

CULTURE, LANDSCAPE, AND THE MAKING OF THE COLORADO SKI INDUSTRY

by

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A thesis submitted to the  
Faculty of the Graduate School of the  
University of Colorado in partial fulfillment  
of the requirement for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy  
Department of History

1996

This thesis for the Doctor of Philosophy degree by

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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

When people hear the topic of my dissertation, they often give me a knowing smile and ask if I am a skier. I say "I was a skier in my life before graduate school, when I had more time and a paycheck." This project has allowed me to explore Colorado's ski areas from the inside out, through their history, design, and marketing as well as their lifts, lodges, and trails. In the process I have met dozens of interesting people and incurred a number of debts. This project received financial support from the American Historical Association's Albert J. Beveridge Research Grant, the University of Colorado History Department's Douglas A. Bean Memorial Faculty Research Stipend and Pile Fellowship, the Roaring Fork Research Scholarship funded by Ruth Whyte, and from Dr. Giles D. Toll. I would like to thank all the people who helped me research this project, including Charlie Langdon at the Durango Herald, Mary Walker and Ingrid Schierling Burnett at the Tread of Pioneers Museum, Sue Spearing at the Grand County Historical Society, all of the people at the University of Colorado Archives and the Colorado Historical Society, and Lisa Hancock, Jody Phillips McCabe, and my other friends at the Aspen Historical Society. Their experience and support helped me tremendously. Thank you, especially, to all of the men and women who so generously shared their experiences and perspectives with me on tape. Interviewing them was my favorite part of this project and I feel honored to have met them all.

My heartfelt thanks go to my advisor Patty Limerick, for her guidance and her perseverance in teaching me to write clearly. Phil Deloria has devoted time, energy, and thought to this project above and beyond the call of duty, and I am grateful to him for it. Thanks to Lee Chambers-Schiller for her support and

inspiring comments; to Bill Riebsame for his enthusiasm and geographical perspective; and to Julie Greene for jumping into the history of the ski industry so cheerfully. Thanks also to my soccer-playing friends in Boulder and Denver, whose company gave me a much-needed respite from graduate school. My parents have given me nothing but constant, cheerful, energetic support from the moment I began this project, even though they were skeptical that skiing actually deserved historical analysis. I could not have finished this without them. Finally, my husband Jon lent his creative mind, his wit, and his immense title-making talents to this work, for which it is much the better. While it certainly helps to have a spouse who is a western historian, I appreciate also his unending patience with me while I was in the throes of dissertation writing, his unselfish support of my work, and his fondness for Basset Hounds.

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Culture, Landscape, and the Making of the Colorado Ski Industry

Thesis directed by Professor Patricia Nelson Limerick

This project is a cultural and environmental history of skiing in Colorado, from 1860 to 1990. It focuses on the ways in which skiers have understood and altered Colorado's mountain landscape, and on the relationship between downhill skiing and constructions of class, gender, and ethnicity.

Nineteenth-century mountain community residents used "Norwegian snowshoes" to travel and recreate in Colorado's Rockies. While these men and women understood their mountain landscape as isolating and often dangerous, wealthy tourists and outdoor enthusiasts saw it as scenic. During the 1920s and '30s a new kind of skiing came to Colorado, associated with European resorts, competition, and cosmopolitan tourism. Alpine skiing's urban enthusiasts used the Rockies as their playground while mountain town residents incorporated the sport into their communities by forming local clubs and developing a regional circuit of competitions. For both groups skiing proved to be a critical site for defining masculinity and femininity. Colorado ski areas sprouted up in the 1930s with the help of local communities, transportation networks, and the U.S. Forest Service. These areas remained local, however, until America's post-war consumer and leisure culture took shape. Veterans of the Army's Tenth Mountain Division, elite outdoorsmen who trained at Colorado's Camp Hale, took advantage of this new economic and cultural context to form the core of Colorado's ski industry. With the contradictory goals of creating a scenic, personal experience for as many people as possible, ski area designers developed increasingly constructed resort landscapes. They pushed local residents to the periphery and crafted resort towns as mythical alpine villages, Victorian mining towns, western cowtowns, or some mixture of

each. By the end of the 1960s destination resorts such as Aspen, Vail, and Steamboat Springs had their own distinct culture characterized by whiteness, wealth, fashion, fame, and sexiness. Destination resorts, moreover, have successfully coopted critiques from environmentalists, minority skiers, and snowboarders by incorporating their interests into resort landscapes and culture.

## CONTENTS

Introduction	Skiing at the Beach.....1
Chapter One	Skiing, Mobility, and Landscape in Colorado's Rocky Mountains.....18
Chapter Two	On Edge: Masculinity, Femininity, and Downhill Skiing.....66
Chapter Three	The Networks Behind Colorado Skiing to 1945.....121
Chapter Four	Call of the Mild: Constructed Landscapes for Skier-Tourists.....173
Chapter Five	Skier-Tourist-Consumers Meet Colorado's Resort Towns.....234
Chapter Six	From Ski Bunnies to Shred Bettys: Colorado's Destination Resort Culture.....281
Conclusion	From Europe to Colorado and Back.....339
Bibliography	.....358

## FIGURES

Colorado Ghost Towns and Mining Camps, 1953.....	39
<i>Ladies' Home Journal</i> , 1929.....	105
Franklin Automobile advertisement, 1931.....	106
<i>Saturday Evening Post</i> , 1931.....	108
Paved Roads in Colorado, 1940.....	135
Colorado Ski Areas.....	175
Chrysler Motors Corp. advertisement, 1963.....	235
Streeter and Quarles advertisement.....	254
Scandinavian Ski Shops advertisement, 1959.....	290
Dolomite advertisement, 1968.....	295
<i>Calvin and Hobbes</i> , 1993.....	318
<i>Cafe Angst</i> , 1996.....	330

## INTRODUCTION

### Skiling at the Beach

In 1995, Disney broke into the ski business in true Disney fashion. Their new Blizzard Beach has its own peaks, a chairlift, snow, and even a warming hut. Clad only in bathing suits, visitors ride a chair lift up the 120-foot "mountain" at the center of this water park. Below Mount Gushmore, the Disney travel guide promised, "waits a winter wonderland of water, fun and sun." Once at the top of Mount Gushmore, vacationers can descend on toboggan slides, flumes, inner tube chutes, or the Summit Plummet, a simulated ski jump on which sliding bathers can reach 60 miles an hour. Disney's imagineers "thought people would enjoy themselves in a ski resort atmosphere," so they built their own in Florida and brought downhill skiing to the beach.<sup>1</sup> And their instincts were right; Disney's unlikely winter wonderland, with its promises of water, fun, and sun, has consistently attracted crowds of tourists since its opening.

Well before Disney introduced skiing to the beach, surfers had brought their sport to the mountains. One California surfer, for instance, found himself living in Colorado's Rockies in 1985. He longed for "bikinis, convertibles, and Los Siete Burritos on Mission Beach." "But mostly," he wrote, "I wanted to surf."<sup>2</sup> He bought a snowboard and later became an instructor, teaching transplanted Californians like himself and native Coloradans how to surf snowy mountain waves.

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<sup>1</sup>Janet Nelson, "How Disney Does It," *Ski Area Management*, 34 (July 1995), 41; Walt Disney Travel Co., Inc., *1997 Walt Disney World Vacations*, 12.

<sup>2</sup>Gavin Forbes Ehringer, "It's Tough to Ignore All These Dinosaurs on Snowboards, Dude," *Rocky Mountain News*, 5 December, 1994, 20B.

These developments raised some eyebrows among recreational skiers. Since the growth of America's ski industry after World War Two, downhill skiers have enjoyed an almost exclusive relationship with mountain ski resort landscapes. Surfers stuck to the ocean, with its beaches and watery waves, and skiers remained in the snow-covered mountains. Colorado, especially, has become known as the center of a billion-dollar industry that encompasses ski areas themselves, related real estate development, associated restaurants, hotels, and retail stores, as well as the ski equipment and ski fashion industries. At the root of the ski industry--and at the heart of Colorado's tourist economy--is the sport of skiing itself. Since the nineteenth century skiers have described the experience as one of exhilaration and thrill. They have also described the experience as one that creates a kind of personal, physical relationship between skier and mountain beyond mere enjoyment of the scenery. Colorado's destination ski resorts have prided themselves on their ability to provide this kind of experience to millions of skiers a year, and to do so in a compelling landscape that is at once safe and adventuresome, wild and comfortable, visually pristine and fully developed. Indeed, Colorado's big ski areas consistently rank among the best and most popular ski resorts in North America; and one of the biggest reasons for their success is the extent to which they incorporate their skiing tourists into the Rocky Mountain landscape. These experiences and landscapes have been seamlessly constructed by a 100 year history of interaction between humans and the land itself.

By transplanting skiing to the beach and surfing to the mountains, Blizzard Beach and snowboarding have threatened to expose the highly constructed relationship between skiers and their remote mountain landscapes. Disney's water park and the sport of snowboarding revealed that what looked "natural"--skiing and mountain resorts--was in fact historical and human-made. The introduction of surf and youth culture to these places threatened skiers deeply. Many resorts

banned snowboarders from their slopes; arguments, fights, and mutual contempt characterized the relationship between skiers and snowboarders for years. Only recently has snowboarding become popular enough (and economically powerful enough) for skiers and the ski industry to welcome "shredding" at their resorts.

Disney posed, in this deconstructionist vein, an even greater threat than snowboarding because it took the process one step farther. Snowboarding introduced a new sport culture to skiing's landscape; Blizzard Beach removed skiing from its physical setting altogether. If Disney's imagineers--specialists in overtly constructed leisure landscapes--could recreate ski resorts in tropical Florida, what did that say about the nature of ski resorts in Colorado? Blizzard Beach's mere presence in Walt Disney World suggested the constructed reality of all ski area landscapes. In humorous references to Colorado's mountains, the water park sent a more confusing message, at once reminding visitors of "real" skiing in the mountains and self-consciously referring to its own Disney location. Pike's Peak thus became Tike's Peak (with child-sized water rides), Steamboat Springs turned into Teamboat Springs (for five-passenger rafts), and a deadly snowslide transformed into Avalunch. Only with tongue in cheek could its posters encourage vacationers to "Ski Disney." Drawing attention to its own constructedness with its place names as well as its larger Walt Disney context, Blizzard Beach threatened to change the way skiers understood "real" ski resorts. But if Disney was ready for a witty world of postmodern self-referentiality, ski resorts were not. One ski industry writer subsequently accused Disney of "hijacking our stuff," of stealing "the essence of skiing" to serve its own--assumably inauthentic--purposes.<sup>3</sup>

Skiing at a beach seems disconcerting, to say the least, and snowboarding has only entered the ski industry after years of resistance. By mixing and merging the beach with the mountains, snowboarding and Blizzard Beach questioned the

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<sup>3</sup>Nelson, 41.

relationship between skiing and the mountain landscapes we have come to associate with the sport. Invaluable to the ski industry and at the center of this project, the connections between skiing's culture and Colorado's very real mountains offer a view into the larger issues of how cultural meanings become inscribed upon the landscape and how landscapes in turn influence culture. In the case of the ski industry, resorts self-consciously designed to hide their constructedness enabled skiers to experience a kind of personal connection to the mountains and wilderness. At the same time, the sport of skiing, which has both an intensely personal aspect and an explicitly social one, forged a strong link between a distinct consumer, leisure-oriented ski culture and mountain towns. The story of how destination ski resorts have come to look the way they do and how they have supported their own distinct culture is the story of this project.<sup>4</sup>

The process through which Colorado achieved its success within the ski industry encompassed a number of ongoing tensions, drawn often along lines of class, race, and gender. First, the lower-class roots of the sport in Colorado, from Scandinavian bricklayers to Rocky Mountain miners, rest uneasily with the presence of an upper-class ski population liberally sprinkled with celebrities. Second, the new multi-ethnic resort workforce and service industry exist in awkward contrast with a still blindingly white clientele. Third, skiers attracted to the adventuresome and "wild" aspect of the landscape simultaneously demanded an increasingly constructed landscape with comfortable chairlifts and well-groomed slopes. Often attracted by the sport's exhilaration and sense of danger, skiers came to insist that ski areas maintain a firm grip on their safety while still providing

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<sup>4</sup>The culture and landscapes I am concerned with in this project specifically are destination resorts, or those ski areas such as Aspen, Vail, Keystone, Telluride, and Steamboat Springs which attract visitors for more than three days at a time. They must provide a wide range of amenities and non-skiing activities for their visitors, who seek a complete vacation experience. Smaller ski areas, which cater to weekend or local skiers, correspond to a different kind of ski culture less preoccupied with consumption.

the illusion of risk. Finally, while the destination resort culture that emerged in Colorado reflected and reinforced national trends toward a consumer, leisure culture, it meshed only partly with contemporary constructions of gender. Skiing has historically been both a quintessentially masculine sport and one whose feelings of freedom and empowerment have appealed to women. While skiing made it possible for women to operate outside social definitions of womanhood, it has also sprouted a heterosexual ski culture that has encouraged stereotypically feminine behavior.

In order to untangle some of these relationships and show how they relate to one another, I have drawn together methodologies from environmental, cultural, ethnic, and gender history to analyze oral histories, local newspapers, U.S. Forest Service publications, ski industry marketing analyses, and other products of ski culture such as ski magazine articles and advertisements. What emerged was a story about how ski resorts and ski culture effectively hid physical and human infrastructures, self-consciously framing mountain landscapes and crafting resort images that swept skier-tourists into mythical worlds from Colorado's skiing history: European alpine villages, Victorian mining towns, western cowtowns, or some mixture of each. Focused on consumption and leisure, the culture that grew up in Colorado's destination resorts could hardly reflect the economic and ethnic diversity of the state's mountain communities. Indeed, skiing pushed long-time residents and local community skiers to the periphery and became increasingly characterized by whiteness, wealth, fashion, and fame. Wrapped up in this distinct culture and rooted firmly in particular mountain communities, Colorado's destination resorts reveal the many-layered and often-contested relationships between landscape and culture in the American West.

Historians of skiing, however, have yet to examine these relationships. The most analytical treatment of the sport and its history in America, John Allen's

*From Skisport to Skiing*, ends in 1940.<sup>5</sup> Some works that extend their reach to the present often focus more on the sport's rich photographic record than on historical analysis; others tell the story of a specific resort or town and so concentrate more on local narratives than on placing those narratives in a broader historical context.<sup>6</sup> A few men intimately involved in the development of skiing and the ski industry in America have widened the scope of ski history by writing their autobiographies.<sup>7</sup> Their life stories--and their influence--spanned decades and

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<sup>5</sup>E. John B. Allen, *From Skisport to Skiing: One Hundred Years of an American Sport, 1840-1940* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1993). Allen has also written a series of articles including "Winter Culture: The Origins of Skiing in the United States," *Journal of American Culture*, 6 (Spring 1983), 65-68; "Values and Sport: The Development of New England Skiing, 1870-1940," *Oral History Review*, 13 (1985), 55-76; "Sierra 'Ladies' on Skis in Gold Rush California," *Journal of Sport History*, 17 (Winter 1990); and "Skiing Mailmen of Mountain America: U.S. Winter Postal Service in the Nineteenth Century," *Journal of the West*, 29 (April 1990), 76-86. Jack A. Benson has also published articles on nineteenth-century skiing, with an emphasis on the Rocky Mountain West and Colorado. Like much ski history but better researched, Benson's articles focus on narrative rather than argument. See Jack A. Benson, "Before Skiing Was Fun," *Western Historical Quarterly*, 8 (October 1977), 431-441; and Benson, "Before Aspen and Vail: The Story of Recreational Skiing in Frontier Colorado," *Journal of the West*, 22 (January 1983), 52-61. One of the earliest narrative ski histories is Charles M. Dudley, *Sixty Centuries of Skiing* (Brattleboro VT: Stephen Daye Press, 1935).

<sup>6</sup>For general histories see Editors of Ski Magazine, *America's Ski Book* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1973); Abbott Fay, *Ski Tracks in the Rockies: A Century of Colorado Skiing* (Evergreen CO: Cordillera Press, Inc., 1984); Stan Cohen, *A Pictorial History of Downhill Skiing* (Missoula MT: Pictorial Histories Publishing Company, 1985); Richard Needham, *Ski: Fifty Years in North America* (New York: Harry N. Abrams Inc. Publishing, 1987). Local Rocky Mountain ski histories include John Rolfe Burroughs, *Ski Town U.S.A.* (Steamboat Springs CO: Pilot Press, 1962); Sureva Towler, *The History of Skiing at Steamboat Springs* (Denver: Frederic Printing, 1987); Charlie Langdon, *Durango Ski: People and Seasons at Purgatory* (Durango CO: Purgatory Press, 1989); June Simonton, *Vail: Story of a Colorado Mountain Valley* (Vail CO: Vail Chronicles, Inc., 1987); Rick Richards, *Ski Pioneers: Ernie Blake, His Friends, and the Making of Taos Ski Valley* (Helena MT: Dry Gulch Publishing, 1992).

<sup>7</sup>Friedl Pfeifer with Morten Lund, *Nice Goin': My Life on Skis* (Missoula MT: Pictorial Histories Publishing Company, Inc., 1993); Otto Lang, *A Bird of Passage: The Story of My Life* (Helena MT: Skyhouse Publishers, 1994); Dick Durrance and John Jerome, *The Man on the Medal: The Life and Times of America's First Great Ski Racer* (Aspen, CO: Durrance Enterprises, Inc., 1995). For a more tongue-in-cheek set of autobiographical stories, see Warren Miller, *Wine, Women, Warren, and Skis* (Vail CO: Goldfinkle, Masowitch, Kloppenboig, and O'Brien, 1958, 1988);

crossed regional boundaries. Jockeying for their own positions within skiing's history, these men have sought larger meanings for their skiing lives and wrestled with what the sport and the industry has meant to them. Similarly have historians, film makers, and veterans sought to interpret the significance of the Tenth Mountain Division and its role in the post-war ski industry. Rich in narrative and generally heroic in tone, skiers' autobiographies and Tenth Mountain Division histories tend to be more personal than historical interpretations of their subjects.<sup>8</sup>

Since this project tells the story of the Colorado ski industry through the lens of landscape and culture, it fits within a set of historiographical traditions that have only occasionally responded directly to one another. Essentially it joins aspects of environmental history and cultural geography with histories of tourism, consumer culture, and sport. Environmental historians have offered compelling examples to illustrate the reciprocal relationships between physical environments and societies. Richard White and William Cronon, especially, have mapped this interaction through regional case studies. Both have come to argue more recently

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Miller, *On Film in Print: Forty-Five Years on the Road With Camera, Skis, Boats, and Windsurfers* (Vail CO: Ritem and Printem, Inc., 1994).

<sup>8</sup>One exception to this generalization is Jack A. Benson's "Skiing at Camp Hale: Mountain Troops during World War II," *Western Historical Quarterly*, 15 (April 1984), 163-174. There are countless articles and approximately 34 books published about the 10th Mtn. Division. For overviews and discussions of how the Tenth fit into developments in skiing, see Minot Dole, *Adventures in Skiing* (J. Lowell Pratt and Co., Inc., 1965); Hal Burton, *The Ski Troops* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1971); Curtis Casewit, *Mountain Troopers: The Story of the Tenth Mountain Division* (New York, 1972). For more personal accounts see Dole; Kenneth S. Templeton, ed., *10th Mountain Division: America's Ski Troops* (Chicago: privately published, 1945); Harris Dusenbery, *Ski the High Trail: World War II Ski Troopers in the High Colorado Rockies* (Portland OR: Binford and Mort Publishing, 1991); and more recently, John Imbrie and Hugh W. Evans, eds., *Good Times and Bad Times: A History of C Company 85th Mountain Infantry Regiment 10th Mountain Division* (Queechee VT: Vermont Heritage Press, 1995). For a complete bibliography, see "The 10th's Books," *Skiing Heritage: Journal of the International Skiing History Association*, 7, 2 (Fall 1995), 33. Two recent documentary films on the 10th are *Soldiers of the Summit* (Council for Public TV, Channel Six, Inc., 1987), and *Fire on the Mountain* (1995) by Beth and George Gage.

that nature and wilderness, while still referring to specific, physical places, have little meaning when separated from human influence and perception.<sup>9</sup> While skiers have generally known that they are not in a natural, wild, or pristine environment, the physical act of skiing down a trail, combined with the scenic views offered from the chairlift or gondola, has still created what skiers understood as a personal and natural relationship between skier and mountain. It is perhaps the ability to have such an experience despite the intellectual acknowledgment of human development that has made skiing so attractive. For urban vacationers, moreover, the National Forest landscape on which most ski areas are built may come as close to "nature" as they have ever been. Placed in specific physical environments and dependent upon marketing those places as natural, wild, and adventuresome at the same time they construct them to be inviting, comfortable, and safe, ski resorts served as powerful illustrations that the environment and society interact on multiple levels.

White and Cronon have approached the question of environment and culture from their perspective as historians; cultural and historical geographers have approached it from the notion of landscape. Less concerned with debating the reality of pure nature and wilderness than environmental historians, landscape geographers discuss place and space as "defined by our vision and interpreted by

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<sup>9</sup>Richard White, *Land Use, Environment, and Social Change: The Shaping of Island County, Washington* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1980); William Cronon, *Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists, and the Ecology of New England* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1983); Richard White, *The Organic Machine: The Remaking of the Columbia River* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1995); William Cronon, "The Trouble with Wilderness; or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature," in William Cronon, ed., *Uncommon Ground: Toward Reinventing Nature* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1995). Donald Worster's work offers another take on society and "nature" and focuses on the often troublesome relationships between capitalism and the physical world in which we live. His work most relevant to the development and perception of ski resort landscapes is *The Wealth of Nature: Environmental History and the Ecological Imagination* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).

our minds."<sup>10</sup> For them, specific relationships among soil, water, plants, animals, and humans are less important than the ways in which humans shape and interpret the world they experience.<sup>11</sup> Authors including D.W. Meinig, Peirce Lewis, J.B. Jackson, and John Stilgoe characterize landscapes as visual surroundings filled with cultural meaning. Since they are at once created and consumed by humans, landscapes are at once a system of signs through which we can decode and analyze our human use of the environment, and a force that shapes people's sensations and moods.<sup>12</sup> Ski resort landscapes are no exception. Designers wanted to remind visitors of European alpine villages, Victorian mining towns, or scenes from the wild west; these landscapes have offered countless, almost constant, opportunities to consume food, fashion, and social life as well as skiing itself; and they have provided visitors with different stages upon which they could advertise themselves and their purchases. More than a visual landscape, ski resorts have also shaped skiers' kinetic experience as they first are carried up and then ski down the mountain. Just as cities once constructed what J.B. Jackson called "the stranger's path," ski resorts have consciously crafted skiers'

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<sup>10</sup>D.W. Meinig ed., *The Interpretation of Ordinary Landscapes: Geographical Essays* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), 3.

<sup>11</sup>See especially Yi-Fu Tuan, *Topophilia: A Study of Environmental Perception, Attitudes, and Values* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1974).

<sup>12</sup>D.W. Meinig, "Introduction," in Michael P. Conzen, ed., *The Making of the American Landscape* (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1990); Meinig, "Introduction," in *The Interpretation of Ordinary Landscapes*; Peirce F. Lewis, "Axioms for Reading the Landscape," in *The Interpretation of Ordinary Landscapes*; John Brinkerhoff Jackson, *Discovering the Vernacular Landscape* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984); Ervin H. Zube, ed., *Landscapes: Selected Writings of J.B. Jackson* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1970); Jackson, *The Necessity for Ruins and Other Topics* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1980); John Stilgoe, *Common Landscapes of America, 1580-1845* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982). Anne Farrar Hyde does an excellent job of incorporating these ideas of landscape with an historical narrative. In her book *An American Vision: Far Western Landscape and National Culture, 1820-1920* (New York: New York University Press, 1990), she traces the ways in which travelers and tourists have understood the western landscape, moving from comparisons to Europe to characterizing it as unique and distinctly western, and incorporating those landscapes into American culture in the process.

experiences as they moved from the parking lot or hotel to the ski lift, up the hill, down different trails, and to a lodge for lunch or a snack. The growth and fame of Colorado destination resorts testifies to the fact that skiers have enjoyed the experience. These landscapes say as much about the ski industry that created them as they do about the skier-tourists who have visited them.

Tourists have been visiting the Rocky Mountains since the nineteenth century. After World War II they came in especially great numbers, traveling in winter as well as summer, from as nearby as Denver and as far away as Europe, to experience the Rocky Mountains as a scenic "other." Destination ski resorts (in contrast to smaller and more local areas) have traditionally made most of their money from out-of-state skiers who spend more on food, lodging, shopping, and extras than in-state skiers. Targeting such a market has made the ski industry in Colorado as much about tourism and marketing as about skiing. Destination skiers pursued not simply the sport, but a vacation in the Rockies; and they combined skier identities with that of the tourist. With the notable exception of Earl Pomeroy in 1957, however, historians are only now in the process of addressing tourism in the West.<sup>13</sup> Pomeroy's nineteenth-century tourists compared western scenery with that in Europe at the same time they romanticized the region for its wilderness and its cowboy image. As Elliott West has pointed out, this dual understanding of the West is nothing new.<sup>14</sup> Indeed, Rocky Mountain ski resorts

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<sup>13</sup>Earl Pomeroy, *In Search of the Golden West: The Tourist in Western America* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1957, 1990). While not book-length monographs, two recent publications on tourism in the West include Kerwin L. Klein, "Frontier Products: Tourism, Consumerism, and the Southwestern Public Lands, 1890-1990," *Pacific Historical Review*, 62 (February 1993), 39-71; and Scott Norris, ed., *Discovered Country: Tourism and Survival in the American West* (Albuquerque NM: Stone Ladder Press, 1994). Hal Rothman, Peggy Shaffer, and Patricia Nelson Limerick will soon be publishing works on tourism in the West.

<sup>14</sup>Elliott West, *The Way to the West: Essays on the Central Plains* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1995).

continue to encourage this mythologizing in the twentieth century through their architecture and advertising campaigns.

Tourists historically occupied a specific position in class and social hierarchies. As Pomeroy, Anne Hyde, Roderick Nash, and Alfred Runte have all suggested, upper-class city-dwellers created cultural hinterlands by supporting western tourism, searching for American scenery to rival that of Europe, and working to preserve America's national parks.<sup>15</sup> The same kinds of people also supported the growth of skiing in the American West. As Pomeroy and Hyde begin to argue, understanding tourism demands an analysis that included class and race. Only through those lenses can historians start to unpack the complicated relationships between wealthy visitors and local western residents.

Historians of American tourism have also raised other issues directly relevant to the growth of Colorado's ski industry. John Jakle followed Pomeroy in suggesting that structural developments including urbanization, more accessible means of transportation, and increased leisure time contributed directly to the phenomenon of American tourism. Along with Dean MacCannell and John Sears, Jakle has argued for tourism's cultural significance. They have seen tourism as a process by which people attach symbolic meaning to the places they visit and so redefine themselves and their place in modern society.<sup>16</sup> At once cultural and economic, tourism and Colorado's ski industry have placed that which visitors hold

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<sup>15</sup>Hyde, *An American Vision*; Roderick Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind*, 3rd ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982); Alfred Runte, *National Parks: The American Experience*, 2nd ed. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1987).

<sup>16</sup>Sears describes the process by which tourists attractions become sacred sites; Jackle defines tourism as a means by which modern people assess their world and define their own sense of identity in the process; and MacCannell places tourism with what he calls the basic theme of our civilization: self-discovery through the complex and arduous search for an Absolute Other. John Jakle, *The Tourist: Travel in Twentieth-Century North America* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1985); Dean MacCannell, *The Tourist: A New Theory of the Leisure Class* (New York: Schocken Books, 1976, with a new introduction by the author, 1989); John F. Sears, *Sacred Places: American Tourist Attractions in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989).

sacred--scenic landscapes and quaint resort communities--in conflict with the development necessary for tourism's growth. Western communities have thus struggled to balance crowds and construction with the physical and symbolic integrity of their tourist attractions.

What makes ski resort landscapes relatively immune to this conflict--beyond the very constructed nature of the resorts themselves--is the degree to which ski resorts have become wrapped up in consumer culture. As much as they functioned as scenic mountain getaways, destination resorts also became landscapes of consumption. Indeed, the consumption of scenery has been part of recreational skiing since the turn of the century. But skiing rested on advertizing and commodity consumption as well. Manufactured ski equipment became available in stores and mail order catalogs for purchase as early as 1905. Recreational skiing also created a market for special ski clothes that were at once warm and fashionable. Not surprisingly, then, the growth of the sport and its industry corresponded to the growth of consumer culture in America. Historians of leisure and consumer culture have noted that, having grown first in the late nineteenth century and then again during the 1920s, the culture of consumption became the status quo in the years after World War II, ultimately turning culture itself into a commodity and glorifying form over content. Destination ski resorts and the ski industry embodied the notion of commercialized leisure and idealized consumption that these historians, most notably T. J. Jackson Lears, have examined.<sup>17</sup> Lears'

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<sup>17</sup>Richard Wightman Fox and T.J. Jackson Lears, eds., *The Culture of Consumption: Critical Essays in American History, 1880-1980* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1983); Lears, "The Concept of Cultural Hegemony: Problems and Possibilities," *American Historical Review*, 90 (February 1985), 567-593; Fox and Lears, eds., *The Power of Culture: Critical Essays in American History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993); Martyn J. Lee, *Consumer Culture Reborn: The Cultural Politics of Consumption* (New York: Routledge, 1993); George Lipsitz, *Time Passages: Collective Memory and American Popular Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1990); Thorsten Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class*, with an Introduction by C. Wright Mills (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1992).

analysis of advertising in American culture further traces an ongoing discourse of authenticity, a discourse which employed images of race, class, and gender immediately visible in ski industry advertisements.<sup>18</sup> Ski resort culture, moreover, gave meaning to commodities only within a particular landscape and so linked their power to place. Clothing and equipment manufacturers, ski resorts themselves, and their respective hotels and restaurants have historically marketed their products as cosmopolitan and European or mythically western (both explicitly white images), as signs of status, and of sexual appeal. Participating in destination resort ski culture meant consuming these images and the identity that came with them more than the products themselves. Within recent ski resort culture form has triumphed over content; visibility has become inseparable from authenticity.

While it has become surrounded by retail businesses, consumer culture, and its own tourist industry, skiing has remained, at root, a sport. Skiing behaved differently, however, than the sports most commonly studied by historians. Skiing has been at once an outdoor sport with its own indoor "apres ski" culture, a sport both personal and social, and a sport that can test the limits of one's endurance and strength at the same time it emphasizes creativity and sensuality. As such a distinct activity, few sports historians have delved into skiing's history. Only one historian, in fact, has placed skiing within the larger context of American culture and sports history.<sup>19</sup> Sports historians have, however, explored more general relationships relevant to skiing. The cultural meanings associated with exercise,

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<sup>18</sup>Jackson Lears, *Fables of Abundance: A Cultural History of Advertising in America* (New York: Basic Books, 1994). Elliott West has recently published an article discussing similar tensions embodied in advertisements that employ western themes--a practice common for ski resorts including Steamboat Springs, Colorado and Jackson Hole, Wyoming. Elliott West, "Selling the Myth: Western Images in Advertising," in *Wanted Dead or Alive: The American West in Popular Culture*, edited by Richard Aquila (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1996), 269-291.

<sup>19</sup>Allen, *From Skisport to Skiing*.

athleticism, and play, for instance, have changed over time and hinged upon contemporary assumptions about class and race. Unpacking the relationships among these cultural constructs is a formidable task, one that sports historians have recently taken on with vigor.<sup>20</sup>

Skiing's culture generally coincided with the mandates for upper-class sport and leisure, though Colorado mountain town residents offered an alternative community ski culture that lasted in resort towns at least through the 1950s. In tune with the development of America's leisure and consumer culture, skiing did not fit exactly with accepted definitions of gender. Nor, however, did it pose the same societal threat that women's track and field or basketball presented. Many historians have explored, through sports, the shape and limits of cultural constructions of gender. While athletics have generally reinforced masculine norms since the nineteenth century, they often challenged accepted definitions of femininity. The ability to move freely through the landscape, Kathy Peiss and Virginia Scharff have pointed out, was a distinctly male power.<sup>21</sup> When women insisted upon doing so--especially in athletic competition--they risked having

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<sup>20</sup>George Eisen and David K. Wiggins, eds., *Ethnicity and Sport in North American History and Culture* (Westport CT: Greenwood Press, 1994); Steven A. Reiss, "From Pitch to Putt: Sport and Class in Anglo-American Sport," *Journal of Sport History*, 21 (Summer 1994), 138-184; George E. Sage, *Power and Ideology in American Sport: A Critical Perspective* (Champaign IL: Human Kinetics Books, 1990); Mark Pyreson, "The Emergence of Consumer Culture and the Transformation of Physical Culture: American Sport in the 1920s," *Journal of Sport History*, 16 (Winter 1989), 261-281; Richard D. Mandell, *Sport: A Cultural History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984); Roy Rosenzweig, *Eight Hours for What We Will: Workers and Leisure in an Industrial City, 1870-1920* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

<sup>21</sup>Steven A. Reiss, "Sport and the Redefinition of American Middle-Class Masculinity," *International Journal of the History of Sport*, 8 (1991), 5-27; Kathy Peiss, *Cheap Amusements: Working Women and Leisure in Turn-of-the-Century New York* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986); Virginia Scharff, *Taking the Wheel: Women and the Coming of the Motor Age* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1991). Peiss and Scharff are not explicitly sports historians; as women's historians they address the physical aspects and limitations of femininity. They also explore how class identity shapes women's mobility by defining womanhood in different ways.

their femininity and sexuality called into question.<sup>22</sup> As a vigorous outdoor sport, and one which afforded women mobility through dangerous mountain landscapes, skiing should have been considered off-limits to women. That women have skied without condemnation since the sport's beginnings testifies to the power of its social side in reaffirming feminine gender roles. On the slopes women could challenge social norms; in the bar and on the dance floor afterwards they reinforced them. The social aspect of ski resort culture thus helped negotiate the tension between dominant constructions of femininity and the physical act of skiing down a mountain.

Analytically, this project draws from a wide range of historiography encompassing categories of landscape, class, race, sport, and gender. The narrative of this story begins in the nineteenth century, when Scandinavian immigrants brought their knowledge of skiing to the Colorado Rockies. Mailmen, miners, farmers, ranchers, and members of mountain communities used skis to travel and recreate during the long winter season. While they understood Colorado's mountain landscape as isolating and often dangerous, wealthy nineteenth-century tourists saw it as scenic. During the 1920s and '30s a new kind of skiing came to Colorado, one associated with European mountain resorts, competition, and cosmopolitan tourism. Alpine skiing and its urban upper-class enthusiasts came to interpret the Rockies as had their nineteenth-century predecessors, as an American version of the Alps. The mountains became their playground, an escape from the increasingly urban world in which they lived.

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<sup>22</sup>Helen Lenskyj, *Out of Bounds: Women, Sport and Sexuality* (Toronto: The Women's Press, 1986); J. A. Mangan and Roberta J. Park, *From "Fair Sex" to Feminism: Sport and the Socialization of Women in the Industrial and Post-Industrial Eras* (London: Frank Cass and Company Ltd., 1987); Patricia Vertinsky, *The Eternally Wounded Woman: Women, Exercise and Doctors in the Late Nineteenth Century* (Manchester England: Manchester University Press, 1990); Allen Guttman, *Women's Sports: A History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991); Susan Cahn, *Coming On Strong: Gender and Sexuality in Twentieth-Century Sport* (New York: The Free Press, 1994).

Denver businessmen and residents encouraged this perception of the landscape and the tourist economy they hoped would develop around it. Mountain town residents, in the meantime, adopted alpine skiing and incorporated it into their circuit of local competitions and carnivals. Colorado ski areas first grew in the 1930s, but remained local in their size and scope until the supporting physical, economic, and human infrastructure took shape and American's post-war economy encouraged the growth of a national consumer and leisure culture. Veterans of the Army's Tenth Mountain Division, interested in making careers for themselves in the mountains, jump-started the post-war ski industry.

With the contradictory goals of creating a scenic, personal outdoor experience for as many people as possible, post-war ski area designers began to develop increasingly constructed and managed resort landscapes. They recreated skiing's older cosmopolitan resort culture in Colorado mountain town communities and worked to attract ever more skier-tourists to their resorts, changing the towns' economic, physical, demographic, and ideological landscapes in the process. By the end of the 1960s destination resorts had their own distinct culture characterized by whiteness, wealth, fashion, and fame. Skier-tourists invested in and helped perpetuate a white "European" ethnicity that extended well beyond the sport's historical roots and wove signs of ethnicity and race among those of class.

Far from the remote landscapes in which mailmen risked their lives, or settings for a community winter carnival or competition, resort ski areas became landscapes of consumption and leisure. And while environmental groups, local residents, U.S. Government agencies, extreme skiers, and snowboarders have all criticized destination resorts and their ski culture, the ski industry has slowed its growth but not faltered. Instead, Colorado's destination resorts have incorporated those critiques and used them to grow in both size and popularity. I have divided this narrative into six chapters, each of which moves the story forward in time and

analyzes the cultural and environmental relationships carried out during that period. Chapters One through Three emphasize narrative slightly more than analysis; chapters Four through Six, while they also move the story forward in time, are more thematic in nature.

The cultural and environmental story behind Colorado's ski industry pulls together a wide range of scholarship including environmental history, landscape geography, and the histories of tourism, consumer culture, and sport. Placed specifically in Colorado's Rocky Mountains, this story is ultimately a western one. The ski industry's use of federal lands, and its place as a successor to earlier mining, ranching, and farming economies in a region where layers of economies have traditionally imposed themselves upon the landscape, places Colorado skiing firmly within a western context. Colorado's destination ski resorts have further developed a distinctly regional identity based upon the sport's history in the state. References to nineteenth-century mining and ranching communities, Europeans who brought alpine skiing to the region, and Tenth Mountain Division veterans who trained there have filled resort landscapes and generated extensive marketing campaigns. Finally, its particular mountain landscapes and its style of destination resorts--including their western and European references--have made Colorado's ski resorts the most famous and the most popular in the nation. Places like Vail, Steamboat Springs, Aspen, Keystone, and Telluride have become the standards by which all other destination resorts are measured.<sup>23</sup> It should be no surprise, then, that Walt Disney decided to infuse its ultimate "ski" resort in Florida with signs and symbols like Tike's Peak and Teamboat Springs. Blizzard Beach consciously borrowed the most powerful ski resort images available--images from Colorado.

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<sup>23</sup>John Findlay makes a similar argument for the western-ness of Disneyland, Stanford Industrial Park, Sun City, and the Seattle World's Fair. John Findlay, *Magic Lands: Western Cityscapes and American Culture After 1940* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992).

Culturally laden mountain landscapes, Colorado's destination resorts have become the center of a powerful ski industry and models for resort development--in the mountains or on the beach--across the country. The success of its resorts testifies to the Colorado ski industry's seamless merging of sport, culture, and landscape.

## CHAPTER ONE

### Skiling, Mobility, and Landscape in Colorado's Rocky Mountains

John Dyer rose from bed early one February morning in 1864, strapped on his Norwegian snowshoes, and headed out into the snow storm towards Oro City, Colorado. He reached timberline, traveling slowly over deep snow, when "all of a sudden I felt a jar, and the snow gave way under me, and a noise struck my ear like a death-knell. I thought it was a snow-slide." About a hundred and fifty feet ahead he found a crack six inches wide where the snow had settled. A week later that crack would produce an avalanche that filled the entire gorge below. "I felt better on the upper side of the break," Dyer wrote mildly, and he reached the top of the Continental Divide at daybreak.<sup>1</sup>

Dyer was not up in the mountains in the middle of a snowstorm for fun. He was delivering 30 pounds of mail, in the midst of a weekly route that carried him from the mining camps of Buckskin Joe and Mosquito over the Divide to Cache Creek, California Gulch, and back again. His 37 mile mail route paid \$18 a week, and he made over three times that exchanging the miners' gold dust for greenbacks--money he desperately needed, since his primary vocation as a Methodist minister did not pay well.<sup>2</sup> Dyer earned his fame in nineteenth-century Summit County, Colorado--and among ski historians--through his identity as the "snow-shoe

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<sup>1</sup>Reverend John L. Dyer, *The Snow-Shoe Itinerant: An Autobiography of the Rev. John L. Dyer*, (Cincinnati: Cranston and Stowe, 1890),170.

<sup>2</sup>Dyer, 164.

itinerant," the minister who skied through the Colorado Rockies delivering the word of God and, for at least one winter, money and mail to isolated mining camps.<sup>3</sup>

Separated from Dyer by time, gender, class, and circumstance, Marjorie Perry also skied in the Colorado Rockies. Her family moved to Denver in 1887 when she was five years old and her father soon owned a coal mine near Steamboat Springs. Majorie spent much of her time outdoors, learning to ride in the backcountry, camp, and track game. She graduated from Smith College in 1905 and joined the Colorado Mountain Club (CMC) when it was founded in 1912. Though she never married, Perry enjoyed an active social life in Denver which included going to parties with the "Shack Crowd" at a primitive cabin between two railroad tunnels near Rollinsville. Perry rode the trains between Steamboat Springs and Denver often, and it was at a train stop where she met the Norwegian ski jumper Carl Howelson, who would tremendously influence her life and Colorado skiing. By 1915 Perry was spending part of every winter skiing at Steamboat Springs, and Grand Lake, and attending CMC ski outings in Rocky Mountain National Park.<sup>4</sup>

Aside from skiing, Dyer and Perry had little in common. Dyer made his home amidst the gold camps that sprung up along isolated creeks in Colorado, far from urban centers and the railroads. To hopeful miners, the Rocky Mountains represented an expanse of potential mineral strikes, huge mountains of ore that could make one or all of them rich. In the winters those same mountains acted as

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<sup>3</sup>Dyer was assigned to the Blue River Mission in Summit County, Colorado in the spring of 1862 and then to South Park in 1863, when he accepted the mail contract for a winter. He continued his preaching in Colorado until 1865 and resumed it in 1879, when he was appointed to the Breckenridge circuit. People did not use the terms "ski" or "skiing" until almost 1900; before then skis were known as Norwegian snow-shoes, and skiing was snow-shoeing. Norwegian snow-shoes--not to be confused with the webbed native variety of snow-shoes--consisted of homemade skis from 8 to 11 feet long, with simple toe straps for bindings.

<sup>4</sup>Janet Robertson, *The Magnificent Mountain Women: Adventures in the Colorado Rockies* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1990), 37-38; Sureva Towler, *The History of Skiing at Steamboat Springs* (Denver: Frederic Printing, 1987), 52.

nearly impervious barriers, cutting off mining camps and towns from the outside world. High altitudes and tenuous supply routes made for lonely, cold, and dangerous winters. Those who remained through the snow season did so in order to mine a little longer or to protect their claims. For these men and for the residents of larger camps like Breckenridge, Father Dyer and his Norwegian snow-shoes represented mobility in an isolated and often immobile world. The currency, mail, and religion he brought with him linked them with a civilization as inaccessible as it was desirable.

Marjorie Perry, on the other hand, lived and played in the center of Colorado society. Returning to Denver after attending one of the East's most highly acclaimed women's colleges, she attended parties and CMC events with her upper-class peers. Where Dyer and his mining clientele found isolation in the winter, Marjorie Perry found freedom and escape. Her father's financial involvement in the Moffat Railroad enabled her to ride the trains at will, and she did--to the extent that she became friends with the firemen, the engineers, and even their families who lived in towns along the route.<sup>5</sup> The railroad made getting to winter carnivals at Steamboat Springs and mountain parties with the "Shack Crowd" a simple affair, and Perry moved easily between urban Denver and its outlying hinterlands. Perry's skiing intersected with her social world, and despite her almost "male" proficiency in outdoor activities and her single status, that social world welcomed her in. For her, the Rockies acted more as a playground than a physical barrier, and what Father Dyer did in order to fulfill his calling and earn a living, she did for fun.

The story of skiing in Colorado from 1860 to 1920 encompasses both John Dyer and Marjorie Perry, two people for whom skiing and the Rocky Mountains meant very different things. They occupied different places within the

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<sup>5</sup>Robertson, 36.

overarching economic structure that tied Colorado's isolated mining camps to its urban center. Dyer's position "out there" in the hinterlands located him, strangely, at the very source of Colorado's new potential wealth. The mines drew a whole population--miners, prospectors, mining camp entrepreneurs, and others hoping to get in on the ground floor of this economic enterprise. In order to strike it rich, these people had to separate themselves physically from the center of economic and cultural power in the territory and settle in isolated mining towns, far from the railroad and beyond easy access to Denver. Marjorie Perry's location in Denver, on the other hand, put her where money, power, culture, and railroads converged.<sup>6</sup> Her father owned mines rather than worked in them, and he helped finance the railroads that people in the hinterlands so desperately needed. The ability to move between the urban center and the mining hinterlands corresponded to economic class starting point as well; the Perrys moved between Denver and Steamboat Springs with ease. The Rocky Mountains, then, could function in multiple ways. For those without economic resources and access to transportation routes they became almost insurmountable frozen barricades. For those with such resources and access, they served as a winter playground.

Within these separate contexts, moreover, the act of skiing itself took on different cultural meanings with different implications for constructions of gender and class. Mountain town residents--largely working-class and often immigrants--skied out of necessity, to live, work, and communicate in a sometimes immobilizing landscape. Recreational skiing for them was a community activity they could share with each other and occasionally with neighboring camps

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<sup>6</sup>See Grady Clay, *Real Places: An Unconventional Guide to America's Generic Landscape* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994) and William Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West* (New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 1991) for analyses of the relationship between urban centers, or the Center, and their hinterlands, or Out There. Both Clay and Cronon see "out there" as economically linked to the "center," as well as serving as a recreational hinterland and refuge for city dwellers.

and towns. Rather than denoting upper-class status, skiing integrated these men and women into a particular mountain landscape. The act of skiing enabled residents to work and brought them together as a community. The most famous and fastest skiers embodied a masculine ideal focused on strength, toughness, endurance, and a certain degree of foolhardiness. Nonetheless, women skied. The meanings tied to their skiing clustered around community identity rather than reshaping gender roles, and their exploits raised few eyebrows.

For upper-class urban skiers the sport signified leisure rather than work or community recreation. In contrast to their city homes, the Rocky Mountains acted as a scenic "other" which they could visit and where they could demonstrate their cosmopolitan familiarity with a distinctly Scandinavian sport. A social activity as well as a personal interaction with mountain landscapes, skiing offered upper-class city people an excuse to get together and travel. Yet its social ties were based more on class than the were on place. Skiing reinforced a more polished, cosmopolitan, intellectual masculinity than that of mountain residents, and it supported an upper-class definition of femininity that embraced outdoor athletics and physical mobility when they occurred within explicitly social contexts. Mountain town residents like Dyer and urban socialites like Perry represent two separate skiing traditions in Colorado, each based on a particular understanding of the mountain landscape and of the sport itself. Scandinavian culture and immigrants, however, influenced participants in both traditions and helped bring them together in celebration of the sport.

#### Snowshoe Itinerants

Skiing became a part of Rocky Mountain culture as soon as miners, ranchers, and settlers entered the region in the mid-nineteenth century. They moved to the Rockies from the East, the Midwest, and from a mixture of European

countries. As an integral part of Scandinavian culture and history, skiing became part of the cultural baggage these immigrants brought with them across the Atlantic in their search for work and prosperity. Archaeological data and artifacts from 4000 years ago show that inhabitants of Norway and Sweden used skis as a means of transportation for travel and hunting, and evidence also supports prehistoric use of skis in Siberia and Slovenia.<sup>7</sup> Norse history and mythology incorporated skiing, or snow-shoeing as it was known, and by the eighteenth century the Norwegian government had, too--through establishing its own ski troops.<sup>8</sup>

During the nineteenth century Norway experienced a prolonged economic downturn and many Norwegians emigrated elsewhere to seek their fortunes. They brought with them a long history of skiing. Two Norwegians showed up on skis at Rock Prairie near Chicago in 1841, and John Tostensen Rui--later known as

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<sup>7</sup>Charles M. Dudley, *60 Centuries of Skiing* (Brattleboro VT: Stephen Daye Press, 1935), 22; Dolfe Rajtmajer, "The Slovenian Origins of European Skiing," *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, 11 (April 1994); 97-101; see also Stein Erikson, *Come Ski With Me* (New York: W.W. Norton and Co. Inc., 1966); Leif Hovelsen, *The Flying Norseman* (Ishpeming MI: National Ski Hall of Fame Press, 1983).

