran out, the population quickly declined and those who once thrived in Aspen soon left town. By 1930 only 700 permanent residents remained.<sup>64</sup> Entrepreneurs Billy Fiske, bobsled gold medal winner in the 1932 Lake Placid Games, and Thomas J. Flynn, a local to Aspen, envisioned a grand ski resort at Aspen capable of attracting a national crowd like Sun Valley.

The two quickly set to work hiring Andre Roch, a famous Swiss avalanche expert to design the trails. Rock cut one long trail designed to hold major downhill races into Ajax Mountain, while investors paid for the installation of a boat and a rope tow. Both Roland Palmedo and Otto Schniebs visited Aspen in the late 1930s and found the region "quite exceptional," and in 1938 a skier reported in the *American Ski Annual* that, "The climate and snow conditions surpassed anything I have ever seen in this country or Europe."<sup>65</sup> Intending to attract wealthy skiers from around the country, the founders laid out plans for a tramway and constructed the Highland-Bavarian Lodge.<sup>66</sup> Despite attracting skiers

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<sup>64</sup> "The Rise, Fall, and Rise of Aspen: The Town the 1940s Saved," *Colorado Heritage*, Winter 1995, p. 35.

<sup>65</sup> F. Martin Brown, "Let's Aspen," *American Ski Annual*, 1937-38, p. 82.

<sup>66</sup> Allen, *From Skisport...*, p. 140.

for a downhill race in 1938 and the National Downhill and Slalom Races in 1941, Aspen failed to attract either a national or local crowd.<sup>67</sup>

The remote location of Aspen caused the resort to be doomed from the start. While Fiske and Flynn realized they needed national support for the mountain to succeed, easy transportation did not exist. Tourists could reach Denver by train, but then transportation across the mountains to Aspen became unreliable. Skiers from Denver faced the same transportation problem, and by the late 30s many had developed attachments to local ski areas which were both more accessible and closer to home. The founders of Aspen did not possess the capital to ensure transportation to the mountain, luxurious accommodations once there, or the marketing necessary to lure wealthy customers. Exactly where Averill Harriman at Sun Valley succeeded, Aspen failed.

### **Winter Park and a Glimpse of Colorado's Potential**

The trend toward the centralization of the ski industry in Colorado roughly followed the same model of the Northeast. While Colorado possessed steeper mountains and better snow, the technology of accessing the terrain posed a problem for ski areas. In 1940 the manager of the Denver Department of Parks and Improvements set out to create a state owned recreational ski area for Denver. Winter Park opened in 1940 with a half mile long rope tow, train access directly from Denver, and a range of intermediate and beginning trails.<sup>68</sup> Until Pearl Harbor, Winter Park existed as Colorado's most commercially successful ski area without a chairlift or expert terrain.

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<sup>67</sup> Rothman, "Selling the Meaning of Place," p. 543.

<sup>68</sup> Rothman, *Devil's Bargains*, p. 184.

When snow trains brought skiers from New York and Boston to the rural towns and mountains of Vermont and New Hampshire two different worlds collided. Towards the end of the 1930s places like Stowe existed to make money from those arriving every weekend from the cities. Winter tourism promoted the “us” and “them” mentality of rural Vermonters compared to urban upper and middle class workers. The physical separation of urban centers and ski centers in the Northeast promoted the growth of Winter Tourism and the modern ski industry. In Colorado, the urban population of Denver and those in existing mountain communities were both closer in distance and more similar in cultural beliefs. By Pearl Harbor a major ski resort existed in Stowe Vermont, while Aspen had attempted to create a national attraction, but fell short of creating a destination resort like Sun Valley. The idea of creating a business out of skiing started earlier in Vermont because the quicker move toward recreational skiing, and the gap created between rural and urban populations. In the Colorado Rockies, Winter Park emerged at the most successful pre-World War II ski area founded as a recreational area formed by the city and not designed to bring in a profit.

The 1930s saw an incredible change and growth in American skiing. Wealthy New England skiers who knew of ski culture in the European Alps led the initial growth of the sport on Vermont hills away from cross country skiing and ski-jumping and towards the beginnings of modern downhill skiing as we know it today. Transportation advances such as the snow trains and rope tows brought the sport closer to urban populations, attracted beginners, centralized ski areas, created ski towns, and increased the social appeal of skiing. European ski instructors left their home countries as Nazi

power expanded, influenced the growth of American ski schools and taught some of the best American skiers of the decade.

By the end of the decade, the beginnings of a modern, centralized ski industry emerged in Colorado and especially in Vermont. The enormous popularity of Sun Valley prompted the growth of other major ski resorts across the country. Aspen attempted, but failed to promote itself as a destination resort, while Winter Park attracted the urban population of Denver. By 1941, Mount Mansfield enjoyed enormous popularity as the “ski capital of the East,” while other Vermont ski areas struggled to compete. Around the country skiing shifted from a local, community activity, towards a regional, tourist based industry. Entrepreneurs such as Averill Harriman and Roland Palmedo envisioned large, self-serving resorts that catered to a wide variety of skiers. However, the bombing of Pearl Harbor pulled America into World War II, and the ski industry’s growth remained stagnant until 1945 when the 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division pushed its way into the Po Valley of Italy, helping to put an end to the final days of the war.

## Chapter Two: The 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division during World War II

### **The Birth of the 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division**

In the winter of 1940 while Mount Mansfield celebrated the opening of its first chairlift and Aspen attempted to revive an old mining town, the United States Army and a group of civilian skiers turned their minds to World War II. On a bitter cold, wind whipped night in February of 1940, Charles “Minnie” Dole, Bob Livermore, Alex Bright, and Roger Langley sat at Johnny Seasaw’s in Manchester Vermont enjoying a drink after a hard day of skiing. All four men pioneered the sport American downhill skiing during their lifetime. Livermore had raced in the 1936 Olympics, Langley presided as president of the National Ski Association, many considered Bright as the “dean of American

downhill racing,” and Charles “Minnie” Dole had founded the National Ski Patrol.<sup>69</sup> The conversation changed from recollecting the day spent on Bromley Mountain to the Soviet invasion of Finland.

Across the Atlantic Nazi Germany had marched through Poland and Hitler’s gaze focused on the rest of Europe, while in November of 1939 the Soviet Union invaded Finland. In what can only be described as a David vs. Goliath match, the Finns held out for three months before succumbing to the Soviet Army. Outmanned almost five to one, the Finnish Army managed to embarrass the Soviets with stealth raids on skis: quickly attacking the Soviet forces, then sinking back into the woodland.<sup>70</sup> Dressed in white camouflage, the Finnish troops used guerrilla warfare, and their knowledge of winter survival to repel the first and second offensives of the Soviet army, before “massive reinforcements from all over the Soviet Union were moved to the Finnish front” ending the conflict.<sup>71</sup>

With Pearl Harbor a little less than two years away, many Americans believed firmly in the idea of isolationism. After the huge loss of American soldiers during World War I, most Americans refused to give up more young men to another war in Europe. However, looking at the growing power of Hitler’s Germany, Dole and the others present began to wonder about a possible attack on the United States in the future, particularly one from Canada and down into the Adirondacks of New York and the Green Mountains of Vermont. The concerns of Dole and others during this night were not as far fetched as they might seem. If Hitler managed to take control of England, he could have used

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<sup>69</sup> Hal Burton, *The Ski Troops*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1971), p. 63.

<sup>70</sup> Peter Shelton, *Climb to Conquer: The Untold Story of World War II’s 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division*, (New York: Scribner, 2003), p. 8.

<sup>71</sup> Gerhard L. Weinberg, *A World at Arms: A Global History of World War II*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 105.

Canada as a staging ground for a war on the United States. During the French and Indian War “British and French troops fought up and down the Champlain Valley.” Later in the American Revolution, British forces planned to march down the large valley between Vermont and New York, through the Hudson River Valley, and into New York City.<sup>72</sup> Regularly trained infantry troops would not be to succeed in the harsh terrain and unforgiving weather of America’s Northeast, especially if fighting against specially trained German mountain troops. Believing strongly in the call for American Mountain troops, Dole immediately wrote to United States War Department, offering the help of the newly formed National Ski Patrol to aid in the creation and training of such a division.<sup>73</sup>

Around the same time Minnie Dole began his correspondence with Washington about the formation of a winter warfare group, the U.S. Army had already begun to think about preparing troops for fighting in cold weather and mountainous regions. The army ordered winter training for six divisions from Massachusetts to Washington. The purpose of this training served two purposes as stated by General Marshall in the winter of 1940:

“1) the establishment of an agency for test and development of clothing and materials for winter warfare operations, and 2) the procurement of skis and other equipment with which to begin ski instruction in certain divisions, initially for morale and recreational purposes.”<sup>74</sup>

The military employed the help of the National Ski Patrol to act as guides and provide winter survival tips, while civilian instructors taught skiing technique. Even ski instructors such as Brad and Janet Mead helped where they could. The owners of Pico Peak opened up their mountain to soldiers, and troops new to the sport, “tumbled down

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<sup>72</sup> Shelton, p. 12.

<sup>73</sup> Shelton, p. 13.

<sup>74</sup> Hal Burton, *The Ski Troops*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1971), p. 76.

the slopes with hilarity and delight.”<sup>75</sup> However, during 1940 and 1941 the U.S. Army did not intend to build up a specialized mountain warfare group. The army stated the main goal as, “to lay a foundation for future winter training.”<sup>76</sup>

Two instances during winter training with the 3<sup>rd</sup> Division in Northern California and the 41<sup>st</sup> Division at Mount Rainer in Washington gave an early preview of the relationships that would exist in winter warfare groups for the rest of the war. With many other pressing issues, the army could not spend the time or the money to test or equip troops with the best winter gear, forcing knowledgeable troops to use their own previous experience. On a patrol by the 41<sup>st</sup> in the mountains of Washington, harsh weather conditions and poor equipment proved too much for nearly one third of the men who were sent back to camp. The army issued without skis edges so that the soldiers could hardly make a turn, while “Civilian-made boots and bindings, designed for packed-slope skiing, fell apart; soldiers collapsed from exhaustion or limped on blistered feet.”<sup>77</sup> Early equipment tests proved how unprepared the U.S. army would be if they ever needed to fight in winter terrain.

In April of 1941, members of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Division set off with twenty other experienced skiers in the Sierra Nevadas. One of these skiers was David Brower, a pioneer in the mountaineering field, who after the war would go on to become the Executive Director of the Sierra Club. At the time, Brower had published the Sierra Club’s *Manual of Ski Mountaineering*. The guide consisted of different articles written by members of the Sierra Club “on everything from avalanche awareness to putting

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<sup>75</sup> Gretchen R. Besser, *The National Ski Patrol: Samaritan of the Snow*, (Woodstock, Vermont: The Countryman Press, 1983), p. 43.

<sup>76</sup> Captain Thomas P. Govan, “Training for Mountain and Winter Warfare,” The Army Ground Forces, Study No. 23, 1946, p. 5.

<sup>77</sup> Burton, p. 89.



together a lightweight kit of backcountry essentials.” Brower’s company came a bit more prepared than the 41<sup>st</sup> Division. All of their equipment had come from civilian suppliers such as Bass Company, L.L. Bean, and Abercrombie and Fitch. They camped at 10,000 feet, and tested every type equipment they could carry from stoves to sunscreen to ski wax. All this information found its way to Washington.<sup>78</sup> Civilian groups like this greatly helped to prepare the military for equipping a specialized mountain warfare group.

At this point the threat of a possible invasion on U.S. soil still concerned both General Marshall and Minnie Dole. The National Ski Patrol called for its members to become completely familiar with the local terrain in case of an invasion from Canada or either coast. In a letter to Dole, Marshall placed value in the Ski Patrol by stating that they should be “prepared to furnish guides to the army in (the) event of training or of actual operations in the local areas.”<sup>79</sup> The perceived threat of foreign invasion soon died down, and the army turned its attention to the war abroad. General Marshall questioned whether the United States would need a specially trained mountain division to fight in Europe.

Several international factors contributed to the establishment of an actual Division that specialized in mountain and winter warfare. As the military switched their focus from domestic invasion to the war abroad, the army no longer needed guide service from the National Ski Patrol. A specialized force of mountain troops needed sufficient training in snow and cold climates, and as the Sierra Club’s *Manual of Ski Mountaineering* had

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<sup>78</sup> Shelton, p. 23-24.

<sup>79</sup> Burton, p. 79.

written, it “is easier to train a skier to be a soldier than to train a soldier to be a skier.”<sup>80</sup>

In addition, the widespread German military operations across Europe caused the military to consider “no theater for the employment of American troop as fantastic.”

However, in 1941, no room in the military’s budget existed for extra expenditures; especially one that required the development of special equipment not used by the regular infantry.<sup>81</sup>

The push for the development of specialized mountain troops came from the success of the German Army in the Balkans; specially trained German Mountain Troops stationed elsewhere in Europe, as well as the failure of British troops in the mountain terrain of Norway. However, in August of 1941 Italian troops attempted to follow Hitler’s push east, and invaded Greece through the mountains of Albania. After a Greek counterattack the Italians were forced to retreat into the mountains which resulted in disaster. An estimated ten thousand troops froze to death; twenty five thousand were killed in combat, and thousands more taken prisoner. “The divisions were not organized, clothed, equipped, conditioned or trained for either winter or mountain fighting.”<sup>82</sup> This event prompted the military to reconsider the formation of a specialized mountain warfare division as a U.S. report on the Italian loss concluded:

“An army which may have to fight anywhere in the world must have units especially organized, trained, and equipped for fighting in the mountains and in winter. Such units cannot be improvised hurriedly from line divisions. They require long periods of hardening and experience, for which there is no substitute for time.”<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Shelton, p. 46.

<sup>81</sup> Training for Mountain and Winter Warfare, p. 4.

<sup>82</sup> Training for Mountain and Winter Warfare, p. 6.

<sup>83</sup> Shelton, p. 25.

