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**Alpine Experiments: The National Parks and the Development of Skiing in the American West**

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Thesis

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## Alpine Experiments: The National Parks and the Development of Skiing in the American West

Jeff Wiltse, Chair

In 1886, the U.S. Army mounted cavalry soldiers on skis to patrol the winter landscape of Yellowstone National Park. Prior to Yellowstone's skiing soldiers, the U.S. government had no formal relationship with skiing. In Yellowstone, the Army initiated the U.S. government's intimate and enduring relationship with skiing in the American West. When the National Park Service (NPS) took over the management of Yellowstone, the government's involvement with western skiing transferred over to the NPS. Upon its creation in 1916, the NPS inherited a national park system primarily carved from the high western mountains and embraced the promotion of recreational skiing in the deep and lingering snow of the parks. Working with regional boosters and park concessionaires, the NPS endeavored to transform snowbound parks into four season destinations. By the 1930s, national parks hosted high stakes ski competitions and became some of the earliest centers of lift-served skiing in the West. Ultimately, ski lifts operated in ten western parks during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. However, critics questioned the appropriateness of the national parks as venues for Alpine skiing. Struggling with its dual mandate of preservation and recreation, the NPS began to recalibrate its permissive approach to Alpine skiing by limiting the type of development and competitions allowed in the parks. The NPS exited World War II with a more conservative approach towards Alpine skiing. However, in the 1950s, the agency embraced a park by park approach to winter use that stifled the development of lift-served skiing in some parks while enabling its growth in others. This approach led to decades of contestation between the NPS, local populations, environmentalists, and concessionaires, which ultimately led to the removal of ski lifts in all of the parks except Yosemite and Olympic. In 2015, the United States Forest Service is the government agency most often equated with western skiing. In my thesis, I will suggest that it was the national parks that first created the inextricable link between the U.S. government and skiing in the West, and once this connection took hold, it proved to be an extremely difficult bond to break.

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## Introduction: Skiing and America's National Parks

*Beyond doubt, the park offers the greatest natural ski grounds in America. When the snow is gone from all other fields elsewhere about the United States, Yellowstone park skiing is at its best.*

—1940, H.F. Tavlin, Secretary of the Gardiner Commercial Club.<sup>1</sup>

Each spring, National Park Service plow crews embark on the Herculean task of opening the Going-to-the-Sun Road in Glacier National Park to the summer crowds after a winter spent slumbering under the deep Northern Rockies snow. Depending on the winter snowpack, road opening dates have fluctuated between early June and early July. The Going-to-the-Sun Road, completed in 1933, cuts across the Continental Divide at 6,647' at Logan Pass. The slowly melting snow at the pass flows east to the Saskatchewan River and Hudson Bay and west to the Columbia River and Pacific Ocean. The Big Drift on the east side of the pass, fed by the prevailing winds howling through the pass from the west, can pile up to depths of 80'. The average annual snowfall for Logan Pass measures 500 inches. This immense and lingering snowpack has made the opening of the high country road an eagerly anticipated event among regional skiers dating back to the 1930s. To celebrate the road opening on June 19, 1938, the Glacier National Park Ski Club sponsored “an informal ski meet on Logan Pass,” and despite inclement weather “about fifty skiers and five hundred people showed up for the event.” On June 2, 1940, the ski club celebrated the road opening with the “Spring International Ski Meet of Glacier National Park Ski Club.” The event attracted “660 automobiles and 3000 people including 239 skiers.” Spectators and skiers “came from Idaho, Montana, Washington, California, Utah, and...nine ski clubs represented the province of Alberta, Canada.” Regional skiers still converge on Logan Pass each summer to celebrate the road's opening, but the gatherings unfold in a less organized manner.<sup>2</sup>

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1 Dr. H.F. Tavlin, “Montana Day in Yellowstone National Park Is Step Toward Making Great Summer Playground an All Year Attraction,” *Belgrade Journal*, February 1940, News Clippings, Yellowstone National Park (YNP) Travel and Public Use News: 1940-1954, Yellowstone Research Library (YRL), Gardiner Heritage and Research Center (GHRC).

2 Rose Houk, *Going-To-The-Sun: The Story of the Highway Across Glacier National Park* (Del Mar, CA: Woodlands Press, 1984), 34-35; Jerry DeSanto, *Logan Pass: Alpine Splendor in Glacier National Park* (Helena, MT: Falcon Press Publishing Co. Inc., 1995), no pagination; E.T. Scoyen, Memo to Director, June 22, 1938; Jay Staley, Spring International Ski Meet of Glacier National Park Ski Club, May 22, 1940; D.S. Libbey, Memo to Director, June 15, 1940, Box: Land, Water, and Recreation Planning (LWRP), Folder: 868 9-28 1, Glacier National Park Archives (GNPA).

On June 23, 2013, after a night of freezing temperatures, the summer sun radiated down on the snow of Logan Pass. The Going-to-the-Sun Road had opened to the public for the summer season two days earlier. The brilliant bluebird day began its work to soften the firm and consolidated snowpack into the ephemeral joy of summer skiing: corn snow. My wife Emily and I were among the skiing faithful in the Logan Pass parking lot readying ourselves for a day of harvesting Glacier's high country corn snow. As we stood next to our Honda Accord attaching our climbing skins to our skis, a couple in a SUV pulled up alongside us and inquired if they could take a picture. For the sightseeing couple, summer skiers were an exotic photo opportunity to rival the park's mountain goats and bighorn sheep that frequent the Logan Pass parking lot to lap up leaked puddles of anti-freeze. I gregariously granted their photo request and smiled as the woman snapped a picture of me holding my skin clad ski. The gentleman, apparently oblivious to the function of the climbing skin, inquired: "Do they have a lift up here for you?" I replied: "No sir. We climb up on our skis using these" and pointed to my skins. After a brief description of utilizing skins to climb uphill and the concept of a freeheel to enable such an endeavor, the man's face began to glaze over, looking somewhat perplexed and disturbed by the prospect of enduring human-powered, uphill travel on skis. Pleased with their photo, the couple bid us farewell and embarked on their scenic SUV descent down the Going-to-the-Sun Road.

Having already started down a path to write my master's thesis on the history of lift-served skiing in America's national parks, the gentleman's question gave me ample fodder to contemplate as I skied uphill. The sheer pleasure of skiing in the summer sun melded with my academic undertaking into field research. I worked to break down the implications and component parts of his question. His seemingly straightforward question presented a multitude of layers to sift through: "Do they have a lift up here for you?" On seeing skis in Alpine terrain, the gentleman's mind immediately assumed there must be a lift involved, and possibly the government was involved in subsidizing the endeavor. He did not define who he meant by "they," but I interpreted it to mean the National Park Service (NPS).

However, the tone of his question also communicated a measure of doubt and surprise because we were located in a national park. In the minds of most modern Americans, skiing and lifts are synonymous, but the national parks and ski lifts are not. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the idea of American national parks as homes to lift-served skiing seems incongruous to most park visitors. The United States Forest Service (USFS) is the federal agency most equated with modern skiing in the American West, not the NPS. However, the national parks were in fact some of the earliest bastions of lift-served skiing in the West.<sup>3</sup>

In my thesis, I will suggest that it was the national parks that first created the inextricable link between the U.S. government and skiing in the West, and once this connection took hold, it proved to be an extremely difficult bond to break. It was in Yellowstone that the U.S. government first became institutionally involved with skiing. In 1886, the U.S. government called on the U.S. Army to guard, manage, and guide the park's development. This relationship continued until 1918, when the NPS took charge of the park. During the Army's tenure, the military mounted cavalry soldiers on skis to patrol the park in winter and more effectively combat poaching in its 2.2 million acre expanse. The poachers used skis to do their clandestine winter work and the Army adopted their tactics. Heroic deeds of skiing in the world's first national park proved irresistible and images and stories of Yellowstone skiing spread across the nation. On April 9, 1887, the cover of *Harper's Weekly* featured an illustration of four skiers descending the northern slopes of Mt. Washburn in Yellowstone. It was the first depiction of skiing to appear on the cover of a national magazine in the United States. Beginning with Yellowstone in 1886, an intimate relationship between the federal government and western skiing was forged, and media depictions of the western parks as ski venues continued to create an intimate link between the national parks and skiing in the popular imagination that lasted well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>4</sup>

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3 For the link between the USFS and skiing, see Michael W. Childers, *Colorado Powder Keg: Ski Resorts and the Environmental Movement* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2012). In 2014, 122 ski resorts operated on USFS land.

4 *Harper's Weekly*, April 9, 1887, cover, Microfilm Collection, University of Montana Mansfield Library (UMML); John Fry, "One Man's Mission," *Ski*, March-April 2004, 90. For a solid treatise on military skiing in Yellowstone, see Paul Schullery, *Yellowstone's Ski Pioneers: Peril and Heroism on the Winter Trail* (Worland, WY: High Plains Publishing Company, 1995).



Prior to the U.S. Army taking to skis in Yellowstone, the U.S. government had no formal relationship with skiing. Under the guidance of the military, a culture of skiing flourished in Yellowstone that readily transferred over to the NPS. Enduring cultures of skiing also took root in other snowbound western parks. Starting with Yellowstone in 1872, the government carved the first wave of national parks primarily from the snow laden heights of the West. Out of the sixteen national parks created between 1872 and 1917, ten of them contained high country defined by heavy, consistent, and lasting snow: Yellowstone, Sequoia, Yosemite, General Grant, Mount Rainier, Crater Lake, Glacier, Rocky Mountain, Lassen Volcanic, and Mount McKinley.<sup>5</sup> Skiing in the national parks quickly turned from a purely utilitarian endeavor to a recreational pursuit embraced by park residents. In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, as the pursuit of recreational skiing spread, ski tourists began trickling into the western parks. The first promotion of recreational skiing in Mount Rainier National Park, one of the globe's snowiest locales, appeared in *National Geographic* in 1909. After his Seattle ski party returned from a weekend trip into the park, Milnor Roberts wrote that “so far as ski sport is concerned, it would be difficult to imagine more perfect riding than can be had on the many miles of varied slopes in Paradise Park.” Shortly after the U.S. government created the NPS as its own bureaucratic entity in 1916, the NPS concurred with the idea of the mountain parks as homes to “ski sport.” From its inception, the NPS began to actively promote and subsidize winter use of the parks. Before the USFS embraced the promotion of skiing, the NPS viewed skiing as a desirable and compatible use of the parks. Promoting the parks as winter sports centers widened the appeal and legitimacy of the NPS in its infant stages by transforming the parks into four season destinations. It was the NPS, not the USFS, that set the

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<sup>5</sup> The U.S. government created Mackinac Island National Park in 1875 as the second addition to the infant national park system. However, the government gave the park to the state of Michigan in 1895. It became Mackinac Island State Park: the first state park in Michigan. Two other early national parks were also stripped of their national park designation: Platt National Park in Oklahoma and Sully's Hill National Park in North Dakota. Created in 1902, Platt became part of the Chickasaw National Recreation Area in 1976. The government transferred Sully's Hill, created in 1904, from the NPS to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in 1931. The park was redesignated as the Sully's Hill National Game Preserve. General Grant National Park became a part of the larger King's Canyon National Park upon its creation in 1940. The name of Mount McKinley National Park was officially changed to Denali National Park and Preserve in 1980.

template for the federal subsidization of Alpine skiing in the West.<sup>6</sup>

The national parks played an important and often overlooked role in the development of skiing in the West from its utilitarian origins to its industrialized future. The NPS welcomed automobiles into the parks and built good roads to high elevations in the mountain parks. The automobile, matched with early NPS road building and plowing efforts, made the high country snow of the West more easily accessible to skiers, and this accessibility motivated new skiers to take up the sport. The introduction of ski lifts to ease uphill travel further fueled the popularity of Alpine skiing as a downhill only mentality began to take hold. Some of the earliest lift-served skiing in the West appeared in the region's national parks. Badger Pass in Yosemite began operating its Upski in 1934, and still stands as the longest operating lift-served skiing in the American West. The first rope tow to operate in a national park arrived in Lassen for the winter of 1935-1936. By the end of the 1930s, the NPS, its chosen concessionaires, and lift-served skiing had turned Badger Pass in Yosemite and Paradise in Rainier into two of the premiere ski destinations in the West. Over the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, ski lifts ultimately operated in ten of the West's most iconic national parks: Yosemite, Yellowstone, Glacier, Crater Lake, Lassen, Olympic, Rocky Mountain, Rainier, Sequoia, and Mount McKinley. The lifts of Badger Pass in Yosemite and Hurricane Ridge in Olympic continue to operate in 2015.<sup>7</sup>

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6 Milnor Roberts, "A Wonderland of Glaciers and Snow," *The National Geographic Magazine*, June 1909, 530-537; Jim Steenburgh, *Secrets of the Greatest Snow on Earth* (Boulder: University of Colorado Press, 2014), 42-43; "Secretary Lane's Letter on National Park Management," May 13, 1918, in Lary M. Dilsaver, ed., *America's National Park System: The Critical Documents* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers Inc., 1990), 48-52. In 1971-1972, Paradise Ranger Station in Rainier National Park set a world record for annual snowfall with 1,122 inches. Mt. Baker, Mt. Rainier's northern neighbor in Washington's Cascades, broke the record in 1998-1999 with a measurement of 1,140 inches for the year.

7 Don Tressider, Letter to Yosemite Superintendent Colonel C.G. Thomson, August 22, 1935, Badger Pass Development Records, File: Badger Pass Development 1935-1949, Yosemite National Park Archives (YONPA); Douglas Strong, *Footprints in Time: A History of Lassen Volcanic National Park*, 5<sup>th</sup> ed. (Red Bluff, CA: WL Walker Lithograph, 1998), 91; NPS, Winter Use Chart, 1946, Box: L-46, File: 868, YNPA, GHRC; U.S. War Department, "Mt. McKinley U.S. Army Recreation Camp Alaska Tops Them All," Research Center, Wisconsin Veteran's Museum; "Slate Skiing Start For Glacier Hill," *Hungry Horse News*, December, 20, 1957, cover, GNPA. Two ski areas, Boston Mills and Brandywine, operate within the legislative boundaries of Cuyahoga Valley National Park, Ohio, which was created in 1974 as part of the Parks to the People program under Richard Nixon. These ski areas existed prior to the creation of the park. As part of the park's founding document, they remained in private hands and continue to do so. Both areas are presently owned and operated by Peak Resorts. So, although the ski areas are within the legislative boundaries of the park, these two ski areas operate on private land, not national park land. The park service has no administrative jurisdiction over these ski operations. Dennis Hamm, Cuyahoga Valley National Park Land Resources Specialist, phone interview by author, January 30, 2014.

However, even as ski lifts began appearing in the western parks, voices within the NPS began questioning the appropriateness of encouraging such recreational development. In February 1936, Sequoia's Superintendent John Roberts White began voicing his opposition to ski lifts in the parks at a superintendent's meeting in Washington D.C. At the meeting, White delivered a speech entitled "Atmosphere in the National Parks" in which he articulated a vision for preserving the natural ambiance of the parks by curtailing the types of recreation and development promoted and allowed within their boundaries. White counseled his fellow administrators that in order "to preserve the national park atmosphere we must curb the human desire to develop the parks quickly to compete in popularity with other resorts, or even State or other parks or national forest areas" and urged them to consider each new development project with the question: "how will it affect the park atmosphere which we desire to maintain or restore?" Among the multiple threats to park atmosphere listed by White in 1936 was the development of the parks for winter sports. White warned of the adverse influences that competition, artificial construction, and the commercialization of winter sports could have on park atmosphere. He also felt that "any mechanical aid to winter sports such as a ski-elevator or a toboggan elevator is out of place" in the parks and would lead to "injuring atmosphere and even scenery." White prophesized that "there is a danger that winter sports will dominate the picture, be improperly commercialized, and make a hurly-burly of the park in the winter."<sup>8</sup>

Within the NPS, White was one of the first administrators to seriously question the development of parks for winter use. Much of White's trepidation towards promoting the parks as venues for competition came from events that unfolded in Rainier in April 1935 when the National Ski Association (NSA) held the U.S. Alpine Skiing Championships at Paradise in Rainier. The event also served as the tryouts for the 1936 Olympics, the first time the Olympics featured the Alpine skiing

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<sup>8</sup> John R. White, "Atmosphere in the National Parks," February 10, 1936, in Dilsaver, ed., *America's National Park System: The Critical Documents*, 142-148; Lary M. Dilsaver and William C. Tweed, *Challenge of the Big Trees* (Three Rivers, CA: Sequoia Natural History Association, Inc., 1990) 154, 157-159.

events of downhill and slalom. The races at Paradise proved to be an important formative event in the development of Alpine skiing in the United States. Newspaper coverage and radio broadcasts spread news of the event across the nation and further bolstered the image of the western national parks as some of the nation's premier ski destinations. The seminal event drew crowds of 7,500 people and 2,000 cars to Rainier and contributed immensely to Paradise's burgeoning popularity as the leading Alpine skiing center of the Pacific Northwest. Yosemite's Badger Pass enjoyed a similar distinction as the hub of Alpine skiing in the Sierra Nevada. During the winter of 1935-1936, 30,000 skiers converged on Badger Pass. When White gave his speech in D.C. in 1936, problems of overcrowding associated with lift skiing and the high profile ski races had already crept into the parks. White's calls for moderation and restraint towards winter use of the parks resonated into early winter use policies issued by the NPS. Director Arno Cammerer issued a winter use policy in 1936 in an attempt to reign in the adverse affects of Alpine skiing on the parks. This policy was the first in a series of winter use policies issued by Cammerer and his successor Newton Drury from 1936-1946, which were designed to limit, but not prohibit, the growth of Alpine skiing in the parks.<sup>9</sup>

The winter use policies issued by Cammerer and Drury were also designed to create a more uniform, instead of piecemeal, approach to Alpine skiing in the parks. World War II gave the NPS time to recalibrate their approach to Alpine skiing in the parks, and the NPS exited the war with a more conservative mindset concerning the promotion of Alpine skiing in the parks. However, Conrad Wirth, who succeeded Drury as director, loosened the push to create a uniform winter use policy for the parks.

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9 Kirby Gilbert, "The 1935 Olympic Tryouts on Mt. Rainier: A Key Event in Nationalizing U.S. Skiing," E. John B. Allen, ed., *2002 International Ski History Congress: Selected Papers from the Seminars Held at Park City, Utah January 20-24, 2002* (New Hartford, CT: International Skiing History Association, 2002), 91-105; Theodore Catton, *National Park, City Playground: Mount Rainier in the Twentieth Century* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2006), 104-105; Joy Lucas, *It Started in The Mountains: A History of Pacific Northwest Ski Instructors* (Seattle, WA: Professional Ski Instructors of America-NW, 1996), 5-6; Howard Weamer, *The Perfect Art: The Ostrander Hut and Ski Touring in Yosemite* (Marceline, MO: Walsworth Publishing Company, 1995), 20; Robert Frolich, *Mountain Dreamers: Visionaries of Sierra Nevada Skiing* (Truckee, CA: Coldstream Press, 1997), 14; Arno Cammerer, Office Order No. 319: NPS Winter Sports Policy, April 7, 1936; Arno Cammerer, NPS 1940 Winter Sports Policy, January 27, 1940, Box: LWRP, Folder: 868 9-28 1,GNPA; Newton B. Drury, 1945 Winter Use Policy, August 13, 1945, Box: L-46, File: 868, YNPA, GHRC; Newton Drury, 1946 Winter Use Policy, March 21, 1946; Box: LWRP, Folder: 868 9-28 2, GNPA.

In 1952, he issued a proclamation declaring that development of the parks for winter use would be studied on a park by park basis. While Wirth's proclamation maintained central control for winter development in D.C., it also fostered a confusing approach to winter use that would prove increasingly controversial during the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. While the NPS stifled Alpine skiing in some parks, it subsidized it in others. Winter development projects became linked to Wirth's signature program, Mission 66, to improve existing park facilities and build new ones. Environmentalists grew increasingly vocal about the effects of these development projects on the parks. Furthermore, beginning with the landmark report from 1963 entitled *Wildlife Management in the National Parks*, more commonly referred to as *The Leopold Report*, factions in the NPS began to redefine the service's mission to shift focus away from organized recreation and towards ideas of wilderness preservation and ecological management of the parks. Heated controversy came to define lift-served skiing in the parks, and it proved to be an increasingly troublesome issue for park managers. It also proved extremely hard to eliminate due to the parks intimate association with skiing that dated back to Yellowstone in 1886.<sup>10</sup>

In 2015, with the only remaining national park ski lifts at Badger Pass and Hurricane Ridge, skiing in other national parks continues, but it occurs without the luxury of ski lifts. *The Leopold Report* urged the NPS to remove “golf courses, ski lifts, motorboat marinas, and other extraneous developments.” Such developments not only infringed on the “naturalness” of the parks, they also created a barrier between visitors and the preferred national park experience of confronting nature on its own terms. In *Mountains Without Handrails: Reflections on the National Parks* (1980), Joseph Sax made distinctions between “reflective recreation” and “power-based recreation” that catered to the “consumer recreationist.” Sax defined power-based recreation as highly consumptive and antithetical to the mission of the national parks. When Sax published his book in 1980, ski lifts still operated in

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<sup>10</sup> Conrad Wirth, Winter Use Memo, November 20, 1952, Box: L-46, File: 868, YNPA, GHRC; Conrad Wirth, *Mission 66*, January 27, 1956, and A.S. Leopold, S.A. Cain, C.M. Cottam, J.M. Gabrielson, and T.L. Kimball, *Wildlife Management in the National Parks*, March 4, 1963, in Dilsaver, ed., *America's National Park System: The Critical Documents*, 193-196, 237-252. Going forward, this thesis will refer to the 1963 report by its more informal name: *The Leopold Report*.

Yosemite, Sequoia, Olympic, Lassen, Yellowstone, and Rocky Mountain. Sax pointed to lift-served skiing as an inappropriate form of recreation in the national parks because it was a power-based form of recreation that catered to the consumer recreationist. Echoing sentiments voiced by Superintendent White in 1936, Sax argued that there were other recreational venues that could fulfill the desire for lift-served skiing, and the national parks needed to set themselves apart by not offering this form of consumptive recreation. Slowly, the NPS has worked towards creating winter recreation regimes that promote self-directed, immersive, non-mechanized, and reflective recreation. Summer skiing at Logan Pass falls into this category of recreation where once a traveler exits their automobile, they enter the park landscape on its terms. While power-based recreation still thrives in the national parks, the NPS has increasingly worked towards the promotion of reflective recreation in the winter parks, and the battles fought over Alpine skiing helped lead the institutional mind of the NPS towards this policy.<sup>11</sup>

Scholars of the national parks, led by Alfred Runte's *National Parks: The American Experience* (4<sup>th</sup> Edition 2010), have written extensively on the conflict inherent in the dual mandate that guides the management of American national parks. The dual mandate of preservation and recreation dates back to the creation of the NPS in 1916 and even further back to the creation of Yellowstone as the world's first national park in 1872. It has always presented park management with a conundrum on how to best strike a balance between preservation and human use of the parks. The NPS continues to grapple with what forms of recreation are appropriate in the parks and what limits need to be placed on these recreational pursuits once they are allowed. Yet the role of skiing in these debates over park management and the shifting interpretations of the service's dual mandate have been largely ignored or given extremely short shrift by many national park scholars, including Runte. In my thesis, I hope to illustrate that skiing played an important role in shaping the management policies of some of America's

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11 Leopold, Cain, Cottam, Gabrielson, and Kimball, *Wildlife Management in the National Parks (The Leopold Report)*, March 4, 1963, reprinted in Dilsaver, ed., *America's National Park System: The Critical Documents*, 242; Joseph L. Sax, *Mountains Without Handrails: Reflections on the National Parks* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1980), 68-77; John R. White, "Atmosphere in the National Parks."

earliest and most beloved national parks. I intend to position skiing in the Western national parks at the center of a story examining its effects on park management beginning with the skiing soldiers of Yellowstone in 1886 and ending with the cultural contestations over lift-served skiing in the national parks during the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>12</sup>

The story of skiing in the national parks offers a valuable conduit into two major issues that have troubled the NPS since its establishment in 1916: managing the parks as both local and national resources and the appropriate role of industrial machines in the parks. Since the 1920s, an important nexus of these two vexing issues has been winter use of the parks. However, the issue of winter use in the national parks is more often directly linked to snowmobiles, due to the decades long controversy in Yellowstone. Michael J. Yochim's *Yellowstone and the Snowmobile: Locking Horns Over National Park Use* (2009) provides scholars with a thorough examination of the highly contested history of snowmobiles in Yellowstone. Snowmobiles crept into Yellowstone during the 1950s, and by the 1990s the battle over the machines in the world's first national park had turned into national news and came to dominate the historical discussion of winter use in the national parks. With so much focus on the most recent “machine in the garden” debate revolving around snowmobiles, scholars, with a few notable exceptions, largely lost track of the earlier incarnation of the insidious “machine in the garden” of the national parks: mechanized ski lifts.<sup>13</sup>

Undoubtedly, solid historical work has been done on individual national park ski areas. Howard Weamer's *The Perfect Art: The Ostrander Hut & Ski Touring in Yosemite* (1995) and Gene Rose's *Magic Yosemite Winters: A Century of Winter Sports* (1999) provide fascinating overviews and

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12 For treatments of the conundrum presented by the dual mandate, see Alfred Runte, *National Parks: The American Experience*, 4<sup>th</sup> Edition (Lanham, Maryland: Taylor Trade Publishing, 2010) 39-41, 95-97; Robert B. Keiter, *To Conserve Unimpaired: The Evolution of the National Park Idea* (Washington D.C: Island Press, 2013); Dayton Duncan and Ken Burns, *The National Parks: America's Best Idea* (New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 2011); and Dilsaver, ed., *America's National Park System: The Critical Documents*.

13 Micheal J. Yochim, *Yellowstone and the Snowmobile: Locking Horns Over National Park Use* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2009). For the tension between modern machines and ideas of pastoral nature in American culture, see Leo Marx, *The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2000).

wonderful images of Badger Pass and the history of winter use in Yosemite. *Finding Hidden Valley: A Recollective History of a Colorado Ski Area* (2006) by Kathryn Howes Barth and Anne Alexander Leggett ties together a series of oral interviews on Rocky Mountain National Park's lost ski area. Highly localized histories of national park ski areas have also been incorporated into larger works on individual parks. *National Park, City Playground: Mount Rainier in the Twentieth Century* (2006) by Theodore Catton, a truncated version of a longer administrative history, and *Making Rocky Mountain National Park: The Environmental History of an American Treasure* (2013) dedicate portions to Alpine skiing in the individual parks. *Little Gem of the Cascades: An Administrative History of Lassen Volcanic National Park* (2010) by Diane Krahe and Theodore Catton and other park administrative histories also situate winter use and Alpine skiing within the larger management histories of individual national parks. Kirby Gilbert provides a brief primer on the subject of national park ski areas in an article entitled "Lost Ski Areas of the National Parks" that appeared in *Skiing Heritage: Journal of the International Skiing History Association* in 2012. However, a monograph on the development and controversies attached to skiing across the wide swathe of Western national parks has yet to be undertaken. Building off the extant collection of secondary sources and the wealth of primary sources I have gathered over the last two years from various archives and libraries across the West, I hope to craft a system wide study on the history of skiing in the western national parks.<sup>14</sup>

Because of the comparatively small-scale of most national park ski areas, they largely flew

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<sup>14</sup> Weamer, *The Perfect Art*; Gene Rose, *Magic Yosemite Winters: A Century of Winter Sports* (Truckee, CA: Coldstream Press, 1999); Kathryn Howes Barth and Ann Alexander Leggett, *Finding Hidden Valley: A Recollective History of a Colorado Ski Area* (Boulder, CO: White Sand Lake Press, 2006); Catton, *National Park, City Playground*; Diane L. Krahe and Theodore Catton, *Little Gem of the Cascades: An Administrative History of Lassen Volcanic National Park* (NPS: September 2010); Jerry J. Frank, *Making Rocky Mountain National Park: The Environmental History of an American Treasure* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2013); Kirby Gilbert, "Lost Ski Areas of the National Parks," *Skiing Heritage: Journal of the International Skiing History Association*, January 2012, 27-32. For other works with varying amounts of detail on individual national park ski areas, see Yochim, *Yellowstone and the Snowmobile*; Eric Burr, *Ski Trails and Wildlife: Toward Snow Country Restoration* (Victoria, B.C.: Trafford Publishing, 2008); Stan Cohen, *Downhill in Montana: Early Day Skiing in the Treasure State and Yellowstone National Park* (Missoula, MT: Pictorial Histories Publishing Co. Inc., 2007); Strong, *Footprints in Time*; and Roger Merrill Oakes, *Skiing in Olympic National Park* (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2014).



under the national radar in the latter 20<sup>th</sup> century. However, rather than being cultural anomalies, the national park ski areas point back to an earlier era in skiing where community prevailed over corporate profit. Victims of creative destruction, ghost (or lost) ski areas dot the American landscape and web-based projects such as the New England Lost Ski Area Project, Alaska Lost Ski Area Project, and Colorado Ski History work to preserve memories of these ski areas of a by-gone era. Some of the earliest incarnations of these types of community ski areas in the West took root in the national parks. Skiing played a crucial role in the West's transition towards an economy reliant on tourism and recreation, and the national parks provided a fundamental pillar for this transition. Yet scholars of skiing have more often than not overlooked the role played by the national parks of the West. Hal Rothman's *Devil's Bargain: Tourism in the Twentieth Century West* (1998) provides deep insights into the developments of tourism in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, including the role played by the national parks and the ski industry in creating the modern landscape of the West. However, besides an extremely brief mention of early lift-served skiing in Yosemite and Rainier, Rothman does not merge the two in his analysis to explore the role played by the NPS in the transformation of western snowscapes.<sup>15</sup>

Academic studies on skiing in the United States have primarily focused on the role of the USFS while largely neglecting the NPS. In *Ski Style: Sport and Culture in the Rockies* (2004), Annie Gilbert Coleman provides an exploration of the social/cultural history of skiing in the Colorado Rockies. Coleman includes solid analysis of the development of skiing in the West into an extractive industry enabled by the USFS, but beyond a single footnote, Coleman does not provide analysis of the role of the national parks in the social, cultural, and economic progression of western skiing. Michael W. Childers' *Colorado Powder Keg: Ski Resorts and the Environmental Movement* (2012) focuses on the relationship between the USFS and modern skiing in his examination of the ski industry and its most vocal critics. Both books, and Rothman's to a lesser extent, also feature Colorado-centric narratives. An

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<sup>15</sup> Hal Rothman, *Devil's Bargain: Tourism in the Twentieth Century West* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1998).

examination of skiing in the national parks offers a wider view of skiing in the West beyond Colorado and its national forests. As skiing evolved from its pre-industrial Nordic roots to its modern Alpine form that dominates skiing today, the western parks played a central role in this transition. In my thesis, I intend to demonstrate that the development and promotion of modern skiing in the American West was intimately tied to the national parks scattered across the snow country of the Cascades, Olympics, Sierra Nevada, and Rockies.<sup>16</sup>

While the national parks are often depicted as wilderness escapes from modern society, humanity utilized these landscapes long before they were established as national parks and human activities continue to shape the parks in profound ways. William Cronon's *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West* (1991) uses the concept of “second nature” to illustrate how humanity layered second nature over first nature as technology, modes of transportation, and the quest for capital transformed the nation's natural, social, and economic geography. This same process has unfolded in the national parks, creating cultural conflicts over the need and appropriateness of some of these second nature overlays. Lift-served ski areas are a prime example of this phenomenon in the parks, and the attempts to eradicate evidence of removed ski areas from the landscape have left third nature artifact landscapes behind in parks such as Yellowstone, Rocky Mountain, and Lassen. Behind the veneer of “the windshield wilderness” of the parks, lay the realities of human overlays: some readily visible to visitors and some hidden. In my thesis, I hope to shed more light on the complicated human histories of the national parks and peel back some of the layers of the parks' varnished over artifact landscapes.<sup>17</sup>

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16 Annie Gilbert Coleman, *Ski Style: Sport and Culture in the Rockies* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2004); Childers, *Colorado Powder Keg*. For comprehensive ski histories, see E. John B. Allen, *The Culture and Sport of Skiing: From Antiquity to World War II* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2007); E. John B. Allen, *From Skisport to Skiing: One Hundred Years of an American Sport, 1840-1940* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1993); John Fry, *The Story of Modern Skiing* (Lebanon, NH: University Press of New England, 2006), 5-12; and Roland Huntford, *Two Planks and A Passion: The Dramatic History of Skiing* (New York, NY: Continuum, 2008).

17 William Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West* (New York, NY: W.W. Norton, 1991). For histories on roads and automobiles in the national parks, see David Louter, *Windshield Wilderness: Cars, Roads, and Nature in Washington's National Parks* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2006); and Paul S. Sutter, *Driven Wild: How the Fight Against Automobiles Launched the Modern Wilderness Movement* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2002).

Mark David Spence's *Dispossessing the Wilderness: Indian Removal and the Making of the National Parks* (1999) explores the often forgotten history of Native American dispossession of traditional lands in Yellowstone, Glacier, and Yosemite by the federal government. His book provides a powerful study on how the federal government dispossessed traditional ways of interacting with the natural environment and imposed a new regime of interaction based on a new set of rules and ideologies. Early park administrators sought to redefine these parks as places where man was merely a visitor. However, as Spence illustrates, this was a fallacy. Native Americans had been utilizing and manipulating these “wilderness” lands for millennia. In my thesis, I wish to expand on the idea of the parks as homes to humanity. With the creation of these places as national parks, rather than removing them from the touch of humanity, these landscapes merely moved into a new era of utilization and manipulation. The management and protection of the parks requires that people also live in and directly adjacent to them, and the conflicts over lift-served ski areas often revolved around the difficulties of attempting to manage the parks as both local and national resources.<sup>18</sup>

The national parks fostered an appetite and clientele for skiing in the West, and the early development of Alpine skiing in the region was closely tied to its national parks. However, as Alpine skiing transformed into an increasingly consumptive pastime, the NPS began to modify its approach to Alpine skiing. The NPS imposed limits on the extent of development it would allow on park landscapes and worked to shift these developments to other western landscapes. Skiing in the national parks presented the NPS and the American public with a host of issues that forced them to question and recalibrate the concept and role of national parks in modern society and how modern technology should fit into these cultural/natural creations. Straddling their dual mandate, the NPS embarked on a journey of accommodation and resistance to Alpine skiing as intra-agency debates and concessions to public

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<sup>18</sup> Mark David Spence, *Dispossessing the Wilderness: Indian Removal and the Making of the National Parks* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1999). For another study on conflicted ideas of wilderness and the place of humans in the national parks, see Theodore Catton, *Inhabited Wilderness: Indians, Eskimos, and the National Parks in Alaska* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1997).

demand failed to create a blanket policy. The internal bureaucratic debates responded and adapted to the external pressures and debates in the public sphere and left the parks with a convoluted and complicated web of local and national policy regarding lift-served skiing. In my thesis, I hope to unravel some of this web and contribute to the ongoing scholarly mission of creating a more complex and nuanced narrative of American national parks and their evolving legacies.<sup>19</sup>



June 19, 1938. Skier at Logan Pass.  
Photo GNPR 868-9-28d, GNPA.



June 22, 2013. Author skiing at Logan Pass. Author's Photo.

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<sup>19</sup> For a thorough and thought provoking tome on the concept of the public sphere, see Jurgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. by Thomas Burger and Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1991). For frameworks to approach the study of place, see Yi-Fu Tuan, *Topophilia: A Study of Environmental Perception, Attitudes, and Values* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1974); and Yi-Fu Tuan, *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1977). Through his work, Tuan provided scholars with a simple but powerful formula to think about place: space + culture = place. For a powerful critique on the modern ski industry, see Hal Clifford, *Downhill Slide: Why The Corporate Ski Industry Is Bad For Skiing, Ski Towns, And The Environment* (San Francisco, CA: Sierra Club Books, 2003).

## Chapter 1: Yellowstone and The Origins of Winter Use

*A pair of skis make about the liveliest way of locomotion, if you give them a chance, of anything on earth, and if you don't think they are alive and full of soul, you just try them and see. They've got a howling, malignant devil in every inch of their slippery surface.*  
—1894, Emerson Hough, *Yellowstone National Park*.<sup>20</sup>

On April 21, 1903, President Theodore Roosevelt soaked in a sublime winter scene as he skied along the South Rim of the Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone. Pockets of steam issued from the chasm below as thermal waters joined the frigid momentum of the Yellowstone River, freshly charged with its 308' plunge over the Lower Falls. Multicolored hues of thermally altered rhyolite dropped 1,000' from the canyon's forested rim to meet the churning blue of the river below. As the canyon snaked off into the distance, snow, rock, tree, river, and steam merged as one. When Roosevelt absorbed the surreal scene unfolding around him at the Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone, he was well into his second week of a two week junket around the park. He had spent his first week in the lower elevations of northern Yellowstone where spring was quickly advancing. During his second week, Roosevelt left spring behind and ascended into the snow bound interior of the park, where winter still reigned.<sup>21</sup>

At the Golden Gate above Mammoth Hot Springs, the President and his traveling companions had dismounted their individual horses in favor of sleighs pulled by “thoroughly trained snow horses,” which conveyed them across park roads covered with four to five feet of snow.<sup>22</sup> Detachments of skiing soldiers assigned to Mammoth's Fort Yellowstone accompanied the Commander-in-Chief on his trip through the park's interior. With “the President as head mail-carrier furnishing one of the most striking

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20 Emerson Hough, *Rough Trip Through Yellowstone: The Epic Winter Expedition of Emerson Hough, F. Jay Haynes, and Billy Hofer*, ed. Scott Herring (Helena, MT: Riverbend Publishing, 2013), 78. This book gathers together the entire series of 14 articles written by Hough about his 1894 ski trip in Yellowstone. *Forest and Stream* published the articles in 1894. Herring provides an introduction and detailed endnotes to put Hough and his 1894 trip into historical context.

21 For details on President Roosevelt's 1903 trip to Yellowstone, see Doris Whithorn, *Twice Told On The Upper Yellowstone, Volume One* (Livingston, MT: Doris Whithorn, 1994), 1-48; John Burroughs, *Camping With President Roosevelt* (Boston, MA: Houghton, Mifflin And Company, 1906); and Theodore Roosevelt, *Outdoor Pastimes of an American Hunter* (New York, NY: C. Scribner's Sons, 1905), 287-317, Archives & Special Collection (ASC), UMML. From Whithorn's book, information and quotes on the Canyon ski trip are drawn from a newspaper article reprinted on pages 27-29. She provides the citation for this article as “Teddy Plunges Into A Snow Drift,” *Bozeman Avant Courier*, May 3, 1903, 6. The article includes portions of Major John Pitcher's diary. Pitcher was the U.S. Army's Acting Superintendent of Yellowstone and accompanied Roosevelt on his park trip.

22 In the images at the end of this chapter, a modern day visitor's map of Yellowstone is included for readers to reference.

examples of applied civil service reform that the country has ever seen,” Roosevelt “proved the hospitality and shared the bed and board of the ski-runners of Yellowstone” as he soaked up their ski lore. At Canyon, which sits at just under 8,000' in elevation, the President donned a pair of skis to tour the Canyon rim and dabbled in some friendly downhill racing: “The president and Mr. (John) Burroughs were on skis and started to race down hill. The snow was soft and Mr. Burroughs, who had never used a ski before, soon found himself with his head in the snow and his feet in the air.” Burroughs soon had a partner to flail about with in the Yellowstone snow: “He hardly struggled to his feet when the president repeated the performance. Neither man was hurt, but Mr. Pitcher secured excellent photos which he promises to have developed.” Unfortunately, Major John Pitcher's photos of the duo's ski bound floundering never surfaced for public consumption. However, snow filled images of Yellowstone skiing had been indelibly imprinted onto the mind of the President.<sup>23</sup>

On April 24, 1903, as the grand finale to his sixteen day trip, the President headlined the cornerstone laying ceremony for the north entrance's 50-foot high stone arch that would soon bear his name and become an icon of the national park idea: The Roosevelt Arch. An estimated 3,500 people attended the event. Faithful citizens from across Montana packed the trains of the Northern Pacific's Yellowstone Park Line. Four hundred Masons from across the state descended on Gardiner, and Troops B and C of the Third Cavalry rode the five miles down the hill from their garrison at Fort Yellowstone. Roosevelt and the soldiers arrived to the event on horseback. As the Masons lowered the cornerstone, the President spread the mortar that secured the stone in its final resting place. After the cornerstone was in place, the President regaled the assembled crowd with a rousing speech. He pontificated to the

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23 Roosevelt, *Outdoor Pastimes of an American Hunter*, 307-308; Lewis R. Freeman, “Ski Runners of the Yellowstone: Winter Life In Uncle Sam's Great Western Park,” *National Magazine*, February 1904, 611-614, accessed January 15, 2015, Google Books; “Teddy Plunges Into A Snow Drift,” *Bozeman Avant Courier*, May 3, 1903, 6, in Whithorn, *Twice Told On The Upper Yellowstone, Volume One*, 27-29; Burroughs, *Camping With President Roosevelt*, 43-46. John Burroughs was a popular nature writer and close personal friend of Roosevelt. Burroughs was active in the conservation movement of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries and accompanied Roosevelt on his 1903 trip around Yellowstone. In Burroughs account of the dual wipe out on skis, it was the President who crashed first. Burroughs soon followed suit, and the President playfully taunted him with a rejoinder of “Who is laughing now, Oom John?” Roosevelt's nickname for Burroughs was “Oom John.”

masses above the snowless shores of the Yellowstone River at an elevation of 5,200', nearly 2,600' lower than where he watched from skis as the same river careened over the Lower Falls.<sup>24</sup>

In his speech, Roosevelt praised the people of the West, the wonders of Yellowstone, and the patriotism that led to Yellowstone's creation and continued preservation. Echoing the words of Yellowstone National Park's founding legislation from 1872, he expounded on the ideals behind the words that would be prominently displayed on the front of the arch: "FOR THE BENEFIT AND ENJOYMENT OF THE PEOPLE." Roosevelt bellowed: "This Park was created for the benefit and enjoyment of the people. The government must continue to appropriate for it, especially in the direction of completing and perfecting a system of driveways...It must be kept for the benefit and enjoyment of all of us; and I hope to see a steadily increasing number of our people take advantage of its attractions." Although spring held sway in the high desert lowlands of Gardiner, it was the snowcapped winter environment of Yellowstone's high country, readily visible from the rostrum, that lingered in his mind: "Incidentally, I should point out that sometime people will surely awake to the fact that the Park has special beauties to be seen in winter; and any hardy man who can go through it in that season on skis will enjoy himself as he scarcely could elsewhere."<sup>25</sup>

In Yellowstone, President Roosevelt tapped directly into a well-established ski culture that had taken root in the snow covered mountains of the American West. The introduction of the ski to the northern Sierra Nevada during the Gold Rush of the 1850s transformed the way humans interacted with western snowscapes. As Manifest Destiny continued to dispossess Native Americans of their western homelands, skis began to displace snowshoes as the preferred winter flotation devices of the western

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24 Aubrey L. Haines, *The Yellowstone Story: A History of Our First National Park, Volume Two* (Niwot: Colorado Associated University Press, 1977), 229-237; Roosevelt, *Outdoor Pastimes of an American Hunter*, 310-311; Chris J. Magoc, *Yellowstone: The Creation and Selling of an American Landscape, 1870-1903* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1999), 140, 165-167; Whithorn, *Twice Told On The Upper Yellowstone, Volume One*, 14-25.

25 Whithorn, *Twice Told On The Upper Yellowstone, Volume One*, 19-23. The full text of President Roosevelt's written speech that he delivered in Gardiner on April 24, 1903 is reprinted in Whithorn's book. For the full text of the Organic Act of 1872, see "An Act To Set Apart A Certain Tract of Land Lying Near The Headwaters Of The Yellowstone River As A Public Park," in Dilsaver, ed., *America's National Park System: The Critical Documents*, 28-29.

mountains. Through the tutelage of ski savvy Scandinavians, Euro-Americans in snowbound western outposts embraced skis as a superior form of winter transportation to snowshoes. During Yellowstone's long winters, poachers took to skis to do their clandestine work and the U.S. Army, appointed as the park's caretaker and guardian in 1886, followed suit. The Army's reign in Yellowstone launched a rich history of skiing in the western national parks and lay the foundation for the intimate relationship between the federal government and skiing that would blossom in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>26</sup>

By the time President Roosevelt visited Yellowstone in 1903, skiing had grown into an indispensable component of winter culture for park residents. It wasn't only the soldiers and poachers who skied in Yellowstone. In March 1894, *Forest and Stream* correspondent Emerson Hough reported that “even the children wear skis at Ft. Yellowstone, and it is no rare sight to see four or five little pairs of skis on the front stoop of a house.” Through mainstream media coverage, the exotic worlds of western skiing and the terra incognita of Yellowstone winter became more familiar to a national audience and created an enduring connection between skiing and the western national parks. President Roosevelt, who purposefully planned his visit before the hubbub of the tourist season began in June, got an intimate view of the serious work done by Yellowstone's skiing soldiers to protect the park. However, he also reveled in the sheer enjoyment of skiing and envisioned a day when the park's winter wonders would be accessible to a wider swathe of the American public. The park's soldiers skied for work, but they also skied for pleasure. In Yellowstone's hybrid ski world of 1903, skiing hovered between its utilitarian roots and its mainstream recreational future while playing a vital role in the Army's efforts to preserve the natural wonders of Yellowstone for future generations.<sup>27</sup>

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26 Allen, *From Skisport to Skiing*, 13-16; Francis P. Farquhar, *History of the Sierra Nevada* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1965), 112; H. Duane Hampton, *How the U.S. Cavalry Saved Our National Parks* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1971), 79-80.

27 Hough, *Rough Trip Through Yellowstone*, 71; Schullery, *Yellowstone's Ski Pioneers*, passim.



## **Native Americans, Snowshoes, Scandinavians, and Skis in the American West**

The history of winter use in Yellowstone National Park began with a group of Native Americans known as the Sheepaters. At the time of the park's creation in 1872, the Sheepaters, Shoshone people who had never adopted the horse or firearm, lived in the park and its immediate environs as year round residents. Numerous other groups, including the Crow, Bannock, Blackfoot, Flathead, Assinboine, Shoshone, Kootenai, Pend d' Oreille, Kiowa, and Nez Perce, used the park seasonally. These groups retreated back to less frigid and snow caked locales for the winter. However, the Sheepaters remained in the park during the winter to hunt bighorn sheep. Scholars estimate that 150 to 400 Sheepaters, aligned in small bands, lived in Yellowstone in 1872. The Sheepaters employed snowshoes and dogs in their winter hunts, driving the bighorn into deep snow to slow them down and make their dispatch an easier affair. Bands of Sheepaters continued living in the park year round until 1879, when the government forced the remaining bands to settle on the Wind River Reservation to the south and the Fort Hall Reservation to the west. Seeing that Sheepaters continued living in Yellowstone after it was officially set aside as the world's first national park, their snowshoeing, along with the other aspects of their day to day lives, should be considered as the first “winter use” of a national park.<sup>28</sup>

In 1872, Yellowstone had a rich history of sustained Native American use, dating back over 11,000 years. Layers of Native American landscapes lay on top of the geologic landscapes sculpted by large-scale forces of volcanism, glaciation, and hydrothermal activity, and this layering continued after the park's creation. The heavily traveled Bannock Trail cut through the park's northern tier. Wickiups, game corrals, tipi rings, obsidian quarries, campsites, and Indian trails dotted the landscape. However, after the creation of the national park, Euro-American administrators began making moves to erase

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28 Joel C. Janetski, *Indians in Yellowstone National Park* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2002), 37-68; Paul Schullery, *Searching for Yellowstone: Ecology and Wonder In The Last Wilderness* (New York, NY: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1997), 24-26; Peter Nabokov and Lawrence L. Loendorf, *Restoring A Presence: American Indians and Yellowstone National Park* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2004), 34-39, 169, 285-288; Spence, *Dispossessing the Wilderness*, 53.