<sup>8</sup>Until the twentieth century Americans referred to skis as snowshoes, the name typically employed by Scandinavians themselves. These long (8 to 10 feet), home-made wooden skis had a single leather strap to hold a boot on and were used with one long pole for steering and braking. So as to distinguish them from the webbed snowshoes that Native Americans used in the Northeast, Americans commonly referred to skis as Norwegian snowshoes. Only at the turn of the century did they become known as skis. See E. John B. Allen, *From Skisport to Skiing: One Hundred Years of an American Sport, 1840-1940* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1993), 7-10 for an analysis of how the language of skiing has developed. Scandinavians used ski troops in the war between Sweden and Norway in 1716. Howelson, 2; Erikson, 18; The Norse god Ull was the protector of skiing and hunting, and Skade was the ski goddess. Viking kings as early as the year 1000 were said to be good skiers, and the *Saga of King Sverre* tells the story of two skiers carrying the two year old son of King Haakon Sverreson across the mountains, a distance of 37 miles, while a civil war raged in Norway in the year 1206, Howelson, 1; *Norway: the Country with a Thousand Years of Ski History* (Chicago: Norwegian America Line Agency, Inc., n.d.) Grand County Historical Society (GCHS), Hot Sulphur Springs, Colorado.

"Snowshoe Thompson"--came with his family to Illinois in 1837.<sup>9</sup> More Norwegians emigrated during the 1850s and moved to Australia and Germany as well as the United States.<sup>10</sup> Some settled in Minnesota's Red River Valley and took advantage of the 1862 Homestead Act; others tried their hand at mining. Future skiing legend John Tostensen Rui, now going by the name of John Thompson, joined the rush of miners and settlers headed to California and set out from Wisconsin in 1851. In October of 1862 the *Sacramento Union* reported that Norwegians had discovered gold at Silver Mountain in 1861, and that "the various districts of the mountain are now to a great extent occupied by that class of citizens." The next summer the paper reiterated that there were "a great many Norwegians in this portion of the State."<sup>11</sup>

Norwegians traveled to the isolated mining camps and made homes there with the other miners, subjecting themselves to the harsh and snowy winters. But "wherever white winters set in," one countryman wrote, "Norwegian immigrants soon had skis and, as in their native country, they made their ski tracks in the woods, the hills, the mountains, on the prairies--wherever fate had brought them."<sup>12</sup> Skiing offered a degree of winter mobility within mining regions that eased the constraints of living in the hinterlands and made Norwegian snowshoeing attractive to all local residents, no matter what their cultural background. Immigrants shared their knowledge of how to make snowshoes with their friends, colleagues, and neighbors. As early as January of 1853 one California newspaper noted that "the miners do all their locomotion on snowshoes."<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>9</sup>Ole and Ansten Nattestad were the two who skied on Rock Prairie. Erikson, 20; Hovelsen, 8; Kenneth Bjork, "'Snowshoe' Thompson: Fact and Legend," *Norwegian-American Studies and Record* 19 (1956):70, 78; Erikson, 20, 21.

<sup>10</sup>Erikson, 18.

<sup>11</sup>*Sacramento Union*, 13 October 1862; *Sacramento Union*, 28 August 1863, as quoted in Bjork, 69.

<sup>12</sup>Hovelsen, 7.

<sup>13</sup>*Marysville Herald* in *Sacramento Daily Union*, 29 January 1853, as quoted in Allen, *From Skisport to Skiing*, 14. The first documented use of snowshoes in

While Colorado did not interest prospectors earlier, the discovery of gold at Pikes Peak in 1859 brought a flood of miners and settlers to the region, where they worked their way into the Rockies in search of valuable ore. These men and women appreciated Scandinavian skiing practices and adopted them when they had to get places in the winter. In mid-December of 1865, for example, Major D.C. Oakes, a government agent for the Ute Indians, set out with his interpreter and two assistants from Denver to Middle Park, about 100 miles away. When they reached Berthoud Pass four days later, two and a half feet of snow lay at the base and many times more at the summit. Aimed and urged up the trail, their pack animals lay down, played dead, and a few actually plunged down the mountainside. Oakes and his party managed to climb the pass on foot, finally descending into Middle Park at nightfall. When they related their travails to a homesteader there named Utter, he took them in and showed them how to make Norwegian snowshoes. Equipped with eight to twelve foot long skis and a single pole for balance, turning, and braking, Oakes and his crew spent the next two weeks learning how to use their new-found freedom. In January they and Utter skied back to Denver, traveling much faster this time than on the way over.<sup>14</sup>

Reverend John Dyer had heard of these fundamentals before he had to employ them. He may have learned about them when he was living in Illinois, Wisconsin, or Minnesota, or he may have picked them up from miners in Colorado

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Colorado occurred in 1857 during the Mormon War. Lost in a storm, Jim Baker, who was leading the Marcy expedition, crafted a pair of skis and used them to find Cochetopa Pass, east of what is now Gunnison. Abbott Fay, *Ski Tracks in the Rockies: A Century of Colorado Skiing* (Evergreen CO: Cordillera Press Inc., 1984), 3. Colonel Marcy noted Baker's use of skis in his journal. Scandinavian cultural influence in the mountainous West thus opened up the possibility of greater winter mobility to all.

<sup>14</sup>"Trip Across the Snowy Range to Middle Park," *Rocky Mountain News*, 26-27 January 1866, 2, as cited in Jack A. Benson, "Before Skiing Was Fun," *Western Historical Quarterly*, 8 (October 1977), 432-34, and in Jim Wier, "The Beginning of Skiing in Grand County," *Grand County Historical Journal*, 4 (March 1988), 10.

when he walked from Denver to California Gulch, Twin Lakes, Gunnison, Fairplay, Buckskin Joe, and back to Denver in 1861. When his church assigned him to the Blue River Mission in Summit County, Colorado in 1862 and he found himself with a preaching schedule that would take him on regular two-week tours of surrounding mining camps, he said matter-of-factly, "I made me a pair of snowshoes."<sup>15</sup> Dyer's circuit encompassed mining towns whose residents stayed during the winter, either because their camp was well-established enough to make it feasible, or because they wanted to protect their claims. Of those who originally settled the town of Aspen, for example, only a few prospectors braved the first winter. Two wintering Swedes introduced skis to the tiny community and so enabled its members to move about even in Aspen's deep snow.<sup>16</sup> These early Colorado skiers depended on their Norwegian snowshoes because they had chosen to travel to isolated places where moving around during the winter could be extremely difficult. In their desire to remain mobile despite their location, these people took to skis.

Mail carriers moved most freely through the frozen hinterlands; they were often the only link between high altitude mining camps and the outside world. Dyer's Methodism, his mail, and the gold dust he exchanged for greenbacks held together the cultural, social, and economic ties--albeit tenuous ones-- between those "out there" and those in the "center." Many mining town residents considered churches and schools to be signs of civic maturity, and actively sought them out in an effort to promote their town and mines. As a minister, and one who could exchange gold for currency, Dyer established a communications link of an especially civilizing kind. A man who could spend greenbacks rather than the more

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<sup>15</sup>Dyer, 144.

<sup>16</sup>Warner Root, in Frank L. Wentworth, *Aspen on the Roaring Fork* (Denver, 1950), 21; Warner Root, "Aspen," *Aspen Times* first issue, n.d., reprinted in *Aspen Times*, 4 January 1979; also cited in Benson, "Before Skiing Was Fun," 432, and Allen, 34, 184.

common currency of gold dust not only increased his financial flexibility, but also called attention to his ability to acquire cosmopolitan currency. Letters and newspapers connected town residents to political, commercial, and social events in the "center" and to family all over the country. Alice Denison, a well-educated woman who had moved to Steamboat Springs to look after her ailing nephew in 1885, relied upon snowshoeing mail carriers to maintain these crucial links with those "outside." In December she wrote her sister "We feel as tho' the bottom had fallen out of our very existence at the rumor that we are to have no mail after the 9th of January . . . we are in an awful pickle about the matter--the mail seemed our only 'holt' on anything earthly."<sup>17</sup> Cramped in small cabins, surrounded by miles of snow and mountains, many nineteenth-century Coloradans depended on skiing mail carriers for their very sanity.

Mountain residents acknowledged the power of these men's mobility by granting them legendary status, status that revealed a kind of masculine ideal that emphasized toughness, endurance, strength, and bravery and was rooted in the mountains. The most famous mail carrier, "Snowshoe" Thompson (originally John Tostensen Rui), lived and worked in the California Sierras. Starting in 1865, he carried mail ninety miles over the Sierra Mountains, from Carson Valley to Placerville, effectually linking the Great Basin with the Pacific Coast. One contemporary called Thompson "a man who laughs at storms and avalanches and safely walks where others fall and perish."<sup>18</sup> Likewise, Colorado's own "snowshoe itinerant," the Rev. John Dyer, has no fewer than three peaks named after him. Dyer himself was quick to relate the adventures he experienced and the danger he overcame in his travels, portraying himself at times as a nineteenth-

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<sup>17</sup>"Pioneering Near Steamboat Springs, 1885-1886, As Shown in Letters of Alice Denison," *Colorado Magazine*, 28 (April 1951), 89.

<sup>18</sup>Allen, 16; E. John B. Allen, "Skiing Mailmen of Mountain America: U.S. Winter Postal Service in the Nineteenth Century," *Journal of the West*, 29 (April 1990), 76-77; Bjork, 62-88; Hovelsen, 8-9.

century Methodist Superman. His accounts may have been inflated, but his contemporaries were quick to agree with him. To the information-starved residents of isolated mountain towns, mail carriers earned super-human status. Between 1875 and 1878 Bill Kimball carried the first winter mail over Berthoud Pass. One friend recalled the tall, rawboned man from Maine: "Kimball was a wonder, the best snowshoe man ever known in Middle Park. His pack was never less than 70 pounds of mail . . . He often packed straight through from Empire to Hot Sulphur, going night and day, with no sleep, stopping only for meals."<sup>19</sup> One fluent newspaperman in 1898 related that

The faithfulness to duty, the hardihood and dash of daring these men show, when in the midst of a terrific mountain storm they strap the mail bag on their shoulders and start out, vanishing in a whirling, blinding snow; or come staggering in at night after a day's battle with the storm, beard and hair a mass of frozen snow and ice, compels admiration, and the mail carrier is usually one of the most popular men in the camps.<sup>20</sup>

These romantic images celebrated the strength and mobility mail carriers represented, and acknowledged the fact that the job of carrying the mail--and linking the center with out there--came at a cost.

Dyer and the more than 50 mailmen on skis in Colorado before 1900 all faced very real dangers of frostbite, snow blindness, exhaustion, snow storms, and avalanches.<sup>21</sup> One Colorado resident knew six or eight mailmen who had lost some part of an extremity, usually toes, as a result of being caught in snow storms.<sup>22</sup> Ed Coburn lost nine of his to frostbite during his first mail run from Hayden to

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<sup>19</sup>Frank S. Beyers, "The History of Berthoud Pass," clipping (January-February 1923), 13. Berthoud Pass file, Colorado Historical Society (CHS), Denver, Colorado.

<sup>20</sup>Z. Fuller, "Rocky Mountain Snow-Shoeing," *The Midland Monthly* 9, 3 (March 1898), as cited in Allen, "Skiing Mailmen," 76.

<sup>21</sup>Allen, "Skiing Mailmen," 78. Allen also discusses Dyer in some depth in this article. There were a few other skiing ministers, as well. Presbyterian George M. Darley skied to various mining camps, and Father James Gibbons held mass in several different camps in the Telluride and Ouray districts. Fay, 3.

<sup>22</sup>"Mail Carriers in the Rocky Mountains," *Colorado Sun*, 31 January 1892, 20, as cited in Benson, "Before Skiing Was Fun," 436, and Allen, "Skiing Mailmen," 81.

Morrison Creek in 1880.<sup>23</sup> Missing toes approached the status of a mild initiation, however, compared to what could happen on mail routes. One carrier, lost and cold, became delirious and was found wandering between Rock Creek and Steamboat Springs. Three men rescued another mailman in that area who had fallen head first into deep, loose snow and gotten pinned there by his own mail bag.<sup>24</sup> Apparently John Dyer received his offer to sub-contract the winter mail delivery after his predecessor, John Armstrong, had died on Mosquito Pass.<sup>25</sup> Others shared Armstrong's fate. Swan Nilson tried to carry the holiday mail through a storm on Christmas Eve in 1883. The Swede left Silverton but never made it the 18 miles to Ophir. His brother finally found the body in August of 1885, mail bag intact, which dispelled rumors that Nilson had absconded with his bag of Christmas loot.<sup>26</sup> Yet another mail carrier froze to death between Georgetown and Hot Sulphur Springs in 1899. Fort Collins measured the temperature that winter at 41 degrees below zero; locals found the man's body frozen at the foot of the range.<sup>27</sup>

By delivering the mail and surviving these dangers, mail carriers seemed to dominate an intimidating landscape. They represented freedom of movement and communication with civilization in a world circumscribed by 14,000 foot peaks, avalanche chutes, and icy blizzards. The masculine ideal which they embodied, therefore, was rooted in place to the mountains in which they traveled. Occasionally those borders drew even more closely around mountain communities when particularly bad weather caused their supplies to dwindle. During moments of need, community members sought to accomplish what mailmen accepted as a

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<sup>23</sup>Towler, 49.

<sup>24</sup>Jean Wren, *Steamboat Springs and the "Treacherous and Speedy Skee* (Steamboat Springs CO: Steamboat Pilot, 1972), 4.

<sup>25</sup>Fay, 3.

<sup>26</sup>Benson, "Before Skiing Was Fun," 435; Fay, 3; Allen, "Skiing Mailmen," 80.

<sup>27</sup>"Frozen to Death," *Denver Times*, 7 February 1899, 2, as cited in Benson, "Before Skiing Was Fun," 436, and Allen, "Skiing Mailmen," 81. Allen relates similar examples of mail carriers' deaths in Idaho.

routine task. In these instances town residents took to skis *en masse*, attempting to overcome the vagaries of a winter landscape that rendered their very presence quite tenuous. Two of the first prospectors at Hahn's Peak, near Steamboat Springs, tried to live there through the winter of 1865-66, but had to abandon camp when provisions ran low and twelve feet of snow encouraged the wild game to seek warmer climes. They skied out with what coffee was left and got caught in a big storm that killed one of them and blinded the other.<sup>28</sup> When snow cut the town of Irwin (a mining camp near Kebler Pass above Crested Butte) off from Crested Butte, miners skied over Ohio Pass to get supplies from a ranch north of Gunnison.<sup>29</sup> The winter of 1898-99, the worst in Colorado history, prompted a series of mass exoduses. Carl Fulton was running a small stamp mill in Swandyke, 16 miles from Breckenridge, and had laid in enough supplies to last him till June, "as we could not get a team up in winter." They got along fine until it started to snow on November 27. By 9:00 the next morning the snow was five feet deep. By the middle of December the danger of avalanches made it too unsafe to stay. So, Fulton said, "we rolled up our bedding and put it on our back and snow-shoed to Breckenridge."<sup>30</sup> When he finally returned to his stamp mill in June--still on skis--he found an avalanche had carried it away and deposited it on the far side of a deep gulch. Fulton's mill, torn to pieces and spread across the mountainside, testified to the environment's physical power over mining's presence in the Rockies. That winter even the residents of Breckenridge, who usually enjoyed access to Denver by train, found themselves cut off by the storm. In such instances, however, necessity sent resilient residents to their skis. Breckenridge citizens spent two weeks clearing a trail to Como, 21 miles away, by which they

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<sup>28</sup>Towler, 49.

<sup>29</sup>Fay, 4. That was the winter of 1879-80.

<sup>30</sup>Carl Fulton, "The Winter of the Deep Snow," *Colorado Magazine*, 39 (January-October 1962), 38.

resupplied their empty stores. After helping clear the trail, Fulton went to Frisco and worked in a mine there until they ran out of powder. He then skied to Como and hauled some back across the Continental Divide on a sled.<sup>31</sup> Despite difficult conditions, mining town residents maintained homes and businesses--and often relied on skis to do so.

Gladys Karstedt recalled that same winter of 1898-99, when her father was isolated in the mining camp of Kokomo and they had no mail from him for over three weeks. "He said they had a really pleasant time playing High Five, and reading, and just talking about the topic of the day. There was something rather snug and comfortable in the walls of snow around them. But the day came when the kitchen cupboards were bare . . . It must have been quite a decision when they buckled on their snowshoes and knew they had eighteen miles to walk with no other way out." His daughter remembered the "dark evening when we opened the door and my father was standing there in his black overcoat." He had skied to Leadville and caught the train to Denver.<sup>32</sup> Some mining camp residents found comfort in numbers during that cold winter. In response to the storm's persistence and their own dwindling supplies, the people of Hunters Pass--a mining camp about 20 miles southeast of Aspen and now the ghost town of Independence --decided to dismantle their homes, build 75 pairs of skis with the boards, and slip, slide, and otherwise make their way together down to the safety of Aspen.<sup>33</sup>

When blizzards did not threaten, early Coloradans used their snowshoes for less desperate errands. In a demonstration of their manhood and foolhardiness, two skiers once crossed Independence Pass to Leadville in order to get some oysters for a Christmas party the Aspen men had decided to throw for the women in camp.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>31</sup>Fulton, 39.

<sup>32</sup>"The Big Snow," *Colorado Magazine*, 40 (April 1963), 113.

<sup>33</sup>Elder, "From Hunters Pass," *Aspen Daily Times*, 4 February 1899, 5, as cited in Benson, "Before Skiing Was Fun," 437.

<sup>34</sup>Fay, 5.

Most who braved the weather and the mountains for errands, however, selected those errands with greater care.<sup>35</sup> On another Christmas, a blizzard kept W.B. Devereaux's stage from getting over Independence Pass on Christmas, so he made a pair of skis from barrel staves and skied home to Aspen. He arrived home, only to spend the holidays in bed from "temporary physical collapse."<sup>36</sup> Midwives and doctors--luckily for Devereaux--turned to skis when called out in winter as well. Susan Anderson, known to many as "Doc Susie," attended to her patients in and near Fraser no matter what the weather. "I've skied into ditches," she said, "[I] never was much of a skier. And I've lost my way, now and then, in a blizzard, but nothing to get worried about."<sup>37</sup> The midwife in early Steamboat preferred to travel on a toboggan pulled by men on skis rather than under her own propulsion, but was known to go as far as 20 miles to a patient.<sup>38</sup>

While skiing across mountain passes to deliver the mail implied one masculine ideal, skiing to accomplish these kinds of errands implied others. Such mountain residents--who hardly resembled the mail carriers' tough masculine ideal--relied upon skis in moments when they required mobility. A clearly masculine characteristic when applied to mail carriers, winter mobility took on more complicated gender meanings when women and less hardy men like Devereaux practiced it. As self-proclaimed novices (in the case of Susan Anderson and the Steamboat midwife) or merely temporary dare-devils (in the case of the Aspen party-givers and W.B. Devereux), these skiers distanced themselves from mail carriers and defined their skiing differently, too.

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<sup>35</sup>Steamboat Springs' first permanent settler skied there from Hot Sulphur in 1875 to ensure no one had jumped the claim he had staked the year before. Towler, 49.

<sup>36</sup>Fay, 4.

<sup>37</sup>Robertson, 75. Anderson arrived in Fraser in 1907, two years after the town grew up along the railroad tracks on the West side of Rollins Pass.

<sup>38</sup>Wren, 4.

The danger and fear associated with the long-range trips of the mail carriers, blizzard refugees, and midwives lessened when skiers stayed within town boundaries and exercised a more modest range of mobility. Traveling 20 miles to reach supplies remained a frightful last resort for most, but trekking from home to the mines and back on snowshoes was a regular commute. In this sense, most every mining town resident knew the surrounding landscape through work.<sup>39</sup> As one newspaper editor near Irwin and Crested Butte noted, "every man, woman and child had to learn to ski, or snowshoe, as we called it--we had to learn if we wanted to go anywhere."<sup>40</sup> Winter mining, hunting, errands, and social visits required skill on snowshoes, and many newcomers spent their time learning as soon as winter set in. Alice Denison moved to Steamboat Springs in 1885 and wrote her sister "Today the snow is falling fast and I guess is the beginning of winter--that is, when cattle must be driven in from the range . . . and the snow shoeing begins."<sup>41</sup> In this context as a common, local, community activity, skiing could be viewed in a completely different light--not as survival, not as work, but as pleasure and recreation.

Skiing offered, in fact, one of the only forms of winter recreation available in these isolated towns. While they knew the landscape through skiing in terms of work, it took on different meanings when they skied for pleasure. The same landscape that kept them apart from the rest of the world and endangered all who attempted to traverse it, provided community members with their own form of recreation. Alice Denison learned how to ski "well enough on a level," and was quite proud one February morning when she made it all the way down a hill without falling. Her tubercular nephew Willy began skiing enthusiastically and Denison

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<sup>39</sup>See Richard White, "Are You an Environmentalist or Do You Work for a Living?": Work and Nature," in William Cronon, ed., *Uncommon Ground: Toward Reinventing Nature* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1995), 171-185.

<sup>40</sup>Wier, 9.

<sup>41</sup>"Pioneering Near Steamboat Springs 1885-1886," 89.

wrote that since he took it up "He looks real well, and seems happier, too."<sup>42</sup> The County Clerk in Grand Lake the winter of 1883-84, a Scandinavian named M.C. Jahren, taught people in that area to ski for fun, and one young woman teacher from Grand Lake during 1917 remembered learning to ski from the local ranch boys.<sup>43</sup>

Like male miners and ranchers, women mountain town residents such as Denison and the Grand Lake school teacher skied for fun--and out of necessity. They could do so without endangering their womanhood because skiing took on very different meanings as a community activity than it had when employed by tough, daring mail carriers. Skiing elicited images of masculinity when placed within the context of work and characterized by long distances, difficult weather, and dangerous terrain. If one thought of skiing in this way, women seemed incongruous. But nineteenth-century Coloradans thought about skiing in other ways, as well--as a social activity, a communal event, and everyday transportation through town. In these settings skiing took on very different gendered meanings.

Within the masculine, mail carrying context of the sport, nineteenth-century women on skis seemed to be completely at odds with prescribed behavior. Victorian constructions of womanhood consigned middle- and upper-class women to the home, where they were to care for the moral, educational, and emotional well-being of their husbands and children. Contemporary medical understandings of women argued that excessive physical, intellectual, or emotional activity would deplete their non-renewable "vital force," thereby threatening women's ability to reproduce as well as their general health. Given that Norwegian snow shoes could reach twelve feet in length and the wearer took them up hills as well as down, in

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<sup>42</sup>"Pioneering Near Steamboat Springs 1885-1886," 90, 91.

<sup>43</sup>Betty Jo Woods, "Skiing at Grand Lake," *Grand County Historical Association Journal*, 4, 1 (March 1988), 21.

often frigid weather, Victorian logic predicted that women skiers would become instantly infertile and irrevocably afflicted with nervous disorders.<sup>44</sup>

The women in California mining camps and Colorado mountain towns such as Breckenridge, Gunnison, Steamboat Springs, Crested Butte, and Aspen, however, seemed unconcerned with this logic. Women in these mountain communities did errands, visited each other, and toured the area on their snowshoes fairly regularly.<sup>45</sup> Their skiing, in its local, social context, afforded them little concern that the sport would compromise their femininity. As historian John Allen observed "In the [California] gold and silver camps social convention certainly continued to play its perceived role of civilizing society, yet it is clear when "the beautiful" fell six feet deep that strenuous activity by women on skis was not condemned out-of-hand as un-sexing, non-womanly or simply not permitted. Indeed, skiing was a talent admired in both men and women."<sup>46</sup> This was indeed the case in Colorado towns, as well. Doc Susie, a self-defined novice, limited her skiing to medical emergencies, but Alice Denison enjoyed trekking around Steamboat Springs and skiing down hills as a diversion. Both earned respect for their snowy travels. Photos from nineteenth-century mining towns throughout the state, moreover, show women standing on their snowshoes with pleasure and poise.<sup>47</sup> Rather than being a reason to ostracize women, then, skiing became a way that residents created a heterosocial winter culture.

Since women could demonstrate as much skill on their skis as men and thus accompany men out-of-doors, the sport acquired a social aspect that would continue

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<sup>44</sup>Lenskyj, 23; Patricia Vertinsky, "Feminist Charlotte Perkins Gilman's Pursuit of Health and Physical Fitness as a Strategy for Emancipation," *Journal of Sport History*, 16 (Spring 1989), 13.

<sup>45</sup>Benson, "Before Aspen and Vail," 57; photographs in Fay, 2, 5, 6; Wren, 6.

<sup>46</sup>E. John B. Allen, "Sierra 'Ladies' on Skis in Gold Rush California," *Journal of Sport History*, 17 (Winter 1990), 347; Wier, "The Beginning of Skiing in Grand County," 12.

<sup>47</sup>Fay, 2, 5, 6; Wren, 6.

through the twentieth century. In Grand Lake, Colorado, an 1883 newspaper article noted that "Coasting on snowshoes has taken the place of dancing parties. Quite a number of our ladies are becoming adept at the art." A rivalry sprang up between local women the next year, when the paper reported "the fact that the ladies of Teller are such expert snowshoers has excited the envy of some of the Grand Lake belles."<sup>48</sup> Norwegian snowshoe parties became popular social events in Aspen, Grand Lake, Tin Cup, White Pine, and Crystal during the early 1880s.<sup>49</sup>

Skiing could reinforce constructions of womanhood only within a specific context: that of a common, local, community activity, usually related not to work but to pleasure and socializing. It was within this same context that male miners took to racing each other, testing their speed and daring in a far different way than mail carriers had. Ski races pitted contestants' skills against other men as well as the mountain, turning skiing into a performance for other male competitors and for women spectators as well. Ski racers thus attached yet another kind of gendered meaning to the sport of skiing. They raced each other on their huge skis, with only a leather toe strap to hold their feet in, flying straight down mountainsides at speeds up to 70 miles an hour. This type of ski racing began in the California Sierras during the 1860s and appeared in Colorado in the 1880s.<sup>50</sup> The first "Rocky Mountain Norwegian Snowshoe Championships" took place at Irwin in Gunnison County in February, 1881. Twenty skiers vied for the \$25 prize money on a course laid out on the town's Main Street. Others held contests over the next few years in Tomichi, Gothic, and Crested Butte.<sup>51</sup> Gunnison County also held

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<sup>48</sup>Jim Wier, "The Beginning of Skiing in Grand County," *Grand County Historical Association*, 4 (March 1988), 12.

<sup>49</sup>Jack A. Benson, "Before Aspen and Vail: The Story of Recreational Skiing in Frontier Colorado," *Journal of the West*, 22 (January 1983), 52, 57; Wier, "The Beginning of Skiing in Grand County," 12.

<sup>50</sup>For more on early California ski racing, see Allen, *From Skisport to Skiing*, 21-28.

<sup>51</sup>Benson, "Before Aspen and Vail," 52.

Colorado's first organized ski meet, in February 1886 at Crested Butte. Sixteen of the area's best skiers competed for \$37 in prize money, racing in heats of four abreast down the mountain.

This meet prompted the immediate establishment of the Gunnison County Snowshoe Club, and the club immediately proceeded to schedule a series of races for that winter. Gunnison, Irwin, and Gothic hosted races that season, all of which offered prize money and attracted a number of competitors and spectators.<sup>52</sup> The Club worked especially hard to attract visitors to watch and compete in the first meet at Gunnison; they placed advertisements in local newspapers, convinced government officials to close schools and courts, and arranged for the Denver and Rio Grande Railroad to run special trains to Gunnison from different mining camps in the region. Their efforts were rewarded when an estimated two thousand people showed up to watch the races.<sup>53</sup> Newspapers--some carried by skiing mailmen--and the D&RG Railroad forged temporary connections between mining camps in order to get people to the race. Some contestants out of reach of the railroad still depended on their snowshoes to get to Gunnison, however, and so demonstrated some of the skiing prowess and masculine strength typically connected with mail carriers. Those who did ski most of the way to Gunnison to compete were among the best who entered.<sup>54</sup>

Along with testing men's speed and skill on snowshoes, these races served as festive, community gatherings. Skiers from rival mining camps acted out that rivalry on the hill, and when they were not satisfied with the day's results, challenged each other to special races after the meet. The presence of prize money and outside betting attracted competitors and spectators, and raised the stakes; each

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<sup>52</sup>E.R. Warren, "Snow-Shoeing in the Rocky Mountains," *Outing*, 9 (January 1887), 350-53; Benson, "Before Aspen and Vail," 53-55.

<sup>53</sup>Benson, "Before Aspen and Vail," 54.

<sup>54</sup>Warren, 351.

camp had its own local favorite whom it hoped to cheer to victory. The Gunnison meet and those that followed throughout the state gave local people something to do during long winters and helped mining camps develop community identities. Although the Gunnison Club never met again after that first season (ski clubs being more ephemeral and transitory than mining camps themselves), other mining communities formed snowshoe clubs of their own. Ouray, for instance, formed the Mount Sneffles Snowshoe Club and offered snacks and alcoholic beverages at their ski meetings.<sup>55</sup> The festive air connected with ski clubs and their races encouraged some residents of Hunters Pass to ease tensions by defining their mass exodus to Aspen during the blizzard of 1898-99 as "The Annual Race of the Hunters Pass Tenderfoot Snow-Shoe Club."<sup>56</sup>

As a local means of transportation and recreation, a method of acting out local rivalries and fostering community identity, and as a kind of social leisure, skiing strengthened nineteenth-century mountain town communities. Recreation, however, remained secondary to the primary task of labor and work. Nineteenth-century skiing in Colorado took hold because miners and ranchers were seeking new wealth in far-away places; they skied "out there" because they lived and worked "out there," and they only lived "out there" because there was no way to work there and live somewhere else. Commuting was not an option. Accordingly, they understood the Rocky Mountains as a source of wealth and as a barrier they had put between themselves and the civilization of Denver's urban center in order to make money. Skiing mitigated the strength of the barrier by enabling men to bring mail, money, and even religion across the mountains, but those mountains remained

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<sup>55</sup>Fay, 6. The Silverton area boasted of some excellent skiers, including Jim Voorheis, who a Denver paper described as skiing "like a war-horse thirsting for gore," as well as George W. Bagley, and Bunker Neeley. See Benson, "Before Aspen and Vail," 57.

<sup>56</sup>Elder, "From Hunters Pass," 5, as cited in Benson, "Before Skiing Was Fun," 437.

Muriel Sibell Wolle, *The Bonanza Trail: Ghost Towns and Mining Camps of the West* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1953), 394.

Figure 1. Colorado Ghost Towns and Mining Camps, 1953

dangerous, isolating, problematic. As such, people understood the the Rocky Mountain landscape as uncivilized and therefore, in relation to women, masculine. Not by accident did most women limit their skiing to town.

Mining camp skiing and the cultural meanings it acquired relied upon distance and difficulty. Improved railroad connections between urban centers and mountain towns eventually removed the need for hardy mail carriers to risk their limbs and lives crossing mountain passes on skis.<sup>57</sup> Skiing mailmen eventually went the way of the Pony Express: out of business and into the world of masculine myth. With them went a particular ski culture, one based upon both isolation and community-building. That culture, however, would leave its traces on those who came to the mountains in the future. By 1886 Como (just over Boreas Pass from Breckenridge), Crested Butte, Silverton, and Aspen enjoyed railroad access to the outside world. In 1891 the Rio Grande Southern linked Ridgeway, Telluride, Ophir, and Rico to Durango with a system that crossed four mountain passes and connected Durango to every major San Juan mining district except Creede and Lake City. Railroads reached from Denver to Steamboat Springs in 1909, boosting Steamboat's tourist business almost immediately. As mountain towns gained access to the rails, the movement of people, money, mail, and ore swelled. Towns boomed and railroad tracks altered the map of winter transportation routes, cutting out mail carriers' routes and reinforcing the isolation of those towns and camps which were not fortunate enough to have their own railroad. The culture of snowshoeing mailmen and mountain town skiing persisted in areas where the railroads did not

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<sup>57</sup>Toll roads, like the one Otto Mears built between Silverton and Ouray in the 1880s, made it easier for stages to carry the mail than ever before, but when snow got too deep to clear away the stage companies usually sub-contracted their mail route out to men on snowshoes. Stages carried the mail over Berthoud Pass after the road was finished in 1875; snowshoer Bill Kimball carried it during the winter. Byers, 11, 13.

reach, continuing to provide mobility for those needing to travel to and among those towns.<sup>58</sup>

While the decisions of railroad magnates sparked booms in some towns, others disappeared from view as their continued isolation or lack of valuable ore encouraged people and investors to move on and move out. Many gold camps, including Father Dyer's stomping ground of Buckskin Joe and Mosquito, had boomed and busted by the mid-1860s. The gold discovered in Irwin, Gothic, and Crested Butte played out in the early 1880s; only coal deposits and the Colorado Fuel and Iron Company saved Crested Butte from the fate of its neighbors. Kokomo's economy declined after 1881, only 20 years after its birth, and the attraction of Ophir's gold finally disappeared when the railroad came to neighboring Rico in 1891 and that town boomed. The repeal of the Sherman Silver Purchase Act applied further pressure to local economies, dropping the bottom out of silver prices in 1893 and prompting a mass exodus from Aspen, Telluride, and Leadville. Only towns that mined gold as well as silver--Leadville, Ouray, Silverton, Gunnison, and Telluride among them--avoided severe or long-term economic depression. The boom and bust economic cycles that helped create and destroy these mining communities had the same effects on their ski clubs. The Gunnison County Snowshoe Club, which had organized contests at Crested Butte, Gunnison, Gothic, and Irwin in 1886, disappeared after one season. Mining camp rivalries dissolved with the population, and so did the ski racing that articulated those rivalries.

Yet, even if it faded, nineteenth-century skiing in Colorado mountain towns would shape the development of the sport and the tourist industry in the twentieth

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<sup>58</sup>Note that despite the Gunnison County Snowshoe Club's success in getting spectators to their 1886 meet by running special trains from various mining camps to Gunnison, a number of contestants still had to ski much of the way there. Warren, 351.

century.<sup>59</sup> Some mining towns refused to expire; others--despite their sleepy atmosphere--retained small populations for years. Those who continued to live in these hinterlands depended on their snowshoes for transportation and fun as they had before, and passed down their knowledge of the sport and its equipment to their children. It was these local skiers who would greet the urban, upper-class, lovers of the outdoors who traveled to the hinterland in hopes of exercise, scenery, and sport in the opening decades of the twentieth century. Together, these skiers and a new cohort of Norwegian immigrants forged a system of ski carnivals and a tradition of recreational skiing that shaped the sport in Colorado for years to come.

#### Urbanites on Tour

An urban movement towards outdoor recreation during the 1890s offers yet another way to tell the story of skiing in Colorado. With its roots in an earlier tradition of wealthy tourism, this movement encouraged an understanding of the Rocky Mountain landscape that contrasted with the one shared by mountain town residents. At the same time that working-class miners were living in the mountains taking bets on whose local snowshoer could ski fastest, wealthy urbanites began roaming the nation in plush railroad cars looking for a bit of scenery. By the 1860s, middle- and upper-class Americans had turned to the leisure tourism established earlier in Europe. They spent their leisure time seeing the sights and hoping that the grandeur of national monuments would put America on a cultural par with the older nations in Europe.<sup>60</sup> Natural sights,

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<sup>59</sup>One ski historian argues, in contrast, that California mining camp skiing developed and fell separately from the trend that would develop the sport nationwide. Allen, *From Skisport to Skiing*, 13. Allen also described mining camp skiing as thoroughly secular, in contrast to the moral values that upper-class outdoorspeople would bring to it in the 1890s and early twentieth century. While this contrast is apparent in Colorado as well, it begins to break down in the mid-twentieth century.

<sup>60</sup>Anne Farrar Hyde, *An American Vision: Far Western Landscape and National Culture, 1820-1920* (New York: New York University Press, 1990), Chap. 1;

celebrated by romantic artists and writers, lent an aura of timelessness and majesty to a nation whose history enjoyed neither. American examples of breathtaking scenery and landscapes that would impress even those familiar with the Alps attracted tourists to the Rockies throughout the second half of the nineteenth century. These sites acquired almost sacred status.<sup>61</sup> "America's nature, if not her culture," as one historian put it, "would command the world's admiration."<sup>62</sup> New railroad connections to the region brought tourists from the East to the West and from increasingly urban areas to places where open spaces, fresh air, and mountain scenery seemed to offer escape, liberation, and renewal. Indeed, the transcontinental railroad companies practically promised such an experience. "By 1869," one historian wrote, "the Far West had become a cleverly packaged commodity, ready to be consumed by wealthy train travelers."<sup>63</sup> Beginning a trend that would continue through the twentieth century, these railroad publicity experts marketed the Rocky Mountains' scenic value to tourists and emphasized that by seeing the mountains for themselves, their customers would become even more cosmopolitan than they already were. Visiting the Rockies thus became, for them, an act of leisure associated closely with social status and national identity.

The new mobility created by the railroad did not come cheap. Tourists needed time free from work to travel, and money to ensure safe and comfortable

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John F. Sears, *Sacred Places: American Tourist Attractions in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 4. See her preface and the introduction for more on the relationships between landscape and culture and between landscape and national identity. "Wilderness" also often functioned as a tourist attraction, and Roderick Nash noted that by the mid-nineteenth century wilderness was "recognized as a cultural and moral resource and as a basis for national self-esteem." Roderick Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind*, third edition (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), 67,

<sup>61</sup>Hyde, 19; Sears, 5-7; Earl Pomeroy, *In Search of the Golden West: The Tourist in Western America* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1957), 34. Pomeroy remains a significant authority on tourism in the West.

<sup>62</sup>Nash, 68.

<sup>63</sup>Hyde, 54.

conditions along the way. They hired private Pullman cars--if not entire trains--for a trip that would cost at least \$300 regularly, without meals. New luxury hotels in the 1870s and 1880s required even more cash, not to mention an appropriate wardrobe.<sup>64</sup> One guidebook estimated in 1873 that a trip to California and back, with side trips to the Rockies and Yosemite, would cost at least \$1200--as much or more as a vacation to Europe.<sup>65</sup> Accordingly, leisurely visits to the Rockies tempted only the wealthy in the nineteenth century, most of whom had already toured Europe. This class of tourists applied their romantic tastes and their familiarity with the Alps to their understanding of the landscape.<sup>66</sup>

Journalist Samuel Bowles, for example, along with eleven other people, traveled west during the summer of 1867 in luxurious Pullman cars. They rode west to Salt Lake City and back to Cheyenne, where they took a coach south to Denver. After camping and picnicking in the mountains, seeing the mining region of Clear Creek and Georgetown, and riding mules over Berthoud Pass to Middle Park, Bowles articulated a view of the landscape very different from that of the mail carriers. His account of the trip, "The Switzerland of America: A Summer Vacation in the Parks and Mountains of Colorado," concluded that "Switzerland is pleasure and health; Colorado is these and use besides--the use of beauty, and the use of profitable work united."<sup>67</sup> Twenty years later Ernest Ingersoll followed the same path, "rambling" West in a luxurious Pullman car all the way to Denver, where he and his group chartered a narrow gauge train to take them into the mountains. He and his party considered their single stagecoach trip to be quite bothersome and uncomfortable, but worth it for the scenery. Ingersoll wrote--with no irony intended--that "roughing it, within reasonable grounds, is the marrow of this sort

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<sup>64</sup>Pomeroy, 7-11, 20-23.

<sup>65</sup>Hyde, 108.

<sup>66</sup>Pomeroy, 33-34.

<sup>67</sup>Samuel Bowles, *The Switzerland of America: A Summer Vacation in the Parks and Mountains of Colorado* (Springfield MA: Samuel Bowles and Co., 1869), iv.

of recreation."<sup>68</sup> His "ramble" assured Ingersoll that "the grand and alluring mountains are still there--everlasting hills, unchangeable refuges from weariness, anxiety and strife."<sup>69</sup> Articulate, upper-class, and well-traveled, Bowles and Ingersoll embodied a kind of masculine ideal far different from their mining camp contemporaries. While still based on mobility, the kind of movement Bowles and Ingersoll exercised demanded wealth and leisure time more than individual strength, endurance, and bravery. Their masculinity, still based on movement through the landscape, had more to do with comfort, ease, and class-based connections than with isolation and danger.

Ingersoll's romantic vision had changed since he toured the area with a USGS survey years before. Then, his relative poverty and more humble mode of travel positioned him--albeit temporarily--as closer kin to mailman John Dyer. John Dyer had always wanted to see Pikes Peak, but to do so, he had to walk from Denver. His subsequent trappings around Summit County's mining camps gave him an insider's view of the mountains and a realistic understanding of the danger they represented, but this did not stop him from appreciating a sunrise. Just after he escaped unscathed from an avalanche area in the midst of a blizzard, for example, Dyer watched the sun rise through the storm. "Although my situation was very disagreeable," he remembered, "I could stop a few minutes and gaze at this astonishing Rocky Mountain scene, sitting in the storm to watch its wonderous ways."<sup>70</sup> Dyer's fascination with the storm underscores the fact that the surrounding weather held more wonder and personal relevance for him than "scenery" imagined through European lenses and viewed from the safety of a railroad car.

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<sup>68</sup>Ernest Ingersoll, *The Crest of the Continent: A Record of a Summer's Ramble In the Rocky Mountains and Beyond* (Chicago: R.R. Donnelley and Sons Co., 1890), 5.

<sup>69</sup>Ingersoll, 6. Ingersoll had been through the Rockies before, on a USGS trip in 1874, which explains why he was glad the mountains were "still" there.

<sup>70</sup>Dyer, 170.

Bowles' and Ingersoll's perspectives as wealthy visitors, however, allowed them to see the landscape as "scenery" rather than as "home" or "on-the-way-to-home." As "scene" rather than "place," the Rockies were a landscape of imagination and ideology, a morally uplifting and healthy place that urban residents ought to visit for liberation and renewal. Isabella Bird, an English outdoorswoman who spent the fall and early winter of 1873 in Estes Park, wrote "there is nothing of beauty of grandeur for which the heart can wish that is not here; and it is health giving, with pure air, pure water, and absolute dryness."<sup>71</sup> This perspective, moreover, only made sense from--and in relation to--the urban "center." The tradition of nineteenth-century tourism in the Rockies began the commodification of undeveloped landscape there, by emphasizing its scenic beauty and capacity for physical and moral rejuvenation. In the context of an industrializing and urbanizing America, these attributed characteristics would only increase in value. By the 1890s the middle and upper classes had inaugurated a group of national movements promoting outdoor recreation and health, movements that would, when combined with advances in ski technique and technology, create a new passion for skiing centered not on the local mines and community but on urban recreational commuters.

As upper-class urban dwellers, outdoor recreationists of the late nineteenth century shared the earlier tourists' assumption that "wilderness" landscapes had value as recreational resources--as an antidote for the urban ills infecting the nation. They also came to share the enthusiasm for western landscapes, exercise, and the challenges of the outdoors embodied by Theodore Roosevelt.<sup>72</sup> Camping grew increasingly popular in America, and as historian Earl Pomeroy noted, outdoor recreation became popular across the country in a few

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<sup>71</sup>Isabella L. Bird, *A Lady's Life in the Rocky Mountains* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1960), 208.

<sup>72</sup>See Pomeroy, 94-104; Nash, 149-153.

years.<sup>73</sup> Undeveloped mountain environments called city-dwellers out to play and offered them the chance for physical, spiritual, and moral renewal. Anticipating Frederick Jackson Turner's declaration that the "frontier" no longer existed after 1890, some joined the philosophers, naturalists, and artists who had set out to preserve parts of "out there" to make sure they would always be separate from the cities. Henry David Thoreau, Frederick Law Olmsted, and John Muir all emphasized the spiritual value of preserving wilderness in the face of advancing urbanization and industrialization.<sup>74</sup> The American government nodded its assent to their ideas--or at least agreed to preserve "certain striking and curious phenomena"--by setting the Yosemite Valley aside in 1864 "for public use, resort and recreation," and by establishing Yellowstone as a National Park in 1872.<sup>75</sup> Dashing the chance that the Forest Reserves created in 1891 would set even more wilderness aside for safe keeping, the 1897 Forest Management Act opened the areas to logging, mining, and grazing. Muir and other preservationists were (understandably) slow to realize that outdoor recreation and the tourism that followed on its heels constituted a "use" of the National Parks that would endanger their integrity as preserved lands. In the late nineteenth century, their vision of preservation and the desire of outdoor recreationists to get away from the pressure and pollution of the city coincided and reinforced each other. Frederick Law Olmsted, creator of Central Park in Manhattan, consciously planned Yosemite as a public park to accommodate tourists.

Some people sought special status for areas in the Rocky Mountains as well. Globe-trotting tourists had dubbed them the Alps of America in the 1860s; English

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<sup>73</sup>Pomeroy, 143.

<sup>74</sup>Nash, 88, 101, 106-7, 122-40; Pomeroy, 90-91; Frederick Law Olmsted, "The Yosemite Valley and the Mariposa Big Trees," *Landscape Architecture*, XLII (1952), 17, 20-23.

<sup>75</sup>Pomeroy, 92; Nash, 106, 112. Yellowstone was more consciously preserved for its unusual geographic features than Yosemite; neither were set aside as representative wilderness areas.

outdoorswoman Isabella Bird and artist Albert Bierstadt had visited in the 1870s; and by the first decades of the 1900s naturalist Enos Mills noted that Theodore Roosevelt and others had called the Colorado Rockies "The Nation's Playground." "This Colorado region," Mills said, "really is one vast natural park."<sup>76</sup> Mills had made the Estes Park region his home and area of biological study, and he embarked upon a mission to preserve it as a national park. Conscious of the tourism the region had enjoyed and hoping to increase it, Mills compared the Rocky Mountains favorably with the Alps and recognized that grand scenery, excellent climate, good entertainment, and swift and comfortable transportation were necessary prerequisites to boosting tourism in the area.<sup>77</sup> A proponent of healthy minds and bodies through outdoor recreation, Mills also understood the financial benefits of the growth of tourism. He saw parks as valuable for their scenery, because "they make better men and women," because outdoor life was educational, and because they made money.<sup>78</sup> Automobile stagelines to nearby Loveland in 1907, and Lyons in 1909, brought tourists by the carload to Estes Park, prompting entrepreneurs to build five new hotels between 1908 and 1911, including the luxurious Stanley Hotel and Stanley Manor.<sup>79</sup> After a drawn-out battle between park proponents and the U.S. Forest Service, Rocky Mountain National Park opened its gates in January of 1915. By the following year roads connected the park to Boulder, Ward, Longmont, Fort Collins, and Grand Lake as well as Loveland and Lyons, and nearly

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<sup>76</sup>Enos A. Mills, *The Story of Estes Park, Grand Lake and Rocky Mountain National Park* (Estes Park CO: Enos Mills, 1917); Enos A. Mills, *The Rocky Mountain Wonderland* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1915), 313. Bird came to Estes Park in 1873, Bierstadt in 1874. Isabella Bird also recognized the spiritual and physical benefits of the Estes Park landscape when she wrote "there is nothing of beauty or grandeur for which the heart can wish that is not here; and it is health giving, with pure air, pure water, and absolute dryness." Bird, 208.

<sup>77</sup>Mills, *Rocky Mountain Wonderland*, 319.