From the combination of winter training with civilians at home, the efforts of Minnie Dole, and Italy's military blunder, emerged the development of winter and mountain training in three different regions with three different areas of focus. Winter and low-altitude mountain training occurred at Camp McCoy, Wisconsin, and Buena Vista, Virginia respectively and alpine training for special mountain troop began again at Fort Lewis in Washington.<sup>84</sup> On November 15, 1941 the 87<sup>th</sup> Infantry Mountain Regiment became activated at the base of Mount Rainer. With the later additions of the 85<sup>th</sup> and 86<sup>th</sup> regiments, these men represented the beginning of what would become the 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division.<sup>85</sup>

### **Paradise Lodge at Mount Rainer**

The military placed New Hampshire-born Colonel Onslow S. Rolfe in command of this new breed of mountain troops. While he possessed plenty of military training experience, Colonel Rolfe admitted to being a novice to both the mountains and skiing. The military may have assumed that being from New Hampshire; he must have grown up a skier and outdoorsman even though he had left the White Mountains at the age of six. Two majors transferred to Fort Lewis, at the base of Mount Rainer also possessed little knowledge about winter training, survival, or skiing.<sup>86</sup>

Through the National Park Service, Colonel Rolfe leased Paradise Lodge, a recreational area located on the south side of Mount Rainer<sup>87</sup>. So much snow dumped on

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<sup>84</sup> Georgianna Contiguglia, "Searching for the Perfect Ski Gear: Equipment Development for the Tenth Mountain Division," *Colorado Heritage*, fall 1992, p. 2.

<sup>85</sup> Three military regiments make up one division. Each regiment consists of around 3,000 troops.

<sup>86</sup> Burton, p. 93.

<sup>87</sup> In the late 1930s Mount Rainer was described as a mecca of skiing in the West along with Sun Valley. Paradise Lodge provided skiers easy access to "ski-runs as steep and long as any in the country. Richard L. Neuberger, "Snow Sport in the Far West," *The New York Times*, Dec. 13 1936.

the soldiers arriving daily to Mount Rainer that troops could ski right out of their second and third story windows. As one soldier noted, “My quarters on the first floor required me to climb to the third floor to step out of doors. Paradise? Right on! A place to study war? Too weird to think about.” This is the same soldier who as a boy remembers thinking after a camping trip of ways to make a living without ever leaving the mountains.<sup>88</sup> Many of the men arriving at Fort Lewis during that first winter had all been men dedicated to skiing or mountaineering, and all possessed a love and respect for the outdoors.

Fort Lewis boasted a roster of the most experienced skiers and mountaineers from around the country. The men made up an extraordinary list of “the who’s who of American skiing” at the time. Many skiers such as John Litchfield, Bob Parker, and Larry Jump came from New England colleges such as Dartmouth and they added to the 10<sup>th</sup>’s reputation as a collection of intellectual elites. Steve Knowlton came from the University of New Hampshire, while John Jay entered with a reputation as being one of the most influential ski cinematographers of his day.

However, many of the biggest names at Fort Lewis came from Europe. Walter Prager entered the 10<sup>th</sup> after coaching some of the best young American skiers at Dartmouth and “With ten or fifteen of the world’s top skiers in the battalion, Walter Prager might have been the only man with the ability to keep all of the greats in line.”<sup>89</sup> Freidl Pfeifer left his position as ski school director at Sun Valley to enter the 10<sup>th</sup>, but not without a few complications. After the bombing of Pearl Harbor, Pfeifer was arrested at Sun Valley after being charged with pledging alliance to the Nazi Party. Pfeifer had

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<sup>88</sup> Charles C. Bradley, *Aleutian Echoes*, (Hong Kong, University of Alaska Press, 1994), p. 9, 4.

<sup>89</sup> Shelton, p. 31-33.

the option of remaining locked up, or enlisting with the U.S. military. Holding nothing but a grudge for the Nazi's after what happened at home in St. Anton, Pfeifer enlisted with the 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division.

With all of these great skiers grouped together in Paradise ski lodge, a far cry from regular army barracks, the atmosphere sometimes felt “more like a college reunion than a military encampment.”<sup>90</sup> Walter Prager reunited with many of his former pupils from Dartmouth such as John Litchfield. One day at Fort Lewis Litchfield took a look outside and admired, “Boy, won’t this new powder be perfect today.”<sup>91</sup> While the men skied for almost eight hours a day, five or six days a week, the experience felt nothing like that of skiing in the Alps, Sun Valley, or even Dartmouth. The troops cross country skied great distances around Mount Rainer all while bearing the winter weather and carrying up to ninety pounds of gear in their rucksacks. Even when the skiers did get to practice downhill maneuvers, they still carried the heavy packs and rifles. The extra weight caused even some of the best skiers to misjudge their speed and turns, and would many times end up in a snow bank, unable to get up without first taking off the pack.

Operating in winter weather at high altitudes, and carrying a large amount of gear upon their backs, the members of the 87<sup>th</sup>, and later the other members of the 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division worked themselves into some of the best shape of any other U.S. military outfit. This was due in part because many of the officers were unaware that training in thinner air at higher altitudes easily caused exhaustion. However, many of the soldiers were already used to the cold weather and thin air, so higher ranked troops pushed their soldiers to the limit. One Captain overheard his soldiers complaining of

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<sup>90</sup> Burton, 100.

<sup>91</sup> [“Life in the Mountain Troops,” November 29, 1942], Dole, Charles Minot, WH 1001, Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library

inhumane treatment after a long march around Paradise and strolled into the tent, placed his new rucksack on the ground and asked a soldier to try it out. After barely being able to get the pack on his shoulders, the Corporal asked him what he had packed, and the Captain replied, “Oh, that, I always put in a few rocks so as to keep fit for combat loads.”<sup>92</sup> Whether the troops thought the training fair or not, for the next two years, members of the 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division faced some of the toughest training in the U.S. military.

When the lease at Paradise Lodge expired, the U.S. army began looking for other places to house the expected growth of the mountain troops. The lodgings at Mount Rainer could not support a full regiment of 1,000 men, let alone the three regiments needed to make up a full Division. Meanwhile, before the mountain troops left Mount Rainer, a group of them decided to make a push for the summit. Men in love with the mountains had been sitting under the shadow of Rainer all winter with the peak “almost straight overhead, a detached mass of ice, rock and swirling snow, floating in the sky, inaccessible, threatening, beckoning.” The men of this twelve day expedition sought to test their equipment and food in more extreme conditions than the 5,000 foot base at Paradise. True to form, John Jay acted as the photographer for the expedition as the group pushed for the summit. The troops quickly realized that using the cooking stoves inside the tent produced carbon monoxide. Soon after, a snowstorm hit, and between three different types of tents, only the Everest type tent was left standing.<sup>93</sup> Within only a couple days, the group made two important discoveries in winter survival. Without any serious problems, and under blue skies, the men reached the summit, and although

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<sup>92</sup> Bradley, p. 11.

<sup>93</sup> Bradley, p. 16

disappointed they couldn't ski down the whole way, still enjoyed a 7,000 foot decent back to Paradise. Overall, the expedition had tested close to 30 different types of ski and mountaineering equipment, learned how to cook and provide shelter in tough winter conditions, and conquered a peak which had been taunting them the entire time at Fort Lewis.

### **Camp Hale and the Completion of the 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division**

After considering three different options, an area located in the Pando Valley near Leadville Colorado was chosen to house the incoming members of the 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division. The land did not need to be purchased because it rested on national forest land, while highways coming from Denver, and a railway directly through the valley provided fairly easy accessibility. Construction began in April of 1942, and after six months of building and over 30 million dollars spent, Camp Hale partially opened after being dedicated to General Irving Hale, a Colorado hero of the Spanish-American War.<sup>94</sup>

Colonel Rolfe arrived in Camp Hale with members of the 87<sup>th</sup> in November of 1942. Underneath the freshly fallen snow lay a dangerous number tools, pieces of glass, and debris left from a hasty construction. In addition, within a few hours of being at Camp Hale, one truck after another became stuck in the wet surface caused by melting snow. Soldiers quickly renamed the base "Camp Hell,"<sup>95</sup> a name which would prove extremely accurate for many of the troops to pass through.

After the arrival of the 87<sup>th</sup> from Fort Lewis, the Army once again called on Minnie Dole to help in the recruitment to troops to fill the 14,000 beds at Camp Hale.

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<sup>94</sup> Jack A. Benson, "Skiing at Camp Hale: Mountain Troops During World War II," *The Western Historical Quarterly*, 15(2) (1984): 165.

<sup>95</sup> John Jay, *Skiing Down the Years*, (New York: Crown Publishers, 1966), p. 175-177.

The army asked Dole to recruit 2,500 men to fill out the ranks of the 87<sup>th</sup>. Dole sought out men who possessed previous skiing or mountaineering experience. Using the National Ski Patrol, and recruiting with films of *Paradise* made by John Jay, Dole managed to recruit almost 3,500 men before the deadline.<sup>96</sup> Jay's films shot at both Mount Rainer and Camp Hale sold the mountain troops. His film *Ski Patrol* showed the "Ski Troops" as disciplined and specialized troops marching through untouched snow on crystal clear days. Jay captured some of the best skiers on film in their white camouflage parkas and ski pants steaming down the mountain with ease, unencumbered by heavy sacks or rifles.<sup>97</sup> The film toured around the country playing to an estimated 7500 viewers at outdoor clubs and community centers. Even with extensive recruiting by Dole, Jay, the National Ski Patrol, and others, not enough skiers of the right age or ability existed to fill the 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division. Minnie Dole soon opened up applications to "outdoorsmen, cowboys, woodsmen-anyone capable to spending a night in the winter woods without dying of exposure or fright-was welcome."<sup>98</sup>

Through this whole recruiting process, Dole strove to confirm that each civilian sent to the 10<sup>th</sup> possessed the skills necessary to succeed at Camp Hale. Dole required each recruit to submit three letters or recommendation from family, friends, or colleagues attesting to their skiing, mountaineering or outdoor ability. A letter from John Jay to Dole on July 17, 1942 shows how the two corresponded in order to find some of the most suitable candidates: "Thanks for your letter regarding Dick. I too have had him in mind

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<sup>96</sup> Besser, p. 47.

<sup>97</sup> Shelton, p. 53

<sup>98</sup> Burton, p. 95.



very strongly for this outfit.”<sup>99</sup> A letter from a skier’s wife from Portsmouth, New Hampshire read:

“He is an excellent skier and has the stamina to be one. He has always been a natural athlete and has never had to strive to be good at any sport. He just plain IS. I am not trying to get rid of my husband, but I do feel that my temporary loss will be your great gain.”<sup>100</sup>

Letters such as this one poured in from all over the country. Cowboys and ranchers growing up high altitudes sent letters concerning their ability to survive harsh weather at high altitudes. Others seemed to desperately want to find their way into the mountain troops. Wrote Private R.J. Estee: “I *know* I could be an excellent skier. All I ask is just one short chance.”<sup>101</sup>

Fred Neuberger remembers coming out of a movie theater around the age of sixteen and seeing lines at the enlistment office after the attack on Pearl Harbor. While wanting desperately to enlist, his father would not allow it till his 18<sup>th</sup> birthday. Unable to enter the war, Fred focused on skiing through the Mount Greylock Ski Club in Massachusetts. By the time his 18<sup>th</sup> birthday rolled around two years later, Fred jumped on the opportunity of join the ski troops. Fred provided three letters, all from the Mount Greylock Ski Club and arrived at his physical, only to realize the poor sight in his right eye would keep him out of the war. Seeing Camp Hale quickly fading, Fred convinced the doctor into marking down false information, sending the young, eager 18 year old into the 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division.<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> [Letter from John Jay, July 17, 1942], Dole, Charles Minot, WH 1001, Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library.

<sup>100</sup> Shelton, p. 47.

<sup>101</sup> Burton, p. 96.

<sup>102</sup> Fred Neuberger, interview by David M. Leach, 30 November 2004, Middlebury, VT.

At full force, the 10<sup>th</sup> consisted of roughly 300 experienced skiers and mountaineers, many of who started with the 87<sup>th</sup> at Fort Lewis, and 6,000 younger skiers such as Fred Neuberger who were primarily volunteers. To fill the rest of the Division 3,000 draftees arrived from other parts of the country that were to be taught how to ski, and “3,000 nonskiing personnel such as administrators, medics, mule skimmers, horse wranglers, and artillery specialists” made up the rest.<sup>103</sup> Troops drafted into the mountain troops came from the 10<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Reconnaissance Troop in South Dakota and the 31<sup>st</sup> Dixie Division from Leesville, Louisiana. While those from the 10<sup>th</sup> Cavalry consisted largely outdoorsmen and cowboys, the soldiers from Louisiana came from “one of the hottest, flattest, and lowest spots in the United States.”<sup>104</sup> However, upon their arrival in the Rockies, all of these troops were placed into the 85<sup>th</sup>, 86<sup>th</sup>, or 87<sup>th</sup> Regiment of the 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division. While Colonel Rolge attempted to adjust these soldiers to skiing and the snow, most of them despised being at Camp Hale. The Colonel issued them, starting January 2, 1943 to begin forty half-days of ski instruction. Southern soldiers began to refer to their skis as “Mah to-chuah (torture) boards.”<sup>105</sup>

Most of these troops had never spent any time outdoors in cold weather, let alone at the 9,000 feet above sea level. Both enlisted men and officers did not know how to handle altitude, and pushed men straight into grueling training exercises who had only been at the camp for a day with no time to adjust. In addition, many soldiers developed a deep rasping cough soon dubbed the “pando hack.” More than 500 smokestacks released smoke that settled into Camp Hale which located in a deep valley, remained protected

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<sup>103</sup> Georgianna Contiguglia, “Searching for the Perfect Ski Gear: Equipment Development for the Tenth Mountain Division,” *Colorado Heritage*, (fall, 1992), p. 3.

<sup>104</sup> Benson, 166.

