

Story of the Quebec Ski Club

By F. W. Russell, Past President and Original Member

LONG before the birth of the Quebec Ski Club, the honour of introducing ski-ing into Quebec City belonged to Mr. Johnnie Schwartz, as he was familiarly called, who was the Norwegian Consul in Quebec at that time. The skis used then were about 10 to 12 feet in length, almost flat, with slightly turned up toe, wooden foot plate, leather toe cap, and usually a lamp wick for binding. They were taken off as the bottom of the hill was reached and laboriously carried back to the top, and unless the skier pointed his skis in the right direction there was no attempting to change their course once they had started down, and which naturally did not give the skier the same pleasure or control as today.

Anybody seen carrying these long contrivances along the city streets were dubbed "cranks or crazy people," but it is interesting to think how many crazy people were in the making in those early days of ski-ing.

Skipping several years and bringing our story up to the last decade and to the formation of the Quebec Ski Club, there lived in Quebec City, Mr. Ernie L. Wilson, accountant of The Quebec Bank (1906) ardent skier and jumper, and to he, the writer, and several others should be given the honour of starting the Quebec Ski Club.

The first meeting was held at the Chateau Frontenac in 1907, some eight ski enthusiasts being present: E. L. Wilson, C. Lynch, H. L. Staveley, P. Turcot, E. A. Judin, William Thoburn, H. S. Scott and F. W. Russell. Officers were subsequently elected with Mr. E. L. Wilson, as President, he directing the newly formed club during the first period of its existence.

Our week-end meetings were more in the nature of exploration trips than actual down-hill ski-ing, with an occasional out of town trip to Boischatel, and as all present had such enjoyable times, more members joined our organization at an annual fee of fifty cents which also entitled the member to a club badge.

From then on ski-ing in general took a firm hold on Quebecers, and our membership rapidly increased, and to meet our mounting expenses we increased our annual dues to \$1.00.

Sandy Bank Hill, The Glacis, Cove Fields, Targets, Gilmour's Hill, and Sillery Hill were the favourite ski grounds in those days, and as a great treat, Boischatel on the week-end. No thought was then given to the need of a clubhouse; all we wanted was to get out on the bright sunny days and slide down every hill

and slope we could possibly find; a frozen sandwich or two all that was required for our frugal lunches.

Our first jump was a snow one erected in rear of the old Ross Rifle Factory on the Cove Fields facing the Targets. Thirty feet was deemed to be a very long jump which only the dare-devils of ski-ing could negotiate, no attention paid to style, the main thing being to land in an upright position and then go at it again.

Our second jump, constructed with a wooden chute, faced Wolfe's Cove in rear of the Ross Rifle Factory, the take-off being of packed snow, but as firewood was scarce in Quebec that year our chute gradually dwindled away piece by piece. Not being disheartened by this we erected a wooden chute and take-off the following year and it remained in our possession for several seasons and our jumpers soon were able to out-jump our hill of 55 feet. The next winter a chute and take-off were erected at Sandy Bank, and from then on jumping took a firm hold on our younger members.

Later, our membership, composed entirely of men and boys, started to dwindle, and as the fair sex appeared to be the attraction on club nights and tournaments, a ladies branch of the club was formed, and from that day our membership list grew rapidly until we reached the high level of 490 members. With a membership of this size suitable club quarters had to be obtained and we were fortunate indeed to receive permission from the Army & Navy Veterans in Canada, Unit No. 33, Quebec, to use their attractive quarters as our first real clubhouse, and that season turned out to be one of the best and most enjoyable the club had yet experienced.

As the social side of the club increased we decided to move our headquarters and were fortunate to secure the Chateauvert residence on St. Foye Road, quite close to our jumping hill at Sandy Bank.

Meetings were held every Tuesday and Friday nights, Saturday afternoons and week-ends, Mrs. Russell and myself undertaking to put the kiddies of those days through their paces in the art of ski-ing. We usually ended up at the clubhouse where a cup of hot chocolate and the famous club doughnuts completed the outing for the day.

During our years of progress a part of our annual dues were set aside for possible club expenditures with the result that a large silver cup was purchased by the club, named our

"Annual Jumping Competition Cup," which was won several times by the late Allan Bisset, and also by Cliff Fletcher.

