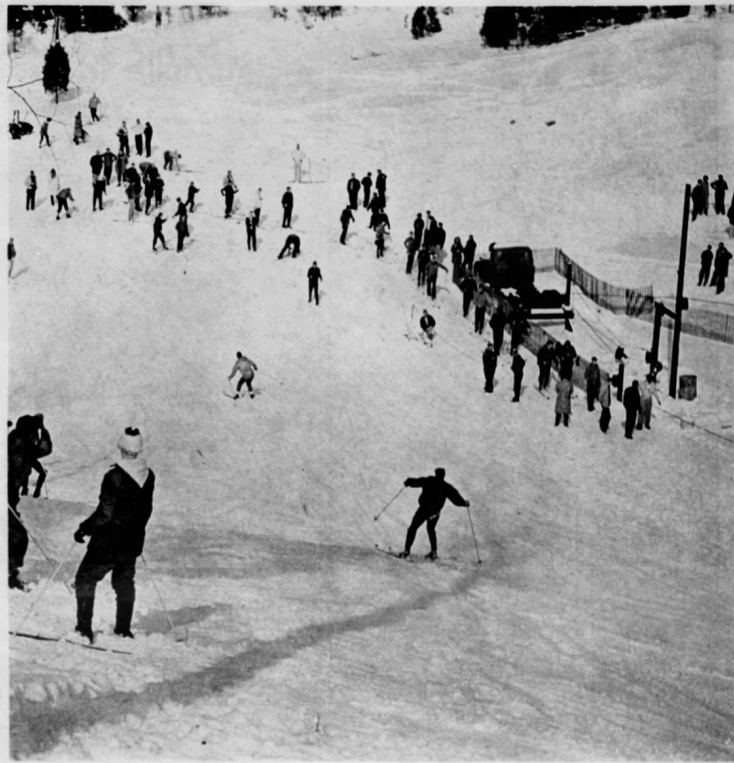


Skier catches onto towrope for ride to top of the intermediate slope. The tow is powered by a large truck.



Group of young people lace their ski boots in trailer which serves as rental office and shelter. Owners have 60 rental outfits, hope to have 100 by next season.



Panoramic view from top of intermediate slope shows skiers spread over the course and spectators watching the wintry action from clearing below. Owners cleared the area of tons of underbrush and some 1500 trees so slope would be ready for skiing this season.

By RICHARD G. GRAY of the PICTURES Staff

ST. LOUIS SKI ENTHUSIASTS no longer need journey to the massive snow fields of Colorado, the white hills of Vermont or the frosty slopes of northern Wisconsin for winter outings. As of this year, they have a ski area right in their own backyard, five miles south of Pacific on Missouri Highway F in the Ozark foothills. Hidden Valley is Missouri's first and only ski resort.

The idea for the ski area originated with a group of local sportsmen who wanted to get in more skiing than expensive and time-consuming trips to Sun Valley and Aspen allow. As a result, the group leased 25 acres from a farmer, cleared a 1000-foot-long intermediate slope and installed a tow to carry skiers up a 275-foot-high course.

Additional facilities include a large practice area for beginners, an outdoor fireplace for get-togethers and a large trailer where ski equipment is rented and coffee and doughnuts are sold. The ski area opened with the first snowfall and will be open from 10 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. on

weekends whenever there is sufficient snow.

Next year, the owners say, they hope to install machinery which will produce snow when the temperature drops below 27 degrees. There also are plans for an 800-foot-long slalom course, a 250-foot-long beginners' slope and a chalet for after-skiing sings and relaxation.

St. Louis skiers are among some 3,500,000 Americans who have taken up the sport. Although a ski club was organized in Minneapolis as early as 1881, skiing did not become popular in this country until after the Winter Olympics were held at Lake Placid in 1932. Since then the number of American skiers has snowballed until today newcomers are taking up the sport at the rate of about 200,000 a year. Americans now spend in excess of \$50,000,000 annually on stretch pants, parkas, skis and other equipment. The sport is an ancient art, first practiced by wandering prehistoric Scandinavians. Archeologists have turned up a Swedish ski dating to 2000 B.C.

Photos by ARTHUR WITMAN of the PICTURES Staff



Skier throws up spray of snow as he heads for spill. While nominal fees are charged for use of facilities owners intend to use all profits for improvements.