<sup>105</sup> Burton, p. 124.

from the wind. In addition, freight trains passed though a couple times a day, struggling to make it up one of the steepest gradients in the country constantly releasing smoke onto the military base below. On recruit described the environment at Camp Hale, “This morning, on my way up here to the Orderly Room, I could just make out the outline of the 8<sup>th</sup> barracks building 50 feet away, and every breath I took just reeked of the smoke.”<sup>106</sup> While the conditions at Camp Hale remained less than preferable, and borderline inhumane to those unaccustomed to the altitude, officers and soldiers alike still worked to develop an elite group of mountain troops.

Every member of the mountain troops participated in ski training. Expert skiers, southerners who had never seen snow and even the officers braved the slopes on Cooper Hill where the world’s longest t-bar of the time had been built to provide easy access to the top of the hill. One of the extraordinary aspects of training with the mountain troops was that the higher ranking officers did not know how to teach skiing. In fact, many of the officers let lower ranking soldiers teach the skiing lessons. At times, no one seemed to know who possessed the ultimate authority while skiing, and officers became frustrated trying to learn the new sport. Some officers refused to take instructions from men of lesser ranks, even though they might have been some of the best skiers in the United States. One colonel told Larry Jump, “to teach only turns to the right because of an old injury the colonel had suffered to his left leg.”<sup>107</sup>

### **The Homestake Lake Experiment**

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<sup>106</sup> Burton, p. 123.

<sup>107</sup> Benson, p. 166.

The first major maneuver performed by the troops at Camp Hale consisted of establishing a defense position at Homestake Lake located 11,300 feet above sea level. In addition, many questions about proper equipment remained unanswered from the previous winter at Fort Lewis. Soldiers not only needed food and shelter, but large equipment such as artillery needed to be moved, while high ranking officers wondered how tactical maneuvers of attacking and defending would change in the mountains. In February of 1943 a full battalion consisting of a thousand soldiers began their long march up to Homestake Lake in the beginning of what the army described as a “miserable failure.”<sup>108</sup>

Problems began immediately. As mentioned earlier, soldiers who had only just arrived at Camp Hale were already being pushed into even thinner air, while instructors had failed to train their troops to use climbing skins, or ski wax in order to traverse up the mountain.<sup>109</sup> In the early training, much of the focus had been on cross country and downhill skiing. Officers asked soldiers with barely any experience in the mountains to haul ninety pounds on their backs while making a futile attempt to stay in formation.

Once the troops reached the Lake and set up their tents, things grew worse. Temperatures ranged from right around 0 degrees Fahrenheit in the day time to 30 of 40 below at night. Even though tests on the climb to the summit of Mount Rainer proved that the pyramid tents failed to operate well in harsh conditions, the army still provided the mountain troops with them. Experienced outdoorsmen didn’t even waste their time with the tents and dug snow caves. They only used the tents to cover the entrances to

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<sup>108</sup> Training for Mountain..., p. 11.

<sup>109</sup> Burton, p. 188.

these caves. Overall 260 men, or almost a third of the original battalion had to be sent down to Camp Hale for frostbite, altitude sickness, or simple exhaustion.<sup>110</sup>

One military experiment performed at Homestake Lake included the purposeful triggering of an avalanche using artillery. “In World War I, a third of all combat deaths in the Italian Alps were caused by avalanches.”<sup>111</sup> However, it’s not believed that any of these were set off on purpose. Troops gathered on the far end of the lake, away from the steep slope where the artillery fired their guns. Tons of snow plunged down into the lake and “a wafer of ice, six feet thick, was pushed right up on shore to within a few feet of the brass. We infantry thought this was the greatest show.”<sup>112</sup> At ski areas all around the country today, avalanches are purposely set off for the opposite reason: they want to insure the safety of their skiers.

Members of the U.S. military who witnessed the maneuvers at Homestake Lake published a report pointing out all the shortcomings of the 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division at that point in time. Out of 11 points published, only one applauded the actions of the Division: “Artillery firing conducted under difficult conditions was excellent.” The rest of the reported pointed to the lack of training in equipment and cold weather conditions provided to the troops, low morale, overloaded men, and the wasting of knowledge which could have been provided by, “experienced woodsmen, mountaineers, guides, and trappers in the enlisted and lower commissioned grades.”<sup>113</sup> The first large scale tactical maneuvers performed by members of the 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division failed to prove anything except that the formation of the ski troops might have been a mistake.

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<sup>110</sup> Shelton, p. 60-61.

<sup>111</sup> Shelton, p. 62.

<sup>112</sup> Shelton, p. 63.

<sup>113</sup> Training for Mountain..., p. 11.

## **The Love for Camp Hale**

However, on the other side of the spectrum remained the expert skiers and mountaineers as well as the younger soldiers who gave their three letters of recommendation to Minnie Dole. Most of these skiers absolutely loved being part of the mountain troops and living at Camp Hale. Younger troops such as Fred Neuberger and Budd Winters “devoured every minute” spent in the presence of ski legends.<sup>114</sup> Budd Winters’ letters home never seemed to show any letdown of emotion. He constantly wrote home about scoring the same on a test as Freidl Pfeifer, or how “Toni Matt and Herb Schneider have just joined our troop. What a ski team!”<sup>115</sup> Those troops who possessed a passion for skiing and the outdoors not only survived at Camp Hale, but remember it mostly as a “fun time.”<sup>116</sup>

The older, more experienced troops possessed the same love for Camp Hale. Bob Parker remembers how those who entered Camp Hale in decent shape, and who had previous experience skiing and surviving outdoors had no problems. The extent of Bob Parker’s misery through his stay at Hale was that, “I might have had a couple of colds.”<sup>117</sup> Other skiers during their twelve day stay at Homestake Lake conducted the first unofficial “Upper Camp Hale Winter Olympics,” racing until 9 P.M. in the moonlight.<sup>118</sup> Races such as this were never part of any formal military activity, but recreational skiing done by the soldiers when many of the others tried to figure out how to stay warm in their tents.

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<sup>114</sup> Fred Neuberger, interview by David M. Leach, 30 November 2004, Middlebury, VT.

<sup>115</sup> Shelton, p. 90

<sup>116</sup> Fred Neuberger, interview by David M. Leach, 30 November 2004, Middlebury, VT.

<sup>117</sup> Robert Parker, phone interview by David M. Leach, 9 December 2004, Middlebury, VT.

<sup>118</sup> Shelton, p. 62.

While most soldiers during training spent their weekend passes at the local bars, or heading home to see family and friends, members of the 10<sup>th</sup> spent there weekends skiing. Those lucky enough to get a ride would pile into a car on Friday afternoon for the 3 to 4 hour drive to Aspen. They stayed at the only working hotel in town at the time, the Jerome, and would ski all day Saturday and Sunday, getting back in time for drills on Monday morning. On the backside of Aspen, troops could hitch a ride with mine workers 2,000 feet up the mountain while watching the sun rise. At that point, they strapped on skins, and climbed the last 1,000 feet to the top. As Robert Parker remembers, “This was why each one of us had joined the ski troops, fresh powder snow, and the mountain world all to ourselves.” It was on one of these weekend trips, where Friedl Pfeifer took in the beauty of the area around Aspen, and vowed to come back to see the ski mountain make a comeback.<sup>119</sup>

### **The D-Series**

In March and April of 1944, almost the entire division marched up to Homestake Peak again for what would be known as the D-Series. For three weeks the troops took part in mock combat in weather ranging from 30 above to 30 below zero.<sup>120</sup> The weather cooperated for the first two weeks, and as Bob Parker remembers, “some of us couldn’t get enough of it.” Parker practiced his racing technique during his down time, and caught a tip between two trees and broke an ankle, forcing him down to Camp Hale where he missed the second part of the D-Series when a storm blew in.<sup>121</sup> The Division continued their combat training through the storm in what would be described as some of

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<sup>119</sup> Shelton, p. 103.

<sup>120</sup> Burton, p. 137

<sup>121</sup> Robert Parker, phone interview by David M. Leach, 9 December 2004, Middlebury, VT.

the most severe tactical maneuvers ever done. Even the normally high spirited Fred Neuberger described the D-Series as a “brutal experience.”<sup>122</sup>

The experience of the typical 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain man at Fort Lewis and at Camp Hale prepared him both for battle and for a return to the ski industry after the war. The 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division brought many of the best skiers in the United States together at Camp Hale to train for war, but that training included skiing every day and pushing each other to get better. In addition, the army paid for free ski instruction for young skiers eager to learn from some of the best instructors around. A rift existed in the 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division between skiers and non-skiers. Most of the non-skiers never warmed up to the cold weather or the snow, but those who were excited about skiing and about the mountains enjoyed almost every moment at Camp Hale.

In addition, these skiers experienced the unspoiled Rocky Mountains. Skiers such as Freidl Pfeifer, John Litchfield and Larry Jump fell in love with the area surrounding Camp Hale. These men had never experienced the Rocky Mountains since the growth of the ski industry in Colorado during the 1930s lagged behind that of Vermont and Sun Valley. The time spent at Camp Hale allowed for these men to capitalize on the growing Colorado ski industry after the war with first hand experience of skiing on the Mountains around Camp Hale.

### **The War in Italy**

Not until December of 1944 did the 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division, with a newly adorned “mountain patch,” board a ship to the front in Italy. They arrived in Italy as the last U.S. Division to enter the war in Europe; however, they played a crucial role

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<sup>122</sup> Fred Neuberger, interview by David M. Leach, 30 November 2004, Middlebury, VT.



completing the allied march up the boot helping to end the war. The Allied invasion of Italy began in September of 1943. Making slow progress up the boot, Allied troops took Rome two days before the launch of D-Day on Normandy beaches. Italy soon became the “forgotten front,” but Germany still retained strongly defended positions across their Gothic Line, stretching across the Northern Apennine Mountains from Pisa to Florence.<sup>123</sup> Between September and October of 1944, U.S. forces lost 15,000 soldiers while attacking the German Gothic line, and became stalled at the base of Mount Belvedere along the German “Winter Line.”<sup>124</sup> Three times during late November, the Fifth Army was turned back in an attempt to take the German high ground positions atop Mount Belvedere. The Allied Forces needed to break through the fortified German lines in order to reach the Po Valley, which opened up to the Northern part of Italy, and the rest of the Allied Forces in Europe.

The 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division arrived in Naples in early January 1945 and immediately took up position at the base of Mount Belvedere. General George Hays, assigned to lead the 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division shortly before their departure to Europe, was informed in the beginning of January that his mountain troops were to lead the assault on Mount Belvedere and then proceed in stages to the Po Valley. When asked who was going to share the bullets, Lieutenant General Tuscott Jr. replied, “No one.”<sup>125</sup> Less than a month into the war, the 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division had been charged with an assignment that had failed three previous times before.

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<sup>123</sup> John Imbrie, *Chronology of the 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division in World War II*, (National Association of the 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division, Inc., June 2004), p. 9.

<sup>124</sup> Imbrie, p. 11.

<sup>125</sup> Imbrie, p. 13.

With the weather in Northern Italy warming up in the beginning of February, the snow up in the mountains had already begun to melt. The romanticized “ski troops” bolting down a mountain with a rifle in hand would not be the case for any of the 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain men in Europe. In fact, only a few soldiers even saw a pair of skis during there time on the front lines. However, in one of the first reconnaissance assignments of the 86<sup>th</sup> regiment, Lt. Traynor selected four expert skiers to accompany him on a mission to scout German installations. Dressed all in white, the patrol climbed a ridge up to 2000 feet and observed and recorded German Observation Posts. The patrol came back across Ally lines, and reported that “a reinforced company could be moved through the territory, only if they were expert mountaineers and properly equipped.”<sup>126</sup>

Patrols such as this one provided valuable information for the men of the 86<sup>th</sup> Regiment. General Hays realized that the German occupation of an unusually steep ridge located to the west of Mount Belvedere had been the problem of the previous failed attacks. Atop this ridge, Germans could not only see troops attacking Belvedere, but could also hit them with artillery fire.<sup>127</sup> This steep, seemingly insurmountable mountain became known as Riva Ridge. Patrols, such as the one mentioned earlier scouted out German positions on top of Riva Ridge, and eventually set up four different routes up the face. Pete Seibert described the process: “For more than a week we scouted Riva Ridge, rock by rock. We established where the Germans had dug in on tope, and we found routes that allowed us to move men and weapons up to attack and occupy the ridge in one night. The climbs ranged from fifteen hundred to twenty-two hundred feet-no Sunday

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<sup>126</sup> Charles Wellborn, *History of the 86<sup>th</sup> Mountain Infantry in Italy*, (86<sup>th</sup> Headquarters Company, 1945), p. 4-5.

<sup>127</sup> Shelton, p. 125.

afternoon excursions, I can tell you.”<sup>128</sup> By the middle of February each route had been set up with green nylon ropes nailed into place so as Germans looking down from the top were unable to see them.<sup>129</sup>

It must be noted however, that these routes up Riva Ridge were not extremely technical. A notable mountaineer of the 86<sup>th</sup> compared Riva Ridge to the steep, challenging, rocky slopes at Mad River Glenn in Vermont saying the ski area would have “built a racing trail down them.” Attempted under normal conditions, Riva Ridge could have been ascended by a moderate climber without the help of a rope.<sup>130</sup> However, troops of the 86<sup>th</sup> were ordered to climb Riva Ridge in the middle of the night, carrying rifles, mortars, and full field packs, directly under the noses of German posts above them. Even German Mountain troops located at the top of Riva Ridge never expected a night climb to the top by American forces even though the Germans knew of the arrival of the 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division. From a loudspeaker on top of Riva Ridge a German voice called out, “Welcome, men of the 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division.”<sup>131</sup> Other propaganda leaflets were dropped. One such read, “It was a long way from Camp Hale and Abetone! You will find out that it will be even longer to get back, if you even do get back.”<sup>132</sup> German troops were aware that new mountain troops had arrived from Camp Hale Colorado, yet they did not expect any type of attack on Riva Ridge.

On the night of February 17, members of the 86<sup>th</sup> hiked fourteen miles from their training area to a small village at the base of Riva Ridge. Throughout the next day the

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<sup>128</sup> Peter W. Seibert, *Vail: Triumph of a Dream*, (Boulder, Colorado: Mountain Sports Press, 2000), p. 47-49.