<sup>78</sup>Mills, *Rocky Mountain Wonderland*, 323.

<sup>79</sup>Mills, *The Story of Estes Park*, 97-100.

100,000 visitors came to the region.<sup>80</sup> Rocky Mountain National Park was an instant success.

Mills' infatuation with the Estes Park region coincided with the rise of what historian Roderick Nash called "The Wilderness Cult." The early twentieth century saw increasingly industrialized cities, the seeming decline of American civilization, and the end of the "frontier." For those caught in the city, the primitive and the wild offered sources of spiritual beauty and truth. John Muir wrote that "thousands of tired, nerve-shaken, over-civilized people are beginning to find out that going to the mountains is going home . . . Mountain parks and reservations are useful not only as fountains of timber and irrigating rivers," he said, "but as fountains of life."<sup>81</sup> Appreciation of the wilderness had spread from a relatively small group of upper-class tourists to become a more middle-class, national cult.<sup>82</sup> The growth of this "cult" coincided with the increasing popularity of outdoor recreation that had spread after the Civil War from Europe to the East, and--by the 1890s--to the West as well. Earl Pomeroy noted the conspicuous presence of Easterners camping in the Rockies as early as the 1870s, by which time Boston residents had formed the Appalachian Mountain Club. By the 1880s, "westerners were camping on an impressive scale."<sup>83</sup> John Muir's Sierra Club, established in 1892, represented the growing population of westerners interested in "exploring, enjoying, and rendering accessible the mountain regions of the Pacific Coast."<sup>84</sup> On the other side of the country, colleges were creating outing

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<sup>80</sup>See Mills, *The Story of Estes Park*, 102-110. The Forest Service opposed the formation of the Park primarily because the land had been used for grazing.

<sup>81</sup>John Muir, "The Wild Parks and Forest Reservations of the West," *Atlantic Monthly*, 81 (1898), 15, as cited in Nash, 140.

<sup>82</sup>Nash, 143.

<sup>83</sup>Pomeroy, 141, 143-44. Antecedents to the Appalachian Mountain Club, which was formed in 1876, were the British Alpine Club formed in 1857, and a similar club formed by the Swiss in 1863.

<sup>84</sup>Nash, 132. The Oregon Alpine Club was established earlier than the Sierra Club, in 1887. Pomeroy, 144.

clubs, encouraging students to get outside and cultivate healthy bodies as well as healthy minds. Enos Mills' reports of new roads and hotels growing up around the Estes Park region of Colorado and the growing popularity of outdoor recreation that he saw supported Pomeroy's conclusion that "By the nineties the whole character of tourism in western America, so recently established, was clearly in flux."<sup>85</sup> The naturalist Mills embodied these ideals in the Rocky Mountains, embarking on frequent hikes and even winter ski camping trips with his dog, Scotch.<sup>86</sup>

He was not alone in his enthusiasm for Colorado's outdoors. Denver resident Mary Sabin had already climbed seven peaks in the state by 1912, many with her sister, Florence. On April 3 she and James Grafton Rogers invited some friends over to create the Colorado Mountain Club. They wrote:

We are organized to unite the energy, interest, and knowledge of the students, explorers, and lovers of the mountains of Colorado; to collect and disseminate information on the Rocky Mountains in behalf of science, literature, art and recreation; to stimulate the public interest in our mountain areas; to encourage the preservation of forests, flowers, fauna, and natural scenery; and to render readily accessible the alpine attractions of this region.<sup>87</sup>

The Colorado Mountain Club (CMC) thus brought interests in the preservation of scenery and wilderness, exercise and outdoor recreation, and tourism, together in one group. That first year the 25 charter members took ten trips. In three years the CMC would be skiing. Urban outdoor clubs like Denver's CMC based their missions on assumptions about the mountain landscape that stemmed directly from their upper-class status and urban location. They understood the mountains as "wild" and "other," as places to visit, play, and preserve. This perspective seems foreign when juxtaposed with that of the lower-class people who lived and worked in the same mountains, earning their living by developing that environment and

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<sup>85</sup>Pomeroy, 145.

<sup>86</sup>See Enos A. Mills, *The Spell of the Rockies* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1911).

<sup>87</sup>Hugh E. Kingery and Elinor Eppich Kingery, *The Colorado Mountain Club: The First Seventy-Five Years of a Highly Individual Corporation, 1912-1987* (Evergreen CO: Cordillera Press, Inc., 1988), 23, 11.

struggling to overcome the boundaries it imposed in winter. Indeed, such contrasting views would continue to raise questions and distinguish mountain town visitors from residents through the twentieth century.

#### Flying Norsemen and Winter Carnivals

Miners in the Rocky Mountains had learned in the 1870s that Scandinavians knew more about skiing than anyone else. The same lesson held true at the end of the century for the recreationists of the CMC, as a new wave of Scandinavian immigrants entered the lives of Coloradans. Norwegians had improved their mobility on skis drastically in the mid-1800s; Sondre Nordheim of Telemark invented the first binding that attached to the heel, and developed the Telemark and the Christiania turns, enabling skiers to maneuver downhill and even jump with ease and grace. By the 1860s jumping competitions had sprouted up throughout Norway and Scandinavia to complement the cross-country races started twenty years earlier, and Nordheim won them handily. He and other skiers from Telemark spread their ideas to those in Christiania (now Oslo), entering contests there and forming the Christiania Ski Club in 1877, which boasted a new cross-country and jumping facility.<sup>88</sup> The Club organized its first national competition two years later, and the Telemark skiers astounded the Prince of Denmark and Norway's King Oscar II with their abilities. "From that day on," one Norwegian historian wrote, "the skiing events at Huseby Hill turned into a national occasion for the whole country." Norway's first Nordic Winter festival would take place at an even better skiing facility in Holmenkollen in 1903. Competitors came from Sweden, and an entire week was dedicated to the celebration of winter sports. National

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<sup>88</sup>Hovelsen, 2-5; Dudley, 36; Erikson, 18-20.

competitions, recreational cross-country skiing and jumping, and community ski clubs entered Scandinavian culture and soon spread across the world.<sup>89</sup>

Norwegian Fridtjof Nansen drew further attention to the sport when he skied across Greenland in 1888. He demonstrated the utility of skiing as a means of transportation, but he also publicized its recreational benefits. In a passage that resonated with meaning for nineteenth-century American tourists and outdoorspeople, Nansen brought the sport of skiing to a new audience. "Where will you find more freedom and excitement," he wrote in 1890,

than in speeding, swift as a bird, down the tree-clad hillside, winter air and spruce branches rushing past your face and eyes, brain and muscles alert, ready to avoid the unknown obstacles which at any moment may be thrown in your path? It is as if all civilization were suddenly washed from your mind and left, with the city atmosphere, far behind. You become one with your skis and with nature. Skiing is something which develops not only the body, but also the soul, and it is of greater importance to a nation than is generally supposed.<sup>90</sup>

Nordheim's new technology and technique, and Nansen's public infatuation with the sport, made recreational skiing accessible and attractive to people all over the world who lived in snowy climes. More than mere physical mobility, community activity, or the means to access scenic mountain, "nature," skiing as Nansen described it offered a kind of liberation--an intensely personal relationship to the mountain landscape that had both physical and psychological aspects and could appeal to anyone, regardless of class or residence.

These advances in technique and technology came too late to reach the mining camps of California or Colorado, which explains why skiing across the mountains remained so frightening, and why downhill races entailed skiing straight down a designated slope as fast as possible. Trying to control long snowshoes with only a leather toe strap made for exciting times. When Americans discovered Nordheim's

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<sup>89</sup>T.W. Schreiner, "Norway's National Sport," *Outing*, 37 (March 1901), 711-15; W.S. Harwood, "Ski Running," *Outing*, 21 (February 1893), 339-346.

<sup>90</sup>Hovelson, 6; Hovelsen, 4-5.

advances and the resulting ease with which they could then ski, people from all walks of life took up the sport. Those upper-class Americans accustomed to traveling the world in search of new scenery and diversions first came across recreational skiing in Norway itself or in European resorts that offered winter sports. Swiss alpine resorts, for instance, had been popular with Europeans since the early 1800s, and by the end of the century Americans patronized them as well. By 1900 St. Moritz was importing Norwegian ski instructors and training Swiss ones to complement its winter sports activities. They formed the St. Moritz ski club in February, 1902, a winter in which 55 of the 531 Christmas guests were Americans, all taking part in a "fascinating combination of social climbing, display of wealth, competitiveness, and longing for the simpler life."<sup>91</sup> Other tourists, less concerned with the image of wealth and more with outdoor activity, went straight to the source. One magazine author noted in 1901 that "more and more foreigners, and from farther distances, are every year drawn into the fascination of Norway's national sport and they enjoy it as much as do the natives."<sup>92</sup>

European skiing and tourism went hand-in-hand only for those who could afford travel; this fact would not change over time. Working-class, immigrant Scandinavians, however, also brought this more refined sport to American soil, where it would become part of community life across the northern United States. Economic depression in Norway and Scandinavia from the 1880s to the 1900s encouraged young men to leave home and try to establish themselves in other countries.<sup>93</sup> Miners, missionaries, mailmen, farmers, students, and other

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<sup>91</sup>Paul P. Bernard, *Rush to the Alps: The Evolution of Vacationing in Switzerland* (Boulder: East European Quarterly, distributed by Columbia University Press, 1978), 151, 147. See also Alice Crossette Hall, "Winter Sport in Switzerland," *Outing*, 33 (March 1899), 391-95.

<sup>92</sup>Schreiner, 711.

<sup>93</sup>Severe job shortages and a depression in agriculture and shipping in Norway drove out more than 270,000 people between 1879 and 1893. Paul S. Boyer, et. al., *The Enduring Vision: A History of the American People*, vol. 2 (Lexington MA: D.C. Heath and Co., 1990), 647. At the turn of the century, Norway's entire

emigrant Norwegians introduced skiing to Australia, New Zealand, Alaska, China, Japan, Chile, Argentina, and even North Africa, as well as Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Italy, France, Russia, and Spain.<sup>94</sup> Earlier Scandinavian immigrants had brought Norwegian snowshoes to America, but after 1880, when the bulk of Norwegian immigrants came to the U.S., they spread a new gospel of skiing and jumping, of Telemark and Christiania turns. They were not a small group-- between 1880 and 1889 almost 680,000 immigrants came from Norway, Sweden, and Denmark to America, making up the fourth largest immigrant group of the decade and 12.7% of the period's total immigration.<sup>95</sup> Among the Norwegians who emigrated were 40 skiers from Telemark, including Sondre Nordheim and three other King's Cup winners.<sup>96</sup> Most settled in the Midwest, where they formed ski clubs and held competitions. Local clubs sprang up in northern rural areas where pockets of Scandinavians settled and promoted skiing as healthy, outdoor recreation accessible to locals rather than as a winter sport for elites.<sup>97</sup> Initially ethnically exclusive and distinctly working-class, these clubs eventually opened up to anyone interested in the sport and exhibited some degree of European ethnic diversity.<sup>98</sup>

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construction industry was depressed, and another 102,000 Norwegians emigrated to America between 1900 and 1905. Hovelsen, 21.

<sup>94</sup>Hovelsen, 7-8; Erikson, 20; Dudley, 37-42; Johannes Hroff Wisby, "Carrying the Mail Over the Andes on Skis," *Outing*, 37 (March 1901), 672-75.

<sup>95</sup>Over 390,000 came in the next ten years, and 488,000 between 1900 and 1909. N. Carpenter, "Immigrants and Their Children," *U.S. Bureau of the Census Monograph*, No. 7 (Washington DC, 1927), 324-25, as cited in Alan M. Kraut, *The Huddled Masses: The Immigrant in American Society, 1880-1920* (Arlington Heights IL: Harlan Davidson, Inc., 1982), 20-21. Between 1875 and 1895 some 263,000 of those came from Norway. Hovelsen, 10.

<sup>96</sup>Sondre Nordheim, with his wife and seven children, settled in North Dakota in 1884. Mikkel Hemmestveit came to Minnesota in 1886 and his brother Torjus joined him in 1889; John Hauge had also won the King Oscar II Cup, and he came to America in 1882. Hovelsen, 11; Harwood, 346.

<sup>97</sup>See Allen, *From Skisport to Skiing* for an analysis of *Idraet*, the moral and physical ideal associated with skiing in Norway that influenced its popularity with outdoorspeople and college outing clubs. This ideal closely resembles that of the late nineteenth-century outdoor enthusiasts who toured the Rocky Mountains, and would play a role in college outing clubs and urban clubs such as the CMC.

In 1891 Scandinavian immigrants formed America's first ski association--the Ski Association for the Northwest--headquartered in St. Paul, Minnesota. The American Ski Association, based in Ishpeming, Michigan, followed soon after, in 1904. By 1919 the National Ski Association had united 30 clubs from all over the country, many with names that displayed their Norwegian heritage.<sup>99</sup>

These local and national clubs, though made up primarily of working-class Americans and immigrants and based in small communities, influenced a cross-section of Americans outside their own ethnicity and class. That skiers had organized on a national scale in 1904 and promoted skiing as an ideal healthy outdoor sport attracted the attention and interest of the upper-class outdoor enthusiasts of the 1890s and 1900s, who sought spiritual, physical, and moral refuge in the mountains. Northern colleges--home of elite young men--accordingly grew interested in cultivating healthy student bodies as well as minds and began to establish outing clubs and amateur ski teams. Dartmouth formed both in 1909, and other New England liberal arts colleges followed. Williams, Middlebury, Harvard, Yale, as well as the state universities of Vermont and New Hampshire, formed their own clubs and began a tradition of intercollegiate ski competitions and winter carnivals.<sup>100</sup> Recreational skiing grew through these channels to become popular among the young well-to-do, who had the time, money, and leisure to develop their interest in the outdoors.

The same national club presence that prompted skiing's entrance into northeastern liberal arts colleges also paved the way for the sport in upper-class urban outdoor clubs. College students and mountain club members shared perspectives based on class, urban residence, education, and leisure; their

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<sup>98</sup>Allen, *From Skisport to Skiing*, 50-53. Some Italians and Irish participated in midwestern ski clubs. Allen notes that because the Scandinavian population was much smaller in the West, western ski clubs did not practice ethnic exclusivity.

<sup>99</sup>Erikson, 22; Hovelsen, 11-12; Allen, *From Skisport to Skiing*, 47-50.

<sup>100</sup>Allen, *From Skisport to Skiing*, 75-79; Dudley, 56-58.

recreational habits reinforced each other; and college students often formed or joined outdoor clubs after they graduated. Urban outdoor clubs had developed an upper-class perspective on mountains as scenic wilderness from the tradition of tourism; the growing influence of ethnic ski clubs led them to incorporate skiing into their outdoor activities. The Colorado Mountain Club, like its eastern ancestors and the Sierra Club in California, adopted skiing as part of its winter agenda when it held its first annual ski outing to Fern Lake near Estes Park in 1915.<sup>101</sup> By the 1910s, then, working-class immigrant Scandinavians had introduced a new sport to wealthy urban Americans.

While fewer Norwegians moved to Colorado than to Minnesota or Michigan, those who did had an indelible influence on recreational skiing in the state. One rather typical Norwegian immigrant, with exceptional skill and enthusiasm for the sport, introduced the sport to Denver residents personally. He also brought a Scandinavian cultural tradition of community ski clubs and organized sport to rural mountain towns where recreational skiing had faded away and the sport barely remained as a form of transportation. Carl Howelson and a few fellow Norwegians in Colorado traveled between Denver and its hinterlands and, by 1920, had forged a new connection between the two through skiing. Howelson wove together Scandinavian and American, urban and rural, working and upper class traditions into a finished product that would send the sport into the 1920s with a bang. This "Flying Norseman" crafted the structure that united Father Dyer's nineteenth-century past with CMC member Marjorie Perry's twentieth-century present.

Son of a shoemaker, Karl Hovelsen was born in Christiania in 1877 and, along with ten his brothers and sisters, grew up skiing.<sup>102</sup> His extraordinary

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<sup>101</sup>Evelyn Runnette, "Skiing With the C.M.C.," *The Ski Bulletin* (March 19, 1937), 6-7.

<sup>102</sup>See Hovelsen, 13-64 for Carl Howelson's biography.

stamina and ability to jump soon became apparent, and he developed an unmatched enthusiasm for the sport. Sondre Nordheim, Fridtjof Nansen, and other King's Cup champions were popular idols, and Huseby Hill and Holmenkollen sacred ground. As he grew, Hovelsen only got better at skiing. He entered local competitions age 17 and represented his local Baerum Ski Club. By 1902 and 1903 he was winning almost every cross-country and jumping contest he entered, including ones at Holmenkollen and other national competitions. At the first Nordic Winter Sports Week in 1903 in Christiania, Hovelsen took home the Prince Regent's Cup for the 50 kilometer race, King Oscar's Cup for the combined races, and the Holmenkollen Gold Medal, the highest award of the Holmenkollen races: he had won every ski event.

From 1900 to 1905, however, Norway underwent an industrial depression which made it difficult for Hovelsen, a stonemason and bricklayer by trade, to find work. He spent 1904 working in Germany to earn money for his passage, and immigrated to America the next year. He found work in Chicago and, now as Carl Howelson, joined the recently established Norge Ski Club. A trip to Riverview Park one day made his future travel plans quite exciting and literally launched Howelson to fame. Noticing a ride at the amusement park near Chicago that consisted of cars that slid from the top of a 90 foot tower down a chute and landed in a pool, Howelson decided to try it on skis. One morning he altered the chute, jumped about 60 feet in the air before landing, and entranced the guards so completely that they let him keep doing it on weekends for the crowds. When the director of the Barnum and Bailey Circus came along and offered him a job, Howelson convinced two of his Norwegian friends to join him in his adventure.

After almost an entire season of performing "a lightning dive, dash and glide, on skimming skis down a declivitous incline; a sweeping, soaring, sensational flight through space, across a gruesome gap, and a final landing on a resilient

landing platform," Howelson hurt his back falling off the jumping platform, left his friend Aksel Henriksen to continue the act without him, and headed back to Chicago.<sup>103</sup> Howelson missed the outdoors, and, like many urban residents looking for the great outdoors, hopped on a train to Denver. The reputation of the Rocky Mountains and news of ample work in Denver drew the "Flying Norseman" to Colorado in the spring of 1909, where he promptly joined the Denver local of the Bricklayers and Masons International Union. This working-class Norwegian immigrant set out to explore the mountains in the region, and in the process he taught both urban and rural residents the fun of skiing.

In December of 1911, Howelson and a Norwegian friend Angell Schmidt took the Moffat Railroad to the top of the Continental Divide and set out on skis toward Middle Park. They talked with a Swedish rancher in Fraser--Doc Susie's stomping ground--and skied on to Hot Sulphur Springs, where they met John Peyer. Peyer had heard of Hot Sulphur's curative baths and hot springs all the way from his home in Switzerland and so came to settle in Colorado. Coming from a country where winter sports were an institution, Peyer was eager to get them going in Colorado. He helped organize Hot Sulphur's Winter Sports Club in the fall of 1911. In a fortuitous coincidence, their first carnival to be held December 30, the day after Howelson and Schmidt turned up at his house on skis. After a quick demonstration, the two Norwegians added skiing to the winter carnival events and showed local residents as well as visitors from Denver the fun of ski jumping. The carnival was such a success the Winter Sports Club planned a larger, three-day carnival for the coming February, in which Howelson and Schmidt agreed to participate.<sup>104</sup> This Hot Sulphur Carnival of 1912 created quite a stir. The *Denver Post* published an article in January that exclaimed "Sulphur Springs

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<sup>103</sup>Barnum and Bailey Circus ad copy, from Hovelsen, 29; see also Wren, 9-12.

<sup>104</sup>Hovelsen, 36-40; Jim Wier, "Skiing at Hot Sulphur Springs," *Grand County Historical Association Journal*, 4 (January 1984), 13-14.

Successful Winter Sports Awaken Interest for Skiing Carnival in Denver," "Former Residents of Norway Give Exhibition that Pleased Spectators," and "Carl Howelson and Angell Schmidt Return From Trip in Mountains and Wonder Why Coloradoans Are Not Ski Experts."<sup>105</sup>

With that first trip to Hot Sulphur, Howelson and Schmidt re-introduced recreational skiing to mountain residents who already owned and used "snowshoes," but lacked the tighter bindings that would enable them to jump and ski downhill more easily. The Norwegians also attracted the attention of Denver residents who had come to the carnival at Hot Sulphur or who read about their skiing and jumping in the paper, thus generating support for ski clubs and competitions in Denver as well as in neighboring mountain communities. Winter sport carnivals and skiing competitions would, many businesspeople and residents hoped, draw tourists to Denver and its nearby mountains in winter--especially those tourists interested in health, the outdoors, and beautiful scenery.

Carnivals required competitors as well as spectators, and John Peyer set out to catch as many of each as he could for the February carnival in Hot Sulphur. He invited ski clubs from the East and Midwest as well as people from all over the West asking experts on skis, sleds, and skates to attend. The *Rocky Mountain News* wrote in late January that entries were coming from "nearly all the States of the Union where snow and ice are to be found," and from Canada, too. "Many people residing in Western Colorado will participate in the carnival, as will many from Denver." The article noted that hundreds of spectators from Denver and elsewhere in Colorado would attend, as would writers and photographers from Eastern publications.<sup>106</sup> The huge success of the 1912 carnival paved the way for an even

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<sup>105</sup>"Sulphur Springs Successful Winter Sports," *Denver Post*, 7 January 1912, clipping, general ski collection, Grand County Historical Society (GCHS), Hot Sulphur Springs, Colorado.

<sup>106</sup>*Rocky Mountain News*, 29 January 1912, as cited in Hovelsen, 39.

bigger celebration the next year, which would include the Norwegian sport of skijoring, where skiers fly behind galloping horses, as well as Howelson and Colorado jumpers competing against two of the best ski jumpers from Red Wing, Minnesota. The January 31, 1913 *Daily News* announced that "judging from the reservations already made at local hotels, the attendance this year will far outnumber that at the carnival last year. Accommodations for 65 Denver people has already been engaged. The Moffat [rail]Road," it continued, "is making a special round-trip of only \$7.40 from Denver."<sup>107</sup> The success of this second carnival was ensured when Howelson, the local favorite, emerged victorious over the visiting jumpers.

Celebrations of winter and sport imported from Norway, Colorado's local winter carnivals served important cultural purposes. They brought together groups of people otherwise separated by residence, class, and ethnicity; they engaged women, men, and children in games and sporting competitions, and they provided some mountain communities with their biggest social event of the year. These annual events fell short of classic Bakhtinian carnival in which class, gender, and racial identities became inverted.<sup>108</sup> They represented, instead, a more historicized, diluted version in which people of different classes and backgrounds mingled on equal terms, cultural restraints upon women temporarily lifted, and ethnic differences dissolved. In this context wealthy CMC members cheered lustily for their local champion Carl Howelson, whose working-class ethnicity and swarthinness contrasted sharply with their own ivy league educations and upper-class constructions of masculinity. In this atmosphere, too, spectators became participants. Women and children competed in their own events--

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<sup>107</sup> *Daily News*, 31 January 1913, as cited in Hovelsen, 41.

<sup>108</sup> See Michael Holquist, *Diologism: Bakhtin and His World* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 89-90; and Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, trans. by Helene Iswolsky (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984).

including jumping contests and events with ambiguous names like the "Ladies' Free-for-All." It was within the context of a winter carnival, significantly, that Carl Howelson met Denver outdoor enthusiast and CMC member Marjorie Perry--a woman with whom he shared little in common. That sport which they did have in common, however, would become the base for a close friendship between these two individuals in years to come just as it would unite mountain town residents with their distant city neighbors.

Key to the growth of winter sports clubs, carnivals, and competitions in the state was the railroad, which brought contestants and spectators to events they otherwise would not or could not attend. It was on the Moffat Railroad where Carl Howelson first met Marjorie Perry. The fact that both were traveling on the railroad, moreover, underlined the new connections between urban center and hinterland upon which recreational skiing would come to depend. Perry's identity as an upper-class outdoorsperson required trips between Denver and her second residence at Steamboat Springs, just as Howelson's skiing associations required him to leave his Denver masonry work for Hot Sulphur Springs. One winter day in 1913, their paths crossed. Perry was on her way to Steamboat in February and, when the train stopped at Hot Sulphur, friends who were there suggested she stay on and watch the ski jumping exhibition the next day. She did. And she met Howelson, and asked him to come demonstrate the sport at Steamboat Springs, which he did. After seeing the town's mountains, open valleys, and ranches, he moved there and began a tradition of local skiing that would earn Steamboat Springs the nickname, "Ski Town USA."<sup>109</sup>

In February 1914, Steamboat Springs held its own annual winter carnival and although "due to the irregularity of the trains' only twenty spectators arrived from Denver, everyone in town fit for boots and mittens was there, and ranch

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<sup>109</sup>Towler, 51-52; Hovelsen, 51-64; Wren, 9-31.

families from miles about hitched up sleds and were on hand." Estimated attendance was between 1,500 and 2,000. Events ranged from the center-stage ski jumping to a shooting match, cross-country races, and a Ladies Free-For-All, as well as street events including the Boy Scout Fire Race, the Wheelbarrow race, a Hazard race, a log sawing relay on skis, and skijoring.<sup>110</sup> Immediately integrated into the community calendar, Steamboat Spring's winter carnival continues even today as a major event where visitors and residents come together to celebrate winter and sport.

The Steamboat Springs Winter Sports Club was formed to plan the carnival and continued after 1917 as the Steamboat Springs Ski Club. With its ladies auxiliary the S.K.I. Club and a high school affiliate, Steamboat's ski club--and the carnival it put on--stood out as larger, more well-known, and boasting a broader community base than any other carnival and club of the time. As with most rural ski clubs, Steamboat's was rooted in the town's working-class population. Howelson himself, along with a few other Norwegian immigrants nearby, continued to earn their livings through manual labor.<sup>111</sup> Rather than a sport for elite outdoor recreationists, the kind of skiing Howelson brought to Steamboat Springs encouraged everyone in the community to enjoy the mountains on skis. Indeed, the weekend trips he led encouraged the town's residents to ski together as a community. He promoted an appreciation of the mountain landscape that recognized that landscape as home.

Howelson's encounter with Marjorie Perry led him to bring Norwegian ideals of community skiing to life in the Rocky Mountains at the same time that it publicized the sport in the region. Howelson himself taught hundreds of people how to ski between 1912 and 1921: people from Denver, Estes Park, Leadville, Yampa,

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<sup>110</sup>Wren, 14-21.

<sup>111</sup>Towler, 52.

Craig, Clark, Breckenridge, Golden, and Hayden.<sup>112</sup> Other Norwegians joined Howelson in promoting the sport in Denver and beyond. Peter Prestrud, for example, moved to Colorado in 1910 and became the postmaster in Frisco (near Breckenridge). He organized the Summit County Ski Club, which helped build a large jumping hill in Dillon and held its first meet there in 1919.

The combined influence of Howelson and his fellow immigrants who taught people how to ski, winter carnivals which publicized the sport, and railroads that increased access to the mountains, prompted the CMC to add skiing to its winter activities in 1915.<sup>113</sup> Enos Mills, who had been using Norwegian snowshoes for his naturalist studies and winter camping trips for years, noticed that recreational skiing had taken hold in the Estes Park area by 1917.<sup>114</sup> The growing visibility of the sport and the influence of local Norwegian immigrants helped recreational skiing expand among the upper classes in Denver as well as among residents of rural towns.

In December of 1913 Carl Howelson and fellow Norwegian C. Andrews helped form the Denver Ski Club, a group of rather wealthy Denverites who wished to further winter sports and hold their own winter carnival. That club grew and changed its name a year later, when Norwegian B.O. Johnson introduced Howelson and the sport of skiing to wealthy Denverite and instant ski enthusiast Dr. Menifee Howard. Together the group built a jump at Inspiration Point outside of the city, held a carnival there in January of 1914, and established the Denver-Rocky Mountain Ski Club.<sup>115</sup> Howard would prove vital to the promotion of skiing and

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<sup>112</sup>Hovelsen, 46.

<sup>113</sup>Runnette, 6.

<sup>114</sup>Mills, *The Spell of the Rockies*, 109, 309; Mills, *The Story of Estes Park*, 101; Hovelsen, 62.

<sup>115</sup>"Ski Jumping Added to Denver Winter Sport Schedule," *Denver Post*, 2 December 1913, clipping, GCHS; Hovelsen, 47; Rachel Zeiner, "The Jump at Genesee," *Denver Post*, 15 November 1981, 37, clipping, recreation-skiing file, CHS.

winter tourism in the Denver area. In December of 1915 he wrote in the *Rocky Mountain News* that skiing "comes to us as a healthy, clean and exhilarating out-of-doors pastime that brings the beautiful nature of the Almighty close to the hearts of men and women. The mountain slopes, as we have them in Denver, present an ideal place for such sport in the wintertime."<sup>116</sup>

A few years later Howard and the Ski Club bought ten acres of land on Genesee Mountain and took out a lease on 300 more to build a better jump site and a club house. Denver skiers held their first meet there in 1919, and the whole city looked forward to 1921, when they would host the national championships. As the Coloradans had hoped, thousands of spectators flocked to Denver and Genesee, and Carl Howelson took home the gold medal. Competitions such as these, like winter carnivals, brought together two distinctly separate kinds of skiers. Wealthy urbanites who understood skiing as a scenic, rejuvenating experience tied to upper-class status and an accordingly intellectual kind of masculinity joined and cheered working-class Scandinavian immigrants who came from Colorado's hinterland and towns across the country to test their manhood by flying through the air on homemade skis.

As one of many Norwegian immigrants, Carl Howelson traveled across the Atlantic and across the United States in search of work. As a skier his mobility was far more startling, because his travel on skis and on the railroads, combined with his legendary skill and enthusiasm, publicized the sport and united--in a strikingly lasting way--very different groups of people. Urban and rural, upper and working class, tourist and local all joined in recreational skiing by the late 1910s. Mountain scenery, healthy exercise, and outdoor air attracted educated, upper-class city folk to skiing in Europe and the Rocky Mountains. The Norwegian

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<sup>116</sup>Dr. Meniffee Howard, "Sport of Skiing in the Rocky Mountains," *Rocky Mountain News*, 5 December 1915, as cited in Hovelsen, 47.

snowshoes that mountain town residents had once used to hold their communities together and communicate with the rest of the world became--when outfitted with bindings and shortened a little--new sources of recreation. Scandinavian immigrants like those who had introduced snowshoes in the nineteenth century turned up in mountain towns again to create community-wide ski clubs and teach the joys of skiing and jumping. But these townspeople skied, as they always had, because they lived in mountains, not because they had extra leisure time and a hankering for a change of scenery. Early skiing thus fostered contrasting perceptions of the mountain landscape and took on different cultural meanings depending on the skier's class and location.

While their economic status and position between the "center" and "out there" changed little, the mobility granted them by the railroads and the new ski technology and technique from Norway allowed these disparate groups to relax and recreate in the mountains. The carnivals and competitions that Howelson and others established in Colorado brought residents of mountain towns and Denver railroad tourists together in the interest of sport. While in the 1910s and 1920s distinctions between the "center" and "out there," upper and working class, local and tourist merged during carnivals and competitions, those distinctions remained important. During the 1920s and 1930s two skiing traditions, one associated with wealthy European resort culture and one linked to Colorado mountain communities in a period of economic decline, would continue to characterize the development of Rocky Mountain skiing.

## CHAPTER TWO

### On Edge: Masculinity, Femininity, and Alpine Skiing

In 1939 Friedl Pfeifer saw Hoyt Smith in Sun Valley's ball room, asked her to dance, and fell in love. The Austrian ski instructor courted her and captured her heart, but her parents would not agree to the marriage. President of the largest chain of banks in Utah and part of Salt Lake City's high society, Mr. Smith could not see his daughter marrying a ski instructor and only consented to the wedding after his daughter threatened to elope. Otto Lang empathized with Pfeifer, his friend, countryman, and fellow ski instructor. A year earlier Lang had also fallen in love with the beautiful daughter of wealthy and well-respected parents. Upon meeting them, Lang "could sense immediately that Sinclair's parents were not too happy about their daughter's fast-developing attachment to an itinerant *sportsmeister*, such as I was."<sup>1</sup> That Lang and Pfeifer both found themselves in such a similar and tense romantic situation demonstrates that skiing often created complicated gender dynamics--dynamics moreover, that conflicted with common assumptions about ethnicity and class. One wonders, rightly, how Friedl Pfeifer ended up in Sun Valley's ballroom dancing with a woman like Hoyt Smith in the first place.

Friedl Pfeifer and his fellow Austrian instructors embodied a masculine ideal explicitly linked to their Austrian-ness and their expertise on the slopes--a masculinity that gave them status within the ski resort world despite their rural, working-class roots. The story behind Pfeifer's appeal to women like Hoyt Smith

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<sup>1</sup>Otto Lang, *A Bird of Passage: the Story of My Life* (Helena MT: Falcon Press, 1994), 167.

begins with the development of alpine skiing in Europe and the ways in which it spread to the American West during the 1920s and 1930s. The move from a Scandinavian skiing technique to one originating in the Alps signified more than a change in athletic practice. It fostered a new winter resort culture, rooted in communities like St. Anton and St. Moritz, and attached new status to the European skiers who taught the sport and competed successfully in it. A recreational sport connected to an upper-class leisure culture, alpine skiing spread throughout America via urban outdoorspeople who traveled to Europe and tried to recreate that resort culture in the United States. Europeans came to America to teach skiing and altered Colorado's winter recreation in the process. While wealthy Denverites latched on to alpine skiing first, middle-class residents took up the sport without its elite trappings and spread it to surrounding mountain communities--many of which simply added it to their own, older skiing traditions.

At once artistic and rugged, personal and social, introspective and competitive, skiing could elicit a palette of experiences. Its cultural meanings grew even more complicated, moreover, when skiers tried to incorporate the experience into their own class-oriented constructions of gender. Mountain town residents crafted a masculine ideal that differed from one to which upper-class tourists subscribed. So too, did working- and middle-class constructions of femininity contrast with those embodied by wealthy urban women. Americans struggling to reconcile outdoor sport with femininity thus defined women skiers alternatively as moving fashion plates or boyish kid sisters. In the context of Sun Valley, where ski instructors epitomized a cosmopolitan masculine ideal and wealthy socialites went to find a touch of European charm, it made perfect sense for Friedl Pfeifer to ask Hoyt Smith to dance, and it made sense for her to say yes.

## Alpine Skiing in Europe and Its Masculine Ideal

Friedl Pfeifer grew up in St. Anton am Arlberg, Austria, the birthplace of alpine skiing (known more generally as downhill skiing). That the Austrian Alps fostered the development of a new downhill style of skiing was no accident. Style was linked, in many ways, to environment. The skiing style that had caught on across Europe and America during the nineteenth century--and in Colorado with the help of Norwegians like Carl Howelson--was designed for traversing Scandinavia's rolling landscape. When skiers attempted to negotiate a different topography--the steep mountain landscape of the Alps--they naturally had to make a few adjustments. Austrian Mathias Zdarsky, for instance, read of Fridtjof Nansen's trip across Greenland on skis and invented the "stem" turn while experimenting on his local mountain west of Vienna. Zdarsky began teaching people to climb and descend mountains on skis before the turn of the century, and trained troops to ski downhill and wage mountain war in the Southern Tyrol during World War One. Mountain climbers from France, too, adapted mountaineering techniques to work with skis as early as the 1870s, opening up the Alps to winter recreational enthusiasts and creating new jobs for guides to lead guests up and down the mountains on skis.

Because many alpine towns were at once farming communities and resorts, downhill skiing developed hand-in-hand with the local community and its tourist trade. Local ski clubs like the Ski Club Arlberg (in Pfeifer's home town of St. Anton) organized the town's youth and sponsored competitions between neighboring clubs as early as the 1890s. Resorts offered alpine ski tours to their winter guests and provided guiding jobs to local skiers with enough expertise. Future skiing icon Hannes Schneider, for instance, took a job as a ski guide at the Hotel Post in St. Anton when he was seventeen, after which he went on to win so many competitions he became recognized as the best and fastest skier in Austria. Already

a center for alpine ski tours due to its Hotel Post, great scenery, snow, and train access, St. Anton am Arlberg capitalized on Schneider's reputation by advertising "permanent classes of instruction by the Austrian champion" in 1910.<sup>2</sup>

During World War One few people vacationed in Austria. After the war tourists began to return to St. Anton, where they could enroll in Schneider's new ski school and learn his "Arlberg" system of skiing, a system that allowed students to learn, and racers to race, faster than ever before. He had students use two poles and the shorter, narrower, more maneuverable skis that World War One mountain troops adopted, but the most revolutionary aspect of the Arlberg system was the progression of turns that Schneider taught. His students learned to ski by mastering one skill and then moving on to a more difficult one that incorporated the first. By 1922 wealthy tourists were raving about Schneider's system, and he had starred in the first instructional ski movie--starting a trend that would not only spread skiing's popularity but pave the way for skiing's inclusion in more glamorous films. That same year, eleven year old Friedl Pfeifer represented St. Anton in junior competitions.<sup>3</sup> Two more movies ensured the success of skiing and of Hannes Schneider--after the release of "Fox Chase in the Engadine," Friedl Pfeifer recalled that "almost overnight, skiing became a social phenomenon."<sup>4</sup> Their paths finally crossed in 1925, by which time Pfeifer had made a name for himself as a talented young racer and Schneider had decided to recruit him as an instructor in his prestigious ski school. Pfeifer's tenure as an instructor in St. Anton coincided with the growth of downhill racing in Europe, international recognition for Hannes Schneider's ski school and his Arlberg system, and the

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<sup>2</sup>Friedl Pfeifer with Morten Lund, *Nice Goin': My Life on Skis* (Missoula MT: Pictorial Histories Publishing Company, Inc., 1993), 6. See also Lang, 54-61.

<sup>3</sup>Pfeifer and Lund, 10; for more on Schneider's Arlberg system see E. John B. Allen, *From Skisport to Skiing: One Hundred Years of an American Sport, 1840-1940* (Amherst MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1993), 96-98.

<sup>4</sup>Pfeifer and Lund, 14.

evolution of a ski resort culture. Friedl Pfeifer was a part of all three developments in Austria, and he would bring them with him to America.

At the same time St. Anton was gaining an international reputation for its winter tourism, it also claimed a leading role in international ski competition. Skiing had become so popular throughout Europe by 1913 that Norway, Austria, Switzerland, and Germany joined the first international ski association and sponsored its own competitions.<sup>5</sup> After World War One alpine skiing joined the Scandinavian-style (or nordic) cross-country races and jumping contests as part of this international competition. "Downhill" races tested who could get from the top of the mountain to the bottom fastest and allowed racers to choose their own path. The difficulty of negotiating trees led British skier Sir Arnold Lunn to develop a separate race called slalom, in which skiers raced down through a series of poles.<sup>6</sup> While "downhill" races often accompanied nordic events in competitions, the first alpine-only competition did not take place until 1927. Sponsored by the Ski Club Arlberg, this race would later be known as the Arlberg-Kandahar. The club awarded prizes in a slalom race, a downhill race, and for the fastest combined time. Soon resorts throughout the Alps--in Switzerland, Germany, Austria, France, and Italy--were holding similar races, establishing a circuit of alpine contests through which the sport would spread.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>Charles M. Dudley, *Sixty Centuries of Skiing* (Brattleboro VT: Stephen Daye Press, 1935), 86.

<sup>6</sup>For a more extensive discussion of the Lunn's development of slalom racing and how it spread to the Eastern U.S., see Allen, 98-103.

<sup>7</sup>Many of the resorts which first held alpine events in the early 1930s are still famous for their races, and continue to attract tourists and ski racers from all over the world. They include, among others, Davos and St. Moritz in Switzerland, Megeve and Chamonix in France, Germany's Garmisch, and the Austrian areas Kitzbuehel and Innsbruck. Alpine skiing gained the ultimate recognition when downhill and slalom events became part of the annual FIS championship competition in 1933. FIS stands for Federation International du Ski, which is the international governing body of skiing. The first FIS that included alpine events took place in Innsbruck, Austria. Dick Durrance, an American boy living in Garmisch-Partenkirchen, raced in Germany's first slalom race in 1932 at the age of eighteen. He won, and would go on to become the best and most famous American downhill

Downhill skiing and tourism in small European mountain towns like St. Anton--and in more famous ones including St. Moritz and Davos in Switzerland--blossomed in the 1920s. It was no accident that they did so together. Resort towns organized ski clubs, sponsored races, and financed traveling teams to represent them precisely to improve their tourist business, which represented one of the few economic opportunities for those towns during the 1920s and 1930s. The skiers who represented these towns in races and taught in the resort ski school became the locus of fame and fortune. In their roles as instructors, mountain guides, and competitors, some European skiers constructed a masculine identity for themselves that placed them at the center of alpine resort culture.

Hannes Schneider, Friedl Pfeifer, Otto Lang, Luggi Foeger, and Rudi Matt were some of the main reasons why people in Europe--and later in America--wanted to take up alpine skiing. These men all worked at the same place: Schneider's ski school in St. Anton. They advertised the beauty of skiing in their physical form, infused the sport with images of masculinity in their behavior, and established Austria as one of the hotbeds of talent with their racing. Schneider and Rudi Matt appeared in a popular ski film called "The White Ecstasy," made in 1931 and shown all over Europe, in which an elaborate ski chase highlighted the style and excitement of downhill skiing.<sup>8</sup> Many of St. Anton's ski instructors--Pfeifer and Otto Lang included--took extensive exams that qualified them to be mountain guides and so join what Pfeifer called "a select brotherhood."<sup>9</sup> Alpine guides had led tourists through the Alps for decades--Pfeifer's father was one--and in the 1920s and '30s trips on skis grew quite popular. Without the benefit of ski lifts and

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racer in the 1930s. Dick and Miggs Durrance, interview by Jeanette Darnauer, 18 August 1993, video tape, AHS. See also Dick Durrance and John Jerome, *The Man on the Medal: The Life and Times of America's First Great Ski Racer* (Aspen CO: Durrance Enterprises, Inc., 1995).

<sup>8</sup>Pfeifer and Lund, 23.

<sup>9</sup>Pfeifer and Lund, 30; Lang, 50.

designated trails, tourists who wanted to ski difficult terrain had to first climb up it, and cope with the dangers of avalanches, snowstorms, and cold, as well. As Pfeifer explained, "Skiing the Valluga [the highest mountain above St. Anton] was a wilderness experience that called for a protecting leader to intercede between the skier and raw nature. The St. Anton instructor was expected to be that leader."<sup>10</sup> One American's "cherished memory" was of a July, 1931 ski trip up the Breithorn in Switzerland, during which his group's guide cast quite a figure. Rousting skiers at 3:00 a.m., setting "a terrific pace" up the mountain, and breaking trail in thigh-deep snow, the guide protected his reputation by reaching the summit with his group before another guide from outside the district could. Once on top the wind and weather prevented a leisurely respite, so the group strapped their skis on again and "looked forward with great anticipation to a five or six-mile coast down the glacier."<sup>11</sup> This guide's leadership and control--even his reputation and rank in the world of ski guides--helped make the group's trip both memorable and enjoyable. Another American, on a different ski trip in Switzerland, noted the difficulty of such pursuits when he noted that after a brief rest stop, "We resume[d] our march [up the mountain]. . . having peeled shirts and undershirts and gotten our second wind." On the way down, he continued, "the descent becomes a sort of race."<sup>12</sup> Skiing in the Alps was no easy task; it took strength, endurance, and competitiveness on the way up and on the way down. Mountain guides epitomized this ideal in their role as leaders, an ideal which their group members could only hope to emulate. In addition to being guides, examples, and protectors, then, these men defined a masculinity that was embedded in the experiences of tourists, resort culture, and a particular way of interacting with the landscape.

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<sup>10</sup>Pfeifer and Lund, 30.

<sup>11</sup>Carl Blaurock, "A Ski Trip on the Breithorn, Switzerland," *Trail and Timberline*, 160 (February 1932), 21, 25.

<sup>12</sup>Lee C. Ashley, "As the Swiss Does It," *Trail and Timberline*, 158 (December 1931), 187-188.

Alpine racing offered a critical venue for constructing these masculine identities. The talent gathered at Schneider's ski school produced an environment in which instructors could refine their technique together and so improve their racing. Friedl Pfeifer and Rudi Matt made names for themselves on the European racing circuit, while others competed on lower levels. Pfeifer, representing the Ski Club Arlberg, won the very first Hahnenkamm race in 1929, traveling to the tourist haven Kitzbuehel and beating experienced racers much older than he. Two years later he won Austria's national championship. While Schneider's ski school served as a training camp for its local instructors/racers, its main business was attracting tourist dollars. These goals, however, were not mutually exclusive, or even in conflict. Friedl Pfeifer explained that "My sphere of interest was managed by the authoritative but benevolent Hannes Schneider, whose fame had reached almost mythic proportions. An instructor's job was to teach skiing and to convey that authority and benevolence to our students."<sup>13</sup> Having well-known racers as instructors certainly helped business, and racing victories only added to the masculine authority instructors already exercised as mountain guides, group leaders, and skilled ski technicians.

Students of skiing came to alpine resorts from Vienna, from England, and from neighboring European countries, though some Americans made the trek, too. They came to watch ski races, learn to ski themselves, and partake in a self-contained winter resort culture designed for and supported by elites. One resort a few hours by train from Vienna, the Semmering, had been a popular playground for affluent merchants, aristocrats, and celebrities of the Austro-Hungarian empire before the war, and it balanced its post-war clientele of tubercular summer

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<sup>13</sup>Pfeifer and Lund, 36. Austrian ski schools in general, and Schneider's in particular, were much more regimented and formal than ski schools today. Students attended the same class with the same instructor daily for their entire stay and had to pass rigid standards of qualification to advance into the next-level class.

visitors with a ski school in the winter. Even after the war, Otto Lang explained, "there was a sizable population of healthy nouveaux riches who looked for ways to spend their money in an environment of prewar luxury."<sup>14</sup> Other resorts in Switzerland enjoyed a similar clientele, mainly of British ski enthusiasts and followers of Arnold Lunn. Hannes Schneider's fans swelled Kitzbühl and the little town of St. Anton. By the early 1930s Lang had moved to St. Anton to teach in Schneider's school, Pfeifer's family had opened a hotel of their own, and "celebrities, nobility, millionaires, and even royalty [were] all lugging their skis to the ski school meeting place."<sup>15</sup> Lang recalled that "St. Anton had truly become a skier's mecca," and remembered teaching famous Italian race car driver Piero Taruffi, a prince of the ancient Roman Ruspoli clan, French nobleman the Comte de Chambrun, and the Marchioness of Londonderry, who brought her entourage and the Duke of Hamilton with her.<sup>16</sup> Even King Albert of Belgium came to St. Anton for ski lessons, although on one very rainy occasion the instructors convinced him to retire to the bar in the Hotel Post instead.<sup>17</sup>

While not every student wore a crown (skiers came from a variety of social worlds and countries to St. Anton), they generally took part in a "resort culture" associated with wealth, consumption, and conspicuous socializing. "With a new fall of snow there came a change in the town of St. Moritz," one American skier noticed in 1931. "From everywhere came people. Sleights jangled down the curved streets. The store windows, filled with soft woolen things and smartly tailored skiing suits,

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<sup>14</sup>Lang, 41; see also Paul P. Bernard, *Rush to the Alps: The Evolution of Vacationing in Switzerland* (Boulder: East European Quarterly, distributed by Columbia University Press, New York, 1978).

<sup>15</sup>Pfeifer and Lund, 33. Lang came to St. Anton the winter of 1929-1930 as a government-licensed ski instructor and mountain guide. From Salzburg and fluent in French and English, Pfeifer characterized him as "exactly the kind of instructor Hannes needed for his growing international clientele." Pfeifer and Lund, 32; Lang, 49.

<sup>16</sup>Lang, 63.

