



# SNOW TRAIL

*Preserving Maine's Skiing Heritage* • ❄️ Spring 2014

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## Pioneer women ski jumpers in Maine

By Scott Andrews  
Editor, *Snow Trail*

When women's ski jumping debuted in the recent Olympic Winter Games, the news media focused much attention on this historic occasion.

Media fascination with women jumpers is nothing new in our state. High-flying female skiers have been darlings of the press since the dawn of Maine ski competition in the 1920s and 1930s.

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*A star attraction of the 1924 Portland Winter Carnival was Margaret Towne, a teenager who wowed crowds of thousands in exhibition jumps. (Portland Evening Express glass plate collection of the Maine Historical Society)*

## From the president...

Leo Tolstoy, the famed Russian novelist, wrote that there are only two stories: “A man goes on a journey or a stranger comes to town.”

I have been on the boards of the International Skiing History Association, U.S. National Ski Hall of Fame plus I was the president of the New England Ski Museum for 10 years. I have seen what works for them and where they struggle. Each of them does a good job within their area. They each work to tell their story about skiing. For each of them the story, their focus, is different.

The story that we have -- that the Ski Museum of Maine is telling -- is in some ways the best story of them all. Maine has deep roots in the sport. We had some of the earliest skiers in the country, some of the earliest and best ski equipment makers and, some of the best racers. Those traditions are carried through to today with ski makers such as Lucid, Volition and Yeti and with the success of Seth Wescott.

The story the Ski Museum of Maine tells is about a journey. We are journeying back in time. We are looking to understand the roots of our sport and to preserve those roots. We are looking to answer the question of why we ski and in doing so add the passion of the sports pioneers to our own enjoyment of the ski sport.

Maine’s story is so strong because it is on the national stage and at the same time has such a strong local flavor. In their heyday Maine companies like Paris Manufacturing, Bass Boots and others were the best the country had.

Yet at the same time, the Maine story is local. It is small towns working together. It is ski clubs promoting skiing and founding major ski resorts. It is people, like Amos Winter, Russ Haggett and Les Otten sharing their visions with all of us.

Helping support our great story is the wonderful collection the Ski Museum of Maine is building, focused around our Made In Maine collection. While the equipment is local, Maine made, the impact is once again, on the national stage.

When I look at how the other ski history organizations operate and then at how we operate I am very proud of what we do. Unless you visit the Museum and have Bruce Miles give you a behind

the scenes tour you do not see the effort we make for proper archival storage and record keeping or the work on tracking down leads that add to the historical record.



*Glenn Parkinson, President*

As a member and supporter of the Ski Museum of Maine what you do see regularly is this journal, *Snow Trail*. You have watched it expand and the stories it tells improve and grow.

This next year is crucial for the Ski Museum of Maine. The journey we are on, the story we want to share with you and to preserve for future generations is getting more complex. A bigger collection, new software and a bigger, more robust, statewide presence are important and part of our future.

We need to grow our membership. This does two things for us, it allows us to tell our story to a wider audience and, to be blunt, it gives us a stronger financial base. You understand how that works. Over the next year you will see a variety of ways that you can help us with this. Your direct financial support and your help with growing our membership is appreciated.

You have been reading my thoughts for a while now so you know I like historical quotations. In 1937 Max Wheildon introduced skiing in Maine to the rest of the country through an article in the *American Ski Annual*. He wrote about a series of ski trips or “hikes” that Portland skiers made in the mid-1920s. Max wrote, “The hikes had all the characteristics and charm of the sport and created an atmosphere of good comradeship which has never lessened.”

Max was right; nearly 80 years later the charm of the sport and good comradeship are still big parts of why we ski, they are key components of our journey

Glen Parkinson  
President, Ski Museum of Maine

## Pioneer Women, continued from page 1

Ski competition in Maine began in the 1920s, when cross-country races and jumping contests were the key attractions of the white wave of winter carnivals that swept across the state. Although women were mostly excluded from official contests, a handful of pioneering females jumped as forerunners, exhibitions and novelties.

This article briefly looks at a handful of women ski jumpers in three historical contexts during the heyday of the winter carnivals: Portland-Augusta in the 1920s, Aroostook County in 1936 and Andover-Rumford in 1938.