<sup>129</sup> Burton, p. 153.

<sup>130</sup> Burton, p. 154.

<sup>131</sup> Shelton, p. 123.

<sup>132</sup> Philip A. Lunday and Charles M. Hampton, *The Tramway Builders: a Brief History of Company D*, <http://www.10thmntdivassoc.org/chronology.html>, p. 53.

troops remained hidden in farms and houses as to not draw attention to German observation posts. The orders were clear: “seize and hold the Mt. Mancinello-Pizzo di Campiano Ridge (Riva Ridge) prior to daylight February 19, 1945.”<sup>133</sup> As the men crept toward the base of the daunting 1,500 foot slope in front of them, Major John Hay thought to himself, “A dozen men, each with a handful of rocks, could have defended those positions.”<sup>134</sup> Luckily, a fog rolled in, blanketing the climbing soldiers as they slowly made their way to the top. It took nine hours for the troops to reach the top of Riva Ridge, and at 5 in the morning, the soldiers began to dig in preparing for the coming attacks. Many of the troops felt like someone had been watching over them, and even General Hays commented on the luck of the 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division. When the fog finally lifted, American troops took the Germans completely by surprise. For the next couple days the 10th Mountain troops repelled a number of counter attacks, secured Riva Ridge, and allowed the 87<sup>th</sup> and 85<sup>th</sup> Regiments to begin their attack on Mount Belvedere. In the end, 17 American troops had died; a little over 50 were wounded, while over a hundred German troops were captured and the rest fled.<sup>135</sup>

One of the biggest challenges facing the planners of the assault on Riva Ridge was the question of how to provide food and equipment to the men on top of the 1,500 foot face, and also how to evacuate the wounded. To bring a wounded soldier safely down the face of Riva Ridge took over six hours to accomplish. 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain engineers came from Camp Hale with an aerial tramway they had practiced using in Colorado. This tramway reduced the time of evacuation to four minutes, and on the way back up

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<sup>133</sup> Wellborn, 9.

<sup>134</sup> Shelton, 133.

<sup>135</sup> Shelton, 141.

could provide needed food and supplies to the troops.<sup>136</sup> NBC's Battlefront Correspondent reported, "The courage and skill of the men that built that queer little lift have helped the Allies take and hold a very important, strategic position... Yes thank God for the Engineers." On the first day of use, the tramway successfully evacuated 30 wounded soldiers and sent back up five tons of supplies.<sup>137</sup>

By February 25<sup>th</sup>, the 85<sup>th</sup> and 87<sup>th</sup> had taken Mount Belvedere, Mount Gorgolesco, and Mount della Torraccia. The 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division had broken through the initial forces on the German Gothic Line, and the push to the Po Valley began. However, from this point out, the 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division was no different from a regular infantry division. The fighting occurred on hilly terrain for the next couple months as the soldier moved extremely quickly, pushing back the diminishing German forces. This in no way diminishes the accomplishments of the 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division. They were the sole reason for an Allied victory in Italy, breaking through the German Gothic line, and pushing through to the Po Valley. The men had fought bravely, and not without consequences. At the time of Germany's surrender on May 2, 1945, the 10<sup>th</sup> suffered 4866 casualties-975 killed, 3871 wounded, and 20 taken prisoner. Regardless of whether they fought on skies, mountains, or rock faces, the 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division proved themselves as an exemplary military division.

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<sup>136</sup> Lunday, Hampton, 59.

<sup>137</sup> Lunday, Hampton, 61.

### Chapter 3: The Formation of the Modern Ski Industry

A skier wrote in the winter of 1942-43 that, “When the war is over, youngsters will come streaming back, keened up for the sport far beyond anything we have ever seen in the past.”<sup>138</sup> While this prediction would prove true, not only youngsters took to the slopes after the war, but changes leisure and economic patters in the United States

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<sup>138</sup> Fred. H. McNeil, “Skiing and the War,” *American Skiing Annual*, (1942-43), p. 99-101.

allowed entire families to hop in the car for a weekend trip to the mountains. New technology provided for faster transportation up the mountain and better snow quality while new skis and bindings provided a safer and faster learning curve for beginners. New skiing fashion encouraged women to try their luck on the slopes, while a booming number of ski schools provided instruction for children of all ages. The changing economic, leisure, and technological patterns of the post World War II era allowed for 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain veterans to help popularize and capitalize on the growth of recreational skiing after 1945 especially in Colorado.

### **The Post-war Economy**

The war had ended, and the growth of the post war economy allowed for citizens to relax for the first time since the early 1940s. The increased level of affluence changed the leisure, consumption, and travel patterns of middle class America. By 1950, Americans spent 34% of their lives involved in leisure activities.<sup>139</sup> With Americans devoting less time to work and more time to leisure, the number of cars in America shot up drastically. Cars provided middle class Americans with the power of consumption, as well as the individual freedom to travel. During the 1950s Americans bought 58 million new cars as “automobile ownership became a badge of middle-class status” while “the annual two-week vacation became a requirement of the middle-class.”<sup>140</sup>

In both Colorado and Vermont increased leisure time, money, and available transportation brought more and more skiers to the mountains. In a two years span

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<sup>139</sup> Marion Clawson and Jack L. Knetsch, *Economics of Outdoor Recreation*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1966), p. 20.

<sup>140</sup> Anne Gilbert Coleman, “Culture, Landscape, and the Making of the Colorado Ski Industry,” (P.h.D. diss., University of Colorado, 1996), p. 183, and Rothman, *Devil’s Bargains*, p. 203.

between 1945 and 1947 the number of visits to Colorado National Parks increased three fold from 40,340 to 149,460 as cars became popular and roads became more reliable.<sup>141</sup> In Vermont, rail access provided transportation to only a few major areas, but a large network of roads allowed individual cars access to a wide array of different ski areas. Vermont assured tourists in the late 1940s that, “all major ski areas in Vermont are located on State Highways, which are kept well plowed and sanded throughout the winter months.”<sup>142</sup> As seen with the failure of an Aspen ski area, and the success of Sun Valley, Winter Park, and Stowe, ski areas needed a reliable transportation network in order to succeed. Directly following the war, Aspen and Arapahoe Basin became the first areas to benefit from the growth of increased affluence, leisure time, and automobile travel. 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain veterans helped to establish both these resorts in Colorado after the war.

### **The Rebirth of Aspen**

During a reconnaissance mission from Camp Hale, Friedl Pfeiffer marched with other members of the Third Platoon the 20 miles through the snow to Aspen. Upon arriving, he felt as if he had returned to his hometown of St. Anton in Germany. Traveling back to Aspen on a weekend trip, Pfeiffer and Percy Rideout hiked up Ajax Mountain while the two of them talked about where possible ski trails could be cut. Soon after, Pfeiffer attended a town meeting promising that after the war he would return to Aspen with the intention of recreating a community resort like his hometown in

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<sup>141</sup> Coleman, p. 183.

<sup>142</sup> Blake Harrison. “Tracks Across Vermont: *Vermont Life* and the Landscape of Downhill Skiing, 1946-1970,” *Journal of Sport History*, Vol. 28, No. 2, Summer 2001, p. 255.



Austria.<sup>143</sup> Keeping good on his promise, Pfeifer, along with fellow 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain veterans Percy Rideout and John Litchfield returned to Aspen after their tours of duty in Italy in order to pick up where Billy Fiske and Thomas Flynn had failed.

Pfeifer wasted no time getting himself back to Aspen. After losing some of his left lung from shrapnel during fighting in Italy, he moved to Aspen in October of 1945, only five months after Hitler's surrender in May. Quickly joining Friedl in Aspen, Percy Rideout and John Litchfield served as co-directors of the blossoming ski school. While the mountain did not officially open until January of 1947, by November of 1945 a small system of trails had been cut and the mountain possessed two forms up uphill transportation. Ajax Mountain unofficially opened in December of 1945 without a single paying customer, but business soon picked up in February and Friedl had the pleasure of teaching Adlai Stevenson how to ski.<sup>144</sup>

Post war Aspen provided a haven for members of the 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division after the war. Men who had fallen in love with the Rockies at Camp Hale looked for nothing more than a place to ski and a job to pay the bills. While Friedl, Percy and John ran the ski school others such as Carl Stingel, Pete Seibert, Dick Wright, and Fritz Benedict joined the ranks of 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Veterans at Aspen. The first winter in Aspen produced no profits or national acclaim as war weary army veterans enjoyed the deep snow and great terrain. Many winter mornings, with no paying customers to teach, ski school instructors took to the empty slopes of Aspen themselves. Klaus Obermeyer recalled "We were all in it together to make a go of Aspen as a ski town...Everybody knew

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<sup>143</sup> Friedl Pfeifer and Morten Lund, *Nice Goin': My Life on Skis*, (Missoula, MT: Pictorial Histories Pub., 1993), p. 111-113.

<sup>144</sup> Pfeifer, p. 130-133.

everybody. We all gathered at the Hotel Jerome at the end of each day.”<sup>145</sup> A small community of 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Veterans, locals from Aspen, and immigrants from Europe existed during the first winter of Aspen brought together not by a drive for wealth, but by a love of skiing.

Three younger Veterans of the 10<sup>th</sup> arrived in the first winter of Aspen. Steve Knowlton in December of 1945, Dev Jennings in January and Bud Phillips in February of 1946. Friedl used his spare time to train these three athletes. Both Steve and Dev would go on to compete in the 1948 Winter Olympics while Bud Phillips would travel back to Vermont in order to run the Mad River Glenn Ski School.<sup>146</sup> However, no one embodied the spirit of Aspen’s first winter quite like Steve Knowlton. In the summer he cut trails on the mountain, and in the winter worked only enough to support himself while training for the Olympics. In fact, Friedl claimed that Steve “Wrote the job description on how to be a successful ski bum.”<sup>147</sup> The Magnifico Ski Shop gave Knowlton free room and board as long as he helped out around the store, doing things like cleaning out the coal stove and sweeping the floors. Most days he woke early to hitch a ride with the few miners left in town halfway up the mountain where he hiked the rest of the way and skied down. “That first season I saw what I wanted in life,” recalled Knowlton, “Aspen and skiing.”<sup>148</sup> However, Friedl, Aspen locals, and investors saw the possibility of turning Aspen into a destination resort in order to revive the old mining town and make a profit.

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<sup>145</sup> “The Winter of ’46: Members of the original Aspen Ski School reminisce about the early years,” Aspen Historical Society. Immigrating to the United States from Bavaria in 1947, Klaus Obermeyer settled in Aspen and revolutionized the ski industry when he created the first down parka. Today Obermeyer is still a leader in performance ski apparel.

<sup>146</sup> “The Historic, Improbable Early Aspen Ski School,” The Aspen Historical Society.

<sup>147</sup> Pfeifer, p. 133.

<sup>148</sup> Verna Noel Jones, “Downhill in Colorado: From boat tows to high-speed lifts,” *Rocky Mountain News*, Nov. 18 1988.

Pfeifer envisioned Aspen as a skiing resort that would rival the likes of his former home in St. Anton. At the local town meeting Pfeifer attended during his time at Camp Hale he explained, “I want to start a ski school here, and I’ll give the local children free lessons so that we can develop a real skiing community. People will be interested in expanding commercial possibilities, and we’ll get enough money to build more adequate towns and lifts.”<sup>149</sup> However, neither Pfeifer nor other 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain veterans living in Aspen possessed the funds to develop a ski resort. As Hal Rothman explains in *Devil’s Bargains*, the risk involved with building a ski resort frightened away many potential entrepreneurs. In order to run a successful ski resort, one needed to obtain leases to state land, fund trail cutting and lift maintenance, provide adequate lodging, services and transportation, and then hope that the weather cooperates and delivers snow.<sup>150</sup> However, in the late 1940s a wealthy Midwestern entrepreneur set his sights on developing Aspen into a year round resort. Before the outbreak of World War II Sun Valley represented the only destination ski resort in the country, but by 1947 Minnie Dole claimed that skiers prefer both the atmosphere and the skiing at Aspen rather than Sun Valley.<sup>151</sup>

Walter Paepcke of Chicago, head of the Container Corporation of America and a non skier envisioned Aspen as a place where the nations’ leaders could be “intellectually, physically, and spiritually revitalized.”<sup>152</sup> Early as the spring of 1945 Paepcke spent time in Aspen inquiring about whether the *Rocky Mountain Winter Sports News* would provide information about new facilities for skiing and winter sports, and looked into buying

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<sup>149</sup> James Sloan Allen, *The Romance of Commerce and Culture: Capitalism, modernism, and the Chicago-Aspen Crusade for Cultural Reform*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1983), p. 125.

<sup>150</sup> Rothman, *Devil’s Bargains*, p. 205.

<sup>151</sup> [Letter from Dole to ASC, Feb. 26 1947] Dole, Charles Minot, WH 1001, Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library.

<sup>152</sup> Richard Needham, *Ski: Fifty Years in North America*, (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1987), p. 47.

property.<sup>153</sup> Unlike the 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain veterans, Paepcke did not hold an interest in skiing, but as a true entrepreneur saw the opportunity to change an old and almost deserted mining town into a cultural center for the country's elites. Rothman claimed that Paepcke did not intend to promote Aspen to a growing middle class, but as a place "where outsiders came in, ran the community as they saw fit, and enjoyed their secluded lives there as docile locals worked service positions."<sup>154</sup> Paepcke's vision involved skiing as merely a recreational activity needed to make Aspen a year round destination, and not the main attraction that would put the small town on the map.

By developing the Aspen Skiing Corporation (ASC) with fellow 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain veterans and a few outside investors, Pfeifer attempted to take control of Aspen's development in to a ski resort. However, unable to obtain the necessary financial backing, Pfeifer gave up control of the ASC to Paepcke in exchange for 25,000 shares of stock and rights to run the ski school.<sup>155</sup> With the investors and the finances available to turn Aspen into a destination resort, work began on installing a modern form of uphill transportation needed to attract skiers. With the success of chairlifts in both Sun Valley and Stowe in the pre-war years, the ASC began work on obtaining a lift that would both attract skiers and allow them to access higher terrain.