<sup>17</sup>Pfeifer and Lund, 36.

were irresistible," and "[s]mart people from all the world filled the hotels."<sup>18</sup> A group of American skiers vacationing in 1926 noticed that skiers in Switzerland tended not to retire early, despite the physical demands of skiing. "In Switzerland," one wrote, "the social life is as attractive as the skiing. We change wet clothes for evening dress, and dine, dance, and make merry in the bar."<sup>19</sup>

As the business of resort town ski schools grew inextricably intertwined with that of local hotels and ski clubs, instructors became more than simply guides, teachers, and famous racers. They had to woo clientele and fit in with the tradition of high-society resort culture in which their students had invested. In doing so these men transformed themselves into icons of cosmopolitan, sexual masculinity, in the process leaping across the class lines that divided elite tourists from service employees. Most began their careers as simple country boys. They had to learn, as did Friedl Pfeifer, not to come to the ski school in clothes that smelled like the barn. Schneider insisted that his instructors be clean, neat, prompt, and polite. He wanted their classes to be fun and safe, so he taught them to build a relationship with their students and develop camaraderie by discussing the mountains around them while they climbed. In order to improve his status in the ski school and the impression he made on his students, Pfeifer copied the diction of a more educated colleague and then took English lessons. This also helped him earn more money, since Schneider paid instructors double for teaching in a foreign language.<sup>20</sup> When Otto Lang joined the ski school in 1929 from Salzburg, his cosmopolitan image and his fluency in French and English proved a great asset. Pfeifer noticed, and in 1933 he took up the study of French.

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<sup>18</sup>Stephen H. Hart, "Skiing at St. Moritz," *Trail and Timberline*, 158 (December 1931), 189.

<sup>19</sup>John L. Jerome Hart, "Skiing in Switzerland and Norway," *Trail and Timberline*, 95 (August, 1926), 1-3.

<sup>20</sup>Pfeifer and Lund, 24-25.

Both men self-consciously cultivated a cosmopolitan image, picking up nuances of language and manners wherever they could and becoming favorite instructors of influential people in the process. Often the relationships instructors formed with their students on the mountain slipped into the social world. Initially reluctant to do so, Schneider eventually allowed his instructors to socialize with their students. Guests and instructors alike enjoyed unwinding over a glass of beer at the end of the day, and sometimes made dinner plans as well. Instructors sometimes found themselves dining in quite distinguished company, meeting important people and so enhancing their own images. Occasionally relationships went even farther, as the masculinity, status, and worldly image of Austrian ski instructors came to outweigh their modest origins, educations, and bank accounts. Otto Lang wrote that "Some of the instructors, handsome by nature and bronzed by the sun, developed an amazing aptitude for sexual encounters," according to stories spread through the ski school.<sup>21</sup> One American heiress apparently fell so in love with an instructor that she stayed for the summer and built a house, leaving when she finally realized that he would not return her affections.<sup>22</sup> The camaraderie that skiing fostered both on the hill and off combined with the resort culture to create a ski world where handsome ski instructors became sex symbols. Their jobs put them in social situations with people of wealth, fame, and title, but their masculinity and status as expert skiers enabled them to mingle with confidence.

In some cases, ski instructors made social connections at St. Anton that would serve them well in later life. One winter morning, for example, an American movie star appeared at the ski school meeting place seeking a private instructor. So began the friendship between Friedl Pfeifer and Claudette Colbert, a

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<sup>21</sup>Lang, 62.

<sup>22</sup>Pfeifer and Lund, 27.

relationship that would ease Pfeifer's transition to living in America. They would meet again, in Sun Valley and then Aspen. Pfeifer also met one of his future employers in St. Anton--Alice Kaier. She had been visiting St. Anton since the 1920s and hired Pfeifer as a mountain guide in 1935 to see if he would do as a coach for her pet project, the U.S. Women's Ski Team. Otto Lang also met future friends and sponsors through Hannes Schneider's ski school. After rescuing an injured man he found with his ski class and easing the distraught wife's fears, Lang made the formal acquaintance of Larry Dorcy (the injured man) and Maud Hill Dorcy (the distraught wife), plus two of Maud's brothers, all of whom proved to be grandchildren of railroad magnate James J. Hill. Lang became close friends with Jerome Hill, and learned from him to appreciate music, literature, painting, theater, and films. The Hill family practically adopted Lang, urging him to travel with them, stay with them, and accept their moral and financial support. Through the Hill family Lang would cultivate a cosmopolitan life and meet his future American employer, Katherine Peckett. She joined the Hill entourage in St. Anton from Franconia, NH, where her family owned an inn that would soon be open for winter guests. Schneider's reputation drew her to St. Anton in search of ski instructors, and in December of 1935 Otto Lang started work as the first St. Anton instructor in America. Many others would follow. These "Arlberg" instructors from St. Anton--and instructors from other European ski schools as well--served as emissaries of skiing to countries all over the world during the 1930s. They brought their enthusiasm for the sport, familiarity with resort culture, knowledge of mountainous terrain, and experience as both teachers and competitors to America, where skiers embraced them as experts. American ski enthusiasts accepted their masculine image and a hometown in the Alps as recognizable signs of that expertise. For upper-class outdoorspeople who subscribed to European resort culture, the ski instructor masculine ideal resonated with their class identities and

they adopted it as their own. This construction of masculinity would have less appeal to skiers unfamiliar with European resorts. In working-class mountain communities, masculinity came from toughness, strength, and endurance rather than style, expertise, and cosmopolitan image.

#### Alpine Skiing and Instructors in the United States

European skiers came to America during the 1930s for professional and political reasons. By that decade news of Schneider's Arlberg technique had spread around the world; influential Americans had experienced it first-hand in Austria; and they wanted more. European ski instructors became export commodities in high demand. Introduced by tourists who had visited Lunn's camp in Mürren and Schneider's ski school in St. Anton, downhill technique came to the United States in the late 1920s and concentrated, at first, in the Northeast.<sup>23</sup> College outing clubs and urban clubs like Boston's Appalachian Mountain Club (AMC) popularized downhill skiing during a period of optimism, economic boom, and unprecedented leisure time. During the 1920s Americans participated in sports as never before, with an enthusiasm and freedom that crossed boundaries of class and gender.<sup>24</sup> Unlike many popular sports in the 1920s, however--baseball, basketball, track, and football among them--alpine skiing appealed to wealthy urbanites who were familiar with recreational trends in Europe, had money for equipment, and the

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<sup>23</sup>Allen, 100-103.

<sup>24</sup>Mark Dyreson, "The Emergence of Consumer Culture and the Transformation of Physical Culture: American Sport in the 1920s," *Journal of Sport History*, 16, 3 (Winter, 1989), 261-281; see also Kathy Peiss, *Cheap Amusements: Working Women and Leisure in Turn-of-the-Century New York* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986); Roy Rozensweig, *Eight Hours for What We Will: Workers and Leisure in an Industrial City, 1870-1920* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983); Richard D. Mandell, *Sport: A Cultural History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994); Allen Guttman, *Women's Sports: A History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991); Susan Cahn, *Coming On Strong: Gender and Sexuality in Twentieth-Century Sport* (New York: The Free Press, 1994); Steven A. Riess, "From Pitch to Putt: Sport and Class in Anglo-American Sport," *Journal of Sport History*, 21, 2 (Summer 1994), 138-184.

time to travel and practice. It also drew in residents of mountain towns for whom skiing required little financial or temporal investment at all. During the 1930s American skiers who could afford it embraced European ski resort culture; those who could not welcomed downhill skiing without its elite trappings and incorporated it into their communities.

As with the spread of nordic skiing during the nineteenth century, immigrants brought technique with them to America. Some European ski instructors acted as catalysts for the explosive growth of American skiing in the 1930s, and others responded to that growth by arriving in ever greater numbers. Both sets came, in part, because their employers guaranteed them jobs and (relatively) handsome salaries. Of the European "experts," Otto Schneibs was one of the first to arrive. He came from Germany and instructed Boston's AMC on the Arlberg technique during the 1928-29 season and took over as coach of the Dartmouth Outing Club ski team in 1930.<sup>25</sup> In 1935 Otto Lang was the first St. Anton instructor to come to America, where (along with Sigi Buchmayr and Kurt Thalhammer from Salzburg) he instructed at Peckett's on Sugar Hill in New Hampshire.<sup>26</sup> After that year European skiers seemed to arrive in droves. Walter Prager, a well-known Swiss skier, took over as Dartmouth coach in 1936, and Austrians Hannes Schroll, Sigi Engl and Otto Tschool also made names for themselves.<sup>27</sup> At least five of Hannes Schneider's instructors established their own ski schools in America: Otto Lang started an Arlberg ski school of his own at Mt. Ranier; Benno Rybizka started one in Jackson, NH and brought eight others from St. Anton with him to run it; Toni Matt ended up at Whitefish, Montana; and

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<sup>25</sup>Allen, 103; John Litchfield, interview by the author, 29 September 1994, Denver, Colorado.

<sup>26</sup>Lang, 80, 99-101; Pfeifer and Lund, 49; Litchfield.

<sup>27</sup>Sigi Engl and Hannes Schroll, from near Salzburg, came to start a ski school at Yosemite Valley; Otto Tschool probably instructed somewhere, as Pfeifer saw him at the 1938 Boston and New York ski shows. Lang, 107-108; Pfeifer and Lund, 52, 66.

Hans Hauser set up a crew of Austrians in his Sun Valley ski school, which Friedl Pfeifer would take over two years later. These men found work across the country--in established mountain resort areas, wherever outdoor clubs had formed, and at new resorts built explicitly for skiing, from Peckett's in New Hampshire to Sun Valley, Idaho.

For many, the promise of work (and status) as ski instructors in America was enough to bring them across the ocean. Other Austrian skiers, however, came to America for political reasons. Conflicting sentiments over Hitler's rise to power in the 1930s divided Hannes Schneider's ski school, and Hitler's invasion of Austria in 1938 wreaked havoc in the town of St. Anton. After the Anschluss a group of strong Nazi supporters in St. Anton emerged, including some of Hannes Schneider's instructors, one of whom became the new Nazi mayor. Friedl Pfeifer opposed Hitler and found himself trapped in St. Anton, until another instructor helped him escape. They and another skier friend made it to Australia, where they taught skiing for a season before heading to America. Upon arrival in Los Angeles, Pfeifer called up his old student Claudette Colbert and found himself at dinner with her, hearing about Sun Valley.<sup>28</sup> Instructor Luggi Foeger also fled Hitler and ended up in Yosemite, California. Hannes Schneider had a more difficult time leaving Austria. An outspoken critic of Hitler amongst what turned out to be some ardent Nazis in his ski school, the most famous man in St. Anton--even in the whole world of skiing--was pulled from his bed and thrown in jail when the Nazis took over. A Nazi sympathizer took over his ski school. According to Otto Lang, "a cadre of loyal townspeople, other ski instructors, and legions of influential former ski school students in Europe and abroad . . . tried everything in their power to set [Schneider] free."<sup>29</sup> Finally a long-time friend and skiing companion, Dr. Karl

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<sup>28</sup>Pfeifer and Lund, 53-60.

<sup>29</sup>Lang, 180.

Rosen, heard of Schneider's imprisonment and called in a favor from Hitler himself. Rosen got custody of Schneider and brought Schneider to his home in Germany, where Schneider finally realized that he would have to abandon his country. In this endeavor another powerful skiing enthusiast, the President of Manufacturer's Trust Company in New York and chairman of the American Banking Committee (which negotiated loans with Germany), stepped in to help. Harvey Gibson made a deal with Hitler's exchequer to free Schneider and his family, and then arranged for him to live and work at a resort Gibson owned at Mt. Cranmore, NH. Hannes, Ludwina, and their two children finally arrived at the North Conway train station on February 12, 1939.<sup>30</sup>

The Anschluss mobilized the power of the growing international ski community at the same time that it brought untold amounts of talent to ski slopes all over the United States. Encouraging the growth of skiing in America with their enthusiasm, experience, and skill, these instructors established themselves as experts and infused American ski culture with alpine references. In the 1930s they established ski schools and taught the Arlberg technique at mountain resorts from California to New Hampshire. They also taught skiing in cities themselves, where the heart of America's skiing population lived. This feat, of course, required some planning. Department stores in Boston and New York, interested in selling ski clothes and equipment, orchestrated giant indoor ski shows and quite literally made European experts into commodities on display. Otto Lang starred in the first indoor ski show, sponsored by the department store B. Altman and held in December of 1935, where he demonstrated the Arlberg system by skiing down a short slide on synthetic "snow."<sup>31</sup> He was such a success that the next year organizers planned mammoth shows in Boston and New York, recruiting Otto Lang, Benno Rybizka, and

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<sup>30</sup>Lang, 180-183; Pfeifer and Lund, 73-74.

<sup>31</sup>Lang, 95-99.

Hannes Schneider himself to demonstrate their technique. American ski enthusiasts filled both Boston Garden and Madison Square Garden--according to Lang, 80,000 people saw the show in New York alone. The December 11 *New York Times* reported that "Skiing hysteria has seized New York with a tremendous grip."<sup>32</sup> These shows continued for at least a few more years, with European skiers on center stage.

Alpine skiers also demonstrated their expertise in smaller arenas. Rural and urban ski clubs continued to pop up across the country as they had since the late nineteenth century. Europeans who had emigrated to America appeared as guest speakers and instructors at these clubs all over the country. Otto Schneibs gave his first talk in Boston to an audience of about forty people. Three hundred came to his second one. Upon his retirement as Dartmouth ski coach (1930-36), one follower said: "Otto, the brilliant apostle of the religion of skiing and camaraderie, combined with his classic way of picturing his ideas in a vivid mosaic of English and German, seemed to ignite all New England." His influence upon Dartmouth College seemed equally profound. The same author, who raced for Dartmouth, wrote that "skiing has claimed more enthusiasts than football or Smith; there are more skis in Hanover than dogs, an unprecedented situation; and Dartmouth's ski consciousness has threatened to replace the old life blood--the 'Beat Yale' complex."<sup>33</sup> While in this case Schneibs was preaching to the converted, there is no doubt that he boosted downhill skiing in America. In addition to his lecture, he established and taught a ski school workshop for Eastern ski instructors, coached the Dartmouth ski team to victory in the intercollegiate championships every year, and even took his show on the road.<sup>34</sup> His favorite saying immortalized him; it rang true for skiers all over

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<sup>32</sup>Lang, 124-127; Pfeifer and Lund, 51-52.

<sup>33</sup>David J. Bradley, "Heil, Otto!" *American Ski Annual* (1936-37), 63-64.

<sup>34</sup>Bradley, 65, Carl E. Shumway, "America's First Ski School," *Trail and Timberline*, 173 (March 1933), 32, 38-39.

America. He said, "skiing is not just a sport; it's a way of life!" For those enamored with European resort culture, his claim referred to a specific leisure experience. For those not familiar with such a world, Schneibs' comment referred to the sport's social aspects and the fact that if you tried skiing once and liked it, chances were you would continue to ski as much as possible. For both sets of skiers, however, skiing's "way of life" was tinted with ethnic signs pointing to the Alps and gender signs pointing toward a particular masculine ideal.

By the 1930s European skiers such as Schneibs, transplanted Arlberg instructors, and famous racers found themselves in the center of an expanding American ski world. Their Europeanness granted them immediate authority in this culture, where terms like "schuss," "sitzmark," and "Ski Heil!" peppered skiers' speech, and students listened extra hard to instructors with German accents. The status of European skiers had reached the point, one author noted, where imposters could simply say "bend zee knees, two dollars pleez."<sup>35</sup> Usually, however, European skiers who came to America earned the respect and admiration of their colleagues and students; who better to teach the Arlberg system, after all, than an instructor from Schneider's school?

Race results further legitimized European prowess in downhill skiing. Austrians, Germans, and Swiss dominated the FIS slalom and downhill competitions during the 1930s, and America's greatest racer during that period, Dick Durrance, had learned to ski and race while living in Germany. Averill Harriman imported European racers--even the Swiss national team--to compete for Sun Valley's Harriman Cup and attract attention to his new resort. Their very presence in America seemed to legitimize skiing in the states. One Dartmouth racer called the Swiss team's visit a *coup d'etat*, and their participation in ski races throughout America and Canada "an intoxicant from which our ski spirit may hope never to

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<sup>35</sup>Editors of Ski Magazine, *America's Ski Book* (New York: Scribner, 1973), 42.

recover." "Their personalities as well as their prowess," he went on, "have insensibly produced [an indelible impression] on those skiing centers fortunate enough to be their hosts."<sup>36</sup> Dick Durrance astounded and excited Americans when he won Sun Valley's Harriman Cup three times--despite stiff competition from Swiss, Austrian, and German skiers--and retired the trophy. He was by far the most celebrated American skier in the 1930s. His performance in the 1936 Olympics, while stunning for an American, did not earn him a medal. American ski enthusiasts of the 1930s thus paid attention to international race results, and judged as authentic those they could associate--however vaguely--with those results.

#### Alpine Skiing in Colorado

European influence, while firmly established in New England during the 1920s and 1930s, certainly did not stay confined to that area. Downhill skiers familiar with the Alps had to adapt their expectations of snow and terrain in the East. Upon seeing photos of his new home in Mt. Cranmore, New Hampshire, Hannes Schneider supposedly asked, "where are the mountains?"<sup>37</sup> For those Arlberg instructors who came to Yosemite, Mt. Rainier, Sun Valley, and later Aspen, that question did not come to mind. They often found, furthermore, longstanding traditions of skiing in small town and city ski clubs that had existed for years or even decades. Ski clubs accepted the new European techniques enthusiastically. One of the earliest Europeans to bring downhill skiing to Colorado, Lt. "Bend more the knee" Albizzi, "revolutionized" Colorado skiing in 1923 by teaching some members of the Colorado Mountain Club (CMC) to turn and

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<sup>36</sup>David Bradley, "Invasion of the Swiss," *The Ski Bulletin*, 26 March, 1937, 5. See also David J. Bradley, "S.A.S.," *The American Ski Annual* (1937-38), 115-119.

<sup>37</sup>Pfiefer and Lund, 73.

stop without the hitherto obligatory sitzmark. "His skiing position," the author noted in 1939, "was exactly that used today by the very expert."<sup>38</sup> A succession of these European "expert" skiers came to Colorado in the 1930s. Unlike the Scandinavian skiers that preceded them, these alpine skiers came to Colorado precisely to teach skiing. As the sport grew in popularity, so did the job opportunities for instructors--especially ones with an accent. One resident of Climax, in Summit County, Colorado, recalled that sometime in the 1930s two local ski "addicts" taught some others the rudiments of skiing, and "it wasn't too long before members of the group decided they needed some formal skiing instruction." They got Bob Balch, an eastern skier who had moved to Denver, to come and teach for a week. Other instructors of different nationalities followed him. "It seems as though," Gerald McMillin remembered, "I learned to snowplow and counterstem in seven different languages."<sup>39</sup> Otto Schneibs also visited Colorado. In 1937 he came to Denver to teach and lecture to local ski enthusiasts with European ski champion Florian Haemerle. Denver ski club sponsors advertised their workshops with gusto, and when Schneibs went to Aspen, residents recognized his presence as "probably the highest recommendation or recognition that can be accorded any winter sports center in the country."<sup>40</sup> Denver skiers and Aspen skiers alike received Schneibs enthusiastically and accepted his visit as acknowledgment of Colorado's potential as a skiing region.

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<sup>38</sup>Henry Buchtel, "Skiing B.E.P.," *Trail and Timberline*, 241 (January 1939), 5-6; J.C. Blickensderfer, "Reminiscences of Skiing in Colorado, 1922-1968," Ski Collection, CHS.

<sup>39</sup>"Climax Ski Area Has Had a Lively, Exciting History," *The Summit County Journal*, 11 March, 1960, 4, Agnes Wright Spring Collection, University of Colorado Archives, Boulder, Colorado (hereafter cited as CUA).

<sup>40</sup>"Famous Skier Will Conduct School Here," *Aspen Times*, 4 March, 1937, 1; notice from the Arlberg Club, the CMC, and the Colorado Ski Runners, n.d., Colorado Ski Clubs and Associations manuscript collection, Colorado Historical Society, Denver, Colorado (hereafter cited as CHS).

One group of businessmen, led by Billy Fiske, a wealthy, world-traveling athlete, sought to recreate St. Moritz in Colorado's Rockies. They hired, accordingly, a Swiss ski mountaineering expert named Andre Roch as a consultant. Roch arrived in Aspen, with his colleague Gunther Langes from Italy, in November, 1936. Their job was to survey the snow conditions and recreational advantages of the area and then designate the best place to build a winter resort. By the time Roch returned to Switzerland the following June, he had designated the best spot for a resort, taught many locals and visitors from Denver to ski, helped establish a popular downhill skiing club in Aspen, and set ski club members to cutting the soon-to-be-famous Roch Run on Aspen Mountain.<sup>41</sup> A group of CMC members spent a week skiing in Aspen and wrote, "Two European guides were there, and they proved themselves to be high-class experts, both in skiing and teaching. We plan to go again next spring vacation."<sup>42</sup> Roch was so influential to Aspen's development as a ski town that its residents declared October 26th "Andre Roch Day."<sup>43</sup> European instructors, coaches, racers, and mountaineers thus brought their experience and expertise to Colorado, where the sport--with their help--was being transformed.

People in Colorado could have a diversity of skiing experiences in the 1920s. Colorado ski clubs held local, regional, and sometimes national competitions. Ski clubs in Denver and in mountain towns, still influenced by Scandinavian immigrants who arrived in the early 1900s, held nordic ski events that continued to grow in popularity. Regional races and carnivals involved men,

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<sup>41</sup>See Frank Willoughby, "History of Aspen's Course and Jump," *The Aspen Times*, n.d., clipping, Ski Collection, AHS; Fred Willoughby, "Andre Roch Brought Racing, a Dream," *The Aspen Times*, 31 January, 1980, 5A, Andre Roch biography file, AHS. See also Anne Gilbert, "Re-Creation Through Recreation: Aspen Skiing from 1870-1970," (1995), Ski Collection, AHS, 14-35. Chapter 3 will discuss the formation of Colorado resorts and the results of Roch's recommendations in more detail.

<sup>42</sup>"Definite Advantages," *The Ski Bulletin*, 26 March, 1937, 15.

<sup>43</sup>City of Aspen Proclamation, n.d., Andre Roch biography file, AHS.

women, and children from the community in the sport, as well as contestants and spectators from Denver, and national competitions drew skiers (and media attention) from across the country. Some mountain residents, however, without organized ski clubs or connections to Denver, retained traditions from their mining years and skied informally on their own.

Outside the town of Aspen, farm and ranch kids like Russ Holmes skied on their ranches, "straight down on homemade skis."<sup>44</sup> Others, like Hildur Hoaglund, went on ski trips with local Swedes.<sup>45</sup> For kids in Aspen itself, skiing provided adventure and thrills during long winters. Fred and Frank Willoughby would climb up the back of Aspen Mountain from their family's mine and ski into town, and kids from Aspen's East End made similar use of the mountain. Those with more timid instincts satisfied themselves by using the upper end of Aspen Street. "The neighborhood bunch used to make their own skis," Jim Snyder remembered. Frank Dolinsek said "we tied boards on our feet and went for it. We would slide off a pile of snow from the shed roof. There were some cow paths on Aspen Mountain we would follow."<sup>46</sup> The skiing legacy of Aspen miners, the cultural memory of Swedish immigrants, and the reality of long winters kept young people skiing in Aspen through the 1920s and early 1930s, after which Roch galvanized the town with downhill skiing. Locals continued to ski in Gunnison as well, despite the early demise of its nineteenth-century ski club. Like Aspen's East End crowd, Gunnison's Western State College students had few diversions besides skiing once winter set in and connections to the outside world shut down. Students and locals skied around

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<sup>44</sup>Mary Eshbaugh Hayes, "The Town Got Excited About Skiing," *Aspen Times*, 2 March, 1978, Skiing 1938-45 file, AHS.

<sup>45</sup>Hildur Anderson, interview by Ramona Markalunas, 18 January, 1979, tape recording, AHS.

<sup>46</sup>"Miner and Ski Pioneer Fred Willoughby Dies," *Aspen Times*, 27 January, 1983, 8A, clipping in Willoughby biography file, AHS; Frank Willoughby, "Aspen Skiing: An Account by Frank Willoughby," n.d., manuscript, Early Skiing file, AHS; Kathleen Krieger Daily and Gaylord T. Guenin, *Aspen: The Quiet Years* (Aspen CO: Red Ink Inc., 1994), 220, 468.

town and also rode the train to Quick's Hill near Crested Butte, encouraged by the college, which established skiing as a regular sport in 1916. A more formal ski club would form in 1938, when three local men organized a special ski trip to Marshall Pass, between Gunnison and Salida.<sup>47</sup>

Denver ski enthusiasts enjoyed organized ski trips and competitions throughout the 1920s--events which featured Scandinavian-style skiing and jumping but set up the structures in which alpine skiing would grow. The Colorado Mountain Club (CMC) began sponsoring Annual Winter Outings starting in 1916, four years after Denver outdoorsmen and women founded the club. Until 1937 these outings were to Fern Lake, near Estes Park. Club members did their own labor, packing in equipment, clothes, and provisions for a weekend, and spent the days skiing and the evenings socializing. In this way, one member explained, "mountain-clubbers first began to make the most of Colorado's glorious mountains in winter, and began to realize the thrills of skiing for real pleasure and enjoyment."<sup>48</sup> By the mid-1920s the popularity of these trips had spread; the Boulder branch of the CMC and the University of Colorado both sponsored winter sports and cross-country trips in February of 1925.<sup>49</sup> The Denver Rocky Mountain Ski Club, established in 1914, focused less on trips to the mountains than did the CMC, and more on honing its members' nordic skiing and jumping skills. Emblematic of the club's enthusiasm was their song: "Ski-i-n-g, wonderful ski-i-n-g--You're the only spo-r-t that I adore. When the snow falls

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<sup>47</sup>Abbott Fay, *Ski Tracks in the Rockies: A Century of Colorado Skiing* (Evergreen CO: Cordillera Press, Inc., 1984), 25.

<sup>48</sup>Evelyn Runnette, "Skiing With the C.M.C.," *The Ski Bulletin*, 19 March, 1937, 6-7. The CMC's programs proved so popular that affiliate clubs popped up in Colorado Springs, Boulder, and Estes Park by the early 1920s. See Hugh E. Kingery and Elinor Eppich Kingery, *The Colorado Mountain Club: The First Seventy-Five Years of a Highly Individual Corporation, 1912-1987* (Evergreen CO: Cordillera Press, Inc., 1988).

<sup>49</sup>Colorado Winter Season Program, January 1 to April 1, 1925, Rocky Mountain National Park Ski Club, Grosword Ski Collection, Grand County Historical Association, Hot Sulphur Springs, Colorado (hereafter cited as GCHA).

over the hillside I'll be bumping down the hill till I'm sore."<sup>50</sup> This ski club held annual competitions at its Genesee Hill site outside of Denver, which drew competitors from Hot Sulphur Springs, Dillon, and Breckenridge as well as from the city.

The national competitions held there in 1921 and 1927, however, topped them all. Carl Howelson and ski club president Menifee Howard convinced the National Ski Association to hold its championships in the West for the first time since its founding in 1904, and the 1921 meet took place at Genesee. Newspapers estimated 40-50,000 came to watch; and local crowds went home happy when Carl Howelson won the National Professional Championship.<sup>51</sup> Denver boosters were even more excited when Howard secured the National Championships for the city again in 1927. They expected contestants from every ski club in the country, champions from Canada and Norway, and 15-20,000 spectators; they planned a week of events in Denver including "street stunts, floats, folk pageants, and carnival ball, besides skiing and skating contests;" and they appropriated \$1,500 for improvements on Genesee Hill.<sup>52</sup> This event, and the one held in 1921, showed Coloradans the best skiers in the country and introduced those skiers to the state's Rocky Mountains. By promoting the sport to locals and the region to visiting skiers, the Denver Rocky Mountain Ski Club and its supporters hoped skiing and winter tourism would play a larger role in the state's economy.

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<sup>50</sup>Program, Annual Amateur Ski Tournament of the Denver Rocky Mountain Ski Club, January 28-29, 1922, General Ski collection, GCHA.

<sup>51</sup>Leif Hovelsen, *The Flying Norseman* (Ishpeming MI: National Ski Hall of Fame Press, 1983), 76-77. An interstate tournament in February of 1923 attracted tough competitors from Wyoming, Idaho, Colorado, and Minnesota, leading Denver newspapers to claim "Denver Will Cinch Fame as Center of Winter Sports In Ski Tourney on Genesee Mountain Slide Today." "Denver Will Cinch Fame," clipping, 18 February, 1923, general ski collection, GCHA.

<sup>52</sup>"Denver Will Have Week of Winter Carnival Sports in February," clipping, 1927, general ski collection, GCHA; "national Ski Meet is Coming to World's Playground in Rockies," clipping, *Denver Post*, 1927, general ski collection, GCHA.

Most skiing in the 1920s revolved around town ski clubs and the carnivals they held, which united Coloradan skiers who lived mountain towns with those who lived in Denver. During those years ski clubs created a circuit of carnivals and competitions, all accessible by train or car to Denver. Ski clubs in Hot Sulphur Springs, Steamboat Springs, Dillon, and Denver, for instance, started before 1920 and all held tournaments throughout the decade. The Denver Rocky Mountain Ski Club tried something new in 1923--it held its First Annual Fourth of July Ski Tournament on St. Mary's Glacier. Jumpers from Denver, Allens Park, Hot Sulphur, Dillon, and Steamboat all made the trip, and the contest continued to attract competitors and spectators through the 1930s. By the 1923-24 season the Allens Park Ski Club and the Rocky Mountain National Park Ski Club held tournaments as well, and were joined that summer by the Pikes Peak Ski Club, which held its First Annual ski tournament there in June. Another Colorado Springs club, the Silver Spruce, held one in 1931. Still other areas joined in the local tournament circuit in the 1920s: the Homewood Ski Club out of Denver (1926), the Pioneer Ski Club of the University of Denver (1928), and the Woodbine Ski Club (1931). These competitions and carnivals united skiers across lines of class and established a structural framework through which alpine skiing--initially an upper-class leisure activity--could spread throughout Colorado's mountain communities in the 1930s.

Formed by a group of Denver skiers, the Arlberg Club embodied the new enthusiasm for alpine skiing in Colorado and would shape the development of the sport in years ahead. Members came from Denver's social elite and, though deeply enamored with downhill skiing itself, they fully embraced the social culture surrounding it. The group came together when Graeme McGowan, a "gentleman skier from Denver," discovered the potential of the West Portal area for skiing and built a small clubhouse there. The Moffat Tunnel offered dependable railroad access

to the area from Denver in 1928, opening up a new playground for Denver skiers that would eventually become Winter Park.<sup>53</sup> The original members of the Arlberg Club had been skiing West Portal in 1928 and decided to organize a club one day during the train ride home. They chose its name from a magazine article that featured Hannes Schneider and his ski school in St. Anton. Although they got the name from an article in *Vogue*, chances are these skiers were already familiar with Schneider and his Arlberg system. They were all members of the CMC; some had attended college in the East at schools with ski teams like Williams and Yale; and many had leisure time and money to spare. Even if they had not been to European resorts themselves (McGowan learned to ski from books written by European experts), this group successfully transferred the cosmopolitan and social image of European resort culture to Colorado. By adopting the Arlberg name, furthermore, they expressed their desire to be associated with Europeanness, and with the legitimacy and status that came with it. The club, members agreed, was to "encourage the development of downhill skiing in Colorado, encourage desirable persons to take up skiing and learn it by club standards, and to assist the development of Colorado resorts."<sup>54</sup> Their by-laws thus embraced the sport, its elite participants, and its resort culture--recreating it to a degree in Colorado. The Denver businessmen who formed the club worked towards their goals by spending weekends skiing at their clubhouse in West Portal, hosting and promoting

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<sup>53</sup>The road over Berthoud Pass was not regularly kept open until 1933, and until 1928 trains had to travel over the often-snowed-in Corona Pass. Blickensderfer, 2. See also Steve Patterson and Kenton Forrest, *Rio Grande Ski Train* (Denver: Tramway Press, Inc., 1984).

<sup>54</sup>Grand County Historical Association, *Winter Park: Colorado's Favorite for Fifty Years, 1940-1990* (Winter Park Recreation Association, 1989), 17-18. One original member of the Arlberg Club was a Denver native, graduate of Williams College, and head of the Merrill Lynch offices in Denver. Another graduated from Yale, practiced law with the Hughes and Dorsey firm, and enjoyed tennis and polo before taking up skiing. This member was known to show up at the clubhouse in a chauffeured Packard--he died in a skiing accident on Loveland Pass in 1939. *Winter Park*, 18, 19.

annual slalom and downhill races there starting in 1929, and developing the area as a ski center. The club also hired its own professional instructor, Norwood Cox, from Grenoble in the Italian Alps.<sup>55</sup>

Other less exclusive Denver skiers also took to alpine skiing in the 1930s. The Denver Winter Sports Club, formed in 1932, conducted a free school for general touring and downhill skiing taught by the best local skiers. "Now that professional coaches are available," one news item noted in 1937, "the club has given up this activity."<sup>56</sup> In return for genuine European instruction, the announcement implied, members should expect to pay. Downhill ski enthusiasts in the CMC made frequent group trips to Rilliet Hill on Lookout Mountain or traveled to West Portal and Berthoud Pass. Experienced local skiers volunteered their services as instructors until 1936, when the CMC hired Robert Balch, originally from the East but now "one of the leading skiers in our part of the country," to give lessons for 50¢ each on Berthoud Pass.<sup>57</sup>

In addition to holding practice sessions and offering formal instruction, Colorado ski clubs incorporated downhill skiing in local tournaments and carnivals. Grand Lake inaugurated the tradition with its first annual winter carnival in January of 1932. The *Denver Post* reaffirmed the cultural power of carnival in its

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<sup>55</sup>Bill Engdail, "Mountain Club Making State Skiing Center," clipping, General Ski Collection, GCHA. This article comes from either *The Denver Post* or *The Rocky Mountain News*, sometime between 1929 and 1933.

<sup>56</sup>"Rocky Mountain Notes," *The Ski Bulletin*, 26 March, 1937, 14.

<sup>57</sup>Volunteer instructors included Arlberg members Frank Ashley, Graeme McGowan, George Berger, as well as Thor Grosword, who was a significant player in the Denver ski world as a skier and a ski manufacturer. "Ski Instruction Classes," *Trail and Timberline*, 182 (December 1933), 178. David Rosendale, "Skiing in the Colorado Mountain Club," *Trail and Timberline*, 208 (February 1936), 11. For reports on winter outings and other CMC ski events, see "The Winter Outing," *Trail and Timberline*, 160 (February 1932), 19; "Ski Trips, 1932-33 Season," *Trail and Timberline*, 179 (December 1932), 174; "Winter Outing," *Trail and Timberline*, 170 (December 1932), 177; Albert Bancroft, "The Winter Outing," *Trail and Timberline*, 173 (March 1933), 31, 37; "The Winter Outing," and "Skiing Notice," *Trail and Timberline*, 186 (April 1934), 46; "Ski Schedule," *Trail and Timberline*, 229 (December 1937), 135.

headline when it called Grand Lake "A sparkling, snowy, Norse Mecca--a St. Moritz right in Denver's backyard."<sup>58</sup> The Second Annual Ski Carnival in Grand Lake was even more exciting. In addition to ski joring (a Scandinavian tradition where a horse tows a skier behind), snow shoeing, hockey, jumping, and cross-country competitions, this carnival featured a down-mountain race on a course almost two miles long with over 2,000 feet of vertical drop. "Indications are," one Denver newsman wrote, "that a group of experienced racers from the Colorado Arlberg Club will attempt to stave off challenges of entrants from Rocky Mountain National Park Ski Club, Steamboat Springs, Denver Winter Sports Club and other organizations."<sup>59</sup> Spectators could look forward to Arlberg members demonstrating "the Austrian style of down mountain skiing" in this event, the first ever to be held except at West Portal, and one in which "unprecedented interest [was] being shown."<sup>60</sup> A week later the Hot Sulphur Springs Ski Club took up the mantle, explaining in its carnival program: "The Down Mountain Race was first entered as an event in U.S. Western Ski Ass'n tournaments by the Grand Lake W.S. Club. The H.S.S. Ski Club is the first club to enter the Slalom Race. A formal challenge has been issued by this club to the Arlberg [sic] Club, for honors in this event."<sup>61</sup> Local ski clubs, often established more than twenty years earlier around cross-country skiing and jumping, embraced the new European sport of downhill skiing with gusto.

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<sup>58</sup>"Grand Lake Will Hold Winter Sports Week," *Denver Post*, 25 December, 1931, clipping, ski scrapbook, Grand Lake Historical Society, Grand Lake, Colorado (hereafter cited as GLHS).

<sup>59</sup>Dave Lehman, "Varied List of Events Included in Ski Meet," *Rocky Mountain News*, 17 January, 1933.

<sup>60</sup>"New Style Ski Race in Grand Lake Meet," *Denver Post*, 20 January, 1933; Dave Lehman, "Leading Skiers in Meet," *Rocky Mountain News*, 20 January, 1933, clippings, GLHS.

<sup>61</sup>Program, Twenty-Third Annual Winter Sports Carnival, Hot Sulphur Springs, Colorado, January 29, 1933, General Ski Collection, GCHA.

Like the Arlberg Club founders, skiers throughout Colorado formed new clubs dedicated to downhill skiing. Denverites with an equal enthusiasm for the sport but different social goals responded to the Arlberg Club by forming the ski club Zipfelberger in the 1930s. The Colorado Ski Runners, also based in Denver, welcomed downhill ski enthusiasts to its ranks as well.<sup>62</sup> Andre Roch and Gunther Langes brought the bug to Aspen locals in 1936 and helped them get skis from Denver, taught them technique, and hosted a race that winter which attracted competitors from the CMC, the Arlberg Club, Ski Club Zipfelberger, and the Colorado Ski Runners.<sup>63</sup> In 1938 and 1939 the Aspen Ski Club hosted the Rocky Mountain Downhill and Slalom Championships on Aspen Mountain's Roch Run, as well as the National Championships in 1941.<sup>64</sup> Even in Steamboat Springs, Carl Howelson's hometown and a bastion of nordic skiing even today, residents could not stay away from downhill skiing. Graeme McGowan demonstrated new techniques to skiers there in 1931, Robert Balch taught lessons there in 1936, and by 1937 Balch wrote that the town was experiencing "that evolution now so familiar, out of Scandinavianism into Alpinism."<sup>65</sup> Some mountain towns jumped straight into "alpinism." During the winter of 1937-38 about fifty skiers appeared on the slopes above Ouray. The next year, the San Juan Ski Club formed with about 100 active skiers from Ouray, Montrose, and Grand Junction. They and the Glenwood Springs Ski Club concentrated on building ski courses for their respective members in 1938. Even in the southwestern part of Colorado, the San Luis Valley

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<sup>62</sup>Giles D. Toll, interview by the author, 2 February, 1996, Denver, Colorado.

<sup>63</sup>Fred Willoughby, "Andre Roch Brought Racing, A Dream," *Aspen Times*, 31 January, 1980, 5A, clipping, Andre Roch biography file, AHS.

<sup>64</sup>The first National Downhill and Slalom Championships were held at Mt. Ranier. For a description of the 1938 and 1939 regional championships and their results, see "Ski Heil to Aspen," *Trail and Timberline*, 232, (March 1938), 31-33; "Aspen Antics," *Trail and Timberline*, 244 (April 1939), 43-44.

<sup>65</sup>Robert Balch, "Steamboat Springs," *The Ski Bulletin*, 19 March, 1937, 8.

Ski Club made "a fine ski course" on Wolf Creek Pass, where over 5,000 people skied in 1938. They planned to install a lift the next year.<sup>66</sup>

In little southwestern towns as in the metropolis of Denver, alpine skiing took hold during the 1930s. Spread by Americans who had been East or to Europe, and by Europeans themselves, it eventually overtook its mining and Scandinavian cousin in popularity. For many Coloradans, skiing down nearby mountains simply proved more rewarding than touring up, down, and across the local landscape. And while all the implications of resort culture were linked to the history of alpine skiing, this history was also fundamentally connected to mountainous landscapes. Regional tournaments throughout the 1930s included more and more participants and advertised new downhill and slalom events. In competition skiers from different places and different classes came together. Despite advances in transportation and technology that helped make recreational skiing more accessible to Coloradans, however, enthusiasm still centered in Denver or towns with mountains nearby. Upper-class urbanites, familiar with European resort culture, adapted characteristics of that culture to their skiing in America and Colorado. Middle-class Denverites and mountain town locals, in contrast, treated skiing as a community sport. For both sets of people, skiing offered an opportunity for men and women to enjoy themselves. Because skiing required neither brawn, brute strength, nor a competitive mind frame, neither age nor sex determined who could learn or excel. Physical coordination, a degree of fearlessness, and a willingness to get a little snowy proved more relevant. The sport encouraged contrasting definitions of masculinity depending on the skier's class and location, providing an upper-class European ideal emphasizing style and expertise on the one hand, and an earlier, working-class mountain town ideal emphasizing toughness and strength on

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<sup>66</sup>*Western Colorado and Eastern Utah* (January 1939), Ski Town file, Routt County Collection, Buddy Werner Memorial Library, Steamboat Springs, Colorado (hereafter cited as BWML); *Ski-Hi Stampede*, 1939, Oversize Pam file, CUA.

the other. For women the experience of skiing sent even more complicated messages about gender, simultaneously undermining and reinforcing different aspects of their social roles.

#### On Edge: Masculinity, Femininity, and Alpine Skiing

When Hoyt Smith accompanied her parents to Sun Valley she entered a setting infused with signs of ethnicity and class. The hotel, restaurant, and ballroom recreated a world of leisure reminiscent of alpine resorts--a world in which upper-class men and women had traditionally enjoyed each other's company and played out gender roles appropriate to their class status. That this setting highlighted a ski hill as its center, however, and its daytime activities focused on a vigorous, outdoor sport, raised complicated questions as to how upper-class women like Smith could incorporate skiing into their feminine identities. The very act of skiing produced a range of experiences that could be construed--by skiers of any class and any gender--as masculine, feminine, or some ambiguous mix of both.

Skiing down a mountainside, for example, placed the skier in a relationship to the landscape that people experienced in different ways. Some skiers understood that relationship as one of raw power and masculine dominance over feminine nature. "The great thrill of skiing," one male author explained in 1938, "rises from the mastery of the individual, unaided by mechanical means, over the forces of nature--her treacherous snows, her vast space--over the forces of gravity, over the pull of speed. It is the feeling of being completely in control when in contest with these forces--to go here or there at will, to schuss, to temporize, to turn, to dodge--this is the enchantment of skiing."<sup>67</sup> To others, a skier's relationship to the landscape was more aesthetic than visceral. For them, skiing

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<sup>67</sup>Dick Tompkins, "Much Ado About Nothing," *Trail and Timberline*, 230 (January 1938), 3.

both allowed access to beauty and created it. The form of a skier in powder snow evoked poetic responses from observers as early as 1865, when a California reporter exclaimed "Nothing on a bright shiny morning can be more graceful and beautiful than a fair young lassie with sylph like motions over hills and plains on her Norwegian shoes."<sup>68</sup> Beauty in form, in the smoothness and rhythm of turns, and in the natural landscape surrounding the skier could invoke images of dancers on a stage. In responding to the question "Why do we ski?" one writer explained in 1953 that the attraction of speed was not the whole answer. "Beauty," he wrote, "is the very essence of skiing . . . it could not be escaped if one were foolish enough or dull enough to try, for skiing is an esthetic[sic] experience compounded of the magnificence of nature and the form, grace and symmetry of a sport which is at the same time an art."<sup>69</sup> As an audience may interpret art in many ways, so did skiers understand the mountain landscape. While some thrived on the challenge and danger it represented, others basked in the scenery and the silent, solitary experience that skiing could offer. And while some skiers understood the act of skiing itself as an aesthetic experience, others saw it as a way to explore and observe the beauty of the natural landscape. One woman in 1938 scoffed at skiers who whizzed down mountain trails while she stopped to "relax and look around in calm wonder at the sheer beauty of my surroundings . . . the deep silence of the mountains, the whiteness of the snow and strength of the tall trees."<sup>70</sup> While this woman's desire to appreciate the landscape contrasts sharply with the more masculine goal of competing against nature and the terrain, such interpretations of the skier's

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<sup>68</sup>*Marysville Daily Appeal*, 17 March, 1865, as quoted in E. John B. Allen, "Research Notes Document: Sierra 'Ladies' on Skis in Gold Rush California," *Journal of Sports History*, 17, 3 (Winter 1990), 349.

<sup>69</sup>John L. Frisbee, "Why Do We Ski?" *Ski* (November 1953), 19, 36-37. Robert C. Lewis, Jr., "Ski Racing," *Trail and Timberline*, 218 (December 1936), 143 also stressed the double pleasures of thrilling speed and beautiful alpine scenery inherent in skiing.

<sup>70</sup>Mary V. McLucas, "Skiing For Pleasure," *Trail and Timberline*, 230 (January 1938), 5.

landscape did not always fall into neat, gendered patterns. Through their experience of the sport and their interpretation of that experience, moreover, men and women skiers could redefine their gender identities in ways that accepted, challenged, or re-shaped dominant norms.

Men and women have appreciated the beauty and solitude they felt in the mountains. Olympic gold medalist Stein Erikson remembered skiing as a child behind his house in Norway and watching animals. "These were my first experiences on skis," he wrote, "an early feeling of oneness with nature."<sup>71</sup> Indeed, "who can remain untouched," another male skier wrote, "by the majesty of a mountain mantled in snow, glistening in the clear winter sun with a purity man has never reached in his greatest creations?"<sup>72</sup> These men understood their relationship to the landscape as complex rather than oppositional. Otto Lang wrote that skiing had "captivated the imagination" of one of his closest friends, who "loved the pristine beauty of the mountains and the meadows covered with snow. The flowing movements of a skier and the mastery of an otherwise inaccessible terrain, while leaving a geometrical design in the freshly fallen snow, intrigued him no end." Of himself and his friend, Lang wrote, "Skiing bound us together."<sup>73</sup> In so describing their skiing experiences, these men crafted their identities in terms that de-emphasized traits like overt power and dominance over the landscape that Colorado mountain residents would define as masculine. Instead, they defined their masculinity in terms consistent with the European resort ideal which they held up as their own.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>71</sup>Stein Eriksen, *Come Ski With Me* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1966), 12.

<sup>72</sup>Frisbee, 36.

<sup>73</sup>Lang, 79.

<sup>74</sup>The fact that Lang's friend was gay, and the fact that Lang did not realize it for years, raise interesting questions about how skiers' sexual identities relate to the gender identities and personal relationship to the landscape they craft through the sport.

Skiers reaffirmed and recrafted gender identities through their relationships with skiers of the opposite sex as well as with the landscape. The social aspects of skiing, when considered next to its intensely individual side, further muddied the sport's relationship to gender categories. "No bounds can restrain the joys of freedom and forgetfulness, of independence and intimacy, of companionship," one skier explained, "which at once drug and stimulate the threadbare senses of the metropolis-refugee who has at last found the solace of mountain solitudes."<sup>75</sup> The act of skiing, as well as the experience of skiing, have drawn men and women together since the nineteenth century. Because American culture has defined heterosexual identities as normal, heterosocial activity--through skiing or by any other means--helped define men as masculine and women as feminine. In this way the social aspects of skiing provided ample opportunities for men and women to subscribe to accepted gender norms. Climbing mountains (and later riding lifts), warming toes, and relaxing after a long day were all conducive to conversation and socializing. Community ski clubs and mountain resorts incorporated social gatherings into their agendas, fostering a sense of camaraderie and even the potential for romantic interludes. Snow-shoeing parties, CMC winter outings, and resort culture all brought women and men together through their interest in skiing, and so established social relationships as part of the sport. Indeed, this pattern was so well-established by the early 1950s that some people learned to ski precisely so they could meet members of the opposite sex. "This aura of romance is the 'special introductory offer' which inspires a great many people to take a first fling at skiing," one skier remarked. "Once the ice-covered Rubicon has been crossed," however, "there is no turning back," as the thrills of skiing "usually commit the beginner to a lifetime of skiing."<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>75</sup>David J. Bradley, "S.A.S.," *The American Ski Annual* (1937-38), 115.