**1. The first city-wide** winter carnivals were in Portland and Augusta in 1922, 1923 and 1924. Here's an excerpt from a *Portland Evening Express* report of ski jumping at the 1923 winter carnival:

"There were spills that caused many a gasp from the great crowd but always the victims of the apparent disaster calmly arose and brushed the snow from himself or herself (for there were two feminine daredevils, you know) and climbed the embankment to essay the feat again. There were leaps that rivaled the soaring of birds for grace and jumps that seemed prodigious to the layman but all were done with such skill and daring as to command the respect and applause of the throngs of spectators. Miss Antoinette Low, the youthful local jumper who essayed in vain to make the jump last year, accomplished the feat on her first attempt yesterday and was warmly applauded while the 15 year old miss from Berlin, N.H., Miss Margaret Towne, also received great applause when she in turn completed the jump and descent without a spill."

In its reports from the prior year (1922), the *Portland Evening Express* identified Miss Low as a 10-year-old recent immigrant from Norway.

The "dainty Miss Towne," quoting the *Kennebec Journal*, was one of a contingent of jumpers from the Nansen Ski Club of Berlin, New Hampshire, who competed in other Maine carnivals. Evelyn Olson, another Nansen girl, also jumped in Augusta.

**2. In Aroostook County**, the *Fort Fairfield Record* was smitten with Clare Lockhart, a local high school sophomore who was the only female jumper in that town's 1936 winter carnival.

The *Record* ran a front-page photo article on January 15, partially reproduced here, touting

## Only Female Jumper



*Clare Lockhart was a high school sophomore in 1936, when the Fort Fairfield Record ran a front-page photo and short article about her athletic prowess. Female ski jumpers, few and far between, were novelties who were always newsworthy in the years before World War II. (Reproduction courtesy of the Fort Fairfield Public Library)*

Lockhart's many athletic accomplishments, both summer and winter.

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# Preserving Maine's Skiing Heritage

*A look at past accomplishments and with your help, vision for the future*

In 1995, three Sugarloaf Ski Club members -- Don Hayes, Greg Foster and Don Fletcher -- founded the Ski Museum of Maine. Their hope was to create an organization that would document and preserve Maine's rich contribution to the sport they loved. Since then the Ski Museum of Maine has grown substantially. We have progressed from just a vision on paper to a full-fledged facility filled with many artifacts on display.

Our supporting membership base has grown to over 500 past and present members. The board of directors has grown to its present size of 17 and represents many different areas of the state. Short biographies of board members can be found on our website.

With your help, the accomplishments of the Museum and its board have been many. Let's look at some highlights:

The Maine Ski Hall of Fame has honored 98 people since it was founded in 2003, spearheaded by board member Dave Irons. These 98 inductees have brought distinction to Maine skiing and their stories comprise a large part of Maine's skiing heritage.

The Fireside Chats have been given approximately 140 times to a total audience of more than 3,000 people since the program started in 2008, spearheaded by board member Scott Andrews.

*From Tree to Ski* is a film that documents the process of making wooden skis at the Paris Manufacturing Company. Scott was instrumental in acquiring the original 16mm film from the family that owned the company -- principally Mary Morton Cowan, daughter of the man who shot it on home movie equipment in the 1930s. With the collaboration of board member Russ Murley, the Ski Museum produced a DVD that is professionally narrated by broadcaster Lou McNally.

Working with a grant from the Maine Memory Network, an internet project of the Maine Historical Society, the Museum created an online exhibit preserving the history of the 1971 Tall Timber Classic, the only Alpine World Cup ski races ever held in Maine. This exhibit has been viewed by people from all over the world. There is a direct link to it on our



*A worker at the Paris Manufacturing Company in the 1930s sands a nearly finished ski on a revolving drum. This screen grab is taken from the digitized, narrated film, From Tree to Ski, a recent project of the Ski Museum of Maine.*

website.

Our Made in Maine exhibit has grown substantially. We are particularly proud of the Theo Johnsen collection, which includes not only examples of his skis, but also a reproduction of his book, *The Winter Sport of Skeeing*. Published in Portland in 1905, this was the first book about skiing as a sport to be published in North America.

Maine was a major manufacturer of skis and boots in the early and middle years of the 20th century. Our Made in Maine collection includes examples of most of these, but there are significant gaps that we need to fill -- either by donation or purchase.

*Snow Trail*, our Museum publication, has developed into a quality historical journal mailed and distributed throughout the state and beyond. Another significant publishing outlet is the Ski Museum's website, and one of our goals is to expand the breadth of its historical content.