As early as the spring of 1946 Pfeifer contacted the American Steel and Wire Company to build a chairlift for Aspen. In a May 16<sup>th</sup> letter, the American Steel and Wire Company confirmed an increase in both the length and number of chairs on the lift

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<sup>153</sup> James Sloan Allen, p. 126.

<sup>154</sup> Rothman, *Devil's Bargains*, p. 208.

<sup>155</sup> Anne Gilbert Coleman, "Culture, Landscape, and the Making of the Colorado Ski Industry," (P.h.D. diss., University of Colorado, 1996), p. 185.

and stated that the lift would be operational for the start of the 1946-47 ski season.<sup>156</sup> The final single lift completed covered 3,225 vertical feet and took about a half an hour from bottom to top making it the longest chairlift in the world at the time.<sup>157</sup> A half way station existed for skiers without the ability to handle the steeper terrain at the summit. *The New York Times* reported that only a year old, the Aspen chairlift was rapidly becoming a tourist attraction, and that over 10,000 skiers and sightseers took rides to the top of Ajax Mountain. The article concluded by mentioning that most predicted the mountain would not make any money “because Aspen is not the easiest ski resort to reach,” but the receipts reported earnings of \$35,000.<sup>158</sup>

While Paepcke still attempted after the initial success of the winter season to create the “Athens of the Rockies,” the growth and popularity of the ski resort could not be denied, and investors realized that winter activity held the real economic future of the resort.<sup>159</sup> In a report on the situation in Aspen before the 1946-47 season, Percy Rideout had been about to leave in order to tour major American cities while using a promotional video shot the previous winter entitled “Why Aspen.” Promotion such as this and Paepcke’s use of newspapers and upper class connections created an environment meant to draw tourists from all over the country.<sup>160</sup> The wealthy clientele that Paepcke marketed Aspen to could easily afford the high transportation costs necessary to travel to Aspen, and could excuse the long travel hours by staying for longer vacations. The increased growth and reliability of automobiles and highway conditions allowed easier

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<sup>156</sup> “Letter from the American Steel and Wire Corporation to Friedl Pfeifer,” May 16, 1946, The Aspen Historical Society.

<sup>157</sup> “Memorandum from Friedl Pfeifer,” October 15, 1946, Aspen Historical Society.

<sup>158</sup> Aspen’s Chair Lift: Build for Skiers in Rockies, It Serves Everybody and Operates All Year,” *The New York Times*, Dec. 21, 1947.

<sup>159</sup> Rothman, *Devil’s Bargains*, p. 212-213.

<sup>160</sup> “Memorandum...,” Aspen Historical Society, p. 1.

access from Denver as wealthier Denver residents made the long drive to Aspen for a weekend. In addition, Aspen Airways Air Taxi was founded in 1953 and catered their service almost exclusively to skiers.<sup>161</sup>

Like Harriman at Sun Valley, Paepcke used his wealth and connections to put Aspen on the map. Aspen failed earlier in the decade because of a lack of transportation to the mountain as well as a lack of necessary finances. The new chairlift at Aspen created a tourist attraction that Paepcke catered to wealthy upper class travelers with the necessary means to both get to the ski resort and stay more than a weekend. By 1950, Aspen played host to the World Ski Championships bringing the best skiers from all over the world to admire Aspen's transformation. 10<sup>th</sup> Veterans such as Pfeifer, Litchfield, and Rideout brought a sense of community to Aspen, while the vision and finances of Paepcke transformed Aspen into a booming destination resort within a few years of World War II. Aspen would pave the way for the growth of the modern ski industry in Colorado.

### **Arapahoe Basin**

Working to produce a ski survey for the Denver Chamber of Commerce in 1946, Larry Jump studied a mountain he would develop into Arapahoe Basin. Coming from the Phillips Exeter Academy boarding school and the Dartmouth ski team, Jump represented the typical well-educated 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division man. After being wounded in the war, Jump returned to the mountains he had fallen in love with at Camp Hale forming Arapahoe Basin, Inc., and acting as the president, general manager, and chairman of the

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<sup>161</sup> R.E.G. Davies and I.E. Quastler, *Commuter Airlines of the United States*, (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1995), p. 34.

board of directors. After meeting Marjorie Brown, an avid skier, early investor, and future wife, the two devoted all their energy to developing the mountain.<sup>162</sup> Unlike the development of Aspen, Jump and those involved with Arapahoe Basin focused on attracting local skiers from the Denver and Boulder. Without the pressure of raising huge amounts of money to pay for attracting tourists from around the country, Jump could focus solely on the skiing experience of the customer. Larry Jump and his vision of Arapahoe Basin represented an Aspen run by Pfeifer without the influence of Paepcke.

Jump possessed a great passion for the mountains in which he trained, those he trained with, spreading the sport, and providing skiers the best possible experience on the mountain. In a December 1946 letter just before Arapahoe Basin's first season, Jump wrote, "We are all deeply in love with what we are doing." Only a couple days prior to that, he had written about his admiration of Arapahoe Basin and the surrounding areas as well as how its accessibility would provide easy access for weekend skiers.<sup>163</sup> As Jump described in an unpublished autobiography, he had, "fallen in love with the people and mountains of Colorado."<sup>164</sup> Keeping in touch with Camp Hale and the 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division, Jump described the open slopes as possessing similar conditions to those on Homestake Peak, and extended, "a hearty invitation for any Camp Hale men to visit us next Sunday." By January of 1952 Jump suspected that most of the 87<sup>th</sup> regiment had visited Arapahoe Basin.<sup>165</sup>

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<sup>162</sup> [Biographical Note], The Laurence (Larry) Jump and Arapahoe Basin Records, WH 1220, Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library.

<sup>163</sup> [Letters, December 12, 5 1946], Jump Records, Denver Public Library.

<sup>164</sup> [Jump Autobiography], Jump Records, Denver Public Library.

<sup>165</sup> [Letter to Camp Hale, Feb. 10, 1948, Letter to Paris January 8, 1952], Jump Records, Denver Public Library. Men of the 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division continued to train at Camp Hale for a couple years after the end of the war.

Beginning with only a single rope tow during Arapahoe Basin's first season, Jump recognized the need for uphill transportation. In order to compete with other ski slopes in the area such as Berthoud and Winter Park, Jump installed a single chair lift for the mountain's second season. By 1950, three or four hundred skiers each Saturday and Sunday would "jam the single lower chair lift with a forty-five minute wait." Car jammed the parking lot forcing many to park on the main highway creating problems for the "over-worked Highway Patrol."<sup>166</sup> Arapahoe Basin catered almost exclusively to middle class skiers within driving distance of the mountain. Because of an increase in leisure time and money, families could easily take weekend trips in their newly bought cars out to mountains such as Arapahoe Basin.

Continuing his search for better lifts, Jump developed a relationship with Jean Pomagalski, a manufacturer of uphill transportation in Europe. Jump purchased Arapahoe Basin's first Pomalift in 1953, around the time in which Arapahoe Basin and Pomalift first started showing profits. Jump soon joined forces with Pomagalski and incorporated Pomalift under Arapahoe Basin, Inc. By 1966 Pomalift had sold over 3000 lifts in the United States.<sup>167</sup> Ski areas used these lifts primarily on flatter slopes which serviced beginner skiers all over the country. The partnership formed by Jump and Pomagalski helped create beginner areas for skiers all over the country. Rather than hiking up and down a small slope, or taking a chairlift or rope tow up to steeper areas, beginners could concentrate on technique in a controlled area.

However, even while expanding his business ventures, Jump remained committed to promoting the growth of skiing and took great pleasure in seeing and hearing about

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<sup>166</sup> [Jump Autobiography]. Jump Records, Denver Public Library.

<sup>167</sup> [Biographical Note, Jump Autobiography], Jump Records, Denver Public Library.



experiences. The mountain instituted the Polar Bear Ski Club, a program designed to bring children from Denver skiing for the day, and competed with the original Eskimo Ski Club of Denver.<sup>168</sup> Using chartered Buses, Arapahoe Basin brought children to the mountain under the instruction of the ski school, and they learned how to get both up and down the mountain. In addition, Jump took great pride in hearing praise for Arapahoe Basin. Letters saved by Jump say things such as, “I ran into Bud Raymond on the street yesterday and he was bubbling over with Arapahoe Basin and what a wonderful job you have done and are doing there,” and “Jody reports glowingly of her weekend in Arapahoe.” Both these comments come from the 1950 season, when, as mentioned earlier, only a single chair existed sometimes with a forty five minute wait.

Meshing with the rise of the wealthy, middle class nuclear family of the 1950s, ski areas provided opportunities for family vacations with increased ski school instruction and beginner services. Poma lifts such as Arapahoe Basin catered to beginners of all ages, while the new lifts serviced expert terrain. A family that consisted of skiers of varying ability levels could all enjoy skiing, while meeting up at the centralized base area for lunch and at the end of the day. With the huge increase in the number of cars, a family could easily leave Denver for a weekend or day trip to Arapahoe Basin.

Developing between 1945 and 1950, the growth and success of Aspen and Arapahoe Basin solidified a ski industry facing dramatic changes before the outbreak of World War II. Aspen followed in the footsteps of Averill Harriman at Sun Valley and created a destination resort while Larry Jump created a weekend destination for weekend

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<sup>168</sup> 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Veteran Frank Bulkley founded the Eskimo Ski Club in 1939 as he brought kids to Winter Park on the ski train every Sunday. After serving in the war, Bulkley returned to run the Eskimo Ski Club and open a ski shop in Winter Park. By 1979 Frank Bulkley and the Eskimo Ski Club had “graduated” 25,000 kids.

skiers from Denver and Boulder. Both mountains used chairlifts able to access higher points on the mountains to lure adventure seekers and at the same time stole business from pre-war local ski hills equipped with only one or two rope tows. In both cases 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain veterans who had fallen in love with the Colorado Rockies returned after the war to help promote the ski industry. Aspen developed into a glamorous destination resort because the financial backing and intention of Arthur Paepcke, while Larry Jump relied on stock holders and many different investors to get Arapahoe Basin running. Both Jump and Pfeifer sought to make a living spreading their love of skiing to Colorado. Their dedication to the sport combined with post war condition in America resulted in a changing ski industry.

By the beginning of the 1950s Aspen and Arapahoe Basin established themselves as two of the major ski resorts in Colorado. While no area could touch the out of state popularity and attractiveness of Aspen, Arapahoe Basin served an expanding population of skiers in the Denver and Boulder areas. The newly installed lifts at these areas attracted skiers to their slopes. Chairlifts and poma lifts replaced rope tows, and the smaller ski hills struggled to keep up. Berthoud Pass built the world's first double chair lift in 1947 competing with Arapahoe Basin, while Winter Park continued to expand with a new lift in 1948.<sup>169</sup> Local community ski hills with a single rope tow and those without any uphill transportation virtually disappeared from the map. Fast lifts, ski schools, and steep runs attracted the middle class skiing family. With the reliability of cars and roads, skiers could travel further to find a better skiing experience, and the ski areas with the newest technology and the best terrain became the most popular.

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<sup>169</sup> Coleman, p. 187.

## Vail

When a mortar shell exploded over Seibert's head in March of 1945, shrapnel exploded through his helmet splitting open his nose and knocking out his teeth, while other fragments almost severed his left arm, destroyed his right knee cap, and broken his femur. Told that he would never ski again, and would be lucky to walk, Seibert returned home to Massachusetts after spending 39 months in the army, 17 of which in a hospital. Seibert knew of the plans for developing Aspen, and decided for himself that, "One way or another, skiing was going to be my life. And I was going to start in Aspen, Colorado. This new American mecca for skiers was about to open in four months, and I couldn't wait."<sup>170</sup>

Keeping good on his promise, Seibert spent four years in Aspen racing as much as possible while working on the mountain to support himself. He even won the famed Roch Cup in 1947 after learning to ski with the injuries sustained in the War. Deciding to pursue his goal of opening his own ski resort, Seibert spent three years in Europe skiing and learning the art of hotel management from the Swiss. Seeking job opportunities back in the U.S., Seibert found himself as the General Manager of Loveland Pass ski area, a relatively small resort popular with families and older skiers because of its flatter terrain, low prices, and close proximity to Denver. Equipped with only a couple "tired rope tows" and an old CCC barracks doubling as a lodge in the mid-1950s, Loveland struggled to keep up with the growth of other areas in the area such as Arapahoe Basin. With ideas and dreams of greater magnitudes, Seibert set out to find and develop a resort along the lines of what he had seen while in Europe.<sup>171</sup>

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<sup>170</sup> Seibert, p. 58-61.

<sup>171</sup> Seibert, p. 81.

In 1956 a Loveland employee suggested a potential ski mountain to Seibert located only 12 miles from Camp Hale. Visiting the mountain and finding excellent skiing terrain for all abilities on the front side and treeless bowls on the rarely seen south side, Seibert and others bought 500 acres on Vail Mountain for 125 dollars an acre.<sup>172</sup> After securing the necessary funds, investors, and Forest Service permits, Vail opened in December of 1962 with a gondola, three chairlifts, and 10 miles of ski trails. Vail opened with the largest and most impressive trail and lift service in the country. Its seven square miles of ski terrain doubled that of Aspen, was seven times the size of Winter Park, and 25 times bigger than Berthoud Pass.<sup>173</sup>

Like at Aspen, Vail attracted many 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain veterans as the resort expanded. William Brown served as mountain manager starting in 1967, Ben Duke presided as President of Vail Associates and was an original investor in the mountain, while Seibert hired Bob Parker as the marketing manager.<sup>174</sup> Parker served as the editor of *Skiing* magazine, started by 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain veteran Dick Wilson, from 1955 to 1962 when he left for Vail.<sup>175</sup> Through connections with the media and the ski world, Parker helped with the early success of Vail mountain which had 55,000 visits its first year.<sup>176</sup> Parker and Vail focused on brining upper and middle class skiers to the mountain by advertising in magazines such as *National Geographic* and the *New Yorker*. Vail focused on attracting the affluent and families by constructing a European style village at the base complete with designer stores, fine restaurants, nightlife, and entertainment while also promoting

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<sup>172</sup> H. Benjamin Duke, "Skiing Soldiers to Skiing Entrepreneurs: Development of the Western Ski Industry," Aug. 2 1989, p. 12.