<sup>76</sup>Frisbee, 36.

Women's participation in recreational skiing, however, did not always fit smoothly into accepted constructions of femininity. The varying degrees of tension between women's behavior on skis and dominant cultural norms shaped to some degree whether women skied and how. Relations of class, ethnicity, and sex mitigated that tension for some women who chose to ski with particular enthusiasm and zeal; and others created new space and freedom for themselves through the sport.<sup>77</sup> Skiing offered ways for women to escape, loosen, and even re-shape social constraints limiting their behavior as outdoor athletes.

American women enjoyed an unprecedented range of acceptable feminine behavior during the 1920s. To a large degree, that range was due to women before them who attended colleges and universities, joined the paid labor force, generated political reform movements, drove cars fast and far, and generally subverted Victorian notions of womanhood.<sup>78</sup> These upper- and middle-class, educated "New Women," who took to bicycles and golf courses in the 1880s and 1890s, helped demonstrate that sports could be healthy. By the 1920s women were competing publicly in basketball, softball, tennis, swimming, skating, and track and field.

These changes affected the skiing behavior of urban women more than women in Colorado mountain towns. There, women kept skiing as part of community life. They did so, moreover, to an astounding degree. Within the

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<sup>77</sup>For overviews of women and sport see Susan K. Cahn, *Coming on Strong: Gender and Sexuality in Twentieth-Century Women's Sport* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994); Helen Lenskyj, *Out of Bounds: Women, Sport and Sexuality* (Toronto: The Women's Press, 1986); Guttman, *Women's Sports: A History*; J. A. Mangan and Roberta J. Park, *From "Fair Sex" to Feminism: Sport and the Socialization of Women in the Industrial and Post-Industrial Eras* (London: Frank Cass and Company, Ltd., 1987).

<sup>78</sup>See Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, *Disorderly Conduct: Visions of Gender in Victorian America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985); Kathy Peiss, *Cheap Amusements: Working Women and Leisure in Turn-of-the-Century New York* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986); Virginia Scharff, *Taking the Wheel: Women and the Coming of the Motor Age* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1991); Maureen Honey, "Gotham's Daughters: Feminism in the 1920s," *American Studies*, 31, 1 (Spring 1990); 25-40; as well as Lenskyj, *Out of Bounds*, and Cahn, *Coming on Strong*.

context of winter carnivals, women skiers could bend even their already loose local restrictions on feminine behavior to include outright competition. Colorado's first winter carnival in 1912 at Hot Sulphur Springs, where Carl Howelson demonstrated his jumping skills to an enthralled crowd, also featured a jumping exhibition by the women of Hot Sulphur.<sup>79</sup> Steamboat Springs' first carnival in 1914 included a "ladies' free-for-all" race across a half-mile course, and street events for everybody--man and woman, boy and girl.<sup>80</sup> Two years later town residents declared they would crown a carnival queen each year to lead the carnival parade and "reign as queen of beauty for twelvemonth."<sup>81</sup> The carnival queen successfully integrated notions of femininity and community power with winter sports, albeit in the ambivalent context of carnival. Other women made more clear, permanent connections by creating local ski clubs for themselves. Women in Steamboat Springs established their own S.K.I. Club in 1917 "to create, develop and sustain interest in ladies' skiing and in all outdoor sports; to encourage the formation of local ski clubs throughout the country; to assist in defraying the expenses of the annual Mid-Winter Sports Carnival; and to aid and foster the carnival spirit."<sup>82</sup> Many of these same women established the Ladies Recreation Club in 1920, formed specifically to support young women athletes.<sup>83</sup> In this way Steamboat Springs women linked their desire to enjoy outdoor sports with the

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<sup>79</sup>Jim Wier, "Skiing at Hot Sulphur Springs," *Grand County Historical Association Journal*, 4 (March 1988), 13. The next year junior jumpers had their own contests, as well. Children participated in local skiing communities more often and to a higher degree than most adults.

<sup>80</sup>Wier, 14-15; Jean Wren, *Steamboat Springs and the "Treacherous and Specky Skee": an Album* (Steamboat Springs: Steamboat Pilot, 1972), 17. Only two women competed in the free-for-all race in 1914. Sureva Towler, *The History of Skiing at Steamboat Springs* (Denver: Frederic Printing, 1987), 68.

<sup>81</sup>Wren, 21-22.

<sup>82</sup>Towler, 85; "Winter Sports Club Active in Steamboat," *Steamboat Pilot*, 16 May, 1930, 2.

<sup>83</sup>Towler, 84.

cause of the sport nationwide and their support of the community, re-shaping definitions of feminine behavior in the process.

While Colorado mountain town women created structures to support their participation in community ski activities, some upper-class Colorado women cultivated a more general freedom of movement and the power that came with it by driving cars, traveling overseas, and by donning skis. Generally Denver residents educated in the East at colleges like Smith, these "New Women" of the 1910s and 1920s combined a love of the outdoors with the sport of skiing. Marjorie Perry, friend of Carl Howelsen and the embodiment of New Womanhood, moved freely between Denver and Steamboat Springs on the train, on horseback during the summer, and on skis in the wintertime. In 1928 she and Elinor Eppich Kingery took the train from Denver to participate in Steamboat's winter carnival. On the way home their train was delayed on the top of Rollins Pass and rather than wait, the two women decided to ski down along the tracks to Tolland, sixteen miles distant. "We could see three long switchbacks through the open timber and tiny Tolland far below," Marjorie Perry recalled. "We left the track and went straight down the hill, making big curves, with the perfect powdered snow swirling in the air."<sup>84</sup>

When Colorado's ski clubs and tournaments grew during the 1920s and the 1930s, Denver women like Perry and Kingery came together with mountain town women in order to compete with each other. Between the development of the sport in Denver and nearby towns, and the increasingly public space women occupied in sport during the 1920s, Colorado women found many opportunities to enter competitions.<sup>85</sup> The Denver Rocky Mountain Ski Club tournament in 1922 offered

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<sup>84</sup>Janet Robertson, *Magnificent Mountain Women: Adventures in the Colorado Rockies* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1990), 43.

<sup>85</sup>Historians have labeled the 1920s as the golden age of women in sports, citing widespread public participation in athletics and less criticism of it than before. Women athletes, Cahn points out, took advantage of the new standard of womanhood embodied by the image of the flapper. See Cahn, Chapter 2.

girls' "sliding," ladies' sliding, and ladies' jumping contests, for instance, along with boys' and men's jumping, cross-country, and "fancy skiing." Twenty-three of the contestants were male; nineteen were female.<sup>86</sup> Hot Sulphur Springs' carnival that year included ladies' contests in cross-country and ski joring, among others. Girls and ladies also jumped in the Fourth of July Ski Tournament on St. Mary's Glacier in 1923, and continued to compete, though in fewer numbers than men, in most tournaments throughout the 1920s.<sup>87</sup>

Women's participation in ski competitions, however, did not preclude their more typically feminine participation in the growing consumer culture and fashion industry. This too, became part of skiing, and may have served to lessen the conflict between feminine roles and behavior represented by women skiing competitively.<sup>88</sup> "The Genesee mountain ski course was given over to something more than a contest between champion jumpers in the interstate ski tournament held there yesterday afternoon," one reporter wrote in 1923. "Altho[sic] it had not been announced that a style show would be held in conjunction with the skiing, the brilliant display of sporting toggerly was all of that, and caused many eyes to wander frequently from the tournament itself in the direction of some fair maid or matron."<sup>89</sup> As Americans invested increasingly in the emerging consumer culture of the 1920s, and skiing grew slowly more popular nationwide, image-makers discovered the aesthetic value of a woman skiing and began to cover magazines with pictures of them (Figure 1). Advertisers, too, sought to associate the sleek, freely moving form of skiing women with their products, notably automobiles, which,

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<sup>86</sup>Program, Denver Rocky Mountain Ski Club Annual Amateur Tournament, January 28-29, 1922, General Ski Collection, GCHA.

<sup>87</sup>See General Ski Collection and Grosword Ski Collection, GCHA.

<sup>88</sup>See Mark Dyerson, "The Emergence of Consumer Culture and the Transformation of Physical Culture: American Sport in the 1920s," *Journal of Sport History*, 16, 3 (Winter 1989): 261-281.

<sup>89</sup>Eileen O'Connor, "Genesee Mountain Ski Tournament Proves to Be Winter Fashion Display, clipping, 19 February, 1923, General Ski Collection, GCHA.

like skiing, promised freedom, speed, and adventure (Figure 2). By depicting or describing women skiers as feminine, or by simply placing a picture of a woman skier on the cover of a women's magazine, these illustrations reconciled outdoor sport with accepted notions of femininity. These illustrations, moreover, placed images of women skiers in the center of consumer culture--popular magazines and

*Ladies Home Journal*, 46 (January 1929), from Gary H. Schwartz, *The Art of Skiing, 1856-1936* (Tiburn CA: Wood River Publishing, 1989), 49.

Figure 1. *Ladies Home Journal*, 1929

Gary H. Schwartz, *The Art of Skiing, 1856-1936* (Tiburn CA: Wood River Publishing, 1989), 93.

Figure 2. Franklin Automobile Company advertisement, 1931

advertisements--thereby reinforcing the skiers' femininity as worthy of consumption, also a feminine behavior.

These images continued to appear on magazine covers and in advertisements throughout the 1930s, despite the declining power of the New Woman/flapper ideal (Figure 3). Women, too, continued to ski--in increasing numbers--at a time when physical educators and organizers of women's sports tried to reconcile women's athletics with a more feminine ideal by casting women athletes as either beauty queens or wholesome and modest girls.<sup>90</sup> The rise of alpine skiing coaxed women out of doors in spite of these contestations over feminine behavior, and in spite of different, class-based feminine ideals. The influx of European experts and technique during the 1930s created an enthusiasm for downhill skiing in which women skiers --elite Denverites and mountain community members alike-- participated. One skier wrote in the mid-1930s of "girls, who, fired by Otto [Schneibs'] ski talks, have abandoned silks and fragile shoes for ski clothes and battleship boots, and have fled to the ski country."<sup>91</sup> Wealthy Americans familiar with European resort culture, and residents of small mountain towns in Colorado, were not affected by the Depression in ways that prevented them from skiing. One group had enough money to keep skiing despite the Depression; the other needed so little to ski that they just kept on doing it. Some towns, in fact, sought to boost skiing in their communities in order to revive the local economy. These class and regional dynamics, combined with the immigration of European experts, boosted participation in recreational skiing for men and women despite changing constructions of gender.

In Denver and Colorado mountain towns, local women joined ski clubs and took on new levels of responsibility. Within the CMC, women assisted in leading

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<sup>90</sup>Cahn, Chapter 3.

<sup>91</sup>Bradley, "Heil, Otto," 65.

*Saturday Evening Post*, 203 (February 14, 1931), from Gary H. Schwartz, *The Art of Skiing, 1856-1936* (Tiburn CA: Wood River Publishing, 1989), 53.

Figure 3. *Saturday Evening Post*, 1931

ski trips, led ski trips themselves, and even volunteered as ski instructors.<sup>92</sup> "That skiing is a woman's sport as well as a man's," one local wrote, "was very clearly indicated here at Aspen when, during this difficult summer, Aspen Ski Club's active women members outnumbered the men, and their total efforts in helping to finance the construction of the Roch Run was certainly equal to or greater than the total accomplished by their men companions."<sup>93</sup> The CMC new members list for the same year--1937--demonstrated a similar trend.<sup>94</sup> Leading ski trips, instructing classes, and financing local development fell outside the usual definitions of feminine behavior and helped women craft a more complicated gender identity for themselves through sport.

At the same time that skiing stretched and reshaped gender constructions for men and women, social interaction between male and female skiers tended to emphasize more traditional definitions of masculinity and femininity. At ski hills throughout Colorado and the nation, men and women skiers shared stories of their day and relaxed together over drinks in clubhouses, restaurants, and hotels. Early skiers in Aspen frequented the Hotel Jerome, where they could drink "Aspen crud" and talk about skiing. Women who shed their silks and fragile shoes for "battleship boots" transformed from women athletes back into socialites once off the slopes, adding an air of social festivity to the après ski world. Arlberg Club members thus encouraged women to go skiing with them, even though the club did not allow them to be members until 1938, almost ten years after the club's inception. Some of those women skied in order to follow social prescriptions and find husbands; they stopped going on club trips after they had married one of the members.<sup>95</sup> Other

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<sup>92</sup>"Ski Trips, 1932-33 Season," *Trail and Timberline*, 170 (December 1932), 174; "Skiing Instruction Classes," *Trail and Timberline*, 182 (December 1933), 178.

<sup>93</sup>Frank Willoughby, "History of Aspen's Course and Jump," *Aspen Times*, n.d., clipping, AHS.

<sup>94</sup>"New Members for 1937," *Trail and Timberline*, 229 (December 1937), 135.

<sup>95</sup>*Winter Park*, 22.

women such as Marjory Perry, however, used the sport to help her defy such prescriptions. More enamoured with the sport than the idea of marriage, Perry remained single. Upper-class women skiers like Perry could thus enter into the heterosocial ski culture in Denver, reinforcing their femininity in the process, and so create room for them to operate outside other culturally prescribed gender norms that might question their athleticism or single status.

Women who skied without the pretext of mingling with men had the most trouble reconciling their skiing with dominant gender constructions. Separated from the social world of the CMC and the Arlberg Club, women alpine racers placed themselves in the very male context of competition. While there were not as many women racers in Colorado as men, their decision to hurl themselves down often frightening courses--with no control gates and packed only by foot--potentially placed them beyond the pale of womanhood. Youth and the context of carnival helped to ease the tensions presented by women's racing. Dorothy McLaren Howard's father urged her to compete with the boys in the Grand Lake Winter Sports Club in cross-country events because there were few other girls to compete against.<sup>96</sup> He could do so more easily because she was young. Women's racing first began in winter carnivals. It took a few years from the first downhill race to attract enough competitors for a separate women's race, but by 1937 at least, Hot Sulphur's Girls' Down Mountain Race and its Ladies' Down Mountain Race had become part of the winter carnival program.<sup>97</sup> Downhill skiing probably caught on faster for women in Denver than in local clubs, since at least four clubs in the city encouraged the sport and sponsored women-only races. Five Denver women raced in the CMC slalom competition at Berthoud Pass in 1937, representing Denver's

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<sup>96</sup>Dorothy McLaren Howard, interview with the author, 22 August, 1995, Grand Lake, Colorado, tape recording.

<sup>97</sup>Program, Twenty-Sixth Annual Winter Sports Carnival of the Hot Sulphur Springs Ski Club, February 6-7, 1937, General Ski Collection, GCHA.

Colorado Ski Runners and the CMC. Louise White took home the prize for first place at the Berthoud Race, which was no surprise since she was the defending regional champion. She kept her streak for years, beating nine others to win the 1939 Rocky Mountain Ski Association Championships for downhill and slalom and the 1940 championships, as well.<sup>98</sup>

Reports of her victories seemed to emphasize White's prowess and daring, qualities that reporters usually employed in descriptions of male racers. At the Berthoud Races in 1937, a Rocky Mountain News reporter applauded Barney McLean's "masterful" performance, that of the winner, and of the second place finisher, who "traversed the trail at breakneck speed." When it came to White, the reporter characterized her as "walking away with the women's title . . . over the same route [as the men]." The reporter described the women's second and third place finishers only in their relationships to "the conqueror" and "the masterful maneuvering Louise White."<sup>99</sup> A few years later descriptions of her had changed little. Again racing on a "treacherous" course, White "beat out" her competitors. In an odd mix of adjectives--illustrative, perhaps, of the sportswriter's fondness for clichés--these reporters emphasized White's power over other "feminine" skiers at the same time they referred to her as Mrs. White.<sup>100</sup> Louise White filled an uncomfortable role as both a successful downhill racer and a woman. While reporters admired her abilities, they acknowledged them as masculine and sometimes felt compelled to reassure readers that she was, in fact, married. White and other women who embodied the conflict between womanhood and

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<sup>98</sup>"C.M.C. Members Place in Berthoud Ski Races," *Trail and Timberline*, 229 (December 1937), 136; "Aspen Antics," *Trail and Timberline*, 244 (April 1939), 43, 44; "Ashley Wins Downhill at Berthoud," "Asheley Wins Downhill Race," and "Frank Ashley Wins Slalom at Berthoud," clippings, General Ski Collection, GCHA.

<sup>99</sup>"C.M.C. Members Place," 136.

<sup>100</sup>Ashley clippings, GCHA.

competitiveness ran the potential risk of having their femininity and their sexuality called into question.<sup>101</sup>

All U.S. women ski racers during the 1930s faced tension between their athletic pursuits and their femininity. Because the best women racers competed internationally, however, they could ski and live within a cosmopolitan resort culture that eased their athleticism with images of class and status. Indeed, it took a woman immersed in such a culture to organize the U.S. Women's Ski Team and train a team for the 1936 Olympics. Illustrative of the upper-class, cosmopolitan "New Woman" of the 1920s, Alice Kaier was the daughter of Walter Damrosch, famous conductor of the New York Philharmonic Society, the Metropolitan Opera, and New York Symphony Society. She had vacationed in St. Anton since the 1920s and, according to Otto Lang, she knew everybody in *Who's Who*.<sup>102</sup> Upon learning that the International Olympic Committee would allow alpine events in the 1936 Olympics, she took it upon herself to organize and finance a women's team. Accordingly, she chose twelve women and sent them off to Austria, to practice in St. Anton.<sup>103</sup> After the Olympics, in which the U.S. women fared rather badly, they returned to St. Anton to train under their new coach, Friedl Pfeifer. He helped them with their technique so much that three American women finished in the top ten of the 1937 Arlberg-Kandahar, and Clarita Heath finished fourth in the world championships --the highest ever for an American. The next year Betty Woolsey tied the record by finishing fourth in the 1938 world championships, and would go on to win the U.S. National Downhill in 1939, beating the star of the visiting Swiss team in the process.<sup>104</sup> After Hitler's invasion of Austria, Pfeifer and the U.S.

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<sup>101</sup>Cahn, 81.

<sup>102</sup>Lang, 157.

<sup>103</sup>Pfeifer and Lund, 49.

<sup>104</sup>Pfeifer and Lund, 53, 73. She was in St. Anton with Pfeifer when Hitler took over Austria, and at the parade the Nazis staged in St. Anton two days later. She showed some of her ski-racing fearlessness when she organized a counter-demonstration and walked beside the parade shouting the skier's greeting "Ski Heill"

Women's team had to find a new training site. They re-grouped in Sun Valley where Harriman had hired Pfeifer to direct the ski school and invited the women's team to train.

This decision placed a group of educated, young, female athletes right in the middle of a social whirlwind, where they incorporated their fearlessness and competition into an upper-class, social culture. One young racer, who would go on to marry the famous Dick Durrance, created quite a spectacle with her risk-taking. Miggs Durrance joined the team in Sun Valley after learning to ski from Sigi Engl and Hannes Schroll, two Austrians who had set up a ski school in Yosemite. She had raced for the Yosemite Ski Club and placed well enough in the regional Jeffers Cup race held at Sun Valley--third of about thirty--that Alice Kaier asked her to stay on and try out for the 1940 Olympic team. When asked about Pfeifer, she said "He scared the hell out of me!" She remembered being frightened by her first training session, when he had them schuss such a steep pitch she thought "Never will I live through that."<sup>105</sup> Pfeifer saw her as more of a risk-taker than she saw herself. He wrote that "her inexperience and daring led her to terrible spills, but she usually bounced right back up again."<sup>106</sup> Durrance would later take a fall that put her in the hospital with a concussion. She and countless other women racers shared the experience of getting hurt.<sup>107</sup> Despite initial moments of fear, they hurled themselves down mountains in the interest of winning. Traveling to competitions all over the world, traveling to Sun Valley from their home towns, and skimming

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and, as Pfeifer put it, giving "a decidedly different hand salute to the Nazis." Policemen tried to seize Woolsey but she escaped through the crowd. Pfeifer, 57.

<sup>105</sup>Durrance, 1993.

<sup>106</sup>Pfeifer, 68.

<sup>107</sup>Sally Niedlinger Hudson, for example, joined the F.I.S. team in 1950 after one of the initial members broke her leg. She broke her own foot training on the downhill course a few days before the race. She remembered skiing later on a sprained ankle, and said "We used to get hurt a lot--we were always breaking things." Sally Niedlinger Hudson, interview by Ruth Whyte, 9 March, 1987, Aspen, Colorado, tape recording, AHS.

down mountains, they exercised a freedom of movement often viewed and perhaps felt as masculine.

The racers in Sun Valley, training for an Olympic team and taking risks in the interest of speed while wealthy and famous vacationers flaunted their femininity nearby, raised questions about the proper role of women in skiing. One author in 1939 argued that the "Ski Rabbit" (precursor to the "ski bunny") uses skis merely as "a vehicle of support for a glamorous female whose main interest in the out of doors is to dazzle and not to ski." This image, she implied, relegated women skiers to the status of sex objects. Her remedy: young women should learn to ski not for social reasons, but for the fun and power of making good turns.<sup>108</sup> While this author would applaud the skill, confidence, and enthusiasm of the U.S. Women's team, hers was not the only opinion.

Another woman expressed fears common during the 1930s: that high-level competition put one's femininity at risk.<sup>109</sup> Despite the excitement and thrills that international competition offered women skiers, she argued, it was not clear that women could compete without temporary or permanent injury. The author went on to argue that training as much as would be necessary to compete against the German "Amazons from beyond the Rhine," if possible at all, would put women in constant danger of injury, and it would mean giving up any social life for that one goal. Finally and worst of all, she concluded, would be the demise of their "feminine charm." As her last piece of evidence, the author produced a photo of the women's F.I.S. team and said they were ugly.<sup>110</sup> According to this reasoning, women who continued to compete in athletics would start turning into men.

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<sup>108</sup>Neale Howard, "Junior Skiing for Girls," *American Ski Annual* (1939-40), 93.

<sup>109</sup>See Cahn, *Coming on Strong*.

<sup>110</sup>The editors of the *Ski Annual* disagreed. Helen Boughton-Leigh, "Racing for Women," *American Ski Annual* (1936-37), 41-45. Apparently at least one husband agreed with her. He made his wife diet so she would be thinner and prettier, and as a result, she--a French racer had a chance of winning the 1948

Rather than accept the purported masculinity of women ski racers, some writers cast them in less threatening images. Just as Louise White, the "conqueror," was also "Mrs. White," the dutiful wife, women racers in the 1940s were generally characterized as cute or pretty as well as fast and tough. In an article with the tag line "Ski Moppet," one author juggled tension between strength and femininity by emphasizing one racer's youth. "No ski slope is too steep or too tough for nineteen year old Barbara Kidder--Colorado's own pigtailed wonder," he wrote. "Although she's America's number one skier, her charm and modesty make her seem like somebody's kid sister."<sup>111</sup> Kidder could be even boyish in her desire to ski fast without seeming masculine, because as a cute kid sister, she could indulge in tomboy-ish activities like ski racing and still grow into a woman. One might ask whether she would have posed a more troubling picture if she had not worn her hair in pigtails. Many American men and women, then, relied on a few adjectives here and there to ease the tension they felt between women's accomplishments on skis and socially acceptable feminine behavior.

The most powerful way skiers eased the tension between their sport and social constructions of gender was through the culture of the resort. Women who skied at European resorts and subscribed to that upper-class resort culture in America closed the gap between skiing and cultural definitions of gender most securely. Resort culture was so focused on the consumption of fashion, food, sex, and handsome ski instructors that women could exercise power as skier-consumers without calling their womanhood into question. European-style resorts in America in the 1930s, however, were few and far between. Aspen skiers and outside investors tried to establish one in the Hayden-Ashcroft area that Andre

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Olympic downhill--grew weak and fell in the race. One may wonder why he let her race at all. James Laughlin, "Inside Report," *Ski*, 13, 1 (November 1948), 9.  
<sup>111</sup>Eugene F. Pilz, "Barbara Kidder--Queen of the Slopes," *Rocky Mountain Life* (December 1946), 46.

Roch had recommended, but the project stalled after the onset of World War Two. Its small lodge nonetheless grew popular in the 1930s with Denver skiers, especially the Arlberg Club and the CMC, and racers attended the National Downhill and Slalom Championships on Aspen Mountain in 1941, but the area did not achieve national fame until after the war. Sun Valley in Idaho drew more European skiers, wealthy vacationers, and movie stars than any other resort before the war, and illustrated the purest form of European-resort-culture-in-America.

This culture, carefully recreated by Averill Harriman and his promotional wizard Steve Hanagan, united European skiers and images together with American socialites, movie stars, and upper-class skiers. Otto Lang came every year as instructor for Nelson Rockefeller, whom he had met at Peckett's in New Hampshire. Friedl Pfeifer found his way there because Claudette Colbert, an old student of his from St. Anton, had recommended it and was a regular herself. A group of skiers from Denver, Colorado Springs, and Albuquerque went to see the spectacle in 1938 and reported that "The picturesque pseudo-Swiss, neo-Austrian, quasi-Bavarian" village about the new Challenger Inn "offered every delight and the Lodge a step up in the direction of dignity and ritzyness." Festive people and atmosphere added to the physical setting. "Beer abends[sic], skating festivals, bal en masque swimming in the hot pools, Bavarian music, the Austrian instructors schussing down Dollar [Mtn.] with red flares--never a dull moment there either."<sup>112</sup> Socializing defined the ski culture at Sun Valley. Friedl Pfeifer remembered it as a "romantic oasis." "The social whirl," he explained, "that centered around the Duchin Room in the Sun Valley Lodge, where an orchestra played every night, made Sun Valley a never-never land where everyone was rich and young and all invited to the dance."<sup>113</sup> Women in this never-never land, who flew (or tumbled) down the slopes during

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<sup>112</sup>"Echoes From Sun Valley," *Trail and Timberline*, 232 (March 1938), 28.

<sup>113</sup>Pfeifer and Lund, 68.

the day on equal terms with the men, changed into their dinner clothes ready to eat, drink, and be merry in a most feminine way. As fashion plates and dinner dates they obeyed the imperative to consume that created the social, sexual, resort culture. They kept up with the latest ski fashion, frequented the best bars, and boasted the handsomest, most masculine escorts--Austrian ski instructors. When Friedl Pfeifer instituted an eleven p.m. curfew for his ski instructors in the interest of establishing some discipline, he said "I found some opposition to my changes. Not from the instructors but from the guests, particularly from the starlets who flocked to Sun Valley."<sup>114</sup> Pfeifer could not complain too much since it was here, dancing in the Duchin Room, that he met his bride Hoyt Smith.

Indeed, skiing had become such a socially acceptable sport for upper-class women by the late 1930s--and so inseparable from social gatherings--that the sport itself sometimes fell from view. "Skiing has now reached the point," one woman from Smith College wrote in 1939, "where participation in the sport has become a social asset. Most modern girls want to be able to swim and play a fair game of tennis or golf. Now skiing falls in line with these sports in being an activity which men and women may enjoy together." The thrills and exhilaration of skiing, the author went on to argue, were an added bonus to its primarily social benefits. As a nod to the woman athlete less interested in the social whirl, she finally noted that many women had no "ulterior motive" for skiing--they just loved the sport.<sup>115</sup> For upper-class women in the 1930s, the prevalent resort culture--filled with opportunities to wear sexy clothes and flirt--mitigated the tension between the potentially masculine act of skiing and upper-class visions of womanhood, redefining that vision of womanhood in the process.

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<sup>114</sup>Pfeifer, 70.

<sup>115</sup>Harriette Aull, "Smith College 'Shees'," *American Ski Annual*, 1939-40, 72.

A few women in that culture, however, exercised so much power through their skiing that no amount of socializing could contain it. They were women ski instructors. While few and far between, they had graced the hills of American ski resorts since at least 1939, when Friedl Pfeifer hired Clarita Heath, Marion McKean, and Elli Stiller to teach for him at Sun Valley. (Other women, in the CMC and probably other clubs as well, acted as volunteer instructors, but did not earn pay checks in the process.) As women entered what was an elite group of masculine European instructors, they took on unfamiliar authority and power that their roles as teacher, leader, and expert commanded. As accomplished skiers, instructors moved with ease through resort culture as well as down the mountain. This expertise empowered them, especially in relation to their students, who, by definition, needed help. The instructors' skill, combined with their assigned role as leaders and teachers, gave them authority over students feminized and infantilized by their inability to negotiate the mountain. Beginners took their lessons--and still do today--on "nursery slopes" and "bunny hills." This power relationship between teacher and student made sense in St. Anton, where the instructors exuded masculinity and expertise from their pores, but it raised questions when women took control over often very wealthy and otherwise powerful male students.

Just as a European name and accent qualified many skiers as "experts" in American ski clubs, associations with Pfeifer, periods of training in St. Anton, and places on international racing teams granted these instructors power and authority at Sun Valley. Of the three women Pfeifer hired in 1939, two had competed on the U.S. Women's Olympic Team and trained with Pfeifer in St. Anton, and the other, also coached by Pfeifer, had been a member of the Austrian women's team. All this power, authority, and expertise, however, centered around their "masculine" ability to ski fast and with confidence. Despite all this, these women retained their

femininity. The contradictory characteristics of skiing helped. Men as well as women wanted to learn how to ski smoothly and beautifully; who better to learn that from than a woman? For those students more interested in apres-ski life than technique, women instructors may have filled a role as objects of beauty and sex-- a role comparable to that played by male instructors for their starlet pupils. Their inclusion in Sun Valley's ski culture, finally, placed these women instructors in a context that encouraged others to see them as women first and as athletes second. They, too, probably made appearances in the Duchin Room.

What few American skiers realized was that the cause of all this tension around gender--and the solution to it, too--was the sport of skiing itself. The very range of emotions it evoked in both women and men, and the difficulty in characterizing the sport as either masculine or feminine, were part of what made the sport so appealing. Women found power within the ambiguities of skiing. As club members, instructors, racers, and fashion statements, women skiers found ways to act (or ski) outside dominant constructions of gender and even to transform them. As ski instructors and resort-goers, men crafted and emulated a new kind of masculine ideal linked to the Alps. Women competitors, too, carved new identities for themselves as either kid sister/tomboys whose youth allowed for their athletic exploits, or as elite, cosmopolitan racers as capable of dancing as negotiating a downhill course. For both women and men, association with upper-class, European resort culture gave them room in which to craft these identities, and left these versions of masculinity and femininity tinged with images of European whiteness. In this context, then, Friedl Pfeifer and Hoyt Smith made the perfect couple: he, the stylish, romantic, and Austrian head of the ski school; she, a beautiful, wealthy young woman on vacation in Sun Valley. Although separated by class and national origin, Pfeifer and Smith represented the masculine and feminine ideals of European resort culture. It made sense that they would marry and have children

together. They could not live their entire lives in Sun Valley's never-never land, however. Once outside the resort culture that created and affirmed their respective gender identities, Pfeifer and Smith felt their class and ethnic differences pull them apart. She would ultimately return to her parents in Salt Lake City; he would make a life for himself in the tiny, depressed town of Aspen, Colorado.



## CHAPTER THREE

### The Networks Behind Colorado Skiing to 1945

At a party in Pasadena in the spring of 1936, T.J. Flynn struck up a pointed conversation with two-time Olympic bobsled champion and Cambridge graduate, Billy Fiske. At first the charismatic Fiske was put off; he was not interested in buying Flynn's mining claims in Aspen, Colorado. After Flynn described Aspen's beautiful, high mountains and the local tradition of skiing, however, Fiske took more notice and they found themselves deep in conversation. The two ultimately teamed up with New York banker Ted Ryan in order to develop a winter resort in Aspen. They wanted to build an American version of St. Moritz, a Colorado resort to rival Idaho's Sun Valley. Flynn had local connections, Fiske had an unquenchable enthusiasm for winter sports--as well as an influential circle of friends in Europe and America--and Ryan had financial know-how.

Together the group created the Highland Bavarian Corporation (HBC) and constructed a small lodge in the Castle Creek Valley, seven miles from the town of Aspen. They brought Andre Roch and Gunther Langes from Europe to make recommendations on the resort's development and to instruct its first clientele. The Highland Bavarian Lodge drew immediate attention from skiers who participated in upper-class ski resort culture, boasting guests from Denver's CMC and Arlberg Clubs, soon-to-be Senator Stephen Hart, famous Colorado skiers Frank Ashley and Thor Grosword, Dartmouth ski coach Otto Schneibs, and radio personality Lowell Thomas--all in 1936-37, its first season. Visitors usually took the train to Glenwood Springs, drove to Aspen, and were carried by sleigh to

the lodge, a modest development that could accomodate sixteen guests in the main lodge and about thirty more in four other cabins.

Despite its advertising, well-connected customers, and optimistic plans that called for developing a resort to rival any in the Alps, however, the Highland Bavarian Corporation would not last. By the start of 1941 the company's plans to build an aerial tramway up Mt. Hayden and a resort village in the ghost town of Ashcroft (twelve miles outside of Aspen) remained unrealized. Negotiations for funding the project had finally come together only to be overshadowed by America's impending entrance into World War Two. To make matters worse, Billy Fiske, the charismatic force driving the HBC, was dead--killed while flying for the RAF in the Battle of Britain. After America's entrance into World War Two, Flynn and Ryan gave up on the project. Ryan offered the HBC's land to the U.S. Army Ski Troops as a training site for one dollar.<sup>1</sup>

During the same period that the HBC struggled and failed to build an American version of St. Moritz in Colorado, a small, local ski area grew up right next door in the town of Aspen. Besides choosing the Mt. Hayden/Ashcroft site for a world-class resort, European consultant Andre Roch helped Aspen residents start up their own ski club and marked a trail for them to cut on Aspen Mountain so they could have a ski run close by. Aspen residents had traditionally embraced downhill

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<sup>1</sup>Theodore S. Ryan, interview by George Madsen, Jr., 23, 26, and 30 March, 1965, transcript of three "Commentary" programs recorded and broadcast over WSNO, Aspen, Colorado, manuscript, Highland Bavarian Corporation file, AHS; T.J. Flynn, "History of Winter Sports Developments at Aspen," *Aspen Times*, n.d., clipping, Skiing 1938-45 file, AHS; unidentified manuscript, Highland Bavarian Corporation file, AHS, 171-175; Andre Roch, Ernie Blake, trans., "A Once and Future Resort: A Winter in the Rocky Mountains of Colorado," *Colorado Heritage*, 4 (1985), 17-23, originally published as "Un Hiver aux Montagnes Rocheuses du Colorado," *Der Schnee Hase* (1937); "Highland Bavarian Winter Sport Club Dedicated Sunday," *The Glenwood Post*, 24 December, 1936, clipping, Highland Bavarian Corporation file, AHS; T.J. Flynn, "Mount Hayden to Date," *The Ski Bulletin*, 8 December, 1939, 6. For a more detailed history of the Highland Bavarian Corporation, see Anne Gilbert, "Re-Creation Through Recreation: Aspen Skiing from 1870-1970," manuscript, 1995, AHS, 14-35.

skiing as a community activity--they now looked to it as a potential catalyst for their now-defunct mining economy. Local volunteers cut what would be known as the Roch Run on Aspen Mountain and built, with some funding from the WPA, a "boat tow" to carry people up the lower part of the run, a warming hut at the top of the run, a jumping hill, and a small clubhouse. Local businesspeople supported the Aspen Ski Club and its efforts to hold local and regional races in town. In a few years the Roch Run's growing reputation, the Aspen community's support of the sport, and improved transportation networks in Colorado, enabled the club to host the Southern Rocky Mountain Regional Championships. Aspen and its ski club were so successful in holding these divisional championships from 1938 to 1940 that the U.S. Ski Association asked them to host the National Downhill and Slalom Championships there in 1941. These races brought skiers from all over the country to the town of Aspen and its mountain, placing the area in a spotlight for the national skiing population to see.<sup>2</sup>

That Aspen residents could witness the failure of the Highland Bavarian's ski resort and the success of their own run on Aspen Mountain during the late 1930s, demonstrates that not all kinds of ski areas could grow in Colorado during those years. A series of material and interpersonal networks formed between 1930 and 1945 to support the development of small, local ski areas like the one on Aspen Mountain. Physical infrastructures including roads and railroads enabled Coloradans to move more easily along certain routes; technological developments allowed clubs to build their own ski tows; local communities sought to revive their economies through skiing and received limited funding from New Deal agencies to do so; and a small population of dedicated skiers worked with the U.S. Forest Service to promote skiing in places accessible to Denver enthusiasts. These new networks, established within the context of the Depression, encouraged a regional and local

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<sup>2</sup>Gilbert, 25-31.

kind of skiing in the Rockies that contrasted sharply with the international, elite resort culture recreated at Sun Valley. The Highland Bavarian Company thus failed at the same time Aspen's local ski area grew. Participants in upper-class resort culture eventually came together in Colorado as members of the 10th Mountain Division, establishing ties with each other and with the Rockies that, in America's post-war economy and culture, would enable them to replace some of Colorado's local areas with European-style ski resorts.

#### Community Networks for Winter Tourism

Downhill skiing's growing popularity and a renewed hope for tourist dollars in the 1920s and 1930s encouraged communities throughout Colorado to promote skiing events and build local ski areas. Rather than appeal explicitly to the upper-class tourists who frequented places like St. Mortiz and Sun Valley, these communities encouraged a more egalitarian kind of skiing accessible to working-class and middle-class skiers as well as urban elites. Local businesses and residents in Denver and mountain towns alike thus formed economic and interpersonal networks to support their ski clubs and host competitions. As early as the 1910s and '20s, even, Denver embraced the sport of skiing and its potential for promoting regional tourism. "The mountain slopes, as we have them in Denver, present an ideal place for such sport in the wintertime," a Denver paper noted in 1915. "As there seems to be an ever-increasing interest in the beauty of our mountains in snowy season, an increase of popularity in ski sport will make them still more popular."<sup>3</sup> Local hopes for winter tourists grew when the Denver-Rocky Mountain Ski Club hosted the national ski championships at Genesee in 1921. While these championships attracted many Scandinavian, working-class athletes,

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<sup>3</sup>"Sport of Skiing in Colorado Mountains," *Rocky Mountain News*, 5 December, 1915.

city residents set their sights even higher. The next year the club's president proclaimed that "Denver should be the St. Moritz of America. It is the greatest place in the world for winter sports. . . [and] is destined to become the ski sport center of the nation."<sup>4</sup> Publicizing regional and national meets at Genesee in 1923 and 1927 respectively, newspapers crowed: "Annual Ski Tourney Will Clinch City's Fame as Winter Sport Center," and "National Ski Meet is Coming to World's Playground in Rockies." Ski clubs and newspapers raised enthusiasm for winter tourism and ski meets within and outside the confines of their own organizations. In 1927 the *Denver Post* noted that it "ha[d] enlisted the co-operation of every service and athletic club and every civic organization in the state in its extensive plans for making Colorado the winter sports headquarters of the world."<sup>5</sup>

Denver businesses and skiers were not the only ones to see the sport as a potential money-maker. Small mountain towns all over the state, hurt by the decline in mining and fighting off the "ghost town" label, embraced skiing and the winter visitors it would attract. "This spirit of developing the asset of the sunshine-tempered winter in Colorado," one journalist noted in the mid-1920s, "has manifested itself from Fort Collins thruout[sic] the state, touching Durango, Grand Junction and Glenwood Springs."<sup>6</sup> The Durango Exchange, which would become the Chamber of Commerce in 1930, marketed the city as a "complete vacationland," promising local businessmen and prospective visitors alike that people who "Come to PLAY" will "Want to STAY."<sup>7</sup> From the 1910s through the 1930s, local towns and ski clubs advertised winter carnivals and ski competitions, fun community events that would also put them on the tourist map. For its first

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<sup>4</sup>Meniffee Howard, *Rocky Mountain News*, 7 November, 1922.

<sup>5</sup>clippings, 18 February, 1923, and n.d., 1927, General Ski Collections, GCHA.

<sup>6</sup>"Towns in Colorado Active in Support of Winter Sports," unidentified clipping, General Ski Collection, GCHA.

<sup>7</sup>Duane A. Smith, *Rocky Mountain Boom Town: A History of Durango, Colorado* (Niwot CO: University Press of Colorado, 1980), 112.

gala winter carnival, Grand Lake, the "St. Moritz right in Denver's backyard," opened private cabins, hotels, and camps, devoting all "its excellent accomodations to the festival."<sup>8</sup> By 1927 Steamboat Springs had its own Commercial Club, which published promotional brochures advertising the "Magnificent Scenery" and "Healthful Climate" of the area.<sup>9</sup> Steamboat Springs' entire community helped finance and organize its annual winter carnival, which had been popular since its beginning in 1914. Colorado Mountain Club (CMC) member Henry Buchtel wrote that "perhaps the best reason to go to Steamboat is that the residents are so glad to have you and so anxious to have you enjoy yourself."<sup>10</sup> By 1940 the local *Steamboat Pilot* was publishing an annual recreation edition, encouraging readers to "Do Your Vacationing Friends a Favor --Tell Them About Steamboat Springs." As Buchtel had noted, local residents and businesses welcomed the development of winter sports in their sleepy ranching town. The Steamboat Springs Winter Sports Club, the Lions Club, and the American Legion all "used their influence and funds to further the cause of winter recreation in a town that seems destined to rank among the first ski resorts of our state."<sup>11</sup>

Other Colorado towns fought for that honor, similarly seizing upon winter recreation and tourism as a possible solution to their economic problems. Aspen, for instance, entered its "quiet years" after having flourished as a silver mining town in the nineteenth century, and existed as the center of a small farming and ranching community in the 1920s and 1930s.<sup>12</sup> After Flynn, Fiske, and Ryan

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<sup>8</sup>"Grand Lake Will Hold Winter Sports Week," clipping, General Ski Collection, GCHA.

<sup>9</sup>Steamboat Springs Commercial Club, "Steamboat Springs, Colorado," pamphlet, Steamboat Springs Promotional Brochures file, Routt County Collection, BWML.

<sup>10</sup>Henry Buchtel, "Steamboat Springs," *Trail and Timberline*, 254 (February 1940), 28.

<sup>11</sup>*The Steamboat Pilot*, 30 May, 1940, Routt County Collection, BWML.

<sup>12</sup>For more on this see Annie Gilbert Coleman, "A Hell of a Time All the Time': Farming, Ranching, and the Roaring Fork Valley during 'The Quiet Years,'" *Montana: The Magazine of Western History* (forthcoming, February 1997).

announced their plans to open the Highland Bavarian Lodge in 1936 and brought Roch and Langes from Europe to help them, town residents latched on to skiing and tourism with vigor. "Winter Resort Plans are Revealed," the *Aspen Times* declared in November of 1936, and "Aspen May Become Leading Snow Sports City in the Entire United States." The author went on to argue that "a determined, enthusiastic and cooperative effort on the part of the citizens of Aspen and Pitkin County should be given to both Mr. Fiske and Mr. Flynn in putting over this, the greatest economic boom that this community will enjoy since the early '90s."<sup>13</sup> The town followed his advice. The Aspen Band, professional and amateur skiers, Mayor Willoughby, and State Senator Twining joined hundreds of local residents and Denver skiers for the Highland Bavarian Lodge's gala opening in December. It was then, one Aspenite noted, that "the town got so excited about skiing." "The people felt it was such an opportunity for the kids," he said. "Mining was faltering and people felt they had a new thing going."<sup>14</sup> The ski club that Roch helped start in Aspen offered instruction, competitions, and social events, involving most of the community in skiing and in the local development of winter sports. A few years later and forty miles down the river from Aspen, the Glenwood Springs Winter Sports Club and Chamber of Commerce were "[doing their] utmost to encourage skiing and winter sports in western Colorado."<sup>15</sup>

Competitions brought skiers and spectators to Colorado towns. Generally local in scope, the people who attended and participated in these races came from working-class mountain town ski clubs as well as from middle- and upper-class clubs from Denver. Class lines, like gender lines, blurred on the slopes. They were deconstructed when lower-class racers won, and reaffirmed in clubs and

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<sup>13</sup>*Aspen Times*, 26 November, 1936, clipping, Skiing 1938-45 file, AHS.

<sup>14</sup>Russ Holmes, in Mary Eshbaugh Hayes, "The Town Got Excited About Skiing," *Aspen Times*, 2 March, 1978, C1.

<sup>15</sup>*Western Colorado and Eastern Utah*, January, 1939, 10, Ski Town file, Routt County Collection, WML.

social activities that drew boundaries around socio-economic groups. The sport of skiing even transformed class lines when local and European skiing traditions--built around contrasting class identities--came together for competition and leisure. Because skiers from different classes all competed against one another, socio-economic distinctions became less important than skill and speed. Upper-class ski clubs such as the Arlberg Club and the CMC had talented racers to represent them, but so did every other ski club. Indeed, carnivals and competitions took place in a community context where every skier had the chance to win. Towards that end--as well as to have some fun--Hot Sulphur Springs, Steamboat Springs, and Grand Lake hosted elaborate carnivals, and Colorado Springs, Idaho Springs, Allens Park, Estes Park, Dillon, Aspen, and Denver held ski competitions and tournaments. Local Aspenites still attribute their town's later success in part to the fact that they hosted the Southern Rocky Mountain Championships there in 1938, 1939, and 1940, and the National Downhill and Slalom Championships there in 1941. Race results peppered the Denver papers and Colorado skiers like Frank Ashley and Thor Groszold (in the 1930s), and Barney McLean, Gordon Wren, and Barbara Kidder (in the 1940s), became regional heroes. They became heroes, moreover, almost because of their modest backgrounds rather than in spite of them. Hot Sulphur, Steamboat Springs, and Denver skiers respectively claimed McLean, Wren, and Kidder proudly as their own. The kind of skiing that Colorado communities promoted, therefore, existed in contrast to the resort culture that attracted wealthy skiers from across the country to Sun Valley. Instead, it celebrated local skiers from local communities who rarely came from privileged backgrounds.

The local orientation of Colorado skiing during the 1930s and 40s resulted largely from the geography of resort culture. Wealthy western urbanites traveled to resorts in Europe to ski during the 1920s and, in the 1930s, to the posh Sun

Valley where Hans Hauser and then Friedl Pfeifer ran the ski school. Those in the East frequented resorts in Europe and in New Hampshire, where Hannes Schneider and a cadre of Arlberg instructors had settled. Some wealthy Californians took up skiing at Yosemite, where a couple of Austrians had opened a ski school. Upper-class skiers interested in resort culture, in other words, followed the European experts that epitomized that culture. In its first season, when the Highland Bavarian Lodge advertised its own European experts, the lodge managed to attract a small but elite clientele from Denver as well as the East Coast.<sup>16</sup> Without permanent European instructors, however, the lodge could not increase such business. The movement of wealthy tourists thus mirrored that of European experts, few of whom came to Colorado before World War Two.

Most of Colorado's skiers during the 1930s and early '40s participated in a local, community skiing tradition. Mountain town residents--especially young ones--skied in their back yards, around town, on whatever mountains were most convenient.<sup>17</sup> They had neither the economic resources nor the inclination to travel and take part in resort culture. Instead, they joined their local ski clubs, competed against neighboring towns, and, if they were good enough and got financial help from their club, traveled to regional or national races. Denver skiers also

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<sup>16</sup>The Highland Bavarian Corporation had the most elite and cosmopolitan clientele of any Colorado ski area. Fiske and Ryan convinced their friend, *New Yorker* humorist Robert Benchley, to write and illustrate a brochure entitled "How to Aspen." Benchley's brochure targeted an audience familiar with the Alps who wanted a similar resort experience without the hassle and expense of going to Europe. His brochure, and the rumors generated by Fiske, Flynn, and Ryan from New York to California, created enough interest for the eastern-based *Ski Bulletin* to publish a piece entitled "I'm Aspen You," documenting the author's troubled search for information about the town. Robert Benchley, "How to Aspen," pamphlet, Skiing: Aspen History file, AHS; Delphine Carpenter, "I'm Aspen You," *The Ski Bulletin*, 5 February, 1937, 5.