Native Americans from the landscape. Due in large part to the concerted efforts of Yellowstone's second superintendent Philetus Norris, who served in that capacity from 1877 to 1882, park boosters carefully constructed a myth of Yellowstone as “uninhabited wilderness” to quell the fear of potential visitors and solidify claim to park lands by the federal government. Fear of ravaging Sioux inspired by the 1876 Battle of the Little Bighorn in eastern Montana was followed by the running battles of the Nez Perce War of 1877, which came directly through Yellowstone. Conflicts in the park between Euro-American tourists and the Nez Perce resulted in several injuries and the deaths of two tourists, creating a public relations nightmare for Norris. In response to rising fears, Norris undertook a pro-active campaign to rid Yellowstone of Native Americans. At the same time that the fear of marauding Indians motivated Norris to build a fortress atop Mammoth's Capitol Hill, he also embarked on a historical mission to expunge Native Americans from the park's past.<sup>29</sup>

Claiming that Native Americans avoided the region out of superstitious fear of its thermal wonders, Norris disseminated a view of a Yellowstone virtually devoid of human presence, inhabited only by the “diminutive” and “feeble” Sheepeaters. The mythical creation proved to be an enduring one. The following quote comes not from Norris but from the fourth printing of Richard A. Bartlett's *Great Surveys of the American West*, published in 1986:

Nor did anyone of importance live there. The land was Shoshoni land, but the only real inhabitants were a deteriorating, half-miserable-animal, half-miserable-human type known as the Sheepeaters. These Indians, who ate berries and roots and ferreted out rodents, remained hidden in the thick timber and never caused trouble. They were too despicable to be worth raiding or hunting down, even by lusty young Blackfeet, Crow, or Sioux braves hellbent for scalps. Their tribes, although they lived on the periphery of 'the summit of the world,' had very few superstitions about the region. They simply knew nothing about it.

Over one hundred years after Norris began his deliberate campaign of misinformation, it was still being regurgitated in academic circles. Bartlett substituted complete ignorance for superstition but otherwise

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29 Magoc, *Yellowstone: The Creation and Selling of an American Landscape*, 140-141; Spence, *Dispossessing the Wilderness*, 55-62, 108; Janetski, *Indians in Yellowstone National Park*, 4-6, 19-20, 29-35, 74-80, 95-100, 107.

continued to trumpet Norris' manufactured history and further reify the erroneous information into national park lore. Norris and his followers created a myth of a virgin Yellowstone wilderness, which was removed long ago from human history and could only be subdued and appreciated by Euro-Americans. The carefully crafted myth of uninhabited wilderness was utterly erroneous. Yet, this technique and pattern of disinformation would be recycled in other locales as the federal government carved new national parks from the high mountains of the American West.<sup>30</sup>

Long before the arrival of skis on the continent, snowshoes played a central role in the winter lives of Native Americans in Yellowstone and across the continent's northern tier. Snowshoe construction and design differed between groups of Native Americans, depending on the terrain and the type of snowpack being traveled through, but no matter the design, snowshoes reigned supreme as the personal flotation device of North American winters. As anyone who has ever endured a round of postholing while walking in deep snow can attest, flotation is a godsend. Both skis and snowshoes provide this flotation. However, prior to the introduction of skis, snowshoes were the only flotation devices available for those traveling through deep snows in the North American snowbelt. Euro-Americans, starting with the French in the 1600s, began adopting snowshoes, and by the 1800s, snowshoes had been widely embraced by Euro-Americans in snowbound regions. The first Euro-American to travel through present day Yellowstone was John Colter in 1807-1808. Although historians disagree on the exact route and timing of his trip through Yellowstone, they tend to agree that a good portion of his journey took place on snowshoes. Furthermore, other mountain men utilized snowshoes in Yellowstone before it became a national park, with a strong likelihood that some of them even wintered over in the park's thermal areas. Among Native Americans and the early mountain men, the snowshoe was an indispensable tool to surviving in the mountain environments of the West, including

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30 Magoc, *Yellowstone: The Creation and Selling of an American Landscape*, 140-141; Hiram Martin Chittenden, *The Yellowstone National Park*, ed. Richard A. Bartlett (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1984), 11, 14-15; Richard A. Bartlett, *Great Surveys of the American West*, Fourth Printing (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1986), block quote on 37-38; Nabokov and Loendorf, *Restoring A Presence*, 5.

those that would later be included in the first round of national parks.<sup>31</sup>

Snowshoes and skis both emerged onto snowy landscapes as a matter of human necessity. Their origin stories are hazy and hotly debated as scholars attempt to piece together archaeological evidence, cave paintings, and ancient lore. The first concrete archaeological evidence of skis come from northern Russia. The ski fragments, found in a peat bog in the 1960s, date to circa 6,000 B.C. Some scholars point to a hybrid snowshoe/ski origin dating back to the last Ice Age in the Altai Mountains of Central Asia, the present day borderlands of Mongolia, Russia, Kazakhstan and China. These scholars posit that snowshoes and skis eventually diverged into unique forms of winter travel as Central Asian populations spread across North America, Europe, and Asia. North American populations ultimately refined the snowshoe while populations that moved north and west into Europe refined the ski. Other scholars argue for multiple origin stories and folkways for the ski and snowshoe as the difficulties of winter travel, hunting, and warfare served as the mother of invention for a variety of cultures. Suffice it to say that beyond the snow flotation devices of Aleuts on the Alaskan Peninsula and Caribou Eskimos in northern Canada, who utilized devices that could qualify as hybrid snowshoe/skis, Native Americans had no tradition of skiing. The ski actually made its North American debut as a Pacific World import. The first recorded use of skis in North America was by Russian traders in Alaska in the 1790s. However, the contraption did not truly find a home in North America until the mid-1800s when Scandinavian immigrants unleashed their ski culture upon the continent and entrenched a new form of winter travel and recreation to supplement and eventually surpass snowshoeing in popularity.<sup>32</sup>

Steeped in traditions of utilizing the ski for cross country travel and practical survival in snowbound environments, Scandinavians, especially Norwegians, spread ski culture with them across

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31 William Osgood and Leslie Hurley, *The Snowshoe Book* (Brattleboro, VT: The Stephen Green Press, 1971), 11-16; Len McDougall, *The Snowshoe Handbook* (Short Hills, NJ: Buford Books, 2000), 1-8; Jeff Henry, *Snowshoes, Coaches, and Cross Country Skis: A Brief History of Yellowstone Winters* (Emigrant, MT: Roche Jaune Pictures, 2011) 18-39; Janetski, *Indians in Yellowstone National Park*, 105.

32 Huntford, *Two Planks and a Passion*, 3-8; Allen, *The Culture and Sport of Skiing*, 7-24; John Fry, *The Story of Modern Skiing*, 4-7; Osgood and Hurley, *The Snowshoe Book*, 11-16, 38-39.

the northern United States. Early on, skiing hopped over the Northeast and its long cultural attachment to snowshoeing. The earliest documentation of skiing in New England does not come until 1870. It is the Scandinavian settlements of the Midwest that are looked to as the cradle of American skiing. The earliest mention of skiing in the Midwest dates to 1841 in Wisconsin, when two Norwegians skied from Rock Prairie to Beloit to purchase flour. Their mysterious “ski tracks caused speculation from Americans unacquainted with skis who wondered what sort of animal or backwood monster had left the curious marks in the snow.” Skiing migrated with Scandinavians and quickly found a home in the mining camps of the Sierra Nevada and the Rockies as other Euro-Americans saw the practical advantages of skis. In the 1850s, snowbound miners in the remote mining camps of California's northern Sierra Nevada began adopting skis as an essential element of their winter lives. The earliest documentation of skiing in California dates to 1853. As the federal government aggressively pried California and other parts of the West from Mexican and Native Americans hands, the pre-industrial Scandinavian folkway piggybacked Manifest Destiny into the mountains of the West as its mining enterprises industrialized the region.<sup>33</sup>

However, most non-Scandinavians found it hard to escape the nomenclature of the snowshoe and embrace the Norwegian word “ski” for the new contraption. Hence, the term “snowshoe” or “Norwegian snowshoe” was more often than not used for skis in 19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup> century America. The snowshoe itself was often distinguished by the terms “webbed snowshoe” or “Canadian snowshoe.” In Yellowstone, Snowshoe Pass cuts through the Gallatin Range and despite the images it may illicit in the modern mind, the place name was actually inspired by “the long heavy wooden skis (Norwegian snowshoes) that army personnel and others used in Yellowstone to travel in winter.” Similarly, the earliest skiing legend of the Sierra Nevada, John “Snowshoe” Thompson, earned his nickname for his skiing skills, which he used to deliver mail across the crest of the Sierra from 1856

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33 Coleman, *Ski Style*, 13-25; Allen, *From Skisport to Skiing*, 14-15, 29-30, 32, 33-37, quote on 30.

-1876. Journalist Emerson Hough, in his series of *Forest and Stream* articles about his 1894 ski adventures in Yellowstone, mentions a “Snowshoe Pete,” who patrolled and repaired the park's telephone lines in winter. Snowshoe Pete, a Swede whose real name was Pete Nelson, did his solitary work on skis. In his first article, Hough started out using the term “snowshoes” to refer to “skis,” but he soon embraced the term “skis” and continued using it throughout the fourteen article series. However, he was careful to note the exotic word's pronunciation as “skee” for the uninitiated. Furthermore, *Forest and Stream* italicized the words “ski” and “skis” every time they appeared. The magazine wanted to draw attention to the strange term as a new addition to the English language. The terms “skiing” and “skier” do not appear in the articles. Hough uses terms such as “ski-going,” “ski-work,” and “ski running” to refer to the act and “ski runner,” “ski-goer,” “ski man,” and “ski traveler” to refer to one engaged in the act. Hough and his reading audience were tentatively treading on new linguistic ground, and Yellowstone skiing was helping to smooth the way for the word “ski” to slowly filter into the American vernacular.<sup>34</sup>

Regardless of the nomenclature attached to it, increasing numbers of Euro-Americans began using skis as their preferred mode of winter travel in the long lasting and seemingly bottomless snows of the mountainous West. In his Yellowstone articles, Hough provided valuable insights into why many in the West preferred “Norwegian skis” over “Canadian web shoes” for winter transport. Hough described how his skiing mentor, Thomas Elwood “Uncle Billy” Hofer, “decided very wisely that it was better to stick to the skis, almost universally used in the Rockies” because “if one wears webs, and so gets traction power, he can not take the long runs down hill by which so much of the time is made in ski running. All the mountain men seem to unite in condemning the web or Indian shoe for this

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34 Allen, *The Culture and Sport of Skiing*, 216-217; Lee H. Whittlesey, *Yellowstone Place Names* (Helena: Montana Historical Society Press, 1988), 142; Farquhar, *History of the Sierra Nevada*, 99-100; Hough, *Rough Trip Through Yellowstone*, 9, 26, 74, 78, 100, 153, 173, 190, 217, 228-229. For details on the life of Snowshoe Thompson, see Kenneth O. Bjork, *West of the Great Divide: Norwegian Migration to the Pacific Coast, 1847-1893* (Northfield, MN: Norwegian-American Historical Association, 1958), 274-299.

mountain work. They say the ski is far easier and faster.” Even on the flats, especially once a trail was broken, skis provided the advantage of kick and glide that snowshoes did not. Of course, the amount of kick and glide being enjoyed often depended on snow conditions and the skier's expertise at treating and waxing their bases. However, with steady experimentation and practice, Euro-Americans in the West increasingly turned away from the snowshoe and embraced the ski.<sup>35</sup>

Following the lead of Norwegians like Snowshoe Thompson, Westerners began choosing long, wide skis for snow travel through relatively open country because skis displaced the weight of a person more efficiently than a snowshoe and allowed one to glide through the snow rather than sink deep into it with each plodding step. In the 1850s and 1860s, miners and railroad workers in the Sierra Nevada experimented with the snowshoe but became frustrated with its inefficiency in the epically deep snows they faced. In the winter of 1866 -1867, John Gillis, a railroad engineer in the Sierra Nevada, described his adoption of the ski over the snowshoe. His commentary provides a wonderful insight into the type of ski equipment being used during this era:

We started with Canadian snowshoes, but soon abandoned them for the Norwegian, each a strip of light wood ten to twelve feet long, four inches wide, and an inch and a quarter thick in the centre; they taper in thickness toward the end, are turned up in front, and grooved on the bottom. There is a broad strap in the middle to put the foot under, and a balancing-pole to steady, push, and brake with. The latter will be seen all important, as a speed of twenty five to thirty miles an hour is often attained on a steep hill side.<sup>36</sup>

As Gillis notes, skis, unlike snowshoes, also provided the exhilaration of speed on downhills. Turning was a novel concept to most in those days, especially the non-Scandinavians who adopted the ski in the chaotic mining camps of the West. Tutelage and refined ski technique were rarities, and the pell-mell adoption of skis by tenderfoots led to very aggressive bombing of downhill runs that often ended in epic wipe outs. The single pole, or lurk, was not only used for propelling one through the terrain. It was

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35 Hough, *Rough Trip Through Yellowstone*, 73-74; Captain Alfred E. Bradley, “The Ski And Its Use For Military Purposes In Yellowstone National Park,” *Proceedings of the Ninth Annual Meeting of The Association of Military Surgeons of the United States, Held at New York City, May 31-June 2, 1900* (Chicago, IL: RR Donnelley & Sons Co, 1901), 408-409, accessed January 15, 2014, Google Books.

36 Farquhar, *History of the Sierra Nevada*, 112.

also used as a brake on downhill runs. One popular method of downhill ascent was “riding the pole” where the skier sat “astride of it, with the rear end of the pole dropping deep in the snow behind and thus serving as a brake.” However, straight shot longboard racing, which began in the mining camps of the northern Sierra Nevada in the 1850s, often eschewed thoughts of pole braking. After using the pole for propulsion in the mass start, the racers squatted over their skis with their pole aerodynamically thrust out in front of them like a joust. The legends of longboard racing boasted of speeds between 60 to 90 miles per hour. Racers enhanced the speed of their racing skis with special, home-made wax or “dope.” Exhilaration and daredevilry added to the allure of the ski and pointed to its more recreational manifestations that would drive skiing to the top of the winter sports world in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Skiing emerged onto the landscape out of utilitarian reasons for winter survival, but fun, daring, exploration, competition, spirituality, and communion with nature were also part of its allure.<sup>37</sup>

Skiing was a cultural transplant ideally suited to the mammoth snowpacks of the western mountains and the remote winter outposts that clung to life there. In the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century West, miners rocketed down its steep mountains to after hours libations, heroic postal carriers braved its dangerous mountain passes, itinerant preachers and doctors spread their cures to its isolated camps, and soldiers patrolled its first national park on skis. For most Euro-Americans in the West, the snowshoe did not hold the deep enduring folkway that it did for Native Americans or Euro-Americans in New England and Quebec, where snowshoe clubs had grown into integral components of winter life. Of course, snowshoes did not disappear from western landscapes. They continued to provide unique advantages for certain kinds of winter work and terrain, and as ideas of winter recreation spread, many took to snowshoes for winter romps. However, the arrival of the ski in the 1850s began transforming

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37 Allen, *The Culture and Sport of Skiing*, 22; Farquhar, *History of the Sierra Nevada*, 99-100, 110-112; Hough, *Rough Trip Through Yellowstone*, 83; William Banks Berry, *Lost Sierra: Gold, Ghosts & Skis*, ed., Chapman Wentworth (Soda Springs, CA: Western America SkiSport Museum, 1991), 9, 11, 30, 61-62. In aggressive bouts of living history, the Plumas Ski Club in northern California's Plumas County keeps the tradition of longboard racing alive each year. The ski club holds The Historic Longboard Revival Series of races each winter at the Plumas-Eureka State Park Ski Bowl near Johnsville, CA.



the way humans interacted with snow covered landscapes in the West.<sup>38</sup>

In Yellowstone, the Army took careful note of this, learning from the first wave of skiing westerners in and around the region's remote mining towns. The origins of the mining town of Cooke City, located in the Absaroka Mountains just outside Yellowstone's northeast boundary, predate the creation of Yellowstone National Park in 1872. Skiing in Yellowstone dates to the park's creation as prospectors made forays into and across the park's northern reaches on skis. By 1883, 500 miners spent the winter in snowbound Cooke City. These men utilized skis and some skied into the unguarded winter park to poach game to sell to their hungry winter companions. To combat such illicit activities, the government called on the Army to protect the park on a year round basis in 1886. Following the lead of the prospectors and poachers, the Army chose skis over snowshoes to pursue their winter work and institutionalized a rich history of skiing in the western national parks in the process.<sup>39</sup>

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### **The U.S. Army, Skis, and the Media in Yellowstone National Park**

When the federal government created Yellowstone National Park in 1872, it did not appropriate any concrete funds for the park's development and protection. Yellowstone's founding document stipulated that ten year leases of park ground to private concessionaires and other nebulous “revenues that may be derived from any source connected with the park” were supposed to fund the park's development and protection. In reality, the founding legislation provided no true funding for the park, revealing the uncertainty surrounding the whole endeavor. Yellowstone's first superintendent, Nathaniel P. Langford, served with no salary and no staff. Poachers and souvenir hunters rode roughshod over the park's wildlife and thermal areas until the government finally called on the U.S. Army in 1886 to protect and manage the development of the park: duties the Army carried out until the NPS took over in

38 Berry, *Lost Sierra*, 3-8; Farquhar, *History of the Sierra Nevada*, 243-244; Fry, *The Story of Modern Skiing*, 5-6; Osgood and Hurley, *The Snowshoe Book*, 16-25.

39 Schullery, *Yellowstone's Ski Pioneers*, 9-11; Charles Wood, *The Northern Pacific: Main Street of the Northwest* (New York, NY: Bonanza Books, 1968), 207.

1918. Prior to the Army's tenure in Yellowstone, the park was left unguarded in winter, and skiing poachers filled the void. However, in the winter of 1886-1887, U.S. Cavalry troops, who had arrived in August, began wintering over in the park. With the tutoring of experienced and ski savvy civilian scouts, cavalry troops learned to ski for winter patrols. This novel experiment created an intimate and ongoing relationship between the federal government and skiing in the American West. It was in Yellowstone where the federal government and skiing first became entwined, and these images were widely disseminated to the American public via the national press.<sup>40</sup>

Although skiing and warfare had a long history in Europe, the U.S. Army had not dabbled in skiing prior to mounting soldiers on skis to patrol the Yellowstone winter. Learning from the mistakes and success of other park skiers, the skiing soldiers of Yellowstone proved to be adept students. As the Army tentatively figured out its ski legs during its first winter, a legendary expedition in the annals of Yellowstone skiing took place. Frederick Schwatka, a renowned Arctic explorer and publicity hound, led a winter expedition into Yellowstone sponsored by *The New York World* and *The Century Magazine*. The ski party, consisting of ten men, departed Mammoth on the morning of January 5, 1887. Schwatka planned on making a 140 mile circuit of the park. Unfortunately for Schwatka, the party skied directly into the teeth of the 1886-1887 winter, which would go down in the chronicles of Western history as one of its most brutal. Historic snowfall and bitter temperatures ensconced the region in a seemingly endless barrage of raging blizzards. For Army personnel learning the skills of skiing and winter survival, the Schwatka Expedition quickly turned into a case study and cautionary tale on the travails of winter travel on the Yellowstone Plateau.<sup>41</sup>

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40 "An Act To Set Apart A Certain Tract of Land Lying Near The Headwaters Of The Yellowstone River As A Public Park," in Dilsaver, ed., *America's National Park System: The Critical Documents*, 28-29; Aubrey Haines, *The Yellowstone Story, Volume One* (Niwot: Colorado Associated University Press, 1977), 169-172, 180-181; Richard West Sellars, *Preserving Nature in the National Parks: A History* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1997), 19-20, 48; Schullery, *Yellowstone's Ski Pioneers*, 24-28; Allen, *From Skisport to Skiing*, 39.

41 Allen, *The Culture and Sport of Skiing*, 29-33; William L. Lang, "At the Greatest Personal Peril to the Photographer," *Montana: The Magazine of Western History*, Winter 1983, 16-22; Haines, *The Yellowstone Story: Volume Two*, 8-9; Schullery, *Yellowstone's Ski Pioneers*, 28-35.

Bad planning, deep snow, howling blizzards, and temperatures reaching as low as -37 F plagued the endeavor from the start. Four miles south of Norris, Schwatka was overtaken by illness after two nights of camping out and one night spent in the Norris Hotel with its winterkeeper. After collapsing on his skis, Schwatka turned around and headed back to the Norris Hotel. He holed up at Norris for the next week and a half, with the exception of an aborted attempt to travel to Canyon on snowshoes. On January 18, Schwatka and the majority of his party finally called it quits and skied back to Mammoth. Schwatka had only made it 25 miles into his proposed 140 mile circuit of the park. The party dwindled to three members: Charles Stoddard, David Stratton, and the photographer Frank J. Haynes, who would go on to become a Yellowstone legend and the park's most renowned photographer. The reduced expedition, now led by Haynes, skied to Old Faithful where they spent one week. At Old Faithful, the expedition added a fourth member, civilian scout Ed Wilson, who skied the 51 miles from Mammoth to join them. Ferocious blizzards kept the party indoors much of the time at Old Faithful, but the weather cleared for a couple days and allowed exploration of the geyser basins, permitting Haynes to photograph the holy grail of Yellowstone's thermal wonders in deep winter.<sup>42</sup>

After their time at Old Faithful, the Haynes party returned to Norris. They traveled down the Firehole River, staying a night with the winterkeepers at the Firehole Hotel, to Madison Junction, where the Firehole and Gibbon meet to form the Madison River. From the wedding of the waters at Madison, the skiers followed the Gibbon back to Norris, skiing all day and into the night in a raging blizzard and surviving a near miss with an avalanche in Gibbon Canyon. They spent two nights in the Norris Hotel before heading across the Central Plateau to Canyon, where they once again enjoyed winterkeeper hospitality as a renewed round of blizzards set in. However, the weather cleared enough to allow the party to ski the Canyon's rim, as President Roosevelt would do 16 years later. Haynes became the first person to photograph the Canyon's natural wonders in the depth of winter, including

<sup>42</sup> Lang, "At the Greatest Personal Peril to the Photographer," 14-23; Schullery, *Yellowstone's Ski Pioneers*, 32-39; Henry P. Wells, "Winter In Yellowstone Park," *Harper's Weekly*, April 9, 1887, 259, Microfilm Collection, UMMML.

the ice wreathed 308' drop of the Lower Falls and the 75' cone of ice formed at its base by the freezing spray of its plummeting waters. Along with his photos of the thermal marvels in the geyser basins of the Firehole and Gibbon, Haynes had amassed the most detailed photographic documentation of Yellowstone's winter wonders to date and was poised to share them with an eager public.<sup>43</sup>

However, before he could share his historic photos, Haynes had to successfully transport the bulky and fragile glass negatives, which numbered 90, across a frozen and unforgiving landscape. High on obtaining the first photos of these winter spectacles, and eager to see new ones, the party made an immense tactical mistake in choosing their route back to Mammoth. Not content to retrace their steps along the road to Norris and Mammoth, they decided to ski up and over the roadless Washburn Range, the northern rim of Yellowstone's immense 34 by 44 mile caldera. Their plan was to travel 20 miles from Canyon to John Yancey's hotel at Pleasant Valley, near present day Tower Junction, via Rowland Pass, where a trail had been blazed in the summer of 1878 by Superintendent Norris. Rowland Pass cut between 10,243' Mt. Washburn, the high point of the range, and an unnamed 9,650' peak. The trail crossed the ridgeline to the east of Mt. Washburn and led to the headwaters of Antelope Creek, which could then be followed down the northern slopes of the Washburns to Pleasant Valley. The skiers envisioned a straightforward, one day trek to the comfort of Yancey's hospitality. However, the twenty miles of backcountry skiing gave them much more than they had bargained for.<sup>44</sup>

Burdened with the weight of Haynes' camera gear and his precious glass negatives, the party opted to travel as light as possible. They took no camping gear and only "two biscuits each in their pockets." The unpredictable winter gods seemed to be smiling upon them as they departed Canyon in -21 F temperatures under calm and clear skies on the morning of January 23, 1887. However, blizzards

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43 Lang, "At the Greatest Personal Peril to the Photographer," 23-24; Schullery, *Yellowstone's Ski Pioneers*, 39-45; Haines, *The Yellowstone Story: Volume Two*, 10; Wells, "Winter In Yellowstone Park," 259.

44 Lang, "At the Greatest Personal Peril to the Photographer," 24-29; Schullery, *Yellowstone's Ski Pioneers*, 44-48; Wells, "Winter In Yellowstone Park," 259; Whittlesey, *Yellowstone Place Names*, 133-134. The present day auto road from Canyon to Tower travels through the 8,859' Dunraven Pass to the west of Mount Washburn's summit.

soon moved in, and after two nights spent in the elements, the disoriented, hungry, and nearly frozen adventurers finally reached the haven of Yancey's at 3 p.m. on January 25. After three days of being nursed back to health by Yancey, the party skied back to Mammoth. Haynes' negatives of Yellowstone's interior wonders in full winter regalia had miraculously survived the harrowing journey. The expedition drove home the dangers of Yellowstone's winter, but it also brought back tangible proof of its amazing allure. On April 9, 1887, *Harper's Weekly* featured an illustration of the Haynes' ski party on its cover. Titled "The Yellowstone in Winter – A Surprise," the cover depicts the skiers descending the northern slopes of the Washburns. They top a knoll and look down on a herd of elk lounging in the snow. Elk begin to react to the strange apparitions above them as the skiers use their single poles to brake and take in the majestic scene. The illustration, done by Charles Graham, was the first depiction of skiing to appear on the cover of a national magazine in the United States.<sup>45</sup> The centerfold of the issue featured eight of Haynes photos taken on the expedition, revealing the myriad of winter wonders housed in the park. Thanks to the Haynes' expedition, *Harper's Weekly* brought the still exotic subject matter of skiing and winter in the world's first national park into the homes of the American public.<sup>46</sup>

Later that winter, skiing exploits in Yellowstone were once again brought to a national audience. This time the central character was Thomas Elwood Hofer, the intrepid scout and skier. George Bird Grinnell, staunch defender of Yellowstone and editor of *Forest and Stream*, hired Hofer to perform a mid-winter wildlife count and write a series of five articles about his experiences on skis in Yellowstone. Shedding the bulk associated with the Schwatka expedition, and lacking the bulky camera gear that Haynes and his companions had to deal with, Hofer and his skiing companion, Jack Tansey, made an efficient 225 mile circuit through the park. They stayed with winterkeepers when possible and otherwise camped out. Hofer and other experienced civilian scouts proved to be valuable mentors to the

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45 A colorized image of this *Harper's Weekly* cover is included in the images at the end of this chapter.

46 *Harper's Weekly*, April 9, 1887, cover, centerfold on 256-257, 259; Lang, "At the Greatest Personal Peril to the Photographer," 24-29; Schullery, *Yellowstone's Ski Pioneers*, cover, 44-48; Haines, *The Yellowstone Story: Volume Two*, 10-11; John Fry, "One Man's Mission," *Ski*, March-April 2004, 90.

tenderfoot skiing soldiers of Yellowstone. Where many of Schwatka's and Haynes' exploits in 1887 provided valuable cautionary tales on what not to do, Hofer provided a model of how safe and efficient winter travel on skis should be undertaken. With the accrued knowledge of the seasoned guides and skiers, the Army learned the tactics of the poachers and the skills of skiing necessary to pursue them. The learning curve was steep, but the efforts soon bore some fruit. The first arrest of poachers by the Army occurred in April 1887 at Norris. The Army's determination to patrol the park's extensive boundaries from poaching incursions throughout the winter established skiing as a necessity for the job. Dramatic ski adventures, along with the monotony of winter life housed in snow bound cabins, began unfolding each winter in Yellowstone as soldiers went about their work.<sup>47</sup>

The exploits of Yellowstone skiing continued to interest a national audience and began to shape early national park policy in fundamental ways. In March of 1894, *Forest and Stream* sent Emerson Hough to Yellowstone to embark on a ski trip through the park and write a series of articles about his experience. Scholars credit Hough's articles with arousing grassroots opposition to the “Segregation” scheme spearheaded by mining moguls and other special interests to build a railroad through Yellowstone's northern tier from Gardiner to the mining district of Cooke City. With this scheme, the segregationists also hoped to pull some of the park's public lands back into private hands. Over the previous decade, *Forest and Stream* and other park defenders had fought against these proposals, claiming that allowing any railroad into the park would despoil, scar, and irreparably damage the entire national park idea. Meanwhile, railroad proponents attached pro-railroad riders to any Congressional bill that sought to create a legal framework to protect the park. The opposing parties had reached a Congressional stalemate, and the national park idea remained with no legal structure. Hough wrote a dramatic account of the arrest of Ed Howell, the notorious bison poacher, executed on skis in Pelican

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47 Paul Schullery, “Yellowstone's First Winter Wildlife Survey,” *Yellowstone Science*, Summer, 1994, 12-15, accessed January 5, 2015, <http://www.nps.gov/yell/planyourvisit/upload/vol2-4.pdf>; Schullery, *Yellowstone's Ski Pioneers*, 49-97; Michael Punke, *Last Stand: George Bird Grinnell, The Battle to Save The Buffalo, And The Birth of The New West* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2007), 176-177.

Valley by the civilian scout Felix Burgess and a soldier named Troike. Hough's exposé on Howell's poaching atrocities, coupled with his coverage of the greed and avarice fueling the railroad lobby, helped to break the legislative stalemate. Congress passed the Lacey Act of 1894 on May 7, which finally provided the federal government with a legal structure to arrest and prosecute individuals engaged in illegal activity in the park. Captain George Anderson, Acting Superintendent of Yellowstone, wrote that Howell's "crime has been of more service to the Park than any other event in its history." The Lacey Act was a piece of landmark legislation because it provided the foundation for a federal regime of law enforcement in the national parks. With the arrest of Howell, Yellowstone skiing fundamentally reshaped how the federal government policed human activities in the national parks.<sup>48</sup>

During Hough's visit, *Forest and Stream* arranged for him to accompany Hofer on skis through Yellowstone's snow clad interior on a wildlife counting expedition. Captain George Anderson proved to be an extremely cordial host, offering Hough every hospitality at his command. Anderson realized he had a powerful ally in *Forest and Stream*, which had an influential and national reading audience. Grinnell, co-founder of the Boone and Crockett Club with Theodore Roosevelt in 1888, traveled in heady conservation circles, and *Forest and Stream* was one of the most strident and consistent voices fighting for the protection of Yellowstone and its disappearing wild bison. Anderson had a high stake in the success of Hough's journalistic ski journey and made sure he was properly outfitted and trained. Prior to his arrival in Mammoth in March 1894, Hough had never strapped on a pair of skis. Hofer took on the role of skiing mentor and put him through a crash course at Mammoth before embarking on their 200 mile journey. Hough's articles once again brought the adventures of Yellowstone skiing and the

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48 For the segregation scheme, the arrest of Howell, and the Lacey Act, see Hough, *Rough Trip Through Yellowstone*, 23-66; Theodore Roosevelt and George Bird Grinnell, eds., *Hunting in Many Lands: The Book of the Boone and Crockett Club* (New York, NY: Forest and Stream Publishing, 1895), 396-400, 407-417, ASC, UMML; Punke, *Last Stand*, 205-217; Karl Jacoby, *Crimes Against Nature: Squatters, Poachers, Thieves, and the Hidden History of American Conservation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 123-129; and Hampton, *How the U.S. Cavalry Saved Our National Parks*, 113-129. For the the full text of the Lacey Act of 1894, see "An Act To Protect The Birds And Animals In Yellowstone National Park, And To Punish Crimes In Said Park, And For Other Purposes," Dilsaver, ed., *America's National Park System: The Critical Documents*, 36-39.

park's winter wonders to a captivated national audience. Along with being an engaging and often humorous adventure story, these articles were a passionate cry for political action to save an endangered natural/national treasure. Captain Anderson praised Hough for bringing the hard work done in Yellowstone “by the soldiers in summer and in winter, in cold and in storms, on foot, on horseback, and on snowshoes (skis)” to the attention of the American public. Anderson stated that “never before was it so well placed before the public as it was by Mr. Hough in his *Forest and Stream* articles,” and Yellowstone skiing provided the heart and soul of those articles.<sup>49</sup>

During their tenure in Yellowstone, the Army not only protected the park, they also directed its development. They adamantly defended the northern tier of the park against the segregationists and railroad boosters. They built Fort Yellowstone, which still acts as park headquarters. They expanded and refined the park's system of roads and trails begun by Superintendent Norris. They worked to consolidate park concessions (hotels, dining, transportation, etc.) into the hands of a chosen few, most notably the Yellowstone Park Company, which grew out of the Northern Pacific's interests in the park. A built infrastructure colonized chunks of Yellowstone as it was transformed from Indian land to tourist “Wonderland.” As part of this infrastructure, the Army ultimately created a system of 12 “soldier stations” to strategically house patrols throughout the park's 2.2 million acres. Soldiers manned these stations year round, and the Army erected 20 “snowshoe cabins” in remote areas to shelter soldiers and scouts on extended ski patrols. Poachers threatened the park from all sides of its immense boundaries, which poured out of northwest Wyoming into Montana and Idaho. The mere possibility of ski patrols in the backcountry served to deter many poachers from continuing their work in Yellowstone, especially after the Lacey Act of 1894 became law. Each winter, due to the transient nature of military postings,

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49 Hough, *Rough Trip Through Yellowstone*, 9-10, 70-76; Punke, *Last Stand*, 164-166; George Anderson, “Protection of the Yellowstone National Park,” *Hunting in Many Lands*, 402. Among Yellowstone employees, Captain George Anderson is fondly remembered for lifting restrictions on alcohol in the park. At Lake Village, the disc golf course is named “The George Anderson” in commemoration of the captain. An annual disc golf tournament, The George Anderson Classic, takes place each summer at Lake. One of its most beloved features is a keg of beer in the hilltop woods.



the Army trained a new crop of skiing soldiers. After furnishing rookie skiers with their gear, veterans took the tenderfoots out to Capitol Hill, where Superintendent Norris had earlier built his fortress to ward off attacks from Indians he claimed were not there. The Army dismantled the fortress, and Capitol Hill's artifact landscape then served as the training hill for skiing soldiers "as enthusiastic as a lot of children with new sleds." Epic pratfalls unfolded as the trainees learned their new skill and joined the ranks of Yellowstone ski runners, which grew exponentially with each passing year.<sup>50</sup>

Skiing had been part of the western landscape for decades, but it was normally attached to skiing right outside one's door in snowbound locales. Skiing matched with mechanized travel was still a novel concept, but its time was coming. On January 29, 1898, an article entitled "A Winter Trip Through The Yellowstone Park," written by Lieutenant Elmer Lindsey, appeared in *Harper's Weekly*. Lindsey and his fellow officer, Captain Scott, embarked on a trip to southwest Yellowstone to gather intelligence on Idaho based poachers, who enjoyed nearly free range in this remote area of the park far removed from Fort Yellowstone. They also planned to inspect the interior soldier stations as they skied all the way back to Fort Yellowstone. Driving home the immense size of Yellowstone, the remote nature of the park in winter, and the increased bands of settlement and mechanization that continued to proliferate on the park's edges, Lindsey and Scott boarded a Northern Pacific train at Cinnabar, Montana, 3 miles north of Gardiner, and rode the rails 347 miles to Market Lake, ID. In 1883, the Northern Pacific had completed the first incarnation of their Yellowstone branch line from Livingston to Cinnabar. By 1903, the railroad would run directly up to Yellowstone's north gate at Gardiner, but it failed to enter the park itself, where an Old West transportation regime of horses and stagecoaches continued to reign. From Cinnabar, Lindsey and Scott rode Northern Pacific trains to Butte, MT, where

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50 Anderson, "Protection of the Yellowstone National Park," *Hunting in Many Lands*, 387, 395, 401; Hampton, *How the U.S. Cavalry Saved Our National Parks*, 47, 100, 105, 108, 114-119; *Rules, Regulations, and Instructions For the Information and Guidance Of Officers And Enlisted Men Of The United States Army And Of The Scouts Doing Duty In The Yellowstone National Park* (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1907), 3-4, 17-33, Amon Carter Museum of American Art, Fort Worth, TX; Bradley, "The Ski And Its Use For Military Purposes In Yellowstone National Park," 410-411; Lewis R. Freeman, "Ski Runners of the Yellowstone: Winter Life In Uncle Sam's Great Western Park," 611-614.

they changed to the Union Pacific, riding it to Market Lake, just north of Idaho Falls. Their hickory skis rode on the trains “in a baggage car.” Lindsey describes the experience of assuring the safe arrival of their skis as “agonizing and expensive,” requiring “personal attention, and a liberal tip at every transfer to counteract the terrible temptation which their upturned and unprotected 'noses' offer to the baggage smasher.” Miraculously, their exotic luggage made it to Market Lake unscathed.<sup>51</sup>

After disembarking the train with their skis in hand, the soldiers hired wagons to take them through the Mormon settlements of Rexburg, St. Anthony, and Marysville on the west side of the Tetons. Early spring mud colonized the valley floor, but Lindsey and Scott eventually strapped on their “nine-and-half foot skis” and headed into the park. They enlisted two seasoned mountain men to accompany them on the first leg of their ski to the Snake River station at the park's south entrance. As they ventured further into the park, they encountered seven to ten foot snowpacks. While they forded streams, took turns breaking trail, and sank knee deep in unconsolidated snow, a fresh round of blizzards added to their difficulties. After a night out in the elements, they finally reached the ruins of an old poacher's cabin near the ford of the Bechler River. The dilapidated ruins provided some shelter, but not much. As the storm raged, and a dangerous ford of the Bechler loomed, the grizzled mountain men decided they had enough and refused to ski on. The soldiers wisely consented to their sage advice and skied back to the muddy valley floor and a train home. Lindsey wrote that “We had been unable to carry out our orders to inspect the winter stations, but...had secured much valuable information, besides frightening our poacher friends by appearing when least expected, and from a new direction.” The arrival of cavalry officers disembarking the Union Pacific with skis, procuring information, and heading into the park did not escape the notice of the locals. It also presaged the near future when the railroads would increasingly see the economic opportunities attached to skiing. Trains and skiing were

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51 Lieutenant Elmer Lindsey, illustrated by Frederic Remington, “A Winter Trip Through The Yellowstone Park,” *Harper's Weekly*, January 29, 1898, 106-107, 110, Library Stacks, UMML; Mark Daniel Barringer, *Selling Yellowstone: Capitalism and the Construction of Nature* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2002), 26, 43; Aubrey L. Haines, *Yellowstone Place Names: Mirrors of History* (Niwot: University Press of Colorado, 1996), 258-260.

just beginning a fruitful relationship that would blossom in the first part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>52</sup>

*Harper's Weekly* matched Lindsey's story with four Frederick Remington sketches, and three of the sketches featured skiing as their central component.<sup>53</sup> The first Remington sketch portrays "Beaver Dick," who Lindsey describes as "thoroughly Indian in his habits and surroundings" but still retaining "the instincts of his own race," holding a rifle and oozing mountain man charisma of the Old West. The "Beaver Dick" image is the only sketch of the four that does not feature skiing. The sketch entitled "Cavalry Officers Inspecting The Yellowstone Park In Winter" depicts three rugged skiers clad in winter gear, carefully surveying Yellowstone's winterscape. "United States Cavalryman At One Of The Soldier Stations In The Yellowstone Park" depicts a soldier on skis confidently clutching his solitary pole, moving away from the snow clad soldier station nestled in a group of trees below a hillock. Another soldier stands in the background near the cabin entrance pondering his skis propped up against the exterior wall. Taken together, Lindsey's prose and Remington's images meld skiing onto a classic story of the American West filled with trains, grizzled mountain men, Mormons, cavalry officers, grand vistas, daunting and diverse topography, and dramatic struggles of man versus wilderness.<sup>54</sup>

For inspiration for the fourth sketch, Remington used a Frank J. Haynes photograph taken in 1894 after his ski party joined Hough and Hofer on their park circuit. Haynes' photo depicts four skiers taking a break in the open expanses of Hayden Valley along the thermal waters of Alum Creek. Two men relax on the shore, skis on the ground, and one man stands along the shore holding his skis as he scans the Big Sky horizon. The fourth man, Hofer, stands in the middle of creek, his skis over his shoulder, lone pole planted firmly in the water, soaking his feet in the warm waters of Alum Creek. For

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52 Lindsey, "A Winter Trip Through The Yellowstone Park," 106-107, 110.

53 Remington's sketches from the January 29, 1898 *Harper's Weekly* are included in the images at the end of this chapter.

54 *Ibid.*, 106, 107, 110. While grizzled, "Beaver Dick" was not one of the grizzled mountain men who accompanied the soldiers into the park. He was a friend of Lindsey's who lived on the east side of the Tetons. Lindsey ranked Dick "as the oldest 'Man of the Mountains' in this section of country at least" and made a special side trip to visit this "pupil and companion of the famous Jim Bridger" to gather insights before heading into the park. According to Lindsey, the Bannock Chief Targhee gave "Beaver Dick" his nickname "not from any unusual propensity for work, but from the peculiar appearance of his teeth, the cuspids having grown to an abnormal length after the loss of his incisors." A Welshman by birth, Dick lost his incisors as a boy "investigating an unexploded charge" in a Pennsylvania coal mine.

his sketch, Remington cropped the photo to focus solely on Hofer, who is not mentioned as such in the article or caption, and titled the image “Wading An Icy Stream.” Remington's simulacrum transports Hofer from comfortably soaking his feet in soothing thermal waters to heroically fording an icy wilderness stream. Combining the quintessential elements of Western iconography that he so expertly imbibed in, Remington isolated Hofer from his companions and transformed him into a nameless hero traveling alone in a formidable wilderness. The skier without a name striking a romantic pose amidst an unforgiving wilderness had entered the romanticized iconography of the American West.<sup>55</sup>

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### **Specialization and the Rise of Recreational Skiing**

Skiing in Yellowstone was not taking place in a vacuum. Just as images of Yellowstone skiing emanated out to the world, advancements in gear and technique from Europe and the United States filtered into the park. Yellowstone was part of a ski world that extended across the continent and across the Atlantic. By the 1860s, skiing had become the national sport of Norway. The exciting spectacle of ski jumping competitions spread out of Norway and around the globe. In 1868, Sondre Norheim introduced the telemark turn, developed by skiers from the town of Morgedal in Norway's Telemark region, to the wider skiing world at a ski jumping competition in Christiania (Oslo). Norheim was also among the Norwegian skiers to pioneer the parallel christiana (or christie) turn. Telemark and christie turns matched with burlier bindings allowed skiers to more effectively, safely, and gracefully ski downhill. The work done by Norheim and his fellow Norwegian skiers to refine gear and technique laid the groundwork for modern skiing. In 1888, Fridtjof Nansen, led a party of six skiers across the Greenland ice sheet, further advancing ideas of Norwegian ski superiority. After Nansen's return, he wrote a two volume account of the trip titled *The First Crossing of Greenland*. The English translation

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55 Ibid., 106; Henry, *Snowshoes, Coaches, and Cross Country Skis*, 57. The Haynes' photograph described above graces the cover of Scott Herring's *Rough Trip Through Yellowstone*.

was published in 1890. The book was incredibly detailed and featured beautiful illustrations of ski gear, technique, and amazing feats of skiers in action. Nansen dedicated an entire chapter, entitled “Ski and Skilobning,” to the history, gear, and techniques of skiing. Nansen's book quickly became the reigning ski tome of its time. Roald Amundsen, a Nansen protege, added to the concept of Norwegian ski superiority in 1911, when he used skis and dogsleds to beat the man-sledging British, led by Robert Falcon Scott, in the race to the South Pole. Scott unwisely eschewed the use of sled dogs and skis and perished on the Antarctic ice. The feats of Norheim, Nansen, and Amundsen brought skiing to a worldwide audience and led to the sport's burgeoning popularity in other parts of the world.<sup>56</sup>

However, Norwegian ski superiority was being challenged by ski developments in the European Alps. The steep terrain of the Alps produced its own challenges and led to the development of Alpine technique. Alpine skiing eventually abandoned the telemark turn and focused on the snowplow and stem turn as the foundation of downhill skiing. Austria became the center of Alpine technique and a fierce ski rivalry between the Norwegians and Austrians soon emerged. In 1896, Mathias Zdarsky published a book touting his Lilienfeld technique featuring the snowplow, stem turn, and shorter skis as the basis for efficient downhill skiing. Zdarsky preached the use of a single pole and used it for braking techniques. Meanwhile, other skiers in both Norway and the Alps embraced the use of two poles. In Austria, Georg Bilgeri preached the use of two poles and promoted the stem turn as the optimal technique for controlled downhill descents. In 1907, building on the work of Norheim, Zdarsky, and Bilgeri, the Austrian Hannes Schneider began work on his Arlberg technique featuring two poles and a strict progression from the snowplow to the stem to the stem christie and culminating with the christie. Ultimately, Schneider codified his Arlberg technique into a highly regimented and successful method of

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56 Louis Dawson, *Wild Snow* (Salt Lake City, Utah: The AAC Press, 1997), 2-3; Paul Parker, *Freeheel Skiing: Telemark and Parallel Techniques For All Conditions*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition (Seattle, WA: The Mountaineers, 1995), 18; Fridtjof Nansen, trans. Hubert Majendie Gepp, *The First Crossing of Greenland, Volume 1* (London, UK: Longmans, Green, and Co, 1890), 3, 73-114; Caroline Alexander, “The Race to The South Pole,” *National Geographic*, September 2011, 122-135. The translation of the Norwegian word “skilobning” into English is usually provided as “ski-running”: using skis to travel quickly across the landscape.

Alpine skiing instruction that would come to dominate Alpine skiing technique into the 1940s.<sup>57</sup>

The U.S. Army took note of European developments in ski technique and gear. In 1900, Captain Alfred E. Bradley, who served as Fort Yellowstone's surgeon from 1895-1898 and two months in 1899, presented a paper entitled "The Ski And Its Use For Military Purposes In Yellowstone National Park" at the Ninth Annual Meeting of The Association of Military Surgeons of the United States. The meeting took place in New York City from May 31-June 2, 1900. Bradley carefully outlined the history of skiing for his audience, drawing heavily from Nansen's *The First Crossing of Greenland*. Bradley proved to be a cognizant scholar of the different types of skis and the advantages each held over the other. He described the use of animal skins on the bottom of skis to aid in traction, although not by the soldiers of Yellowstone, and the use of short, broad skis in Europe and Asia. As for the choice of "9 to 12 feet long, 4 inches wide" skis used by the Army in Yellowstone, Bradley explained that these were ideal for travel on "plains and open plateaus where rapid progress is desired." While short, broad skis were easier to control on downhills, especially in thick timber, the long, narrow skis, which featured "along the under side...a central groove which acts as a keel," were ideal for more rapid ski touring through relatively open terrain. The military designed a typical ski itinerary in Yellowstone to cover 20 miles a day. Skiers took turns "breaking trail" and traveled in single file. They treated "the under surface of the skis with beeswax, so as to facilitate gliding and prevent snow from adhering." Bradley's detailed report presented at a professional forum of military doctors illustrated that skiing in Yellowstone was not a static enterprise. Western skiing was entering into the realms of specialization, big government, and bureaucratization that would come to define its modern manifestation.<sup>58</sup>

Supported by Yellowstone's built environment, the Army, in league with the Secretary of the Interior, implemented a bureaucratic framework on the park landscape. They created a concrete regime

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57 Allen, *The Culture and Sport of Skiing*, 126-129; Dawson, *Wild Snow*, 3-4; Parker, *Freeheel Skiing*, 19-21.