<sup>173</sup> Verna Noel Jones, "Downhill in Colorado."

<sup>174</sup> Duke, p. 13

<sup>175</sup> Interview with Robert Parker.

<sup>176</sup> Duke, 13.

“soft, sloping terrain.”<sup>177</sup> With the addition of a ski school and ski patrol formed by many 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain veterans, Vail emerged from its very beginnings as a planned destination resort.

Skiing in Colorado changed from a localized community activity into a big business. Areas needed to be financed, while planners and entrepreneurs sought out longer and faster lifts accessing steeper runs with deeper snow. Without the financing and the business sense of Arthur Paepcke, Aspen never would have exploded as a destination resort in the early 50s, while Arapahoe Basin would not have gotten off the ground without the persistence of Larry Jump to continually expand the mountain and the chairlifts. The opening of Vail in 1962 marked the final step in the growth of ski resorts. Vail emerged as a planned destination resort, and did not continuously add on like Aspen or Arapahoe Basin. As ski resorts grew and the sport’s popularity skyrocketed, so did the nationalizing trends of fashion and technology.

### **Ski Equipment and Apparel**

Before the individual men of the 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division even returned from the war, they had already impacted the ski industry in America. The army released a flood of surplus army equipment for private use: “Approximately 100,000 pairs of skis with a corresponding number of bindings, poles and boots. The equipment is practically all new and the ceiling prices are set low enough to offer plenty of good buys.” One could purchase a pair of skis with metal edges for less than 8 dollars whereas privately

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<sup>177</sup> Rothman, *Devil’s Bargains*, p. 231.

produced metal-edged skies went for 25 dollars or more.<sup>178</sup> While not the most stylish outfit on the slopes, many also purchased the surplus ski pants and parkas. The low cost of surplus ski equipment brought many beginners to the sport that would have been unable to afford it otherwise. As early as the winter of 1945-46, the original developers of Sugarloaf Mountain in Maine first climbed up the mountain using 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division skis and skins bought at an army surplus store.<sup>179</sup>

The surplus of army ski equipment gave many the opportunity to try their hand at skiing after the war who never would have known the sport otherwise. Even after tinkered with a little bit, surplus army skis were of poor quality. Not until an aviation engineer with a large passion for skiing, but lack of natural ability, did the ski manufacturing business enter the modern era. Howard Head, like many others, took to the slopes at Stowe Vermont for the first time in his life in 1946. After falling in love with the sport, Head set out to design “a ski that was easier to use, less breakable, and delivered more for the money than a wooden ski.” Turning to his knowledge of airplanes, Head worked countless hours in his basement creating and recreating aluminum skis. The first year Head put the skis out on the market, he sold 300 pairs at the unheard price of 85 dollars.<sup>180</sup> Ski instructors and racers were slow to accept the changing technology, but wealthier recreational skiers who could afford the skis reaped the benefits. The turned easier, lasted longer, and worked better in almost all different types of snow conditions. Head skis quickly became “prestige skis” in Europe.<sup>181</sup>

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<sup>178</sup> John Jay, *Ski Down the Years*, (New York: Universal Publishing and Distributing Corporation, 1966), p. 183.

<sup>179</sup> [Letter from Phineas Sprague to 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Historical Archives, January 21, 1997], Western History Collection, Denver Public Library.

<sup>180</sup> Needham, p. 56.

<sup>181</sup> Jay, p. 185.

Various models of metal skis entered the market during the 1950s, and by the beginning of the 1960s stores only sold inexpensive wooden skis to children. As the technology of skis, boots, and bindings increased, the sport became both safer and easier to learn. New technology allowed skiers to gain confidence in their ability ultimately allowing them to have more fun on the slopes. Fast lifts, beginner runs, and new skiing technology fundamentally changed learning how to ski from a chore and into an experience. As affluent middle class skiers learned to ski, and weekend trips to the mountains became even more of a social event than in the 1930s, the ski fashion industry grew, especially growing out of urban centers in the East.

In New York, Bloomingdales wasted no time after the war opening up their new ski shop in November of 1946. “Notables in the local skiing community” attended the grand opening featuring everything from boots to jewelry that stressed “classic functional fashions approved by experienced skiers.”<sup>182</sup> Department stores like Bloomingdales and Gimbels promoted early ski apparel manufacturers such as Fred Picard, White Stag, and Ernst Engel during the late 1940s. By 1949, Gimbels embraced the social dimension of skiing and sold both a ski and an after-ski line of clothing. Gimbels argued that after-skiing was a special time in the world of fashion. Evening clothes were too dressy while “casual sportswear is not for the evening.” As a result, Gimbels launched “colorful lounging costumes, perfect for hearthside after a long cold day on the slopes.”<sup>183</sup> Skiing after World War II quickly became fashionable. Designers and department stores capitalized on the growing number of women skiers and created a new market. During

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<sup>182</sup> “Ski Outfits From Boots to Jewelry Seen at Housewarming Party at New Shop,” *The New York Times*, Nov. 14 1946.

<sup>183</sup> “After-Ski Clothes Have Own Showing,” *The New York Times*, Nov. 29 1949.

the 1930s, males dominated recreational skiing in Vermont, but as the sport became fashionable, women learned to ski many times for no other reason than social prestige.

However, not until a German by the name of Willy Bogner developed a nylon stretch pant in 1952 did fashion really have an impact on the growth of the sport. Coming in a multitude of colors and styles, the pants attracted both men and women to the mountain. Women liked how the pants showed off her figure unlike previously worn baggy pants, and men enjoyed how they “did for the lower body what the snug turtleneck sweater did above.”<sup>184</sup> The popularity of Bogner ski pants skyrocketed, and by the middle of 1950 he sold exclusively stretch pants. As described in a general history of skiing, stretch pants gave the sport a new slim, sexy and fast look. “Fashion became an integral part of skiing and skiing an integral part of American life. The sport settled on the American consciousness with a decided air of elegance.”<sup>185</sup>

As resorts like Aspen attracted “ski bums” such as Steve Knowlton, new trends in fashion such as the stretch pant gave rise to the “snow bunny.” A 1959 *New York Times* article describes a snow bunny as woman who, as typically as beginner skier, spends her time at ski resorts chasing down men and bathing in a hot tub if one exists. At the time 60 percent of all skiers were men, and 51 percent of those men were unmarried. Women vacationing at ski resorts only take lessons and learn to ski in order to be able to keep up with the men on the slopes. The article describes how more often than not men will ignore the advances of women at ski resorts because they are too concerned with skiing, and do not want the extra hassle of waiting around for a woman. On the slopes men will

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<sup>184</sup> Beatrice and Ira Henry Freeman, “The Snow Bunny Stalks the Schusser,” *The New York Times*, Feb. 22 1959.

<sup>185</sup> Needham, p. 65.



gladly “eat their sandwiches on the ride up the mountain in the chairlift so as not to waste a moment,” while women will “hang around the chalet most the day.”<sup>186</sup>

Male skiers still liked to believe that the rugged outdoorsman still owned the ski slopes in the post World War II era. However, as the ski industry grew into a business and the sport’s technology grew, more of the population could learn the sport easier. Women such as Andrea Mead Lawrence, the daughter of Pico Peak owners, brought women’s skiing to a new level when she won two gold medals in the 1952 Olympics.

## **Vermont**

In the second issue of *Vermont Life* published in the winter of 1946-47, the magazine proclaimed that Vermont had found “white gold” located in the snow covered winter mountains. As 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain veterans came home from the war, they wasted no time getting back to their local hills and making up for lost time. For those who had not experienced the joy and thrill of skiing before the war, the “health giving enjoyment” answered Vermont’s question “What do we do in the winter?” Not only did the sport provide locals winter entertainment, but also winter business. The article pointed out that southern Vermont resorts such as Bromley Mountain existed only 200 miles from New York City.<sup>187</sup> Changes to the Vermont ski industry occurred in roughly the same fashion as in Colorado. However, more substantial centralization of the ski industry in Vermont allowed for a more pronounced change in Colorado. The booming economy combined

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<sup>186</sup> “The Snow Bunny Stalks the Schusser.”

<sup>187</sup> “White Gold,” *Vermont Life*, Vol. 1, No. 2, winter 1946, p. 3-8.

with actions of 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain veterans, growing technology and ski resort entrepreneurs resulted in the rise of a few major ski resorts along the East coast.

The inaugural year of *Vermont Life* coincided directly with the rise of resort skiing in Vermont. In fact, the seasonal publication aimed to bring tourist dollars to the state by attracting adventure seekers to the “Vermont way of life.”<sup>188</sup> In every winter issue of *Vermont Life* during the late 40s and early 50s, the magazine ran stories promoting different ski areas such as Woodstock, Bromley, Ascutney, and Pico Peak. During the late 1930s small Vermont towns such as Woodstock realized they could profit from the migration and skiers from urban centers. Stowe established the first major ski resort on the East coast, and as the war ended, continued to expand their influence on Eastern skiing.

## **Stowe**

Stowe reigned as the “king of Vermont skiing” in the 1930s and 1940s, but by the early 1950s other emerging ski resorts competed for both tourist and local dollars.<sup>189</sup> Stowe stayed even with the competition by installing a T-bar in 1950, a double chair in 1954, and a new chair to parallel and eventually replace the original single chair in 1960.<sup>190</sup> Crowds of skiers still commuted on the weekends from places such as New York, and when the snow fell, the population more than doubled from 1700 up to 3500 in the early 1950s. During these boom weekends tourists rented housing anywhere from

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<sup>188</sup> Vermont Memories II: Into the ‘50s, 1996 Vermont ETF

<sup>189</sup> Harrison, “Tracks Across Vermont,” p. 256.

<sup>190</sup> Edwin L. Bigelow, *Stowe Vermont: Ski Capital of the East, 1763-1963*, (Vermont: Essex Publishing Company, Inc., 1964), p. 155.

luxurious accommodations for \$25 a night to shared bunk beds for less than \$5 a night.<sup>191</sup>

In addition to the expansion of the Mount Mansfield ski area, plans also came out for a recreation center in Stowe to accommodate those who might not spend all their time skiing. *Vermont Life* revealed the plans for the new center in 1949 to include shops, bowling, a theater, dancing, tennis, and pool. The article stressed the importance of meeting the demand of a growing year round vacation business in Vermont.<sup>192</sup> By 1953 Saks Fifth Avenue of New York even opened a year round ski shop in Stowe.<sup>193</sup> Growth such as the recreational center and new shops attracted families to Stowe. The mountain provided adequate entertainment for anyone not interested in skiing.

Following the war Stowe did not possess the financial capabilities to invest in the improvements made during the post war era. A millionaire by the name of Cornelius V. Starr of New York City took an interest in Stowe in the late 1940s. Becoming the partner of Austrian born ski instructor Sepp Ruschp who started at Stowe in 1936, the two acquired 90 percent of the stock in the Mt. Mansfield Lift Company by 1949 and consolidated it into the Mt Mansfield Company. During the rest of the 1950s Stowe evolved into “a massive, integrated, and self-servicing resort.”<sup>194</sup> Just as Roland Palmedo invested money into Stowe before the war, Starr invested after the war. Individual entrepreneurs helped Stowe from its very beginnings to dwarf localized ski hills and pave the way for the future of ski resorts in Vermont.

### **Bromley and Trail Maintenances**

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<sup>191</sup>Bernard Kalb, “A Week-end On and Off Skis Converts a Skeptic,” *The New York Times*, Feb. 10 1952.

<sup>192</sup> “Stowe Center,” *Vermont Life*, Vol. 3, No. 2, Winter 1949.

<sup>193</sup> “To Open Vermont Ski Shop,” *The New York Times*, Nov. 12 1953.

<sup>194</sup> Mazuzan, p. 61, Harrison, “The Technological Turn,” p. 210.

After the war, Fred Pabst followed the lead of Stowe, and began rapidly developing Bromley Mountain just outside of Manchester Vermont. Before the war Pabst had spread out his wealth and financed many different rope tows in the East and Midwest only to see the tow at Bromley succeed. Pabst quickly realized that the financial success of drawing skier relied on developing a major ski area. Pabst spent 500,000 dollars developing a network of lifts and trails that would help crowds by “spreading skiers all around the mountain who normally stay at the bottom.” On a busy weekend day Bromley sold nearly 3000 tickets, comparable to that of Stowe in the same year, and could boast that no more than one hundred would be at the base because of the trail design.<sup>195</sup>

Pabst successfully accomplished crowd control by developing a program of meticulous trail maintenance. During the off season, workers took out all stump, large rocks, logs, and anything else that could possibly disrupt a skier. As a result, Bromley’s runs required less snow to cover the cleared trails, and the cleared trails created smoother runs allowing more beginners to ski from the summit alleviating the crowds at the base. In addition, Pabst employed some of the earliest grooming techniques in the country. Stemming from World War II transport vehicles, grooming equipment such as Bromley’s “sno-cat” could pack down 10 inches of snow depth extending the longevity of the trail.<sup>196</sup> The grooming technology progressed quickly after the development of initial machines like the “sno-cat” at Bromley. Trail care technology grew at ski resorts on the East because of a wider variety of weather conditions during the winter months as compared to the higher elevations of the Colorado Rockies. Grooming provided Pabst

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<sup>195</sup> Pat Harty, “The Story of Bromley Mountain,” *Vermont Life*, Vol. 7, No.2, winter 1952.

<sup>196</sup> Frank Elkins, “Along the Ski Slopes and Trails,” *The New York Times*, Dec. 8 1949.

with the ability to smooth out certain runs each night, ensuring hazard-free beginner trails for young and old out learning the sport.