Thanks to important partnerships with the Ski Maine Association and its member areas, we have established the Maine Ski Heritage Classic, a daylong celebration of Maine's skiing heritage. We



*Bates College was a pioneer promoter of recreational skiing for women. This photo, taken in the 1930s or 1940s, is part of a digitized collection of Bates skiing images that was recently acquired by the Ski Museum of Maine. (Courtesy Muskie Archives of Bates College)*

have also established an annual golf tournament and a fall pre-season launch party.

None of this could have happened without the support and commitment of many people who are passionate about skiing and riding.

As we approach the 20th anniversary of the Ski Museum of Maine, the list of accomplishments grows and along with it the vision of things yet to be done. Our home in Kingfield has given us a good base from which we hope to expand this vision.

With your help we want to enlarge our footprint by setting up exhibits in other areas of our great state. We are thinking about a mix of permanent and

temporary satellite exhibits in several locations. We hope to continue to take our traveling display anywhere that people want to gather to learn about Maine's skiing history and heritage.

The Fireside Chat series is a work in progress and the capacity for growth is limitless. The research for the Chats and the *Snow Trail* fills many volumes with documents and photos. We also want to be able to acquire more films like *From Tree to Ski* so that we may preserve and share them. As we all know, the digital technology gives us an opportunity to preserve old movie films and photographs, but preservation does not come cheap. A quality job requires financial resources. That is where you -- our supporters -- come in.

There are many ways you can help. If you are a member of the Museum, we thank you for your support. Please spread the word about the work we are doing. If you are not a member, we urge you to join today. It couldn't be easier. Visit our website -- [www.skimuseumofmaine.org](http://www.skimuseumofmaine.org) -- and sign up through our secure online store.

The work we do is important and we cannot do it without the help of many people like you.

Sincerely,

Bruce Miles  
Executive director, Ski Museum of Maine

Another high school competitor during those years at Fort Fairfield was Elida Erickson, who earned a varsity letter in skiing. But jumping wasn't one of Erickson's events. After seeing his teenage daughter practice in the back yard, her father had sternly forbidden her to jump.

3. **Johanne Kolstad**, a Norwegian-born 24-year-old who claimed to hold the women's world record for longest distance -- 186 feet in Norway -- traveled the New England winter carnival circuit in 1938. Kolstad's scheduled appearance at the Pineland Ski Club's jumping contest in Andover grabbed the attention of the *Portland Press Herald*, which ran a photo and article, capped by the eye-catching headline reproduced here.

The same article notes that Kolstad wasn't the only female jumper on the carnival circuit that year: Norwegian-born Ella Gulbranson wowed crowds in Rumford a week earlier.

*The editor wishes to thank Karla Wolters, a Ski Museum volunteer, for her energetic and effective research into the winter carnivals in Aroostook County.*

1938  
**Will Break Andover  
Ski Record Or A Leg  
Says Johanne Kolstad**

**Norwegian Girl Believes She Can Jump More  
Than 160 Feet At Big Winter Carnival  
Of Pineland Club**

Special Despatch to The Press Herald

Andover, Feb. 16—Miss Johanne Kolstad of Oslo, Norway, who claims to hold the official woman's ski jumping championship of the world is going to shatter the existing record of 159 feet on Andover's big jump over the week-end or "break a leg trying." Competing in the 10th annual Pineland Ski and Social Club Winter Carnival events Saturday and Sunday she has informed President Warren Percival that the local jump looks very good to her and that she believes she can soar more than 160 feet. At any rate she has promised to make a determined attempt and a large crowd of spectators are expected by the committee.

Mr. Percival said that snow conditions were good for the carnival and expected the jump to be in excellent shape. Miss Kolstad will match her skill against many of the best amateur jumpers of New England.

She has competed in major events in all sections of the world and made her record of 186 feet in Norway last year. Her longest jump in this Coun-

Ski Jumper



*Johanne Kolstad was one of several Norwegian ski jumpers who traveled the New England winter carnival circuit, providing entertainment for thousands of spectators. In the article reproduced here (from the Portland Press Herald of 1938), Kolstad promises to "break a record or break a leg."*

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\$119 per person / \$450 per team  
includes round, cart, lunch and awards

\$15,000 hole in one contest

Seth Wescott is scheduled to play

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**Ski Museum of Maine Mission:**  
“preserve and publicize the business of skiing in Maine, while celebrating Maine’s ski history and heritage”

For more information visit  
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*Hebron Academy was a pioneer promoter of interscholastic ski competition in the 1930s and 1940s. This photo is part of a digitized collection of Hebron skiing images that was recently scanned by the Ski Museum of Maine. (Courtesy of the Bell-Lipman Archives of Hebron Academy)*