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Chicago Banker Backs 'Little Switzerland'

Start Big Ski Resort At Savanna

By STAFF WRITER

SAVANNA, Ill. — A Chicago banker's vision of establishing a ski resort along the Mississippi River near here is fast coming into focus.

Already two ski runs of 2,400 feet and 600 feet have been hacked out of the forest, and Ted R. Haller, vice president in charge of business development for the Northwest National Bank of Chicago, sees within three to five years a ski area which would rival anything in the Midwest.

Haller's perspective even encompasses development eventually of a "Little Switzerland" surrounding the steeply-slanting hills around his resort here.

He is now remodeling the house which came with the purchase of property along the lines of a Swiss chateau.

Haller has in mind construction of a lodge, complete with swimming pool at some time, a la Sun Valley.

Two Rope Tows

But of more immediate importance to ski enthusiasts is that Haller intends to have two rope tows operating by next year.

"If they want to ski there this year they'll have to walk up the hill," Haller said. "Actually, walking will get them in good condition for mountain skiing; but people won't walk anymore," he explained.

The Chicago banker, who has been skiing for 20 years from the Australian Alps to Aspen, Colo., also plans to purchase a snow-making machine by next year.

"This way, you'll be able to ski from Thanksgiving to spring; all you need is 32 degree temperatures. And in checking the temperature from the top of the hill and

the flat, I've found that it varies as much as 10 degrees at times," he added.

Near Palisades

Located about four miles north of here, the resort is not far from the Palisades State Park whose bluffs tower above the Mississippi.

Haller, 50, also plans to clear out a huge natural bowl which he says "would be ideal for skiing."

He took possession of the property last spring after searching for five years.

Haller, who was raised in Cedar Rapids, said it was while on a trip back from Sun Valley that he passed this way to visit in his home town.

"Going through Savanna, I was impressed by the beauty of the place and the fact that it would make an ideal spot for skiing."

He purchased the Savanna site without even looking at the house which went with it.

He has led most of the work involved in clearing out the area for ski runs, journeying down each weekend from Chicago.

"On one weekend I lost 10 pounds," he said.

A bachelor, Haller said he would eventually like to have a chair lift and possibly even a ski jump at the resort.

"There has been a lot of curiosity about the place among local people, and I've received considerable response from Chicago people interested in a local resort," he noted.

"I think the resort would bring in a crowd (there are rail connections to Chicago) which would spend money freely in the area. If people coming in would build here, possibly similar to the Swiss chateau style, we would really have something. The area is ideal for ice-boating, too," he pointed out.

"A Lot Of Fun"

The only time Haller displayed the banker's traditional conversatism was when asked for an accounting of how much he has invested so far. But it wasn't because he was reluctant to tell; he just doesn't know.

"I haven't seen any figures yet, I know it's a lot, but I've been in the business long enough to know that you have to spend money to make it. And aside from that, it's just been a lot of fun for me," he added.

Thirty members of the Jefferson Park Lions' Club were guests today of Haller at the resort, and he has been conducting guided tours as well as skiing every weekend at the site since the first snowfall.