As one of the closet major ski areas to New York manicured with flat, smooth, groomed runs, Bromley attracted a large number of tourists who had never been on skis before. Pabst marketed to beginning skiers by implementing “Learn-to-Ski weeks”, special family rates, and “under 16” rates. A growing demand for ski instruction led Pabst to hire 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain veteran Neil Robinson as the director of the Bromley Ski School. By 1954 Robinson had 18 ski instructors under him teaching everyone from 4 year old children to adults. During his spare time, Robinson collaborated with Howard Head, breaking many of the different models that Head sent for him to test out.<sup>197</sup>

As Neil Robinson directed the ski school at Bromley Mountain, Clif Taylor set out to change the way in which beginners learned to ski. After serving on the Ski School at Mad River Glenn in Vermont, Taylor believed the Arlberg technique placed beginners on skis too long for their body, and because of that, the learning curve slowed down. By designing a short ski rather than a sawed off longer ski, Taylor cut down the “hellishly long time” needed to learn the sport. As the largest advocate of the “short ski method,” Taylor toured ski schools around the country attempted to both sell his product and convince ski schools to adapt teaching with short skis. Not until ten years after Taylor’s first short ski did his method reach a wide audience after SKI Magazine experiment at different resorts with short skis, and concluded that by starting beginners on short skis and graduating them to larger skis as their technique and ability improved, people learned

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<sup>197</sup> Girtrud and Frank Elkins, *Twenty Years Along the Ski Trails*, (New Hampshire: The Reporter Press, 1954), p. 31.

faster. The Graduated Length Method was launched, and soon adapted by more than 300 ski schools in North America and Europe.<sup>198</sup>

### **Mount Ascutney and Snow Making**

Mount Ascutney in Vermont developed followed the same development patters as other ski areas in the area. In the pre war years a farmer allowed for a couple ski trails to be cut for the enjoyment of the local community. By 1946 the Ascutney Ski Corporation had leased the land and built a lodge equipped with four rope tows. However, during the late 40s a series of snow less winters shut down the mountain until John H. Howland, a self-made Vermont business man, purchased the mountain in 1956 for \$2000. Howland quickly hired Robert Ely, longtime friend and 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain veteran to work as an outside operations manager for the resort. After serving with the 10<sup>th</sup> and graduating from the Boston School of Practical Arts, Howland believed Ely “had the talents and skills that were particularly well suited to the task of designing and building a ski area.”<sup>199</sup>

In preparation for the 1957 ski season Howland spent over \$100,000 investing in a new T-bar, building a warming hut, restaurant, ski shop, and a rope tow to service the beginner area. Howland did not possess the resources of Pabst at Bromley or Starr at Stowe to build up Ascutney into a major destination resort. He concentrated his business efforts more on developing local skiers rather than attracting outside skiers. Howland took pride in building up a community where local families both worked and skied at the

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<sup>198</sup> Needham, p. 74 and Kevin O’Connor, “Vermont Ski Museum Honors 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division,” *The Rutland Herald*, Nov. 9 2003.

<sup>199</sup> John H. Howland, *Ventures and Adventures: The Memoirs of a Vermont Businessman*, (West Windsor, VT: Vermont Historical Narratives, 1999), p. 92-95.

mountain. Ascutney never developed into a major resort during the 50s, but did develop and import new technology that would change Eastern skiing forever.

After seeing an item in *Popular Mechanics* about making snow by combining water and air under pressure, Robert Ely decided to try it himself. Using parts from Howland's machine shop and attaching it to a sprinkler, Ely produced the first machine-made snow in Vermont. After making adjustments, the snow quality became good enough to ski on, and Howland set up a demonstration on Ascutney. Before publicizing the accomplishment, LIFE Magazine released a story on snowmaking at a small ski area in Western New England. However, in 1957 Ascutney became the first ski area in Vermont to employ snowmaking. Howland withstood the public criticism from Fred Pabst that winter, and by the next summer Pabst invested millions of dollars to cover all of Bromley Mountain with snowmaking capabilities.<sup>200</sup>

By the mid 1960s all the major ski areas in Vermont could boast extensive snowmaking coverage. As an extremely costly venture, only the major resorts could afford to install the system.<sup>201</sup> By possessing the ability to make snow, ski resorts gained a new sense of reliability. With variable weather conditions in the Northeast, holiday season profits could disappear if Mother Nature failed to grant ski areas with enough snow to open. Snowmaking allowed ski areas to open earlier in the winter and close later in the spring only increasing the gap between major resorts and small community ski areas.

### **Mad River Glen and Sugarbush**

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<sup>200</sup> Howland, p. 97-100.

<sup>201</sup> Harrison, "The Technological Turn," p. 215.

Following the war, the development of almost all the major ski areas such as Stowe, Bromley, and Mount Ascutney had grown from small, communal beginnings. These mountains started off with a rope tow mostly servicing a local population before starting to grow during the second half of the 1930s and following the war. When Mad River Glen opened in 1948, “they did it on purpose.”<sup>202</sup> A *Vermont Life* article in 1949 emphasizes how the development of the mountain was planned from scratch. Roland Palmedo and J.N. Cooke who both invested in the Mount Mansfield chairlift sought out the mountain perfect for a top rate ski area, and planned lifts, trails, lodges, accommodations, and transportation before even selling a single lift ticket. With the help of the local community, Palmedo and Cooke formed the Mad River Association. The group of local and outside business men would meet once a month to discuss matter surrounding the mountain and the local community. They worked to organize a list of five hundred beds available to rent before the first skier even hit the slopes. 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain veteran Bud Phillips, who spent a couple years in Aspen skiing under the instruction of Friedl Pfiefer, found himself a job as the ski school director at Mad River Glen during its first season in 1948. Falling in love with the mountain, the people, and the surrounding community, Phillips headed the ski school until 1965.<sup>203</sup>

Businessmen such as Roland Palmedo recognized the direction in which the ski industry was heading soon after the end of World War II. Small local hills were either going out of business or expanding their trails, lifts, technology, and accommodations in order to compete with the expanding number of resorts in Vermont. The development of Mad River Glen represents the shift of the ski industry to a business complete with a

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<sup>202</sup> Baird Hall, “Mad River Glen at Faysoth- “*they did it on purpose,*” *Vermont Life*, Vol. 4, No. 2, p. 30-31.

<sup>203</sup> A.W. Coleman, “Snow Corner of New England,” *American Skiing Annual*, 1950, p. 91-93.



formula for success. Ski resorts no longer expanded to meet a growing customer demand, but needed large financial backings in order to pre-build facilities that would attract skiers.

Down the road from Mad River Glen, Damen Gadd, whose family made a fortune on pineapples in Hawaii, and 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain veteran Jack Murphy founded Sugarbush ski resort in 1958. After managing Mad River Glen from 1952-1956 Murphy teamed up with Gadd to create a planned destination resort designed to attract wealthy skiers from all over the east coast. Sugarbush provided a vacation destination in Vermont where one could go for a weekend and not ski a single run. Complete with nice restaurants, and upscale accommodations, skiers worried more about their clothes and their company rather than their skiing ability. Sewall Williams, a local in the Mad River Valley and former 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain soldier, ran a ski shop at Sugarbush where he recalled that customers would buy a new pair of Bogner pants every two weeks.<sup>204</sup> Sugarbush attracted almost all of its skiers from outside the local area, but hired many of its employees from the Valley. The resort brought the local communities out of an economic slump, but also brought in a constant flow of outsiders who hurt the feel of the local community. The development of Sugarbush in the late 1950s represented the transformation of the Vermont ski industry into a business run by wealthy entrepreneurs meant attracting wealthy customers and large profits.

As the resorts continued to grow, so did the number of skiers. Shopkeepers in New York reported that they had run out of ski clothing and equipment by New Year's Day of 1956. A week before the start of the holiday vacation that year both Stowe and

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<sup>204</sup> Sewall Williams, Interview by Jane Beck, transcript, 11 March, 1994, Warren, VT, Vermont Folklife Center, Middlebury, VT.

Mad River Glen reported that no housing was available within 50 miles of either resort.<sup>205</sup> The largest ski areas in the state continued to develop into the late 1950s, establishing themselves as the premier destination resorts in Vermont while putting smaller areas out of business. By 1958 Bromley planned to develop a new double chair, a mile and a half beginner slope, and a new 700 car parking lot. Sugarbush provided Vermont with a new double chair and first gondola that carried skiers on the “longest single-span lift ride in the United States with the greatest vertical rise (2400 feet) in the East.” In total, thirteen new ski lifts opened up across the state for the 1959 ski season.<sup>206</sup> At the end of the 1950s thirty different ski areas existed in Vermont, and at the end of the 1959 season all were said to be in a “healthy financial state.” The Department of Economic Research in Vermont estimated that these resorts would bring in an additional 16.5 million dollars from winter tourists.<sup>207</sup>

In a ten year period between 1948 and 1958, large ski resorts replaced local community hills. Over fifty ski areas existed in Vermont in the winter of 1948, many of which consisted of single row tow built to service a single ski club. Stowe, Mad River Glen, Pico, Bromley, and Ascutney would continue to expand their facilities throughout the fifties, establishing them as some of the giants of the decade. By 1958, the ski map of Vermont looked almost identical as it does today. Resorts such as Mt. Snow, Okemo, Killington, Sugarbush, Smuggler’s Notch, and Jay Peak, all emerged during the 1950s as planned resorts that competed against the older, constantly expanding resorts such as Stowe, Bromley, and Ascutney.

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<sup>205</sup> “Ski Gear Boom: Demand for Equipment Outstrips Supply,” *The New York Times*, Jan. 15 1956.

<sup>206</sup> Morton Strong, “Skiing in Vermont: Thirteen New Ski Lifts Contribute to What May Be State’s Best Season,” *The New York Times*, Jan. 18 1959.

<sup>207</sup> “Skiing in Vermont: Snow Business is Now Big Business-Profitable year is Forecast,” *The New York Times*, Dec. 6 1959.

## Conclusion

The growth of the modern ski industry after World War II progressed along the same lines in Vermont and Colorado, but at different times. With the development of Mount Mansfield in Stowe, the Vermont ski industry moved toward large, centralized, profitable ski resorts before the United States became involved in World War II. As the popularity of downhill skiing grew due to an increased accessibility with snow trains, the implementation of uphill transportation, the European influence on ski schools, and social prestige associated with skiing, Vermont's ski areas served a regional clientele from urban areas rather than a small local group of skiers. Wealthy entrepreneurs such as Roland Palmedo and Fred Pabst saw economic opportunities in the growth of ski resorts, and invested the capital necessary to attract a growing number of skiers.

In Colorado, the formation of centralized ski areas did not completely develop before the United States involvement in World War II. Skiing remained a local, community based activity for most of the 1930s. Snow trains did not leave Denver till 1936, the same year that Berthoud Pass introduced the state's first rope tow. In 1941 thirteen of the 33 ski areas in Colorado possessed no uphill transportation.<sup>208</sup> These areas supported a strictly local group of skiers tied by membership in a club, or as residents of a specific town. The areas did not exist to bring in a profit, but simply to provide a place to congregate and enjoy the thrills of skiing. Skiers learned from each other as organized ski schools did not exist, and rope tows normally provided access to one open slope rather than a network of trails. The failure of Aspen to succeed as Colorado's first destination ski resort reinforced the local ski networks as Colorado residents were

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<sup>208</sup> Coleman, p. 148.

unwilling to travel long distances to ski. Winter Park developed in the early 1940 through funding from the city of Denver. With train service from the city, Winter Park still served the local residents of Denver, but did run two T-bar lifts and provided skiers with a dozen trails to choose from. The Colorado ski industry existed on a local level before World War II, and while it was moving in the same direction as Vermont's, the war interrupted and halted any growth.

The lack of privately financed, centralized ski areas designed to attract a regional or national group of skiers combined with the congregation and training of the 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division in Colorado allowed for veterans returning from the war in Italy to have a larger impact on the ski industry in Colorado than in Vermont. Training at Camp Hale introduced passionate skiers and outdoorsmen to a secluded part of the Colorado Rockies that had been almost untouched before the construction of Camp Hale. Friedl Pfeifer, Larry Jump, and Pete Seibert all fell in love with the mountains surrounding Camp Hale and vowed to make skiing and the Rockies a part of their life. Their war wounds and experiences in the brutal fighting during the war gave each man a newfound sense of purpose. These men developed Colorado ski resorts as a way to make a living by promoting the growth of the sport they loved in the mountains where they spent two years training. Unlike entrepreneurs such as Walter Paepcke and Fred Pabst interested establishing ski resorts as a business, 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain veterans such as Larry Jump poured all their energy into establishing ski areas that provided thousands of people with a chance to learn how to ski.

The post-war ski industry boom would have occurred without the 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division, but the growth of the Colorado ski resorts would not have been as rapid. In

both Vermont and Colorado the ski industry showed signs of developing into a major business at the beginning of World War II. Without the post-war economic boom, the growth of an affluent middle class, improvement in technology, and changes in leisure and consumption patterns, the ski industry would not have grown as quickly as it did. The increased number and affordability of cars combined with the reliability of roads allowed families the freedom to drive to the mountains for a weekend. Improving uphill transportation, trail maintenance, ski technology, and ski school instruction significantly shortened the learning curve for first time skiers. The social appeal of ski fashion and the development of ski towns complete with other forms of entertainment provided for a worthwhile vacation without ever strapping on skis. The post-war ski industry grew when ski resorts found ways to bring in non-skiers by capitalizing on the post war economy, technological changes, and the creation of off-the-slope entertainment.

