



View from Foot of Nursery Slope Showing Top of Mount McKay, Fort William Ski Club

## *Where the 1939 C.A.S.A. Championships will be Held*

By ELIZABETH PATTERSON

ON A beautiful Saturday in September there arrived in Fort William, Mr. Alfred Lindley, noted mountaineer and skier of Minneapolis, and his wife, Grace Carter Lindley, Ladies' Dominion Champion Skier, formerly of Seattle. They came on invitation to inspect the Fort William Ski Club's preparations for the Dominion Ski Meet in 1939. They arrived during the afternoon while enthusiastic members, along with some paid help, were removing rocks, cutting down trees and otherwise hurrying up work that might have taken years to do had it not been for this Meet.

Their inspection of the new downhill was most complimentary and they cautioned the members not to make the competition too easy but to leave plenty of bumps and turns to test the skier's ability. To novices like ourselves a drop of 1,005 feet in a distance of 4,700 feet at places, looks suicidal, but to experts this probably is child's play, compared to the Kandahar-Arlberg, and other noted downhill courses.

On climbing to the top of Mount McKay the visitors exclaimed "What a gorgeous view." Away below stretched the Kaministiquia River, meaning "Three Rivers" or "The river with three mouths"; in the distance the city of Port Arthur backed by smoky hills; out on Lake

Superior the Sleeping Giant of Thunder Cape lying on his back with his arms folded, where he has been thousands of years waiting for Nanna Bijou, his wife, who left him owing to his rough treatment. Then farther out still, Isle Royale, United States territory. Right below us the famed elevators holding an Empire's grain and ships busy loading for Eastern Ports.

Mount McKay and land surrounding is the property of the Indians. We tried to buy this land to build a scenic road up to the first ledge and the price asked by the Indian Band, in all seriousness, was one million dollars. They built the road themselves, putting in a toll gate, and this road toll gate and 2,800 acres is now controlled by the Ski Club. All clearing and policing is done by members of the Band who co-operate fully with the Club. Indians on snowshoes pack the trails for long distance races, and when banks form on turns, shovel and stamp them flat.

While some ski-ing was done in the district during the years from 1905 to 1913, a suitable hill was not found and the Club was abandoned. It was not, therefore, until 1929 that a revival of interest in ski-ing was felt in the district. On March 3 of that year a Ski Meet was held at the Prison Farm, and it is still fresh in the minds of many members today, the wonderful

turnout of spectators and the many spills by the contestants that day in the soft snow. The first prize went to the fellow who made the most graceful fall, as not a single contestant made a standing jump. That day was the real starting point of the Fort William Ski Club. Enthusiasm ran high amongst the public and later, when the hill and clubhouse at Hawkes Farm was prepared and put in shape by our members, we felt assured that ski-ing as a sport was firmly established.

In 1932-1933 the Club started clearing a hill for jumping on Mount McKay, where the present Ski Club is located. Many obstacles were encountered, but with the help of enthusiastic members, who placed both physical and financial energy behind the project, the Ski Club was able to hold the District Championship Ski Meet on their new hill the same winter. From that time the Club has progressed rapidly, both in the matter of clubhouse, trails and slopes, membership increase and general enthusiasm, reaching this year the peak of achievement, the Dominion Ski Championships.

Hills that thrill—trails that tax the skill of the most expert and enthusiastic skiers, winding downward for 1,600 feet from the summit of snow-capped Mount McKay—these form the playground of the Fort William Ski Club. No

club in Canada has been more generously endowed by nature with every requisite for ski-ing.

The prime factor for good ski-ing is snow—and we do have that in great quantity and just about everything else that goes to make perfect ski-ing. According to experts, our snow conditions are perfect, icy slopes and piercing winds being unknown to this region. If this year's rainfall is any indication, there is bound to be snow enough for the most ardent skier.

To date all cleared slopes face north, but on the Club property are three mountain peaks—Mount McKay, Minen (Blueberry Mountain), Anninotika (Maple Tree)—also a number of smaller elevations; all a continuation of the Laurentians, so that ski-ing on all points of the compass will be available in the near future.

The major slope, or nursery, has been increased this year to almost double the proportions of last year. There is no flat land, the slope having a forty degree angle at the top and graduating down to ten degrees. A new downhill has been cut from the very peak of Mount McKay, which is to be used as the Championship Downhill Run at the Dominion Championships, one of the most diversified runs in Western Canada, descending 1,005 feet in a length of 4,700 feet.

The clubhouse, situated at the base of the nursery slope, is easily accessible from the highway, about three-quarters of a mile from the street car line. From this vantage point both senior and intermediate jumps, as well as nursery slopes, are in full view. At the present time work is being done on a new jumping hill, which, when completed, will vie with any ski hill in Canada, distances of 200 feet and over being possible.

Back of the major hill, Mount McKay, are thirty odd miles of beautiful ski trails on which at convenient distances are small ski huts or "skuts," as the local skiers call them, privately-owned, but always open to the wandering skier.

Close proximity to the city makes electricity available during the entire ski-ing season—and with over one hundred 60-watt lights on the clubhouse slopes, both climbing and running are better at night than in the daylight.

Most important of our new developments is our ski-tow, and as far as is known the only electric ski-tow in Canada, and this winter it will be the only ski-tow in Canada in operation west of the Laurentians. Grasping the rope, the skier is pulled up over 400 feet, finding himself on an open gradual slope which can be taken as slowly or as quickly as desired. The great beauty of all this is its convenience, but ten minutes by motor from the heart of the city.

While competition is always keen in District Meets, last year was the first time local skiers entered the Dominion Championships, and they acquitted themselves with high honours, paving the way for future meets.

View from Take-Off Platform, Senior Jump, Fort William Ski Club