<sup>17</sup>When Gordon Wren was growing up in Steamboat Springs, "every kid had a jumping hill in their back yard." They all had names, like Webber's Hill, Wither's Hill, Studer's Hill, and more creatively, the Suicide Six, the Man Killer, the Baby Amateur. "We'd just take a shovel, build a jump, and jump." Gordon Wren, interview by the author, 25 August, 1995, Steamboat Springs, Colorado, tape recording and transcript, 10, 1.

joined local ski clubs and competed in local and regional races. Members of the upper, middle, and working classes, these men, women, and children tended to ski close to home. For many that was a decision based upon class. Arlberg Club and CMC members could afford to travel if they wanted, but most were such dedicated skiers that they skied near Denver so they could go every weekend. That Colorado skiers tended to ski close to home during the 1930s, then, was a reflection of where they could actually get to on the weekends as well as a reflection of their class status.

### Transportation Networks

A physical network of roads and railroads determined where most Coloradans could travel. The advent of the automobile in the 1920s enabled throngs of Boston and New York skiers to travel to New Hampshire and Vermont on the weekends. Colorado mountain passes, however, were much more difficult to negotiate than New England roads. Most were closed to automobile traffic during the winter until the 1930s. For skiers who lived in mountain towns, this situation posed no particular threat--they skied at home. For those who lived in Denver, it limited their skiing to places either near the city or to places accessible by train. By World War Two road and railroad networks had improved tremendously, but not to the point where skiers could get across the state for a competition or carnival. The shape of these routes thus encouraged the growth of a limited regional skiing community with Denver at its center. Ski areas closest to Denver and its skiing population developed faster and to a greater degree, therefore, than did those in distant mountain towns.

Railroads and highways criss-crossed the landscape. Shaping the movement of people within the state, they granted tourists and skiers access to the mountains and towns along their routes. Before 1930 skiers had little choice of destination.

Efforts to improve automobile transportation within the state began at the turn of the century and increased through the 1920s, but Colorado's weather and geography limited their success. In 1902 Denver's first 42 automobile owners formed the Colorado Automobile Club and began a campaign for wider, safer, faster roads. The Colorado Good Roads Association, established three years later, pushed for the creation of a State Highway Commission and better financing. By 1914, 1,192 miles of improved roads marked the state. Matching funds from the Federal Bureau of Public Roads in 1916 and the first gasoline tax in 1919 helped bump the miles of improved roads up to 8,600 by 1925, including roads over Berthoud, Fremont, Tennessee, Monarch, Poncha, and Wolf Creek passes.<sup>18</sup>

The definition of "improved" roads, however, remained relative. The road from Denver to Middle Park over Berthoud Pass, built as a wagon road in 1874, had been "improved" in 1911 and again in 1918 to allow automobile traffic. By 1918 40,000 cars had crossed the pass, but only in the summer and autumn months. Heavy rains and unsafe bridges often closed the road, which reached 11,300 feet in elevation at the top of the pass.<sup>19</sup> The Berthoud Pass road attracted traffic despite these difficulties. It was part of the transcontinental auto route known after World War One as the Victory Highway, its popularity a testament to the trials motorists during the 1920s expected to face in their cross country travels. By 1928 the Berthoud Pass Road and much of U.S. Highway 40 to which it belonged, still fell short of current standards for "improved" status. While thousands motored "madly past [the mountains] every summer, vacation bent on the scenic miles of the transcontinental Victory Highway," they still limited their

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<sup>18</sup>A. Ridgeway, *A History of Transportation in Colorado*, manuscript (1926), CUA, 83; Colorado Department of Highways, *Paths of Progress*, manuscript, n.d., CUA, 8-9.

<sup>19</sup>Steve Patterson and Kenton Forrest, *Rio Grande Ski Train* (Denver: Tramway Press, Inc., 1984), 11.

explorations through Colorado to the summer.<sup>20</sup> After World War One Coloradans voted five and six million dollar bond issues for highway construction and improvement to last until 1927, but only in 1931 did the Highway Department try to keep the Berthoud Pass road open all winter.<sup>21</sup> The road over Loveland Pass, which would provide another main link between Denver and the Western Slope, was not even under construction until 1928. It would reach an elevation of 11,992 feet and eventually connect Silver Plume to Dillon, though as late as 1939 the road was still dirt.<sup>22</sup>

Improvements in the 1930s made automobile travel in the mountains more feasible, if still challenging. An ambitious federal project that started in 1929 connected Estes Park through Rocky Mountain National Park to Grand Lake after four summers of work. Trail Ridge Road attracted summer automobile tourists to the park in unprecedented numbers. New roads, though seasonal, provided jobs as well as boosting tourism. Roosevelt's New Deal government seized upon road construction as a means of both employing large numbers of men and improving access to rural places. Focusing on farm-to-market routes and scenic parkways such as the Blue Ridge, vast federal expenditures through the WPA created a general surge in road construction that would strengthen Americans' reliance upon the automobile for recreation.<sup>23</sup> For its part, Colorado voted a \$15 million

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<sup>20</sup>Frances Higgins, "Presenting Breckenridge Peak," *Trail and Timberline*, 95 (August 1926), 3; Steamboat Springs Commercial Club, "Steamboat Springs, Colorado," pamphlet, Steamboat Springs Promotional Brochures file, Routt County Collection, BWML.

<sup>21</sup>Other sources say Berthoud Pass was not open in the winter until 1933; still others recall it was 1935. Snow storms and slides probably closed it temporarily throughout this period.

<sup>22</sup>*Paths of Progress*, 12; Patterson and Forrest, 11; Continental Oil Co. Official Road Map of Colorado, c. 1928, CUA; Texaco Touring Map of Colorado, 1939, map case 9, CUA; see also Carl Ubbelohde, Maxine Benson, and Duane A. Smith, *A Colorado History*, sixth ed. (Boulder CO: Pruett Publishing Company, 1988), 327-329 for more on the impact of the automobile and tourism on Colorado during the 1920s.

<sup>23</sup>Phoebe Cutler, *The Public Landscape of the New Deal* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 50-63.

warrant issue to improve state highways.<sup>24</sup> Denver skiers seeking automobile access to towns like Hot Sulphur and Steamboat Springs noticed the difference. Between 1928 and 1939 workers completed the road over Loveland Pass and covered it with gravel, and they paved Highway 40 over Berthoud Pass and most of the way from Denver to Steamboat Springs. Residents of Durango could drive on paved roads to the base of Wolf Creek Pass or north about 25 miles towards Silverton, as could Leadville skiers on their way to Climax or Tennessee Pass.<sup>25</sup> "Only yesterday," Graeme McGowan noted in 1937, "all mountain roads were little better than narrow, winding footpaths clinging precariously to the canyon walls. Not only were they closed all winter, but any summer cloudburst rendered them impassible." "Today," he went on, "a few places are accessible by magnificent broad highways, safe and easy any day in the year."<sup>26</sup> The operative word here may be "few." Colorado highways crossed the Continental Divide in at least thirteen places; only three of those passes, however, were paved, and little funding or manpower were available for further improvements after America's entrance into World War Two (Figure 1).

Between 1920 and 1945, then, state and federal funding produced a system of roads that linked Colorado's cities to its mountains, but roads were rough and skiers were slow to take full advantage of them. Denver skiers rarely drove past Berthoud Pass; those in Colorado Springs frequented Pikes Peak; Grand Junction residents kept close to Grand Mesa; and skiers in mountain towns stayed on their

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<sup>24</sup>*Paths of Progress*, 12.

<sup>25</sup>The State Highway Department allocated \$30,000 for improvements on Loveland Pass in 1929, which was the biggest chunk of funding for any pass. State Highway Department, Annual Budget for the Year 1929, CUA; Continental Oil map, 1928, CUA; Texaco Touring map, 1939, CUA.

<sup>26</sup>Graeme McGowan, "A Rocky Mountain Prophecy," *The Ski Bulletin*, 19 March, 1937, 5.

local slopes.<sup>27</sup> Denver skiers particularly depended upon their cars. They drove

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<sup>27</sup>"Until recently," one spokesman noted in 1937, "few of the mountain highways were kept open during the winter and it was difficult to reach those mountain areas where the best skiing is found." Fred R. Johnson, "Colorado's National Forests," *The Ski Bulletin*, 26 March, 1937, 15.

Thomas J. Noel, Paul F. Mahoney, and Richard E. Stevens, *Historical Atlas of Colorado* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1994), map 31.

Figure 1. Paved Roads in Colorado, 1940

to Berthoud Pass, and, after skiing down, drove back up to the top so they could do it again. This ritual required enlisting someone willing to shuttle friends rather than ski. In response to "the strain of driving their own cars" to Berthoud, and to "the great demand for such transportation," the CMC financed and operated Berthoud's first ski bus on January 5, 1936. Offering "for the first time a dependable means of transportation between the summit of the Pass and the Fraser River switchback at the bottom," the CMC ski bus not only brought skiers from Denver to Berthoud, but also shuttled them up the Pass at regular intervals. The price: \$1.75 for the round-trip from Denver, 15¢ for members each ride up the Pass, and 25¢ for non-members.<sup>28</sup> By February the CMC emphasized the regularity, dependability, and reliability of its bus to Berthoud Pass, though skiers seemed more interested in using it as a ski lift once there than riding it from Denver. The increasing patronage of skiers riding the bus to the top of the pass just a month after it started, one member noted, "proves conclusively that the bus is indispensable on the Pass itself."<sup>29</sup> In this way the CMC helped downhill skiers negotiate Colorado highways in the interest of sport—even though most continued to drive their own cars from Denver.

At the same time that the structure of automobile roads expanded throughout the state, an older system of railroads remained in place. As a system of tourist transportation the railroads were eventually overtaken by the automobile, but not until they had shaped the development of skiing in Colorado. The Denver and Rio Grande Railroad moved ore from Leadville, Durango, Gunnison, Crested Butte, Silverton, and Dillon in the 1880s, and from Aspen, Ouray, and Telluride a few years later. Even older lines connected Denver and the mining districts around Breckenridge and Como, where Father John Dyer had made his living carrying the

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<sup>28</sup>"The C.M.C. Ski-Bus," *Trail and Timberline*, 207 (January 1936), 153.

<sup>29</sup>David Rosendale, "Skiing in the Colorado Mountain Club," *Trail and Timberline*, 208 (February 1936), 12.

winter mail. In opening access to these mining towns the railroads put mailmen like Dyer out of business and encouraged others to hang up their Norwegian snowshoes for good. After that skis functioned more as toys than tools, and recreational skiing spread along railroad routes as the old utilitarian version of the sport was fading away.

Scandinavian immigrants and Denver ski enthusiasts in the early twentieth century rode trains into the mountains so they could ski; Carl Howelsen and Marjorie Perry, for example, spread their winter sport gospel along the Moffat Road. Formed in 1902, David Moffat's Denver, Northwestern and Pacific Railway was to cross the Continental Divide at Rollins Pass and connect Denver with Salt Lake City. The need for immediate revenue delayed plans to build a tunnel through the divide; engineers instead laid tracks up Rollins Pass on a four percent grade (twice the normal pitch) and reached the summit of the divide at Corona, 11,660 feet above sea level. The Moffat Road reached Hot Sulphur Springs in 1905, Steamboat Springs in 1908, and ended in Craig in 1913, after Moffat had died and the railroad had gone bankrupt.<sup>30</sup> The costs of maintaining the railroad outweighed its income from carrying coal, lumber, and cattle over Rollins Pass to Denver. Clearing snow and blockages off the highest railroad in North America ate up 41 percent of the Moffat Road's operating expenses. Reorganized as the Denver and Salt Lake Railroad Company, the Moffat Road kept up operations and enjoyed new importance during World War One when it transported coal and oil from northwestern Colorado.<sup>31</sup>

Despite frequent stoppages at Corona--even because of them at times--the Moffat Road encouraged the spread of recreational skiing in Colorado. Howelsen first visited Hot Sulphur Springs after having ridden the train to Corona in search

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<sup>30</sup>Ridgeway, 78; Patterson and Forrest, 14; Ubbelohde, Benson, and Smith, 253.

<sup>31</sup>Patterson and Forrest, 14.

of skiable terrain. Marjorie Perry met Howelsen when she was on her way home from Steamboat Springs and got off the train at Hot Sulphur to see him jump. Perry, Howelsen, and friends from Denver took advantage of delays at Corona by hopping off the train, strapping on their skis, streaming down the mountains, and meeting up with the train sixteen miles later in Tolland. More important for Hot Sulphur and Steamboat Springs, the Moffat Road carried Denver skiers to their carnivals. Competitors and spectators filled local hotels, turned out in big numbers for carnival events, and recounted their adventures to friends after they went home. From the 1910s through the 1920s, then, the Moffat Road helped Hot Sulphur and Steamboat Springs earn fame as early ski centers.

This railroad continued its tradition of carrying skiers to the mountains after downhill skiing became popular in the late 1920s. Escaping the storms and snow on top of Rollins Pass was the key: it kept the railroad in business and opened up new terrain for Denver downhill skiers. The Moffat Road's hope of building a tunnel under the Divide started to take form when the Moffat Tunnel Bill passed the state legislature in April of 1922. Work began late in the summer of 1923, and the 6.2 mile tunnel opened for business in the end of February, 1928, representing an investment of \$18 million and 28 lives.<sup>32</sup> Not only did the tunnel improve transportation from Denver to Hot Sulphur and Steamboat Springs, it also helped promote a new downhill ski area. Denver skier and U.S. Forest Service consultant Graeme McGowan had identified the West Portal area as ideal, so he turned an old Moffat Tunnel staff building into a club house, bought a placer claim called Mary Jane, and established Portal Resorts.<sup>33</sup> He and a group of Denver skiers rode the train to West Portal regularly as soon as the tunnel opened, and, united as the Arlberg Club, promoted alpine skiing at what would become Denver's

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<sup>32</sup>Patterson and Forrest, 14-15.

<sup>33</sup>Grand County Historical Association, *Winter Park: Colorado's Favorite for Fifty Years, 1940-1990* (Winter Park Recreation Association, 1989), 17.

Winter Park. Regular ski trains ran to West Portal in 1930 and several years afterwards, until the automobile road over Berthoud Pass was kept open all winter long.<sup>34</sup> With completion of the Moffat Tunnel, West Portal became one of Colorado's most well-known downhill runs.

In 1936 *The Denver Rocky Mountain News* brought Colorado's traditions of tourism boosting, winter sport carnivals, and Denver ski enthusiasm together on the train. The *News* sponsored Denver's first snow train, to carry passengers on a 172 mile round trip from Denver to Hot Sulphur Springs for the 25th Annual ski tournament and winter sports carnival. "You can get a nice ride on a railroad train--which a lot of Denver folk haven't done in years," the newspaper promised. "You can watch the thrilling snow and ice games! You can use your own skis and skates and toboggans! And," the paper went on, "the whole day's outing, including round-trip rail fare and admittance to the carnival, will cost you an even \$1.75."<sup>35</sup> The *News* could not have wished for better success. Tickets sold out; Denver department stores placed ads for ski equipment and fashions in the paper; the whole city got involved. Over 2,200 people rode the trains to the carnival--some coming from as far away as Cheyenne. In Hot Sulphur they met up with 500 others, including fifty jumpers and a 42-piece high school band, who had ridden another train from Steamboat Springs. In all, Hot Sulphur counted 7,000 visitors for the day.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>34</sup>CMC member Robert Collier, Jr. arranged for the first special train to carry skiers through the Moffat Tunnel and drop them off at West Portal in February of 1930. Before then, skiers made more informal arrangements with the conductor. The CMC also managed to reduce the fare by filling an entire car with forty or fifty skiers. The railroad company simply left their car on a siding at West Portal. Evelyn Runnette, "Skiing with the C.M.C.," *The Ski Bulletin*, 19 March, 1937, 7; David Rosendale, "Skiing in the Colorado Mountain Club," *Trail and Timberline*, 208 (February 1936), 13.

<sup>35</sup>*Denver Rocky Mountain News*, 24 January, 1936, as cited in Patterson and Forrest, 18.

<sup>36</sup>Patterson and Forrest, 19.

The success of this campaign sparked others. Just six days after its Hot Sulphur train, the *News* sponsored a special D&SL Pullman snow train with overnight service to the winter carnival in Steamboat Springs. Its snow train to Hot Sulphur became an annual event. Other Denver businesses including Safeway Stores, the *Denver Post*, and Montgomery Ward jumped in and sponsored other snow trains, working with the railroad company and organizing trips in return for publicity. As railroads from Boston to Seattle had learned, ski trains attracted business.<sup>37</sup> Even when no train catered to a specific event, skiers made good use of the railroads. By 1938 railroad pamphlets advertised regular Sunday snow train service to West Portal on the D&SL through the Moffat Tunnel, as well as DS&L and D&RG service to other "Western Winter Playgrounds" in Aspen, Hot Sulphur Springs, Steamboat Springs, and Marshall Pass.<sup>38</sup> Winter tourism and skiing had grown along the routes of Colorado's railroad system, expanded that system to include ski trains, and influenced its winter advertising campaigns. The railroads, in turn, welcomed winter tourists and skiers and opened access to some winter sports centers. Colorado's system of highways and railroads grew hand in hand with recreational skiing during the 1920s and 1930s, actively promoting winter tourism at the same time they responded to the growing popularity of the sport. This growth of skiing, however, like the transportation networks that influenced it, remained limited to a specific region. The onset of World War Two, moreover,

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<sup>37</sup>The Boston and Maine Railroad carried almost 200 skiers to the mountains of New Hampshire on its first ski train, January 11, 1931. The New York, New Haven and Hartford Railroad first experimented with its own ski train in 1935, the Snowball Express brought skiers from San Francisco to Truckee starting in 1932, and the University Book Store in Seattle sponsored a ski train to the Cascades in 1935. See E. John B. Allen, *From Skisport to Skiing* (Amherst MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1993), 104-109.

<sup>38</sup>Berthoud Pass, Pikes Peak, and Rocky Mountain National Park were also listed as "Western Winter Playgrounds," but no trains serviced those particular areas. Burlington Route, "Winter Sports," pamphlet, Recreational Skiing file, CHS. The Denver and Rio Grande Railroad offered service to Aspen from Denver, Pueblo, or Colorado Springs. Patterson and Forrest, 21, 22.

ushered in a mood of seriousness that brought an end to special snow trains headed for winter carnivals.

The geography of skiing in Colorado, shaped by localism and limited transportation networks, differed greatly from the geography of European-style resorts. Colorado skiing encouraged the crossing and blurring of class lines that paralleled the ski-induced refiguring of gender. In local and regional carnivals and competitions, Coloradans focused these crossings around distinct events and performances and placed them in a mountain landscape. Political and financial networks in Colorado, while beginning to encourage the influx of outside money into mountain communities, actually enhanced skiing's geography of localism during the 1930s.

#### The Political and Financial Networks Behind Colorado's Early Ski Areas

The transportation structures that opened physical access to the mountains in winter fit into another framework of relationships that encouraged the growth of local ski areas before the end of World War Two. As ski clubs recognized the need to build lodges and lifts, they forged connections to local businesses and community members, linking downhill skiing with new technology and the world of finance. Too, local ski clubs and businessmen formed personal relationships with U.S. Forest Service rangers, even receiving small-scale support from New Deal agencies to boost their local economies through skiing. In short, Colorado's local ski clubs established a political and financial network that connected their clubs to local businesses and governments as well as to the Forest Service and federal New Deal agencies. Set in America's post-war economy and culture, this framework would support the development of a national ski industry in Colorado. During the 1930s, however, it produced more modest results.

Graeme McGowan, founding member of the Arlberg Club and an avid outdoorsman, worked as a consultant for the U.S. Forest Service surveying skiable terrain on forest land and recommending improvements to develop it. With the Forest Service's support, he promoted winter recreation and skiing from Berthoud Pass and West Portal to New Mexico and Arizona.<sup>39</sup> Interested in employing unskilled workers as well as improving the civic and recreational landscape of the country, FDR's Civilian Conservation Corps, the Works Progress Administration, and the Public Works Administration also helped develop and finance small ski areas across Colorado. The CCC often carried out plans formed by the Forest Service to cut ski trails, and the PWA and WPA helped local communities finance tows they wanted to install.<sup>40</sup> While it is unclear exactly how New Deal government agents understood skiing, the financial support and physical labor that they offered small ski areas almost certainly represented a commitment to the development of recreation and tourism. At the very least, funding the development

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<sup>39</sup>See Graeme McGowan, "Future Skiing in the National Forests," *Trail and Timberline*, 218 (December 1936), 145-146, reprinted in *The Ski Bulletin*, 1 January, 1937, 4-5; Graeme McGowan, "Ganchos de Nieve," *The American Ski Annual* (1937-38), CHS, 87-95. The National Park Service also promoted skiing and winter recreation at this time. Rocky Mountain National Park officials kept Trail Ridge Road open to timberline in order to open access to ski trails. It developed ski trails and built shelters at Hidden Valley, a ski area within the Park, but did not install tows. The Park Service promoted skiing most actively in Yosemite National Park, where facilities in the 1930s could not accommodate the 25,000 skiers who came to Badger Pass in the winter. The Park Service built a huge new lodge from which skiers could see the lift and the bottom of three downhill runs, and expanded the trail system after skiers continued to crowd the area during the 1935-36 season. "Ski Trip," *Trail and Timberline*, 219 (January 1937), 9; "Skiing Comes of Age in California," *American Ski Annual* (1936-37), 159-160, CHS; Fanning Hearon, "Skiing in the National Parks," *American Ski Annual* (1941-42), 69-86, CHS.

<sup>40</sup>The luxurious Timberline Lodge, built by the CCC on Mt. Hood, Oregon at the cost of \$650,000, represents the largest and most visible single federal investment in skiing. More important were the many smaller investments made across the West. One could argue that early support from the CCC and the PWA enabled communities to develop local ski areas--many of which became destination resorts after the war--that they would not have been able to develop otherwise. For a discussion of the New Deal and America's recreational landscape, see Cutler, *The Public Landscape of the New Deal*.

of local ski areas provided jobs and economic support to Denver and many of Colorado's rural mountain communities.

During the 1930s the sport had progressed to the point where skiers sought specific, developed places to ski. Ski lift technology was in its infancy in the 1930s, and most skiers appreciated rope tows despite the fact that one arm usually felt longer than the other at the end of the day.<sup>41</sup> Even simple rope tows cost money, though, and required a place to set them up. Where to put them was easy; National Forests covered most of the Rocky Mountains, and the U.S. Forest Service issued special use permits for ski tows freely. Ski clubs had a more difficult time raising money and recruiting labor for cutting trails, building cabins, and operating tows. Most got help from a combination of sources including the CCC and PWA New Deal agencies, the Forest Service, local businesses, and sometimes town or city governments in addition to their own club members. The two main ski areas that grew up near Denver in the 1930s both depended on this complex support network.

Ardent CMC members had been practicing their downhill technique on Berthoud Pass since the early 1930s, and the area became quite popular once the road over the pass was kept open through the winter. The CMC helped develop the trails, which all lay within the Arapahoe National Forest, in coordination with the Forest Service, the CCC, and whoever else they could get to help. The trail from the summit to the highway, built in 1934, represented "the best efforts of the CCC and a chilly party of local surveyors." The Forest Service cleared stumps from the

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<sup>41</sup>The first rope tow for skiing was patented in Switzerland in 1931; the first of its type in the U.S. appeared in Woodstock, Vermont, in 1934. During the 1930s rope tows were the most prevalent ski tow in the country, although some areas experimented with new technology. Sun Valley operated the first chair lift--derived from a device used to unload bananas--and Aspen, Yosemite, and Steamboat Springs operated "boat tows," which hauled skiers up the hill in two counter-balanced sleds. For a good synopsis of ski tow technology in the 1930s, see Allen, *From Skisport to Skiing*, 109-114.

practice hill.<sup>42</sup> The next year CMC members spent "long, hot summer Sundays planning and marking the trails" that CCC recruits would build under supervision of the Forest Service.<sup>43</sup> This system of trails attracted regular skiers from Denver in increasing numbers. Where the group of skiers had once been so small, one man recalled, that everyone knew each other by their first names, just a year or two later "the top of Berthoud Pass, crowded Sunday after Sunday with four to five hundred cars, became so that there was scarcely room for comfortable skiing."<sup>44</sup>

In order to oversee the development of local ski areas like Berthoud Pass, a dozen or so ski clubs and communities came together and formed the Colorado Winter Sports Council in November, 1936. This organization continued development at Berthoud Pass, building trails, improving parking, and installing Colorado's first rope tow. Funded by the May Company department store in Denver, the tow opened on February 7, 1937. By charging a small fee for rides, the CMC recouped \$500 the next season, about one fifth of the tow's cost.<sup>45</sup> Not to be left out of the picture, the Forest Service financed the construction of a new, three-story lodge, complete with telephone, water, and toilet facilities.<sup>46</sup> By 1941 the

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<sup>42</sup>Reynolds Morse, "The High Trails of Winter," *Trail and Timberline*, 194 (December 1934), 163.

<sup>43</sup>David Rosendale, "Skiing in the Colorado Mountain Club," *Trail and Timberline*, 208 (February 1936), 12.

<sup>44</sup>J.C. Blickensderfer, "Reminiscences of Skiing in Colorado, 1922-1968," manuscript, n.d., CHS, 2; Frank Ashley, "Colorado Skiing," *The American Ski Annual* (1936-37), CHS, 110.

<sup>45</sup>Jack Kendrick, "Winter Sports Development," *Trail and Timberline*, 238 (September-October 1938), 104; Blickensderfer, 3; letter from L.R. Kendrick to J.R. Pechman, 22 August, 1938, Colorado Ski Clubs and Associations Collection, CHS.

<sup>46</sup>The U.S. Forest Service supported such development on National Forest land in the interest of managing public use of the National Forests that might otherwise have gotten out of control. While it is unclear how top officials in the USFS understood the sport of skiing, the agency had an established tradition of encouraging wise use of such public lands for grazing and logging. Skiing, while recreational rather than extractive, presumably fit under the same wise-use rubric. Personal relationships among USFS rangers and skiers, and forest officials

area at Berthoud Pass offered skiers lunch or refreshments at the lodge, plus six different trails, two rope tows, and parking space for 600 cars.<sup>47</sup> The second-largest ski area in Colorado at the time, Berthoud Pass represented the results of a support network encompassing the federal government, local surveyors, Denver ski boosters, and local businesses. Winter Park, then the largest ski area in Colorado, did, as well.

West Portal attracted skiers from Denver, especially when the road over Berthoud Pass proved impassible. Arlberg Club members, CMC members, their friends, and other Denver downhill enthusiasts rode the train there and skied on "the old sheep driveway," cut by the Forest Service in the 1920s to connect grazing areas and known more popularly as the Mary Jane trail. The Arlberg Club, who regarded West Portal as its home turf, leased land and a make-shift clubhouse from Graeme McGowan's Portal Resorts. Instead of asking the Forest Service to build a public lodge on national forest land, the Arlberg Club built its own on private land adjoining the Arapahoe National Forest in 1933, financed primarily through a large donation from one wealthy club member.<sup>48</sup> A few years later the CMC also built a cabin near West Portal for its members and guests, with 17 bunks and meals available.<sup>49</sup> As the skiable terrain lay on forest land, the Arlberg Club worked together with the Forest Service and the CCC to clear and improve the Mary Jane trail in 1933. That relationship continued the next year, when the CCC built a steep, straight, downhill racing course on which the club held its annual competitions.<sup>50</sup> The Forest Service thinned and cleared three more trails in the

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like Graeme McGowan who enjoyed skiing themselves, helped solidify good relations between the government agency and local ski areas.

<sup>47</sup>"Thrilling Winter Sport in Colorado, Top of the Nation," pamphlet, 1941, CUA.

<sup>48</sup>Barrion Hughes, an original Arlberg Club member who worked as a lawyer in Denver, donated \$3,000 to build a lodge for the Club. *Winter Park*, 17-19.

<sup>49</sup>"Ski Cabin," *Trail and Timberline*, 210 (December 1938), 126, 127.

<sup>50</sup>Morse, "The High Trails of Winter," 163; "The Ski Races," *Trail and Timberline*, 198 (April 1935), 45.

West Portal area in 1936 and 1937 (one of which led skiers there from the top of Berthoud Pass), and made plans to build a public lodge, as well.<sup>51</sup>

Efforts to build ski lifts at West Portal plunged supporters into an even larger web of political financial relationships that would make it distinct among Colorado ski areas. Tows represented a significant investment, one that few individuals or clubs wanted to handle on their own. The Colorado Winter Sports Council and the May Company had financed the ones at Berthoud Pass; the City of Denver decided to take on West Portal. Manager of Parks and Improvements for the City and County of Denver in 1938 was George Cranmer, an outdoorsman who had learned to ski from Carl Howelsen and wanted to expand the city park system. He, like some Denver businessmen and the *Denver Rocky Mountain News*, thought "the fun of sliding over snow with a couple of boards tied to the feet may bring millions of dollars to Colorado."<sup>52</sup> Crowding at Berthoud Pass further convinced him that skiers could support more areas. After having inspected the West Portal area with experts including Otto Schneibs and Bob Balch, Cranmer and the Denver Chamber of Commerce's Winter Sports Committee decided that "this area can afford pleasure for several thousand skiers every day after proper development," and that the City of Denver was just the organization for the job.<sup>53</sup>

After that, financial wheels started moving quickly. Cranmer got a Forest Service permit held by the city for 6,400 acres between Berthoud Pass and West Portal, incorporating the ski area into Denver's Mountain Parks System. The City Council raised the \$25,000 necessary to build tows and trails by applying for a WPA project that would cover 45% of the bill, and soliciting subscriptions from local businesses and individuals for the remaining \$14,000. The city's backing

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<sup>51</sup>Ashley, "Colorado Skiing," 112; letter from L.R. Kendrick to J.R. Pechman, 22 August, 1938, Colorado Ski Clubs and Associations Collection, CHS.

<sup>52</sup>*Winter Park*, 24.

<sup>53</sup>Kendrick, "Winter Sports Development," 105. Kendrick was Chairman of the Committee on Winter Sports.

"gave this undertaking a permanence and stability formerly lacking in the eyes of business interests," encouraging Denver businesses, ski club members, as well as the Moffat Road, the Burlington, and the Union Pacific Railroad to invest in the ski area.<sup>54</sup> When Cranmer ran out of money to cut trails, he called for volunteers and got ninety--Arlbergers, CMC members, skiers from other Denver clubs, both male and female. In 1939 Bob Balch became the first manager of the Winter Park ski area, overseeing city employees who had volunteered to build trails and a J-bar lift there on the weekends. Its grand opening in January of 1940 brought racers from ski clubs across the state as well as some from Wyoming and Sun Valley. The next year it operated two T-bar lifts, a tractor sled lift, over a dozen trails, a 35 meter jump, a lodge with food concessions, a well-equipped race course, and offered accommodations only two miles down the road.<sup>55</sup> While tiny by current standards, in 1941 these facilities made Winter Park the biggest ski area in the state. The city of Denver, and people who skied there, could thank a collection of supporters that ranged from the WPA and railroad companies to local volunteers and city workers.

Farther from Denver's concentration of cash and recreational skiers than Berthoud Pass and Winter Park, a number of smaller ski areas throughout Colorado depended on similar support networks for their growth in the late 1930s. They, like the two larger areas, served local skiers interested in taking day trips. One group of Denver skiers pooled their money and built a ski lodge in Empire called the Trap Door--after the spider's nest the building resembled--from which they could ski terrain on Loveland Pass, Jones Pass, St. Mary's Glacier, and Fremont

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<sup>54</sup>Kendrick, "Winter Sports Development," 105; letters from Jack Kendrick to J.R. Pechman, 22 August, 1938 and 30 August, 1938, Colorado Ski Clubs and Associations Collection, CHS; "Ski Tows," *Trail and Timberline*, 240 (December 1938), 125.

<sup>55</sup>*Winter Park*, 28-35; "Thrilling Winter Sports in Colorado, Top of the Nation," CUA; Patterson and Forrest, 25.

Pass.<sup>56</sup> A more ambitious group from Denver, ski club Zipfelberger, started to develop Loveland Basin. By 1939 the Forest Service had built a lodge there and four downhill trails, including the Zipfelberger racing trail. The club built a cabin just below timberline that same year, and put up a small tow on the practice hill. By 1941 they had three rope tows in operation. To the South, Colorado Springs skiers frequented the area at Glen Cove, where the Forest Service built some trails, a jump, and the Pikes Peak Ski Club installed a tow. Still other ski clubs across the state teamed up with the Forest Service and local businesses to build ski areas. Grand Junction skiers put up rope tows and built a lodge in the Grand Mesa National Forest, and the Continental Ski Club of Climax built a small area near Fremont Pass that stayed open for night skiing.<sup>57</sup> Steamboat Springs hosted slalom and downhill races and built a tow of their own in 1938. Along the D&RG line in Glenwood Springs, the winter sports club, the chamber of commerce, officials of the White River National Forest, members of the local CCC camp, and high school volunteers all came together to build a downhill course in one of Glenwood's city parks on Lookout Mountain.<sup>58</sup> Local infrastructures and the enthusiasm characterized Colorado ski areas in the 1930s, big and small.

Farther from Denver, and so even more dependent upon local skiers and support networks, downhill ski areas grew up in the southwestern part of Colorado as well. Long connected with the sport, the Gunnison and Crested Butte region installed Colorado's first chairlift at the Pioneer area, offering skiers a rope tow and the well-known Big Dipper trail as well. Western State College had a practice hill in Gunnison itself. Telluride skiers followed Bruce Palmer's portable rope tow

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<sup>56</sup>Blickensderfer, 4-5.

<sup>57</sup>Blickensderfer, "Reminiscences," 4-5, 8-9; J.C. Blickensderfer, "One Day Skiing Trips from Denver," *Trail and Timberline*, 253 (January 1939), 10-11; "Colorado's National Forests," *The Ski Bulletin*, 26 March, 1937, 16.

<sup>58</sup>"Glenwood Springs," *Western Colorado and Eastern Utah* (January 1939), 10, Ski Town file, Routt County Collection, BWML.

around the area and formed the Ski-Hi Ski Club to sponsor local competitions and raise money for a new rope each year.<sup>59</sup> Durango businessmen and civic organizations bought a rope tow which the San Juan Basin Ski and Winter Sports Club operated 25 miles outside of town. Locals facetiously referred to Chapman Hill, closer to town and funded in part by the WPA, as "Durango's Sun Valley."<sup>60</sup> The San Juan Ski Club of Ouray also used WPA funds--about \$5,000 worth--to clear a course by its practice slope. They got permission to do so in the form of a Forest Service permit, and club membership funds financed a ski shelter.<sup>61</sup> Salida, too, had its own ski area by 1941, when the Monarch Pass area opened for business with two rope tows and a ski club lodge. The San Luis Valley Ski Club drove to Wolf Creek Pass for its snow, where a Forest Service shelter, two rope tows, and long runs attracted skiers.<sup>62</sup>

These Colorado ski areas, built for the most part in the late 1930s, shared more than their mixture of local and federal support. They were small. They were simple. Amenities, if any, consisted of a ski shelter where it might be possible to buy lunch. Tows were prevalent, though many skiers hiked above the top of the lift to reach better terrain. Thirteen of the 33 Colorado ski areas listed in a 1941 brochure had no lifts at all. These areas were populated, furthermore, by local skiers. People wanting to spend more than a day skiing had to travel to the nearest town with a hotel and return to the slopes the next day, or if they were club members, they might opt to spend the night in a clubhouse bunkroom. Limitations

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<sup>59</sup>Bill Mahoney, interview by the author, 6 June, 1994, Telluride, Colorado, tape recording; David Lavender, *The Telluride Story* (Ridgway CO: Wayfinder Press, 1987), 60, 62.

<sup>60</sup>The club and the Forest Service were waiting in 1941 for highway 550 to be relocated before they planned a larger ski area on forest land. C.R. Towne, "Durango Skiing Area," *Rocky Mountain Winter Sports News*, 16 January, 1941, 2; Smith, *Rocky Mountain Boom Town*, 125.

<sup>61</sup>"Ouray," *Western Colorado and Eastern Utah* (January 1939), 10, Ski Town file, Routt County Collection, BWML.

<sup>62</sup>"Thrilling Winter Sports in Colorado," CUA; Southern Rocky Mountain Ski Association member clubs, 1941-42, McLaren Collection, GCHA.

in highway development, ski lift technology, and financing--despite New Deal support--kept Colorado ski areas and the groups that ran them locally oriented.

Even the Highland Bavarian Corporation, with its European experts, Wall Street connections, and images of an American St. Moritz, could not buck the trend. While Flynn, Fiske, and Ryan tried to find financing for the tramway and resort village they envisioned below Mt. Hayden, the Aspen Ski Club's little boat tow and Roch Run on Aspen Mountain gained fame. Like other local ski areas across the state, Aspen's area opened and attracted skiers because a series of local networks that emphasized community skiing supported it. Local businesses and governments joined their ski clubs to forge relationships with the Forest Service and New Deal agencies. Community members understood skiing as a benefit to their local economies during the Depression, and they counted on improved roads and railroad access to bring visitors to their slopes. The growth of these physical, financial, and political infrastructures, while encouraging the development of skiing in Colorado, encouraged a particular kind of community skiing with its own class meanings. The sport remained centered in mountain community and Denver ski clubs, which--except for the Arlberg Club and the CMC--had working- or middle-class members. European resort culture and its accompanying wealth had yet to establish itself in Colorado.

With America's involvement in World War Two, the development of Colorado skiing changed course. During the war Berthoud Pass ski area closed down. Sun Valley became an army hospital. Hopes for the HBC disintegrated. Materials for tows and lifts, money for construction and labor, gas for travel, and time to ski all seemed to disappear overnight. At the same time that the war slowed ski area activity, however, it also formed another piece of infrastructure for Colorado skiing. The Army's 10th Mountain Division brought icons of European resort culture, and upper-class participants in that culture, to the Rockies. As a

military embodiment of resort culture stationed at Colorado's Camp Hale, the 10th Mountain Division introduced cosmopolitan skiers to the state's community skiing traditions and so added a new class dynamic to the sport. After the war, veterans of the 10th would return to Colorado and recreate ski resort culture in the state's mountain communities, calling upon local networks established in the 1930s but expanding ski areas' scope to regional and national levels.

#### A Network of Elite Skiers in Colorado - The 10th Mountain Division

Of all the Army divisions in World War Two, it's a safe bet that the 10th Mountain formed the tightest group. The first American troops organized for mountain warfare, the 10th Mountain Division locked the world's best skiers together--as only military regulations and discipline can--on ski slopes in Colorado. These soldiers grew close through training and by sharing their skills and ideas. By the end of the war, the 10th Mountain Division had produced a cadre of individuals, each of whom had similar blueprints for post-war ski areas. These men shared so much in common by the end of the war that they continue as a self-conscious unit today, holding annual reunions, publishing books, and appearing in 10th Mountain Division documentaries.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>63</sup>There are as many as 34 books published about the 10th Mtn. Division. See Minot Dole, *Adventures in Skiing* (J. Lowell Pratt and Co., Inc., 1965); Hal Burton, *The Ski Troops* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1971); Curtis Casewit, *Mountain Troopers: The Story of the Tenth Mountain Division* (New York: ??, 1972) for excellent overviews and how the 10th fit into developments in skiing. For primary source material see Dole; Kenneth S. Templeton, ed., *10th Mountain Division: America's Ski Troops* (Chicago: privately published, 1945); Harris Dusenbery, *Ski the High Trail: World War II Ski Troopers in the High Colorado Rockies* (Portland OR: Binford and Mort Publishing, 1991); and more recently, John Imbrie and Hugh W. Evans, eds., *Good Times and Bad Times: A History of C Company 85th Mountain Infantry Regiment 10th Mountain Division* (Queechee VT: Vermont Heritage Press, 1995). For a complete bibliography, see "The 10th's Books," *Skiing Heritage: Journal of the International Skiing History Association*, 7, 2 (Fall 1995), 33. Two recent documentary films on the 10th are *Soldiers of the Summit* (Council for Public TV, Channel Six, Inc., 1987), and *Fire on the Mountain* (1995) by Beth and George Gage.

A small group of upper-class skiers first came up with the idea of recruiting and training mountain ski troops in the United States. One evening after the Hochebirge Ski Club of Boston's annual races in 1939, a group of men started talking about the Russo-Finnish war. They applauded the skill and tactics of the Finnish ski troops, and came to the conclusion that America would need similarly trained forces to repel any attack on her northeast coast. That night Minot "Minnie" Dole and Roger Langely, both presidents of national ski organizations, decided to offer their services and those of their organizations to the Secretary of War.<sup>64</sup> A long series of letters, proposals, and meetings--facilitated by Dole's connections to fellow Yale alumni--finally led to official cooperation between the War Department and the National Ski Patrol (NSP) on the issue of equipment development. In November of 1941, the Army activated the 87th Infantry Mountain Regiment--the first of three regiments that would ultimately make up the 10th Mountain Division.<sup>65</sup> The National Ski Patrol's job was to provide men to fill this Regiment and satisfy later demands for mountain troops. The only civilian agency authorized to recruit for the Army, over the next four years the NSP recruited 10,634 enlisted men and 370 officers for what would become the 10th Mountain Division.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>64</sup>Dole, 90-91. Minot Dole founded the National Ski Patrol System; Langley was president of the National Ski Association. The National Ski Patrol was an organization of volunteers that worked to ensure the safety of skiers at ski areas across the country. See chapter 4 for a more detailed treatment of the NSP.

<sup>65</sup>See Dole, 90-125; Fred H. McNeil, "Skiing and the National Defense," *American Ski Annual* (1941-42), 5-21, CHS; Charles McLane, "Of Mules and Skis," *American Ski Annual* (1942-43), 21-34, CHS.

<sup>66</sup>H. Benjamin Duke, Jr., "Skiing Soldiers to Skiing Entrepreneurs: Development of the Western Ski Industry," paper given at the 1989 Western Historical Association conference, 4, DPL. The War Department also experimented for a time with ski paratroops. Dick Durrance headed the teaching staff at Alta, Utah, where a company of trained parachutists from Fort Benning, Georgia learned to ski and camp outdoors in the mountains. The project lasted a year, after which Durrance reported "maybe a third of them got to like it and ended up being pretty good, a third of them were so-so, and a third of them were just wrecks." Durrance concluded that it would be easier to teach skiers to parachute than parachutists to

With a national structure that united local ski patrols under regional chiefs, who were in turn responsible to divisional chairmen, the NSP could recruit skiers and outdoorsmen from all over the country. Not just anyone could join the 87th Regiment, however. In order to build elite mountain troops, the NSP called for "[m]en who have lived and worked in the mountains, such as rock climbers, trappers, packers, guides, prospectors, timber cruisers . . . if they ski, so much the better." "Good skiers without extensive mountaineering experience," Dole's bulletin continued, "if they are physically fit for rigorous winter and mountain training, will be acceptable."<sup>67</sup> Volunteers had to fill out a questionnaire on their background and experience as well as submit three letters of recommendation to verify their qualifications.<sup>68</sup> The reach of the NSP and publicity about "Minnie's Ski Troops" spread the word to skiers and outdoorsmen all over the country that draftees and volunteers could join this elite group of ski troopers. The idea appealed--mainly to men associated with cosmopolitan ski culture either by virtue of their class or their expertise. Ski racers of regional, college, national, and even international fame signed up for the 87th and headed to Fort Lewis, Washington. Charlie McLane, who had captained the Dartmouth ski team, was the first to arrive. Before long he was only one outstanding skier among many. They included the head of the Mt. Hood ski school, head of the Mt. Ranier ski patrol, ex-coach of the University of Washington ski team, ex-captain and coach of the University of Vermont ski team, ex-New Hampshire State captain, an Olympic jumping coach, as

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ski. Quite a number of famous American ski racers helped Durrance train these troops, many of whom went on to join the regiments in the 10th Mountain Division. James Laughlin IV, "Ski Parachute Troops," *American Ski Annual* (1942-43), 94-96, CHS; Dick and Miggs Durrance, interview by Jeanette Darnauer, 18 August, 1993, video and transcript, 8, AHS.

<sup>67</sup>Charles M. Dole, "Mountain Forces to be Enlarged, Bulletin 10C," *American Ski Annual* (1942-43), 108, CHS.

<sup>68</sup>For examples of letters of recommendation, see Jack Pechman re: Frank Bulkley II, 27 January, 1942, and Pechman re: Muldrow Garrison, 22 March 1942, Colorado Ski Clubs and Associations Collection, CHS.

well as instructors from Sun Valley, Mt. Hood, Yosemite, and Franconia NH, competitors from Williams College, Dartmouth College, Denver, and Steamboat Springs, and a skiing mail carrier from the Sierra Nevadas. Foreign-born skiers also joined up, including Dartmouth coach Walter Prager, German national team member Peter Pringsheim, a 10-year veteran of Polish army skiing detachments Wladyslaw Thomas Mietelski, Norwegian jumping coach Harold "Pop" Sorensen and jumper Torger Tokle, Italian Swiss-born mountaineer Peter Gabriel, Laplander Eric Wikner, and instructors Olaf Rotegarrd and Hans Kolb.<sup>69</sup> This collection of men represented every aspect of America's ski history, from Scandinavian jumpers and European mountaineers, to Austrian instructors and college outing club members. While from different economic backgrounds, the ethnicity and expertise of these men, and often their class as well, ensured that the 10th Mountain Division would embody an American version of European resort culture.

Besides competitors, instructors, college athletes, and coaches from across the United States and the world, the 87th also attracted a weird combination of wealthy resort-goers and rural outdoorsmen. Minot Dole got to meet actress Norma Shearer when her escort came to volunteer for the mountain troops; he had noticed the couple the night before, dancing at New York's Plaza Hotel. George Frankenstein, son of the last German Ambassador to England, also came to see Dole and signed up for the 87th.<sup>70</sup> To these upper-class personalities the 87th brought together skiers, snowshoers, Maine woodsmen, dog-sled people, big-game hunters, Norwegian farmers, and more. "This remarkable collection of people," Peter Wick said, "was to have a truly distinctive stamp on the 10th Division."<sup>71</sup> The mountain

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<sup>69</sup>McLane, 24-27; McNeil, 18-20. For short biographies of Walter Prager and Torger Tokle, including their role in the 10th Mountain Division, see Templeton, 172, 174.

<sup>70</sup>Dole, 109.

<sup>71</sup>Peter Wick, letter to Robert Woody, 29 December, 1981, in Imbrie and Evans, 188.

troops drew this group of men together, disparate in their class, occupation, and places of birth, but united by their enthusiasm for the mountains. As outdoorsmen in an organization made famous by its expert skiers, these men would become further united by exposure to, if not participation in, a typically upper-class ski culture.

During the winter of 1942, after the attack on Pearl Harbor, the men of the 87th Regiment moved to the Paradise Lodge on Mt. Rainier to train in earnest. And they trained with enthusiasm and spirit. "After a day's drill," Minot Dole noticed during one visit, "they would form a singing group and get out guitars."<sup>72</sup> Indeed, as one member said, "a rare spirit cast a glow on our activities" on Mt. Rainier, and he had "no doubt that the 87th that winter was one of the singinest outfits to ever shoulder an army pack."<sup>73</sup> A testament to their foreign-born members, to the Scandinavian images associated with skiing, to their sense of humor, and to the strange unity of the 87th, the song "Oola" soon became a favorite. The first two (of many) verses read:

I'm Oola, ski-yumper from Norway brought up on Lutefisk and Sil  
Ay come to New York to find me some work but I guess I go vest right away.  
Ay yomp on a train for Ft. Lewis to fight for the U.S.A.  
Ay join up the Mountain Battalion and here Ay tink Ay will stay.