The most significant impact of 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division veterans on the United States ski industry is skier who carved her first turns under the instruction of people like Bud Phillips at Mad River Glen or the local boy in Aspen who learned to ski for free under the supervision of Friedl Pfeifer. The 2,000 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain veterans who became ski instructors across the United States after World War II introduced an entire generation to the world of skiing they held such a fondness for. As the ski industry in Vermont and Colorado grew after World War II, skiing became easier. Transportation made mountains more accessible, ski and boot technology made the learning curve faster, while the growth of centralized ski resorts brought a variety of terrain and entertainment to the same place. As the growth of the ski industry made the sport easier and more convenient, ski instructors continued to work one on one with beginners in the hope that one day that

crying child would receive the same thrill from skiing as his instructor. The development of resorts such as Sugarbush, Aspen, Arapahoe Basin and Vail not only provided thousands of people the opportunity to learn the sport, but also provided returning 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain veterans havens to ski and congregate.

The growth of the post-war ski industries in Vermont and Colorado relied on number of different factors. The growth of an affluent middle class, a surging post-war economy, changes in leisure patterns, and a growing consumer culture all expanded the possible skiing population across the country. As families began to wonder where they should spend a week vacation wealthy entrepreneurs backed ski resorts with capital in order to equip them with state of the art lift technology, luxurious amenities, and non skiing entertainment. Tenth Mountain veterans did have an impact on the ski industry by their actions in founding major resorts in Colorado and Vermont, but their main accomplishment is with the thousands of people they taught to ski during the growth of the ski industry after World War II.

## **Bibliography**

### **Primary Sources**

#### **Archival Collections and Sources**

Aspen Skiing Corporation file, Aspen Historical Society.

The collection of primary sources included letters, and status reports dealing with the first couple years of the ASC from 1946-1950. These sources gave me great insight into the motives behind the developers of Aspen after World War II.

Charles Minot Dole Collection, WH 1001, Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library

A great collection of letters talking about the formation of 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division as well as the growth of the ski industry after World War II. Dole kept in contact with many 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain soldiers after the war.

H. Benjamin Duke, "Skiing Soldiers to Skiing Entrepreneurs: Development of the Western Ski Industry," Paper given, Aug. 2 1989, Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library.

A fifteen page paper outlining the birth, formation, and wartime experiences of the 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division. The second half examines the formation of Aspen and Vail. The author was a 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain veteran and an original investor in Vail mountain.

Laurence (Larry) Jump and Arapahoe Basin Records, WH 1220, Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library.

A huge compilation of letters, records, and journal entries from the formation of Arapahoe Basin. These gave me a good understanding of Larry Jump's motives behind forming Arapahoe Basin and the overall sense of community.

#### **Newspapers, Magazines, and Newsletters**

*American Ski Annual*

I examine articles in these publications from the 1930s through the 1960s. I usually found one or two helpful articles talking about the direction different skiers thought the ski industry was headed.

#### *Burlington Free Press*

This newspaper helped me to examine the growth of skiing in Vermont before World War II. Many of the articles focused on Stowe and the growth of snow trains.

#### *Denver Post*

I did not use too many articles from the Denver Post. I had very limited access to the newspaper, but found a couple recent articles (the past twenty years) that went into good detail about the actions of certain 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain veterans.

#### *New York Times*

Very helpful in terms of getting a broad picture about the state of skiing on the east coast both before and after World War II. Ski reporters such as Frank Elkins provided fairly regular columns about skiing in Vermont.

#### *Rocky Mountain News*

I did not use many articles from this paper either. The ones that I did find were very helpful, but I had limited access to the paper.

#### *Rutland Herald*

Not as helpful as the *Free Press*. Examined the growth of skiing in the southern part of Vermont, but not with the same consistency as the *Free Press*.

#### *Time Magazine*



I only used one article from *Time* that talked about the impact Otto Scheibs had on the growth of skiing in Vermont and New Hampshire.

### *Vermont Life*

An extremely helpful primary source. Started publication in 1946 partly to promote Vermont as a winter destination for tourists. Every winter issue contained at least one article on the present and future condition of the ski industry in Vermont.

## **Oral Histories and Interviews**

Fred Neuberger, interview by David M. Leach, 30 November 2004, Middlebury, VT.

This interview provided me with great background information on a young ski enthusiast in the 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division. His stories helped me out with every part of the paper.

John Litchfield, phone interview by David M. Leach, 12 December, 2004.

John Litchfield is one of the more celebrated 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Veterans and it was great to hear about his experiences. It was tough to do a phone interview, but still got very good information regarding his role in the development of Aspen.

Robert Parker, phone interview by David M. Leach, 9 December 2004, Middlebury, VT.

Received very helpful information from Robert Parker who remains extremely involved with the 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division today. There are quotes from him in almost every book on the 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain, so I had a ton of information about him.

Sewall Williams, Interview by Jane Beck, transcript, 11 March, 1994, Warren, VT, Vermont Folklife Center, Middlebury, VT.

This transcript gave me a better understanding of the development of Sugarbush in the late 1950s. Sewall provided great insight into how the resort changed a small Vermont community.

## **Dissertations**

Anne Gilbert Coleman, "Culture, Landscape, and the Making of the Colorado Ski Industry," (P.h.D. diss., University of Colorado, 1996).

This dissertation provided excellent information as well as source ideas on the growth of the Colorado ski industry. She examines every different way the growth of the ski industry has impacted Colorado.

## **Documentary Films**

*Fire on the Mountain*, Produced and Directed by Beth and George Gage, Telluride, CO, 1995, Videocassette.

A very entertaining and somewhat helpful documentary on the 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division. Provided great background information, interview clips, and live footage.

## **Printed Primary Sources**

Albert S. Carlson, "Ski Geography of New England, *Economic Geography*, Vol. 18, No. 3 (Jul., 1942).

It was interesting to look at this article and read what it said about the future of the Vermont ski industry when I already knew what was going to happen to certain resorts.

Friedl Pfeifer and Morten Lund, *Nice Goin': My Life on Skis*, (Missoula, MT: Pictorial Histories Pub., 1993).

Provided a very detailed account of Pfeifer's life. Definitely might have been biased because it's an autobiography and was published about fifty years after the dates he talked about.

Girtrud and Frank Elkins, *Twenty Years along the Ski Trails*, (New Hampshire: The Reporter Press, 1954).

Somewhat helpful. Frank Elkins wrote a ski column in the *New York Times* and the book focused on the growth of skiing in the Northeast.

John H. Howland, *Ventures and Adventures: The Memoirs of a Vermont Businessman*, (West Windsor, VT: Vermont Historical Narratives, 1999).

I only used a chapter from this book when Howland talks about his buying Ascutney Mountain and how they stumbled across snow making. Did paint a good picture about Ascutney's situation after World War II.

Peter W. Seibert, *Vail: Triumph of a Dream*, (Boulder, Colorado: Mountain Sports Press, 2000).

A somewhat helpful account about Seibert's life and the development of Aspen. Not as reliable because it's a promotional book for Vail resorts.

### **Military Histories and Studies**

Captain Thomas P. Govan, "Training for Mountain and Winter Warfare," The Army Ground Forces, Study No. 23, 1946.

Provided helpful information about the army's goals for the 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division and what led to its formation.

Charles Wellborn, *History of the 86<sup>th</sup> Mountain Infantry in Italy*, (86<sup>th</sup> Headquarters Company, 1945).

This history provided a helpful account for the Riva Ridge battle. The history went into great detail about the events on that night and leading up to it.

John Imbrie, *Chronology of the 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division in World War II*, (National Association of the 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division, Inc., June 2004).

This detailed chronology helped me to better understand the part that the 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division played in the Allied victory in Italy.

Philip A. Lunday and Charles M. Hampton, *The Tramway Builders: a Brief History of Company D*, <http://www.10thmtndivassoc.org/chronology.html>.

Gave a detailed history of the 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain engineers and the role they played on the Italian front. Not as helpful as the other regiment histories.

## Secondary Sources

### Books

Charles C. Bradley, *Aleutian Echoes*, (Hong Kong, University of Alaska Press, 1994)

The book provided me with great information about training at Camp Hale and at Fort Lewis. Many of the stories are told from memory.

Charles J. Sanders, *The Boys of Winter: Life and Death in the U.S. Ski Troops During the Second World War*, (Boulder, CO, University Press of Colorado, 2005).

This book examines the lives of three 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division soldiers who die in combat. The author did very extensive research, and the first couple chapters helped me to gain a better understanding of skiing before World War II.

E. John B. Allen, *From Skisport to Skiing: One Hundred Years of an American Sport, 1840-1940*, (Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1993).

An extremely well written and well researched source. I only used the second half, but gave great information on skiing in the 1930s. It also gave me many different source ideas.

Edwin L. Bigelow, *Stowe Vermont: Ski Capital of the East, 1763-1963*, (Vermont: Essex Publishing Company, Inc., 1964).

I barely used this book. Only had a brief chapter on the development of Stowe as a ski destination.

Gerhard L. Weinberg, *A World at Arms: A Global History of World War II*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

I used this book for any background information I needed on World War II. I didn't use this book much, but it greatly helped me out when I needed it.

Gretchen R. Besser, *The National Ski Patrol: Samaritan of the Snow*, (Woodstock, Vermont: The Countryman Press, 1983),

I did not talk about the formation of the ski patrol as I originally thought, so I only used this source to research the Ski Patrol's influence on the 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division.

Hal Burton, *The Ski Troops*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1971).

The first book to be released about the 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division. Very helpful details about Camp Hale, but was written by a 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain veteran.

Hal K. Rothman, *Devil's Bargains: Tourism in the Twentieth-Century American West*, (Lawrence, Kansas, University of Kansas Press, 1998).

An extremely well researched and well written book. It examined the growth of Sun Valley, Aspen and Vail. However, Rothman is biased against the Corporate take over of the ski industry.

James Sloan Allen, *The Romance of Commerce and Culture: Capitalism, modernism, and the Chicago-Aspen Crusade for Cultural Reform*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1983)

Parts of this book greatly helped me to understand the motives behind Paepcke in developing Aspen into a destination resort. Very well researched, but I only used about a chapter.

John Jay, *Ski Down the Years*, (New York: Universal Publishing and Distributing Corporation, 1966).

Provided an interesting look at the ski industry directly after its boom. The book provided many of the same causes that other books mention today.

Marion Clawson and Jack L. Knetsch, *Economics of Outdoor Recreation*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1966),

I barely used this book, but parts helped me to understand the post war economy and how that affected outdoor recreation. The book made inaccurate predictions about what the state of outdoor recreation would be in the year 2000.

Peter Oliver, *Stowe: Classic New England*, (Boulder, CO: Mountain Sports Press, 2002).

A promotional book for Stowe. Only used this to patch up a couple holes I had in the founding and development of the resort.

Peter Shelton, *Climb to Conquer: The Untold Story of World War II's 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division*, (New York: Scribner, 2003).

A very interesting book about the 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division's Camp Hale and wartime experiences. The book seems like it was well researched, but only provides a short bibliography and no footnotes.

R.E.G. Davies and I.E. Quastler, *Commuter Airlines of the United States*, (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1995).

I barely used this book except for a small section where it talks about plane service to Aspen in the early 1950s.

Richard Needham, *Ski: Fifty Years in North America*, (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1987).

A general history of skiing over fifty years. Helpful for some background information, but not much else.

## **Journal Articles**

“Colorado Ski Hall of Fame: Class of 2002,” *Skiing Heritage*, Vol. 14, No. 2, June 2002.

This article provided me with some background information on John Litchfield that I didn’t get in my interview with him.

“The Rise, Fall, and Rise of Aspen: The Town the 1940s Saved,” *Colorado Heritage*, Winter 1995.

A brief history of Aspen. Not very helpful as I had many other sources on Aspen’s development.

Abbott Fay, “Pioneer Slopes: Early Colorado Ski Resort Development, 1920-1950,” *Colorado Heritage*, No. 1, 1985.

This article did provide me with a good background of Colorado skiing during the 1930s. The information checked out with that in Coleman’s dissertation.

Basil Service, “Sun Valley’s Two Ski Schools: America’s European Alpine Touring and Alpine Skiing Beginnings,” *Idaho Yesterday*, 1994, Vol. 37, No. 4.

Talks about the history of Sun Valley and the ski school. Provided me with enough information about the ski school and the feeling at Sun Valley during the late 1930s.

Blake Harrison, “The Technological Turn: Skiing and Landscape Change in Vermont, 1930-1970,” *Vermont History*, Vol. 71, Summer-Fall 2003.

Harrison in this paper examines how snow trains, uphill transportation, trail maintenance and snow making all changed the Vermont landscape as ski resorts developed.

Blake Harrison. “Tracks Across Vermont: *Vermont Life* and the Landscape of Downhill Skiing, 1946-1970,” *Journal of Sport History*, Vol. 28, No. 2, summer 2001.

In a similar paper, Harrison focuses in on a shorter time period in order to examine the growth of the Vermont ski industry after World War II. This article looks at resorts more specifically.

George T. Mazuzan, "'Skiing is not merely a schport': The Development of Mount Mansfield as a Winter Recreation Area, 1930-1955," *Vermont History*, Vol. 40, No. 1, 1972.

A good, detailed history of Mount Mansfield during the time period I examined. Provided me with other source ideas that I used to find more information.

Georgianna Contiguglia, "Searching for the Perfect Ski Gear: Equipment Development for the Tenth Mountain Division," *Colorado Heritage*, fall 1992.

Examines how the 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division tested out different ski gear during their time at Camp Hale and how this transferred into the skiing community after World War II.

Hal K. Rothman, "Selling the Meaning of Place: Entrepreneurship, Tourism, and Community Transformation in the Twentieth-Century American West," *Pacific Historical Review*, Vol. 65, No. 4, 1996.

This article was very similar in content to a couple of the chapters from *Devil's Bargains*. I used the book more often than not because more research had been done on the book.

Jack A. Benson, "Skiing at Camp Hale: Mountain Troops During World War II," *The Western Historical Quarterly*, Vol.15, No.2, 1984.

A brief but interesting study on the soldiers experience at Camp Hale. Provided good information on the gap between skiers and non-skiers.

Peter J. Ognibene, "At the first ski spa, stars outshone the sun and snow," *Smithsonian*, Vol. 15, Dec. 1984.



Showed the glamorous side of Sun Valley during the late 1930s. Not as helpful to me as the other article on the development of Sun Valley's ski school.