58 Captain Alfred E. Bradley, "The Ski And Its Use For Military Purposes In Yellowstone National Park," 403-413; Colonel James M. Phalen, "Alfred Eugene Bradley Biography," 1940, Bradley Family Papers, Folder 1, ASC, UMML.

of rules and regulations to govern the management of the park and the actions of park visitors on a year round basis. At a time when Yellowstone remained remote and largely inaccessible during winter, the Army regarded any winter visitors, with the exception of skiing journalists and Presidential entourages, with great suspicion. The Army advised its soldiers and scouts that: “All persons traveling through the park from October 1 to June 1 should be regarded with suspicion. They will be closely questioned and if necessary will be watched from station to station.” The Army systematically subdivided the park into regions to be patrolled by soldiers at specific stations. Guidelines demanded that soldiers and scouts keep detailed records of their activities and the country they traveled through. While on ski patrols, soldiers were told to keep their feet “dry and clean” and carry “matches, a good axe, and sufficient food.” Specific guidelines for proper ski attire, down to “colored glasses to prevent snow blindness” with the frames “wrapped in woolen yarn to prevent freezing the face,” were carefully spelled out. Soldiers were forbidden to go out on winter patrol alone and told to “avoid the regular trails as far as possible” and “vary their different trips as much as the character of the country will allow.” They were advised that imbibing in “intoxicants or stimulants, even in the slightest degree, is dangerous on a snowshoe (ski) trip.” From the uncertain days of 1886, the government had embraced, qualified, and quantified skiing as an integral component of Yellowstone winter. This process created an intimate relationship between the federal government and skiing, which would continue to expand.<sup>59</sup>

In 1900, Dr. Bradley declared in front of his audience of Army surgeons that “the use of the ski in the park has always been confined to the hard work of patrol and other duty.” However, journalist Lewis Freeman stated that skiing was both “a Winter sport and a business among the scouts and soldiers employed in the national park.” Freeman wrote of a 1902 tutelage in ski jumping by two Canyon winterkeepers named Clark and Smith. Freeman watched Clark sail 60 feet off a homemade jump before trying it himself. Clark's other ski antics included a stunt where he shot a hundred feet

<sup>59</sup> *Rules, Regulations, and Instructions For the Information and Guidance Of Officers And Enlisted Men Of The United States Army And Of The Scouts Doing Duty In The Yellowstone National Park*, 10-32.

down a forty-five degree slope onto the ice shelf at the brink of the Lower Falls and “stopped, as usual, by throwing himself on his side and digging the edges of his ski into the frozen snow.” Clark, “an inventive genius,” was also working on a “parachute cape...to help in checking his momentum at the proper moment” and “make his landing much less painful in the event he went over.” Clark's extreme skiing illustrates that early skiing in Yellowstone was not only confined to “the hard work of patrol and other duty.” Park skiing also fed off the adrenaline, exhilaration, and sheer enjoyment that fueled the sport's growth across the nation. In 1905, Theodore Johnsen, owner of Tajco Sporting Goods in Portland, Maine, published the first American ski manual. Titled as *The Winter Sport of Skeeing*, Johnsen's ski manual also served as a catalog to sell his line of skis, bindings, poles, and assorted winter gear to a national market. Pictures from 1910 and 1911 show soldiers and scouts in Yellowstone mounted on shorter skis similar to those sold by Tajco, which were more suited for controlled downhill descents than the homemade 10-12' behemoths originally used in the park. The 20<sup>th</sup> century ushered in a hybrid ski world in the West caught between its utilitarian roots and its recreational explosion.<sup>60</sup>

At the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, skiing telephone men, skiing winterkeepers, skiing scouts, skiing photographers, skiing journalists, skiing poachers, skiing soldiers, skiing naturalists, skiing presidents, skiing wives, and skiing children all populated the Yellowstone snowscape. Dr. Bradley's wife, two children, and the family's “hired girl,” Lucy, took to skis for fun each winter during the family's Fort Yellowstone posting in the latter half of the 1890s. Freeman's 1904 article in *National Magazine* included a photo of four children on skis at Fort Yellowstone entitled “Children Of The Park Ready For Sport.” During the winter of 1903-1904, Yellowstone skiing pulled more people into its hybrid world. Construction crews at Old Faithful augmented the skiing ranks as they finished work on the now iconic

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60 Bradley, “The Ski And Its Use For Military Purposes In Yellowstone National Park,” 408; Freeman, “Ski Runners of the Yellowstone: Winter Life In Uncle Sam's Great Western Park,” 611; Lewis Ransome Freeman, *Down the Yellowstone* (New York, NY: Dodd, Mead, and Company, 1922), 25-29, ASC, UMML; Theodore Johnsen, *The Winter Sport of Skeeing* (1905; repr., New Hartford, CT: International Skiing History Association, 1994), passim; Schullery, *Yellowstone Ski Pioneers*, 74, 76. Earlier in the winter of 1902, during one of Clark's brink of the Lower Falls ski runs in Yellowstone, his dog followed him but failed to stop in time. The dog was not wearing a parachute.



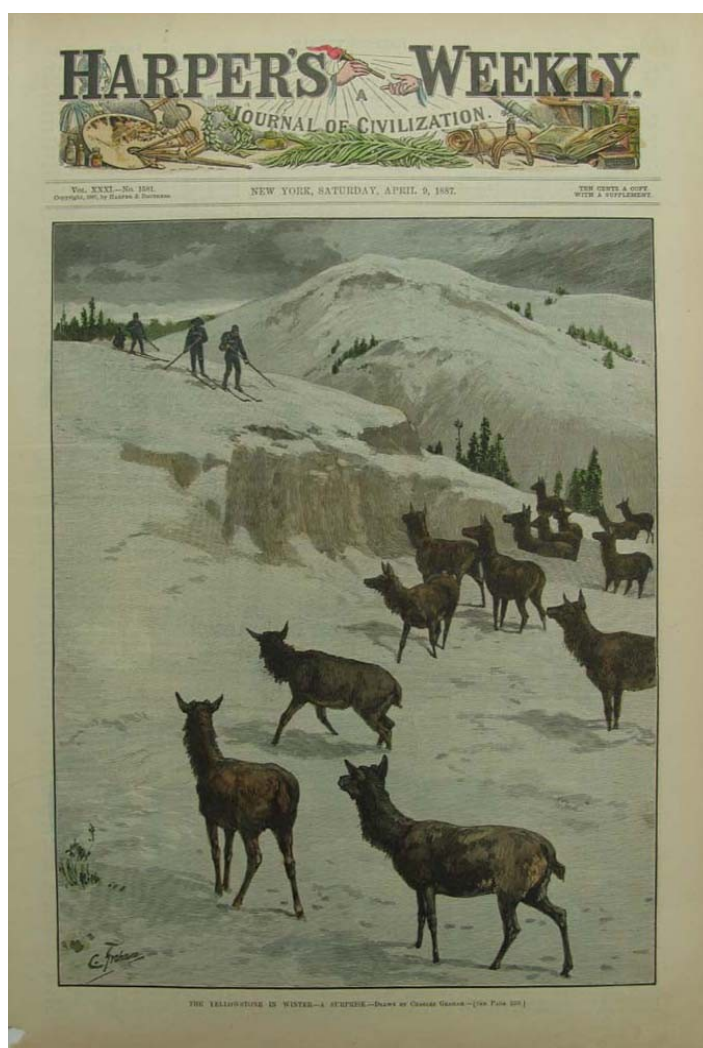
Old Faithful Inn. Construction on the building, designed by architect Robert Reamer, had begun in June 1903, just two months after Roosevelt departed the park. Construction crews wintered at Old Faithful to complete the structure and have it ready for its June 1, 1904 opening. In the winter of 1910-1911, this pattern was repeated at Canyon when construction crews wintered over to complete work on the Canyon Hotel, also designed by Reamer. Isolated in the deep snows of Canyon, “they had no saloon or club or theater to beguile their time and bemuse their faculties, and even for the younger, pleasure-loving workers there was no diversion, except the fierce thrill of gliding and coasting on skis over the glacier-like slopes of the desolate amphitheater which surrounded them.” Photos exist of the construction crew, including Reamer, playing baseball on skis atop Canyon's thick snowpack. Although the crews were in the park to work, they skied for pleasure.<sup>61</sup>

The shift towards recreational skiing in the West accelerated as the age of motorized transport continued its rapid progression into previously remote areas. As the early national park system grew, remote western outposts became more accessible with mechanization. President Roosevelt departed Cinnabar on a train, not a horse. However, outside of steamboats plying Yellowstone Lake during the summer and occasional autos sneaking in, the park remained as a zone of non-motorized transportation. The “system of driveways” envisioned by Roosevelt in 1903 was built and automobiles and buses displaced horses and stagecoaches on the park roads by 1917, but heavy snows choked this “system of driveways” each winter and the park's interior went into virtual hibernation. Beyond the local population, very few visitors ventured into Yellowstone winter until the late 1930s. The park's interior winter expanse remained largely off limits to all but a hardy few. Yellowstone entangled the federal

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61 Harriett Bradley Fitt, *I Thought As A Child*, “When I Was A Little Girl At Fort Yellowstone,” 5, 10; Letitia Follett Bradley, “An Account of the Life Work of Alfred E. Bradley,” 4, Bradley Family Papers, Folder 1, ASC, UMML; Freeman, “Ski Runners of the Yellowstone: Winter Life In Uncle Sam's Great Western Park,” 614; Hough, *Rough Trip Through Yellowstone*, 109-111; Henry, *Snowshoes, Coaches, and Cross Country Skis*, 91-101; J.H. Rafferty, *A Miracle In Hotel Building: The Dramatic Story of the Building of the New Canyon Hotel in Yellowstone Park* (Yellowstone Park Company, 1911), author's collection. The quote comes from page 6 of this pamphlet. Baseball on skis is a tradition that the snow bound employees of Old Faithful Snow Lodge continue each winter during their annual Winter Olympics.

government with skiing and laid the foundation for skiing in the national parks, but its remoteness worked against its promotion for large-scale winter recreation. However, other western parks did not remain so inaccessible in winter, and it was on these national park landscapes that mechanization and skiing soon evolved into a symbiotic relationship.<sup>62</sup>



Colorized version of Harper's Weekly April 9, 1887 cover featuring the Haynes ski party in Yellowstone.  
Print 028wntr, [www.printsoldandrare.com/wintersports/](http://www.printsoldandrare.com/wintersports/)

62 For steamboats on Yellowstone Lake, see Haines, *The Yellowstone Story: Volume Two*, 18-19, 71, 126-127, 261. For early auto history in the park, see Haines, *The Yellowstone Story: Volume Two*, 256-275; and Yochim, *Yellowstone and the Snowmobile*, 14-29. For additional works on early skiing and winterkeeping in the park, see Lee H. Whittlesey, *Death in Yellowstone: Accidents and Foolhardiness in the First National Park* (Boulder, CO: Roberts Rinehart Publishers, 1995); and Gerald L. Bateson Jr., *Growing Up In Yellowstone* (Gardiner, MT: Pumice Point Press, 2011).



*From Archives & Special Collections, Mansfield Library, The University of Montana-Missoula*

April 1903. President Theodore Roosevelt and Major John Pitcher (right) at the Cinnabar Depot. Photo 81-2019, ASC, UMML.



*From Archives & Special Collections, Mansfield Library, The University of Montana-Missoula*

April 24, 1903. President Roosevelt pontificates at the arch cornerstone laying ceremony in Gardiner. Photo 81-0424, Leslie Watson "Gay" Randall Papers, ASC, UMML.



Circa 1896-1897. Lucy on skis in front of The National Hotel at Mammoth. Lucy worked as the "hired girl" for Dr. Alfred E. Bradley's family at Fort Yellowstone. Photo 72-0061, Bradley Family Papers, ASC, UMML.



"Beaver Dick." by Frederic Remington. Harper's Weekly, January 29, 1898.



"Cavalry Officers Inspecting The Yellowstone Park In Winter." by Frederic Remington. Harper's Weekly, January 29, 1898.



"Wading An Icy Stream." by Frederic Remington. Harper's Weekly, January 29, 1898.



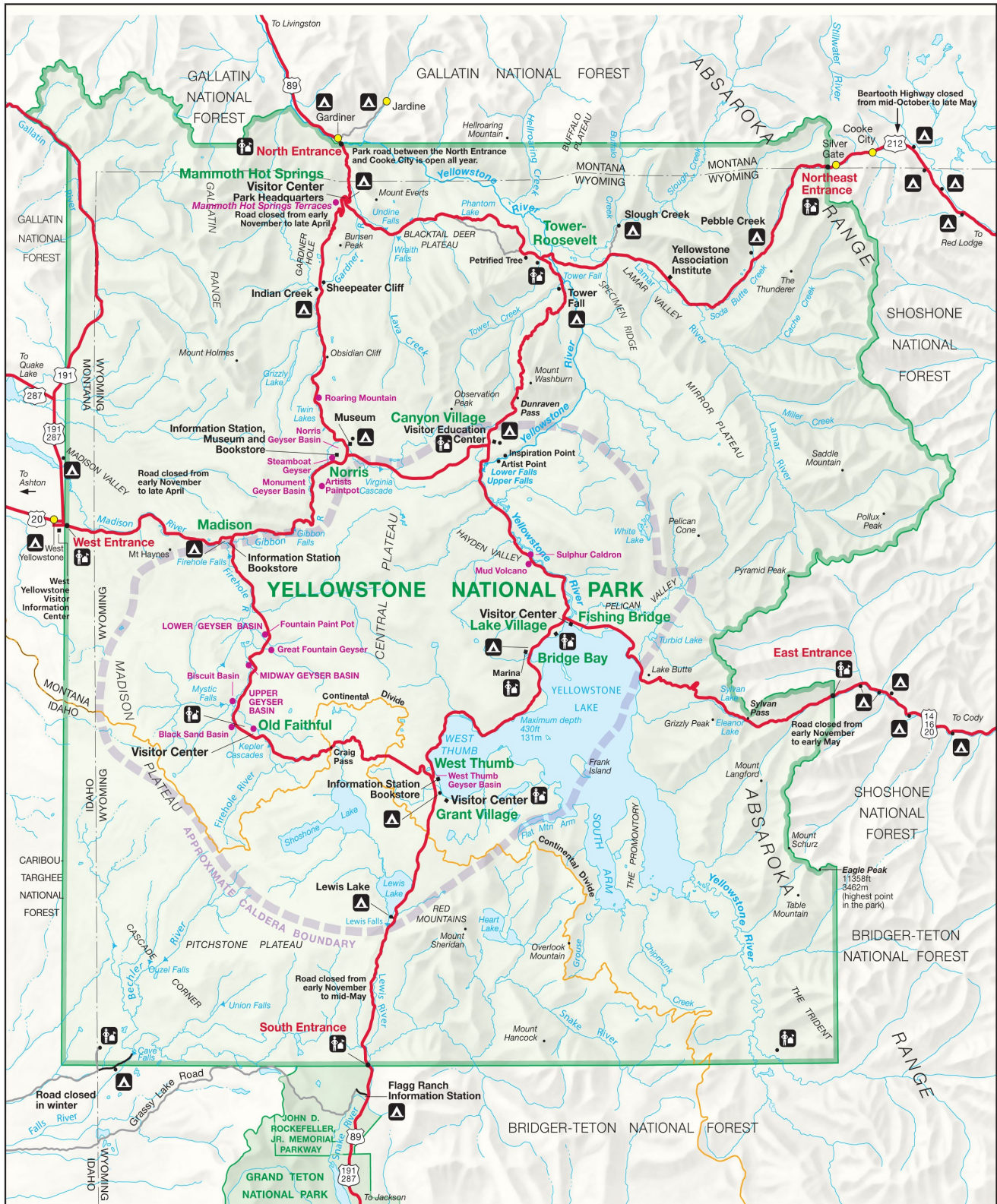
April 1894. Transporting poacher Edgar Howell to Fort Yellowstone after his arrest. Scout Felix Burgess (far left), two soldiers, and Edgar Howell and his dog (far right). Frank J. Haynes Photo, NPS Photo 11550, Yellowstone National Park Online Photo Collection.



"United States Cavalryman At One Of The Soldier Stations In The Yellowstone Park." by Frederic Remington. Harper's Weekly, January 29, 1898.



January 1887. Haynes Ski Party departing Yancey's and heading back to Fort Yellowstone. Frank J. Haynes Photo, NPS Photo 10651, Yellowstone National Park Online Photo Collection.



Contemporary park map given to visitors at entrance stations.

National Park Service, U.S. Department of Interior.

## Chapter 2: Creeping Mechanization and Winter Development

*America grows more and more winter sports conscious as each snow falls and the thermometer drops a degree, and it is learning that the grandest ski slopes, snow vistas, icy skating rinks, and toboggan slides lie within its national parks. Here winter sports facilities belong to all people of the United States, almost as though they existed in their own backyards, though on a considerably vaster scale and a little harder to reach.*

—January 10, 1937, *The Washington Post*.<sup>63</sup>

Upon its creation in 1916, the National Park Service (NPS) immediately began grappling with the issues of development, public access, and winter recreation touched on by President Roosevelt during his 1903 speech in Gardiner. From January 2 - January 6, 1917, the reigning brain trust of the national parks and the newly minted NPS gathered in Washington D.C. at the Fourth National Parks Conference. They met to formulate an agenda for the new bureaucracy and the management of the parks under its guardianship. On the morning of January 4, J.W. Barber presented a talk entitled “Winter Sports in the National Parks” to the assembled crowd of park administrators, politicians, and related intelligentsia. Over the course of his adult life, Barber had systematically visited “the sports centers and recreation centers of our country” from the White Mountains of New Hampshire to Paradise on Mt. Rainier. After traveling over the vast expanse of the United States, Barber spent two winters in Switzerland studying its winter sports facilities. Barber hoped to give the national park crowd “some ideas of how winter sports are conducted in Switzerland, in the effort to show you that it is very easy for the American people to adapt many of their sports for use in their own country.” He declared that “there is great need of systematic work being done in this country for the development of winter sports.” In an era when the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) had little interest in promoting recreation, Barber viewed the national parks as the natural venues for winter sports in the West and the natal NPS as the government agency perfectly suited to promote and subsidize their development.<sup>64</sup>

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63 “23 of 26 U.S. Parks Are Open for Sport: Ski Slopes, Snow Vistas, Skating Rinks, and Toboggan Slides Are Available to Winter Sports Lovers in National Reserves,” *The Washington Post*, January, 10, 1937, F1.

64 J.W. Barber, “Winter Sports in the National Parks,” *Proceedings of the National Parks Conference* (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1917), 162-163, accessed January 2, 2015, Google Books; Childers, *Colorado Powder Keg*, 15-21.

The morning session of January 4, titled “Recreational Use of the National Parks,” featured five speakers and covered a range of recreational activities that included hiking, camping, fishing, and mountaineering, alongside the winter sports discussed by Barber. Enos Mills presided over the session and introduced Barber to the audience. In his introduction, Mills predicted that “before you realize it, our national parks and other places will be used all the year round...many of the national park supervisors are already at work on a plan for the using of the parks in the wintertime...and, I am sure, they will return to their respective parks determined to make the best use of these parks for the people at all seasons of the year.” As a skier and one of the founding fathers of Colorado's Rocky Mountain National Park, created in 1915, Mills was intimately acquainted with the winter wonders of the park, and as one of the park's early concessionaires, he was keenly aware of the desire to cultivate a four-season clientèle. Easily accessible to Colorado's population base centered in Denver and other burgeoning Front Range communities, Rocky Mountain was ideally situated to capitalize on citizens increased mobility fostered by railroads and automobiles. As automobiles grew more ubiquitous, an appetite for winter sports among mobile urbanites also began to grow, and the national parks were primed to nurture this trend. Mills, like Barber, envisioned the NPS spearheading the drive to develop centers of winter recreation in the mountains of the West.<sup>65</sup>

By January 1917, any lingering skepticism of park administrators towards embracing the automobile in the national parks had passed. Yellowstone, the last hold out against automobiles, had relented in 1916, and in 1917 automobiles and buses officially replaced horse driven transportation on the park's roads. The title of the conference's afternoon session on January 5 was “Motor Travel To The Parks.” Robert Sterling Yard, who later turned into a critic of the automobile in the national parks, introduced the session and declared that “the motor car will be an immense factor in the future

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65 “Recreational Use of the National Parks,” *Proceedings of the National Parks Conference*, 4, 161-162; “Enos Mills – Sport Builder - 1992,” Colorado Ski and Snowboard Museum Hall of Fame website, accessed March 15, 2015. In his 1911 book *The Spell of the Rockies*, Enos Mills writes of out skiing an avalanche in Colorado's San Juan Mountains. Mills was inducted into the Colorado Ski and Snowboard Hall of Fame in 1992.

development of our national parks because it will be an increasing accelerator in their future patronage.” Yard introduced Dr. Harry Marc Rowe, President of the American Automobile Association, who presided over the afternoon's proceedings. The NPS and the American Automobile Association were in lock step on the need for “good roads” inside the parks and leading up to them. Park administrators embraced the automobile as both transportation and as a form of outdoor recreation unto itself. Welcoming automobiles into the national parks would have profound effects on shaping the built environment of the parks and rendering the parks more accessible for skiing and winter use.<sup>66</sup>

On May 13, 1918, Secretary of the Interior Franklin Lane issued a letter addressed to Stephen Mather, the first director of the NPS, that encapsulated much of the discussion that took place at the 1917 conference. The Lane letter detailed the mission of the NPS and the management policies that would guide it and shape the park lands under its jurisdiction. The letter stated that “Every opportunity should be afforded the public, wherever possible, to enjoy the national parks in the manner that best satisfies the individual taste. Automobiles and motorcycles will be permitted in all of the national parks; in fact, the parks will be kept accessible by any means practicable.” The Lane letter wanted to ensure that the national parks were accessible with good roads, and once the traveling public arrived in the parks, he wanted to ensure that they were able to imbibe in their chosen recreational pursuit, with the notable exception of hunting. The letter stated that “all outdoor sports which may be maintained consistently with the observation of the safeguards thrown around the national parks by law will be heartily endorsed and aided wherever possible.” The Lane letter envisioned a recreational landscape which moved across the parks in all four seasons and declared that “winter sports will be developed in the parks that are accessible throughout the year.” Winter sports such as ice skating, tobogganing, snowshoeing, and skiing were on the menu of activities to be “endorsed and aided” by the NPS. Not only would these activities be permitted in the parks, but they would be actively promoted by the NPS

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<sup>66</sup> “Motor Travel To The Parks,” *Proceedings of the National Parks Conference*, 275-281. For Robert Sterling Yard's later trepidation towards roads and autos in the national parks, see Sutter, *Driven Wild*.



and its chosen concessionaires. In 1918, skiing sat as an equal alongside a wide assortment of winter sports. However, by the 1930s, Alpine skiing would rise to the top of the winter sports world and begin to dominate NPS debates revolving around winter use.<sup>67</sup>

Coupled with the automobile, the birth of the NPS in 1916 enabled a more aggressive push to create organized winter use of the national parks and established the western parks as some of the country's prime ski venues. While park administrators viewed railroads in the parks as anathema to the national park idea, they wholeheartedly embraced automobiles. As the NPS carved out its own bureaucratic fiefdom, it needed as many supporters as possible to legitimize its existence and ensure the continued growth of the national parks. Easier access to the parks for a broader reach of the American public was tantamount to the success, longevity, and legitimacy of the NPS. The park service embarked on a mission to ensure the democratic nature of the national parks by assuring their accessibility and openness to a myriad of recreational uses and users. Cooperative efforts between the federal government, states, and park boosters built good roads to the parks, and the federal government engineered roads to higher elevations within the parks. Mechanized forms of travel and concerted plowing efforts opened up the snow country of the western national parks to a growing segment of American society hungry for winter sports. Modern skiing, the national parks, and the automobile matured together. As mechanization crept further into park landscapes, it grafted itself tighter onto evolving concepts of skiing in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. During the interwar period, the efforts of the NPS, park concessionaires, railroads, regional boosters, and ski clubs established the national parks as some of the most renowned Alpine skiing venues in the United States and solidified the federal government's intimate relationship with skiing in the American West.<sup>68</sup>

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67 "Secretary Lane's Letter on National Park Management: May 13, 1918," in Dilsaver, ed., *America's National Park System: The Critical Documents*, 48-52. Dilsaver comments on page 10 that "Albright actually wrote the letter reflecting the ideas of Mather and others." Horace Albright acted as Mather's closest advisor and succeeded him as director of the NPS.

68 For in depth studies on automobiles and the national parks, see Sutter, *Driven Wild*; and Louter, *Windshield Wilderness*.

## **Railroads, Autos, and The Winter Development of Yosemite**

Yosemite, Rainier, and Rocky Mountain National Parks became recreational ski destinations before other western parks due to their close proximity to large urban populations. In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, motorized transportation pushed further into the mountains and profoundly changed the nature of skiing in the West. As trains and autos moved into the mountains, skiing as a mode of winter transport held less importance, and the activity took an increasingly recreational turn. The refinement and regimentation of ski technique and gear originating in Europe transformed skiing into a leisure activity and specialized sporting discipline. Motivations to ski became less attached to utilitarian concerns and more attached to enjoyment and competition as railroads, autos, and good roads made the mountains more accessible to people living in snow deprived lowlands. Yosemite was easily accessible from Los Angeles, San Francisco, Sacramento, and the large collection of towns and cities lining California's Central Valley. Rainier's prominent snow covered silhouette beckoned the citizens of Seattle, Tacoma, and Olympia. Rocky Mountain called out to Colorado's Front Range population. Skiing was no longer limited to skiing right out of one's door in snowbound environments. New converts to the sport were willing to travel from snowless environs via train and auto to ski in the mountains. The penetration of reliable mechanized travel into snow country initiated the large-scale transformation of skiing in the 20<sup>th</sup> century West as it transitioned from its pre-industrial roots towards its industrialized future of recreation, competition, and mechanization.<sup>69</sup>

In 1890, the federal government had created three national parks in California's Sierra Nevada: Yosemite, Sequoia, and General Grant. Faced with the dilemma of who should protect the California parks, the government decided to continue the arrangement established in Yellowstone for U.S. Army protection of the new federal parks. However, unlike Yellowstone, the troops in the California parks did not winter over. Their primary duties took place in the summer months and consisted of monitoring

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<sup>69</sup> For the evolution of skiing in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, see Huntford, *Two Planks And A Passion*; Allen, *the Culture and Sport of Skiing*; Allen, *From Skisport to Skiing*; Rothman, *The Devil's Bargain*; Coleman, *Ski Style*.

tourists, fighting fires, chasing poachers, and rousting domestic sheep, cattle, and the humans who tended them from the parks' high country. With these more seasonal patrols, the Army had no winter presence in the California parks and did not create a population of skiing soldiers in the Sierra Nevada. However, this seasonal arrangement led to the creation of civilian rangers who did patrol the California parks year round and utilized skis in their winter work. Furthermore, especially in Yosemite Valley, managed by the State of California until 1906, year round residents, mail carriers, and a limited number of winter visitors took to skis and snowshoes for winter travel and recreation. As mechanized means of transport crept closer to Yosemite Valley and made winter travel less arduous and time consuming, a clientèle for organized winter use of the park was slowly building and the railroads began to actively foster this trend after the completion of the Yosemite Valley Railroad in 1907.<sup>70</sup>

Circa 1910, the Southern Pacific Railroad issued a promotional poster of a skiing Gibson Girl cruising down a steep Yosemite slope with Half Dome looming behind her. Fashionably clad in matching red overcoat and cap, a long black skirt, and knee high boots that seemed to miraculously cling to her skis without the help of any visible bindings, the paragon of feminine mystique expertly braked her rapid descent with her single pole.<sup>71</sup> Beyond advertising concepts of the feminine ideal and raw nature, the poster pointed to the vested interests that railroads held in the national parks. While no railroads ran inside the boundaries of the early national parks in the western mountains, tracks ran directly up to them. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, railroads served as important boosters and economic engines of the western parks. In Yellowstone, the Northern Pacific played an integral role in the park's creation, development, and early concession operations. The Union Pacific later followed suit on the park's western fringes. The Northern Pacific also played a key role in the creation of Mt. Rainier

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70 Sellars, *Preserving Nature in the National Parks*, 48-49; Dilsaver and Tweed, *Challenge of the Big Trees*, 85-92; Rose, *Magic Yosemite Winters*, 5-11; Berry, *Lost Sierra*, 5.

71 See the images at the end of this chapter for the Southern Pacific's skiing Gibson girl. "Yosemite In Winter, Southern Pacific" poster, circa 1910, included in Alfred Runte, *Yosemite: The Embattled Wilderness* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1990), illustration collection "II: The Art of Promotion" between pages 76 and 77.

National Park in 1899. The Great Northern was a key player in the creation of Glacier National Park in 1910 and became the park's lead concessionaire. The Southern Pacific lobbied for the creation of Sequoia and Crater Lake National Parks. In Yosemite, the Southern Pacific and Santa Fe cooperated with the short line Yosemite Valley Railroad to bring visitors from California's urban centers to the park's western gate of El Portal. With the rising interest in winter recreation, railroads began looking at snow as more than just a dreaded obstacle and impediment to winter travel.<sup>72</sup>

The Southern Pacific's interest in marketing winter and skiing as a sellable commodity accelerated when the town of Truckee, California began holding annual winter carnivals in 1896. Located within the Northern Sierra cradle of western skiing and along the route of the nation's first transcontinental railroad completed in 1869, Truckee was well situated to capitalize on the region's abundant snowfall. Drawing inspiration from large winter carnivals held in more eastern locales such as Montreal and St. Paul, Truckee's "Ice Carnival" featured a massive "Ice Palace," a wood framed toboggan slide, horse-drawn sleigh rides, ice skating, demonstrations of the railroad's massive rotary plow, ice harvesting on Donner Lake, and skiing. During this era, the spectacle of ski jumping defined skiing in the minds of many winter neophytes and was prominently featured at Truckee. In 1910, carnival promoters bragged that the toboggan course was "in fine condition" and "the course over which the skii (sic) jumpers will skim the earth is also in splendid shape and leaps of 50 feet will be the rule." "Many hundreds" of visitors "from all points between Sacramento and Reno" traveled to Truckee via special "excursion trains" run by the Southern Pacific to frolic in the deep snow of the Sierra Crest. Some donned skis for themselves and skimmed across the deep snow, and others contented themselves with watching the high flying feats of the "expert" ski jumpers. Many lowland Californians enjoyed

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<sup>72</sup> Barringer, *Selling Yellowstone*, 38-41; Richard Orsi, Alfred Runte and Marlene Smith-Baranzini, *Yosemite and Sequoia: A Century of California National Parks* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 44-47. For a study dedicated to the relationship between railroads and the national parks, see Alfred Runte, *Trains of Discovery: Western Railroads and the National Parks*, Fourth Edition (Boulder, CO: Roberts Reinhart Publishers, 1998).

their initial first hand exposure to skiing at Truckee as enthusiasm for the sport built in the state.<sup>73</sup>

Through Truckee's Ice Carnival, railroads and snowbound communities in the West became more cognizant of the exotic lure of mountain winters to urban dwellers. With the completion of the Yosemite Valley Railroad to El Portal in 1907, railroads began marketing Yosemite as a destination for winter tourism. On February 5, 1909, the Santa Fe Railroad organized "another popular winter outing to Yosemite Valley" from San Francisco to enjoy the "ideal winter conditions now prevailing in the valley." Both the Southern Pacific and the Santa Fe began crafting an image of Yosemite as the West's premier winter resort. Private enterprise, regional boosters, and park administrators all had interests in drumming up four season business in the national parks. More remote parks, such as Yellowstone and Glacier, stayed largely inaccessible to winter visitors and would have to wait for the age of the automobile to mature before they could begin to market winter seasons. However, park administrators and boosters in and around Rainier, Yosemite, and Rocky Mountain began viewing winter as a valuable commodity that could be marketed to urban denizens living in the surrounding lowlands.<sup>74</sup>

Because their train tracks could not penetrate park boundaries, the railroads had incentive to lobby for the construction of good roads in the parks. Early on these roads conveyed horse driven vehicles, but by the early 1900s, automobiles began displacing horses. Originally, the railroads did not view automobiles as a competitor, but as an ally to get their customers into the parks. In 1908, Rainier became the first national park to officially allow autos on its roads. Yosemite acquiesced in 1913. The creation of a successful four season tourist economy in Yosemite hinged on dreams that dated to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century of building a reliable all season road to Yosemite Valley. In 1902, the *Mariposa*

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73 "Truckee's Frost Palace," *San Francisco Call*, December 25, 1895, 43; "Down The Toboggan Slide At The Ice Carnival in Truckee," *San Francisco Call*, January 6, 1896, 1; "Ice Carnival Excursion Rates," *San Francisco Call*, January 9, 1896, 11; "The Truckee Ice Carnival," *San Francisco Call*, January 30, 1896, 3; "Truckee's Triumph," *Sacramento Daily Union*, February 20, 1896, 3; "Truckee's Ice Carnival," *Sacramento Daily Union*, February 24, 1896, 2; "Toboggan and Ski Courses At Truckee in Fine Condition," *San Francisco Call*, February 12, 1910, 21.

74 "Yosemite Winter Outing," *The San Francisco Call*, February 3, 1909, 3; Milnor Roberts, "A Wonderland of Glaciers and Snow," *National Geographic*, June 1909, 530-537.

*Gazette* issued a call for a new road financed with “State and National road assistance” to “open the Yosemite, winter and summer alike.” The *Gazette* declared that “Yosemite is equally grand and sublime in the heart of winter” and asked its readers: “Where can such a snow scene be found in California as in Yosemite Valley?” The gazette answered its own question with: “No place.” The paper boldly predicted that “time will make Yosemite a grand winter resort.” It did take time, but momentum towards a four season economy in Yosemite continued to build as mechanized transport crept closer to the park.<sup>75</sup>

In 1917, with the nascent NPS in charge of Yosemite, more concrete strides towards establishing Yosemite as a winter sports center took place. Lacking motorized access to the high country snow in winter, skiers toured around the valley and utilized the slope of the medial glacial moraine near the stables of Camp Curry as the valley's ski hill. Some motivated individuals who lacked skis did not let that prevent their pursuit of the sport. Intrepid skiers constructed their own homemade skis out of barrel staves and strips of leather. Winter enthusiasts also built “Ash Can Alley” near Camp Curry as a sledding venue. The valley's blacksmith removed the handles of discarded trash (or ash) can lids and transformed them into sliding apparatuses to take down the sculpted run. Other revelers used hotel trays to navigate the packed course, which became a recurring and beloved part of Yosemite's winter landscape for the next twenty years. That same winter the parking lot of Camp Curry was flooded to create an ice skating rink, which also become an annual addition to the winter landscape. When ice conditions permitted, Yosemite skaters ventured out onto Mirror Lake and the Merced River. In 1922, Yosemite Valley held its first winter carnival from February 17-20. It included “a big program of winter sports, including skating, skiing, tobogganing, sleighing and coasting” and set Yosemite further down the road to legitimacy as a winter resort. Winter visitors and the residents of Yosemite Valley, who numbered 80 to 90 in the mid-1920s, plied the park's winter landscape on skis, snowshoes, toboggans, ice skates, ash cans, and hotel trays, and horse drawn sleighs rides, dog sledding, and ski-

<sup>75</sup> Frank, *Making Rocky Mountain National Park*, 17, 25, 26; Louter, *Windshield Wilderness*, 22, 25; “The Yosemite: Arguments for a Free Road to This Great Resort,” *Mariposa Gazette*, December 20, 1902, 4.

joring with horses added to the menu of winter activities offered in the valley.<sup>76</sup>

Railroads began the campaign to market Yosemite as a winter destination, but it was good roads and automobiles that ultimately allowed the park to establish itself as a destination winter resort by the end of the 1920s. With the long awaited completion of the “All Weather Highway” along the course of the Merced River from Mariposa to Yosemite Valley in 1926 and the opening of the elegant Ahwahnee Hotel in 1927, Yosemite was finally poised to truly take off as a winter destination. In 1925, NPS Director Stephen Mather had forced the park's two rival concessionaires, the Yosemite National Park Company and the Curry Camping Company, to merge in order to streamline concession activities and provide superior visitor services. With the opening of the Ahwahnee on July 14, 1927, the recently minted Yosemite Park and Curry Company (YPCC) now had a world class hotel to supplement its less luxurious lodging and attract California's wealthy to the park in winter. For Christmas of 1927, Don Tressider, President of the YPCC, created an annual holiday event to lure members of high society to stay at the Ahwahnee. Inspired by Washington Irving's *Bracebridge Hall* (1822), the Christmas themed pageant, known as the Bracebridge Dinner, featured a lavish meal and orchestrated entertainment. Guests attended the gala cloaked in Tudor themed formal wear and wigs. Tressider and his wife Mary presided over the festivities in the Ahwahnee dining room decked out as a Tudor manor. In creating a profitable winter season, Tressider realized that he not only had to cater to outdoor enthusiasts, but also to the portions of California's high society more interested in grand spectacles than snow sports.<sup>77</sup>

Spearheaded by Tressider and Stephen Mather, the YPCC and NPS worked in close unison to create a vibrant winter season in Yosemite. In 1928, the YPCC created the Yosemite Winter Club “to

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<sup>76</sup> Rose, *Magic Yosemite Winters*, 12-14; Report prepared by Page & Turnbull for Delaware North Company, *Determination of Eligibility: Badger Pass Ski Area* (San Francisco, CA: Page & Turnbull, 2009), 11; H. Oehlmann, “Recollections,” *Yosemite: Saga of A Century, 1864-1964* (Oakhurst, CA: The Sierra Star Press, 1964), 27-28; “23 of 26 U.S. Parks Are Open for Sport,” *The Washington Post*, January, 10, 1937, F1; “Yosemite Winter Carnival February 17TH. to 20TH.,” *Mariposa Gazette*, February 4, 1922.

<sup>77</sup> Weamer, *The Perfect Art*, 9; Rose, *Magic Yosemite Winters*, 15-20; Runte, *Yosemite: The Embattled Wilderness*, 186-187. Don Tressider married into his prominent position in Yosemite. Mary Tressider's maiden name was Curry. She was daughter of David and Jennie Curry, owners of the Curry Camping Company. The Bracebridge Dinner is still held annually each December at the Ahwahnee. For many years, Ansel Adams organized and directed the affair for the YPCC.

encourage the development of all forms of winter sports.” Tressider named Mather an honorary executive, and Horace Albright, Mather's assistant director and the acting superintendent of Yosemite, served as the club's first president. Avid skiers, the Tressiders hired Ernst des Bailleurs, a Swiss winter sports expert, as the director of winter sports and the Swiss skier Jules Fritsch as the director of the Yosemite Ski School. They constructed a ski jump and packed ski runs on the valley's ski hill to give lessons. Fritsch and his fellow instructors also took skiers on tours of the high country. Along with providing instruction, the YPCC rented skis, snowshoes, ice skates, and other winter gear to visitors. The YPCC and the Yosemite Winter Club staged winter carnivals, winter Firefalls, ski competitions, ski jumping exhibitions, snowshoe races, ski-joring competitions, and constructed an intricate toboggan slide. They also created a world class 60,000 square foot outdoor skating rink at Curry Village where, along with recreational skating, hockey games, figure skating, speed skating, and curling competitions were held. Intercollegiate hockey teams competed on the rink for the Hoover Cup, donated by President Herbert Hoover to encourage the development of winter sports in the park. With the enthusiastic support of the federal government, the YPCC used winter sports, lavish spectacle, and competitive events to lure winter visitors to Yosemite.<sup>78</sup>

The YPCC and the NPS hoped to further facilitate the development of Yosemite as a premiere winter sports center by placing it on the world stage. The International Olympic Committee (IOC) had designated the United States as the host country for the 1932 Winter Olympics, and Yosemite hoped to be chosen as the Olympic venue. The Tressiders attended the 1928 Winter Olympics in St. Moritz, Switzerland on a scouting mission. It was there that they met Ernst des Bailleurs and lured him to Yosemite to aid in the park's Olympic dreams. Yosemite, Lake Tahoe, and Lake Placid, New York were all in the running. California chose Yosemite as its contender to go up against Lake Placid. The strong

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<sup>78</sup> Rose, *Magic Yosemite Winters*, 20-29; Weamer, *The Perfect Art*, 12-14; Berry, *The Lost Sierra*, 197-198; Frolich, *Mountain Dreamers*, 14; Morten Lund, “The Short, Sweet Ski Life of Hannes Schroll in America,” *Skiing Heritage Journal*, December 2009, 10.



point of Yosemite's bid lay in its ice skating rink, lodging facilities, and spectacular setting. Its weak point was the modest ski facilities available at the low elevation of the 4,000' valley floor. The IOC chose Lake Placid, which had a more established infrastructure and track record of holding large-scale winter events. The rejection of Yosemite by the IOC redoubled the park's efforts to develop itself as a world class winter resort. One of the major obstacles was the lack of world class ski facilities. The true winter bounty of Yosemite lay in the high country above the valley's rim, which was still inaccessible to motorized travel in winter. As Yosemite entered the 1930s, winter boosters hatched plans to access the untapped potential of the deep and lasting snows that lay above the valley floor.<sup>79</sup>

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### **Rocky Mountain, Rainier, and Failed Tramway Proposals**

In 1916, while Yosemite continued its early efforts to create a winter tourist season, Fern Lake provided the setting that launched organized winter recreation in Rocky Mountain National Park. Ringed by evergreen forests and granite outcroppings, the tranquil blue waters of Fern Lake perch at 9,450'. The Continental Divide traverses the high country above, and a collection of 11,000 to 13,000 foot peaks loom tantalizingly close. Part of a network of lakes situated on the east side of the Divide, water enters and exits the lake in Fern Creek and flows over multiple waterfalls towards its junction with the Big Thompson River at The Pool. Today, a historic patrol cabin, built in 1925, stands alone in backcountry isolation to greet lake visitors after their four mile trek from the Moraine Park trailhead. However, the landscape between Moraine Park and Fern Lake was once colonized by a string of lodges razed to the ground by the NPS in the 1960s and 1970s. Moraine Park contained three lodges, a pool, and a golf course. The Forest Inn greeted visitors at The Pool, and Fern Lake Lodge, opened in 1911, provided food and lodging to backcountry visitors at the lake. Grandfathered into the park, the lodges predated the creation of Rocky Mountain in 1915. Over time, the NPS purchased these inholdings and

<sup>79</sup> Rose, *Magic Yosemite Winters*, 20-25; Weamer, *The Perfect Art*, 12-13; Runte, *Yosemite: The Embattled Wilderness*, 152-153; Berry, *The Lost Sierra*, 197-198.

razed their structures from the landscape in bouts of wilderness creation designed to significantly reduce the park's built environment and move tourist facilities out of the park. Fern Lake Lodge had its remaining vandalized vestige burned to the ground by the NPS in 1976, but the artifact landscape left behind continues to occupy a central place in the history of skiing in the national parks.<sup>80</sup>

The drive to create Rocky Mountain National Park, as was the case with many of the early western parks, was initiated by local interests eager to have a national park to call their own. A coalition of outdoor lovers, recreationists, business people, and politicians formed to lobby the federal government for the park's creation. As part of this local coalition, the Colorado Mountain Club (CMC), which included avid skiers among its ranks, formed in 1912 and played an instrumental role in the park's creation. Skiers in Colorado and around the nation were increasingly banding together in clubs to promote and advance their chosen sport. On February 22, 1905, the National Ski Association had formed in Ishpeming, Michigan. The Denver Ski Club formed in 1913, and the Denver-Rocky Mountain Ski Club formed in 1914. One of the goals of these clubs was to create ski centers in their home areas, and like the railroads, local communities began to see the potential financial boons of skiing as sport. The town of Estes Park was also a primary stakeholder in the coalition to create Rocky Mountain National Park. Located on the proposed park's eastern fringe and easily accessible to the Front Range population, Estes Park had been a tourist destination since the 1870s. Estes Park hoped to create a four season economy with the creation of the national park. In 1911, the first winter carnival in Colorado was held in the railroad town of Hot Sulphur Springs on the west side of the Continental Divide. Headlining "Flying Norsemen" on skis, the carnival was a huge success. Similar carnivals quickly spread over Colorado's winter landscapes, and ski jumping, cross country ski races, and ski-

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80 "Fern Lake," Rocky Mountain Hiking Trails, accessed February 6, 2015, <http://www.rockymountainhikingtrails.com/fern-lake.htm>; Kenneth Jessen, *Estes Park: A Quick History Including Rocky Mountain National Park* (Fort Collins, CO: First Light Publishing, 1996), 49-56; C.W. Buchholtz, *Rocky Mountain National Park: A History* (Boulder: Colorado Associated University Press, 1983), 157-158, 194; Peter Bronski, *Powder Ghost Towns: Epic Backcountry Runs in Colorado's Lost Ski Resorts* (Berkeley, CA: Wilderness Press, 2008), 32-37.

joring became central attractions. A more refined form of Nordic skiing spread with the carnivals and inspired new skiers to take up the sport. Residents of Estes Park and Colorado's Front Range, many of them members of ski clubs or the CMC, looked to the newly created Rocky Mountain National Park as a haven for the development of skiing in the state of Colorado.<sup>81</sup>

During the park's first winter season of 1915-1916, the CMC began a long tradition of organizing winter events in the park. Winter activity began in February of 1916 when the Estes Park Outdoor Club invited CMC members on a "snow frolic" via snowshoe or ski from Moraine Park to Fern Lake. Built as a fishing lodge, Fern Lake Lodge created a winter niche for itself and became a home base for winter activities until 1938, when the lodge reverted back to a summer only operation. The tradition of CMC winter outings to Fern Lake, usually taking place in February or March, continued until 1934. The outings lasted anywhere from a few days to a couple of weeks, and other snow enthusiasts and organized groups, such as the Olinger Highlanders, also took advantage of the lodge's winter amenities.<sup>82</sup> In February of 1917, the idea of the winter carnival transplanted itself onto the snowy landscape of Fern Lake when the CMC and the Estes Park Outdoor Club organized the first winter carnival to take place in a national park. The event featured ice skating, snowshoeing, skiing, and toboggan events. In total, 463 people attended the first winter carnival. The winter carnival of 1917 broke new ground in the winter use of American national parks and lay the groundwork for future winter carnivals and special events that would draw large winter crowds to the western parks.<sup>83</sup>

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81 Don Hummel, *Stealing the National Parks: The Destruction of Concessions and Park Access* (Bellevue, WA: The Free Enterprise Press, 1987), 38; Frank, *Making Rocky Mountain National Park*, 6, 7, 16, 173, 174; Coleman, *Ski Style*, 32-36; John Pontii and Kenneth Luostari, *Midwest Skiing: A Glance Back* (Chicago, IL: Arcadia Publishing, 2000), 44. The town of Hot Sulphur Springs claims that its 1911 winter carnival was "the first winter carnival west of the Mississippi River." The claim is incorrect because Truckee, California began holding its winter carnivals in 1896.

82 The Olinger Highlanders, also known as The Highlander Boys, was a Denver based organization founded by George Olinger. Akin to the Boy Scouts, the organization dedicated itself to turning young boys into productive American citizens.