Each day and each night at Ft. Lewis, yee vhis! how it would rain.  
And if it would keep up dis vedder, ay never go skiing again.  
At last ve go up to the mountain. She's one doggone place you should see.  
The minute I get there I'm happy. I run out and yomp on my ski.<sup>74</sup>

The camaraderie that these first members of the 87th shared stemmed from their common interest in skiing and their mutual respect for one another. Members of the 87th shared songs, training experiences on Mt. Rainier, and a familiarity with

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<sup>72</sup>Dole, 111.

<sup>73</sup>Lt. Charles C. Bradley, "A Mountain Soldier Sings," *American Ski Annual* (1944-45), 37-38, CHS.

<sup>74</sup>Bradley, 38-39.

each other that would make them the core of the 10th Mountain Division. That core would soon move to Colorado.

In June of 1942 the Army decided to expand its Mountain Infantry and activate the 2nd and 3rd Battalions of the 87th Regiment. As Fort Lewis fell short of the ideal mountain training facility, General Marshall appointed a team to find a new one. Of the four final possibilities, the Aspen site that the HBC offered and Wheeler Junction in Colorado were too inaccessible, and West Yellowstone was home to the threatened Trumpeter Swan who had friends in high places--namely FDR's uncle, who presided over the Wildlife Conservation Committee and made protecting the bird his personal mission. So the winner was Pando, Colorado, a sheep-loading station just north of Tennessee Pass on the main line of the D&RG railroad, near Leadville on U.S. Highway 24.<sup>75</sup> Construction on Camp Hale was finished in November, 1942. It would be home to 15,000 men of the 10th Mountain Division, formally activated in the spring of 1943 and made up of the 85th, 86th, and 87th Regiments. Minnie Dole of the National Ski Patrol sent notices to all patrolmen asking for volunteers and toured colleges in the East looking for recruits to fill the new regiments. He found 3,500 men in sixty days, most from colleges.<sup>76</sup> Those men, combined with the 87th, made up one of the most highly educated--and correspondingly elite--military forces in the Army. Some 64% of the enlisted men in the 86th Regiment, for instance, qualified for officer training school.<sup>77</sup> Quite a few members of the 10th Mountain Division (initially known as the 10th Light Division) thus knew each other from college or college

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<sup>75</sup>Duke, 5; Jack A. Benson, "Skiing at Camp Hale: Mountain Troops During World War II," *Western Historical Quarterly*, 15 (April 1984), 164; Dole, 117.

<sup>76</sup>Dole, 118.

<sup>77</sup>Duke, 5; Burton, 143; Benson, 173; One source said the majority of volunteers came from the Universities of Dartmouth, Vermont, Maine, Williams, Harvard, Yale, Princeton, Cornell, Michigan, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Montana, and Washington. During the winter of 1944, about 60% of the 10th Mountain Division were college students, about 20% had been born and raised in the Rockies, and the rest were foreign-born Americans. Templeton, 15-18.

athletics. Gordy Wren knew a number of them from racing and ski jumping competitions he had taken part in across the United States. "It was a mixture of guys from everywhere," he remembered, "South, West, North, East--everywhere that anyone had heard of skiing."<sup>78</sup> Working-class athletes and wealthy men who wanted to become skiers joined elite skiers themselves in the 10th, fostering an atmosphere and tone that existed in stark contrast to those of other military organizations.

That this division operated within the context of an upper-class ski culture tended to lessen--or loosen--standards of discipline and behavior based on military rank. While this made some officers a little nervous and worried that the Division was too much like a ski club, it made the 10th even more appealing to its members and enlistees.<sup>79</sup> One member joined specifically because he "disliked military organization, *per se*," and felt he would have the greatest amount of freedom as a rifleman in the ski troops.<sup>80</sup> Steve Knowlton called the 10th "great," because "It threw me into a group of skiers that I had heard about who were probably the best skiers in the United States at that time. People like Toni Matt . . . these were people I had heard about and read about . . . and I got to rub elbows with them."<sup>81</sup> The division's reputation, combined with the chance to fight Hitler, attracted still more foreign skiers to Camp Hale, including Sun Valley's Friedl Pfeifer and Florian Haemmerle, and St. Anton natives Luggi Foeger, Toni Matt, and Herbert Schneider(Hannes' son). They officially declared their allegiance by becoming United States citizens in Leadville.<sup>82</sup> These icons of international resort

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<sup>78</sup>Gordon Wren, interview by the author, 25 August, 1995, Steamboat Springs, Colorado, tape recording and transcription, 3-4.

<sup>79</sup>David Brower and Morely Nelson, in Beth and George Gage, *Fire on the Mountain* (1995); Dole, 116; Benson, 166-167.

<sup>80</sup>Dusenbery, 9.

<sup>81</sup>Steve Knowlton, interview by the author, 19 October, 1994, Denver, Colorado, tape recording and transcript, 1, AHS.

<sup>82</sup>Abbott Fay, *Ski Tracks in the Rockies: A Century of Colorado Skiing* (Evergreen CO: Cordillera Press, Inc., 1984), 29; Friedl Pfeifer and Morten Lund, *Nice Goin':*

ski culture, who represented the European masculine ideal, further enhanced the reputation of the 10th and its character as a fraternity of elite skiers. The 10th Mountain Division would become the largest ever volunteer fighting force, its appeal and reputation further cementing a group of men initially drawn together by their connections to skiing and outdoor sport.<sup>83</sup>

Of course the 10th had its problems, too. The often unpleasant reality of Army living often contrasted with the memories of its veterans. Not all of its members had volunteered for the Mountain Troops. Nor were they all familiar with the mountains. Their presence in the 10th resulted from organizational mistakes for which the Army was known, and from the need to fill out the division's ranks. The 10th Cavalry Reconnaissance Troop came from Meade, South Dakota and consisted primarily of cowboys, and the 31st Dixie Division came to Camp Hale from Leesville, Louisiana, one of the flattest, hottest, and lowest parts of America. The quality and unity of the 10th "went downhill a little bit," Gordy Wren recalled, one time when the Division was low on numbers. "So they sent out a bulletin open to all military personnel to send their people to Camp Hale. What happened," Wren explained, "is we got a lot of the riff raff."<sup>84</sup> When men from disbanded tank destroyer units showed up, many of them "from the hoots and hollers of

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*My Life on Skis* (Missoula MT: Pictorial Histories Publishing Company, Inc., 1993), 116. When Torger Tokle, a ski jumping champion from Norway, joined the 87th Regiment he said to friends "I will do everything for my adopted land to help it remain the champion of the small and downtrodden nations of Europe." Templeton, 172. It is also possible that the U.S. Government made Austrians and Germans choose between signing up for the military or returning home.

<sup>83</sup>Practically every 10th Mtn veteran testifies to the common love of the outdoors and the mountains that they shared. See for example, *Fire on the Mountain*; John Litchfield, interview by the author, 29 September, 1994, Denver, Colorado, tape recording and transcript, 3, AHS; Knowlton, 1994, 1. Harris Dusenbury considered himself "a passable skier and loved the moutnains." He joined up in part because he thought he would be safer fighting in the mountains than anywhere else. "Alpine terrain is familiar and comforting," he wrote, "I feel at home there, but war offers only the terrible unknown conjured up in vivid imagination." Dusenbery, 10.

<sup>84</sup>Wren, 1995.

Appalachia," one member of the 85th's C Company remarked "The 10th was beginning to get a dual personality." "Harvard could talk about Nietzsche and Einstein," he said, "but Harlan County played a lot better poker."<sup>85</sup> These men had a tough time adjusting to the cold, rigorous, high-altitude training exercises expected of them, and to the Division's unorthodox ski fraternity atmosphere.<sup>86</sup> Once put on the ski slopes at Cooper Hill (Camp Hale's ski area), some officers were hard put to obey their instructors who were of lesser rank.<sup>87</sup> Army bureaucracy occasionally weakened the unified identity of the 10th by breaking up the core group of skiers and outdoorsmen. The Army assigned many original members of the 87th to different regiments, and sent at least one 20 man detachment of elite outdoorsmen to instruct other Army units in the U.S. and then the British Army in Europe.<sup>88</sup> The changes in personnel that worked against the unity of the 10th seemed to have had only limited impact, however, especially in the judgement of division veterans.

Far more influential were the experiences they shared at Camp Hale and then in Italy. "Life at Camp Hale was filled, as all army life is," veteran C. Page Smith wrote, "with multitudinous small dramas and bits of high and low comedy."<sup>89</sup> Often referred to as "Camp Hell," Camp Hale introduced members of the 10th Mtn to the problems of high altitude living as well as to the beauties of Colorado's Rockies. Both sets of experiences drew the soldiers together and

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<sup>85</sup>Robert Woody, in Imbrie and Evans, 129.

<sup>86</sup>Minnie Dole watched one exhausted soldier returning early from an overnight mountain exercise. "Ah'm goin' back to camp," he said, "Ah'm from the Deep South an' I just cain't take this stuff." Dole also saw two GI's trying to get themselves evacuated from the same exercise by trying to freeze their feet. Dole, 122-123.

<sup>87</sup>Benson, 166.

<sup>88</sup>Gordy Wren was part of this detachment. They taught mountain skills at Pine Camp New York and in West Virginia. They went to Italy before the 10th and Wren "hardly saw my outfit all the time I was over there," since the detachment was assigned to the British troops. Wren, 3. Commanders at Camp Hale came and went as well, lessening any sense of continuity that had grown there. Benson, 169-170.

<sup>89</sup>Imbrie and Evans, 31.

anchored their identity in place, to the mountains of Colorado. Built in eight months at an altitude of 9,200 feet, Camp Hale gave a bad first impression. When the 87th Regiment arrived there in November of 1942, a coat of snow covered what turned out to be a muddy quagmire studded with nails, glass, and tools left over from its hasty construction. Their trucks did not get far that day. Troops arriving later on noticed an imposing cloud hovering over the Camp, a result of 500 individual soft coal burning furnaces and frequent triple-engined steam trains climbing the 4% grade between Pando and Tennessee Pass. This cloud, trapped in the high valley and often reducing visibility to a city block, fathered the ever-present cough known as the "Pando Hack." Other troubles plagued the residents of Camp Hale. Extreme cold led to dozens of cases of frost bite; the altitude made marching more difficult than Army manuals acknowledged; and the equipment they tested sometimes backfired, as when troops who had camped out at 12,000 feet woke up in the morning to find themselves trapped in their sleeping bags, the zippers frozen.<sup>90</sup> One veteran recalled life at Camp Hale as "strenuous activity conducted always with some experimentation."<sup>91</sup> These hardships, however, paled in comparison to the D-Series.

Lasting about four weeks in the spring of 1944, these divisional maneuvers proved to be the most rugged training exercise in the U.S. Army. Troops lived outdoors for the entire series, sleeping, marching, climbing, camping, and trying to keep their feet warm, often 12,000 feet above sea level in temperatures that reached 30 degrees below zero. "Designed to test our ability to operate in the mountains in subzero temperatures," one division historian wrote, "the operation succeed[ed] in pushing both men and machines to the limit of their endurance."<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>90</sup>Dole, 124; see Benson, *Skiing at Camp Hale*, for a thorough critique of the 10th at Camp Hale.

<sup>91</sup>Litchfield, 1994, 3.

<sup>92</sup>Imbrie and Evans, 6.

"Looking back," another wrote, "it will be hard to realize that we actually went through that agony of cold, with clothes constantly wet and no way to dry them out, with no time for sleep, and with no time for more than a bite on the run." Being wet, cold, tired, and hungry characterized the D-Series for most. In one day alone over 100 men with frostbite had to be evacuated.<sup>93</sup> "No one who took part in those maneuvers," one rifleman argued, "will ever forget them."<sup>94</sup>

The very toughness of D-Series bound members of the 10th Mountain Division into an even tighter unit than before. Conducting war games in subzero temperatures and snowstorms with only half an atmosphere to breathe required teamwork. "Through these past few days of hardship our squad had become a family," one man recalled, "closely knit, and concerned above all in the welfare of its members."<sup>95</sup> This feeling applied to the entire division, as well. The D-Series became understood as a rite of passage into the 10th, and stories of the maneuvers became part of the division's lore. "We of the ten thousand who went through the great experience," Dusenbery argued, "had an elan that could have been acquired in no other way. Whatever the 10th Mountain Division was, it had its nucleus in the multiform and arduous experiences of our D Series."<sup>96</sup> Their common experience of cold and hardship in that spring of 1944 served the 10th well in battle. One skier and mountaineer from Oregon remembered that "later when we had really heavy shelling in Italy, and had a real rough day with a lot of firing going on, you'd hear somebody say 'If this gets any worse its going to be as bad as D-Series.'"<sup>97</sup> "For high morale the rifleman must know what fear and pain are," another soldier pointed out, "and he must have confidence in his ability to meet whatever pain lies

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<sup>93</sup>Imbrie and Evans, 6; *Fire on the Mountain*. See also Hugh Evans' recollections of D-Series in Imbrie and Evans, 198.

<sup>94</sup>Dusenbery, 13.

<sup>95</sup>Dusenbery, 150.

<sup>96</sup>Dusenbery, 157.

<sup>97</sup>Ralph Lafferty, *Fire on the Mountain*.

in store for him. We in the 10th Mountain Division could always look back upon D Series and say that this is but child's play."<sup>98</sup>

D-Series represented the culmination of a year and a half of training in the mountains surrounding Camp Hale. From July 1943 to December of 1944 members of the 10th Mountain Division called Camp Hale, Colorado, home. Members of the 87th Regiment had been together since the beginning of 1942. The length of their training gave the 10th an edge on the battlefield, since "most divisions at that time during the war didn't have that luxury of being together that long to either form friendships or to function and train as a fighting unit."<sup>99</sup> More importantly for the post-war ski industry, that period of training introduced outdoorsmen from across the country and around the world to the Colorado Rockies. Training exercises--skiing in winter and mountain climbing in summer--gave members of the 10th Mountain Division an intimate knowledge of the mountains around Camp Hale. Even during strenuous maneuvers-or perhaps especially during them--men took time to notice the scenery. A volunteer from Wisconsin wrote about one winter bivouac near Cooper Hill, where the 2nd Battalion of the 86th was scheduled to train for two weeks. "Here, practically on top of America," he wrote, "we were high in the sky and it seemed as if we could reach out and help boost the moon up over the Divide."<sup>100</sup> Even during the D-Series Colorado's mountains enchanted soldiers of the 10th. One member of the 86th's C Company recalled his experience while on a windy lookout. "I raised my eyes to the view that stretched out before me," he said, "range after range of mountains, dazzling white peaks and long ridges, Holy Cross, Homestake, Elbert, Massive, and a thousand

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<sup>98</sup>Dusenbery, 156. Hugh Evans agreed when he wrote "D-Series was a truly rough exercise. But it did prove to us we could maneuver and survive in the mountains under very extreme conditions. It gave us confidence that we could do anything." Imbrie and Evans, 198.

<sup>99</sup>Litchfield, 1994, 3.

<sup>100</sup>S/Sgt. Edwin C. Gibson, "On Cooper Hill," *American Ski Annual* (1944-45), 60-61, CHS.

lesser peaks and mountain ramparts." "The majestic beauty of these ranges," he went on, "made me realize that there were some compensations for being in the mountain troops."<sup>101</sup>

More than just beautiful mountains, the Rockies often triggered images of sport in the minds of Camp Hale's soldiers. During D-Series, Harris Dusenbery and his squad noticed terrain that they thought would make a great ski hill, plotting, even, where the lifts ought to go.<sup>102</sup> Some foreign-born members of the 10th noticed, as wealthy tourists had since the nineteenth century, the resemblance between the Rockies and the Alps. Friedl Pfeifer recounted his first view of Aspen, when he came down Hunter Creek while on maneuvers from Camp Hale. "The first look I had I thought I was home," he said. "The mountains reminded me of home."<sup>103</sup> Few others could comment on the similarities between Aspen and St. Anton with his authority.

They could, however--and did--sample what Colorado had to offer in the way of ski areas. Trapped in a cycle of "training for two weeks and then you couldn't wait to get out of camp," soldiers from Camp Hale spent their free weekends with their wives, partying in Denver, or skiing.<sup>104</sup> The practice of skiing recreationally on the weekends introduced the 10th's cohort of elite skiers to the community-oriented ski areas of Colorado. Steve Knowlton said "we all went skiing on the weekends," even if it meant driving all night Friday to get there and all night Sunday to get back before revele. (Knowlton, it should be noted, represented a particularly enthusiastic group of 10th Mountain Division skiers.) Winter Park, Steamboat Springs, and Aspen were the favorites, though a trip to

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<sup>101</sup>Dusenbery, 109.

<sup>102</sup>Dusenbery, 28, 74.

<sup>103</sup>Friedl Pfeifer, interview by the author, 21 July, 1994, Aspen, Colorado, tape recording and transcript, 2, AHS.

<sup>104</sup>Most spouses lived in Glenwood Springs, Buena Vista, or Denver; a few lived in Aspen and Leadville. Litchfield, 1994, 3; Knowlton, 1994, 1-2.

Salt Lake City and Alta was not out of the question.<sup>105</sup> This weekend skiing gave the soldiers opportunities to ski for fun rather than work, and without ninety-pound packs on their backs. They could indulge in skiing's social aspects with members of the opposite sex, and they could enter whatever races they could find. Colorado ski areas that stayed open during the war and were accessible from Camp Hale thus found themselves inundated by GIs on the weekends. Members of the 10th experimented with the best way to ride Climax's idiosyncratic rope tow, went home with friends to Steamboat Springs, and competed in races at Steamboat, Winter Park, and Aspen.<sup>106</sup> In addition to its regular regional races, Winter Park sponsored a "civilian race" in January of 1943, which pitted a team from the 10th Mountain Division against a team of other racers. Needless to say, the GIs from Camp Hale won.<sup>107</sup>

Aspen turned out to be the Camp ski area of choice. In the words of one local, "every weekend the place was full of skiers and GIs that came over. They stayed at the hotel and they skied . . . there was a lot going on."<sup>108</sup> Those who had had enough skiing at Camp Hale came for the social part of the sport. Percy Rideout, an ex-Dartmouth skier who coached the college's team for a year after its European coach was drafted, said simply, "it was fun to come [to Aspen] and hang around the Jerome Hotel and drink cruds."<sup>109</sup> Composed of a vanilla milkshake with anywhere from one to six shots of whiskey, Aspen cruds were all the rage. "It

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<sup>105</sup>Knowlton, 1994, 1; Wren, 1995, 4.

<sup>106</sup>"Climax Ski Area Has Had a Lively, Exciting History," *Summit County Journal*, 11 March, 1960, 4, pam file, CUA; Wren, 1995, 4; Knowlton, 1994, 1-2.

<sup>107</sup>Barney McLean, interview by Ruth Whyte, 15 October, 1986, tape recording #C89, AHS. Barney McLean was one of the few Colorado ski champions who did not sign up for the mountain troops; he went into the Air Force and competed against the team from Camp Hale at Winter Park.

<sup>108</sup>Elizabeth Oblock Sinclair, interview by the author, 26 July, 1994, Aspen, Colorado, tape recording and transcript, AHS, 3.

<sup>109</sup>Percy Rideout, Jack O'Brien, and Steve Knowlton, interview by Ruth Whyte, 24 March, 1991, Aspen, Colorado, tape recording, AHS.

was healthy," Rideout explained, "and it made the weekend interesting."<sup>110</sup> A night at the Jerome cost \$1 then, and meals 50¢; the nightlife centered around the Jerome bar and an occasional community dance at the Armory. Through their visits to the old mining town and to other ski areas, members of the 10th Mountain Division grew familiar with Colorado's mountain landscape and the people who lived there. They brought their elite racing and cosmopolitan resort roots to Colorado's tradition of community skiing, and, in the process, they linked their national, interpersonal network of skiers to the skiing landscapes of Colorado. Camp Hale anchored their group identity to the Rockies, and it was thus united that the 10th Mountain Division left for Camp Swift, Texas, and from there to the Italian front.

Once in Italy, the 10th finally had the chance to show the world what it could do. Under the leadership of Major General George Hays, the Division entered the war in February, 1945.<sup>111</sup> As with most units in war, the combat experiences that members of the 10th shared cemented relationships that had already formed. The 10th Mountain Division, however, also enjoyed the distinction of achieving military successes that few believed were possible. Those who survived the Italian campaign came home famous, with a sense of pride and accomplishment that reinforced the 10th Mountain Division's identity as a group of elite outdoorsmen.

Their main points of battle in Italy were on Riva Ridge and Mt. Belvedere, from which the Germans controlled the rich, agricultural lands of the Po Valley. This position also gave the Germans observation of Highway 64, one of two main supply routes to the central Italian front, thereby preventing an Allied offensive up that road. The Germans had repulsed at least two earlier attempts to take Mt.

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<sup>110</sup>Rideout, 1991.

<sup>111</sup>There are considerable primary and secondary sources recounting the military actions of the 10th Mountain Division. This narrative pulls from first and second-hand accounts in Dole, Imbrie and Evans, Templeton, *Soldiers on the Summit*, and *Fire on the Mountain*, and accounts from veterans Duke, Pfeifer, Litchfield, and Knowlton. For a detailed timeline starting in 1940, see "A 10th Mountain Timeline," *Skiing Heritage*, 7, 2 (Fall 1995), 10-13.

Belvedere; their position on Riva Ridge allowed them to direct artillery onto advancing troops. General Hays thus proposed an assault on the hitherto considered un-climbable Riva Ridge.<sup>112</sup> On the night of February 18, after hiding in nearby farmhouses and planning their routes of ascent, members of the 86th Regiment silently scaled 1,500 foot Riva Ridge, surprising the Germans above and taking control of the ridge the next day. While the 86th held Riva Ridge against seven German counter attacks in the next two days, the 87th and the 85th attacked Mt. Belvedere and the peaks nearby.<sup>113</sup> It took four days to control Mt. Belvedere and longer to secure the surrounding ridge of mountains. During those days the brutality of war made itself clear to the members of the 10th Mountain Division and the numbers of dead and wounded rose. More than one GI told another "I wish we had that bastard Dole over here now." By the middle of March, however, the 10th secured the region and had the Germans on the run. After a short rest, the Mountain troops broke through final resistance in mid-April and spearheaded the 5th Army's attack up the Po Valley. Moving so fast that they had no flank protection and sometimes led the 5th Army by 30-40 miles, the 10th Mountain Division crossed the Po River and reached Lake Garda right on the Germans' heels. On May 2, a few days after the battle at Lake Garda, the German commander in Italy surrendered all his troops. Their celebration tempered with loss, soldiers of the 10th Mountain Division shipped out of Italy back to the United States in late July, 992 of their 14,300 members dead and over 4,000 wounded.

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<sup>112</sup>Lieutenant Ralph Lafferty wrote Minot Dole about the battle: "My memory went back to those bare pine trees we started on back at Fort Lewis . . . and to the rock climbing on the face over by B slope at Hale, and I thanked God for this training when I saw what we faced." "Snow wasn't the problem," he wrote, "but boy, those cliffs. I pity the poor bastards who have to lug machine guns and the heavy equipment." Dole, 130.

<sup>113</sup>General Alexander of the British Army commented that "the only trouble with the 10th Mountain Division was that the officers and men of the Division did not realize that they were attempting something which couldn't be done, and after they got started, they had too much intestinal fortitude to quit." Templeton, 29.

Though the 10th Mountain was the last division sent to Europe and the first to be shipped home after the war's end, its men experienced the full onslaught of war. "With their supporting troops," General Hays wrote, "my one division has been opposed at some time throughout the entire operation by approximately 100,000 German troops."<sup>114</sup> The death of close friends and colleagues, a landscape devastated by artillery and mortar shells, and the gruesome realities of battle all affected the mountain soldiers. Their experience of war isolated them--just as it has isolated soldiers before and since--and unified them as people who have seen too much. "Only a front line soldier can understand a front line soldier," Pfc. William Douglas wrote to his uncle in March of 1945. "I find it absolutely impossible to write home of the war. It is impossible to give the greatness of the whole thing. It is muddy. It is dirty. Nobody likes it. It can be funny at times. But above all, it is big."<sup>115</sup>

The encounter with war and its hardships together in Italy gave these men another set of experiences in common. They could also take pride in a job well done. After their successful attack on Riva Ridge and Mt. Belvedere, telegrams from Army commanders covered General Hays' desk. From Lieutenant General Truscott, Commanding General of the 5th Army: "Congratulations on the magnificent manner in which you have accomplished a very difficult assignment. . . Your outstanding success in your first operation augurs well for a brilliant future . . . I am proud indeed to have this division fighting shoulder to shoulder with the veteran divisions of the Fifth Army."<sup>116</sup> From Major General Crittenberger, Commanding General, IV Corps: "The 10th Mountain Division has again demonstrated on the battlefield its right to be classified as a splendid combat unit . .

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<sup>114</sup>General Hays, letter to Donald B. Douglas, 14 May, 1945, in Imbrie and Evans, 255.

<sup>115</sup>William C. Douglas, letter to Kent Clow, 28 March, 1945, in Templeton, 109.

<sup>116</sup>Lieut. General L.K. Truscott, Jr., telegram to Major General George P. Hays, 8 March, 1945, in Templeton, 34.

. it is a great pleasure for me hereby to commend you and your officers and men, not only for a precise and masterly execution of your mission, but as well for the dash and vigor that never for a moment left the issue in doubt."<sup>117</sup> For their eight day race up the Po Valley from the Apennine Mountains to the Alps, the 10th Mountain got its highest praise from Lieutenant General von Senger, who commanded the opposing XIV Panzer Corps. The 10th, he told General Hays after the war was over, was the best division he had encountered in Italy, Russia, and France; it had broken completely through two German Panzer corps and forced himself, his staff, and many of his troops to swim the Po River on the same day that the 10th crossed it in assault boats.<sup>118</sup> Von Senger's admission only emphasized what members of the 10th already knew: that they had led the entire 5th Army drive, had been first across the Po River, and had helped bring a quick end to the war in Italy. In letters home then and in reminiscences well afterwards, they showed intense pride in their division.<sup>119</sup>

Once home and deactivated, members of the 10th Mountain Division spread out across the country. They left, however, a network of fellow soldiers crafted by a common exposure to elite ski culture, years of training together at Camp Hale, and combat experience in Italy. As one veteran put it, the 10th Mountain Division "was not an army, it was a fraternity. It was a brotherhood of outdoorsmen. It was

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<sup>117</sup>Major General Willis D. Crittenberger, telegram to Major General George P. Hays, 8 March, 1945, in Templeton, 35.

<sup>118</sup>General Hays, letter to Donald Douglas, 14 May, 1945, in Imbrie and Evans, 255.

<sup>119</sup>Lt. Rawleigh Warner, Jr., excerpts of letters to his parents, 1 May, 1945, and 7 May, 1945, in Templeton, 105, 106, 108. Almost all of the letters published by Templeton that were written after May 1 emphasize soldiers' pride in the 10th Mountain Division and its push up the Po Valley at the head of the 5th Army. At a 1959 reunion of the 10th, division historian and combat commander of the 87th Dave Fowler remarked that "the men who served in that organization [the 10th] have the firm conviction that the Tenth Mountain Division was the finest combat division our Army ever had." Dole, 151. They paid a price for their accomplishments, however, and they knew it: of the eight divisions in the 5th Army during the push up the Po Valley, the 10th suffered one-third of the casualties.

a vivid life experience, and one we treasure, still."<sup>120</sup> The idea that the 10th was a brotherhood of outdoorsmen illustrated that, despite differences among its members, the 10th developed a group identity and that, in many ways, that identity was linked to elite resort culture. European ski icons, upper-class college students, and mountain town athletes united as "America's elite ski troops," reinforcing European resort culture among them and merging that culture's definition of cosmopolitan masculinity with a kind of masculinity formed by war. A visible minority of 10th Mountain veterans chose to pursue skiing as a profession after the war ended. Some of this momentum, of course, came from the number of veterans who were skiers before they joined the Army. Dartmouth coach Walter Praeger predicted that "the thousands of GIs who learned or taught skiing in the 10th Mountain Division will be taking an active part in every phase of skiing [after the war]."<sup>121</sup> He was right. According to one estimate, about 2,000 veterans of the 10th became ski instructors, and many others designed resorts, built lifts, manufactured equipment, or became involved in some other aspect of the sport. Sixty-two ski resorts in America were either founded, managed, or had their ski schools run by 10th Mountain Division veterans.<sup>122</sup> These men plugged their areas into the network of relationships that they had formed during the war, thereby helping skiing become a national rather than merely a local or regional sport.

Their impressions of the landscape surrounding Camp Hale brought many of them back to Colorado after the war. Home for some and second home to all, the Rocky Mountain landscape attracted veterans who had grown up all over the country and even abroad. They had not forgotten the scenery and opportunities for skiing that the region offered. Friedl Pfeifer wrote that when he first looked down on

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<sup>120</sup>Bill Bowerman, from *Fire on the Mountain*.

<sup>121</sup>*Ski News*, 1 December, 1945, as cited in Duke, 7.

<sup>122</sup>Duke, 8; *Fire on the Mountain*.

Aspen and thought of his home town in the Austrian Alps, "I felt at that moment, an overwhelming sense of my future before me." The next day he and fellow soldier Percy Rideout hiked Aspen Mountain with the conscious goal of building a new resort there. He even went so far as to talk with the city council and ski club, gaining the support he sought for his future plans.<sup>123</sup> He and Rideout talked at Camp Hale and again in 1945 before they were discharged, agreeing that Aspen would be a great place to live, start a ski school, and work together.<sup>124</sup> John Litchfield joined them. Originally from Maine and a Dartmouth graduate, he spent most of his weekends from Camp Hale with his wife who had moved to Denver. Of Aspen he said, "I certainly had a love of the mountains and the area, and it was nice to come back to something like that after the war."<sup>125</sup> Pfeifer, Rideout, and Litchfield were only three of many 10th Mountain veterans to move to Aspen after the war. Despite their status as elite skiers, many of these men were not independently wealthy. They sought jobs in Aspen, but they did not necessarily want to become wealthy; they wanted to keep skiing. Fritz Benedict tried his hand at ranching there before he established a career in architecture. "The whole concept of living in the mountains was so appealing," he said, "whether you made money was not important."<sup>126</sup> Aspen was so popular with these men in that respect that it became the jumping-off place for 10th Mountain vets who decided to manage or start up ski areas of their own. Steve Knowlton, Florian Haemmerle, Dick Wright, Hans Hagemeister, Pete Seibert, Len Woods, Curt Chase, and John Jay all spent at least some time skiing and living in Aspen before moving on to other skiing-related projects. Tenth Mountain veterans, for example, opened Arapahoe Basin ski area, managed Loveland Basin Ski area, managed Winter Park and ran its

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<sup>123</sup>Pfeifer and Lund, 111.

<sup>124</sup>Rideout, 1991.

<sup>125</sup>Litchfield, 1994.

<sup>126</sup>*Fire on the Mountain*.

ski school, designed, opened, and operated Vail, started up Ski Broadmoor, and became involved in Powderhorn, Breckenridge, and Howelson Hill ski areas.

The connections these veterans had developed to each other as a group--connections that formed from experience in battle and from their common allegiance to an elite kind of skiing--transformed Colorado skiing after the war. Veterans of the 10th brought national and even international skiing expertise and experience to mountain communities' local ski areas. After the war they continued to work with each other as they had during their training and combat, creating a national support network for ski area management that helped broaden the scope of the political and financial networks forged during the 1930s. They also lent their military reputation to the sport. Before World War Two the center of alpine skiing lay in Europe. No international competitors took American racers seriously, nor did they have to. The skills and performance of the 10th Mountain Division changed all that. Even though they hardly used their skis at all in Italy, their military successes turned them into international heroes, elite mountain troops who seemed to have conquered the Germans practically single-handedly. The fact that so many European and Scandinavian skiers had volunteered for the 10th made the Division much more reputable. When they came home these GIs represented America's top echelon of skiers and outdoorsmen, and embodied a corresponding masculine ideal that merged the older European resort ideal with one based on combat. This new masculinity was, moreover, distinctly American. Membership in the 10th and training in Colorado connected these men to an American government and landscape; fighting for the U.S. and claiming victory over European nations further emphasized their American-ness. So, when they got involved in small Colorado ski areas, as Pfeifer did in Aspen, they brought a new kind of elite skiing culture with them. They did not simply impose European ski resort culture upon Colorado's mountain towns and ski clubs. They introduced a new American ski ideal, elite

culture, and a far-reaching interpersonal network to Colorado skiing, all forged out of their experiences in the 10th Mountain Division. When combined with the physical, economic, and political infrastructures already established in the 1930s, the network and culture of 10th Mountain skiers changed the orientation of Colorado skiing. They connected local clubs to a national network of elite experts, and so expanded the focus of the sport from its local, working- and middle-class club roots to include skiers--wealthy and middle-class--from across the country. Their influence, when placed the context of America's post-war economy and consumer culture, turned isolated mountain communities like Aspen into elite, American ski resorts.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### Call of the Mild: Constructed Landscapes for Skier-Tourists

Hundreds of faces looked up Aspen Mountain one sunny Saturday in January, 1947. Businessmen from Denver, Colorado Springs, Chicago, and Washington, famous skiers, 10th Mountain Division veterans, and the Governor-elect of Colorado joined Aspen townspeople at the base of the mountain, waiting for the lift to start.<sup>1</sup> Set in motion with the push of a button, Aspen's Lift No. 1 carried skiers a mile and a half through the air and up 2,200 feet, where, after a short hop on Lift No. 2, they could enjoy the scenery from the top of the mountain, have a snack at the Sundeck, and ski down the famous Roch Run. The world's longest chairlift, and (moving 275 skiers an hour) the fastest, Lift No. 1 introduced masses of people to the joys, thrills, and fears of skiing Aspen Mountain. Two locals guessed that a good skier, equipped with "a stout heart and seven spare legs," could ski 38,000 vertical feet in a day.<sup>2</sup> This was a staggering thought for men and women used to riding short rope tows or hiking up a mountain for one savored run down. Now they could appreciate the scenery and the experience of skiing down the mountain as many times as their skill, strength, and desire would allow.

A coalition of skiers and businessmen, the Aspen Skiing Corporation and its Lift No. 1 kicked off the post-war shift from small, community-run ski areas to

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<sup>1</sup>For accounts of Aspen's opening ceremonies, see Dick Smith, "Once Again Aspen is a Boom Town," *Rocky Mountain News*, 11 January, 1947; Leonard Wood, "Aspen Ski Club to Celebrate Opening of Longest Chair Lift," *Aspen Times*, 12 December, 1946, 1; and Friedl Pfeifer with Morten Lund, *Nice Goin': My Life on Skis* (Missoula: Pictorial Histories Publishing Company, Inc., 1993), 145-150.

<sup>2</sup>Leonard Woods, "Aspen, Now," *American Ski Annual* (1946-47), 158, CHS. See also Leonard Woods, "Memorandum," to Directors of the Aspen Skiing Corporation, 15 October, 1946, AHS.

corporate-owned resorts marketing themselves to a national audience (Figure 1). At these new resorts skiers were transformed from outdoorspeople into customers. Once at the resort, access to the Rocky Mountain scenery and the experience of skiing came with the price of a lift ticket (\$3.75 for a day during Aspen's first season). Ticket holders with skill, as the locals had pointed out, could experience the joys of skiing down a mountain not just once or twice a day, but over and over again--cramming in the scenery and thrills of Aspen Mountain until their muscles and psyche could take it no longer. Longer and faster lifts ushered in a new world of skiing where more people could make more runs than ever before. Building that world, however, was no small task. Behind the opening of Aspen's first chairlifts lay a labyrinth of enterprises and jobs: organizing a corporation; finding investors; getting loans; acquiring surface rights to the patchwork of mining claims that lay over Aspen Mountain and getting permission from the Forest Service to use the National Forest land in between; cutting new trails; and finally constructing and running the lifts themselves. In its physical reality on the mountain, in the myriad of relationships that it represented, and in the increased access to the slopes that it provided, Aspen's Lift No. 1 fundamentally altered the Rocky Mountain landscape. It changed, as well, skiers' physical, sensual, and perceptual relationship to that landscape.

Far from static, the experience of skiing in the Rockies has changed historically. Nineteenth-century miners, female community members, and Scandinavian immigrants, twentieth-century resort goers, Austrian ski instructors, 10th Mountain Division soldiers, and local racers have all felt the exhilaration of skiing fast and well for a moment, just as they have all picked themselves up and brushed the snow from their clothes after a bad fall. (Different individuals, of course, grew more familiar with either one experience or the other.) The meanings that they attached to that common experience, however,

Thomas J. Noel, Paul F. Mahoney, and Richard E. Stevens, *Historical Atlas of Colorado* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1994), map 52.

Figure 1. Major Colorado Ski Areas

depended upon the larger context in which they were skiing--a context that included relationships of work and leisure, class, and gender. This larger context shaped how skiers understood the mountain landscape. The post-war developments of skiing in Colorado represented a significant change in all skiers' relationships to the landscape because, for the first time, ski area managers had to design and develop ski areas that could handle crowds and still provide ticket-buyers with a positive individual experience.

### The Experiences of Skiing

Ever since people started skiing in America, they have articulated physical and psychological responses to the sport that are strikingly similar. After an initial period of frustration and learning, many skiers have described the sport as thrilling and exhilarating, as well as peaceful and scenic. They tell, further, of a personal kind of connection to the mountain landscape. One nineteenth-century outdoorsman expounded on the joys (and pitfalls) of Norwegian snowshoes: "The ski has an unpleasant way of running in opposite directions, of getting crossed, and finally of piling the pupil in a snow-bank. But . . . to one who is persistent the joys of jumping and running with the ski are finally opened." When faced with a hill, the author continued, "[the skier] shoots the hill like the wind, and is off down the valley without stopping in his flight. This may appear to be dangerous," he said, "but it is exhilarating."<sup>3</sup> An author in 1905 similarly wrote: "as the experienced skidor [skier] dashes down the crusted hillsides with the speed of the wind, there comes to the sport an added exhilaration and excitement that postively knows no equal."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>Rolf W. Jackson, "A New Year's Day Ski Run," *Outing*, 31 (January 1898), 395.

<sup>4</sup>Theodore A. Johnsen, *The Winter Sport of Skeeing* (Portland, ME: Theo. A. Johnsen Comany, 1905), reprinted by The International Skiing History Association, New Hartford, CT, 1994, 6.

Skiers since then women and men have continued to echo these authors' characterizations of the sport. In 1928, for instance, Marjorie Perry and her friend Elinor Eppich Kingery got off their train, which was delayed on the top of Rollins Pass, and decided to ski down along the tracks to Tolland, sixteen miles distant. "We could see three long switchbacks through the open timber and tiny Tolland far below," Marjorie Perry recalled. "We left the track and went straight down the hill, making big curves, with the perfect powdered snow swirling in the air."<sup>5</sup> When asked what had attracted him to skiing as a nine year old in the mid-1930s, Giles Toll readily answered "being in the mountains." "The feeling of rhythm," he said, and "to some extent the speed, but mostly the feeling of being able to come into synchrony with the mountains and the snow."<sup>6</sup> Expert skier (and Deep Ecologist) Dolores LaChappelle has described the experience of skiing perhaps most self-consciously. "Once this rhythmic relationship to snow and gravity is established on a steep slope," she wrote, "there is no longer an I and snow and the mountain, but a continuous flowing interaction."<sup>7</sup>

In addition to expressing exhilarating and personal relationships with the mountains and the snow, skiers have also described the sport in terms of freedom. Beth Sinclair, who learned to ski in the late 1930s, said that what attracted her to the sport was "the freedom and the speed." Fellow Aspen resident Cherie Oates, who took up the sport in the 1940s, also liked to ski downhill fast. "I'd be picking up pieces [of equipment and clothes] out of the trees [after a fall], I'd always be losing something," she said, "but there was just a real thrill about that, a real challenge .

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<sup>5</sup>Janet Robertson, *The Magnificent Mountain Women: Adventures in the Colorado Rockies* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1990), 43.

<sup>6</sup>Giles D. Toll, interview by the author, 2 February, 1996, Denver, Colorado, tape recording and transcript, 5.

<sup>7</sup>Dolores LaChappelle, *Deep Powder Snow: 40 Years of Ecstatic Skiing, Avalanches, and Earth Wisdom* (Durango CO: Kivaki Press, 1993), 101.

. . [and] a freedom that you're on your own power."<sup>8</sup> Descriptions of skiing in terms of thrill, exhilaration, freedom, and personal connection to the mountain landscape are so pervasive, in fact, that they have almost reached the point of cliché. It is important to recognize, however, that these feelings and experiences have attracted people to the sport since its very beginning. When placed in the position of providing a fun skiing experience to large groups of people after World War Two, ski area managers and designers had to think carefully about those feelings of exhilaration, freedom, and connection to the landscape in order to reproduce them for their customers.

While skiers have articulated common experiences of the sport over time and even across lines of gender and class, the context in which skiers have skied has changed dramatically. The meaning of the sport and the experiences it elicits, therefore, depend largely upon historical context and the relationships of labor and leisure, gender, and class that place each skier within that context. To skiing mailmen in the nineteenth century, then, the act of skiing and the exhilaration it could elicit acquired meaning within the context of work. The mountain landscape represented a series of dangerous, physical obstacles to negotiate, and through skiing in this isolating landscape these mail carriers created and embodied a self-reliant masculine ideal particular to their mountain communities. For female residents, however, skiing gained meaning as a combination of work and community recreation within an explicitly social landscape. Skiing in this context reinforced a femininity focused on community that contrasted with the tough, individual masculinity of the mail carrier.

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<sup>8</sup>Elizabeth Oblock Sinclair, interview by the author, 26 July, 1994, Aspen, Colorado, tape recording and transcription, AHS, 2; Cherie Gerbaz Oates, interview with the author, 13 July, 1994, Aspen, Colorado, tape recording and transcription, AHS, 6.

Wealthy outdoorsmen and resort-goers in the first part of the twentieth century understood skiing in far different terms. Their class status and urban places of residence defined skiing as a purely recreational activity, albeit one which could purge them of their city stresses and place them in a more manly setting. The mountain landscape became a space for them to act out a masculine ideal rooted in European resort culture, and skiing the means by which they could achieve such an ideal. Upper-class women, like their mountain-town predecessors, experienced skiing through a more social context than men. As part of elite resort culture, upper-class women and international athletes experienced the freedom and exhilaration of skiing within a context that would not call their femininity into question. Women racers in Colorado, therefore, who skied outside that class culture, either became characterized as kid sisters or ran the risk of seeming masculine. Finally, just as the context of local carnivals and competitions translated 1930s Colorado skiing into a working- and middle-class community activity, so did the context of war and the elite membership of the 10th Mountain Division translate their skiing into an ultimate male, American act. After World War Two skiing became a leisure activity for more middle- and upper-class men and women than ever before, and the meaning of the skiing experience changed yet again.

The sensuous experience of skiing has taken on startlingly different meanings over time. Just as variables of class and gender have altered the cultural significance of the sport, however, so has the landscape itself. The development of ski areas, in particular, affected the ways in which skiers experienced and understood the mountain landscape. For most skiers--from skiing mailmen to women resort-goers--appreciating mountain scenery was part of the sport's appeal. More than mere visual beauty, the mountain landscape offered snow, weather, and terrain that skiers felt as they moved through it. Until the 1930s,

skiers hiked up mountains before skiing down them; laboring slowly up the mountain was both integral and necessary to the exhilarating act of skiing down.

Even through the 1930s, after short rope tows became available for use, skiers continued to hike and climb for better scenery and longer ski runs than they could get by riding the rope tow. Rather than limit themselves to the short boat tow, for example, visitors to Aspen commonly rode part-way up the back of Aspen Mountain in trucks headed for the Midnight Mine and climbed the rest of the way up the mountain. Reaching the top at lunch time, they would rest, have a bite to eat and a look around, and then ski down into town. Elizabeth Paepcke's memories of such a trip in 1938 came infused with visions of the mountain landscape. "At the top we halted in frozen admiration," she wrote. "Mountain range after mountain range succeeded another, rising and falling like storm driven waves, crested with streamers of snow blowing straight out from each icy, perpendicular 14,000 foot peak." Intensifying the majesty around her was the impression that she and her group were completely alone in the mountains. "In all that landscape of rock, snow, and ice," she went on, "there was neither print of animal nor track of man. We were alone as though the world had just been created and we its first inhabitants."<sup>9</sup> Not only did the Chicagoan see herself as intimately connected to the mountains and snow around her, she understood that landscape as pristine, wild, and natural. This was an appropriate understanding for her, given that her normal daily activities placed her in the urban and social landscape of Chicago's high society.

Long hours of climbing let recreational skiers like Paepcke feel connected to the wilderness of the surrounding mountains. "When you climb," said 1936 Olympic team member Mary Bird Young, "you have a chance to look around--look at the mountains, look at the snow--you have a chance to think." Janet Mead

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<sup>9</sup>Elizabeth Paepcke, "Memories of Aspen," manuscript, n.d., 7, Elizabeth Paepcke biography file, AHS.

agreed. She liked "the happy occasion of climbing . . . and all of the vicissitudes that take place between the bottom where you start and the top that you reach . . . the quiet and the depth of it, or [seeing] animal tracks through the woods." "You come upon things," she said, "that you would never see otherwise."<sup>10</sup> Skiers across Colorado expressed their agreement with her by frequenting ski areas that offered no lifts at all. State ski area directories through the 1940s, published to advertise Colorado's ski areas, included areas such as Highland Basin, Montezuma Basin, Independence Pass, St. Mary's Glacier, Jones Pass, Hoosier Pass, Allens Park, Ouray, and Rabbit Ears Pass, where skiers were obliged to hike up whatever they wanted to ski down.

Skiing in undeveloped landscapes remained both an individual and a social experience. While skiers skied down on their own, they also shared the work, appreciation of the scenery, and exhilaration of the run down with the friends who accompanied them. Catching their breath together on the way up, resting and looking around at the top, and gathering afterwards around the fire served to reinforce the significance of their experience in the mountains. That trip would become part of a collective memory--of shared effort and rewards--dusted off and relived from time to time, the climb growing more arduous, the mountains more glorious, and the run down more thrilling with each retelling. What better way to destroy such a relationship with the mountains, one might ask, than to make it easily accessible--to remove the effort of hiking up, turn the run down into an imminently repeatable experience, and make it available to everyone willing to buy a ticket? Indeed, one skier in the 1930s referred to the increasing appearance of ski lifts and complained that "this way of skiing is so mechanical--you ride up in lifts, up and down, up and down--you don't get the feeling of what it's all about."<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup>Bill Barry, *Legends of American Skiing, 1840-1940*, produced and directed by Richard W. Moulton (Skiing Magazine, 1986), videocassette.

<sup>11</sup>Mary Bird Young, from *Legends of American Skiing*.

Once ski lifts became more common, however, most skiers welcomed the opportunity to ride up the mountain. They had climbed up, after all, in order to ski down; why not ski down as much as possible? With the development of chair lifts like the one in Aspen, Colorado's post-war ski areas could offer the experience of skiing to far more people than ever before. Far from homogenizing the skier's experience, chances to ski a run more often let skiers try new things. Each run, that is, always differed from the last. Choosing how fast to go, where to turn and when, skiers realized endless combinations of peaceful gliding, rhythmic swooping, scenic resting, and breathtaking speed, interspersed with ungraceful tumbles and the retrieval of various pieces of equipment and clothing. The mountains thus looked different and felt different every run, no matter how many trips one took. Moreover, the choices and pitfalls that shaped each run emphasized skiers' individuality on the slopes, helping skiers to feel alone on the mountain even if they shared that space with others. Able still to contemplate the scenery from the top of the mountain together, lift riders could also share their impressions with friends as they had before the ski industry's boom. Lift lines, double chair lifts, and gondolas became opportunities to see friends and make new ones, a process continued at day's end in the lodge or the bar. Stories changed hands as before, featuring still the mountain and its surrounding landscape.