The late Albert E. Seifert was another good friend of our club, donating the large silver plaque for cross-country racing for men; also, a few days before his fatal illness, he presented the handsome silver shield for annual competition for the best all-round lady skier of the club.

A silver shield was presented by the then presiding president for annual competition and hopes are entertained that he may be able to present this shield in person to the lucky winner of the best all-round man skier of 1936.

Mr. Esmond Leonard and Mr. Gordon Petry donated the large canvas on which was painted attractively in our club colours, grey and maroon, the words "The Quebec Ski Club, Inc." which was used to designate our special car on all our out of town trips.

Out of a membership of 33, in 1913, some 16 answered the call of King and Country, two of whom made the Extreme Sacrifice, Garnet W. Lemesurier and Percy Stuart. During the war all ski-ing activities naturally stopped but Cliff J. Fletcher on his return from France in 1919 endeavoured to rejuvenate the old club into renewing its activities.

Our present crest was designed by Miss M. Guilbault and Mr. Charles Lynch, both ardent skiers intensely interested in our welfare.

Our club was honored in 1920 by being one of the original incorporators of The Canadian Amateur Ski Association.

Amongst those taking an important part in the early history of our club, many of whom have gone down their "Last Ski Trail," were: E. L. Wilson, C. Lynch, H. S. Scott, H. L. Staveley, Percy Turcot, G. Denison, G. Langmyre, Percy Stuart, Garnet Lemesurier, Charles Vashesha, Nels Neilson, A. E. Seifert, Tor Gloersen, F. A. Judin, W. A. Thoburn, J. W. Gillespie, Doc Gale, Allan and Frank Bisset, A. M. Hunter (Peanuts), W. J. Campeau, Yves Tessier, Gaston Beaupre, Rene LaRue, B. Myler, W. A. Goodday, C. J. Fletcher, D. O'Gallagher, H. G. Clair, Wilfrid Legare ("Bigchiefnohaironthehead"); while among the ladies were: Misses Tessier, Myler, Levie, Swindell, Walsh, Byrne, Quart, James and a host of others. To them all may be attributed the success of our club to the present day.

In closing this brief record of our earlier days, I may have inadvertently omitted the names of members who played an important part in the history of our club. If so, I ask their forgiveness.

New Ski Runs at Lake Placid

TWO NEW downhill ski runs are now in process of construction—one from the peak of Mount Marcy, the highest mountain in New York State, 5,344 feet above the level of the sea, down to Adirondack Lodge; and the other on Mount Van Hoevenberg, famous as the site of the Olympic bobsled run.

Following generally the old foot trail, the new Mount Marcy development will take the ski-runners down a total descent of 3,189 feet, a distance of six and one-half miles to Adirondack Lodge, passing such well-known landmarks as Plateau Camp, Indian Falls, and Marcy Dam.

Every skier, from novice to expert, will here find something to his liking, with the added attraction of the gorgeous view from the summit of Mount Marcy, called by the Indians "Tahawus, the Cloud Cleaver." The first 544 feet of the run are above the timber line.

Winter's snows linger long on the mighty slopes of Marcy, so that ski-ing here may be enjoyed well into the spring, even when flowers have started to peep through the moss in the lower valleys

Work is also started on the new Mount Van-

Hoevenberg downhill run, which winds along the northeastern slope of the mountain following closely in its turns the Olympic bob-run adjoining it on the west. It is nearly a mile from the start of the run at the top of the mountain to the finish at the bob clubhouse.

The course will be approximately 15 feet wide on the straightaways, widening out to 70 feet maximum on some of the great curves. Classed as an intermediate or expert run, the new trail will contain several 20 per cent grades; plenty of thrilling action for the most experienced skier.

Here it will be all "slide," as Conservation Department trucks will take the skiers to the top of the mountain at a nominal charge.

For racing, a Lobner electric timing device will be installed, which will record times of contestants in hundredths of a second.

Experts say that the new development on Mount VanHoevenberg will be one of the finest downhill ski runs in the Northeastern United States. It will take its place with the five other excellent downhill runs at Lake Placid and will make up a part of the 250 miles of ski trails which radiate from this resort in all directions.