83 Buchholtz, *Rocky Mountain National Park: A History*, 157-158, 194; "History of Skiing in Rocky Mountain National Park," Box: 1, File: 20, Hidden Valley Winter Ski Area Historical Records Collection (HVWSAC), Rocky Mountain National Park (ROMO) Archives; Bronski, *Powder Ghost Towns*, 34; Lloyd K. Musselman, *Rocky Mountain National Park Administrative History, 1915-1965* (Washington D.C.: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service Office of History and Historic Architecture, Eastern Service Center, 1971), "Chapter XI: Winter Sports and Hidden Valley," no pagination in online version, accessed January 2, 2015, <http://www.nps.gov/romo/historyculture/administrative-history.htm>.

The success of the park's inaugural winter season launched a concerted effort to create more intensive winter use of Rocky Mountain. The following summer, Estes Park locals, CMC members, and park rangers cooperated in an effort “to improve ski runs and toboggan slides at Fern Lake.” For the winter of 1917-1918, “the automobile stages of the Rocky Mountain Parks Transportation Co.” began operating “throughout the winter, thus providing comfortable facilities for reaching the park whenever conditions are right for the sports that only snow and ice can make possible.” Winter visitors could drive their own autos to the park or jump on the Rocky Mountain Park Transportation Co. automobile stages at Front Range rail stations. Fern Lake Lodge's winter clientèle traveled to Moraine Park via bus or automobile but exited their motorized conveyances there, traveling to Fern Lake on snowshoe or ski. The winter carnival was built into the annual CMC outings to Fern Lake and the success of the outings built the reputation of Rocky Mountain as a premier ski destination in Colorado.<sup>84</sup>

Each winter, skiers and snow enthusiasts cherished the chance to escape to Fern Lake. Depending on the year, snowpacks ranged from three to ten feet deep by March. In 1921, the owners of Fern Lake Lodge modernized the facility to better accommodate winter guests. During the winter of 1922-1923, the lodge stayed open from November to April and provided accommodations to over 500 overnight visitors. That same year, the NPS and CMC members widened and blasted the downhill ski runs at Fern Lake and Odessa Lake, which drains into Fern Lake, to make them safer, and “a new trail was worked out between Fern and Sprague Lakes for use in cross-country runs.” Alice Hale of the CMC, described winter days at Fern Lake filled with “skiing and snowshoeing all around the country” with “some venturesome souls even climbing up to the very top of the world at the Continental Divide.” As skis became more common than snowshoes, an expanding system of ski trails radiated from Fern Lake, and the growing interest in downhill skiing become increasingly apparent. In 1922,

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<sup>84</sup> Department of the Interior, *Annual Report of the Superintendent of National Parks to the Secretary of the Interior* (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1917), 28, 186-187; Department of the Interior, *Report of the Director of the National Park Service To The Secretary of the Interior For The Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 1918* (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1918), 66, accessed February 8, 2015, Google Books.

foreshadowing the near future when European ski instructors became the defining mark of legitimacy for an American ski school, “Lt. Albizzi, former ski instructor in the Italian Army” became the first instructor to tutor students on the ski runs around Fern Lake. Marquis Nicolas d' Albizzi, a master of both the telemark and christie, amazed novice skiers with his jumping and turning prowess and was one of the first professional ski instructors to ply his trade in the United States. Following the ski filled days, there were “songs and other fun around the huge log fire in snug little Fern Lodge.” Hale declared that “a few days up there, absolutely away from the hectic rush of city life is an experience to be cherished for a life time.” Fern Lake quickly became synonymous with skiing in Rocky Mountain.<sup>85</sup>

Rocky Mountain's first superintendent under the NPS, Lewis Claude Way, had attended the Fourth National Parks Conference and took careful heed of the words of Mills and Barbee concerning winter development of the national parks. Way had taken over the administration of Rocky Mountain in September 1916, and by that time the CMC had already inserted itself into the cultural landscape of the park. From the beginning of his tenure, which lasted until his resignation on October 24, 1921, Way enthusiastically embraced the CMC and the promotion of winter recreation. He assigned his year round rangers, which numbered four at the time, to assist the CMC on their winter forays to Fern Lake. The rangers assisted the CMC in cutting ski trails, constructing toboggan slides and ski jumps, and providing medical assistance and search and rescue services for those injured or lost in the park's winter landscape. Roger Toll, a charter member of the CMC, succeeded Way as the superintendent of Rocky Mountain from 1921-1929. Toll came to Rocky Mountain from Rainier, where he had served as superintendent since 1919. In Rainier, Toll worked closely with The Mountaineers and was well acquainted with local desires to develop the parks into winter sports centers. Working in step with the

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85 “History of Skiing in Rocky Mountain National Park,” Box: 1, File: 20, HVWSAC, ROMO Archives; Alice Hale, “For the Love of the Mountains,” *Denver Municipal Facts*, March-April 1928, 27, Denver Public Library Digital Collections (DPLDC); “The Ski Riders of Genessee,” *Denver Municipal Facts*, January-February 1922, 5, DPLDC; Department of the Interior, *Report of the Director of the National Park Service To The Secretary of the Interior For The Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 1922* (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1922), 145, accessed February 8, 2015, Google Books; Erling Strom, *Pioneers on Skis* (Central Valley, NY: Smith Clove Press, 1977), x, 44-50.

CMC and local communities, Way and Toll actively engaged in promoting and supporting a wide array of winter activities in the park, and skiing was rapidly becoming the most popular.<sup>86</sup>

In 1923, the *Report of the Director of the National Park Service* noted that at Fern Lake “the use of skis is replacing to a large extent the use of snowshoes. Many people who previously used snowshoes are finding skis more interesting.” Organized skiing in Rocky Mountain began spreading from Fern Lake to locales on both sides of the park. Throughout the 1920s, skiing continued to grow inside the park and on its immediate fringes in Estes Park on the east and Grand Lake on the west. Both towns created winter carnivals, built ski jumps, and held ski competitions. In 1925, the Estes Park Ski Club created a ski run on Deer Mountain in the park, and in 1926 the Colorado State Ski Tournament, attended by 1500 people, was held at Old Man Mountain in Estes Park. In 1928, “The National Park Service at Washington... recognized the excellent carnival advantages of the Colorado Rockies” and “officially declared a winter sports season, from December 15 to March 15, at Estes Park.” Through the efforts of the CMC, ski clubs, local boosters, and the NPS, Rocky Mountain had become one of Colorado's most popular winter use areas, and the park entered the 1930s with increasing demand from the skiing public for improved access and more federal subsidization of their sport.<sup>87</sup>

Skiing in the west's national parks was not restricted to winter. The deep and lingering high country snow allowed skiing and other winter sports to continue long into the summer season, and the construction of roads to higher elevations enabled this pursuit. The road to Paradise in Rainier opened to autos in 1915. Each spring, clearing the snow-choked road provided the NPS with a mammoth challenge. They employed bulldozers, steam shovels, TNT, and crews of hand shovelers to open the

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86 *Proceedings of the National Parks Conference*, 6, 332-335; “Skiing in the Mountain Parks,” *Denver Municipal Facts*, February-March, 1920, 3, DPLDC; Buchholtz, *Rocky Mountain National Park: A History*, 149, 157-160, 194.

87 Department of the Interior, *Report of the Director of the National Park Service To The Secretary of the Interior For The Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 1923* (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1923), 163, accessed February 22, 2015, Google Books; Buchholtz, *Rocky Mountain National Park: A History*, 194-195; “History of Skiing in Rocky Mountain National Park,” Box: 1, File: 20 HVWSAC, ROMO Archives; Warren E. Boyer, “Winter Recreation in Colorado Plays Tag with Thermometer,” *Denver Municipal Facts*, November-December 1928, 5, DPLDC.

road for summer visitors. Once they completed the immense task it left summer visitors with a unique opportunity to recreate in deep snow. In 1917, Rainier's Paradise Inn opened for business. Traffic to the national parks slackened during World War I, but plenty of visitors from the adjacent lowlands still made their way to Paradise that summer. On July 15, 1917, Paradise Inn was still “surrounded by snow which had an average depth of four feet.” The park's concessionaire, Rainier National Park Company (RNPC), facilitated the growing trend of “winter sports in summer” at Paradise by providing “large quantities of skis, snowshoes, toboggans, and specially made sliding trousers for men, women, and children” and employed “experienced guides... to teach the various sports and the use of the winter equipment necessary.” Winter sports in summer gained an enthusiastic following and firmly placed Rainier and other mountain parks in the West on the national ski map of die-hard skiers.<sup>88</sup>

Paradise remained inaccessible to winter auto travel, but on New Year's Day of 1917 a group from The Mountaineers snowshoed up to Paradise Inn. The RNPC opened the hotel for The Mountaineers to use on their winter outing, and this move presaged future developments in Rainier to make the park more hospitable to winter visitors. During the winter of 1923-1924, the NPS kept the road open to Longmire, located at 2,761', with the use “of a snowplow attachment operated ahead of a caterpillar tractor.” The RNPC opened the National Park Inn at Longmire and “park travel became so heavy that the hotel accommodations were taxed to the utmost and during the four months from December 1 to March 31, 9,553 people visited Longmire.” The NPS was overjoyed with the results of Rainier's inaugural winter season and predicted that “Mount Rainier National Park will become one of the greatest winter resorts on the Pacific Coast.” The following winter, the RNPC added dog sledding with an Eskimo musher to the slate of winter activities offered at Longmire, which already included snowshoeing, tobogganing, skiing, and horse drawn sleigh rides. However, at Longmire's low

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<sup>88</sup> Department of the Interior, *Report of the Director of the National Park Service To The Secretary of the Interior For The Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 1917*, 49-50; Louter, *Windshield Wilderness*, 18; Catton, *National Park, City Playground*, 81-82, 105.

elevation, winter was unreliable and precipitation oscillated between snow and rain. The true winter riches lay 3,000 feet above at Paradise but accessing them required human-powered travel.<sup>89</sup>

By the 1920s, both Rainier and Yosemite had succeeded in attracting winter visitors, but the desire to develop high quality ski areas was left unfulfilled because of the lack of motorized winter access to the deep and lasting snows of the parks' high country. In 1919, park officials in Yosemite had mulled over plans “for the possible construction of a shaft from the level of the valley floor to Glacier Point, which would make this spot far more accessible in winter than it is in present time even in the summer.” Such a solution would have opened “up the splendid slopes of Sentinel Dome behind the hotel (Glacier Point Hotel) for winter sports” and “made one of the most unique winter resorts in the world.” The elevator to Glacier Point never came to fruition, but ideas of accessing the high country snow of the national parks through mechanized alternatives to the automobile continued. In 1924, the RNPC floated a proposal to solve the problem of mechanized winter access to Paradise by building an aerial tramway from the bridge over the Nisqually River to Paradise. This would have eliminated the arduous challenge of plowing the upper portion of the Paradise road all winter. The plan floundered for years, but it did not die. In 1928, the RNPC revived the plan, attaching it to the construction of another hotel at Paradise: Paradise Lodge. The RNPC wanted to keep the new lodge open year round, but in order to do so, comfortable and reliable mechanized transport to Paradise was needed. In 1930, the YPCC proposed a similar plan for an aerial tramway to link Yosemite Valley to Glacier Point. With the difficulties and expense of winter plowing, park concessionaires viewed aerial tramways as the ideal solution for unleashing the Alpine skiing potential of the parks' high country.<sup>90</sup>

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89 Department of the Interior, *Report of the Director of the National Park Service To The Secretary of the Interior For The Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 1917*, 49-50; Department of the Interior, *Report of the Director of the National Park Service To The Secretary of the Interior For The Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 1924*, (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1924), 20-21, accessed February 8, 2015, Google Books; Catton, *National Park, City Playground*, 82-83, 105.

90 Department of the Interior, *Annual Report of the Superintendent of National Parks to the Secretary of the Interior* (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1919), 64, 373, accessed February 8, 2015, Google Books; Catton, *National Park, City Playground*, 83; Weamer, *The Perfect Art*, 15-16; Rose, *Magic Yosemite Winters*, 31.



Despite endorsements by The Mountaineers and Sierra Club and the tentative approval of Stephen Mather, the economic obstacles of the Depression and aesthetic concerns ultimately doomed the tramway proposals. The Chief Landscape Engineer of the NPS, Thomas Vint, voiced opposition to the Rainier tramway because it would ruin the spectacular view of Nisqually Glacier from the road. The Yosemite proposal met similar resistance from Yosemite's Advisory Board. The three member board of non-government experts, which included the landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted Jr., first convened in 1928. Critics of YPCC and NPS development schemes demanded a seat at the table, and Mather gave one to them. The purpose of the Advisory Board was to help guide the responsible development of Yosemite. The board provided a critical counter point to the unending stream of development proposals issuing from the YPCC, which NPS administrators interested in increasing park attendance more often than not approved. The Advisory Board conceded the merits of the tramway for accessing the high country for winter use but felt the negative impacts on iconic park scenery outweighed the benefits. Largely aesthetic in nature, opposition to the tramway proposals mirrored earlier outcries against allowing railroads into the parks. Like railroads, opponents feared that tramways would mar and scar the spectacular natural vistas of the national parks with emblems of industrialized society, which visitors theoretically came to the parks to escape.<sup>91</sup>

Critics also worried that the approval of one tramway would open the floodgates to a slew of tramways appearing in the western parks. Rather than commune with park landscapes, tramways would stand apart from them and separate park visitors from intimate interactions with the parks. The government designed roads to merge with park landscapes, allowing visitors to experience nature through their automobile. Whereas roads and autos had been incorporated into the park landscapes as an essential facilitator of their public enjoyment, critics of the tramway proposals viewed them as

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91 Theodore Catton, *Wonderland: An Administrative History of Mount Rainier National Park* (Seattle, WA: NPS Cultural Resources Program, 1996), "Chapter IX: The Rainier National Park Company," no pagination in online version, accessed February 26, 2015, [http://www.nps.gov/parkhistory/online\\_books/mora/adhi/chap9.htm](http://www.nps.gov/parkhistory/online_books/mora/adhi/chap9.htm); Weamer, *The Perfect Art*, 15-16; Rose, *Magic Yosemite Winters*, 31; Runte, *Yosemite: The Embattled Wilderness*, 154-157.

amusement park distractions standing between the natural wonders of the parks and their visitors. However, the failure of the tramway proposals in the 1930s did not expunge the idea from the minds of developers. In the 1970s, trams would once again be proposed in Yosemite and Guadalupe Mountains National Park in Texas. These proposals were also rejected, but the resurgence of the idea illustrates the back and forth pendulum swing of preservation and public access that constantly challenges the NPS and often forces uneasy and tenuous compromises. As the 1930s progressed, other challenges related to winter use would begin to surface and force the NPS to reevaluate and begin to modify its permissive attitude towards the promotion of Alpine skiing in the western parks.<sup>92</sup>

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### **Winter Development, Competitive Skiing, and Bureaucratic Trepidation**

NPS opposition to the Rainier and Yosemite tramways was rooted in scenic preservation, not resistance to motorized travel penetrating deeper into national park landscapes. In the 1930s, newly completed high elevation roads cut fresh swathes across the mountains of the western parks. Trail Ridge Road in Rocky Mountain and the Going-to-the-Sun Road in Glacier both opened to the public in 1933. The opening of the Wawona Tunnel in 1933 provided auto access from Yosemite Valley to the deep snowpacks above the valley floor and led to the development of the Badger Pass Ski Area. Some of the earliest “good roads” to high elevations in the West were largely concentrated in the national parks. The labor force of the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) arrived in the parks during the 1930s and was put to work on road projects and winter development initiatives. As skiers continued to become more organized and vocal, they exerted increasing amounts of pressure on the NPS to accommodate their skiing desires by providing better access to snow country, and the NPS obliged. Opening up the high country snows of the western parks in the 1930s to competitive skiing events and increasing numbers of recreational skiers ultimately fell to automobiles, road building, enhanced

<sup>92</sup> Catton, *National Park, City Playground*, 83-85; Louter, *Windshield Wilderness*, 14-19; Runte, *Yosemite: The Embattled Wilderness*, 157, 203-205; Sax, *Mountains Without Handrails*, 62-63, 73.

plowing efforts, and less scenically obtrusive forms of mechanized lifts than aerial tramways. With improved access and increased development, other mountain parks in the West began to open up to the steadily rising number of people drawn to skiing's Alpine incarnation. In the 1930s, Alpine skiing firmly transplanted Nordic skiing as the dominant form of the sport, and the national parks of the West developed into some of the premier Alpine skiing venues in the country.<sup>93</sup>

Crater Lake added itself to the list of western parks heralded as ski destinations in the late 1920s and early 1930s. The national park, created in 1902, played an integral part in The Crater Lake Wilderness Race, which began in 1927. In its original incarnation, the cross-country ski race ran for 42.6 miles between Fort Klamath and the caldera rim of Crater Lake. The race started and finished at Fort Klamath, located outside the southern entrance of the park at an elevation of 4,183'. The turn around point for the race was inside the park at Crater Lake Lodge, located on the lake's rim at an elevation of 7,100'. In 1929, organizers changed the name of the race to The Klamath Cup Race, and the 43-year-old Swedish immigrant Emil Nordeen won with a time of 5 hours and 57 minutes. Nordeen won the race again in 1931 with a record breaking time of 5 hours and 35 minutes. For his superhuman efforts, race organizers awarded Nordeen with a 38 inch high, solid silver cup adorned with gold trim. In conjunction with the race, a large winter carnival was held at Fort Klamath. The appetite for winter recreation in Oregon was rising, and more winter events began moving into the deep snows of the park. On March 18, 1934, a "winter Ski Carnival" was held in the park near Government Camp. The Ski Carnival was well attended, and with the success of the event, Crater Lake's Superintendent David Canfield declared that "it is apparent that a great deal of pressure will be brought to bear to keep the Park regularly open for winter consideration." Ski clubs, regional boosters, and the NPS increasingly looked at the park's abundant snowfall as a resource that needed to be tapped. Instead of a hindrance to

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93 Carl P. Russel, *100 Years in Yosemite: The Story Of A Great National Park* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1957), 191; Buchholtz, *Rocky Mountain National Park: A History*, 175-176; Houk, *Going-To-The-Sun*, 34-35; "23 of 26 U.S. Parks Are Open for Sport," *The Washington Post*, January, 10, 1937, F4.

winter visitation, the snows of Crater Lake could be exploited as a defining feature to entice visitors to the park and its surrounding communities.<sup>94</sup>

Tapping the potential of the park's snow hinged on making it accessible to the driving public. With cooperative efforts between state and federal plow crews and the park's acquisition of a rotary snow plow, the NPS began experimenting with keeping the road to Crater Lake's rim open to automobiles on a year round basis. By 1935-1936, the dream became a reality. For the first time in the park's history, the road to the lake's rim remained accessible year round to automobile traffic. In the summer of 1936, Superintendent Canfield wrote:

That this [year-round] development was appreciated, was shown by the arrival of many visitors during the snow-covered months to view Crater Lake in its scintillating raiment of winter finery. These visitors, to a large number, took an active interest in amateur winter sports, utilizing slopes for skiing, tobogganing and sleighing. The acquisition of an additional snow plow facilitated the difficult task of maintaining open roads in the face of winter storms, leaving a total snowfall of nearly 50 feet. No accidents marred the success of the winter season.

Previous to the enhanced plowing attempts, the crater rim was normally rendered inaccessible to automobiles from November to June, and even into July in high snow years. In 1937, Canfield estimated that keeping the road to the rim open on a year-round basis increased the park's attendance by nearly 50,000 visitors. As winter access continued, ski races, dog sled races, and winter carnivals populated the caldera rim. The park became a favorite ski destination for Oregon residents, and the park's massive snowpacks allowed skiing to continue well into the summer.<sup>95</sup>

During the 1930s, the focus of winter use in Rocky Mountain shifted from Fern Lake to the more accessible Hidden Valley, located on the lower portion of Trail Ridge Road's east side. In 1931,

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94 Margaret LaPlante, *Crater Lake National Park* (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2013), 9, 108-110; Katie Burns, "A Part of History: Annual Great Nordeen Cross-Country Ski Race Links The Past To The Present," *Bend Bulletin*, December 15, 2007; John Lund, "History of the Crater Lake Wilderness Ski Race," *Nature Notes From Crater Lake* Vol. 28, 1997, accessed February 27, 2015, Crater Lake Institute Website; Harlan D. Unrau, *Administrative History: Crater Lake National Park, Oregon, Volume 2* (U.S. Department of Interior, NPS 1987), "Chapter 15: Visitation and Concessions Operations in Crater Lake National Park: 1916-Present," no pagination in online version, accessed February 27, 2015, [http://www.nps.gov/parkhistory/online\\_books/crla/adhi/chap15.htm](http://www.nps.gov/parkhistory/online_books/crla/adhi/chap15.htm).

95 Unrau, *Administrative History: Crater Lake National Park, Volume 2*, block quote from "Chapter 15: Visitation and Concessions Operations in Crater Lake National Park: 1916-Present"; LaPlante, *Crater Lake National Park*, 108-122.

The Rocky Mountain National Park Ski Club formed and chose Chief Ranger John McLaughlin as its director. The club dedicated itself to the continued development of winter sports in Estes Park and Rocky Mountain. They lobbied for the construction of a ski area and toboggan slide at Hidden Valley. However, as Estes Park and certain factions within the NPS pushed for more aggressive winter development of the park, Rocky Mountain Superintendent Edmund Rogers began to harbor conflicted views. While recognizing the benefits of winter use in boosting park visitation, Rogers held reservations about scarring the park's landscape with more ski runs and continuing to turn the park into a competitive skiing venue. However, unbeknownst to Rogers, unauthorized efforts to develop Hidden Valley as an Alpine ski area had already begun. Prior to the park's creation, mechanized sawmill operations had harvested the forest of Hidden Valley, with some of the trees used in the construction of Estes Park's iconic Stanley Hotel. During the 1920s, Hidden Valley had also served as a construction camp for the building of Trail Ridge Road. The legacy of extractive enterprise left open cuts through the trees of Hidden Valley's lower slopes and skiers began adopting them as downhill runs. In the 1920s, Jack Moomaw, a park ranger and avid skier, began taking matters into his own hands to promote skiing at Hidden Valley. Moomaw expanded the existing swathes through the forest with surreptitious logging forays of his own. His illegal efforts ultimately helped to establish Hidden Valley as the Alpine ski center of Rocky Mountain.<sup>96</sup>

Estes Park felt that Rocky Mountain's administration had been dragging their feet for too long on developing the park as an Alpine skiing destination. Many locals, both inside and outside the park service, viewed Moomaw's illegal tree trimming as a heroic undertaking. When Moomaw's activities came to light, he was nearly fired, but the local community rallied to his defense. Moomaw kept his

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96 Barth and Leggett, *Finding Hidden Valley*, 15-17, 24-26; Frank, *Making Rocky Mountain National Park*, 176-177; Musselman, *Rocky Mountain National Park Administrative History, 1915-1965*, "Chapter XI: Winter Sports and Hidden Valley;" Jessen, *Estes Park: A Quick History Including Rocky Mountain National Park*, 173-174; Ferrel Atkins, "Interview with Dan Griffith," August 6, 1966, 3-4, 7-8, Oral Interview Collection, Estes Park Library Local Archives (EPLLA); Bob Bradley, "Historic Hidden Valley Report," November 3, 1993, 1, Vertical Files, Hidden Valley Folder, EPLLA.

job, and bowing to local pressure, park officials allowed him to continue his work on the ski runs. Through the efforts of Moomaw, the park attracted the National Ski Association's (NSA) Championships for March 1934, and organizers selected Hidden Valley as the site of the National Down Mountain Race. Event organizers put Moomaw in charge of the races, and skiers from across the country rendezvoused in Rocky Mountain. The Cross-Country Race ran from Bear Lake through Fern Lake and on to Moraine Park. The race was won by Joseph Duncan, a local boy from Estes Park who had been mentored by Moomaw. One of Moomaw's downhill creations at Hidden Valley, nicknamed the Suicide Run, became the site of the Down Mountain Race. Dropping 1,000 feet in one mile through the forest of lower Hidden Valley, the trail was the width of a bridle path. The winding and treacherous run motivated some skiers to wisely bow out of the event. Local skier Ted Mathews broke his back during the race after slamming into a tree adjacent to the narrow run. Joseph Duncan also took first place in the Down Mountain Race with a time of 2 minutes and 58 seconds. The following winter Hidden Valley hosted the Colorado Regional Olympic tryouts and further bolstered the credentials of Rocky Mountain as an Alpine skiing venue.<sup>97</sup>

In 1936, Superintendent Rogers left Rocky Mountain to become Yellowstone's superintendent, and his successors proved to be more amiable towards the promotion of Alpine skiing. Before the winter season of 1936-1937 commenced, Rogers' successor, Thomas Allen, announced that the east side of Trail Ridge Road would be kept open all winter to upper Hidden Valley. The road switchbacked around Hidden Valley and plowing the road allowed cars and buses to be used to shuttle skiers to the top of the lower runs. Keeping the switchback open also rendered the more bountiful snow and open

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97 Barth and Leggett, *Finding Hidden Valley*, 25-29; Frank, *Making Rocky Mountain National Park*, 176-177; Musselman, *Rocky Mountain National Park Administrative History, 1915-1965*, "Chapter XI: Winter Sports and Hidden Valley"; Morten Lund, "America's First Alpine Trials – and Tribulations," *Skiing Heritage Journal*, September 2009, 8; Jack Moomaw, *Recollections of A Rocky Mountain Ranger* (Estes Park, CO: YMCA of The Rockies, 1994), 167-169; Jessen, *Estes Park: A Quick History Including Rocky Mountain National Park*, 74; Bradley, "Historic Hidden Valley Report," November 3, 1993, 1, Hidden Valley Folder, Vertical Files, EPPLA. During World War II, Joseph Duncan became a member of the 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division. He died in combat in Italy in 1945.

slopes of upper Hidden Valley accessible via motorized transport. David Canfield succeeded Allen as superintendent in 1938. Canfield transferred from Crater Lake, where he had created a successful winter season through plowing and the promotion of special events. Concerned with overcrowding at Hidden Valley, Allen and Canfield worked to increase plowing efforts along the Bear Lake and Falls River roads in attempts to spread out Front Range residents flocking to the park for winter sports. They also explored other park locations to develop as ski areas. However, issues of winter access and aesthetic concerns over developing new areas for winter use scuttled these plans. By the end of the decade, Alpine skiing activities in the park had firmly coalesced around the already scarred landscape of Hidden Valley as it transformed into the hub of winter activities in Rocky Mountain.<sup>98</sup>

During the 1930s, a similar trajectory towards increased winter use unfolded in Lassen and turned the national park into a favorite destination for skiers in northern California. Located on the southern extremity of the Cascades and ideally situated to accrue immense snowpacks, Lassen occupies the center of a vast network of federal lands radiating outward and upward from Northern California's Central Valley along the Sacramento River. With the creation of the national park in 1916, local communities increasingly looked to Lassen as an economic engine for their region. In the 1930s, regional boosters and park managers looked south and saw a ski boom unfolding in the Sierra Nevada, anchored in Lassen's elder sibling of Yosemite. They realized that snow was one of Lassen's biggest offerings, and skiing became a key component in the promotion of the park. In 1931, Lassen's Loop Road linking the north and south sides of the park opened to much fanfare. Going up and over the lower flanks of 10,457' Mt. Lassen, the thirty mile Loop Road reaches a high point of 8,512'. Originally the NPS had entertained plans to keep the road plowed all winter to provide year-round access to the core of the park. However, the park's heavy snow soon proved the impracticality of the plan. In 1934,

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98 Richard A. Bartlett, *Yellowstone: A Wilderness Besieged* (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 1985), 302; Barth and Leggett, *Finding Hidden Valley*, 30-37; Frank, *Making Rocky Mountain National Park*, 179-180; Musselman, *Rocky Mountain National Park Administrative History, 1915-1965*, "Chapter XI: Winter Sports and Hidden Valley;" Bradley, "Historic Hidden Valley Report," November 3, 1993, 1-2, Vertical Files, Hidden Valley Folder, EPPLA.

the NPS experimented with plowing the south end of the road as far as Lake Helen, located at an elevation of 8,162'. Heavy snow and avalanches proved that the task of keeping the road plowed to Lake Helen each winter to also be impractical. The NPS settled for plowing the Loop Road's southside, which received the most snow, to Sulphur Works, sitting six miles and 1,200' below Lake Helen. Sulphur Works quickly developed into the de facto home of Alpine skiing in Lassen.<sup>99</sup>

With winter access to the park accomplished, the deep, long lasting snow and the relative proximity of the park to some of the bigger population bases in sparsely populated northern California, such as Redding, Red Bluff, and Chico, made the park an ideal choice for winter events in the region. On April 8, 1934, with the southern end of the Loop Road already plowed to Lake Helen, the Mt. Lassen Ski Club hosted a ski tournament at the lake. Many of the skiers and spectators made their way to the park from Redding, which sits along the banks of the Sacramento River at an elevation of 495'. As the city of Redding reached highs of 83F, the highlands of Lassen luxuriated in epically deep snows. Official government snow surveys in April 1934 revealed an average of 114 inches of snow sitting on the ground at Lake Helen. Spring was in full effect in the lowlands of the Central Valley, but the snows of Lassen would linger for months to come. For aspiring skiers, regional boosters, and park managers, the gold in the hills of Lassen was white.<sup>100</sup>

Local and national ski racers and ski jumpers descended on Lake Helen that Sunday afternoon, and over a thousand spectators gathered to watch the events and skim across the snow on their own. The day before the event the *Redding Searchlight* reported that “officials of the club announce no admission charge will be made for this event.” There had been some back and forth between Lassen's Superintendent, Lynne Collins, and the third director of the NPS, Arno Cammerer, about the ski club's

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99 Krahe and Catton, *Little Gem of the Cascades*, 155; Douglas Strong, *Footprints in Time*, 70, 90-91; NPS, *Lassen Volcanic National Park California General Management Plan* (NPS, 1981), 30-31, Internet Archive, accessed December 20, 2013, <https://archive.org/details/lassenvolcanicna00nati>; NPS, *Lassen Park Peak Experiences*, June – November 2013, 22, author's collection.

100 “Snowmen Going to Park Meet,” *Redding Searchlight*, April 7, 1934, 4; “Weather Report: April 6, 1934,” *Redding Searchlight*, April 7, 1934, 4; “Unusual Depth of Snow Shown at Lake Helen,” *Redding Searchlight*, April 7, 1934, 1.



desire to collect admission fees. Cammerer nixed the admission idea. This foreshadowed his philosophical struggle concerning competitive skiing events in the parks, which would re-surface in a more crystallized form in 1936. In the meantime, the locals, especially Superintendent Collins, were beaming with the success of the ski meet. Regional boosters, park officials, and local skiers all reveled in the burgeoning ski culture coalescing around Lassen and committed themselves to the continuing development of skiing in the park. With state and NPS plow crews cooperating to keep roads open, increasing numbers of skiers converged on Lassen. In February 1935, the Shasta-Cascade Wonderland Association, a booster organization for far northern California, formed “a permanent Lassen Park development committee.” The committee consisted of representatives from Tehama, Shasta, Lassen, and Plumas counties, along with Superintendent Collins, and the supervisor of Lassen National Forest, P.D. Hansen. The promotion and development of skiing in Lassen and on Mt. Shasta's national forest lands to the north were an essential part of the association's four season plans for their region.<sup>101</sup>

During the 1930s, the scale and stakes of ski competitions in the western parks continued to grow. The first Silver Skis race, featuring sixty male racers, took place in Rainier on April 22, 1934. *The Seattle Post-Intelligencer* sponsored the race, and the inaugural affair attracted 5,000 spectators. The course was nearly five miles long and dropped 4,800' in elevation from Camp Muir, located near the 10,000' level on the mountain, down into Paradise Valley. Skiers climbed up to the starting point, and the race employed a mass start where all 65 competitors began careening down the course simultaneously. In 1934, the fastest skier, Don Fraser, completed the course in 10 minutes and 49.6 seconds. Twenty of the skiers did not finish the race due to the ensuing chaos of the simultaneous start.

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101 Krahe and Catton, *Little Gem of the Cascades*, 154-155; Douglas Strong, *Footprints in Time*, 90; “Snowmen Going to Park Meet,” *Redding Searchlight*, April 7, 1934, 4; “Peaks Highway To Be Kept Open by State In Winter,” *Redding Searchlight*, January, 10, 1935, 4; “Highway Men Struggle to Keep Routes Open In Snow” *Redding Searchlight*, January, 19, 1935, 1; “32 From Corning Attend Snow Fete in Lassen Park,” *Redding Searchlight*, January, 4, 1935, 4; “Conditions Are Perfect For Snow Sports in Region,” *Redding Searchlight*, January 6, 1935, 1; “Park Development Group Chosen By Wonderland Head,” *Redding Searchlight*, February, 3, 1935, 4; “Western Playgrounds Now Offer Winter and Summer Sports,” *Five Star Weekly Insert in Redding Searchlight*, January 18, 1936, 8.

The event also included women's and children's races on shorter courses. The Silver Skis was such a success that the NSA decided to hold the U.S. Alpine Championships on the lower half of the Silver Skis course on April 14-15, 1935. The races also acted as the U.S. qualifier for the 1936 Winter Olympics Alpine ski team. Rainier's Superintendent Owen Tomlinson had his plow crews open the road past Narada Falls to just below Paradise to provide easier access and enough parking to accommodate the hordes of spectators. The spectacle attracted a crowd of 7,500 people and 2,000 automobiles. Some NPS officials were ecstatic with the event's success, but others, including Director Cammerer, started seeing a darker side to Alpine ski competitions and the mammoth spectacles they created in the parks.<sup>102</sup>

Definite cracks in NPS enthusiasm towards the development of the parks as competitive skiing venues surfaced on April 7, 1936 when Cammerer issued "Office Order No. 319." Rather than coming from park superintendents, who tended to appreciate the ability of competitive ski events to promote their individual parks, the opposition towards high-stakes competition came directly from the top of the bureaucratic chain. Cammerer circulated the following memo to his subordinates with the title "National Park Service Winter Sports Policy":

National Parks shall be kept open for recreational use in winter so far as consistent with cost and probable use, emphasis being placed primarily upon scenic values thus made available. Visitors should be encouraged to utilize parks informally with winter activities.

Ski jumping contests, necessitating the construction of artificial ski jumps, are not desirable. Bob sled and other highly competitive contests and exhibitions which require artificialization of terrain must be avoided. The collection of admission fees for special winter sports events is prohibited.

In the second paragraph of the order, Cammerer solidified his stance against charging admission fees for competitive events, which had first surfaced in debates over the April 8, 1934 Lake Helen ski meet

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102 Catton, *National Park, City Playground*, 104-105; Bette Filley, *The Big Fact Book About Mount Rainier* (Issaquah, WA: Dunamis House, 1996), 251-252; Lowell Skoog, "The Silver Skis: America's Wildest Race," accessed February 14, 2015, <http://www.alpenglow.org/skiing/silver-skis-2005/>; John Jay, *Ski Down The Years* (New York, NY: Award House, 1966), 157-160; Lund, "America's First Alpine Trials – and Tribulations," *Skiing Heritage Journal*, September 2009, 8-13.

in Lassen. He lay any future debates to rest by irrevocably prohibiting the collection of admission fees to competitive events held in the parks. Cammerer's reference to "bob sleds" revealed that his concerns, while centered on skiing, also encompassed other winter sports. Memories of Yosemite's failed bid for the 1932 Winter Olympics lingered, and Cammerer wanted to rein in the further escalation of winter competition in the parks before similar plans were rehashed in the future.<sup>103</sup>

Cammerer's stance was a departure from that of Horace Albright, his predecessor as director of the NPS from 1929-1933. The Yosemite Olympic bid had enjoyed the enthusiastic backing of both Albright and Stephen Mather. As the first two directors of the NPS, both men had embraced the promotion of winter use in the parks with a wide array of events and development schemes. Cammerer articulated a more conservative and conflicted approach towards winter use than his predecessors had demonstrated. While Cammerer did not ban competitive events outright, Order No. 319 did assure that there would be no more Olympic bids issuing from the national parks. However, the suggestive, rather than definitive, language contained in Order No. 319 also demonstrated that Cammerer was very conscious of straddling the dual mandate. Skiers and local communities were important constituencies that the NPS did not want to anger and alienate with sweeping restrictive proclamations. Cammerer left most of the decision making power on winter use of the parks up to individual superintendents who lived and worked with these constituencies. While some superintendents agreed with Cammerer's trepidation towards winter use, others did not. This allowed some of the western parks to continue on their trajectory towards becoming some of the West's earliest and most popular Alpine skiing centers.<sup>104</sup>

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### **Skimeisters, Ski Movies, and Ski Lifts**

In 1936, Don and Mary Tressider of the Yosemite Park and Curry Company (YPCC) made a

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103 Arno Cammerer, Office Order No. 319: NPS Winter Sports Policy, April 7, 1936, Box: LWRP, Folder: 868 9-28 2, GNPA.

104 Ibid.; Weamer, *The Perfect Art*, 12-13.

ski pilgrimage to St. Anton am Arlberg in the Austrian Alps to meet the world's most renowned skimeister, Hannes Schneider. As the architect of the Arlberg technique of Alpine ski instruction, Schneider had become the most famous and sought after ski instructor in the world. His ski school in St. Anton attracted the world's wealthiest skiers to come study at the feet of the master and his carefully chosen proteges. Schneider and his acolytes spread the Arlberg gospel worldwide from Europe to Australia, New Zealand to Japan, and North America to South America. By the 1930s, the cult of personality built around Schneider had grown to epic proportions. Schneider and his well groomed instructors had developed into global ambassadors of Alpine skiing. Upon their meeting with Schneider in 1936, the Tressiders offered Schneider a job as head of the Yosemite Ski School. Content in St. Anton for the moment, Schneider politely declined the Tressiders offer, but his influence had already infiltrated the national parks of the American West and would continue to do so for decades to come.<sup>105</sup>

In the 1920s, Schneider and his Arlberg technique had gained momentum through his film collaborations with the German director Arnold Fanck. Their partnership began in 1920 with the film *Das Wunder des Schneeschuhs (The Wonders of Skiing)*, which featured Schneider and other Arlbergers demonstrating their ski technique in the Alps. The film began a long and fruitful relationship between Fanck and Schneider, which lasted into the 1930s, in a series of Fanck's "mountain films" that featured the Alps and the dramatic mountain activities of climbing and skiing as the films central characters. In 1925, Fanck and Schneider collaborated on *Der heilige Berg (The Holy Mountain)*, released in 1926. The feature length film featured majestic ski scenes, including trend setting ski chases featuring Schneider and his cadre of Arlbergers shredding untracked mountain heights. In total, the skiing Schneider starred in twelve of Fanck's mountain films, and together they created a legacy that profoundly influenced skiing and its depictions in popular culture. Fanck's films created a lasting template and appetite for ski films and spread Schneider's cult of personality and his Arlberg technique

<sup>105</sup> Rose, *Magic Yosemite Winters*, 44-45; Allen, *The Culture and Sport of Skiing*, 261-262, 264-266; Otto Lang, *Downhill Skiing* (New York, NY: Henry Holt And Company, 1936), 1-10; Parker, *Freeheel Skiing*, 19-21.

to a rapidly widening audience.<sup>106</sup>

As the tumultuous events of the interwar period initiated a central European diaspora, practitioners of the Arlberg technique came to the U.S. to take over existing ski schools and establish new ones. This eventually included Schneider, who after running afoul of the Nazis in Austria, immigrated with his family to North Conway, New Hampshire in 1939 to take over the ski school at Mt. Cranmore. However, before Schneider's migration, his proteges had already established the Arlberg technique in North America as the paragon of modern skiing. One of Schneider's most influential disciples to relocate from St. Anton to the United States was Otto Lang, who also appeared as a skier in some of Fanck's mountain films. In 1935, Kate Peckett recruited Lang from St. Anton to come to New Hampshire to teach skiing at her family's Peckett's Inn at Sugar Hill. Schneider sanctioned the move, and Lang quickly became Schneider's most prominent representative in North America. After a winter in New Hampshire, Lang desired his "own ski school in an area where there were high mountains and reliable snow conditions." In the spring of 1936, Lang headed west to Mt. Rainier in search of high mountain snow with the railroad scion Jerome Hill, whom he had become friends with in St. Anton.<sup>107</sup>

The international lives of Lang and Hill intersected with the history of Alpine skiing and the national parks in a myriad of ways. Jerome Hill was the grandson of James Jerome Hill, "The Empire Builder" of the Great Northern Railway, and the son of Louis W. Hill, who had taken over the reins of the Great Northern from his father. The Hills and the Great Northern played a pivotal role in the creation of Glacier National Park in 1910. As an heir to the Hill fortune, the artistic minded Jerome had a wealth of disposable income and free time. As a ski enthusiast, he was determined to shoot a film depicting the beauty of the Arlberg technique unleashed on the snow of the western mountains. Hill

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106 Allen, *The Culture and Sport of Skiing*, 262-264; Ephraim Katz, *The Film Encyclopedia* (New York, NY: Harper & Row Publisher, Incorporated, 1979), 400-401, 836; *Der heilige Berg (The Holy Mountain)*, directed by Arnold Fanck (UFA, 1926), DVD (Kino Video, 2003), Information Center (IC), UMLL. *The Holy Mountain* launched the long and controversial film career of Leni Riefenstahl, who starred in the film.

107 Allen, *The Culture and Sport of Skiing*, 260, 262, 273-274; Otto Lang, *A Bird of Passage* (Helena, MT: Falcon Press, 1994), 76-83, 92, 104.

recruited Lang as his film collaborator and the lone skier to star in his film. The two men traveled by train to Seattle, and upon seeing the 14,409' Mt. Rainier for the first time, Lang wrote that he “fell in love with this giant mountain before ever setting foot on it.”<sup>108</sup>

Their small crew spent two weeks filming at Mt. Rainier, using Paradise Inn as their home base. Lang and Hill arrived at Paradise in time to enjoy the spectacle of the 1936 Silver Skis race, won by Hannes Schroll, the Austrian head of the Yosemite Ski School, in a record setting fashion of five minutes and thirty seconds. For Lang's two weeks at Paradise, “the weather stayed favorable throughout our shoot, with the sun shining every day, resulting in ideal spring snow conditions that made skiing like gliding on melting butter.” After their time at Paradise, the film crew traveled to Mt. Baker to finish the filming. Upon leaving Paradise, Lang reminisced that “somehow I had a feeling I would be back at Mount Rainier. The thought crossed my mind that this might be a promising place in which to open my own school.” Lang's reputation quickly grew in the U.S. as he continued to ski his way into heady circles of American wealth and power. While in New Hampshire, one of Lang's ski students had been Nelson Rockefeller, president of New York City's Radio Music City Hall. Lang used this connection to maneuver the film, ultimately titled *Ski Flight*, into a January 1938 debut on a double bill with Disney's *Snow White and The Seven Dwarfs* at Radio Music Hall. After a successful six week run alongside *Snow White* at Radio Music Hall, *Ski Flight* played in hundreds of movie theaters across the United States. *Ski Flight* brought the beauty and elegance of a sport that still lay on the fringes of mainstream America to coast to coast audiences. It also contributed to Lang's growing reputation as the nation's preeminent ski instructor, and Rainier's reputation as one of the nation's premier ski venues.<sup>109</sup>

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108 Lang, *A Bird of Passage*, 77-78, 101, 106.

109 Ibid., 106-111, 133-134, 140-141, 143, 148; “A Bird of Passage,” *Skiing Heritage Journal*, Winter 1995, 33-34; “Letter to the Editor from Lowell Skoog and response from Morten Lund,” *Skiing Heritage Journal*, December 2006, 4, 6; *Ski Flight: A Document of Skiing According to the Principles of Hannes Schneider*, produced by Jerome Hill (Warner Brothers, 1937), accessed March 18, 2015, VIMEO. The film was originally entitled *Snow Flight*, which is also the title seen at the beginning of the film. However, the film was referred to as *Ski Flight* upon its double bill debut with *Snow White*, probably to avoid confusion between the two titles.

Along with filming *Ski Flight* in 1936, Lang was also commissioned by Henry Holt and Company to write a ski manual on the Arlberg technique entitled *Downhill Skiing*. Lang dedicated his book to Hannes Schneider, who also wrote the foreword for “the first ski-book written by one of my teachers to be published in America.” Alongside Lang’s words, the book featured illustrative photos of Lang demonstrating the Arlberg technique. Photos in the book were taken by Roger L. Moore, a northeastern photographer; Luggi Foeger, a fellow Schneider protege who became the skimeister at Badger Pass in 1938; Jerome Hill; and Louis W. Hill, Jerome’s older brother. Many of the photos were taken from the raw footage of *Ski Flight* shot in Rainier, and other still photos were taken on the ski slopes of New Hampshire, Yosemite, Mt. Rainier, and Mt. Baker. Lang’s book came out shortly before Schneider and Lang appeared together in the Winter Sports Shows held in Boston Garden and New York City’s Madison Square Garden, complete with an indoor ski hill where Schneider and Lang awed huge crowds with their skiing. Eighty thousand people attended the multi-day event in New York City. Along with his seminal ski film and instructional ski manual, Lang wrote articles for magazines and newspapers and soon had a signature pair of skis and metal ski poles, the brainchild of Lang and the first of their kind. After his arrival in the U.S., Lang quickly became a star, and his close and highly visible relationship with Schneider propelled him to increasing fame and success in America.<sup>110</sup>

Lang’s experience in Rainier shooting *Ski Flight* convinced him that it was the ideal place for him to open his ski school. With the acquisition of more efficient rotary plows, the NPS had kept the road to Paradise open to Narada Falls, 1.5 miles below Paradise, during the entire winter of 1935-1936. This effort allowed the Rainier National Park Company (RNPC) to keep lodging at Paradise open for overnight accommodations. Guests could ski or snowshoe up to Paradise or be transported via horse drawn sleigh operated by the RNPC. Winter visitation to Rainier skyrocketed to 58,183 people for the 1935-1936 season. In December 1936, Lang opened “America’s First Official Hannes Schneider Ski

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<sup>110</sup> Lang, *Downhill Skiing*, passim; Lang, *A Bird of Passage*, 101-103, 111-112, 122, 124-127, 129, 138-140; “Otto Lang and his pioneer steel pole,” *Skiing Heritage Journal*, September 1998, 36.

School” at Paradise. That winter, the NPS plowed the road all the way to Paradise. Visitors parked their cars at Narada Falls and jumped on RNPC shuttle buses to Paradise. Skiers could also utilize the shuttles for machine assisted yo-yo skiing.<sup>111</sup> “Gradually Paradise Inn attracted skiers for extended stays, as people developed the habit of prolonging their customary weekend visits to take advantage of a continuous series of lessons,” which was the hallmark of Arlberg instruction. With the added attraction of a ski school headed by a celebrity instructor, winter business boomed at Paradise, and as Lang's star continued to rise in the ski world, so too did Rainier's.<sup>112</sup>

In March 1937, Twentieth Century Fox chose Paradise to film the ski scenes for the movie *Thin Ice*, starring Tyrone Power and Sonja Henie. With his experience working on *Ski Flight*, the studio asked Lang to help with filming the ski sequences for *Thin Ice*. The slopes of Rainier doubled for the Swiss Alps where the story was set, and the cast and crew stayed at Paradise Inn. However, a barrage of blizzards kept them holed up for nearly three weeks as the idle production hemorrhaged \$10,000 a day. The delays were a financial boon for the RNPC and the locals hired to help. The romantically involved Powers and Henie “kept mostly in their suite of rooms, with meals served in privacy.” The studio finally ordered the stars and most of the crew to pack it up. They left a skeleton crew behind to film the ski scenes under Lang's direction. The weather cleared, and using ski doubles, Lang orchestrated majestic ski scenes of the lovers chasing each other across the slopes of Rainier. Henie's ski double was an eighteen-year-old student of Lang's named Gretchen Kunigk, who later went on to marry Don Fraser, the winner of the 1934 Silver Skis. In 1948, as Gretchen Fraser, she became the first American skier to medal in Alpine events at the Olympics with a gold in the Slalom and a silver in the Alpine Combined at St. Moritz. In 1937, one ski scene in *Thin Ice* involved skiing a slope that was steeper than Kunigk was comfortable with at the time. So, Lang donned his skis, Henie's outfit, and a blonde wig

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111 Yo-yo skiing refers to skiing a chosen slope repeatedly without the aid of a ski lift. Mechanized forms of yo-yo skiing involve the use of an automobile, snowmobile, or helicopter. However, the most common form of yo-yo skiing is human powered and is accomplished by using skins or a boot track to repeatedly climb up and ski down a slope like a yo-yo.

