

We've Come a Long Way From First Ski 'Resort'

LOOKING
EM OVER
by Jim Doherty



Petoskeyites, who discovered having fun in the snow in the 1920's, were also pioneers in the operation of ski resorts.

In fact the forerunner of today's plush ski operations here was started in the 1930's on a farm a couple miles east of Petoskey.

Several people jogged my memory on this after I wrote a column last week telling how folks entertained themselves in winter here years ago.

The Petoskey Ski Club sometime in the late 1930's leased land

from the late Julius Fettig for ski jumping and skiing. The rope tow was powered by a Model A car sitting on top of a hill and it was operated by Ray Fettig Sr. The car was "partially" housed.

Ray recalls that Chim and Fritz Curtis and Lou Hankey were active leaders in the ski club and while the jump didn't get the use the slopes did, it was an attraction for years.

The city plowed the drive to the Fettig farm so skiers could get in. The "snowtrains" were met by horse and sleigh and skiers were taken out to the farm. And they warmed up in the Fettig house and were served lunches, but this got to be a bit too much.

So the ski club had a small building hauled in which was placed at the base of the main hill and skiers could use it for warming up and getting lunch. Josephine Fettig, who had served lunches from the home, then served them in the building.

In either 1939 or 1940 the University of Michigan's great All America star Tom Harmon crowned the Michigan Winter Queen here and, a number of people recalled, skied on the farm slopes.

We were also told that the ski jump at the farm finally became unsafe but was still an attraction to youngsters who wanted to climb it or try it so it was razed for safety. At the back of Petoskey Winter Sports Park there was a big jump on "Suicide Hill", now also gone, where jumpers from many cities came each winter for competition.

Folks also used to ski behind cars and this could be quite a thrill, even with 1930 speeds.

From this small beginning, skiing has evolved in this area to a big winter business with many employees. The fancy lounges, swimming pools, plush dining areas and all the rest came much later. As did \$10 and \$12 lift tickets. Nobody this morning could remember the daily fee for using the one-car powered rope tow, but they didn't think it amounted to much. But in those Depression Days it didn't take much for it to amount to something and skiing wasn't for everyone even then.

The early slopes would probably today be declared "bunny slopes" or perfect for cross country skiers, but it was the best available at that time. And certainly better than anything most anywhere else you could reach by train and sleigh in the winter.

Skiers bundled up in bulky wool. The skis were long, there were no \$200 boots to wear or safety bindings unless you called a leather strap and a heel locked on with a cut innertube a safety binding.

Certainly nobody in the 1930's visualized skiing as it is here today, but it was fun—then as now.

Reviewing The News

50 YEARS AGO

Realizing that the airplane is soon to become one of the big factors in traveling, the Emmet County Board of Supervisors set in motion what they hope will be the machinery that will give the county at least one first class airport.

The motion was adopted unanimously and a committee set up to secure co-operation of local cities and organizations.

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Benjamin Purnell goes back today to the House of David, where for 22 years he was king.

In a pine casket, attended only by Frank Wyland, his former bodyguard, the "king's" body will be removed without ceremony at 5 p.m. to the east wing of the Diamond house. There it was to rest until a mammoth mausoleum has been prepared to receive it and become a shrine for his religious followers.

regulars, 32-8. In the second game which some fans considered Petoskey lucky to win 16 to 13 from Cadillac.

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About four inches of heavy, wet snow fell this forenoon in Petoskey, completely covering up the dirty bottom snow left on the ground after a long thaw.

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25 YEARS AGO

Three all-time Petoskey power records tumbled, the latest report of the city utilities revealed.

Consumption for 1952 hit 10,793,900 kwh, December's total was 1,031,200 kwh and on Dec. 22 the city hit a new hourly peak load of 2,800 kwh. The new yearly output record is 478,500 above last year.

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Petoskey Post Office receipts for 1952 were \$9,359.34 higher than 1951, it was revealed today, with the rate increase