112 Catton, *National Park, City Playground*, 105-107; Lang, *A Bird of Passage*, 127-128.



for the sequence. *Thin Ice* further bolstered the national skiing credentials of both Rainier and Lang.<sup>113</sup>

When the scenes for *Ski Flight* and *Thin Ice* were filmed in Rainier in 1936 and 1937 there were no ski lifts at Paradise. Skiers climbed the slopes under human power. The opening scene of *Ski Flight* shows Lang and his dog Droopy emerging from a snow covered cabin high in the mountains. Lang demonstrates to Droopy how to attach climbing skins to skis. After telling Droopy to go back and guard the cabin, a whistling Lang joyfully climbs uphill on his skin clad skis. Near the end of the twenty minute movie, following Lang's detailed explanation and demonstration of the Arlberg technique, Lang declares "I guess that's just about enough of this talk. Let's get off these seal skins that we used to get up here." He expertly detaches his skins without taking off his skis and quickly folds and pockets them before heading downhill. The final three minutes of *Ski Flight* show Lang gracefully arcing turns down steep and untouched slopes of virgin powder. Similarly, in *Thin Ice*, there are no ski lifts or crowded, tracked out slopes. The skiers in the film climb the wide open slopes alone and under their own power. At the time, the heels of Alpine skiers were not completely locked down and their adjustable bindings still allowed skiers to efficiently climb uphill and ski the flats. Uphill skiing remained an essential component of Alpine skiing, and ski lifts had not yet come to define and monopolize the sport.<sup>114</sup>

However, ski lifts had begun to trickle into the national parks as they became home to some of the earliest lift-served skiing in the American West. An experimental electric ski lift, known as The Upski, went into operation for the 1934-1935 ski season at Yosemite's Badger Pass. The first rope tow in a national park appeared in Lassen for the 1935-1936 ski season, and a rope tow began operation at Paradise for the 1937-1938 ski season. When Cammerer issued Order No. 319 on April 7, 1936, ski lifts had only appeared in Yosemite and Lassen. Competition, not mechanized skiing, was the winter

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113 Lang, *A Bird of Passage*, 134-138, 272-273; Filley, *The Big Fact Book About Mount Rainier*, 167; Morten Lund with Gary Schwartz, "The First Hollywood Ski Movies," *Skiing Heritage Journal*, Winter 1996, 31-32; Zachary Keeler, "When Hollywood Went to Washington: Film's Golden Age in The Evergreen State," accessed March 26, 2015, *The Great Depression in Washington State* website, Pacific Northwest Labor and Civil Rights Projects, University of Washington; *Thin Ice*, directed by Sidney Lanfield, (Twentieth Century Fox, 1937), VHS (Fox Video, 1993), IC, UMM.

114 *Ski Flight*, produced by Jerome Hill; *Thin Ice*, directed by Sidney Lanfield.

specter that most troubled Cammerer in 1936. The director did not specifically mention ski lifts in the order and left any decisions concerning lifts in individual parks to the discretion of the park superintendents. In 1936, the existential struggle of the NPS with how to best approach the rising tide of Alpine skiing in the western parks was in its embryonic stages, and it left the door open for the continuing proliferation of ski lifts in the parks. Melding lift technology onto Alpine skiing caused the sport to rocket in popularity and led to increased bureaucratic soul searching on the future of the national parks as some of the West's leading Alpine skiing centers.<sup>115</sup>



*Circa 1890s. Yosemite Valley. Mrs. Fiske and cat go for a ski. Mrs. Fiske was the wife of photographer George Fiske. The couple lived in Yosemite Valley.  
NPS Photo-YOSE012906, Historical Images of Yosemite National Park, NPS Online Gallery.*

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115 Strong, *Footprints in Time*, 91-92; David Tirrell Hellyer, *At the Forest's Edge: Memoir of a Physician-Naturalist* (Seattle, WA: Pacific Search Press, 1985), 183-188; Page and Turnbull, *Determination of Eligibility: Badger Pass Ski Area*, 11; Cammerer, Office Order No. 319: NPS Winter Sports Policy, April 7, 1936, GNPA.



Circa 1920s. Winter at Fern Lake Lodge in Rocky Mountain.  
NPS Photo, ROMO Archives (in Buchholtz book, pg. 158).



Circa 1910. Southern Pacific poster. Yosemite National Park Research Library (in Runte, Yosemite: Embattled Wilderness).



1929. Emil Nordeen competing in The Klamath Cup Race. Nordeen won the 42.6 mile race in 1929 with a time of 5 hours and 57 minutes. He won again in 1931 with a time of 5 hours and 35 minutes.  
Vintage Ski Photo - Crater Lake Nordic Race, Vintage Winter Website.



April 1935. Paradise, Mount Rainier. Hannes Schroll leaps off a cornice on his way to downhill victory at the U.S. Alpine Championships and U.S. Olympic Qualifier at Paradise. Spectators reported that Schroll yodeled as he leapt and schussed the slope. Schroll won both the Men's Downhill and Slalom. He was a visiting Austrian, so he did not qualify for the U.S. Olympic team. Hannes Schroll Wikipedia Page, Wikimedia Commons.



April 1937. Sonja Henie and Tyrone Power on skis at Paradise Inn, Mount Rainier National Park, during filming of "Thin Ice." Richards Studio Collection Series: D745 Image 59, Tacoma Public Library Online Archives.



March 1934. Hidden Valley, Rocky Mountain National Park. National Down Mountain Race on "Suicide Run." On back in pencil "Robert Balch of the Hochgebirge Ski Club Boston, Mass, winner of third place rounding dangerous 'S' curves." Photo 1983.080.008, Hidden Valley Collection, Estes Park Museum.



1936. Badger Pass Ski Lodge, Yosemite.  
NPS Photo-RL003263, Historical Images of Yosemite National Park, NPS Online Gallery.



April 1937. Gretchen Kunigk, ski double for Sonja Henie, in costume for the filming of "Thin Ice" at Paradise Inn on Mount Rainier.  
Richards Studio Collection Series: D745 Image 61, Tacoma Public Library Online Archives.

### Chapter 3 – Ski Lifts, Winter Policy, and War in the Western National Parks

*For the administration, protection and maintenance of the park it is essential that a definite plan for Winter Use be developed, so that we may be in a position to advise the ski enthusiasts next fall of these plans and show that we are taking an active interest in winter sports. --June 17, 1940, George W. Miller, Chief Ranger, Glacier National Park.<sup>116</sup>*

On March 24, 1940, a reverent Easter Sunday scene unfolded in Yellowstone “just as the sun slanted its golden rays over the panorama of snow-covered mountains onto the white terraces” of Mammoth Hot Springs. The sound of “3,000 persons” who “formed a quarter circle around the electric portable organ, and groups of choir singers who sang a beautiful Easter hymn” mixed with the sound of bubbling water continuing its slow but steady travertine construction project. A contingent of skiers came to Easter services geared up for devout worship. “After the impressive half-hour service the crowd dispersed down the paths and roadway while the skiers shot down the steep terraces alongside the boiling streams of hot water.” Among the skiing faithful was a group from Helena, Montana, that included Brooke Ricker, the president of the Northern Rocky Mountain Ski Association; Dave Mann, “a former Dartmouth skier and one of the top skiers in the Northern Rocky Mountain Ski association;” and John Collins, the secretary of the ski association. After turns on the Mammoth Terraces, the skiers drove to the northern slopes of Mt. Washburn. Ricker later wrote an article about his ski experiences entitled “Yellowstone Snow Safari.” In January 1941, his chronicle appeared in *Ski Illustrated* and marketed Yellowstone as an Alpine skiing destination to a growing and mobile skiing public.<sup>117</sup>

*Ski Illustrated* packaged and sold the increasingly commercial image of Alpine skiing to a national audience and the national parks were part of the package. On the pages opposite Ricker's article, the magazine pictured glamorous models and actresses showing off the latest ski and apres ski fashions, gave ski advice from noted experts, and advertised the latest gear advancements. Amidst this

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116 George W. Miller, “Memo to Glacier National Park Superintendent Libbey,” June, 17, 1940, Box: LWRP, Folder: 868 9-28 1, GNPA.

117 Brooke Ricker, “Yellowstone Snow Safari,” *Ski Illustrated*, Winter 1941, 28, 33, News Clippings, YNP Travel and Public Use News: 1940-1954, YRL, GHRC; “Article On Park Skiing Carried In Publication,” *Livingston Enterprise*, January 23, 1941, YNP Scrapbook #10, Microfilm Cabinet Drawer 1 (S59), YRL, GHRC. Brooke Ricker served in the U.S. Army's 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division during World War II.

burgeoning commercialization of Alpine skiing, Ricker portrayed Yellowstone as an Alpine skier's paradise. He enthusiastically described the ski scene on the northern slopes of Mt. Washburn: "We found plenty of ski tracks and sitzmarks already there, and we hurriedly put on our own skis to make some more of both. The snow was deep and the slope long and plenty steep. We made the long ride down, and had someone meet us in a car at one of the switchbacks to return us to the starting place."<sup>118</sup> On the slopes of Washburn, Ricker's party met some park rangers "trying their luck with 'Christies.'"<sup>119</sup> Ricker described the rangers as recent converts to the joys of Alpine skiing: "Skiing to the Rangers used to mean only long, hard patrol trips checking on the animals' winter conditions, in deep snow with long skis, and they just plain hated the sight of a pair of skis. It took some tall talking, fast action ski motion pictures, and visits from members of neighboring clubs to show the boys they were really missing a lot of fun." As skiing became increasingly detached from its uphill manifestations, the skiing rangers "were particularly interested in portable tows, as a group from Butte had one in use the previous weekend. The Rangers vowed they would have their own tow next year." By the spring of 1940, lift assisted skiing had crept into Yellowstone, and the rangers' enthusiasm for the concept provided fertile ground for its continued experimentation.<sup>120</sup>

In the 1930s, ski lifts led to the sport's explosion in popularity and increased public pressure on federal land managers in the West to accommodate Alpine skiers' growing desires. The prime ski country lay in the region's national forests and national parks. As the ski rush gripped the West, skiers fanned out across the vast expanses of federal land in search of veins of white gold where lifts could be erected. The USFS joined the NPS in promoting and subsidizing the growth of Alpine skiing in the West. New Deal programs funneled money and manpower into the promotion and development of

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118 Sitzmark is "a German word for the imprint in the snow made by a fallen skier." Henry Beard and Roy McKie, *Skiing: A Skier's Dictionary* (New York, NY: Workman Publishing, 1989), 66.

119 Christie is a "Term for any skidded turn that ends with the skis in a parallel position. The maneuver was introduced and perfected by Norwegians who named it for Norway's capital city, Christiana, from which it was eventually contracted to 'christie.'" The city of Christiana is now known as Oslo. Beard and McKie, *Skiing: A Skier's Dictionary*, 21.

120 Ricker, "Yellowstone Snow Safari," 28-30, 33-34.

skiing on federal lands. CCC labor helped build and improve ski facilities in the region's parks and forests. Works Progress Administration (WPA) posters touted the attributes of the national parks as ski venues. Yosemite, Rainier, Lassen, Crater Lake, and Olympic established themselves as some of the earliest centers of lift-served skiing in the West. In 1941, as public pressure to develop the western snow mounted, the Department of the Interior tasked the U.S. Travel Bureau to compile a comprehensive list of Nordic and Alpine ski areas in the West. The agency published its findings for the public in a 35 page booklet entitled *Ski West: 1941-1942*. Ten national parks made the list and eight of them boasted of ski lifts. Yosemite had added two rope tows at Badger Pass to compliment The Upski, and seven other parks allowed concessionaires or ski clubs to operate rope tows within their boundaries. On the eve of World War II, Sequoia, Yosemite, Lassen, Rocky Mountain, Crater Lake, Rainier, Olympic, and Yellowstone had been colonized by lifts. Backed with New Deal money and labor, the national parks entered the 1940s primed to capitalize on the ski boom. Despite creeping doubt entering the institutional mind of the NPS concerning Alpine skiing, the political and economic atmosphere of the era pointed towards the continued growth of lift-served skiing in the parks.<sup>121</sup>

However, World War II interrupted ski plans across the United States. As efforts turned to the war, Alpine skiing development was put on the cultural back burner by both the public and the federal government. The pre-war ski boom went on a hiatus, but skiing in the national parks continued. On August 10, 1942, *Life* featured an article on summer skiing in Lassen resplendent with bikini clad snow bunnies, but as the war dragged on and pre-war budgets disappeared, visitor services in the national parks were virtually brought to a standstill. Parks began shutting down visitor facilities and backing off

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121 "23 out of 26 U.S. Parks Are Open for Sport," *Washington Post*, January 10, 1937, F1+F4; Neil M. Maher, *Nature's New Deal: The Civilian Conservation Corps and the Roots of the American Environmental Movement* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2008), 73; Allen, *From Skisport to Skiing*, 114-115, 140-142, 164-165; Dorothy Waugh, *Winter Sports WPA Posters, 1930s*, Library of Congress Prints and Photographic Division; U.S. Travel Bureau, *Ski West: 1941-1942*, 1941, Box: L-46, File: 868, YNPA, GHRC. For *Ski West*, the U.S. Travel Bureau surveyed ski areas in twelve western states: Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming.



winter plowing efforts. Some parks shut down their winter operations for the duration of the war, but other parks continued to operate ski lifts for locals and military personnel. Badger Pass remained open throughout the war, and The U.S. Army Recreation Camp in Mount McKinley National Park operated rope tows for Alaska's military personnel on leave. Ski troops utilized rope tows in Rainier for training. The national parks played a crucial role in the origin story of the 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division, and the soldiers came home to jump start the post-war ski industry. World War II also provided the NPS with breathing room to more fully process and contemplate the future of Alpine skiing in the parks without the recreational ski lobby in their ears.<sup>122</sup>

The addition of ski lifts to park landscapes in the second half of the 1930s added to the concerns of overcrowding and spectacle that bothered Director Arno Cammerer in 1936. Before the appearance of ski lifts, Alpine skiing was still a wholly human powered endeavor once skiers reached the slopes, and this fact tended to discourage the faint of heart. Ski lifts profoundly changed the nature and definition of Alpine skiing in the 1930s by mechanizing uphill travel. Larger and more concentrated winter crowds began descending on the parks and instigating demands for more intensive development of Alpine skiing. Ski lifts increased problems of overcrowding and contributed to amusement-park-like atmospheres in the national parks, which the NPS leadership increasingly wanted to avoid. Before World War II, factions in the NPS, led by Superintendent John Roberts White in Sequoia, began to question the aesthetic and philosophical ramifications of winter development and the appearance of ski lifts in the western parks. The NPS exited the war with a more conservative and measured approach to Alpine skiing. It continued to placate some of the mechanized desires of its ski constituents, but it also began to more carefully consider the adverse effects of Alpine skiing on the national parks.<sup>123</sup>

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122 "Summer Skiing: Californians bask in the deep snows at Lassen Volcanic National Park," *Life*, August 10, 1942, 38, 40, 42; Rose, *Magic Yosemite Winters*, 63-65; "Mount McKinley Army Recreation Camp, Early 1940s to 1953," Alaska Lost Ski Areas Project, accessed March 10, 2015, <http://www.alsap.org/McKinley/McKinley.htm>; Jeffrey L. Leich, *Tales of the 10<sup>th</sup>: The Mountain Troops and American Skiing* (Franconia, NH: New England Ski Museum, 2003), 18-35.

123 Cammerer, Office Order No. 319, GNPA; Weamer, *The Perfect Art*, 24-27; White, "Atmosphere in the National Parks," February 10, 1936, in Dilsaver, ed., *America's National Park System: The Critical Documents*, 142-148.

## **Ski Lifts, National Park Concessionaires, and The Rise of Corporate Skiing**

The 1936 Winter Olympics at Garmisch-Partenkirchen in Nazi Germany marked a major shift in the global trajectory of both competitive and recreational skiing. It was the first time that the Alpine skiing events of Downhill and Slalom joined the traditional Nordic events on the Olympic schedule, and an aerial tramway shuttled Alpine competitors to the top of the race courses. The use of a mechanized lift to transport skiers to the top of the mountain illustrated the rapidly accelerating trend of a downhill only mentality in the sport of Alpine skiing. When Hannes Schneider developed his Arlberg technique to instruct skiers to go downhill with grace, speed, and control, Alpine skiing did not rely on mechanized uphill transportation. Along with enjoying downhill runs, skiers learned to climb slopes and cruise the flats under their own power. In North America, this would largely remain the case until the latter half of the 1930s. While the divide between Nordic skiing and Alpine skiing was widening, the two branches of skiing had not undergone a complete divorce. It was the development of ski lifts that ultimately led to specialized Alpine skiing gear and technique that focused solely on downhill and sent skiing's dominant form on the track towards a thoroughly industrialized future.<sup>124</sup>

The mechanized uphill transport that came to define Alpine skiing evolved from railroad and mining technology in mid-nineteenth century Europe and the United States. The first funicular opened in Lyon, France in 1862. The first cog-railway opened on Mount Washington, New Hampshire in 1869. Aerial cableways began appearing in Switzerland in 1866. Mining enterprises adopted this technology and brought it to the mountains of the American West. Legends of northern California skiing tell of miners in Johnsville utilizing the Gold Mountain tramway in the 1870s as the “world's first ski lift.” The miners climbed into the ore buckets with their skis and rode the contraption to the top. After disembarking from their bucket, they schussed the slope on their skis. Designing tramway technology to more comfortably accommodate passengers took some time, but in 1908 the first scenic tramway

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<sup>124</sup> Huntford, *Two Planks And A Passion*, 349-351; Allen, *From Skisport to Skiing*, 109-114.

opened in Grindelwald, Switzerland. Technology designed for use in extractive industries was retrofitted to conveniently transport tourists to mountaintops to enjoy the scenic beauty that was otherwise difficult to reach, and this technology was soon adapted for use in skiing.<sup>125</sup>

Melding lift technology onto Alpine skiing drew legions of new recruits to the slopes. The first surface lift, a precursor to the rope tow, specifically designed to transport skiers uphill opened in Switzerland in 1908. However, suffering from design issues, bureaucratic intransigence that refused the inventor a patent, and political turmoil, the lift closed in 1914 and never reopened. Stories from Truckee, California tell of skiers utilizing the haulback lift attached to the toboggan slide for skiing purposes as early as 1913, but this trend did not spread and remained isolated in Truckee. In the 1930s, several inventors on both side of the Atlantic began constructing rope tows of their own design. In 1931, the first rope tow in North America, built by Alec Foster, began operating near Shawbridge, Quebec in the Laurentian Mountains. Foster utilized the rear wheel of a Dodge propped up on blocks to power a rope channeled through a system of wheels and pulleys. In 1932, a Swiss engineer patented a rope tow that utilized a motorcycle engine. The first rope tow on U.S. soil went online at Woodstock, Vermont in 1934. Rope tows utilizing motorcycles, cars, and trucks for power quickly spread across the continent as North American skiers reveled in the do it yourself uphill mechanization of the sport.<sup>126</sup>

Rope tows, J-bars, T-bars, and poma lifts are all examples of surface or drag lifts, which pull skiers mounted on their skis uphill along the snow covered surface of the ski slope. In 1934, a Swiss engineer named Ernst Constam invented a ski lift that utilized a continuously circulating overhead cable. Dangling from the overhead cable was a series of J shaped bars that could accommodate a single skier and drag them up the hill. Constam's invention provided the template for an array of copycat J-

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125 Huntford, *Two Planks And A Passion*, 347-349; "History," Plumas County Ski Club Website, accessed March 2, 2015, <http://www.plumasskiclub.org/history.html>; John McKinney, "Eureka: A Trail to Gold Mountain," *Los Angeles Times*, May 31, 1992. Gold Mountain is now called Eureka Peak. The peak is located in Plumas-Eureka State Park.

126 Stan Cohen, *A Pictorial History of Downhill Skiing* (Missoula, MT: Pictorial Histories Publishing Company, 1985), 108-112; E. John B. Allen, *The Culture and Sport of Skiing* 236, 357 footnote #36; Fry, *The Story of Modern Skiing*, 16; Morten Lund, "The Wonderful, Awful Reign of the Rope Tow," *Skiing Heritage Journal*, June 2008, 27-31.

bars, T-bars, and poma lifts that began appearing on the world's ski slopes in the 1930s and 1940s. Further modifications of aerial cableway technology introduced the chairlift to the world at Sun Valley, Idaho in 1936 and foreshadowed the postwar future of Alpine skiing. However, it would be years until a Constam type lift arrived in the national parks, and decades until a chairlift arrived. The uphill revolution in the national parks began with boat tows and rope tows in the mid-1930s.<sup>127</sup>

The first ski lift to operate in a national park was The Upski at Yosemite's Badger Pass; an experimental version of the contraption began operating in 1934. It consisted of “a toboggan traveling over the top of the snow and carrying six passengers and their skis a distance of 930 feet and an elevation of 290 feet.” The Yosemite Park and Curry Company (YPCC) rented the equipment to construct The Upski in San Francisco. It was powered with “a Ford engine using a half inch cable lying freely on the snow and traveling through pulleys and sheaves.” Subsequent versions of The Upski used “a pair of counterbalanced sleds, pulled by a cable, in which skiers stood, then in later versions, sat.” This type of lift, known as a boat tow, ran on the surface of the snow, but skiers sat or stood inside of it holding their skis. Unlike a rope tow, T-bar, or chairlift, a boat tow required skiers to take their skis on and off. The Upski was an integral part of the YPCC's efforts to develop Badger Pass into the premier ski area in the West, and patient skiers were willing to wait in long lines to save the uphill climb. In December 1935, the YPCC opened a brand new ski lodge at Badger Pass and expanded the carrying capacity and vertical climb of The Upski for the 1935-1936 ski season. CCC labor was used in the construction of the lodge, access roads, and the clearing of ski runs. During the winter of 1935-1936, 30,000 thousand skiers flocked to Badger Pass. For the winter of 1936-1937, the ski area added two additional sleds to the Upski operation, dubbed “Queen Mary” and “Big Bertha.” Enlarging The

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127 Huntford, *Two Planks And A Passion*, 348-349, 352; “Ernst Constam: Lift Inventor,” *Skiing Heritage Journal*, December 2003, 30; Cohen, *A Pictorial History of Downhill Skiing*, 116, 118-119. A poma lift, also referred to as a platter lift, utilizes a disk that is attached to an overhead cable and placed between the skier's legs. With skis on the ground, the skier is pulled uphill by the lift. Unlike a rope tow, a poma lift requires towers to be mounted in the landscape and has a more significant and apparent footprint. Poma is the name of the French company that invented and manufactures this type of lift. The company also manufactures and installs a wide variety of aerial lifts.

Upski's carrying capacity increased the allure of skiing at Badger Pass and bolstered its reputation as the nexus of Alpine skiing in the West.<sup>128</sup>

For the winter of 1935-1936, the YPCC also introduced Austrian ski racer Hannes Schroll as the new director of the Yosemite Ski School. In April 1935, Don and Mary Tressider had been on hand to witness Schroll's dominating victories in the U.S. Alpine Championships at Rainier. The Tressiders recruited Schroll to take over the reins of the Yosemite Ski School from Jules Fritsch, who was more interested in leading Alpine tours in the high country than teaching The Upski riding hordes how to ski. The charismatic Schroll, nicknamed the "Red Devil of the Tyrol," became the face of the Yosemite Ski School, and the YPCC regularly sent Schroll on trips to San Francisco to promote Yosemite skiing. Schroll predated Otto Lang's arrival in Rainier by a year. Like Lang, Schroll was a certified Arlberg instructor, but he had a more erratic approach to downhill technique and teaching than the highly regimented Schneider and Lang espoused. Schroll taught a modified version of the Arlberg technique that featured a more erect posture and more direct to parallel turns. The mere fact that Schroll shared Austrian heritage with Schneider, matched with his impressive European victories and his skiing display on the American stage at Rainier, secured his credentials as the reigning skimeister of the West when he arrived in Yosemite. Quickly obtaining celebrity status in California, Schroll taught skiing to enthusiastic Yosemite crowds that included such Hollywood royalty as Walt Disney and his family.<sup>129</sup>

Inspired by the burgeoning popularity of Badger Pass, ski lifts soon appeared in other western parks. Shortly after The Upski began operation, rope tows arrived in the West and began infiltrating the snow covered slopes of the Sierras, Cascades, Olympics, and Rockies. In the winter of 1935-1936,

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128 Weamer, *The Perfect Art*, 19-20; Rose, *Magic Yosemite Winters*, 34-38; Page and Turnbull, *Determination of Eligibility: Badger Pass Ski Area*, 11-12, 27-28, 32, 36-38; Frolich, *Mountain Dreamers*, 14; Don Tressider, Letter to Yosemite Superintendent Colonel C.G. Thomson, August 22, 1935, Badger Pass Development Records, File: Badger Pass Development 1935-1949, YONPA; Lori Orr, "The Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) in Yosemite," *Yosemite: A Journal For Members of the Yosemite Association* 67, no. 4 (Fall 2005): 3-7, accessed April 2, 2015, <http://www.yosemite.ca.us/library/yosemite/67-4.pdf>.

129 Lund, "The Short, Sweet Ski Life of Hannes Schroll in America," 9-13; Frolich, *Mountain Dreamers*, 14-15, 24-25; Rose, *Magic Yosemite Winters*, 37-41.

Lassen became home to the first rope tow to operate inside an American national park. By this time, the NPS had decided that Sulphur Works was as far as they would commit to plowing the south end of Lassen's Loop Road. Sitting on the southwest side of the park at just under 7,000', the Sulphur Works contains a collection of vigorously bubbling mudpots and steaming fumaroles. Living up to its name, the intoxicating smell of sulphur hangs thick in the air, and scientists believe that the area served as the main volcanic vent of ancient Mt. Tehama. It was just above these very visible signs of Lassen's volcanism that the age of lift-served skiing began in the park. Lassen National Park, Ltd., the main concessionaire in the park, began setting up a portable rope tow and a warming hut at Sulphur Works each winter. The warming hut, taken from a CCC camp and removed from the park's landscape along with the rope tow at the end of each ski season, contained a lunch counter, ski shop, and first aid room ran by the concessionaire. There was no winter lodging available in the park, so the majority of skiers traveled to Lassen on weekends from surrounding communities. The rising popularity of the ski area at Sulphur Works and efforts to keep the northwest entrance road open to Manzanita Lake increased Lassen's winter visitation to over 10,000 people a year in the second half of the 1930s.<sup>130</sup>

During the second half of the 1930s, ski development in Washington's Cascades was largely concentrated around Mt. Baker, Snoqualmie Pass, and Mt. Rainier. Mt. Baker became home to the first ski lift in Washington in 1935. The "Ski Escalator" was a boat tow consisting of a huge wooden sled dragged uphill by a steam powered winch used in logging. It could hold 30 skiers and their gear. The USFS gave the tow's operator, Arthur Brandlund, permission to run the tow and charge skiers 25 cents to ride. However, the operation was extremely short lived. Less than one month after the operation began, Brandlund was killed in an avalanche as he readied the tow for a day's work. This left the state of Washington without a ski lift. However, in fall of 1937, Jim Parker and Chauncey Griggs formed Ski

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<sup>130</sup> Krahe and Catton, *Little Gem of the Cascades*, 155-157; Strong, *Footprints in Time*, 70, 90-91; NPS, *Lassen Volcanic National Park California General Management Plan* (January 1981), 30-31, Internet Archive, accessed December 20, 2013, <https://archive.org/details/lassenvolcanicna00nati>.

Lifts, Inc. to remedy the situation. With the permission of the NPS and the RNPC, Ski Lifts, Inc. began operating a rope tow at Paradise in Rainier in the winter of 1937-1938. They later set up rope tows at Mt. Baker and Snoqualmie. Benefiting from the already established infrastructure of Paradise's guest accommodations, the presence of Otto Lang's ski school, and the enhanced plowing efforts of the NPS, the Rainier operation became an immediate success and added to the reputation of Paradise as the leading ski center of the Northwest. Paradise already had the built environment in place to easily accommodate the addition of the rope tow, and unlike Yosemite and Lassen, Rainier offered slope side lodging. At the time, Paradise Lodge remained open all year and Paradise Inn was open from Christmas week to May and June 15 to September 15. In the winter of 1937-1938, over 80,000 winter visitors came to Rainier. By 1941, that number would rise to 133,990.<sup>131</sup>

Ski Lifts, Inc. recruited David Tirrell Hellyer to take charge of the on-the-ground logistics of the rope tow operation at Paradise. The company constructed a two-story engine house for the tow behind Paradise Inn, at an elevation of 5,420'. They put the rope's upper pulley on top of a pole at the summit of Alta Vista at an elevation of 5,940'. The 1,450' long rope tow provided skiers with a 500' elevation gain. Once the rope tow was set up, Hellyer and his crew tended to its operation, upkeep, and maintenance. Weather permitting, Hellyer's crew would hang Coleman lanterns on the tow's guide poles to allow night skiing for overnight guests. Each winter weekend, Paradise's accommodations filled to capacity. Hellyer recalled nights filled with dancing “schottisches in wool-socked feet,” singing, and “jolly room parties” that “flowed from room to room throughout the buildings.” Despite the success of Rainier's ski boom and the advanced state of development already present at Paradise, the NPS did impose restrictions on the ski operation in order to limit its aesthetic effects. Hellyer wrote that “special conditions and restrictions were placed on our operation within the national park, since

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131 John D'Onofrio and Todd Warger, *Mount Baker* (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2013), 105; Hellyer, *At the Forest's Edge*, 183-189; Catton, *National Park, City Playground*, 106-107; Catton, *Wonderland*, Appendix B: Visitation; Martelle W. Trager, *National Parks of the Northwest* (New York, NY: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1939), 153-154, ASC, UMML.

every evidence of human interference with the landscape had to be removed when the snow left the hillsides.” Each spring, Hellyer's crew masked “the holes where the poles had been lifted from the ground with huckleberry bushes,” and to further minimize the aesthetic effects on summer scenery, they assembled the engine house each year in late fall and disassembled it each spring. They stashed the engine and the component parts of the tow and the engine house “out of sight” at Paradise where it waited patiently to be reassembled for the next ski season.<sup>132</sup>

Alpine skiing demands were quickly spreading across the Pacific Northwest and the New Deal federal government was willing to subsidize the fulfillment of these desires. The most significant example of the U.S. government's subsidization of Alpine skiing was the construction of Timberline Lodge on national forest land at 6,000' on the south side of Oregon's 11,240' Mt. Hood. With New Deal funding and labor, the government directed all aspects of the lodge's construction from the design stage on and owned the 74,000 square foot building when it was finished. Dedicated by President Franklin Roosevelt in September 1937, the lodge officially opened for business in February 1938. The architect Gilbert Stanley Underwood laid out the basic design for Timberline Lodge, which was modified by USFS architects to better blend in with Mt. Hood's landscape. Underwood also designed the Ahwahnee in Yosemite and the Sun Valley Lodge. However, in juxtaposition to Sun Valley's image as an exclusive retreat for the rich, famous, and beautiful, the government designed Timberline as an expression of American craftsmanship and the country's democratic ideals. The government employed over 500 people in the construction project. Just as Paradise served as a nearby mountain escape for Washington communities, Timberline provided a mountain retreat for Oregonians, and quickly came to rival Paradise as the Pacific Northwest's preeminent ski center.<sup>133</sup>

Demonstrating the increasing importance of the USFS in the promotion of Alpine skiing in the

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132 Hellyer, *At the Forest's Edge*, 183-188; Trager, *National Parks of the Northwest*, 153-154.

133 Margaret Supplee Smith, *American Ski Resort: Architecture, Style, Experience* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2013), 25-31, 34; USFS Brochure, “Timberline Lodge: An Expression of Hope and Purpose,” 1984, author's collection.



West, Otto Lang opened new branches of his ski school on Mt. Baker and at Timberline during the winter of 1937-1938. Lang began dividing his time between Paradise and his new ski schools. That same year Lang appeared as a spokesman for Dodge and received a car as payment. In a full page ad featured in *The Saturday Evening Post* and other national magazines, Lang appeared decked out in Austrian garb standing next to a 1938 Dodge with skis draped over his shoulder while one smiling young lady stuck her head out of the driver's side window and another sat in fake snow fiddling with her skis. Lang, the car, and the models all perched in front of a faux backdrop of Mt. Rainier. A smaller inset photo depicted Lang shredding fresh powder. In the ad, Lang declared "You'd think there would be few thrills left for me. I thought so, too, until I started driving my new Dodge to and from my ski schools at Mt. Baker and Mt. Rainier – 300 miles each weekend." The ad illustrated how entangled modern Alpine skiing had become with automobiles, and how Lang's trajectory as one of the most famous faces of American skiing continued to rise. Rainier's reputation as a national center of Alpine skiing continued to benefit from its close association with Lang. However, the ad also hinted at the expanding role that the national forests were playing in the development of Alpine skiing in the West.<sup>134</sup>

Early on in their American ski careers, Hannes Schroll and Otto Lang both realized that the national parks could not accommodate the kind of extensive development that was already becoming the hallmark of modern Alpine skiing. Schroll and Lang used their experience in the parks to leap frog to western ski resorts that were premised on intensive development and more reminiscent of the exclusive resorts they had worked at in the Alps. Longing to create a simulacrum of the Alpine skiing scene of his native Austria in the Sierra Nevada, Schroll left Yosemite in 1938 to spearhead the development of Sugar Bowl near Truckee. Even with the established tradition of NPS promotion of winter development in Yosemite, it would never allow Badger Pass to develop into a posh resort on the scale of the one envisioned by Schroll. Hemmed in by NPS concerns of over development, Badger Pass

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<sup>134</sup> Lang, *Bird of Passage*, 143-147, 152-154. The full page ad appears in the photo collection between pages 210 and 211 of Lang's book. I have also included the advertisement in the images at the end of this chapter.

only had a day lodge, and the YPCC was not allowed to build slopeside lodging. Yosemite Valley had the magnificent Ahwahnee Hotel, but it was located 23 miles away from the ski slopes. Similarly, Lang left Rainier in 1939 to begin working at Sun Valley. Lang decided that Sun Valley had more to offer for his future than the inclement weather of Rainier and the development restrictions imposed on the ski operation by the NPS. As savvy businessman and leading ambassadors of modern skiing, Lang and Schroll understood that ski profits lay in the creation and promotion of exclusive destination resorts.<sup>135</sup>

Whereas the majority of Badger Pass and Paradise skiers ventured to the slopes for the day, Sun Valley and Sugar Bowl created the template for destination resorts built on extended stays by wealthy skiers. The influential connections Schroll forged with students at Badger Pass paid off handsomely during his creation of Sugar Bowl. Schroll counted Walt Disney and Jerome Hill among his students at Badger Pass. With the financial backing of Disney and Hill secured for developing Sugar Bowl, other investors soon poured in. Mount Hemlock was renamed Mount Disney, and California's first chairlift, running 1,000 vertical feet up Mt. Disney's face, opened on December 15, 1939. Schroll's yodeling and a cartoon version of Sugar Bowl's iconic lodge even appeared in Disney's 1941 *The Art of Skiing*, an animated short featuring a skiing Goofy, who ascends the mountain on a cartoon chairlift. Meanwhile, despite its lack of a chairlift, Badger Pass continued to be California's most popular ski area, attracting 60,000 skiers in the 1939-1940 season. Fuggi Loeger, schooled by Hannes Schneider, took over the Yosemite Ski School when Schroll departed. The YPCC added two rope tows to The Upski operation in 1940, and that winter, Badger Pass crowds reached 73,108. However, with Schroll and Disney as the face of Sugar Bowl, it soon began to siphon off many of California's rich and famous who desired a more exclusive concept of Alpine skiing than Badger Pass' national park setting would allow.<sup>136</sup>

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135 Lund, "The Short, Sweet Ski Life of Hannes Schroll in America," 11-13; Frohlich, *Mountain Dreamers*, 24-25; Lang, *A Bird of Passage*, 152, 187, 192-193, 206; Supplee Smith, *American Ski Resort*, 32-54.

136 Lund, "The Short, Sweet Ski Life of Hannes Schroll in America," 11-13; Frohlich, *Mountain Dreamers*, 24-25, 102; Rose, *Magic Yosemite Winters*, 45-46, 54-55; *The Art of Skiing*, directed by Jack Kinney (Disney, 1941); Weamer, *The Perfect Art*, 20; Supplee Smith, *American Ski Resort*, 32-34. In 1949, Schroll married Maude Hill, Jerome's sister.

After three winters in Rainier, Lang departed for Sun Valley in 1939 to work with Friedl Pfeifer, a fellow Austrian and Hannes Schneider protege. Even while working at Rainier, Lang had spent several weeks at Sun Valley each winter as the private ski instructor for Nelson Rockefeller and his family. Lang felt that the drier and sunnier climate of Sun Valley, coupled with its more advanced state of development, which included chairlifts, offered him a brighter future than Rainier. While Lang enjoyed his time at Paradise, he saw little future in its further development as a destination ski resort. With high European standards for what a winter resort should be, Lang wrote that “Paradise Inn battered by time and the elements was never meant to become a destination winter resort. Its location in a national park limited possibilities for expansion. And while the inn was quite acceptable for the relatively short summer season, it was inadequate for winter months.” Of the rope tow at Paradise, Lang wrote “as primitive as this conveyance was it was still preferable to laboriously climbing up the hill.” However, apart from that, Lang painted a rather bleak picture of the “primitive” rope tow where after grabbing the “often icy or, at other times, wet and slippery rope” a skier could be “shot forward, as if launched from a cannon, to fall flat on his face.” The fallen skier would then “obstruct the next skier’s progress, who fell on top of the one already prostrate, entangling his skis and struggling to get out of the way. There was an infinite variety of prat- and pitfalls, like devious traps, along this journey, and it was always a relief to arrive at the top.” While revolutionizing Alpine skiing in North America, rope tows were a tiring and difficult mechanism to master and a far cry from Sun Valley’s chairlifts.<sup>137</sup>

While boat tows and rope tows had arrived in the national parks, the NPS, as they had with tramway proposals, proved much less receptive to allowing chairlifts in the parks. Meanwhile, mass media depictions held up Sun Valley and its chairlifts as the epitome of modern skiing in the West. A skier riding Sun Valley’s first chairlift, a single chair up Dollar Mountain, appeared on the March 8, 1937 cover of *Life* and became the envy of rope tow skiers across the United States. In 1941, Sun

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<sup>137</sup> Lang, *A Bird of Passage*, 129, 133, 145-146, 154-155, 159, 192-193.

Valley's chairlifts were prominently displayed in the film *Sun Valley Serenade*. After Lang moved to Sun Valley, he became the ski instructor and close friend of Hollywood mogul Darryl Zanuck, who recruited Lang to direct the ski scenes in the film. *Sun Valley Serenade*, like *Thin Ice*, starred a skating and skiing Sonia Henie, and Lang once again orchestrated the filming of the ski scenes with doubles. Unlike *Thin Ice* and *Ski Flight* where skiers climbed the slopes under their own power, *Sun Valley Serenade* depicted chair lifts as essential components of Alpine skiing. Instead of being jerked chaotically uphill by a rope tow, skiers began longing for the comparative luxury and comfort of a chairlift. However, unlike rope tows, chairlifts were capital intensive investments and Sun Valley and Sugar Bowl had plenty of capital to fuel the continuing expansion of their ski operations and accommodations. Averill Harriman, owner of the Union Pacific Railroad, built Sun Valley. Walt Disney and the Great Northern Railway money of Jerome Hill financed Sugar Bowl. The YPCC and the RNPC had the capital and desire to finance chairlift construction and slopeside accommodations and were highly motivated to do so in their quests to expand their concession operations into lucrative four season enterprises. However, while park concessionaires and many Alpine skiers looked to Sugar Bowl and Sun Valley as desirable templates to recreate in the national parks, the NPS looked to them as cautionary tales that would lead to the industrialization and urbanization of parks' natural landscapes.<sup>138</sup>

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### **Portable Rope Tows and Community in the Western Parks**

While debates concerning issues of spectacle, overcrowding, and highly concentrated winter use prompted the NPS to reappraise its approach to Alpine skiing in the parks and limit the type of development and lifts, the NPS recognized the value of lift-served skiing as a promotional tool for the

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138 Ibid., 216-220; "East Goes West to Idaho's Sun Valley, Society's Newest Winter Playground," *Life*, March 8, 1937, cover, 20-27, 62; *Sun Valley Serenade*, directed by H. Bruce Humberstone (Twentieth Century Fox, 1941), VHS (Fox Video, 1991), IC, UMML; Otto Lang, *How to Ski* (Garden City, NY: Sun Dial Press, 1941); Rothman, *Devil's Bargain*, 186-201; Suplee Smith, *American Ski Resort*, 32-34; Gary E. Machlis and Donald R. Field, eds., *National Parks and Rural Development: Practice and Policy in the United States* (Washington D.C.: Island Press, 2000), 97-98.

year round relevance of the parks and as a recreational resource for local populations living in and around the parks. The addition of rope tows to the winter landscape of the parks did have aesthetic impacts and narrowed people's park experience by directing their travel on a single swathe of snow covered ground. However, rope tows at least kept skiers grounded on park landscapes instead of hovering above them, and unlike chairlifts, rope tows could be dismantled and hid from sight lines when the ski season ended. The NPS was not willing to embrace chairlifts in the parks, but it was willing to accommodate rope tow skiing. Upon making the early decision to steer away from the destination resort model of Alpine skiing, the NPS endeavored to foster the creation of less intrusive community oriented ski areas utilized by the regional communities surrounding the parks.<sup>139</sup>

On the east side of Rainier, the NPS had an additional winter use dilemma thrust upon them by the state of Washington, which was largely dealt with by allowing local skiers to operate their own portable rope tows during the ski season. Responding to requests from skiers and winter enthusiasts living on the eastern side of Rainier in communities such as Yakima that wanted winter auto access to the east side of the park, the state began plowing the state road into the park up to Cayuse Pass during the winter of 1937-1938. Wary of avalanche danger and added pressure on the NPS to expand Alpine skiing facilities in the park beyond Paradise, Rainier's Superintendent Owen Tomlinson had requested that the state leave the road unplowed in winter, but to no avail. During the winter of 1937-1938, 34,000 people descended on the area around Cayuse Pass. Calls for the NPS to develop a ski area at the pass emanated from Washington residents, but unwilling to create another winter use dilemma to rival the one already presented by Paradise, the NPS resisted these requests. However, the NPS was willing to permit skiers to operate portable rope tows in the area. Ski Lifts, Inc. had built several portable tows to be dragged to various Washington locales and was allowed by the NPS to set one up in the park at Tipsoo Lake between Chinook Pass and Cayuse Pass in the winter of 1938-1939. The Yakima

<sup>139</sup> Catton, *National Park, City Playground*, 105-108; Machlis and Field, eds., *National Parks and Rural Development*, 97-98.

Cascadians also began setting up their portable tow at Tipsoo Lake, and a tradition of rope tow skiing began in the area that would last into the 1950s. The NPS allowed these rope tow operations to continue as a concession to local skiers while refraining from further subsidizing the endeavor through the construction of elaborate winter facilities.<sup>140</sup>

The NPS embraced the use of portable rope tows by local skiers as a strategy to deflect pressure for larger scale winter development of the parks for Alpine skiing. In Crater Lake, Superintendent Ernest Leavitt allowed the Chiloquin Ski Club to operate “a portable electric ski lift” on slopes near Crater Lake Lodge for the winter of 1938-1939. The following winter, two rope tows powered by gasoline engines and operated by the Crater Lake Ski Club joined the Chiloquin Ski Club's tow on the slopes. Do-it-yourself operations of portable rope tows by local skiers was a grassroots ski phenomenon, rather than a corporate undertaking driven by profit motive. These rope tows served as fulcrums to foster tightly knit ski communities and good relations between the NPS and local communities. In Yosemite, Lassen, and at Paradise in Rainier, park concessionaires all had financial stakes in the operation of ski lifts. In other parks, the NPS endeavored to keep the involvement of park concessionaires in ski operations extremely limited to non-existent. Portable rope tows being brought into the parks and operated by local ski clubs with the permission of the NPS were much easier to control and direct than concessionaire operations of ski lifts driven by desires for profit and continual calls for expansion. The NPS proved much more willing to accommodate small-scale community rope tow operations in the parks than larger operations proposed by concessionaires.<sup>141</sup>

In Olympic National Park, the history of the Deer Park Ski Area occupies an interesting place in

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140 Catton, *National Park, City Playground*, 107; Hellyer, *At the Forest's Edge*, 189-190; John W. Lundin, “Ski Lifts, Inc. and The First Northwest Rope Tows,” *HistoryLink: The Free Online Encyclopedia of Washington State History*, accessed April 3, 2015, [http://www.historylink.org/index.cfm?DisplayPage=output.cfm&file\\_id=10716](http://www.historylink.org/index.cfm?DisplayPage=output.cfm&file_id=10716); Lowell Skoog, “Crystal Mountain to Cayuse Pass,” Alpenglow Gallery, accessed April 4, 2015, <http://www.alpenglow.org/skiing/crystal-1991/index.html>; Lowell Skoog, “Cayuse Pass to Paradise,” Alpenglow Gallery, accessed April 4, 2015, <http://www.alpenglow.org/skiing/cayuse-2001/index.html>.

141 Unrau, *Administrative History: Crater Lake National Park, Volume 2*, “Chapter 15: Visitation and Concessions Operations in Crater Lake National Park: 1916-Present.”

the annals of community skiing in the national parks because its history as a ski area began on national forest land in 1934 and ended in a national park in 1957. Olympic National Park did not come into existence until July 29, 1938, when President Franklin Roosevelt signed the law that created the national park out of Mount Olympus National Monument and swathes of forest service land that surrounded the national monument. The Deer Park area was not included in the original bill that created a 634,000 acre national park, but the bill that created Olympic National Park reserved the right for the president to add additional acres to the national park up to a limit of 898,220 acres. On January 2, 1940, President Roosevelt signed a presidential proclamation that added additional acreage to the park. The additions included Deer Park and Hurricane Ridge, where the park's Alpine skiing facilities would be shifted to beginning in the winter of 1957-1958.<sup>142</sup>

The origins of the Deer Park Ski Area date back to 1934 when efforts to create a ski area in the national forest on Washington's Olympic Peninsula began in earnest. New Deal funding and labor was utilized in the endeavor at the request of local communities and ski clubs. Using CCC labor, the USFS completed the construction of a one lane road in 1934 to 5,000' at Deer Park, located 25 miles from Port Angeles on the slopes of 6,007' Blue Mountain in the Olympic Mountains. The CCC built a camp at Deer Park and ultimately retrofitted the barracks and cook house into a ski lodge that provided overnight lodging. An old sheepherder's cabin doubled as a first aid station and day lodge. Originally utilizing a lone bulldozer, the USFS endeavored to keep the new road plowed in winter, and by the winter of 1935-1936, Deer Park had quickly developed into the Olympic Peninsula's ski center. Located in the moisture shadow of the Olympics highest point, the 7,828' Mt. Olympus, the Deer Park area accrued less snow than other parts of the Olympics, which made clearing the road with the bulldozer a difficult but feasible endeavor. Although the area sometimes suffered from a lack of deep

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142 NPS, *Olympic National Park: An Administrative History* (Seattle, WA: NPS Northwest Region, 1990), 52-53, 76-80, accessed April 2, 2015, [http://www.nps.gov/parkhistory/online\\_books/olymp/olymp\\_adhi.pdf](http://www.nps.gov/parkhistory/online_books/olymp/olymp_adhi.pdf); Kirby Gilbert, "Ski Areas Struggle to Survive in Olympic National Park," *The Ancient Skier*, Fall 2014, 1-2, accessed April 2, 2015, [http://wsssm.org/docs/WSSSM\\_AS\\_Fall\\_Newsletter.pdf](http://wsssm.org/docs/WSSSM_AS_Fall_Newsletter.pdf);

snow, the snow that did fall was a drier variety of powder than other parts of the peninsula enjoyed, and in most years it provided ample coverage for skiing. By the 1938-1939 ski season, the Olympic Winter Sports Club had begun operating a rope tow at Deer Park, which utilized a motorcycle engine. With the addition of Deer Park to the national park in January 1940, the NPS inherited an already established community ski area and allowed the operation to continue. This legacy of a community ski area in Olympic inherited by the NPS from the USFS in 1940 survives in 2015 at Hurricane Ridge.<sup>143</sup>

In Yellowstone, the park's interior expanse remained largely inaccessible to winter auto access beyond Mammoth Hot Springs until 1938, and this fact deflected early demand for ski lifts in the park. However, local pressure to open up the park's northern tier to winter auto travel mounted during the 1930s. In 1938, the U.S. Congress passed legislation, sponsored by Montana Senator Burton K. Wheeler, that provided funding and obligated the NPS to keep Yellowstone's Northeast Entrance Road from Mammoth to Cooke City open year round to the public. With the Northeast Entrance Road open to wheeled vehicles year round, the Gardiner Commercial Club and the NPS endeavored to encourage Montana residents to visit the park in winter. Building off successful experiments in 1938 to draw regional visitors to the park in winter and early spring, boosters created a winter event for the park and dubbed it Montana Day. They held the inaugural Montana Day on January 19, 1939. Snow covered landscapes, wildlife viewing, beautiful photographic opportunities, and winter sports were the selling points for the event. The outdoor skating rink at Mammoth was opened to visitors, ski courses were set up on hillsides in Lamar Valley, and nearly 1,200 people attended Yellowstone's first Montana Day.<sup>144</sup>

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143 Oakes, *Skiing In Olympic National Park*, 6, 9, 10, 26, 29-30, 33, 51, 60, 64, 66, 72, 77, 78; Gilbert, "Ski Areas Struggle to Survive in Olympic National Park," 1-3; Alpenglow Ski Mountaineering History Project, "References and Notes to Deer Park articles from *Port Angeles Evening News*," accessed April 2, 2015, <http://www.alpenglow.org/ski-history/notes/news/paen.html#paen-1938-Apr-22-p8>. Oakes book gives the date of the rope tow's initial operation at Deer Park as the winter of 1936-1937, which would predate the operation of the rope tow at Paradise. However, Kirby Gilbert's article and a *Port Angeles Evening News* article from January 17, 1939 site the winter of 1938-1939 for the initial operation of a rope tow at Deer Park.

144 Dr. H.F. Tavlin, "Montana Day in Yellowstone National Park Is Step Toward Making Great Summer Playground an All Year Attraction," *Belgrade Journal*, February, 1940, News Clippings, YNP Travel and Public Use News: 1940-1954, YRL, GHRC; Yochim, *Yellowstone and the Snowmobile*, 24-25.



Montana Day and NPS efforts to plow and open the northern portion of the Dunraven Pass Road to the public in early spring raised the profile of Yellowstone as an Alpine skiing destination. In April 1938, the NPS began experiments to open up the high country snow of Mt. Washburn's northern slopes along the Dunraven Pass Road to spring skiing. The NPS plowed the road nine miles south of Tower Junction, up to "Mae West Curve," earlier than usual to provide the sightseeing and skiing public with auto access to Washburn's deep snow. The Montana Ski Association spread the word around Montana and reported that 525 people, 65 of them skiers, cashed in on the novel springtime opportunity to recreate in Yellowstone's high country. On May 1, the NPS once again offered the opportunity to the public. This springtime tradition continued in future years, and as evidenced in Brooke Ricker's account, the NPS permitted ski clubs to operate portable rope tows on the slopes of Mt. Washburn in the spring. Yellowstone's entry in *Ski West: 1941-1942* noted: "Mount Washburn Area open to late spring skiing in April and May. Open slopes ranging from 10 – 40%. Ski Clubs normally operate one or two 600' rope lifts on weekends." The tradition of allowing ski clubs to set up portable rope tows up in this area in the spring continued until 1950. The portable tows on Washburn began a tradition of rope tow served skiing in Yellowstone that would last until 1993, but it also initiated a process of NPS resistance towards more intensive Alpine skiing development of Yellowstone.<sup>145</sup>

The success of the first Montana Day in 1939 inspired encore presentations over the course of the next three winters until World War II put an end to the event after 1942. During these three years, Alpine skiing became more of a central selling point for Montana Day. In 1941, Montana Day organizers set up and operated a portable rope tow in conjunction with the event for the first time. An article run in newspapers across Montana declared that "one of the most encouraging happenings in connection with winter sports activities in Yellowstone national park, has been the permission granted

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145 Yochim, *Yellowstone and the Snowmobile*, 26, 229- footnote 35; Meeting Minutes, November 17, 1941, MSC006: YSA Records, Box: 2, File: Meeting Minutes, YNPA, GHRC; Jack Ellis Haynes, *Haynes Guide of 1947* (Bozeman, MT: Haynes, Inc., 1947), 129; U.S. Travel Bureau, *Ski West: 1941-1942*, 1941, Box: L-46, File: 868, YNPA, GHRC.

by the director of national parks at Washington, for the erection of a portable ski tow in Yellowstone.” In cooperation with the NPS, the Gardiner Commercial Club chose a site for their portable tow on a park hillside two miles to the west of the northeast entrance. On Montana Day, the rope tow operated for enthusiastic skiers on the hillside covered with a two foot base of packed snow topped off with a coating of six fresh inches. On the day before the event, *The Butte Standard* praised the cooperative efforts of the NPS and the Gardiner Commercial Club in setting up “one of the finest drag lines to take the skiers (sic) up the mountain slope that ever has been rigged up in the West.” The article went on to say: “It is notorious that skiers expend all their energies in coming down hill and that mechanical contrivances must be rigged to get them up hill. In Yellowstone they will find ski-ways the like of which they have never known before, not even in their most fantastic dreams.” Hyperbole aside, Montana Day in 1941 did pave the way for a more permanent rope tow operation in Yellowstone.<sup>146</sup>

The 1941 Montana Day operation of the portable rope tow near the Northeast entrance was temporary, but the groundwork for a permanent rope tow operation in Yellowstone was already being laid. The Yellowstone Winter Sports Association formed early in 1941 with the intent to purchase a rope tow to be used by club members in the park. Charter members proposed that “membership be limited to employees of Yellowstone National Park and members of their immediate family and that any special memberships that are sold to people outside of the group be on a week-end basis.” Unlike the Gardiner Commercial Club, the core of the association's mission was not to attract winter visitors to Yellowstone. Their mission was to provide lift assisted skiing to the local population. Events unfolded quickly over after the group's first meeting on February 19, 1941. Less than a month later The

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146 “Montana Day' Set for Feb. 16,” *Butte Standard*, February 6, 1941; “Expect Crowds in Yellowstone,” *Billings Gazette*, February 15, 1941; “Montana Day in Winter At Yellowstone,” *Butte Standard*, February 15, 1941, “Third Annual 'Montana Day In Yellowstone' to Be Feb.16,” *Dillon Examiner*, January 22, 1941; “Preparations For 'All-Montana Day' in Park Progress,” *Livingston Enterprise*, January 23, 1941; “Montana Day to Be Observed,” *Butte Montana Standard*, January 27, 1941, “Mark Montana Day,” *Spokane Chronicle*, February 11, 1941; “Celebration Planned in Yellowstone Park,” *Choteau Acantha*, February 13, 1941; “Montana Day in Park Expected To Draw Crowd,” *Butte Post*, February 12, 1941; “Gardiner Prepares For Montana Day in Yellowstone Park,” *Great Falls Tribune*, February 10, 1941, YNP Scrapbook #10, Microfilm Cabinet Drawer 1 (S59), YRL, GHRC.

Yellowstone Winter Sports Association had purchased a rope tow and “the ski tow was ready for use and would be set up at Mt. Washburn for skiing Sunday afternoon.” For the remainder of the spring skiing season, the tow remained on the northern slopes of Washburn along the Dunraven Road.<sup>147</sup>

After the ski season, the club removed the rope tow from Washburn and stored it in Mammoth. On November 17, 1941, The Yellowstone Winter Sports Association held a meeting to discuss the placement of the lift for the upcoming ski season. Outgoing President Lloyd Seasholtz told the assembled crowd of thirteen members “of plans to construct a warming house and to establish the ski tow on a slope near the Undine Falls parking area.” Although the site, with a base elevation of 6,600', enjoyed nothing like the snow accumulations of the Washburn site, it held some obvious advantages. Number one was its proximity to Mammoth and Gardiner. The Undine site was only 4 miles from Mammoth and nine miles from Gardiner, and unlike the Washburn site, Undine could be accessed throughout the year due to its location on the Northeast Entrance Road. The Washburn site could not be accessed until the spring, depending on how deep the snow was and how soon the NPS decided to plow the road and open it to the public, which varied from year to year.<sup>148</sup>

On February 22, 1942, the rope tow at Undine became part of the festivities for the fourth annual Montana Day. The Yellowstone Winter Sports Association had begun operating the rope tow in January 1942 for members, and it was a logical extension to use the operation as part of Montana Day. Instead of setting up a portable rope tow near the northeast entrance as they did in 1941, Montana Day organizers took advantage of the rope tow already in place at Undine. Due to the onset of World War II, attendance for Montana Day in 1942 dropped dramatically from previous years, but officials reported that 100 automobiles entered through the north gate and more than 50 skiers took advantage of Undine's rope tow. With the onset of World War II and the increased calls by the federal government to

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147 Minutes of Ski Meeting, February 19, 1941; Minutes, March 14, 1941, MSC006: YSA Records, Box: 2, File: Meeting Minutes, YNPA, GHRC.

148 Minutes, November 17, 1941, MSC006: YSA Records, Box: 2, File: Meeting Minutes, YNPA, GHRC.

restrict travel and ration gasoline and rubber, this proved to be the last Montana Day. But ironically, as lift-served skiing scaled back in other parts of the West due to the war, 1942 marked the birth of Undine Ski Hill as a lasting cultural institution for park residents. The community rope tow continued to operate at Undine Ski Hill until its controversial removal in 1993. The establishment of Undine Ski Hill during World War II led to an interesting fifty year legacy where the operation remained firmly off the radar of most Yellowstone visitors and operated on a highly localized scale.<sup>149</sup>

The longevity of Undine Ski Hill resulted from the willingness of the NPS to embrace small-scale lift operations for the benefit of the local communities living in and adjacent to the parks. After Undine's rope tow was used as part of the last Montana Day, the NPS backed off the promotion of Alpine skiing to park visitors. In 1943, Superintendent Edmund Rogers declared that “we do not intend to carry on any winter sports activities in Yellowstone National Park this winter for the general public...it is contemplated that some of our employees will engage in skiing on the ski field near Undine Falls...but it is not likely that there will be any persons from outside the park, except perhaps from Gardiner and Livingston, availing themselves to these facilities.” The rope tow at Undine survived rationing and remained in operation during the war because the NPS viewed it as a valuable recreational and educational asset for an isolated community. The war established Undine Ski Hill as an operation for local residents and school children, rather than a means to draw winter visitors to the park. World War II largely ended any future efforts by local boosters and the NPS to actively promote lift skiing in Yellowstone to the wider public.<sup>150</sup>

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149 “Public Invited to Park on February 22,” *Butte Standard*, February 14, 1942; “Park's Montana Day Plans Ready,” *Red Lodge News*, February 20, 1942; “Public Invited to Park on February 22,” *Butte Standard*, February 14, 1942, “Big Day in Big Park,” *Big Timber Pioneer*, February 25, 1942; “100 Motoring Parties Attend Annual Montana Celebration in Park,” *Great Falls Tribune*, February 23, 1942, YNP Scrapbook #10, Microfilm Cabinet Drawer 1 (S59), YRL, GHRC; Report on Undine Ski Hill, January 19, 1994, MSC006, Box: 1, File: Ski Hill Equipment and Maintenance, YNPA, GHRC.

150 “Big Day in Big Park,” *Big Timber Pioneer*, February 25, 1942; “100 Motoring Parties Attend Annual Montana Celebration in Park,” *Great Falls Tribune*, February 23, 1942, YNP Scrapbook #10, Microfilm Cabinet Drawer 1 (S59), YRL, GHRC; Report on Undine Ski Hill, January 19, 1994, MSC006, Box 1, File: Ski Hill Equipment and Maintenance, YNPA, GHRC; Edmund Rogers, “Memo to Region Two Director,” December 1, 1943, Box: L-46, File: 868, YNPA, GHRC; Minutes – Annual Meeting of Y.W.S.A, November 23, 1942; Minutes, March 17, 1943; Minutes, March 18, 1943; Minutes, January 19, 1944, MSC006: YSA Records, Box: 2, File: Meeting Minutes, YNPA, GHRC.

## 1940 Winter Sports Policy and Bureaucratic Disconnect

Issued in April 1936 by Director Cammerer, the sparsely worded Order No. 319 had left much uncertainty about the future development of Alpine skiing in the parks and the limitations that would be imposed by the NPS. Both the skiing public and park administrators wanted more concrete guidance on the subject and clearer indications of how far the NPS was willing to go in the promotion of Alpine skiing. In December 1937, Cammerer's boss, Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes, "created an Advisory Committee on Skiing to secure advice on questions of policy and practice from its members, some of whom are active in the National Ski Association." The committee members advised Ickes of the need for the NPS to issue "a specific policy and a concrete program of development for winter sports." Cammerer's office ultimately created a more detailed Winter Sports Policy and sent it to Secretary Ickes for approval on January 27, 1940. Following Ickes approval, Cammerer's office circulated the new Winter Sports Policy to NPS offices around the country on February 7, 1940. The policy addressed a host of winter sports, but Alpine skiing dominated the newest NPS directive.<sup>151</sup>

The 1940 Winter Sports Policy reflected how Alpine skiing issues had been challenging the director and his cohorts during the latter half of the 1930s. When Cammerer circulated the policy, he included an introductory letter to place it in context. The director stated that "this policy outlines a general framework into which a definitive program may be fitted according to the winter conditions and use of each park area." He advised superintendents "to select a small group of skiers, who have demonstrated a background of national park interest, to advise in preparing a program for winter use development which can be carried into effect as funds permit." Through opening a direct dialog between the NPS and skiers, Cammerer hoped to strike a balance between accommodating the recreational desires of an important park constituency and preserving the aesthetic and atmospheric

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151 Cammerer, Office Order No. 319; Arno Cammerer, Introduction to 1940 Winter Sports Policy, February 7, 1940; Arno Cammerer, NPS 1940 Winter Sports Policy, January 27, 1940, Box: LWRP, Folder: 868 9-28 1, GNPA.

qualities of the parks, which the modern incarnation of Alpine skiing had begun to challenge.<sup>152</sup>

While attempting to shape a more consistent national policy towards winter sports in the parks, the 1940 policy still left a lot of decision making up to individual park superintendents. They were the ones in “direct dialogue” with skiers and the policy allowed for winter sports to be approached differently by superintendents and tailored to the unique circumstances of their parks. Some superintendents did not share Cammerer's more conservative approach to winter use, and this was clearly illustrated by the significant bureaucratic disconnect that seemed to exist between Cammerer and individual superintendents when it came to ski competitions in the parks. The 1940 policy began by reiterating Cammerer's aversion to the parks as competitive venues. The new policy used more forceful and definitive sounding language than the 1936 policy had employed towards competition in the parks and directed park administrators to privilege informal winter recreation over organized and competitive forms. It advised administrators that “informal skiing, snowshoeing, ice skating, tobogganing, and other winter sports in which all people may participate are encouraged but professional exhibits and contests designed to attract large groups of spectators are prohibited.” However, the policy also stated that “amateur winter sports contests and events having educational and recreational value may be conducted.” Superintendents seemed to consistently blur the lines between professional and amateur in order to continue holding popular competitive ski events in their parks.<sup>153</sup>

The Silver Skis in Rainier continued to run annually from 1934-1942 and 1945-1948, with a hiatus during World War II. The race even survived the death of skier Sigurd Hall in 1940. He died instantly after veering off the course in thick fog and slamming into rocks. In Lassen, skiers staged their own high profile downhill race called The Inferno, which was run in late spring or early summer after the Loop Road had been plowed. Skiers climbed Mt. Lassen and skied back down to the road on a mile and a half course, which dropped over 2,000' in elevation. In 1941, Lassen's Inferno, billed as the

152 Cammerer, Introduction to 1940 Winter Sports Policy; Cammerer, NPS 1940 Winter Sports Policy, GNPA.

153 Ibid.

nation's last ski meet of the year, took place on June 29. Over fifty of the country's top male skiers congregated in Lassen for the race. Sig Engl, a ski pro in Sun Valley who had previously taught at the Yosemite Ski School, won the race with a time of 1 minute and 35.4 seconds. At Badger Pass, the CCC built a thirty-meter ski jump to attract high profile jumping competitions to the park. From 1939-1941, Yosemite hosted the Far West Kandahar, which attracted the nation's leading ski racers along with throngs of spectators. Despite Cammerer's directives, professionals continued to compete in the parks, and large crowds continued to assemble to watch them compete. While the national leadership of the NPS endeavored to streamline park management into a more consistent national policy, park superintendents continued to enjoy a high degree of autonomy to rule over their individual fiefdoms.<sup>154</sup>

Concerning the proliferation of ski lifts in the parks, the 1940 policy also formulated more specific guidelines and park superintendents seemed more willing to embrace these guidelines than they did concerning the directive on competition. In an attempt to curtail the resurgence of the tramway ideas that had appeared in Yosemite and Rainier in the 1920s and 1930s, the policy stated: "The construction of funiculars and other mechanical means of climbing mountains, as distinguished from ski lifts, is prohibited." As opposed to the philosophical disconnect concerning competition in the parks, Cammerer and his superintendents presented a united front on this point. Concerning ski lifts, the policy was cautious, but not prohibitive. The policy stated that: "Ski lifts or ski tows either of a type which shall be removed at the end of the winter sports season or which shall be so constructed as to involve no substantial impairment of scenic values. These may be installed or operated by the park operator or sponsored by ski organizations under permit." The policy encouraged the removal of ski lifts at the end of each season but did not demand it. While proposing a guiding philosophy about the

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154 Cammerer, NPS 1940 Winter Sports Policy, GNPA; Filley, *The Big Fact Book About Mount Rainier*, 252; Skoog, "The Silver Skis: America's Wildest Race"; "Closing Ski Meet of Nation Set Sunday At Lassen," *San Jose News*, June 28, 1941, 7; "Engl Wins Famed Inferno Ski Race," *Berkeley Daily Gazette*, June 30, 1941, 12; Rose, *Magic Yosemite Winters*, 43-44, 50-52, 57. Lassen's Inferno borrowed its name from the famous Inferno races in Austria, and The Far West Kandahar borrowed its name from Austria's Arlberg-Kandahar races. Both Austrian races began in 1928. The Arlberg-Kandahar was organized by Hannes Schneider and Arnold Lunn, who was on hand in Yosemite in 1941 to lay out the slalom course.

kind of ski lifts desired, the policy left room for interpretation for superintendents, but Cammerer and the superintendents remained consistent and faithful to the system wide aversion to chairlifts.<sup>155</sup>

The policy focused on the preservation of the natural atmosphere of the parks as the paramount concern to guide park administrators in their approach to winter sports. It advised that “ski centers shall be so located that there will be no substantial impairment of scenic values and, wherever possible, they shall be confined to areas that have been cleared by natural processes.” Minimal clearing of downhill runs would be allowed, but “only to the sufficient width to insure safety to skiers and laid out so far as possible to avoid the appearance of artificiality.” Regarding the construction of ski jumps, the policy called for small jumps “either of a temporary type which shall be removed at the end of the winter sports season or constructed without trestle work so as to involve no substantial impairment to scenic values.” Cammerer suggested that in some places “stone work could be built up for take-offs, which with a small amount of planting would fit into the landscape.” He suggested that “the general developments outlined in this policy are suitable for CCC and ERA work.” The policy sought to establish limits, but not prohibit, development attached to skiing in the parks.<sup>156</sup>

In his introductory letter, Cammerer articulated a hope and vision for the future of skiing in which skiers eschewed its lift-served form. He wrote that “the trend of skiing appears to be away from the continuous repetition of downhill runs. Primary consideration, therefore, should be given to the study of a system of ski trails, huts, and shelters.” Cammerer, who passed away in April 1941 shortly after resigning his post, infused the 1940 policy with his vision of what park recreation should look like in the future. Cammerer hoped to promote a version of skiing in a parks that aligned with a sense of place and experience in the national parks that focused on more contemplative and self-directed forms of recreation than lift-served skiing. Cammerer embraced the idea of developing hut systems for ski touring in an attempt to placate and misdirect the rising tide of criticism leveled by the skiing public

155 Cammerer, NPS 1940 Winter Sports Policy, GNPA.

156 Cammerer, Introduction to 1940 Winter Sports Policy; Cammerer, NPS 1940 Winter Sports Policy, GNPA.



against the NPS and its increasing reluctance to approve chairlifts and other more intensive forms of winter development. Utilizing New Deal money and CCC labor, the NPS did construct the Ostrander Hut in Yosemite and the Pear Lake Hut in Sequoia in 1940-1941 to help foment the ski touring idea. However, World War II put an end to this experiment, and it was never revived. In fact, the future of modern skiing was heading firmly towards “the continuous repetition of downhill runs.”<sup>157</sup>

The 1940 policy echoed many of the concerns verbalized by Sequoia Superintendent John White in his “Atmosphere in the National Parks” speech delivered to his fellow park administrators in Washington D.C. in February 1936. In his speech, White had cautioned NPS administrators to refrain from competing with other resort areas, and the 1940 Winter Sports Policy echoed this sentiment. While allowing development of the parks for winter sports, the 1940 policy set limits on what was acceptable. Adverse and lasting effects on the scenic values of the parks were to be avoided as much as possible. The parks were natural treasures and the preservation of their unique natural qualities needed to guide and inform any development decision for winter sports. Building on the ideas of White and expounding on ideas presented in the 1936 policy, the 1940 policy envisioned a sense of place for the parks where an aesthetic appreciation of nature and self-directed, contemplative recreation with the natural world should be held up as the guiding principles of park management, not competition and organized, directed forms of mass recreation. Above all the national parks should be managed as natural sanctuaries and not conventional resorts. While portions of the 1940 policy concerning competition in the parks were ignored or willfully blurred by individual superintendents, the policy did create a groundwork for further NPS management policies that would increasingly privilege contemplative forms of recreation over the “power-based recreation” described by Joseph Sax in *Mountains Without Handrails*. Both Superintendent White and Cammerer began to articulate a future for park management that would slowly begin to take hold by the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>158</sup>

157 Ibid.; Weamer, *The Perfect Art*, 15-16, 29-42.

158 Ibid.; Sax, *Mountains Without Handrails*, 68-77.

## World War II, Skiing, and Extractive Resistance in the Western Parks

Director Cammerer set in motion a delicate and long lasting process of accommodation and resistance to Alpine skiing in the national parks with the two winter use policies issued during his tenure as director. On the eve of World War II the footprint of ski facilities continued to grow in Western national parks, but Cammerer's policies had placed more concrete limits on development possibilities. Enabled by New Deal money and labor, Alpine skiing development on federal land was poised to continue until the events of December 7, 1941 intervened and turned the nation's attention to war. As the war dragged on, ski developments across the nation ground to a halt, and as rationing intensified, many ski areas closed for the duration of the war. Most of the national park ski areas operated during the winter of 1941-1942, but several shut down during the subsequent World War II winters. During the war, the national parks were largely mothballed as NPS budgets vanished, and visitor services virtually came to a standstill. The Alpine ski rush also took a break in the West, but lift-served skiing did not come to a complete halt in the national parks. Newton Drury, Cammerer's successor as director, used wartime skiing in the parks as part of a NPS campaign to deflect the mounting calls to harvest and utilize the natural resources of the parks for the war effort.<sup>159</sup>

Extractive industries used the war effort in attempts to gain access to the locked away natural resources of the western parks. Grazing interests pushed to open the parks to livestock. Mining interests lobbied to extract minerals vital to the war effort, and the government allowed some rare tungsten to be mined in northwest Yosemite. Timber interests pressed for logging in the parks with the most publicized debate revolving around harvesting virgin stands of Sitka spruce, used in aircraft production, from the recently created Olympic National Park. However, under the leadership of Drury, who became director in 1940, the NPS resisted these calls for resource extraction. Olympic was not logged for the war effort, and alternate stands of Sitka spruce were found in British Columbia. In order to open up

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<sup>159</sup> Strong, *Footprints in Time*, 92; Gilbert, "Ski Areas Struggle to Survive in Olympic National Park," 2; Rose, *Magic Yosemite Winters*, 65; Hummel, *Stealing The National Parks*, 118-121.

more administrative space for the war effort in Washington D.C., the NPS vacated their D.C. headquarters for military use and moved their operation to Chicago, where it remained until 1947. The NPS also offered up the use of the parks themselves to the military for training, administrative, recreational, and convalescence purposes as part of its campaign of resistance to extractive use. The military accepted the offer and utilized the parks and their existing facilities throughout the war, and the national park ski facilities became part of these military uses.<sup>160</sup>

Like Undine Ski Hill, Badger Pass weathered the storm of rationing and remained in operation throughout the war. Before rationing set in, Yosemite even hosted the National Alpine Championships on March 13-14, 1942, the first time the races were held in California. The NPS considered closing Badger Pass the following winter. However, the efforts of Don Tressider of the YPCC convinced the NPS that Badger Pass could be a valuable resource in the war effort, and the cash strapped NPS committed to plowing the road to Badger Pass. In 1943, the military commissioned the use of the Ahwahnee Hotel as a convalescent hospital for the U.S. Navy. In the fall of 1943, Yosemite's Superintendent Frank Kittridge made an announcement that the NPS would not plow the road to Badger Pass for the 1943-1944 ski season. Hil Oehlman, who replaced Tressider as head of the YPCC when he departed to become president of Stanford University, once again convinced Kittridge to keep the road open. Oehlman successfully argued that skiing at Badger Pass could be used as part of the program of winter convalescence for the sailors staying at the Ahwahnee, in addition to serving the military personnel of the air base at Merced and civilians working in the war effort. Kittridge allocated funds to keep the road plowed, and Badger Pass remained open for skiing for the duration of the war.<sup>161</sup>

In Alaska, Mount McKinley National Park, created in 1917, also became a hotbed of military

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160 Newton B. Drury, "The National Parks in Wartime," reprinted from *American Forests*, August 1943, in Dilsaver, ed., *America's National Park System: The Critical Documents*, 167-173; Robert B. Keiter, *To Conserve Unimpaired: The Evolution of the National Park Idea* (Washington D.C.: Island Press, 2013), 18-19; John C. Miles, *Wilderness in National Parks: Playground or Preserve* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2009), 115-116.

161 Rose, *Magic Yosemite Winters*, 58-65.

activity during World War II. The severe climate of the park and the high elevation of its mountains were ideally suited for military maneuvers and the testing of survival skills and cold weather gear. During the war, multiple military test expeditions plied the park's heights and included a successful July 1942 summit of 20,321' Mount McKinley. The military also determined that the park would provide a perfect rest and relaxation retreat for military personnel and families living at isolated Alaska bases. In the fall of 1942, the military leased the McKinley Park Hotel from the Alaska Railroad, the park concessionaire, and opened it up on April 10, 1943 as the main lodge of the year round Mount McKinley U.S. Army Recreation Camp. On January 3, 1944, *Life* included an article on the camp. The cover shot featured a pin up worthy Barbara Belle Brubaker, an "employee of the U.S. Army engineers in Alaska," clad in a fur parka with skis slung across her shoulder. The camp operated two rope tows from December through April that could be moved to different slopes depending on the snow pack. Ski runs sat near the hotel, on Mount Healy, and at Mile 6 of the park's main road, where a warming hut was also erected. The Army recreation camp closed on March 1, 1945. However, the concessionaire continued experiments with keeping the hotel open year round from 1947 to 1950 and installed a rope tow and skating rink for the winter enjoyment of the public. The use of rope tows and the hotel for military enjoyment were also revived during the Korean War.<sup>162</sup>

In Washington, both Olympic and Rainier played important parts in the origin story of the legendary 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division. Inspired by recent successes of Finnish ski troops in the Russo-Finnish War of 1939-1940, Minnie Dole, the founder of the National Ski Patrol, formulated an idea for American ski troops. Dole originally envisioned the ski troops as homeland defense rather than an overseas fighting force. He pitched his idea to the military brass but was initially rebuffed by the

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162 Shelby Carpenter, *Denali National Park and Preserve* (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2014), 8, 87-102; Frank Norris, *Crown Jewel of the North: An Administrative History of Denali National Park and Preserve* (Anchorage, AK: Alaska Regional Office National Park Service, 2006), 89, 105-112, 122-124; "Alaska Holiday," *Life*, January 3, 1944, cover, 10, 28-30; "Mount McKinley Army Recreation Camp," Alaska Lost Ski Areas Project. *Life* gave the age of the "pretty skier" Brubaker as 22; her hometown as Glenrock, Wyoming; her "special talent" as "training wild horses"; and her hobby as "collecting live rattlesnakes."

skeptical military. With the exception of the skiing soldiers in Yellowstone, the U.S. military had no history of using ski troops. After the Army left Yellowstone in 1918, it abandoned the use of skis, and the NPS and USFS took over the mantle of the government agencies directly involved with skiing. The institutional mind of the Army largely forgot its earlier involvement with skiing in Yellowstone. However, as part of his campaign, Dole and his colleagues meticulously documented the long history of military skiing in Europe, and stressed the ongoing importance of mountain troops in the fighting forces of European countries such as Great Britain, Germany, France, and Italy. With dogged determination, documentation, and lobbying, Dole ultimately convinced Army Chief of Staff General George C. Marshall and Secretary of War Henry Stimson of the validity of his vision. In an unprecedented move, the Army decided to task Dole and the National Ski Patrol, a civilian organization, to recruit skiers and mountaineers for the mountain troops. On November 15, 1941, the military officially activated the 87<sup>th</sup> Mountain Infantry Regiment to be stationed at Fort Lewis, Washington, which sat below the looming, snow clad silhouette of Mt. Rainier.<sup>163</sup>

Prior to the official activation of the 87<sup>th</sup> Mountain Infantry Regiment in 1941, the Army initially responded to Dole's early lobbying efforts by experimenting with small ski patrol units at various locations across the country. Some of these experiments took place in Rainier and Olympic and lay the groundwork for the more intensive training in Rainier for the 87<sup>th</sup> in 1941-1942. In 1940, the Army created these experimental ski units "patched together from the skiers and woodsmen already in established infantry divisions." Among these units were an eighteen man unit from the 3<sup>rd</sup> Division 15<sup>th</sup> Regiment and a twenty-five man unit from the 41<sup>st</sup> Division. Both units were stationed at Fort Lewis for the winter of 1940-1941 for ski training and equipment testing, and the primary venues for their training and testing were in the mountains of Rainier and Olympic. The 41<sup>st</sup> Division ski patrol

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163 McKay Jenkins, *The Last Ridge* (New York, NY: Random House, 2003), 15-17, 20, 26-27, 32-33; John Jay, *Ski Down the Years* (New York, NY: Award House, 1966), 172-175; Charles Minot Dole, *Adventures in Skiing* (New York, NY: Franklin Watts Inc., 1965), 90-110.

wintered at a CCC camp on the edge of Rainier. The 3<sup>rd</sup> Division unit took up residence at Longmire inside Rainier. Both units utilized the facilities at Paradise, including the rope tow operation, in their training. As the winter's culminating exercise, Captain Paul Lafferty, the former ski coach at the University of Oregon, led the 3<sup>rd</sup> Division ski patrol on a two-week circumnavigation of Rainier to test equipment and ski technique. Lieutenant John Woodward, former University of Washington ski team captain, led the 41<sup>st</sup> Division unit on a four day ski trip from west to east across the mountains of Olympic. Some soldiers skied on metal edged skis while others used skis with no metal edges. Unsurprisingly, the 41<sup>st</sup> returned from their trip and advised the Army that ski troops needed metal edged skis. The Army used the winter landscapes of the national parks to gather institutional intelligence on the latest mountain gear and work to fine tune and develop it for military needs.<sup>164</sup>

As factions in the military continued to warm to Dole's idea for ski troops, they decided to produce a film to help streamline ski training into a regimented curriculum based on the Arlberg technique. The U.S. Army Signal Corps, which Daryl Zanuck of 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox had recently joined as a colonel, joined forces with 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox to create the training film. Zanuck chose Sun Valley as the location and Otto Lang as the director. To portray the ski troops in the film, the Army sent five ski troopers from Fort Lewis, led by John Woodward, to Sun Valley, and Lang recruited Sun Valley ski instructors to complete the film's ski troops. A film crew from 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox and John Jay of the Signal Corps also converged on Sun Valley for the production. The outdoor filming took place in Idaho in May 1941 at Galena Pass and on Sun Valley's Bald Mountain. The Signal Corps released the training film in the fall of 1941 under the title *The Basic Principles of Skiing* and began using it at Fort Lewis that winter to train the soldiers of the newly created 87<sup>th</sup> Mountain Infantry regiment.<sup>165</sup>

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164 Charles J. Sanders, *The Boys of Winter: Life And Death In The U.S. Ski Troops During The Second World War* (Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2005), 52-53; Leich, *Tales of the 10<sup>th</sup>*, 9-15; Catton, *National Park, City Playground*, 110; Peter Shelton, *Climb to Conquer: The Untold Story of World War II's 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division Ski Troops* (New York, NY: Scribner, 2003), 20-26.

165 John Jay, *Skiing the Americas* (New York, NY: The MacMillan Company, 1947), 208-217; Sanders, *The Boys of Winter*, 53-54; "Days of Innocence: A Training Film for a Non-Existent Outfit," *Skiing Heritage Journal*, Autumn 1995, 4-

During the winter of 1941-1942, recruits to the thousand man 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion 87<sup>th</sup> regiment filtered into Fort Lewis, and Rainier quickly turned into the regiment's mountain training ground. The commanding officer, Colonel Onslow Rolfe, arranged with the NPS and the RNPC to rent Paradise Inn and Tatoosh Lodge for the winter to house troops at Paradise. They also agreed that on weekdays the rope tow operation would be reserved for the exclusive use of the Army, but on weekends it would be open to the public. With the recruiting efforts of the National Ski Patrol, the country's leading skiers and mountaineers, many of them European ex-pats, began filling the ranks. Slowly, a streamlined training took shape that utilized savvy enlisted men as ski and mountaineering instructors. Starting with *The Basic Principles of Skiing*, the Army made the decision to use the tried and true Arlberg technique over other schools of skiing that had recently come into vogue. Lang's film and his 1936 manual *Downhill Skiing* became the guiding texts for the ski tutelage of the mountain troops in Rainier.<sup>166</sup>

Military life in a national park offered both unique challenges and rewards for the 87<sup>th</sup>, which spent the entire winter of 1941-1942 skiing and testing equipment in Rainier. The troopers had to hone their ski skills to accommodate the 90 pound rucksacks and rifles slung on their backs. The rifles were one aspect of the military operation that troubled the NPS. The soldiers carried rifles in Rainier, but they were not allowed to fire them. This included blanks because the NPS worried about the detrimental effects on the park's wildlife. On April 13, 1942, dozens of ski troopers raced in the Silver Skis, and largely dominated the field. However, Matt Broze, a Seattle firefighter, took first place. Broze beat Walter Prager, the top skier of the 87<sup>th</sup>, by two seconds. In May, the winter training and gear testing climaxed with a ten man expedition to Mt. Rainier's 14,410' summit. The soldiers skied to 12,300' on Rainier where they established Camp 2. They stashed their skis there and proceeded on crampon clad

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5; Lang, *A Bird of Passage*, 226-227; *The Basic Principles of Skiing*, directed by Otto Lang (U.S. Army Signal Corps, 1941), *Classic Ski Films DVD #5* (Topics Entertainment, 2006), IC, UMML.

166 Shelton, *Climb to Conquer*, 29-35; Catton, *National Park, City Playground*, 109-111; Jay, *Skiing the Americas*, 217-220; Sanders, *The Boys of Winter*, 59, 61-64; Jay, *Ski Down the Years*, 175-177; Cohen, *A Pictorial History of Downhill Skiing*, 165-169; Jenkins, *The Last Ridge*, 33, 37-41.

feet because the higher snow was laced with crevasses and treacherous, wind glazed ice. However, after attaining the summit and returning to Camp 2, the troopers enjoyed a 7,000' ski descent back to Paradise. The summit expedition consummated the ski troops intimate relationship with Rainier. The military had already hatched plans to expand the operation into an entire division, ultimately designated as the 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division, and built a dedicated mountain training facility at Camp Hale, Colorado at 9,200' to house it in 1942. By the time the 10<sup>th</sup> began shipping out to Italy in December 1944, it included 13,365 soldiers. The ski troops outgrew Rainier and the limitations presented by its national park setting, but the park would always remain a vital component of the 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division saga.<sup>167</sup>

America's ski troops and Rainier forged a lasting connection in the public sphere, and the NPS encouraged and utilized this highly visible association of Rainier and the ski troops in their campaign to ward off calls for the extractive use of the parks in the war effort. By offering up the parks for military use, the NPS proved that the agency and the natural resources of the parks were in fact pulling their weight and contributing valuable assets to the war effort. Even when the ski troops were still in their experimental stages prior to the outbreak of war, the relationship between the military and Rainier was already being crafted. On January 20, 1941, the cover of *Life* featured "U.S. Ski Trooper" Sergeant Reese Mckindley of the 15<sup>th</sup> Infantry smoking a hand rolled cigarette while "looking down the frozen slopes of Mt. Rainier." On November 9, 1942, the cover of *Life* featured an action shot of a "Mountain Trooper" decked out with glacier goggles, crampons, ice axe, and rope. The pictures included in the article were mostly shot in Rainier and included "ski trooper Sergeant (Walter) Prager" decked out in white and strapping on his white skis. Dramatic images of the ski troops in their iconic white pants,

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<sup>167</sup> Shelton, *Climb to Conquer*, 35-43; Charles Sanders, *The Boys of Winter*, 60-61; John Imbrie, *Chronology of the 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division in World War II* (Houghton, NY: National Association of the 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division, Inc., 2004), 1-6, 12, 27, accessed April 7, 2015, <http://10thmtdivassoc.org/chronology.pdf>. On pg. 107 in *Adventures in Skiing*, Minnie Dole wrote that the original choice for the 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division camp was not Camp Hale, but a spot in "western Yellowstone Park." However, this spot "turned out to be the breeding ground of the almost extinct trumpeter swans, and bird lovers put up such a howl" that an alternate site was found. The proposed site actually sat outside the western boundary of the park in Idaho near Henry's Lake. West Yellowstone, Montana was the closest town of size to the camp. Construction actually began on the Army Winter Training Camp before the Army pulled up stakes and left in spring of 1942 to build Camp Hale. Abandoned ruins remain to mark the Army's artifact landscape in Idaho.



white parkas, white pack covers, and glacier goggles mounted on white skis continued to be disseminated throughout the war and maintained the public connection of the troops with Rainier.<sup>168</sup>

Images like these transformed the ski troops of the 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain into lasting pop culture icons. On March 27, 1943, the cover of *The Saturday Evening Post* featured a Mead Schaeffer illustration of a ski trooper clutching his rifle and crouching on skis. In 1943, Warner Brothers released a twenty minute film shot at Camp Hale entitled *Mountain Fighters*. John Jay, an accomplished maker of ski films, took on the role of public relations officer and directed two recruitment films entitled *They Climb to Conquer* and *Ski Patrol*. Rainier was prominently featured in Jay's films. Jay actively kept the ski troopers affiliation with Rainier alive through these films and other public relations campaigns. An associate of Jay, Debbie Bankart, took *Ski Patrol* on the road as a powerful recruiting tool. An estimated 75,000 people watched the film on the nationwide tour. The allure of Rainier proved to be a powerful motivation for many skiers to enlist in the mountain troops, and Rainier's reputation as one of the country's top ski areas continued to grow through its close association with the mountain troops.<sup>169</sup>

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### **Postscript to War: 1945 Winter Use Policy**

As the NPS waged its campaign of extractive resistance during the war, it also had ample time to ponder the extractive tendencies of modern Alpine skiing itself. During the war, the NPS refined its winter policy to more tightly control and rein in the adverse effects of Alpine skiing in the parks. On August 13, 1945, only four days after the United States dropped a second atomic bomb on Japan at Nagasaki, Director Drury issued a new Winter Use Policy, which superseded the 1940 policy. With the end of the war in sight, Drury quickly began refocusing the NPS towards a peace-time mentality. The

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168 "Army's New Ski Patrol Practices On The Snowy Slopes Of Mt. Rainier," *Life*, January 20, 1941, cover, 15, 27, 78, 81; "Mountain Troops," *Life*, November 9, 1942, cover, 58-63.

169 Cohen, *A Pictorial History of Downhill Skiing*, 167; *Mountain Fighters*, directed by B. Reaves Eason, produced in cooperation with the U.S. Army (Warner Brothers, 1943), accessed April 7, 2015, YouTube; Shelton, *Climb to Conquer*, 50-54.

revised policy echoed much of the 1940 policy, but Drury took a more pragmatic approach towards the present and future trend of skiing than Cammerer had in 1940. Drury embraced ski touring in the parks but doubted that skiing was in fact trending away from lift-served downhill. Concerning ideas for a system of mountain ski huts, the revised policy stated that “should the public desire to use this type of facility to the extent that some enthusiasts assert, the Service will then be glad to consider a program of further encouragement of ski touring and ski mountaineering.” As for ski lifts, the revised policy directed that “ski lifts and tows will be limited to the types that can be removed at the end of the winter season.” The new policy took a more prohibitive and uniform approach to ski lifts and brought them under the direct approval of the director himself, but it still left the door open for the continuation of mechanized ski areas in the postwar parks.<sup>170</sup>

On September 9, 1946, Drury circulated a paper by E.P. Meinecke to his field offices entitled “The Skier and His Government.” Drury wanted his NPS administrators to read and consider the merits of the paper as they made their preparations for the upcoming winter season. On June 25, 1941, Meinecke had read the paper in front of the Section on Forests and Recreation at the Commonwealth Club of California. Meinecke questioned the appropriateness of USFS and NPS involvement in the promotion and financing of skiing in the West. He came to the powerful conclusion that “the policy of the Government cannot be that of promotion of winter sports.” Meinecke praised the self directed strain of skiing that avoided lifts and set out into the mountains and woods under the skier's own power. In Meinecke's opinion, ski touring was the type of skiing that should be encouraged on federal lands, not the lift-served version, which he saw as a dangerous and unhealthy trend. In his memo introducing the paper, Drury wrote: “The paper contains a number of thought-stimulating statements that should be of particular interest to those in snow areas confronted with the problems of winter use.” Meinecke's collection of “thought-stimulating statements” skewering the development of modern Alpine skiing and

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170 Newton B. Drury, 1945 Winter Use Policy, August 13, 1945, Box: L-46, File: 868, YNPA, GHRC.

its over reliance on the government and ski lifts included the following:

Unfortunately, the great majority of Sunday skiers over here seek an effortless sport. They want it all down hill and someone to untangle them at the bottom. They demand ski lifts; they will not make the effort of climbing a slope on skis. All this may be development on the easy side. I seriously doubt whether a wise and farsighted government should foster a trend which leads sharply away from the development of a sound sport.

The fact that Drury sat on Meinecke's paper during the war, thoroughly digested it, and then sent it out to all of his charges in the wake of the latest winter policy provides a powerful statement as to where the NPS director leaned on the issue of lift-served skiing in the parks. Yet, Drury was also a shrewd enough politician to realize that he did not want to offend the powerful ski constituency who also supported the national parks. Drury continued to balance the dual mandate by allowing lift skiing to continue in the western parks, and the 1945 Winter Use Policy set a hurry up and wait approach towards mechanized ski areas in the national parks that would largely settle into a holding pattern of attrition into the 1990s.<sup>171</sup>



January 20, 1941. *Life*. "U.S. Ski Trooper" Sgt. Reese McKindley on Mt. Rainier.



January 3, 1944. *Life*. Barbara Belle Brubaker at Mount McKinley U.S. Army Recreation Camp.

171 Newton B. Drury, Memo Introducing Dr. E.P. Meinecke's "The Skier and His Government," September 9, 1946; Dr. E.P. Meinecke, "The Skier and His Government," June 25, 1941, Box: L-46, File: 868, YNPA, GHRC.



Circa 1930s. Artist Dorothy Waugh, WPA Poster. U.S. Government Printing Office, Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division.



Circa 1930s. Artist Dorothy Waugh, WPA Poster. U.S. Government Printing Office, Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division.



Circa 1937. Badger Pass Upski. NPS Photo.



1942. Lassen Girls. Life, August 10, 1942.



1942. 87th soldiers in front of Tatoosh Lodge in Rainier.  
10th Mountain Division Collection, DPL.

THE SATURDAY EVENING POST 37

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1938. Otto Lang Dodge advertisement.  
The Saturday Evening Post, 1938.



Circa 1950s. Rope tow near Cayuse Pass, Rainier. HistoryLink.org



1941. 41st Infantry Ski Patrol in Olympic National Park.  
10th Mountain Division Collection, DPL.

## Chapter 4 - Mechanized Starts and Stops: The Uneasy Truces of National Park Ski Areas

*For years the place was served by a rope tow, but either it became unsafe or it failed, so the park decided to replace it with a poma lift. That's when the brown stuff hit the ventilator.*

—October 9, 1994, Rick B. Smith, Acting Superintendent of Yellowstone National Park.<sup>172</sup>

On August 26, 1993 a helicopter hovered above the slopes of 9,235' Brokeoff Mountain in the southwest corner of Lassen Volcanic National Park's 106,372 acre expanse. Anchored by 10,457' Mt. Lassen, the dramatic terrain of northern California's vast Lassen region spread out below pilot Vic Pendleton. The U.S. government created the national park in 1916 to encircle its namesake volcano during a series of magnificent explosions that unfolded between 1914-1917. Mt. Lassen, an active plug dome volcano, descended from a more massive composite volcano that once dominated the park landscape. Known as Mt. Tehama or Brokeoff Volcano, Lassen's volcanic ancestor constructed itself in a series of immense explosions estimated to be fifty times the size of Mt. St. Helens' explosion in 1980. Tehama's explosions unfolded 400,000 to 600,000 years ago, building its cone to a base of eight miles and a height of 11,000'. Volcanism, glaciation, and weathering eroded the sprawling cone away and left behind a jagged flank of clustered peaks in its place: Mount Diller, Pilot Pinnacle, Mount Conard, and Brokeoff Mountain. In most winters, the ability of these mountains to attract, capture, and hold snow is immense. This ability had led to the area's choice as the home of the Lassen Ski Area in 1935. Pendleton's helicopter hovered over the park to pluck the remaining remnants of the Lassen Ski Area off Brokeoff Mountain's lower slopes and close a fifty-eight year chapter of park history.<sup>173</sup>

Earlier that year, California Guest Services Inc., the concessionaire that ran the ski area, cited financial losses as the reason for the ski area's closure. The announcement enjoyed the full support of

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172 Rick B. Smith, Email to Mike Finley, October 9, 1994, Box: A-367, File: Misc. Correspondence (MC), YNPA, GHRC.

173 "Ski Lift Goes Down, Out," Redding *Record-Searchlight*, August 18, 1993, A1; "Ski Towers Find Whiter Pastures," Redding *Record-Searchlight*, August 27, 1993, A1; Strong, *Footprints in Time*, 17; John Boslough, *America's National Parks* (Lincolnwood, IL: Publication International Limited, 1990), 167-169; NPS, *Lassen Volcanic NPS Map and Guide* (NPS 2012), author's collection; California Historical Society, "Mount Lassen," *California Chronicle*, Fall 2010, 1, accessed February 13, 2014, <http://www.thefreelibrary.com/Mount+Lassen.-a0241514997>.

the NPS, which had already envisioned the eventual removal of lift-skiing from the park. Pendleton and a ground crew completed work that had begun nine days earlier to remove the ski area's triple chairlift and rope tows from the slopes of Brokeoff Mountain. During the final phase of the operation, the crew removed "11 lift towers, a large gear wheel and a small building from the ski slope." Seventy-two year old Mary McClellan from nearby Mineral was among the assembled onlookers watching as the ski area slowly disappeared from the park's cultural and natural landscapes. "It's very sad. My family skied here for 50 years. My children learned to ski here and so did I," McClellan bemoaned as the removal operation continued to unfold. Pieces of McClellan's history disappeared with each load lifted. To the group of assembled spectators, Pendleton's helicopter was a stark symbol marking the end of a cultural institution that had valiantly survived a half century of contestation. To bookend the removal of Lassen's lifts, the NPS also ordered the removal of ski lifts at Sequoia's Wolverton Ski Bowl in 1991, Rocky Mountain's Hidden Valley in 1992, and Yellowstone's Undine Ski Hill in 1994.<sup>174</sup>

The seeds of the four ski areas' longevity and contested closures lay in the conflicted approach to lift skiing taken by the NPS following World War II. In 1952, NPS Director Conrad Wirth issued a Winter Use Directive stating that "where the possibility of winter use is apparent and there is no alternative site outside of a national park or monument satisfactory for such use, the National Park Service will initiate comprehensive studies, including the types and cost of necessary developments; the cost of the operation, the probable patronage; and the effect the development would have on the area's basic features and objectives." Wirth's policy modified the 1946 Winter Use Policy issued by Newton Drury by placing special emphasis on the fact that each park's winter use situation was unique and should be considered on its own merits. While the NPS worked to phase out some ski areas, it allowed others to be developed, and this approach resulted in a convoluted mix of management policies

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174 "Ski Lift Goes Down, Out," Redding *Record-Searchlight*, August 18, 1993, A1; "Ski Towers Find Whiter Pastures," Redding *Record-Searchlight*, August 27, 1993, A1; Barth and Leggett, *Finding Hidden Valley*, 210-211; Richard Smith, Undine Ski Area Closure Notification, November 1, 1994, Box: A403, File: Undine Ski Hill, YNPA, GHRC; Kirby Gilbert, "Lost Ski Areas of the National Parks," *Skiing Heritage Journal*, January 2012, 27-32.

concerning Alpine skiing in the postwar parks. This lack of a common approach resulted in decades long battles between the NPS, concessionaires, local communities, and environmental groups over the role of the western national parks as appropriate venues for lift-served skiing.<sup>175</sup>

Following World War II, ski groups renewed their vigorous campaign to develop the public lands of the West for Alpine skiing. Flush with victory in the war, recreational skiers flocked back to the slopes, 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain veterans returned home to spearhead the postwar ski industry, and low-priced surplus military gear flooded the market to outfit skiers. A conflicted NPS, hesitant to alienate an important and growing constituency, grappled with how to satisfy skiers without compromising the integrity of the parks. The NPS approached skiing's modern lift-served form as a problem to be carefully considered, controlled, and avoided when prudent. In 1946, the NPS circulated a winter use chart that listed twelve western parks and three eastern parks with skiing possibilities. No ski lifts appeared in the eastern parks, but out of the twelve western parks listed, ski lifts ultimately operated in ten of them during the postwar period: Rocky Mountain, Yellowstone, Glacier, Rainier, Olympic, Crater Lake, Lassen, Yosemite, Sequoia, and Mt. McKinley.<sup>176</sup>

However, until the mid-1960s, lift-served skiing in the parks continued to be limited to surface lifts. This was a key component in NPS strategy towards slowly pushing lift skiing out of the western parks. In Rainier, which received the heaviest winter use, the NPS used World War II as an opportunity to close slopeside winter lodging at Paradise and experiment with winter road closures. The NPS also resisted decades of pressure to build a chairlift at Paradise. The demand for lift-served skiing in Rainier slowly dwindled away as consumers demanded a higher caliber of amenities than a day lodge, rope tows, and a belated poma lift could offer. Ski resorts developed in the Cascades that featured more

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175 Conrad Wirth, Winter Use Memo, November 20, 1952, Box: L-46, File: 868, YNPA, GHRC; Newton Drury, 1946 Winter Use Policy, March 21, 1946, Box: LWRP, Folder: 868 9-28 2, GNPA.

176 Cohen, *A Pictorial History of Downhill Skiing*, 175; Jay, *Ski Down the Years*, 182-183; NPS, Winter Use Chart, 1946, Box: L-46, File: 868, YNPA, GHRC. The eastern parks listed in the 1946 NPS chart were Acadia, Shenandoah, and Great Smoky Mountains. George Hurt, a 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division veteran and Estes Park local, spearheaded the postwar development of Hidden Valley in Rocky Mountain National Park as a lift-served ski area.



intensive development and siphoned Alpine skiers away from Rainier. By 1975, the public demand for lift skiing at Paradise had largely atrophied, and its surface lifts disappeared once and for all.<sup>177</sup>

By limiting the types of ski lifts and the amount of related development, the NPS endeavored to keep ski areas in the parks small-scale affairs that served local populations. However, even with these limitations, critics of ski lifts in the parks became more numerous and vocal. In 1963, *The Leopold Report* called for the removal of “mass recreation facilities such as golf courses, ski lifts, motorboat marinas, and other extraneous developments which completely contradict the management goal” and urged that “above all other policies, the maintenance of naturalness should prevail.” The report marked an important shift in NPS policy towards managing the parks as “a vignette of primitive America” based on holistic ideas of ecological management. *The Leopold Report* urged the NPS “to reverse its policy of permitting these non-conforming uses, and to liquidate them as expeditiously as possible.” Yet, even as the NPS embraced long term goals to remove most ski lifts from the parks, they approved chairlifts in Yosemite, Lassen, and Rocky Mountain. Such developments angered environmental groups as they cast an increasingly wary eye towards the use of public lands for the profit of the ski industry. Emboldened by the political victories of the Wilderness Act in 1964, the flurry of environmental legislation passed during the Nixon administration, and a successful campaign to stop a large-scale ski resort at Mineral King in the southern Sierras, environmentalists mobilized to seriously question the adverse effects of ski areas on the ecology of the parks. However, the liquidation of ski lifts from park landscapes envisioned by *The Leopold Report* proved to be a long and, as yet, incomplete process.<sup>178</sup>

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177 Rose, *Magic Yosemite Winter*, 98; Catton, *National Park, City Playground*, 121-130, 165-166; Burr, *Ski Trails and Wildlife*, 197.

178 Leopold, Cain, Cottam, Gabrielson, and Kimball, *Wildlife Management in the National Parks (The Leopold Report)*, March 4, 1963, and “The Wilderness Act,” 1964, in Dilsaver, ed., *America's National Park System: The Critical Documents*, 237-252, 277-286; J. Brooks Flippen, *Nixon and the Environment* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2000), passim; Krahe and Catton, *Little Gem of the Cascades*, 279; Barth and Leggett, *Finding Hidden Valley*, 208-210; Fry, *The Story of Modern Skiing*, 293-296.

## Postwar NPS Strategies of Alpine Resistance

From March 18-25, 1946, a group of seven skiers commissioned by the Great Northern Railway conducted a skiing reconnaissance on the western side of Glacier National Park. Inspired by the success of the Union Pacific's Sun Valley, the Great Northern contemplated creating its own ski resort in Glacier where its Glacier Park Company acted as the park concessionaire. The Great Northern tapped Alfred Lindley of the National Ski Association (NSA) to organize the Glacier expedition with his wife Grace. The Lindleys, both former members of the U.S. Alpine ski team and competitors at the 1936 Winter Olympics in Nazi Germany, assembled a legendary crew of skiers for their Glacier Park reconnaissance. Lindley recruited Erling Strom to join him in Glacier. In 1932, Lindley and Strom had been part of a historic four man expedition that climbed both the north and south peaks of Mount McKinley and utilized skis up to 17,000'. The Norwegian immigrant Strom began his North American ski career in the mid-1920s in Estes Park as a champion ski jumper and ski guide in Rocky Mountain National Park. In 1927, Marquis d' Albizzi recruited Strom, whom he met in Colorado, to teach skiing at Lake Placid, New York. Strom later taught at Mont Tremblant, Quebec; Stowe, Vermont; and established a backcountry ski lodge at Mt. Assinboine, British Columbia. In turn, Strom recruited Marquis d' Albizzi, his longtime friend and legend of North American skiing, to join the Glacier trip. James Laughlin, "proprietor of the skiing resort at Alta, Utah," and chairman of the NSA's Hut and Trail Committee rounded out the impressive ski resume of the Glacier reconnaissance team. F. Peavey Heffelfinger and Louis W. Hill Jr., described by Lindley as "competent tourist skiers," joined the reconnaissance trip as the official representatives of the Great Northern.<sup>179</sup>

Prior to World War II, the Great Northern had commissioned the Lindleys to survey the possibilities for a ski resort along its route. On their initial trip in 1940, the Lindleys determined that

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179 Alfred Lindley, Letter to Superintendent Emmert, January 19, 1946; Alfred Lindley, 1946 Report to the Great Northern on Glacier Ski Trip, May 7, 1946; F. Peavey Heffelfinger, "The Adventures of F.P. Heffelfinger On Ski Trip To Glacier Park," March 29, 1946, Box: LWRP, Folder: 868 9-28 2, GNPA; Strom, *Pioneers On Skis*, passim. Grace Lindley won the U.S. National Women's Championships Slalom in 1938 and the Downhill in 1940.

Whitefish and Glacier offered “the best skiing on the main line of the Great Northern between the Continental Divide and the Cascades.” They ruled out the eastern side of Glacier for ski development because of a lack of consistent snow, a colder climate, and high prevailing winds. They felt that Whitefish and the area immediately around Belton (West Glacier), where a ski hill operated on national forest land, only offered opportunities for modest local development as ski areas. The Lindleys determined that the best opportunity for the development of a world class ski resort lay inside the national park “in the vicinity of Flattop Mountain, Heaven's Peak and McDonald Creek.” In 1940, Al Lindley had been a member of the NPS Advisory Committee on Winter Sports, and the Lindleys were cordially hosted in Glacier by Superintendent D. S. Libbey. In his post trip report, Lindley described Libbey as showing “definite enthusiasm for the prospect of a skiing development and expressed a desire to cooperate in such development at all times.” Referencing Sun Valley as the template, Lindley wrote that a modern destination ski resort had to offer three things to be successful: “(a) Good skiing conditions as to terrain and snow; (b) comfortable accommodations fairly close to the skiing area; (c) a satisfactory ski lift.” Lindley felt that Glacier's Flattop Mountain and Heaven's Peak amply met the first criteria, but it would require the cooperation and capital of the NPS and Great Northern to build the necessary access road, accommodations, and ski lift. If this were done, Lindley felt that “a skiing resort could be developed second to none in the United States.” However, World War II put any plans for a Great Northern ski resort in Glacier on indefinite hold.<sup>180</sup>

Despite intervening changes in NPS policy, the idea was not forgotten. With the war over, the Great Northern's President Frank Gavin asked Lindley to return to Glacier to complete his reconnaissance and report back with recommendations. Lindley's second trip focused exclusively on the area around Heaven's Peak and Flattop Mountain. After being contacted by Lindley about the trip,

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180 D.S. Libbey, Memo for Director on Winter Use of Glacier, January 9, 1941; Alfred Lindley, 1941 Report on Skiing Possibilities of Whitefish, Belton, and Glacier Park, January 1941; Lindley, Letter to Superintendent Emmert, January 19, 1946, Box: LWRP, Folder: 868 9-28 2, GNPA; Cohen, *Downhill Skiing in Montana*, 167-169.

Glacier Superintendent J.W. Emmert kept his regional and national bosses closely apprised of the situation. By 1946, a reconnaissance trip commissioned by a concessionaire for a possible ski resort in Glacier concerned the NPS leadership greatly. Lawrence J. Merriam, Director of Region Two, wrote to Emmert “that a study of a national park for winter use or of developing a winter use program is a function of the Service and not of the authorized concessionaire.” He asked Emmert to accommodate the needs of Lindley in the park but also to politely remind the Great Northern of the role and function of the concessionaire and the terms of their contract. Merriam wrote to Emmert that “there have, as you know, been some instances where the Service has been drawn into programs such as winter sports through concessioner activities rather than through a well thought out program of its own.” From 1937-1941, Merriam had served as Yosemite's superintendent and knew well the hazards of winter use. A very cooperative NPS in Yosemite had given the YPCC and its Winter Sports Club extreme leeway to manufacture a winter tourist season for the park. The meteoric growth of Badger Pass in the second half of the 1930s, which Merriam presided over, served as a cautionary tale for park administrators in the perils of manufacturing a demand for lift-served skiing that could quickly spiral out of control. Experiences in Yosemite and Rainier had taught the NPS to no longer allow concessionaires to control the direction of winter use in the national parks.<sup>181</sup>

While hospitable to Lindley's crew, Emmert kept his bosses thoroughly apprised of the trip's developments. The skiers were allowed to stay in NPS patrol cabins, and the NPS shuttled the skiers via automobile and boat from their private train car, sidetracked at the Belton station, to the east end of Lake McDonald. After their reconnaissance, the skiers met with Emmert to discuss their findings. Emmert carefully advised them of park policy and the conversation eventually turned to hut supported ski touring. Emmert left the meeting relieved and feeling “that this trip was organized principally by these men...rather than at the specific request of Mr. Gavin for a Great Northern development.” In his

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181 Lindley, Letter to Emmert, January 19, 1946; Lawrence C. Merriam, Memo to Emmert, February 13, 1946, Box: LWRP, Folder: 868 9-28 2, GNPA; Russell, *100 Years in Yosemite*, 171-172; Weamer, *The Perfect Art*, 12-27.

introductory letter to Emmert, Lindley had stated that he came to the park at the request of “Mr. Gavin,” but he also indicated that the group's desire was “to see that this great park is opened up for touring skiing in the winter months.” Lindley recognized that the NPS approach to skiing had changed since 1940. His post trip report laid out a plan for a ski resort that took into account the limitations imposed by the latest Winter Use Policy, which he included in his report. The report also lined out loftier possibilities for resort expansion, including a tram up Heaven's Peak, should NPS policy towards winter development change. It presented a Glacier hut system as a viable and desirable compromise.<sup>182</sup>

The report also featured a sub-report titled as “Enclosure E,” written by James Laughlin. He advised the Great Northern “to postpone a major resort development and to concentrate on a type of skiing which the NPS would approve, that is, ski touring.” Laughlin felt “that in fifteen years' time there may well be enough pressure from skiers to bring about a change in policy,” but the present NPS policy was not conducive to the creation of a ski resort. Laughlin cited “the failure of the ski operation at Mount Rainier” as “directly attributable to the refusal of the National Park Service to sanction the construction of a major lift,” and lobbied for hut skiing as a desirable alternative. He opined that while younger skiers gravitated to “downhill only skiing,” more mature skiers gravitated to “less violent forms of skiing” such as “leisurely trips in the high country” and stressed that older skiers also had more money to spend. He thought Glacier was the perfect venue for hut skiing and offered up 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division veterans as the ideal guides. Weasels, over the snow vehicles developed during World War II and put through rigorous testing and use by the 10<sup>th</sup>, could be used to shuttle skiers to the base hut in order to avoid the expense and difficulties of extra winter plowing. Despite the report's detailed recommendations, neither the ski resort nor the hut system ever came to fruition in Glacier.<sup>183</sup>

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182 J.W. Emmert, Glacier Ski Party Memo to Lawrence Merriam, March 29, 1946; Lindley, 1946 Report to the Great Northern on Glacier Ski Trip, May 7, 1946, Box: LWRP, Folder: 868 9-28 2, GNPA.

183 James Laughlin, Enclosure E to 1946 Report to the Great Northern on Glacier Ski Trip, GNPA. Alfred Lindley died in a plane crash in 1950. A cabin in Colorado's Alfred A. Braun Hut System is named in honor of Lindley. The Lindley Hut rests in the Elk Mountains above Ashcroft, Colorado in the White River National Forest. The hut sits at 10,440' in the trees of a mountain bowl below 13,521' Star Peak.

On March 21, 1946, prior to the report's submission to the Great Northern and NPS, Newton Drury's office issued a slight revision of the 1945 Winter Use Policy. After receiving complaints, Drury's office revised the policy because it had "been interpreted as imposing restrictions on winter use which were not intended and which would prevent the holding of certain competitive events publicly desirable and not injurious to the natural values the Service is obligated to safeguard." Instead of prohibiting "spectacles whose purpose is to attract large crowds of spectators," the revised policy read that such spectacles "will be avoided" and left decisions up to regional directors. However, the limitations imposed on ski developments and lifts remained the same. The policy's dubious attitude concerning the amount of public demand for hut supported ski touring also remained. Ironically, this attitude was also shared by Erling Strom in a post ski trip conversation with Emmert. In a memo to Merriam, which was duly forwarded up the chain of command to Drury, Emmert reported that Strom expressed the idea that "the American skiing public was being trained for down-hill skiing only and did not in general care for long cross-country hiking." While popular in Europe, hut skiing in the U.S. was a niche market at best. Although more compatible with existing policy, the NPS was not willing to subsidize hut skiing for a select few skilled and motivated enough to embark on extended ski trips.<sup>184</sup>

With an explicit winter use policy in place, the NPS exited the war with a strategy to lessen the impacts of Alpine skiing on the parks. A key component was strictly limiting or eliminating overnight winter accommodations in the parks. While encouraging ski touring as a desirable and compatible use of the parks, the NPS avoided creating a new winter use dilemma with the construction of hut systems. Elaborate hut systems could be seen to run afoul of the NPS decision to eliminate slopeside lodging in Rainier. Nonetheless, the closure of slopeside lodging at Paradise and the NPS policy of prohibiting the construction of chairlifts there raised the ire of Alpine skiers. In 1947, ski filmmaker and 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain veteran John Jay wrote in his book *Skiing the Americas* that the "National Park Service has been

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184 Newton Drury, 1946 Winter Use Policy, March 21, 1946; Emmert, Glacier Ski Party Memo to Lawrence Merriam, March 29, 1946, Box: LWRP, Folder: 868 9-28 2, GNPA; Weamer, *The Perfect Art*, 52-53.

inexplicably slow about developing this potentially great spot, and Rainier lags far behind in facilities.” To Jay's Alpine skiing mind, the NPS decisions may have seemed inexplicable, but in the institutional mind of the NPS, the decisions were carefully considered and purposefully obstructionist. In the 1930s, Paradise had quickly grown into the Pacific Northwest's most renowned ski center, and the NPS exited the war with a strategy to turn it into an Alpine skiing backwater. In 1966, Jay expanded on his Rainier lamentation in *Ski Down Years*. Referencing Rainier's unpredictably inclement weather, he wrote that “neither mountain nor the National Park Service, which has charge of it, has ever been particularly hospitable to skiers and skiing...the Silver Skis, like Mt. Rainier on which it was held, is one of the dinosaurs of American skiing.” The NPS strategy to methodically remove Rainier from the list of Alpine skiing destinations had worked so well by the mid-1960s that even a 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain veteran who trained at Paradise had relegated Rainier to Alpine skiing's past.<sup>185</sup>

Despite the end of the war in August 1945, several of the established national park ski areas remained closed for the winter of 1945-1946. Lassen did not reopen during that winter because its wartime budget had already been allocated. There were no funds to plow the road into the south end of the park from Mineral, so the park roads stayed snow covered in winter as they had for most of the war. However, regional boosters and ski clubs fell into their pre-war routine with renewed vigor. The Redding Eskimos, a recently reorganized Redding ski club, began operating a rope tow on Sunday, January 6, 1946 in the national forest just outside the north end of Lassen at Eskimo Hill. As ski clubs reorganized, regional boosters based in Redding continued hatching plans to turn the region into a leading center of winter recreation. Along with pushing for improved all season roads into higher elevations on Mt. Shasta, the boosters, including California congressman Clair Engel, viewed Lassen as an essential piece of their winter plans for the region. They suggested the open and snow laden slopes of the Devastated Area in the park as “the ideal resort area.” They complained that the park was

<sup>185</sup> NPS, Winter Use Chart, 1946; NPS, Winter Use Chart, 1948; NPS, Winter Use Chart, 1950, Box: L-46, File: 868, YNPA, GHRC; Jay, *Skiing the Americas*, 57; Jay, *Ski Down the Years*, 160; Lucas, *It Started in the Mountains*, 6.

“hampered by a lack of funds, which could only be met by the continuous pressure of the public for appropriate legislation” and urged skiers and business owners to push for the winter development of federal lands. Just as E.P. Meinecke had decried in 1941, the boosters plans depended on opening up federal lands to ski development and the aid of federal monies to build the roads and infrastructure necessary to entice winter tourists to the region. The Devastated Area ski resort never materialized, but the cries for improved roads and renewed plowing were heard by federal administrators.<sup>186</sup>

By December 1946, winter access for automobiles to both the northwest and southwest sides of Lassen was once again provided by the NPS. On December 26, 1946, park naturalist Harry B. Robinson reported that while skiing conditions were “not favorable at the south end of the park...some skiers had been enjoying the sport at the Sulphur works (sic).” The NPS renewed plowing the southern end of the Loop Road for winter travel up to Sulphur Works. With 46 inches of snow on the ground, the rope tow at Sulphur Works began operation after its war induced hiatus on Saturday January 4, 1947. Two weeks later, the Mt. Lassen Ski Club, inactive during the war, reorganized and held its first post-war meeting in Mineral. Eugene J. Barton stated that “new developments and ski tows at the Mineral Lodge, Mt. Christy, and the Sulphur Works in Lassen park will give the club increased facilities for operations.” With rope tows up and running on the park's southwest side, regional skiers returned to Lassen, and boosters set their sights on enticing Californians from further south to make the journey north to ski. The postwar expansion of air travel fueled loftier dreams of the Lassen/Shasta region as a winter destination that drew more than the population of local communities. Boosters viewed air travel as a key to draw visitors to California's far flung northern reaches from Sacramento, San Francisco, and

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186 “Weekend Ski Outlook Good,” *Redding Record-Searchlight*, January 5, 1946, 1; “Help Needed to Set Up Ski Tow,” *Redding Record-Searchlight*, January 5, 1946, 1; “Skiers Enjoy Sunday Outing,” *Redding Record-Searchlight*, January 7, 1946, 1-2; “Skiing Outlook Appears Good,” *Redding Record-Searchlight*, January 18, 1946, 4; “Redding Support Asked For Plan To Help Improve Mt. Shasta Sports Area,” *Redding Record-Searchlight*, January 10, 1946, 4; “Rescued Skiers Well; Tell of Experiences,” *Redding Record-Searchlight*, January 9, 1946, 1-2; NPS, Winter Use Chart, 1946, Box: L-46, File: 868, YNPA, GHRC.



Los Angeles and linked their snow sports blitz directly to more convenient air travel.<sup>187</sup>

On January 10, 1947, Southwest Airways inaugurated its “Feeder Line” to northern California communities including Chico, Red Bluff, and Redding: towns close enough to Lassen to look to the park as a major tourist draw. Southwest advertised its expanded operations as a “revolutionary type of air service.....a service which will link the smaller communities of California on the air map of the world” and regional boosters bought in. Snow laden Lassen and Shasta were held out as white carrots to the denizens of California's big urban areas “who heretofore, have spent long hours in getting to ski areas in the Sierras.” Convenience and time was at an increasingly high premium for the modern tourist, and Southwest promised air travelers adverse to arduous automobile travel a more painless and luxurious future. In coordination with the expanded air service, The Shasta-Cascade Wonderland Association launched a publicity blitz on radio stations in San Francisco and L.A. touting “snow sports activities in northern California.” The association also unleashed “theme girl” Letty Johnson on California. Letty embarked on a statewide tour to spread “the good word – and looks – to less fortunate folk who live elsewhere.” Media releases pictured Letty fashionably outfitted in ski gear with her skis slung excitedly over her shoulder as she headed out on her latest adventure in the region's winter wonderland. However, even with improved air travel, the visions of a winter empire in the Lassen region never came to fruition. Despite its status as a national park, Lassen remained a largely regional destination, even in summer. The NPS endeavored to minimize the temptation to travel from afar to ski at Lassen. With no slopeside lodging and limited amenities, Lassen would never draw crowds of skiers from the southern part of the state, but it would blossom into a treasured regional ski area.<sup>188</sup>

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187 “Park Offers Ice Skating,” *Redding Record-Searchlight*, December 26, 1946, 6; “Skiing Good At Sulphur Works,” *Redding Record-Searchlight*, January 3, 1947, 2; “Ski Club Will Name Officers,” *Redding Record-Searchlight*, January 14, 1947, 4; “Redding Welcomes Plane Service,” *Redding Record-Searchlight*, January 7, 1947, 8; “Snow Sports Program To Be Linked With Plane Service,” *Redding Record-Searchlight*, January 7, 1947, 3.

188 “Redding Welcomes Plane Service,” *Redding Record-Searchlight*, January 7, 1947, 8; “Snow Sports Program To Be Linked With Plane Service,” *Redding Record-Searchlight*, January 7, 1947, 3; Southwest Airways advertisement, “Southwest brings a NEW KIND of AIR SERVICE to California,” *Redding Record-Searchlight*, January 7, 1947, 8; “Envoy Extraordinary,” *Redding Record-Searchlight*, January 9, 1947, 1.

Crater Lake also reestablished itself as a regional Alpine skiing destination after the war, but the NPS determined to keep the park's winter operation as low key as possible. As it had in Lassen, the NPS had backed off winter plowing in Crater Lake during the war. Beginning in November 1942, the park closed from mid-November to late June each year and did not reopen as a year-round destination until June 15, 1946. That winter, the NPS kept the road to the rim open, and the Crater Lake Lodge Company provided winter services at the request of Director Drury. The company contracted A.L. Vincze from Klamath Falls to operate a rope tow and provide ski rentals and lessons on the rim near Crater Lake Lodge. However, in line with NPS aversion to slopeside amenities, the majority of visitor services for the winter were located below the crater rim at Park Headquarters where the concessionaire rented some NPS buildings and offered limited lodging and meal services. The following winter, overnight accommodations in the park were no longer offered. In his 1949 annual report to the director, Superintendent Ernest Leavitt wrote of the benefits of operating the park on a day use only basis in winter. He cited the fact that it made snow plowing operations easier and had “a second advantage of holding down crowds to some extent during winter months which makes it easier for the National Park Service to take care of winter visitors.” Even with the lack of services, 53,980 visitors descended on Crater Lake for the 1949-1950 winter season, measured as October 15-June 15. The NPS estimated that “60 percent of visitors come to the enjoy the scenery only, and about 40 percent to enjoy the scenery and winter sports including skiing, tobogganing, and snowshoeing.” Leavitt noted “some complaint, however, on the part of skiers in our gateway cities who would like very much to be able to secure meals and lodgings in the park, and stay in the park over weekends.” However, Leavitt went on to say that “experience has shown that the cost of furnishing such service is out of all proportion to the revenues received.” It also aligned nicely with NPS policy to limit Alpine skiing in the parks.<sup>189</sup>

The history of lift-served skiing in Crater Lake proved to be much shorter than Lassen's

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189 Unrau, *Administrative History: Crater Lake National Park, Volume 2*, “Chapter 11” and “Chapter 15”; NPS, Winter Use Chart, 1946, Box: L-46, File: 868, YNPA, GHRC.

prolonged history. Rope tow operations in Crater Lake continued into the early 1950s, but NPS policy and deteriorating relations with the Crater Lake Lodge Company led to the elimination of any concessionaire coordinated rope tow operations in the park. Ski clubs could operate rope tows with special use permits provided that the tows were “taken down and removed from the park at the end of the day.” With the appearance of more permanent ski lifts at national forest ski areas in Oregon, ski clubs began to lose interest in supplying and maintaining their own portable tows and abandoned the mechanized do-it-yourself brand of tow skiing in the park. The focus of lift-served skiing in the area transferred from Crater Lake to the surrounding national forests. The NPS strategy of eliminating lift skiing worked in Crater Lake. The NPS continued to provide winter auto access to Crater Lake's rim, and motivated skiers could substitute automobile yo-yo skiing for lift skiing. However, the rope tows at Crater Lake disappeared in the 1950s, and lift-served skiing never returned to the park.<sup>190</sup>

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### **Community Slopes in the National Parks**

As part of their postwar push to develop Alpine skiing facilities on public lands, the National Ski Association (NSA) organized a Public Lands Winter Sports Committee. In 1948, the committee circulated a “Questionnaire On Aspects Of Winter Use Of Public Lands” to ski clubs across the nation to gain feedback on how to best utilize public lands as sites for lift-served ski areas. Fred H. McNeil acted as the voice of the committee, and respondents sent their completed questionnaires back to McNeil at his office in the Editorial Department of *The Oregon Journal* in Portland. As a member of the media, McNeil was ideally situated to organize a public relations campaign to pressure federal land managers to accommodate the desires of skiers. In McNeil's introductory letter to the questionnaire dated March 3, 1948, he accurately declared that “much of the skiing in this country is done on lands administered by the Federal agencies, chiefly the United States Forest Service and the National Park

<sup>190</sup> Unrau, *Administrative History: Crater Lake National Park, Volume 2*, “Chapter 11” and “Chapter 15”; NPS, Winter Use Chart, 1949; NPS, Winter Use Chart, 1951, Box L-46, File 868; YNPA, GHRC.

Service.” McNeil praised the efforts of federal land managers in promoting skiing but concluded that they were overwhelmed by the increased demand for Alpine skiing on public lands. He declared that “the skiing public must make a united drive to obtain Congressional action so the Federal agencies will have the means to go ahead with their winter sports development programs.” The future of western skiing did lay on the federal lands, but NPS administrators increasingly maneuvered to deflect this public pressure away from the national parks and towards the more willing national forests.<sup>191</sup>

By May 1948, the NSA questionnaire had found its way into the hands of NPS administrators. Stanley C. Joseph, Acting Associate Regional Director for Region Two, sent it to his superintendents and asked for their comments and reactions. Region Two included the snow laden bastions of Glacier, Grand Teton, Rocky Mountain, and Yellowstone. The response of Yellowstone Superintendent Edmund B. Rogers clearly illustrated that the NPS had taken the active promotion of lift-served skiing off the menu of tourist activities in Yellowstone. Rogers responded that “there is no large-scale demand for skiing facilities or supervision of winter sports activities in Yellowstone National Park as this area is not close to any large center of population. A small tow is owned and operated by employees and a few winter visitors use it without charge. The early opening of the road from Tower Falls to the north slopes of Mt. Washburn permits late skiing by skiers from adjacent towns.” Stressing Yellowstone's remote location from large population bases, Rogers painted Undine Ski Hill as a small, localized, out of the way operation. He ended his letter by saying “it appears that the questionnaire has little application to this area and we have no suggestion or comment regarding it.” This rather terse and dismissive ending indicated that any ideas of Yellowstone as an Alpine skiing destination died with Montana Day. Undine Ski Hill and its lone rope tow was strictly there to serve the needs of the local community.<sup>192</sup>

Following the war, Yellowstone administrators, with the support of the national leadership,

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191 Fred H. McNeil, Memo to Skiing Organizations and Club Officials, March 3, 1948; Questionnaire On Aspects Of Winter Use Of Public Lands, 1948, Box: L-46, File: 868, YNPA, GHRC.

192 Stanley C. Joseph, Memo to Region Two Superintendents, May 28, 1948; Edmund B. Rogers, Memo to Region Two Director, June 7, 1948, Box: L-46, File: 868, YNPA, GHRC.

worked to discourage any ideas of the park as an Alpine skiing destination. Yellowstone's listing on the 1946 Winter Use Chart stated that “the park's great distance from centers of population, the availability of developed winter sports areas nearer those centers, severe winter climate and unfavorable snow conditions preclude giving further consideration at this time to plans for additional winter use development of the park.” Superintendent Rogers and his assistant Fred Johnston consistently began to use variations of this refrain to deflect any inquiries into Yellowstone's potential as an Alpine skiing destination. In 1946, Minnie Dole, the visionary behind the 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division, contacted Rogers for ski information on Yellowstone to be included in *The National Skiing Guide*, which Dole was editing for A.S. Barnes and Company. In his response to Dole, Rogers went out of his way to stress Yellowstone's undesirable nature for skiing. Rogers told Dole that “snow lies extremely loose and unpacked throughout the park, which conditions, in conjunction with stormy and cold weather, makes skiing conditions unfavorable” and stressed Yellowstone's “great distances to centers of population” and the fact that there are no public skiing facilities. Rogers mentioned that ski clubs were sometimes allowed to set temporary rope tows up in the park but stressed that this is rare “due to the generally poor snow and weather conditions” and Yellowstone's remote location. Rogers made no specific mention of Undine Ski Hill and refrained from filling out the questionnaire that Dole had sent because “answers to nearly all of the questions asked on this form would supply only negative information.”<sup>193</sup>

The remoteness of Yellowstone allowed park administrators to effectively resist calls to develop the park for Alpine skiing beyond small-scale local use. Each inquiry to Rogers and Johnston about Alpine skiing was met with their pat response of bad weather, poor snow conditions, remote location, and no public ski facilities. The NPS stance benefited from an ample supply of local ski hills close to the Montana towns that would have provided the majority of Yellowstone skiers. Montana residents did

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193 NPS, Winter Use Chart, 1946; Charles Minot Dole, Letter to Edmund Rogers, April 1, 1946; Edmund Rogers, Response to Charles Minot Dole, April 5, 1946; Edmund Rogers, Letter to Region Two Director, June 6, 1949; NPS, Winter Use Chart, 1948; NPS, Winter Use Chart, 1950; Fred T. Johnston, Letter to Harvey W. Miller, November 23, 1949, Box: L-46, File: 868, YNPA, GHRC.

not need to drive to Yellowstone for lift skiing, and the Montana lifts were far enough away from the park to ensure the continuing desire of Yellowstone locals for the rope tow at Undine Ski Hill. Furthermore, the NPS successfully staved off calls to enhance plowing efforts into the interior of the park to serve the desires of Wyoming communities, which could have led to demands for ski development in the park's interior. Yellowstone was completely left off the NPS Winter Use Charts of 1948 and 1950. The trend of labeling Undine Ski Hill as a strictly local operation, which the general public did not need to know about, solidified into park code in the immediate post-war period and lasted until its closure in 1994. The final special use permit for Undine Ski Hill issued on January 1, 1993, reiterated the fact that the hill was for “1) recreational skiing. for Yellowstone Club members only 2) ski lessons for Yellowstone Park Ski Club students only (from Mammoth/Gardiner elementary school).” The special use permit clearly stated “the ski area covered by this permit will be non-commercial in nature and shall be operated in a non-commercial manner. It shall be available to members of the Yellowstone Ski Club and shall not be available to the general public.” The NPS embraced this basic philosophy during World War II. With these objectives in mind, Undine Ski Hill effectively flew under the public radar and consistently failed to appear in the litany of ski guides and Yellowstone guidebooks produced over the decades. Downplaying or ignoring the existence of Undine Ski Hill developed into a practiced public relations art form amongst the NPS and other park insiders.<sup>194</sup>

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194 Edmund Rogers, Memo to Region Two Director, June 6, 1949; Fred Johnston, Letter to Harvey Miller, November 23, 1949; NPS, Winter Use Chart, 1948; NPS, Winter Use Chart, 1950, Box: L-46, File: 868; Undine Ski Hill Special Use Permit, January 1, 1993, MSC006: YSA Records, Box 2, Unnamed File, YNPA, GHRC. For the development of lift skiing in post World War II Montana, see Cohen, *Downhill in Montana*. For the debate over plowing Yellowstone's interior roads, see Yochim, *Yellowstone and The Snowmobile*. For examples of the long list of ski guides and Yellowstone guides with winter sections that hold no mention of Undine Ski Hill, see Haynes, *Haynes Guide of 1947*; Robert and Eleanor Huggins, *Skiing In The West: The Complete Guide to 200 Ski Areas in the 11 Western States* (San Jose, CA: The H.M. Gousha Company, 1967); Robert G. Enzel, *The White Book of Ski Areas*, Thirteenth Edition (Washington D.C: Inter-Ski Services Inc., 1988); Orrin H. and Lorraine G. Bonney, *Guide to the Wyoming Mountains and Wilderness Areas*, Third Revised Edition (Chicago, IL: The Swallow Press, 1977); Paul Schullery, *Four Season Road from Gardiner to Cooke City Through Yellowstone National Park* (NPS and Yellowstone Library and Museum Association, Ca. 1960); and Cliff McAdams, *Yellowstone Guide and Reference Book* (Boulder, CO: Pruett Publishing Company, 1981).

The operation of single rope tows for the use of local ski clubs was not viewed as a threat by NPS administrators, especially when a large portion of the skiers had NPS affiliations. Concessionaires never became involved in lift skiing in Yellowstone, and the same was true for Glacier. The only ski lifts to operate in Glacier were rope tows owned and operated by local clubs for community members. In 1941, a CCC crew based in the park helped the Glacier Ski Club make “extensive improvements” to the Belton Ski Hill located in the national forest above Belton, and after the war, the Glacier Ski Club began setting up a rope tow on the hill each winter. In January 1957, the West Glacier Lion's Club purchased a portable tow with a 400' rope powered by a small gasoline engine mounted on a toboggan. Instead of setting the tow up on the Belton Ski Hill, they chose a more open and accessible hill inside the park boundary. The NPS issued the Lion's Club a special use permit to operate the tow on weekends and holidays. The new ski hill, referred to as “Stevens Meadow,” sat “on the edge of West Glacier near the old bridge across the Flathead's Middle Fork in Glacier National Park.” The hill was located “behind the Mellett and Messenger residences” in the park service housing area. Adults from the Lion's Club operated the tow and charged a nominal fee for its use: \$.10 for kids, \$.25 for high school and junior high students, and \$.50 cents for adults. On winter weekends, the rope tow acted as a community gathering spot and was heavily utilized by the local kids and teenagers. The hill was also a popular bedding spot for elk, with “their sitzmarks providing minor pitfalls for skiers.”<sup>195</sup>

The Stevens Meadow ski hill only hosted a rope tow for three winters. The winter of 1958-1959 was the last winter the site was used for a rope tow operation. For that winter, the Lion's Club erected a new and improved rope tow on the hill featuring a Jeep motor and a 600' rope. Marlin Metcalf loaned

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195 Superintendent Report, 1942, 11, GNPA; Cohen, *Downhill Skiing in Montana*, 167-169; *Glacier Glimpses*, January 14, 1957; *Glacier Glimpses*, January 29, 1957; *Glacier Glimpses*, March 12, 1957; *Glacier Glimpses*, December 31, 1958; *Glacier Glimpses*, February 26, 1959, George C. Ruhle Library (GCRL), Glacier National Park (GNP); “Slate Skiing Start For Glacier Hill,” *Hungry Horse News*, December, 20, 1957, cover; Photo Montage, *Hungry Horse News*, February 1, 1957, cover; “Sleeping Elk are Ski Hill Problem,” *Hungry Horse News*, February 15, 1957, cover; Photo Montage, *Hungry Horse News*, January 31, 1958, cover, 4; “Lions Extend Tow on W.G. Ski Hill,” *Hungry Horse News*, December 26, 1958, cover; “Lions to Have W.G. Ski Tow Operating,” *Hungry Horse News*, January 29, 1960, cover, GNPA.

the motor to the club for the winter and put it back in his Jeep for summertime use. For the winter of 1959-1960, the Lions once again utilized Metcalf's jeep engine, but they shifted the tow back to the Belton Ski Hill. Newspaper accounts and the employee newsletter did not give a reason as to why the Lions chose to put the tow back on the Belton Ski Hill. The winter of 1959-1960 seemed to be the last year that the West Glacier community operated a rope tow as no references to a West Glacier rope tow were found following that winter. With the rapid expansion of Big Mountain (now called Whitefish Resort) relatively close by and the opening of the ski area's first chairlift in December 1960, the demand for a rope tow dwindled in West Glacier for locals who could drive to the lifts of Big Mountain. By 1960, in addition to its first chairlift, Big Mountain offered a T-Bar, a poma lift, and a rope tow. Following World War II, the development of Big Mountain as a regional ski resort effectively ended any further calls from the public and the Great Northern to develop a ski area in Glacier.<sup>196</sup>

On the Olympic Peninsula, no alternate Alpine skiing sites existed outside of Olympic National Park. The 1946 Winter Use Chart stated that “the park offers the only environment on the Olympic Peninsula favorable for snow sports.” While resisting pressure from skiers to develop other parts of the park for Alpine skiing, such as Flapjack Lakes, Sol Duc Park, and Seven Lakes Basin, the NPS allowed the continuation of Deer Park as the peninsula's lone Alpine skiing area. Like Lassen and Crater Lake, the ski area at Deer Park closed during the war. It did not reopen until the winter of 1946-1947, when the NPS once again committed to plowing its access road. The NPS also allowed the renewal of the tradition of slopeside lodging at Deer Park, established when the ski area was still under the jurisdiction of the USFS. The ski lodge, housed in the retrofitted CCC bunkhouse, was an extremely modest and

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196 Cohen, *Downhill Skiing in Montana*, 167-199; *Glacier Glimpses*, November 4, 1959, GCRL, GNP; “Big Mt. Expansion - ‘Encouraging,’” *Hungry Horse News*, March 22, 1957, cover; “Lions Extend Tow on W.G. Ski Hill,” *Hungry Horse News*, December 26, 1958, cover; “W.G. Lions Holding Ski Hill Benefit,” November 6, 1959, cover; “At West Glacier,” photos and captions, *Hungry Horse News*, January 8, 1960, cover; “Lions to Have W.G. Ski Tow Operating,” *Hungry Horse News*, January 29, 1960, cover; “Big Mountain Expects Banner Season,” *Hungry Horse News*, December 16, 1960, cover, 4, GNPA; Lawrence C. Merriam, Winter Use Memo to Director, January 20, 1948, Box L-46, File: 868, YNPA, GHRC.



communal affair, consisting of “double deck bunks, small kitchen and mess hall.” The lodge could accommodate 20 women and 24 men. The Olympic Ski Club, based in Port Angeles, contracted with local men Larry and Tom Winters to run the lodge and rope tow operation. For the winter of 1949-1950, two rope tows operated at Deer Park and served 3,280 skiers. The road, lodge, and tows were only open on weekends and holidays and the normal season ran from December 26-April 15. With its established history, its small and local scale, and the lack of alternate Alpine skiing facilities on the peninsula, the NPS allowed the operation to continue as it had before the war.<sup>197</sup>

In Sequoia, lift skiing took hold when Newton Drury permitted the Sequoia Ski Club, founded in 1935, to begin operating rope tows at Wolverton Basin in 1945. Wolverton's ample snow supplied by its 7,300' elevation began drawing local skiers to its slopes in the 1920s. Drury did not feel that allowing rope tows run by a local ski club at an established ski hill to be a threat to park values. Ice skating and tobogganing at nearby Lodgepole and general sightseeing to view the sequoia forests clad in snow attracted more winter visitors to Sequoia than skiing at Wolverton did. Out of the 39,259 people that visited Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks during the winter of 1945-1946, the NPS reported that “20,000 participated in winter sports” and only 6,000 of them skied at Wolverton. During the winter of 1946-1947, the NPS reported a dramatic spike in winter visitation to 136,344 people in the two parks but did not indicate how many of these winter visitors were skiers. However, with lift skiing now established as an accepted past time in Sequoia, the number of Alpine skiers coming to the park consistently rose as Wolverton made its appearance on the Alpine skiing map of southern California. Despite his determination to more tightly limit and control ski lift operations in the parks, Drury's decision to allow the Sequoia Ski Club to operate rope tows in 1945 created a legacy of lift skiing in Sequoia that would last until 1991 and increasingly involve the park concessionaire.<sup>198</sup>

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197 NPS, Winter Use Chart, 1946; NPS, Winter Use Chart, 1948; NPS, Winter Use Chart, 1950, Box L-46: File: 868, YNPA, GHRC; Lucas, *It Started in The Mountains*, 11-12; Paul Crews, *Early Hiking in the Olympics* (Seattle, WA: Peanut Butter Publishing, 1996), 103-106; Oakes, *Skiing in Olympic National Park*, 22, 80-81, 87, 89.

198 Sequoia Ski Club History, Sequoia Ski Club website, accessed April 22, 2015; NPS, Winter Use Chart, 1946; NPS,

Viewing it as a valuable asset for local skiers and not as a tourist draw, the NPS envisioned Wolverton as a small-scale, local affair. In the beginning, the role of Sequoia's concessionaire was minimal. Sequoia and King's Canyon National Parks Company rented ski equipment, provided ski instruction, and offered a hot drink and sandwich service at the ski hill. In accordance with NPS aversion to more robust slopeside amenities, the company's winter "meal service facilities, and overnight accommodations for approximately 125 people" were located four miles from Wolverton at Giant Forest Village. In 1948, along with two rope tows and the concessionaire services, the NPS reported a "parking area for 75 cars; a small shack available as a warming house...pit type toilets...first aid and ranger services" at Wolverton. By the 1950s, The Sequoia Ski Club operated three rope tows at Wolverton. In 1957, as business increased and the responsibilities attached to the operation grew, the ski club sold their tows to a private contractor, who added a fourth rope tow in 1960. In 1965, the NPS agreed to move an old ranger station from Lodgepole to Wolverton to act as an improved warming hut. By 1967, the ski area featured a 25,000 square foot skating rink and parking for 300 cars. By 1975, Wolverton featured a warming hut, two comfort stations, a ski patrol cabin, and a first aid station. The ski area was able to maintain and grow its following among local skiers, and as it did so, its footprint on the park's landscape grew with each passing decade.<sup>199</sup>

With the ski area's longevity, the park concessionaire became more invested in the operation and its ability to draw overnight guests to the park. As with other ski areas in the parks, the NPS struggled to control Wolverton and hatched long term plans to eliminate its lifts. However, these long term plans were hedged by limited growth and the operation moved beyond being a community ski

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Winter Use Chart, 1948, Box: L-46, File 868: YNPA, GHRC; David T. Page, *Explorer's Guide: Yosemite and The Southern Sierra Nevada*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition (Woodstock, VT: Countryman Press, 2011), 291; Gilbert, "Lost Ski Areas of the National Parks," *Skiing Heritage Journal*, January 2012, 31-32.

199 NPS, Winter Use Chart, 1948, Box: L-46, File: 868: YNPA, GHRC; Sequoia Ski Club History, Sequoia Ski Club website; "Ski Area Guide," *Skiing*, September 1969, 154; Huggins, *Skiing In The West*, 74; A. Berle Clemensen, *NPS Report on Sequoia-Kings Canyon National Parks* (Denver, CO: NPS Service Center, 1975), 22, accessed April 22, 2015, [http://www.nps.gov/parkhistory/online\\_books/seki/sequoia\\_history.pdf](http://www.nps.gov/parkhistory/online_books/seki/sequoia_history.pdf).

venue and into the realm of a business venture. In the early 1980s, winter visitation to Sequoia dramatically increased. The NPS allowed Guest Services Inc. to keep additional cabins open for winter visitors, and their 95 cabins regularly filled to capacity with overnight visitors. The addition of Rainier's former poma lift for the winter of 1982-1983 increased the ski area's popularity. In the January 1985 issue of *Ski*, Guest Services Inc. ran an ad urging skiers to “try your feet at cross country or downhill at Wolverton.” In 1986, Wolverton's concessionaire run amenities included “ski rentals, a snack bar, and full service facilities for downhill ski repair and conditioning.” The ski area's poma lift and two rope tows operated Friday to Sunday and on holidays from December to April, offering skiers a variety of terrain and 383' of vertical. Lift tickets priced at \$14 for adults and \$9 for children continued to attract skiers from the surrounding communities. However, long term plans for removal did win out in the end, and by 1991 the lifts of Wolverton were gone and the area resumed its pre-World War II life as a cross-country ski area, backcountry skiing trailhead, and snow play area.<sup>200</sup>

While the establishment of Alpine skiing facilities on nearby national forest land buffered public pressure on some parks, the lack of alternative facilities increased the pressure on other parks. The NPS embraced a strategy of “cooperating with representatives of other Federal and State agencies to investigate the possibilities of existing and potential winter use centers in the vicinity of Park Service areas so that wherever possible pressure on our areas may be relieved.” Glacier, Yellowstone, Crater Lake, Rainier, and Grand Teton, where lifts never operated within park boundaries, were able to resist more substantial Alpine skiing footprints in large part due to the development of alternate sites on nearby national forest land, which effectively served to relieve pressure on the parks. The remote Alaskan location of Mount McKinley never made it a viable possibility for a popular ski area in the

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200 NPS, “Environmental Assessment, Development Concept Plan – Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks, California” (Denver, CO: NPS Service Center, 1982), no pagination for online version, accessed April 22, 2015, [http://archive.org/stream/environmentalass00giant/environmentalass00giant\\_djvu.txt](http://archive.org/stream/environmentalass00giant/environmentalass00giant_djvu.txt); “Now Open All Winter, General's Highway Through the Giant Sequoias,” *Sunset*, January 1986; “Ski Area Guide,” *Skiing*, September 1969, 154; “Ski Guide,” *Orange Coast Magazine*, November 1986, 64, accessed April 22, 2015, Google Books; Enzel, *The White Book of Ski Areas*, 24; Gilbert, “Lost Ski Areas of the National Parks,” *Skiing Heritage Journal*, January 2012, 31-32.

first place, and the park's rope tows disappeared after the Korean War. However, in Olympic, Yosemite, Rocky Mountain, Lassen, and Sequoia, pressure to develop the parks for Alpine skiing did not abate and nearby alternates were non-existent or extremely slow in coming.<sup>201</sup>

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### **Selected Development and the Battle Over Mineral King**

Illustrating the difficulty of removing activities from the national parks once they are established as tradition, lift skiing tenaciously hung on in the postwar parks. The NPS enabled this longevity with Director Wirth's proclamation in 1952 to allow for the limited growth of Alpine skiing facilities where “no alternative site outside of a national park” existed. His 1952 declaration soon became linked to his signature program of Mission 66 to rehabilitate degraded national park facilities and build new and improved ones. The NPS allocated Mission 66 money to fund improvements to park ski areas deemed worthy of continuation. In Olympic, Mission 66 money funded a new and improved road to Hurricane Ridge and allowed the park's downhill ski facilities to be transferred there from Deer Park in 1957. While Undine Ski Hill remained a strictly local affair, improvements and expansion of the Alpine skiing facilities in Sequoia, Rocky Mountain, Lassen, Yosemite, and Olympic increased their visible footprint and their appeal to regional skiers. Some skiers were happy with the improvements, many skiers wanted more, and others were appalled as the divide between environmentalists, park management, and concessionaires over the future of Alpine skiing in the parks widened.<sup>202</sup>

In 1967, *Skiing in The West: The Complete Guide To 200 Ski Areas In The 11 Western States* listed six lift-served ski areas in the national parks: Lassen Ski Area; Badger Pass in Yosemite; Wolverton in Sequoia; Hidden Valley in Rocky Mountain; Paradise Valley in Rainier; and Hurricane

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201 Lawrence Merriam, Region Two Office Memo No. 47-35, April 11, 1947; NPS, Winter Use Chart, 1946; NPS, Winter Use Chart, 1950, Box L-46: File: 868, YNPA, GHRC; Norris, *Crown Jewel of the North*, 121-127.

202 Conrad Wirth, Winter Use Memo, November 20, 1952, Box: L-46, File: 868, YNPA, GHRC; Conrad Wirth, *Mission 66*, January 27, 1956, in Dilsaver, ed., *America's National Park System: The Critical Documents*, 193-196; Page and Turnbull, *Determination of Eligibility*, 13, 42; Oakes, *Skiing in Olympic National Park*, 95; Frank, *Making Rocky Mountain National Park*, 191-194.

Ridge in Olympic. Undine Ski Hill did not appear in the guide. Lassen featured a “new 1,100' poma lift” and ski chalet, two rope tows, and parking for 300 cars. Badger Pass had one chairlift, four T-bars, and parking for 400 cars. Wolverton had four rope tows and parking for 300 cars. Hidden Valley consisted of three T-Bars, one rope tow, and parking for 425 cars. Paradise featured seven rope tows, parking for 1,000 cars, and “pending approval by the National Park Service” plans to “add Sno-Cat tours to transport experienced skiers to the 10,000-foot level of Mt. Rainier and open one of the longest runs in the world, 7-1/2 miles long, and dropping 7,000 vertical feet.” The NPS never approved the Sno-Cat tours. Hurricane Ridge featured a single rope tow and a snow play hill for saucer sledding. All of the ski areas featured day lodges with meal service, ski schools, and ski shops. In 1967, full day lift tickets ran between \$2.00 at Paradise and \$4.50 at Badger Pass. Hidden Valley and Badger Pass were open daily, and the other ski areas were open weekends and holidays. Hidden Valley's day lodge was built in 1955 with Mission 66 money. Badger Pass got the first chairlift in a national park in 1965.<sup>203</sup>

In 1988, *The White Book of Ski Areas: The Complete Ski Area Directory of the U.S. and Canada* only listed four ski areas in American national parks: Wolverton, Badger Pass, Lassen, and Ski Estes Park (Hidden Valley). Neither Undine Ski Hill nor Hurricane Ridge made *The White Book*. Despite the addition of a poma lift in 1971, the ultra-local and small-scale of Hurricane Ridge erased it from the national map of ski areas. In 1988, Wolverton offered two rope tows, a poma lift, 383' of vertical, and \$14 adult lift tickets. Lassen offered a triple chairlift (added in 1982), two rope tows, 600' of vertical, and \$17.00 adult lift tickets. Hidden Valley had been rebranded as Ski Estes Park in the early 1980s by the Estes Park Valley Recreation and Parks Department, the concessionaire that ran the now NPS owned ski area. Ski Estes Park offered two T-bars, two poma lifts, \$16 adult lift tickets, and 2,000' vertical. Badger Pass featured one rope tow, one T-bar, four chairlifts (three double chairs and one triple chair), 800' of vertical, and \$17.00 lift tickets. By the late 1980s, the remaining park ski

<sup>203</sup> Huggins, *Skiing in the West*, 17-18, 34, 74, 96, 224, 229; Rose, *Magic Yosemite Winter*, 98; Barth and Leggett, *Finding Hidden Valley*, 208-209.

areas, even Badger Pass with its four chairlifts and long pedigree, had settled into niches in the Alpine skiing landscape as family friendly ski areas and throwbacks to an earlier age of skiing measured by community vibe, not vertical feet and high-speed detachable quad chairlifts.<sup>204</sup>

While the NPS allowed limited growth of ski areas following Wirth's 1952 proclamation, concessionaire run ski areas had difficulty competing with the rapidly growing resorts of the modern ski industry. Any growth of ski areas in the parks was carefully studied and controlled by NPS planners. Hurricane Ridge continued to operate as a community ski hill run by the Olympic Ski Club. However, the operations at Wolverton, Hidden Valley, Lassen, and Badger Pass were run by concessionaires who were concerned with making a profit. At the urging of concessionaires, the NPS began to slowly loosen some of its restrictions on the types of lifts allowed. The NPS authorized the first T-bar to be erected in a park at Badger Pass in 1946 to replace the outdated Upski. The NPS allowed the addition of two poma lifts at Hidden Valley in 1955 and one at Lassen in 1956. In 1965, the NPS dropped its blanket aversion to chairlifts in the parks by allowing Badger Pass to erect its first double chair. By 1973, the ski area featured three double chairs. The NPS remained steadfast about not permitting a chairlift in Rainier, but it allowed Hidden Valley to erect a double chair in 1972. The first triple chair in a national park arrived in Lassen in 1982. Outside Badger Pass, Lassen, and Hidden Valley, no other national park ski area ever featured a chairlift, and the approval of each chairlift was fraught with controversy as critics of lift skiing in the parks saw the footprints of park ski areas continue to grow.<sup>205</sup>

Immediately before and following World War II, single chair chairlifts, like those at Sun Valley and Sugar Bowl, were still a rarity and a marvel. These resorts and the capital investment required to build them changed the nature of Alpine skiing in the West from a local, grassroots phenomenon to one

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204 Enzel, *The White Book of Ski Areas*, 8, 13, 24, 42; Strong, *Footprints in Time*, 100-101; Barth and Leggett, *Finding Hidden Valley*, 192-193.

205 Page and Turnbull, *Determination of Eligibility*, 13-14; Barth and Leggett, *Finding Hidden Valley*, 208-210; Krahe and Catton, *Little Gem of the Cascades*, 159-160, 279.

driven by profit and real estate. With their chairlifts, slopeside lodging, and elaborate apres ski scenes, ski resorts harvested and managed the western snow more like the extractive industries the NPS sought to keep out during World War II. By the 1960s, double chairs at ski areas across the West had become common place. The rapidly changing nature of the ski industry quickly changed the definition of small-scale. In the larger U.S. ski map, one double chairlift at a ski area in the 1970s and 1980s classified it as a Mom and Pop resort. Established destination ski resorts continued to grow in order to compete with each other, and brand new large-scale resorts continued to pop up in the West's national forests. In the 1960s, Disney hatched plans for a mega-resort on national forest land adjacent to Sequoia National Park that ignited an impassioned decade long fight between the Sierra Club and Disney. The widely publicized battle over Mineral King shaped public perception of the industrial nature of the modern ski industry and caused many Americans to rethink the national parks as venues for Alpine ski areas.<sup>206</sup>

The fight over the ski resort at Mineral King occurred during a period of rising environmental consciousness in the U.S. and cast Alpine skiing in the light of an extractive industry on public lands subsidized and authorized by the federal government for private profit. Environmentalists increasingly saw Alpine skiing as an environmental threat to public lands. The 16,000 acre Mineral King basin had been excluded from additions to Sequoia National Park in 1926 because of its history of mining in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century that left it blemished with signs of human development. The ownership of the basin also existed as a mix of public and privately owned land resulting from old mining claims. Mineral King was left as a peninsula of national forest land pocked with private ownership jutting into the national park. Private individuals maintained vacation cabins in Mineral King and the access road to the basin ran for 10 miles through the national park. In the mid-1940s, skiers began surveying the basin's potential for development. In 1949, the Sierra Club and USFS both suggested Mineral King as an alternative site for a proposed ski resort on southern California's 11,503' San Geronio Mountain.

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<sup>206</sup> Fry, *The Story of Modern Skiing*, 293-296; Gilbert, "Lost Ski Areas of the National Parks," *Skiing Heritage Journal*, January 2012, 31-32.

Both entities wanted to maintain the wilderness character of that area, then designated as the San Geronio Primitive Area and now protected as the San Geronio Wilderness. In 1949, the USFS, with Sierra Club backing, solicited bids from private developers for a ski resort in Mineral King, but due to the amount of money required to improve the area's access road, no bids were submitted at the time.<sup>207</sup>

However, the idea was not forgotten, and in the mid-1960s Disney revived the idea of a ski resort in Mineral King. The company secured an agreement from the state of California to use federal money to build the necessary access road, which would cut through the national park. In 1965, the USFS once again called for bids to develop a resort at Mineral King. Disney's bid won, and in January 1966 Disney and the USFS signed a three-year development contract for an all-season resort. Disney's original proposal was for a resort complex capable of accommodating 8,000 people. The plan included twenty-two ski lifts, golf courses, pools, large hotels, thirteen restaurants, multiple hotels, and parking for 3,600 cars. The NPS was not happy about the prospect of a new and improved state highway running across the national park but acquiesced to the project. The Sierra Club, on the other hand, was outraged by the proposal and officially filed a lawsuit against the proposed development on June 5, 1969. When the Sierra Club proposed Mineral King as a possible site for a ski area in 1949, it did not picture urbanization on this scale. As the industrial and urban scale of skiing grew, the Sierra Club, an early proponent of Alpine skiing in Yosemite, had come to view Alpine skiing in a very different and extractive light. No longer viewed by preservationists as a mere threat to an area's natural atmosphere, Alpine skiing came to be seen as an extractive threat to the ecology of the West.<sup>208</sup>

In their lawsuit, the Sierra Club sued the USFS and the NPS for allowing a development to proceed that would inflict irreparable environmental damage on Mineral King. In 1969, a federal court's injunction temporarily blocked the development, and the lawsuit eventually made its way to the

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207 Dilsaver and Tweed, *Challenge of the Big Trees*, 280-283; Sax, *Mountains Without Handrails*, 68-70.

208 Dilsaver and Tweed, *Challenge of the Big Trees*, 280-283, 298-302; Sax, *Mountains Without Handrails*, 68-70; Burr, *Ski Trails and Wildlife*, 162-171.



U.S. Supreme Court in 1972 as *Sierra Club v. Morton*. The court ruled against the Sierra Club because it did not prove that the development inflicted direct harm on the club. However, the court's ruling also encouraged the Sierra Club to modify their lawsuit to focus on an individual club member who lived or recreated in the area and would be directly harmed by the resort. Furthermore, the court's dissenting opinion issued by William O. Douglas opined that “those who have that intimate relation with the inanimate object to be injured, polluted, or otherwise despoiled are its legitimate spokesman...the voice of an inanimate object therefore should not be stilled.” Douglas encouraged the Sierra Club and other environmentalists to speak on behalf of the nation's trees, wildlife, rivers, mountains, etc. that could not speak for themselves but should also enjoy legal rights as members of an ecological community.<sup>209</sup>

The battle over Mineral King revealed widening rifts in the conservation and ski communities. Wilderness minded preservationists and backcountry skiers viewed the resort as an environmental threat while wise-use conservationists and downhill skiers saw the resort as a valuable addition to the southern California landscape. The Sierra Club quickly amended and refiled its lawsuit and the legal battle continued alongside a high profile public relations battle between Disney and the Sierra Club. David Brower acted as the most prominent voice of the Sierra Club and the anti-resort faction. Former NPS Director Horace Albright and former Sierra Club president and chairman of the NPS Advisory Committee on Winter Sports Bestor Robinson acted as prominent spokesmen for the pro-resort faction. Envisioning a long legal battle, Disney and the USFS began walking back the proposed scale of the resort, but the Sierra Club would not settle for compromise. It had made up its mind to fight any ski resort in Mineral King. To augment its legal and public relations campaigns, the Sierra Club worked on a political solution of incorporating Mineral King into Sequoia National Park. The NPS embraced this idea and Representative John Krebs of California introduced a bill to Congress to transfer Mineral King to the national park. As part of an Omnibus Parks Bill, the proposal made it through Congress and was

<sup>209</sup> David Beesley, *Crow's Range: An Environmental History of the Sierra Nevada* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2004), 192-193; Dilsaver and Tweed, *Challenge of the Big Trees*, 298-299; Burr, *Ski Trails and Wildlife*, 162-171.

signed into law by President Jimmy Carter on November 10, 1978. The bill specifically prohibited any Alpine skiing developments at Mineral King once it became part of Sequoia National Park.<sup>210</sup>

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### **Turbulent Longevity and Contested Removals**

The fact that a ski development had been averted by the proposed area's inclusion in a national park cast a spotlight on existing national park ski areas as highly questionable and hypocritical undertakings. By 1981, the NPS had issued a proclamation that specifically forbid the creation of any new ski areas in the parks, but improvement projects continued at existing ones. Critics increasingly questioned the adverse environmental effects of these improvements and the mere existence of these ski areas in the national parks. The National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA) of 1969 forced government development projects to undergo a thorough Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) process to study and minimize the environmental effects of major development projects. NEPA assured more transparency in government projects and opened up planning procedures to increased public input. Each EIS had to detail possible alternatives alongside its preferred alternative and be circulated for public review. Along with the actions of the Sierra Club, NEPA had helped slow down plans for Mineral King, bring them under increased public scrutiny, and supply the public a platform to comment on the project. This same process was also required in the creation of General Management Plans (GMPs) for the national parks. NEPA forced the NPS to open up their planning process to public scrutiny and input, and this extended to plans for park ski areas. Public meetings on GMPs gave citizens a platform to debate the issue of park ski areas and have their voices heard by the NPS. Both pro-ski area factions and anti-ski area factions took advantage of this beginning in the 1970s as park ski areas came under greater public scrutiny and environmental groups began lining up against them.<sup>211</sup>

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210 Dilsaver and Tweed, *Challenge of the Big Trees*, 298-303; Beesley, *Crow's Range*, 168, 203-205; Burr, *Ski Trails and Wildlife*, 162-171.

211 NPS, *Lassen Volcanic National Park California General Management Plan* (January 1981), 32; Flippen, *Nixon and the Environment*, 46-53; Dilsaver and Tweed, *Challenge of the Big Trees*, 288-289, 299; Dilsaver, *America's National Park*

The requirements of NEPA made the creation of GMPs for the parks arduous and drawn out processes. Major ski area improvements were slow in coming. At public meetings on Lassen's GMNP in 1974 at the northern California towns of Redding, Susanville, Mineral, and Red Bluff, citizens spoke out in favor of ski area improvement and expansion. Mission 66 had supplied NPS funds to build the Lassen Ski Chalet, revamp the entrance road and parking area, and build new comfort stations, but did nothing to increase skier capacity. Skiers complained that the facilities were not adequate for the crowds of people that came to Lassen. They complained of long lift lines, especially at the poma lift, and called for the addition of chairlifts. Anti-ski area voices were notably absent from the public meetings in 1974, but the number of people who thought it was time for the ski area to go was growing. By 1979, freshly charged and better organized off the victory over Mineral King, environmentalists had become much more vocal in subsequent discussions during the drawn out GMP process. As the exhaustive GMP process dragged on, ski area growth stagnated but the number of skiers rose dramatically at Lassen due to the destruction of the chairlift at Mt. Shasta Ski Bowl in February 1978 by an avalanche. With the elimination of lift-served skiing on Shasta, lift skiers flocked back to Lassen. In the winter of 1980-1981, 32,000 downhill skiers converged on Lassen. Meanwhile, the shoddily built ski chalet rapidly deteriorated, the sewage system turned into an environmental hazard, and the aging lifts suffered from a myriad of mechanical breakdowns.<sup>212</sup>

With the voices from both sides of the debate carefully considered, the finalized GMP came out in 1981. It took a middle road on expansion of the ski area and authorized the construction of Lassen's triple chair to replace the poma lift. The chairlift began operation in 1982 and provided 600 vertical feet of skiing compared to the poma's 450'. However, the 1981 GMP stated that "the long range objective of

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*System: The Critical Documents*, 3-4, 271.

212 NPS Transcripts, Public Meetings on Master Plan Options for Lassen Volcanic National Park at Redding, Susanville, Red Bluff, and Mineral, August 1974, Boggs Collection, Redding Public Library; John Crowe, "Ski plan goes to Washington," *Redding Record-Searchlight*, November 20, 1982, A1, A8; Krahe and Catton, *Little Gem of the Cascades*, 268-275.

the National Park Service will be the removal of the downhill ski facilities when comparable or better facilities are developed in the vicinity.” The NPS envisioned that this could take as long as 15-20 years. With the addition of the chairlift, skier attendance hit an all time high of 51,000 during the winter of 1984-1985. However, in December 1985, The Mt. Shasta Ski Park opened at a safer location on Mt. Shasta than where the avalanche ravaged Shasta Ski Bowl had been located. Shasta now offered northern California skiers two triple chairlifts with 1,100' and 750' vertical, and many skiers switched their skiing allegiance back to Shasta from Lassen. Drought in the late 1980s hurt business at the Lassen Ski Area further. The USFS allowed the Shasta Ski Park to use snowmaking machines, clear its runs of brush, and cover ski runs with a base of cedar bark, allowing them to “open with as little as 20 inches of snow.” The NPS did not allow the Lassen Ski Area these luxuries. In 1989, the operator of the Lassen Ski Area, John Koeberer, stated that “Lassen is in a unique situation because we need more snow to open because we operate on a national park.” With drought, competition, and preservationist backlash against the ski area, business plummeted to 17,000 skiers by 1990, and Koeberer decided he wanted out of the ski area business. The NPS decided not to offer the operation to another concessionaire, and the ski area closed for business in April 1993.<sup>213</sup>

In Rocky Mountain, a similar process of environmentalist backlash and unprofitability led to Hidden Valley's closure. The NPS had allowed a double chairlift to be built in 1972, which eliminated the need to plow the lower portion of Trail Ridge Road to shuttle skiers via buses to Upper Hidden Valley. The concessionaire also wanted to use the chairlift in summer for sightseeing purposes, but the NPS vetoed this idea. In 1976, the park's GMP advocated the long term phase out of the ski area. Considering the limitations imposed by the NPS and the long term decision to remove the ski area, the

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213 NPS, *Lassen Volcanic National Park California General Management Plan* (January 1981), 30-34; Huggins, *Skiing in the West*, 34; Enzel, *The White Book of Ski Areas*, 13, 15; Krahe and Catton, *Little Gem of the Cascades*, 281-282; Bill Miller, “Inspection results, snow lift spirits at ski resort,” *Redding Record-Searchlight*, November 29, 1985, A1, A8; “Skiing returns to Mt. Shasta,” *Redding Record-Searchlight*, December 16, 1985, A1, A10; Jeff Reid “Ski industry sliding downhill, looking for a lift with snow,” *Redding Record-Searchlight*, December 22, 1989, A1, A8.

Rocky Mountain Park Co. decided to liquidate its ski area assets. The NPS bought the ski area facilities for \$750,000, but it no longer wanted the chairlift. The concessionaire sold the chairlift to a ski area in Quebec, and it was removed in 1977. The NPS gave the concession contract to the Estes Park Recreation District (EPRD), which ran the ski area until its closure in 1992. The removal of the chairlift once again necessitated plowing and shuttling skiers who wanted to ski Upper Hidden Valley by bus. The convoluted lay out of Hidden Valley, its lack of a chairlift, and its high winds and low snowfall, compared to ski areas on the west side of the Continental Divide, drove many skiers elsewhere. From a high point of 44,000 skiers in 1986-1987, numbers had declined to 9,900 skiers by 1990-1991. The area operated at a loss of \$732,000 during its last six years, hemorrhaging both NPS and EPRD funds while sustaining rising criticism from environmentalists. The EPRD decided it could no longer run the ski area at a loss. Instead of awarding the concession to another bidder, the NPS took the opportunity to officially close the ski area in January 1992.<sup>214</sup>

No longer seen as mere affronts to park atmosphere and scenery, critics attacked ski areas as threats to park ecology. At Hidden Valley, the NPS allowed snow making operations that dated back to the 1950s. Water for snow making was taken from Hidden Valley Creek, home to the threatened greenback cutthroat trout, and this extractive use of park resources for a contested recreational use was used by environmentalists as one reason among many to eliminate the ski operation. Mechanical contraptions groomed and compacted the snow of park ski areas, annihilating subnivean space used by wildlife. Lassen's chairlift had threatened endangered peregrine falcons, and 130 trees had been cut down to build it. Trees, brush, stumps, and rocks were cleared from ski runs. Hidden Valley created an elaborate system of moving snow from one section of the ski area to another to make sure the runs remained skiable. In 1990, the Sierra Club urged Superintendent James Thompson to close Hidden

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214 Jackie Hutchins, "Park Service will dismantle ski area," *Estes Park Trail Gazette*, January 8, 1992, 1-2; Barth and Leggett, *Finding Hidden Valley*, 174-194; Lewis A. Hutchinson, "A Historical Review and Evaluation of the Hidden Valley Ski Area and Alternate Ski Locations," December 1991, Box: 5, Folder: 36; Superintendent James Thompson, Memo To All Employees on Hidden Valley Closure, January 24, 1992, Box: 1, Folder: 11, HVWSA, ROMO.

Valley instead of continuing “to cater to a limited constituency at the expense of a resource which belongs to every American.” In 1991, the National Parks and Conservation Association questioned the propriety of a ski area “which improperly catered to local interests at the cost of park impacts.” National environmental groups called on the NPS to stop degrading a resource that belonged to all Americans for the benefit of a limited local population. The regional ski areas of the national parks had firmly arrived on the national radar of environmental groups, which did not view the ski areas as benign and quaint throwbacks to an earlier era of skiing. Locals were more than welcome to ski in the parks, but they should do so without the luxury of lifts carrying them uphill.<sup>215</sup>

In Yellowstone, the beginning of the end for Undine Ski Hill was the furor caused by tree removal when the NPS decided to replace the rope tow with a poma lift in 1993. The installation of the poma lift included: erecting eight towers (“all painted dark brown”) with concrete bases dug into the hill; cutting down 30 trees; creating landings along the lift line using boardwalks and excavated soil; creating a new ski trail; and the use of heavy equipment rumbling over the hill to get all this done. The lack of an EIS for an operation of this scale outraged critics. According to the NPS, an EIS was not needed because the continuing existence of Undine Ski Hill had already been addressed in the approved Winter Use Plan of 1990 and its accompanying environmental assessment. The Winter Use Plan dealt with the ski area in one scant sentence: “The Undine Ski Hill will be maintained for community use, but it will not be expanded.” The NPS took the stance that the replacement of the rope tow with a poma lift was not an expansion but a “replacement in kind.” The NPS argued that as a “replacement in kind” the project enjoyed categorical exceptions to the EIS process required by NEPA. In an October 20, 1993 memo to Superintendent Robert Barbee, John Sacklin, the Supervisory Outdoor

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215 NPS, Report on Hidden Valley, December 20, 1991, Box 1, Folder 11; Joanne Carter, Letter to Wilderness Society Members, January 9, 1992, Box: 1, Folder: 9, HVWSA, ROMO; Krahe and Catton, *Little Gem of the Cascades*, 279-280; Barth and Leggett, *Finding Hidden Valley*, 122, 147, 208-210; Richard S. Eckert, Sierra Club letter to Superintendent Thompson, July 5, 1990; Terri Martin, National Parks and Conservation Association Letter to Superintendent Thompson, April 22, 1991, Box: 1, Folder: 9, HVWSA, ROMO.

Recreation Planner for the park, declared that the project “doesn't appear to be highly controversial.” This proved to be a major bureaucratic miscalculation.<sup>216</sup>

In the wake of the ski area closures in Sequoia, Rocky Mountain, and Lassen, the ill advised plan to replace Undine's rope tow with a poma lift brought the largely ignored ski area to the attention of national environmental groups. While scores of locals passionately defended the ski area and its long cultural legacy, critics attacked the ski area as existing solely for the benefit of NPS employees and other locals to the detriment of the park's environment. After his pleas to stop the project were rebuffed by Superintendent Barbee, Michael Scott of the Wilderness Society wrote to George Frampton, the Assistant Secretary for Fish, Wildlife, and Parks of the Department of the Interior. Scott stated that The Wilderness Society objected “strongly to this project” not only on the questionable grounds of the planning and review process but “because a downhill ski area should not exist in Yellowstone National Park. It is clearly inconsistent with the purpose of the park.” Critics argued that this was indeed an expansion and that the poma lift would generate increased use of the ski area and further tax park resources. Ski area supporters did not help their case, when, by trying to downplay the exclusive nature of club membership, they countered that club membership was open to anyone willing to pay the \$10 individual membership fee or \$25 family fee. Opponents quickly picked up on this and added too much inclusiveness to their litany of charges damning the ski area.<sup>217</sup>

Opposition to the project was not limited to national environmental groups. Members of the Mammoth/Gardiner community, including NPS employees, also objected to the operation. Among these voices was Andrew Mitchell, the Helitack Foreman of Yellowstone. In an open letter, Mitchell

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216 NPS, *Winter Use Plan Environmental Assessment for Yellowstone, Grand Teton, and John D. Rockefeller Memorial Parkway*, November 1990, 51, Google Books; John Sacklin, Categorical Exclusion: Installation of Poma Lift at Undine Ski Area, October 20, 1993, Box: A-403, File: Undine Ski Hill; Rick B. Smith, Email to Mike Finley, October 9, 1994, Box: A-367, File: MC, YNPA, GHRC.

217 Robert D. Barbee, Letter to Michael Scott, December 10, 1993, Box: N-365, File: Skiing; Michael Scott, Letter to George Frampton, January 5, 1994; NPS, Report on Undine Ski Hill, January, 19, 1994; Jeanne-Marie Souvigney to Bob Barbee, January 3, 1994; Terri Martin to Bob Barbee, January 6, 1994, Box: A-403, File: Undine Ski Hill; NPS, Special Use Permit, January 1, 1993, MSC006: YSA Records, Box: 2, Unnamed File, YNPA, GHRC; “Yellowstone Ski Area Draws Critics,” *The Spokesman Review*, December, 19, 1993.

suggested an alternative site for a community skiing operation in the Jardine area of the Gallatin National Forest, located a mere 5.5 miles above Gardiner. Mitchell lamented that “the community is indeed divided. I'm saddened that we in the Park Service seem to have lost sight of our very purpose, that we would consider our recreational desires ahead of our mission 'to preserve a vignette of primitive America.' All bureaucratic semantics aside, I find the replacement in kind argument to be a charade.” A rising tide of voices agreed with Mitchell's sentiment, and Superintendent Barbee was left in the middle of a house divided over the issue. In January 1994, Barbee halted the installation of the poma lift and put together a five person review panel “selected to represent different perspectives and expertise” to study the contentious issue. As the review panel went about its assigned task, Barbee left Yellowstone to become the Regional Director in Alaska. He handed off the Undine Ski Hill problem to Acting Superintendent Rick Smith, who presided over the park until Mike Finley arrived as Yellowstone's new superintendent at the end of 1994.<sup>218</sup>

Filling the temporary void as acting superintendent allowed Smith to approach the issue in a pragmatic fashion. On October 9, 1994, shortly before the review panel submitted their findings, Smith sent an email to Finley warning him of the contentious nature of the issue within the park community and suggested that “if we decide that the ski area's time is over, I strongly recommend that you let me make the decision, saving you the problems associated with closing it...they might not give me as much crap as they would you.” On the other hand, Smith wrote “if we decide to keep it open, then you should make the announcement. The people who want it closed are not as emotionally tied to the issue as those in favor of it, and though they will disagree, I don't think that they will be ready to mutiny over this issue. The other side might. Let them call for me to walk the plank, not you.” Shortly after Smith's email to Finley, the review panel submitted their report. Unable to come up with a definitive decision,

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218 Andrew Mitchell, “Some Thoughts from a Reluctant Crusader,” n.d.; Cynthia Young, Undine Ski Hill Review Panel Report, October 1994, Box: A-403, File: Undine Ski Hill; Rick B. Smith, Email to Mike Finley, October 9, 1994, Box: A-367, File: MC, YNPA, GHRC; “Lift Construction Suspended,” *High Country News*, January 24, 1994.



the panel recommended that an environmental assessment be done prior to a final decision. They also came to the conclusion that “the primary issues here are symbolic and not environmental.”<sup>219</sup>

Smith disagreed with the panel's recommendation for an environmental assessment but agreed with their statement about the primary issues being symbolic. The cultural institution of Undine Ski Hill had turned corrosive, and it was time for it to go. Smith issued a final ruling on November 1, 1994 “to close the area effective immediately.” He directed that all the structures and equipment related to the operation be removed from the site and for the park archivist to “collect and catalog what may be of historical significance.” He also mandated that the area should be rehabilitated and that all work on the site should be done by September 30, 1995. In making his decision, Smith reminded the human denizens of Yellowstone that they “live and work in an international fishbowl” and “we must not allow even the appearance of impropriety to undermine or compromise our ability to manage the park.” He declared that “it is necessary, therefore, to constantly reevaluate traditional practices in light of contemporary attitudes and standards” and his reevaluation of Undine Ski Hill led him to “conclude that what was acceptable in the 40s, when Undine first operated and Mammoth and Gardiner were far more isolated than they are today, no longer is.”<sup>220</sup>

During the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the hopes for Yellowstone that President Theodore Roosevelt expressed in Gardiner in 1903 had come to fruition. So did the vow uttered by the skiing ranger's encountered by Brooke Ricker on the slopes of Washburn in April 1940 “to have their own tow.” The roads were built, the people had come, and the rangers got their tow. Winter in Yellowstone was shared with the world, and the dreams for the future slowly morphed into the nagging problems of the present in the ongoing cultural/natural “fishbowl” of the world's first national park. In 1994, Yellowstone struggled with a host of controversial issues including the battle over snowmobiles, heated debates over NPS management of

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219 Rick B. Smith, Email to Mike Finley, October 9, 1994, Box: A-367, File: MC; Cynthia Young, Undine Ski Hill Review Panel Report, October 1994, Box: A-403, File: Undine Ski Hill, YNPA, GHRC.

220 Richard B. Smith, Administrative Review: Undine Ski Area, November 1, 1994, Box: A-403, File: Undine Ski Hill, YNPA, GHRC; “Yellowstone Puts Skids On Plan For Ski Area,” *Deseret News*, November, 4, 1994.

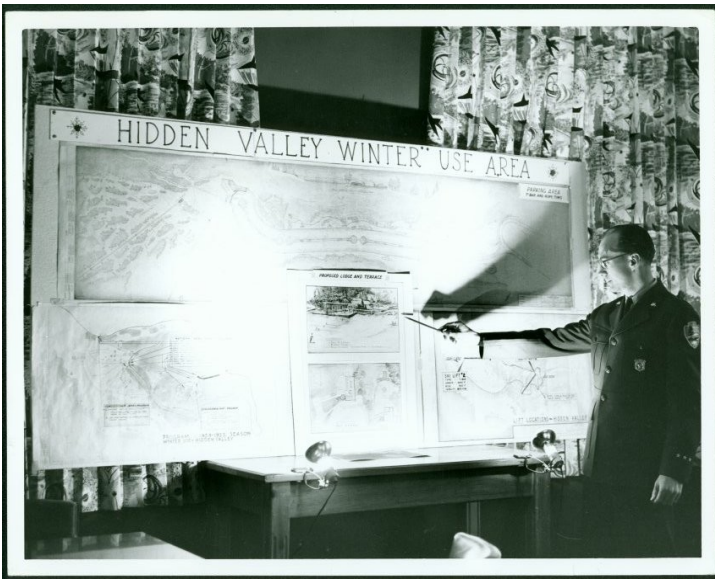
bison for brucellosis, and the looming reintroduction of wolves in January 1995. The NPS did not need a public battle over a ski lift at Undine to further erode its public standing in the West. The contested history of the national parks in the West is a never-ending project, and a portion of it lays hidden in plain sight behind a thin veil of trees across the road from Undine Falls.<sup>221</sup>



*1955. Skiers on rope tow at Big Drift, Upper Hidden Valley, Rocky Mountain National Park. Photo 2006.013.237, Estes Park Museum.*

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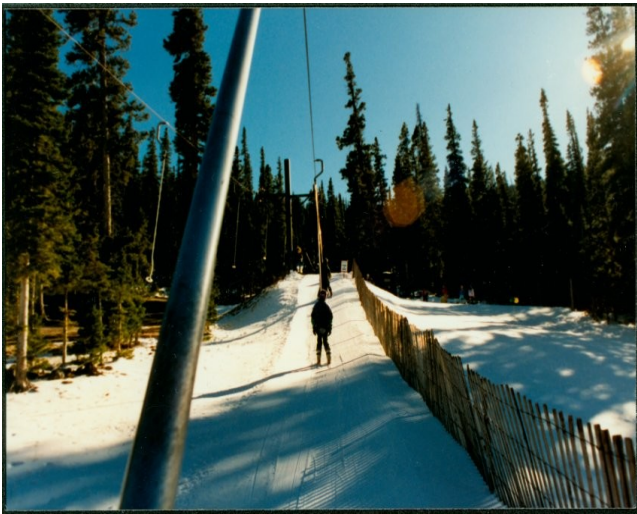
221 Whithorn, *Twice Told On The Upper Yellowstone, Volume One*, 19-23; Ricker, “Yellowstone Snow Safari,” 29.



Early 1950s. Mission 66 in action. NPS officials plan winter recreation at Hidden Valley.  
Photo 2006.013.241, Estes Park Museum.



Circa 1970s. Ski Lodge at Hidden Valley.  
Photo 2006.013.239, Estes Park Museum.



Skiers riding a poma lift at Ski Estes Park at Hidden Valley. No date. Photo 1995.037.012, Estes Park Museum.



1972. Construction of Hidden Valley chairlift.  
Photo 2006.013.243, Estes Park Museum.



Wolverton Ski Bowl  
Patch.  
[www.crescentbaycouncil.org](http://www.crescentbaycouncil.org)



April 2011. Emily Meyer skis at Undine Ski Hill, Yellowstone. Author's photo.



1965. Ski Lodge at Wolverton. Sequoia Ski Club Website.



Wolverton Ski Bowl Patch.  
[www.crescentbaycouncil.org](http://www.crescentbaycouncil.org)



*Undine Ski Hill, Yellowstone. Photographer unknown. No date. Yellowstone Online Photo Collection, NPS.*

## Epilogue: Artifact Landscape

Shrouded behind a veil of trees just off Yellowstone National Park's Northeast Entrance Road lies an artifact landscape. Its existence goes unnoticed by the vast majority of Yellowstone's millions of yearly visitors. The landscape sits directly across the road from a popular pullout promising scenic views of Undine Falls as it drops 60' over protruding ledges of volcanic rock through the canyon of Lava Creek. Named after mythological aquatic nymphs, Undine Falls shared its given name and its wide pullout with the artifact landscape in question for over fifty years.<sup>222</sup> On the opposite side of the road from the overlook, an unmarked path leads through the trees and quickly opens up into a meadow at the base of a 300-foot hill. It becomes immediately apparent that this hill has a cultural history to go along with its natural one. An old roadbed cuts across the hill and disappears into the woods, harkening back to earlier non-mechanized transportation networks. If explorers continue to roam, they will soon stumble across a large, green power box hidden among the trees at the hill's base. On top of the box sits a collection of artifacts, collected and placed as offerings to the past by earlier explorers. Random pieces of plastic, wire, metal, rubber, wood, and glass create a collage of human artifacts atop the box, which sits on a concrete foundation inscribed with the date "Nov. 9, 1993." This date marks the beginning of the end for fifty-three years of lift-served skiing in Yellowstone National Park. Inconspicuously tucked into the trees, the hidden monument serves as an ad hoc gravesite for Undine Ski Hill and the largely forgotten history of mechanized skiing in America's national parks.<sup>223</sup>

One can imagine the sense of excitement and expectation felt by the individual that inscribed the momentous date of "Nov. 9, 1993" into the wet cement. A new chapter in the history of Undine Ski Hill was about to begin as five decades of rope tow skiing would soon be upgraded to poma skiing

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222 Whittlesey, *Yellowstone Place Names*, 161. Geologist Arnold Hague named the falls in 1885. The correct pronunciation of the word is "UN deen." However, many Yellowstone locals pronounce the word as "Un dine." The falls seen from the overlook is the sixty foot upper Undine Falls. A lower falls lies hidden down canyon and drops fifty feet.

223 Observations gathered by the author on multiple field expeditions to the Undine Ski Hill site on foot and ski.

powered by the green box on the concrete slab. Little did the carver suspect that less than one year later lift skiing at Undine would be terminated for good when Richard Smith ordered the permanent closure of the operation on November 1, 1994. The hill never got its poma lift and with the rope tow already removed and the controversy intensifying, lift skiing did not take place at Undine during the winter of 1993-1994. Carving the date in the cement proved to be a prophetic memorial to the end of a lasting cultural institution and the beginning of the hill's latest phase of existence. After ordering the closure of the ski area, Smith directed the park archivist to “collect and catalog” historically significant objects and the park's landscape architects “to develop and implement a landscape plan to rehabilitate the area.” However, the power box remained in place, and if one spends time roaming and scanning the hill, other artifacts can be unearthed and added to the collection already resting on top of the box.<sup>224</sup>

Undine was the last ski area to be removed from an American national park. Two now survive. As the oldest operating lift-served ski area in the West, Badger Pass has been embraced as an integral and ongoing part of Yosemite's human history and cultural landscape. The historic lodge at Badger Pass, built in 1935, is undergoing a phased renovation by the NPS and its chosen Yosemite concessionaire, Delaware North. Snow permitting, as California suffers through historic drought, three double chairlifts, one triple chairlift, and a cable tow continue to operate at Badger Pass. At Hurricane Ridge, two rope tows and a poma lift pull duty as the only ski lifts on the Olympic Peninsula. Run by the Hurricane Ridge Winter Sports Club and the Hurricane Ridge Winter Sports Education Foundation, the operation dates back to the community driven days of do-it-yourself rope tow skiing. In Rocky Mountain and Lassen, the formerly lift-served landscapes exist as layered artifacts of the parks' human history. Modern visitor centers sit on the sites of the old ski lodges to welcome year-round visitors. In the winter, the artifact ski runs act as snow play areas for citizens to frolic, sled, snowboard, snowshoe,

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224 Richard B. Smith, Administrative Review: Undine Ski Area, November 1, 1994, Box: A-403, File: Undine Ski Hill, YNPA, GHRC.

and ski. Once exiting their vehicles, their winter fun proceeds under human power.<sup>225</sup>

Alpine skiing played a major role in transforming the economy of the West, and the ghost ski areas of American national parks are extensions of the process of creative destruction into the recreation and tourism economy. As skiing evolved into a large scale industry, the small ski areas that launched the industry were largely left behind as surface lifts and warming huts were replaced with high speed detachable quads, gondolas, condos, and apres ski glitz. The national parks played a fundamental role in laying the foundation for not only the tourist and recreation economy of the West but also for the region's ski industry. Even the small community ski hill at Undine created skiers that ultimately gravitated towards the corporate slopes of Big Sky, Red Lodge, and Whitefish. The national parks helped to prime the pump for spreading the popularity of Alpine skiing in the West. However, the ski industry soon outgrew most of the parks due to the limitations imposed by the NPS and shifted its attention to the less restrictive management policies of the USFS. The future of the large-scale federal subsidization of the ski industry lay in the national forests and not the national parks.<sup>226</sup>

Artifacts of creative destruction litter the vast landscapes of the American West. Abandoned homesteads slowly decay back into the Great Plains. Ghost towns stand in various stages of disrepair in the region's deserts and mountains as enduring testaments to the fickle boom and bust cycles of American capitalism. These artifact landscapes are not merely monuments to the West's past. They are also emblems of the present and harbingers of the future as the processes of creative destruction continue to unfold in places like the Bakken Oil Fields of western North Dakota and eastern Montana.

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225 Badger Ski Lodge Rehabilitation FONSI, accessed May 1, 2015, <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/document.cfm?parkID=347&projectID=23928&documentID=40413>; Badger Pass Ski Map, accessed May 1, 2015, <http://www.yosemitepark.com/Images/BadgerPassMap-clear.jpg>; Hurricane Ridge Ski and Snowboard Area, accessed May 1, 2015, [http://hurricaneridge.com/?page\\_id=2](http://hurricaneridge.com/?page_id=2).

226 For more on the concept of creative destruction, see Joseph Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy* 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition (New York, NY: Harper and Row, 1962); and Thomas J. Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996). For a study on layered landscapes and the often malleable histories of abandoned places, see the following study of the silver mining ghost town of Ashcroft, Colorado: Jon T. Coleman, *The Skeletal Shell Game: A History of a Colorado Ghost Town, 1880 – Present* (Master's Thesis, University of Colorado, 1997), Aspen Historical Society: Archive Aspen, accessed on November 1, 2014, <http://www.archiveaspen.org/documents/HistoryofColoradoGhostTown1880to1990searchable.pdf>.



Fueled by creative destruction, artifact landscapes layer on top of one another, and these landscapes are not limited to the activities of the traditional extractive industries. The “New West” that emerged in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, largely defined by an economic shift towards recreation and tourism, also produces layers of artifact landscapes precipitated by shifting economic and cultural trends. The remnants of ghost ski areas dot the Rockies, Sierras, Olympics, and Cascades, including the mountains of the national parks. Rather than being wilderness outposts immune to the forces of creative destruction, the national parks have often acted as engines for the process. The shifting social, cultural, and economic trends of the postwar West have left the vanished ski areas of the national parks as artifact landscapes slowly being subsumed back into reconstructed vestiges of “primitive America.”



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*Sacramento Daily Union*

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*Climb to Glory*. Directed by Warren Miller. Warren Miller Entertainment, 2013.

*Der heilige Berg (The Holy Mountain)*. Directed by Arnold Fanck. UFA, 1926. DVD. Kino Video, 2003.

*Downhill Montana: Early Day Skiing in The Treasure State and Yellowstone National Park*. Produced by Stan Cohen. Pictorial Histories – Sunrise Studios, 2011.

*Legends of American Skiing: 1849-1940*. Directed by Rick Moulton. VHS. Keystone Productions, 1982.

*Mountain Fighters*. Directed by B. Reaves Eason. Produced in cooperation with the U.S. Army. Warner Brothers, 1943.

*Ski America*. Directed by Sidney Shurcliffe. Sidney Shurcliffe Productions, 1938-1940. DVD. New England Ski Museum, 2010.

*Ski Down The Years*. Directed by John Jay. John Jay Productions, 1970. *Classic Ski Films DVD #3*. Topics Entertainment, 2006.

*Ski Flight: A Document of Skiing According to the Principles of Hannes Schneider*. Produced by Jerome Hill. Warner Brothers, 1937. *Classic Ski Films DVD #6*. Topics Entertainment, 2006.

*Ski Hidden Valley Estes Park: A Documentary*. Directed by Brian Brown. BrownCow Production, 2013.

*Ski Troop Attack*. Produced and directed by Roger Corman. 1960. DVD. Alpha Video, 2002.

*Sun Valley Serenade*. Directed by H. Bruce Humberstone. Twentieth Century Fox, 1941. VHS. Fox Video, 1991.

*Storm Over Mont Blanc*. Directed by Arnold Fanck. UFA, 1930. DVD. Kino Video, 2005.

*The Art of Skiing*. Directed by Jack Kinney. Starring Goofy. Disney, 1941.

*The Basic Principles of Skiing*. Directed by Otto Lang. U.S. Army Signal Corps, 1941. *Classic Ski Films DVD #5*. Topics Entertainment, 2006.

*The Best of John Jay*. Directed by John Jay. John Jay Productions, 1970. *Classic Ski Films DVD #4*. Topics Entertainment, 2006.

*The Heroes of Telemark*. Directed by Anthony Mann. Columbia Pictures, 1965. VHS. Columbia Tristar, 1996.

*Thin Ice*. Directed by Sidney Lanfield. Twentieth Century Fox, 1937. VHS. Fox Video, 1993.

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