The post-war birth of the ski industry and the increased access to Colorado's ski areas upon which it was based successfully transformed recreational skiing into a business as well as a sport. This transition put skiing's feelings of freedom, exhilaration, and personal connection to the mountains--feelings central to the sport and responsible for its widespread appeal--in danger on two counts. Ski area developers and managers found themselves selling what had been an intensely personal experience to as many people as possible. To them mountains and snow had come to represent natural resources promising physical recreation

and psychic rejuvenation. At the same time that the physical construction of lifts, lodges, and base areas directly altered Colorado's mountain landscape, they attracted customers to such a degree that skiers' once fairly intimate relationships to mountain ski trails, scenery, and snow could not last. Conflict and tension arose when the potential of crowds endangered those relationships. Area developers tried to restore skiers' relationships to the mountain landscape by re-creating them within an increasingly constructed and built environment.

### Colorado's Post-War Ski Areas

Colorado's ski areas experienced a boom which began immediately after World War Two, accelerated throughout the 1950s, and reached its peak in the '60s. "When the war is over," one skier prophesied, "youngsters will come streaming back, keened up for the sport far beyond anything we have ever seen in the past." Soldiers, too, would seek the limitless scenery, bright sky, and fresh air of skiing, this skier argued. "When the lads begin shucking their olive drab and navy blues, . . . they'll want a pile of individual freedom, quite aside from that they are fighting for now to win for the nation. You'll see our hills thronged as never before."<sup>12</sup> After the war ended and the country finally exhaled, this writer's predictions came true. Ski areas that had been closed for the duration opened again. Skiers and war veterans--encouraged by the gas, tires, money, and free time suddenly on their hands--hopped in their cars and went skiing. Mountain residents, many of whom had skied throughout the war, approached the sport with renewed enthusiasm. Relieved of war-time stress and presented with a cheery future, white, middle-class and wealthy Americans who had never worn skis before traveled to the mountains for vacation and took up the sport.

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<sup>12</sup>Fred H. McNeil, "Skiing and the War," *American Skiing Annual* (1942-43), 99-101, CHS.

Their behavior coincided with changes in the consumption, travel, and leisure patterns of white, middle-class Americans across the country. As the consumer culture of the 1950s took shape, Colorado's ski industry gained momentum. Most people had more money after World War II than ever before. The average American's income in 1960 was 35% higher than it had been in 1945; many had savings left unspent during the war; and Americans re-entered the consumer culture with a bang. They bought new cars--58 million of them during the 1950s.<sup>13</sup> They also enjoyed more leisure time. By 1950 daily, weekend, and vacation leisure hours constituted over 34% of Americans' waking lives, and in 1959 each working American took over one week of paid vacation.<sup>14</sup>

For many Americans after World War Two, vacation meant getting in the car and seeing the country with the family.<sup>15</sup> Visits to Colorado's National Forests skyrocketed from 40,340 visitor-days in 1945 to 149,460 in 1947. They rose especially in the mid-1950s, reaching 355,550 in 1956.<sup>16</sup> An accompanying

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<sup>13</sup>Paul S. Boyer, et. al., *The Enduring Vision*, vol. 2 (Lexington MA: DC Heath and Co., 1990), 1017, 1018, 1022. Skiers could also find cheap, Army surplus ski equipment. Equipment meant for the 10th Mountain Division became surplus after the war. Of high quality and low price, a skier could outfit themselves with skis and bindings, boots, even parka and pants for about \$25. Thousands did. Editors of Ski Magazine, *America's Ski Book* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1973), 46.

<sup>14</sup>Marion Clawson and Jack L. Knetsch, *Economics of Outdoor Recreation* (Baltimore, Johns Hopkins Press, 1966), 16-17.

<sup>15</sup>Recreational automobile travel increased significantly after World War Two, especially for families earning over \$10,000 a year. Almost half of American families earning under \$4,000 a year, however, also took automobile vacations. Automobile trips, furthermore, accounted for 94% of all outdoor recreation trips in 1953. Those at the top of the socio-economic ladder were more likely to fly. John A. Jakle, *The Tourist: Travel in Twentieth-Century North America* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1985), 186.

<sup>16</sup>Statistics-takers use visitor-days to measure use of national forests and ski areas, a term which refers to one visitor using the forest or area for one day. Use of Colorado's national forests showed a sharp increase immediately after the war from 1945 to 1947, at which point it reached a fairly steady level, increasing again from 1952-56. An unexplained sharp peak occurred in 1951, when use more than doubled and then returned to its former levels. L.J. Crampon and Ronald D. Lemon, "Skiing in the Southern Rocky Mountain Region," manuscript, Bureau of Business Research, University of Colorado, Boulder, Colorado, 1957, 32, CHS.

"unprecedented flood of traffic" swamped Colorado's roads after 1945, forcing the Colorado's government to reorganize its state highway system.<sup>17</sup> By 1952 federally-funded paved roads, U.S. 40 and U.S. 6, swept cars over Berthoud and Rabbit Ears passes and Loveland and Vail passes.<sup>18</sup> The federal government made automobile vacations even easier with the Highway Act of 1956, authorizing funds to build a 41,000 mile system of divided, limited access freeways across the country. New highways and the rise of air travel after the war made Colorado's Rockies a reasonable destination for middle-class Americans across the country, increasing both physical and financial access to the sport. Front Range ski areas reported a 48% increase in use during the 1946-47 season from the season before, and an additional 27% increase for the next.<sup>19</sup> The Denver and Salt Lake Ski Train, too, resumed regular service to Winter Park after the war. Under new management in 1947 as the Denver and Rio Grande Western, the ski train continued to carry passengers to Winter Park and back for three more decades, peaking in 1966 when it ran 22 cars on each of four different days to keep up with demand.<sup>20</sup> According to one chronicler, "The socio-economic force of the leisure boom [in the 1950s] changed American skiing in less than a decade from a slightly eccentric preoccupation of a few thousand people to a mass participation sport with the number of participants exceeding a half million."<sup>21</sup>

These national changes in consumption, leisure, and travel introduced new populations to the sport of skiing, and American businessmen knew it. Without

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<sup>17</sup>The Highway Planning Committee's "four pound report" reduced the State Highway System from 12,400 to about 8,000 miles of roads, but made the Department of Highways responsible for construction and maintenance of all 8,000 miles, rather than the 4,000 miles of "primary" highways. Colorado Department of Highways, *Paths of Progress*, 14, pam file, CUA.

<sup>18</sup>State Highway Map of Colorado, Colorado Department of Highways, 1952, CUA.

<sup>19</sup>"Forest Service Surveys 1947-48 Season," *Rocky Mountain Skiing*, 1 December, 1948, 2.

<sup>20</sup>Steve Patterson and Kenton Forrest, *Rio Grande Ski Train* (Denver: Tramway Press, Inc., 1984), 33.

<sup>21</sup>*America's Ski Book*, 50.

wartime demands on technology and materials, private enterprise had room to grow in new directions. After World War Two, skiers who wanted to turn the sport into their livelihood--often 10th Mountain Division veterans--sought out and found investors willing to help them develop new areas or improve old ones. They bought European lifts, whose manufacturers sent engineers to install them, importing the world's newest ski lift technology to the states.<sup>22</sup> Armed with new leadership, financing, technology, and more potential customers than ever before, Colorado skiing developed from a community activity into part of a national industry.

The Aspen Skiing Corporation (ASC) first illustrated this change. The ASC represented an alliance among 10th Mountain Division veterans and businessmen from all over the country. Friedl Pfeifer first formed the ASC and tried to develop the area himself after the war, but could not find sufficient financial backing until he won the support of Chicago businessman Walter Paepcke, who wanted to re-create Aspen as an "ideal" town and cultural center. Paepcke was never really interested in skiing; he got involved mainly to control the growth of the sport in Aspen.<sup>23</sup> In return for Paepcke's help in raising money to develop the ski area, plus 25,000 shares of stock and exclusive rights to run the ski school, Pfeifer gave up control of the ASC. With Paepcke's connections and plans to develop Aspen culturally, the company attracted investors including Paepcke's brother-in-law Paul Nitze of the State Department, future president of Denver's Colorado National Bank George Berger, Denver attorney William Hodges, Colorado Springs businessman and close friend of the Paepckes Eugene Lilly, executive vice president

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<sup>22</sup>Artur Kuen, for instance, came to America to install lifts for the German company Dopplemayer. He built ski tows and lifts for Aspen Mountain and Snowmass, as well as for Mammoth in California and two ski areas in Alaska. Artur Kuen, interview by the author, 13 July, 1994, Snowmass, Colorado, tape recording and transcription, AHS.

<sup>23</sup>For more on Paepcke and his cultural goals, see James Sloan Allen, *The Romance of Commerce and Culture: Capitalism, Modernism, and the Chicago-Aspen Crusade for Cultural Reform* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983).

of the Hilton Hotel chain Joseph Binns, as well as local land holder D.R.C. "Darcy" Brown and Minot Dole, founder of the National Ski Patrol and the 10th Mountain Division.<sup>24</sup> Together they owned or sold \$250,000 worth of stock in the company to build the chair lifts; by the end of May, 1947, the Aspen Skiing Corporation owned total assets of over \$345,000.<sup>25</sup>

The ASC's corporate growth was accompanied by an influx of 10th Mountain Division veterans to Aspen after the war. John Litchfield and Percy Rideout ran the ski school along with Friedl Pfeifer, offering ski lessons for a small fee; Steve Knowlton helped cut new trails in the summers and trained for the 1948 Olympics in the winter; and Pete Seibert joined the ski patrol and monitored the slopes, hoping to learn enough in Aspen to start his own resort someday.<sup>26</sup> The businessmen and Army veterans who converged upon Aspen added their talents, money, and energy to that of the local community. Long-time Aspen residents, many from families who had moved to town during its mining boom, provided labor, technical knowledge, and community support for the ASC's projects.<sup>27</sup> Walter Paepcke's bonanza celebration of Goethe in the summer of 1949 and the FIS world alpine championships, hosted for the first time in the United States at Aspen in

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<sup>24</sup>Pfeifer and Lund, 136-42; Dutch Hodges, "The Beginning of the Dream," manuscript, n.d., AHS; Smith, "Once Again Aspen is a Boom Town;" Leonard Woods, "memorandum," AHS; Paul Hauk, "Aspen Mountain Ski Area Chronology," (U.S.D.A. Forest Service, White River National Forest, 1979) 2, manuscript, U.S. Forest Service, Aspen Ranger District, Aspen, Colorado.

<sup>25</sup>"Schedule B," Aspen Skiing Corporation Balance Sheet, 31 May, 1947, Aspen Skiing Corporation Collection, AHS.

<sup>26</sup>Seibert would go on to develop Vail. His future public relations guru Bob Parker also joined the ski patrol in Aspen, and veterans Dick Wright and Andy Ransom joined the ski school. Steve Knowlton and John Litchfield also became Aspen businessmen, owning and operating the Golden Horn and the Red Onion nightspots, respectively.

<sup>27</sup>Some, such as the Willoughbys and the Browns, agreed to sell or lease the surface rights to their mines on Aspen Mountain so the ASC could build ski trails and run the lift over them. Others, such as Red Rowland and the Willoughby brothers, helped with the construction of the lift. A few locals would enter into the ASC's employ. See Anne Gilbert, "Re-Creation Through Recreation: Aspen Skiing from 1870-1970," manuscript, AHS.

1950, won national media attention for the town and its young ski resort. Skiers from Denver, Chicago, Sun Valley, and New York showed up to see what Aspen was like for themselves. In its organization, finances, management, and out-of-state customers, Aspen's ski area outgrew every pre-war resort except Sun Valley.

Other post-war ski areas in Colorado reflected a similar change. Berthoud Pass re-opened for business with only two rope tows, but by December of 1947 the area's manager-operator had financed, installed, and opened the world's first double chair lift.<sup>28</sup> Twice as long as Berthoud's longest rope tow and capable of carrying two people up in one chair, this ski lift earned Berthoud Pass fame along with the capacity to carry even more Denver skiers up its slopes. Similarly innovative was Steamboat Springs' Emerald Mountain lift, which interspersed chairs and T-bars on "the world's longest single-span ski lift." Financed by city revenue bonds and costing roughly \$100,000, this lift officially opened for business in February of 1948, with Colorado's governor, town dignitaries, and a large crowd looking on and plenty of skiers on the slopes.<sup>29</sup> The City of Denver acknowledged the need for new financial organization when it created the Winter Park Recreational Association, a non-profit corporation that took over control of the area's planning, development, financing, mortgaging, and personnel.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>28</sup>Sam Huntington was the manager-operator for the Toll and Grant interests and Forest Service Permit. He financed his "twin chair" by finding Denver businessmen (Toll and assumably Grant) to invest in the project. Paul Hauk, "A-Basin Ski Area Chronology," (USDA Forest Service, 1978), 2, U.S. Forest Service, White River National Forest, Aspen Ranger District; "Colorado Ski Areas," *Rocky Mountain Life* (December 1947), 51; Giles D. Toll, interview by the author, 2 February, 1996, Denver, Colorado, tape recording and transcript, 6.

<sup>29</sup>Bill Fetcher, "A History of the Emerald Mountain Ski Lift," 19 April, 1992, manuscript, Emerald Mountain Ski Lift file, BWML. Steamboat's "world's longest single-span lift" was longer (at 8,850 feet) than Aspen's Lift No. 1 (at 8,480 feet), but Aspen included its Lift No. 2 in its claim to fame by characterizing its lift as one, albeit in two sections. See also Maurice Leckenby, "Skiing Steamboat," *Rocky Mountain Life* (October 1947), 23.

<sup>30</sup>Patterson and Forrest, 25. See also Betty Hosburgh, "Colorado's Newest Ski Developments," *Rocky Mountain Life* (March 1946), 8-9; "Heavy Snows Open Colorado Ski Areas," *Rocky Mountain Skiing*, 1 December, 1948, 1; Grand County

Brand new ski areas also took shape after the war, emulating Aspen's mix of corporate organization, 10th Mountain Division veteran leadership, and local support. The Denver Chamber of Commerce and the U.S. Forest Service also encouraged the development of Arapahoe Basin. In May of 1946 10th Mountain vet Larry Jump, along with his friend Sandy Schaufler, local property owner Max Dercum, ski legend Dick Durrance, and Denver ski manufacturer Thor Grosword formed Arapahoe Basin, Inc. Financed by the original incorporators, the sale of 150,000 shares of stock, and a loan from the Reconstruction Finance Corporation, Arapahoe Basin opened for the 1947-48 season with two chair lifts, a rope tow, and a shelter complete with lunch counter and a stall that doubled as the ski shop and the ski school office.<sup>31</sup> Without a town or overnight accommodations at their bases, Berthoud Pass and Arapahoe Basin catered to day skiers rather than the destination skiers who traveled to Aspen and stayed for a week or more. The three areas had in common, however, their use of new technology and financial organization. Their directors and managers, furthermore, shared the assumption that thousands of Americans would soon take up skiing.

They were right. Americans participating in the post-war consumer and leisure culture flocked to the new and improved ski areas. Speedy chair lifts, T-bars, and poma lifts replaced rope tows, and ski areas with no tows at all, previously considered worthy of at least a visit, disappeared from ski area listings. During the late 1950s and the 1960s the number of Colorado ski areas rose along with the number of skiers. Between 1957 and 1961 such places as Aspen Highlands, Buttermilk, Crested Butte, Breckenridge, Ski Broadmoor, and

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Historical Association, *Winter Park: Colorado's Favorite for Fifty Years, 1940-1990* (Winter Park Recreation Association, 1989), 47-67.

<sup>31</sup>Hauk, "A-Basin Chronology," 1-5; Abbott Fay, *Ski Tracks in the Rockies: A Century of Colorado Skiing* (Evergreen CO: Cordillera Press, 1984), 41-42; Larry Jump, "Arapahoe Basin--The Promised Land," *Rocky Mountain Life* (January 1947), 38-39, 42.

Cuchara Basin opened for business. By 1966, Vail, Steamboat Springs' Mt. Werner, Lake Eldora near Boulder, Purgatory outside of Durango, Sunlight in Glenwood Springs, and Meadow Mountain near Vail had added their names to the state's winter tourism and ski area directory; Snowmass-at-Aspen followed on their heels and opened in 1967.<sup>32</sup> These ski areas ranged from ritzy destination resorts to small areas targeting local clientele. Some opened only for weekends and holidays with one or two lifts; others operated as many as seven lifts all season long. Most, however, were new. By 1966 only seven of the thirty areas in the state had welcomed skiers in the 1930s.<sup>33</sup>

No longer was Colorado skiing only a local, community activity. Tenth Mountain veterans' national reputations, new financing and business organization, and the development of longer and faster ski lifts attracted more skiers than ever before to Colorado areas. Colorado residents from all over the state, as well as people from other parts of the country, took up the sport and came to Colorado. Cuchara Basin and Monarch Pass provided skiing to residents in the southern part of Colorado, and Meadow Mountain served the Hispanic community of Minturn, albeit briefly. As early as 1957 Colorado ski areas did over 30% of their business

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<sup>32</sup>"Ski Areas in Colorado, Wyoming, and New Mexico," *Rocky Mountain Life* (November 1946), 48-50; "Colorado Ski Areas," *Rocky Mountain Life* (December 1947), 51-53; "Colorado Ski Directory," *Rocky Mountain Life* (December 1948), 52, 54; "Skiing Centers of Colorado," *Colorado Wonderland* (December 1950), 21; *The Manual of Colorado Skiing at the Top of the Nation* (Denver: Colorado Ski Information Center, 1954); Crampon and Lemon, "Skiing in the Southern Rocky Mountain Region," (1957); *1961-62 Colorado Ski and Winter Sports Manual* (Denver: Colorado Visitors Bureau, Winter Sports Committee, 1961); *1966-67 Colorado Skiing: Resorts, Lodges, Services, Transportation* (Denver: Colorado Visitors Bureau, 1966); *Colorful Colorado*, 1 (Winter 1966), 69-83; *1968-69 Colorado Skiing: Resorts, Lodges, Services, Transportation* (Denver: Colorado Visitors Bureau, 1968). See also Tommy Neal, "Purgatory--An Exciting New Word in Skiing," and other articles in *The Durango-Cortez Herald*, 27 November, 1966 for information on the development of ski areas in the southwestern part of the state. See Paul Hauk, "Ski Area Chronologies" for the development of ski areas within the White River National Forest.

<sup>33</sup>Those areas were Aspen, Berthoud Pass, Grand Mesa, Hidden Valley, Pikes Peak, Winter Park, and Wolf Creek.

with skiers from out of state.<sup>34</sup> America's post-war consumer culture and the nation-wide growth of tourism, combined with start of the ski industry, created a context within which people no longer had to belong to an elite club or live in a mountain town in order to ski.

Nor did they have to be especially rugged to enjoy the sport. During the 1950s and 1960s, downhill skiing became more accessible to men and women outside mountain communities and elite resorts, where constructions of gender and class lessened the impact of skiing's physical demands. After World War Two, technological advances in ski equipment made the sport easier to learn. Army surplus skis and bindings were cheap after the war, but aircraft engineer Howard Head drastically improved the performance of wooden skis when he developed a successful metal ski in 1950. Lighter and easier to turn than wooden ones, metal skis found a solid niche in the American market by the early 1960s. A few years later fiberglass skis hit the market, furthering the development and success of new ski equipment. Binding technology, too, advanced quickly in the decades following World War Two. In the 1950s cable "beartrap" bindings gave way to step-in "safety" bindings built to release in dangerous falls, easing the fears of timid skiers as well as improving control over their skis. New boots similarly aided their wearers, adding stiffness, height, and hence more control to the leather lace-up boots typical of the 1940s. The first leather buckle boot hit the market in 1955. Plastic Lange boots appeared ten years later, improving skier control and earning kudos from European racers who called them "les Plastiques Fantastiques."<sup>35</sup> By technically improving the connection between a skier's feet

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<sup>34</sup>Of the state's skiers 69.1% came from Colorado, with another 3.5% from other mountain states. The most out-of-state skiers came from the Central states, contributing 19.7% of Colorado's business. Illinois, Texas, Minnesota, and Kansas, respectively, sent the most skiers to Colorado. Crampon and Lemon, 4-5.

<sup>35</sup>Stan Cohen, *A Pictorial History of Downhill Skiing* (Missoula: Pictorial Histories Publishing Company, 1985), 89-106.

and the snow, the new equipment developed in the 1950s and 1960s helped people learn more easily, turn more quickly, ski faster, gain confidence, and ultimately have more fun skiing.

Ski lifts served a similar function, mediating skiers' relationship to the mountain and increasing access to the sport. As new equipment lessened the requirement for toughness while going down the mountain, lifts lessened it for the way up. Ski lifts and tows offered quick rides up the mountain and wiped hours of hiking off a skier's itinerary; a day of arm-stretching rope tow riding seemed worth the bother only until chair lift and T-bar technology offered easier alternatives.<sup>36</sup> Getting people up the mountain farther and faster thus became a main goal for ski area developers interested in attracting customers. As they attracted customers, so too did new ski lifts reduce the lines that formed at popular areas. In a never-ending cycle of lift-building, areas made sensible expenditures to boost skiers up mountains. In 1966 only eight of the state's 30 ski areas had an hourly capacity of less than 1,000 skiers. Aspen Mountain, then boasting seven lifts, could move over 5,000 skiers in an hour. Arapahoe Basin, Aspen Highlands, Breckenridge, Loveland Basin, Vail, and Winter Park shared that distinction.<sup>37</sup> Whether as a cause or as a result of Colorado's growing ski industry--or more likely both--lift construction and ski area expansion did not slow down until the mid-1970s.<sup>38</sup>

#### Constructed Ski Area Landscapes

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<sup>36</sup>One Forest Service poll taken in 1947 established that "most skiers would willingly trade two rope tow tickets for a ticket on a chair lift or T-bar tow." "Forest Service Surveys 1947-48 Season," *Rocky Mountain Skiing*, 1 December, 1948, 2.

<sup>37</sup>"Colorado Ski Areas," *Colorful Colorado*, 1, 3 (Winter 1966), 69.

<sup>38</sup>Nils Ericksen, P.E., "If You Build It, They Will Come," *Ski Area Management*, 35, 1 (January 1996), 52.

Ski area development and lift construction prevented skiers from experiencing the mountain landscape in the same way as those who climbed up ski trails by foot and skied one or two runs down in a day. Ski areas could, however, accentuate certain attractive aspects of that experience. From a developer's perspective mountain scenery became a natural resource; skiers' views of the surrounding mountains, something to plan and frame. Lodges and restaurants sprouted up accordingly--even on mountain tops--featuring picture windows and architectural equivalents to the highway signs that announce "scenic overlook" to every passing vehicle. Arapahoe Basin built its "Snow Plume Refuge" atop a narrow ridge, so "its huge picture windows [could] . . . revel in the splendid panorama of the Gore Range, Tenmile Range, and the Mount of the Holy Cross far to the West."<sup>39</sup> Chair lifts and gondolas, too, offered riders aerial visions of impressive landscapes on every ride. Even the U.S. Forest Service, in its "Planning Considerations for Winter Sports Resort Development," recognized that while "lifts should be located to serve the best skiing terrain," and "seldom should the type of lift dictate the location of ski trails," it admitted that "a lift intended to provide both ski trail access and scenic views for summer [and presumably winter] tourists is one exception to this principle."<sup>40</sup> Ski area planners had been noting that exception for some time. One developer of Snowmass attributed the resort's first-year success to its scenic appeal. By virtue of its terrain and lift placement, "even the weaker skiers . . . can get to the top of Elk Camp and the Burn, and its almost as if they can get a Sir Edmund Hillary complex," he said; "they're on top of the world."<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>39</sup>Larry Jump, "Arapahoe Basin--The Promised Land," *Rocky Mountain Life* (January 1947), 38.

<sup>40</sup>Forest Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture and the National Ski Areas Association, *Planning Considerations for Winter Sports Resort Development* (1973), 15.

<sup>41</sup>Jim Snobble, interview by the author, 11 July, 1994, Aspen, Colorado, tape recording and transcript, 2, AHS.

Skiers--even those who had once hiked to ski--appreciated the views from ski area lifts. "To be able to ride the lift at Berthoud," one CMC member recalled, "and get that view down the west side of the Indian Peaks, was a great thrill. I looked forward to each ride because I could get that view." Nor was that treat limited to skiing at Berthoud. "[It] was the same thing at Winter Park or any of the lifts. To be able to ski Aspen Highlands and get a look at the [Maroon] Bells and Pyramid at the top of the mountain, those are wonderful, important parts of the experience for me."<sup>42</sup> The presence of lifts, by offering better and more frequent views than hikers could enjoy, increased the impact of mountain scenery and transformed skiers' relationship to the landscape in the process. Their experiences mediated by man-made constructions and planned perspectives, skiers saw the mountains as much as they felt them. The Rocky Mountain landscape thus acquired economic value as a visual resource for skier-tourists; the mountains became objects to view, distant evidence of western wilderness intact. Chair lifts encouraged the romantic sensibility of being enmeshed in wilderness, in contrast to the up close and personal relationship to the landscape experienced by skiers who climbed up the mountain.

The Forest Service even encouraged ski areas literally to cultivate the image of a romantic, wild, "natural" landscape for summer visitors. "When they ride chairlifts or gondolas," the agency advised, "vegetation on ski trails should not only look as if it is not eroding, but should look natural and perhaps even be covered with native wildflowers."<sup>43</sup> Ski areas convinced visitors--to at least some degree--that the landscape around them was indeed untainted by humans. To those unfamiliar with federal land use policy, the fact that most ski areas existed

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<sup>42</sup>Toll, 1996, 9.

<sup>43</sup>H. Peter Wingle, *Planning Considerations for Winter Sports Resort Development*, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Rocky Mountain Region (1994), 77.

on National Forest land may have been convincing enough. City dwellers especially confused the image of pristine "nature" with that of "scenic mountain landscapes," sometimes with the help of the ski industry. One marketing director wrote, "The more hectic cities become, the greater the drive toward Nature, a reward for skiers." He went on to equate Nature (with a capital "N") to "the vast sweep of snowbowl, the play of sun and shade, [and] the changing colors of the winter sky at dusk."<sup>44</sup> (This equation ignored the fact that National Forest land has been used and managed by westerners since it became National Forest land.) As the ski industry attracted middle-class Americans farther and farther away from the Rocky Mountain West to Colorado's mountains, it became easier to accept the marketing director's figuring. For suburban Chicagoans, Dallas businessmen, or New Jersey housewives, Colorado's national forests represented rugged wilderness beyond compare--a perfectly accurate perception, in light of where they were from.

Ski area developers crafted the visual impact of mountain scenery to help skiers feel connected to "nature." If they stood in a clearly developed ski area, at least they could see that a "wild," "pristine" landscape existed on the other side of the ski area boundary. As they experienced the mountain landscape as wilderness through their eyes, so too did skiers connect with the mountains through their feet. Views from lifts mesmerized passengers on their way up the mountain, overpowering the visual impact of lifts, lodges, and access roads around them. Only on their skis, however, flowing through the snow and trees and transfixed by that feeling, could skiers believe that they were "in synchrony with the mountains and the snow," embraced by a "natural" landscape that, if they were to stop and look around, flashed "man-made" like a neon sign. Dolores LaChapelle reveled in the sport and the mountains. "Skiing in the fall line," she wrote, "by the very nature

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<sup>44</sup>Tod Martin, forward to *Skiing Colorado*, by Curtis W. Casewit (Old Greenwich, CT: The Chatham Press, 1975).

of the terrain, allows the skiers to have much the same movement as a flight of birds--seemingly random but never colliding. Obeying the earth," she concluded, "results in perfect freedom."<sup>45</sup> The freedom, creativity, and exhilaration that skiers experienced through their sport created a dynamic and intense connection between skier and mountain. Ski area developers found themselves challenged to foster that connection--one of the most personal as well as appealing aspects of skiing--for large audiences.

In the years immediately after the war there were few experts at cutting trails. Tools and techniques for clearing ski trails had yet to be developed, and where to cut them seemed straightforward. Andre Roch had laid out Aspen's famous Roch Run in 1937. Tenth Mountain Division veterans helped Friedl Pfeifer and the local ski club clear two new short runs in honor of the grand opening. Two years later Aspen Ski Club members, who had cleared the run originally in 1937, continued to appeal to "members and friends of skiing" to help clear brush from the trails on Aspen Mountain.<sup>46</sup> These runs, according to ski instructor and 10th Mountain vet John Litchfield, were "just plain a labor of love by the people that lived there."<sup>47</sup> Locals continued to pitch in when area manager Dick Durrance decided to open up the terrain and cut Ruthie's Run in 1949. "All we did," he said, "was simply go up to the top of the mountain and mark a very wide stretch and chop trees down."<sup>48</sup>

Simply cutting trees down was enough to build more trails. Planning them out took more thought. While the Roch Run had earned a national reputation among downhill competitors even before the war--Roch had designed it as a racing trail-

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<sup>45</sup>LaChapelle, 5.

<sup>46</sup>*Aspen Times*, 14 October, 1948, 1.

<sup>47</sup>John Litchfield, interview by the author, 29 September, 1994, Denver, Colorado, tape recording and manuscript, 4, AHS.

<sup>48</sup>Dick and Miggs Durrance, interview by Jeanette Darnauer, 18 August, 1993, Aspen, Colorado, video tape, AHS.

-Pfeifer and Durrance knew they would have to cut some easier trails to sell more lift tickets. Pfeifer designed some by-pass runs so less experienced skiers could avoid the steepest sections of the Roch Run, but that wasn't always enough. Steve Knowlton recalled observing one woman descend the Roch Run that first year the chair lifts were open. "She was sliding down the corkscrew with her hands out in front of her," he remembered, "and she was yelling 'You son of a bitch, why did you bring me here!'"<sup>49</sup> This was not quite the experience that the Aspen Skiing Corporation was hoping to foster. A few years later Fred Iselin convinced the ASC to bulldoze Spar and Copper Gulches into bowls, smoothing the terrain and opening it up to less experienced skiers. "Having done that," one ASC director recalled, "you couldn't keep the skiers away--it was the best damned skiing in the world."<sup>50</sup> Area developers caught on fast. People want non-threatening terrain, one instructor and planner explained. Another instructor agreed: "Those intermediate slopes are really what pays the freight--those are the slopes that get people interested in the sport."<sup>51</sup> Building a ski industry, after all, required attracting new skiers to the sport and to Colorado; areas needed trails to accommodate their numbers and their skill-level.

Trail designers both altered the physical mountain landscape and shaped skiers' relationship to that landscape. Cutting trees, brush, and bulldozing new trails and access roads characterized most trail development until the 1970s. Few designers understood the degree to which they affected the mountain landscape or its significance to plant and animal populations.<sup>52</sup> Caught in the contradiction of

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<sup>49</sup>Steve Knowlton, interview by the author, 19 October, 1994, Denver, Colorado, tape recording and manuscript, 3, AHS.

<sup>50</sup>Paul Nitze, interview by the author, 20 July, 1994, Aspen, Colorado, tape recording and transcript, 4, AHS.

<sup>51</sup>Jim Snobble, interview by the author, 11 July, 1994, Aspen, Colorado, tape recording and transcript, 3, AHS; Litchfield, 1994, 5.

<sup>52</sup>Chet Anderson was the exception. With degrees in Wildlife Management and Forest Ecology, Anderson worked as a snow ranger for the U.S. Forest Service before developing Purgatory ski area outside of Durango. He tried to reduce

selling a personal, intimate experience to as many people as possible, ski area developers tried to create ski trails that would lessen the impact of crowds. When Friedl Pfeifer cut the first new trails on Aspen Mountain for its grand opening under the ASC, he said he "[removed] trees only when necessary [and] left much of the mountain untouched, so that skiing would feel like a backcountry tour."<sup>53</sup> Twenty-five years later the U.S. Forest Service recommended such planning for all ski areas. "If a mountain is designed permitting inter-connecting, but separate ski run systems," the Forest Service pointed out, "a skier can have the feeling of isolation and freedom of congestion."<sup>54</sup> Designers thus consciously shaped ski trails to help skiers feel alone, personally interacting with the mountain. They wanted to encourage the kind of experience that helped skiers forget they were in a designed, planned, man-made landscape--ironically constricting vision in order to heighten the sense of freedom and unrestricted movement.

Trail designers tried to emphasize skiers' feelings of freedom and exhilaration through the physical shape of their trails as well as through their visual impact. To accomplish that, they had to think in three dimensions. Along with framing views or hiding crowds, popular ski trails romanced skiers with their terrain. "Variety is key," Chet Anderson, designer of Purgatory, explained. Good trails need steep and shallow pitches, room for cruising, and transitions between types of terrain. "That," he said, "is what can make it sensual."<sup>55</sup> One famous instructor agreed, comparing such terrain to the human body and

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bulldozing and soil disturbance when building the area, and redesigned trails rather than cut them through wildlife habitat. Chet Anderson, interview with the author, 7 June, 1994, Durango, Colorado. After 1971 developers used helicopters, rather than building roads and using heavy equipment, to install lift towers in fragile mountain environments over 11,000 feet.

<sup>53</sup>Pfeifer and Lund, 140.

<sup>54</sup>U.S. Forest Service, "Planning Considerations," (1973), 19.

<sup>55</sup>Anderson, 1994.

encouraging students to "caress the mountain, as you would a lover."<sup>56</sup> With mountains as their medium, good trail designers thus shared with artists the goal of creating a work that would elicit a flash of emotions, a work that people could return to again and again, experiencing it differently each time. A few of them became acknowledged masters. Pfeifer's design of Aspen Mountain "had a rhythm you would feel," remembered Steve Knowlton. More interesting than Aspen Highlands, Snowmass, or Vail, according to one well-traveled ski instructor, Aspen Mountain "is really a very romantic mountain." "Friedl did a masterful job in making runs and outruns and dips and changes in the terrain--where it would turn a little bit and romance [sic] and turn a little bit and go down, and you could have a rest." Big resorts like Snowmass and Vail have more space, he continued, but also longer [flat] run-outs [between trails] and more cruising. "You don't feel like your blood is stirring up" there, he said.<sup>57</sup> Different ski areas thus developed their own characters, based in part on how their trails felt. As architects and ski area developers shaped skiers' visual perceptions of the Rocky Mountain landscape, trail designers manipulated skiers' kinetic experience on the slopes.

These men did so by reshaping a landscape they gendered "female." This fact highlighted the idea that for them, skiing was a male experience. As 10th Mountain Division veterans and European skiers, these men understood the skiers' relationship to the landscape as one which contributed to a masculine identity. Women skiing on these "female" landscapes--and experiencing freedom, thrills, and exhilaration on them, no less--could thus place their own femininity at risk by the act of skiing. One might wonder how the instructor who encouraged his students to "caress the mountain as a lover" handled his female students. It

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<sup>56</sup>Peter Miller, "Make Love to the Mountain," *Ski* (November 1979), 157. Jean Mayer, a former French Junior National Ski Champion, directed the Taos Ski Valley ski school.

<sup>57</sup>Steve Knowlton from Beth and George Gage, *Fire on the Mountain* (Telluride CO: Gage and Gage Productions, 1995); Paterson, 1994, 10.

remains unclear, however, to what degree women agreed with these men's understanding of skiing. Significantly, quite a number of women skiers articulated their skiing experiences as "freedom," a term that could refer at once to the physical sensation of skiing downhill and to behavior they appreciated as outside the dominant constructions of femininity. In their developing of ski area landscapes, then, trail designers did more than encourage particular physical sensations; they infused their trails with gendered meanings that further complicated skiers' relationship to the mountain landscape.

Even skiers' connection to the snow itself changed with the advent of the ski industry. Before lifts dotted the landscape and skiers peppered the slopes, every day was a powder day. No matter where one skied, there was usually room for more fresh tracks. On bad days, soft, heavy snow, perhaps rutted from earlier skiers, presented obstacles that skiers accepted as part of the sport. Racers who wanted a smooth course joined friends, colleagues, and volunteers arm in arm for a hike up the trail, "boot packing" the run. Once the general public began to frequent ski areas, the snow began to show some wear and tear. "Sitzmarks" became a common problem, caused by and most dangerous to beginning skiers. Roughly equivalent to divots on the golf course and formed by skiers' less fortunate full-body contact with the mountain, sitzmarks needed filling. Before the war skiers tended to accept their individual responsibility for this. Many new enthusiasts, however, embraced traditional skiing etiquette only reluctantly. In an effort to remedy the situation in 1948, one ski patrolman approached 32 different fallen skiers by asking "would you mind helping me fill up your sitzmarks?" "Of the 32," he reported, "eight helped willingly; four grudgingly; and 20 blew [me] various and sundry types of 'birds' and pushed off to their next fall." "Time and time again," he complained, "there were more skiers down in the snow than there were on their feet."<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>58</sup>C. Minot Dole, "Whither American Skiing?" *Ski*, 12 (January 1948), 15.

With the introduction of better equipment and shorter skis in the 1960s, and the continual increase in traffic on the slopes, moguls overtook siltmarks as the meanest snow hazard. These fields of snow mounds, created by skiers repeatedly turning in the same places, tripped up quite a few skiers who had less command of their turns (compounding the original siltmark problem), and annoyed even more. As early as 1948 it became apparent that masses of skiers could not be turned loose on the slopes without causing the snow conditions to deteriorate.

As with other problems caused by increased participation in the sport, ski area operators discovered a way to mitigate, mediate, and manage the problem away. When lifts and lodges took away the "natural" feel of the immediate landscape, developers pointed skiers towards breathtaking views of the neighboring mountains instead; when crowds of skiers left holes and moguls behind them, the ski industry took up "snow grooming." Steve Bradley, manager of Winter Park after the war, invented the country's first snow grooming tool and accordingly became known as the "Father of Slope Maintenance."<sup>59</sup> His "Bradley Packer," which he designed in 1951 and continued to modify, smoothed the snow as ski patrollers pulled the contraption behind them. About ten years later at Loveland Basin Gordy Wren developed another early grooming machine pulled by a snow-cat. It consisted of a culvert with big wheels on the ends of it, and Wren remembered trying to groom every slope with that one machine.<sup>60</sup> Area owners and managers thus found themselves in the business of smoothing trails as well as designing and cutting them.

Post-war ski areas continued to take on new responsibilities in the interest of attracting more customers, solving--or at least re-directing--the problems that accompanied skiers' increasing use of the mountain landscape. By the late

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<sup>59</sup>Fay, 43; *Winter Park: Colorado's Favorite*, 72.

<sup>60</sup>Wren, 1995, 5.

1950s ski areas had so much invested in providing a good experience for their customers that they could not afford to depend on the weather for their most valuable resource--snow. One or two lean seasons could hurt even the most successful areas beyond hope of recovery. Ski area owners and managers knew this all too well. Consequently, when the Rocky Mountain Ski Area Operators' Association met in 1963, one member brought up "the question of starting our own weather modification program." He "suggested that some money be spent in investigating the effect of [weather modification] and the means to accomplish localized storms when conditions are right." The group agreed, budgeting \$500 for cloud seeding and making plans to look into long-range forecasting as well.<sup>61</sup> Experts in the field, however, soon crushed their hopes. "No one can today speak with authority regarding the feasibility of cloud seeding to increase snow cover," a scientist from the National Center for Atmospheric Research wrote to the association. "The circumstances in respect to long range forecasts are not very much more helpful." "If I were in your shoes," he said, "I would regard the forecast as pretty much a random guess."<sup>62</sup>

Faced with huge financial losses should the snow refuse to fall, ski area operators turned to making snow themselves. "Guaranteed snow! Think of it!" *Ski* magazine declared in 1957. An engineering firm in Massachusetts, originally involved in irrigation equipment, had developed a snow-making system that one eastern ski area used profitably that year. "Snow-making promises to take the weather risk out of skiing," the article claimed. It would remove (or at least reduce) "your risk, when you plan your ski vacation or weekend, the operator's risk, and consequently the risk that everyone with a recreational or commercial

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<sup>61</sup>Minutes, Rocky Mountain Ski Area Operators' Association meeting, 13 February, 1963, Aspen, Colorado, Aspen Skiing Collection, AHS.

<sup>62</sup>Walter Orr Roberts, letter to Steve Knowlton, 11 March, 1963, Aspen Skiing Collection, AHS.

interest in the sport must take."<sup>63</sup> While this technology primarily helped ski areas in the East and Midwest (that were at a relatively low elevation), Colorado resorts occasionally needed a few more inches than the weather provided. Magic Mountain outside Denver led the way in the late 1950s when Earl Eaton installed a snow-making system there, followed by Ski Broadmoor, a small area that catered to skiers in Colorado Springs. In addition to boosting lower Front Range ski areas' snow cover, snow-making could lengthen the season. By 1968 Loveland Basin was using man-made snow to open in mid-October, a month before other areas.<sup>64</sup> Corporate competition and increasingly available technology eventually kicked off a race among ski areas to open first.

Bad snow years still caught most Colorado resorts up the proverbial creek, however. Vail and Purgatory each hired Eddie Box and his Southern Ute Ceremonial Dancers to relieve dangerous droughts by performing a "snow dance" for them. He and his group solved the areas' worries when their dances brought results--delaying, perhaps, their decision to purchase snow-making equipment.<sup>65</sup> After the devastatingly lean 1976-77 snow season, however, most big Colorado areas invested in the technology. They had too much at stake, by that point, to do otherwise. The growth of snow-making in Colorado represented yet another ski industry investment designed to insure its continued popularity and growth. It also added another layer to the built environment of ski areas, now visible in snow guns, hoses, and the weird hills of snow they spewed (which people then had to

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<sup>63</sup>"New Future," *Ski*, 22, 3 (December 1957), 68-72.

<sup>64</sup>"Ski Areas," *Historic Georgetown Centennial Gazette 1868/1968*, 23, Colorado Tourism file, Routt County Collection, BWML.

<sup>65</sup>Eddie Box and his group performed a rain dance and agreed to let it be called a snow dance in Vail on December 9, 1963. A blizzard hit a week later. Three years later on December 4 Box and his dancers traveled to Purgatory. Before they finished dancing, snowflakes the size of quarters were coming down. It snowed for three days. June Simonton, *Vail: Story of a Colorado Mountain Valley* (Vail CO: Vail Chronicles, Inc., 1987), 84; Charlie Langdon, *Durango Ski: People and Seasons at Purgatory* (Durango CO: Purgatory Press, 1989), 43.

groom). Finally, man-made snow altered human relationships to nature's weather. Ski area operators could manufacture a "natural" resource upon which they depended; and skiers could scratch one more worry off their list, increasingly assured that the ski area would arrange everything for them.

#### Dangerous Landscapes and the National Ski Patrol

Skiers wanted and needed snow under their feet. Great views and "romantic" trails were an added plus. Post-war ski areas provided these things in the interest of improving business. How skiers behaved at ski areas, however, remained up to them. Contemplative skiers cruised, glided, and stopped to admire the scenery. More adventuresome types schussed, reaching for that exhilarating high only available through speed. Quite a number did both, according to their mood. This caused yet another dilemma for the ski industry: crowds of creative and willfull individuals on one mountain spelled danger. Complicating the problem was that, for many, the appeal of the sport hinged upon an element of risk. Mountain landscapes and speed, however, posed a more appealing threat than crowds of bumblers on skis, bouncing off whatever--or whoever--happened to be in their path. With the growth of the ski industry the danger of crowds threatened to overtake that presented by the natural landscape, transforming skiing from a personal, adventurous relationship to the mountains into a slam dance.

Early skiers recognized the risks they took. "Death," outdoorswoman Dolores LaChapelle wrote, "is an ever present possibility in the powder snow world as the snow, gift of the sky, when too deep or unstable, is drawn down by the gravity of the earth, and this mutual appropriation of the one to the other is called *avalanche*."<sup>66</sup> Mail carriers and nineteenth-century travelers accepted avalanches and extreme weather as dangers they would face in their journeys, and occasional

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<sup>66</sup>LaChapelle, 46.

obituaries testified to the reality of those risks. Recreational skiers in the 1920s and 1930s, skiing on scenic mountain passes in small groups, similarly recognized the hazards of their sport. They willingly accepted those risks in exchange for the chance to be outdoors and ski in a rugged, wild, mountain landscape. They had to accept those risks; there was usually no one else to do it for them. Elizabeth Paepcke had a guide to help her in this regard, yet the very act of hiring a guide showed she acknowledged the dangers of skiing. She recalled that "it snowed silently as we followed the faint outlines of a logging road through forests broken by outcroppings of rock and an occasional meadow," on her first trip down Aspen Mountain in 1938. "When we came to a steep bank of snow," she continued, "our guide proceeded alone, testing every step with his ski pole. Only after crossing safely himself were we allowed to make the traverse, one by one. No one spoke or made the slightest noise in fear that the vibration of a voice should send us and the entire mass avalanching down the mountainside."<sup>67</sup> This real danger heightened the wilderness experience that skiing represented for city-bred Paepcke, adding a level of excitement and exhilaration to the sport that set skiing apart from other kinds of recreation.

For urban and suburban businessmen, skiing and its dangers offered an opportunity to get outdoors that contrasted favorably with their day jobs. When invited on a ski trip in 1933, for instance, Minot Dole wrote, "I was a family man, settled, a commuter, and so on. There was no reason at all why an expedition to the colds of Lake Placid should stir my blood a bit. But there it was," he remembered, "I could hardly wait." Trying to explain his feelings, Dole argued "That is modern man's dilemma: the occasion of security gives rise to the desire for adventure. That is something that the civilized American is not likely to have much of." He concluded: "The mushrooming of the sport of skiing owes a lot to the lack of

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<sup>67</sup>Paepcke, "Memories of Aspen," AHS.

adventure in the life of today's Everyman."<sup>68</sup> "Modern men" thus embraced the potential dangers of skiing, according to Dole, and welcomed the opportunity to be outdoors and take the physical chances that the landscape offered. In this instance, then, skiing's exhilaration took on meanings associated directly with class. Men working outdoors, in "uncivilized" conditions or places, Dole implied, would not need to ski to take risks or prove their manliness.

Aside from avalanches, skiers had to worry most about injury from falls or collisions. Before World War Two, one Denver skier remembered, "most skiers were conservative, experienced mountaineers." Accustomed to the local landscape and its dangers, these men (and some women) "were a very self-sufficient group." "As there were no *safety* bindings," he noted, "there was no false sense of safety."<sup>69</sup> These Denver club skiers (probably members of the CMC or Zipfelbergers) performed necessary rescue work themselves and all helped bring down accident cases, including one friend with a broken femur. Skiers faced long, painful journeys before they could see a doctor. It was possible, at popular places like Berthoud Pass, to find an M.D. on the slopes to help out. Others were not so lucky. Minot Dole discovered this first hand while skiing at Stowe, VT on the eve of 1936 with his wife and another couple. After having twisted his ankle the day before, a tough fall in his beartrap bindings left him lying in the snow under the morning rain with his ankle "not at the right angle for an ankle." It took until 3:00 for his friends to find help, drag him to the road, and drive him to a doctor, who then told

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<sup>68</sup>As much an argument for skiing's widespread appeal to post-war Americans as it was to those in the 1930s, Dole's theory also explained--in part--why is appeal also depended on class. C. Minot Dole, *Adventures in Skiing* (New York: Franklin Watts, Inc., 1965), 36.

<sup>69</sup>J.C. Blickensderfer, "Reminiscences of Skiing in Colorado, 1922-1968," manuscript, n.d., 11-12, CHS. "Beartrap" bindings were about the only kind available in the 1930s and 1940s; they tied the skier's foot securely to the ski and did not release.

him his ankle was so badly broken he should have it set in New York City rather than in the small Vermont hospital.

Even after this harrowing experience, Dole recounted, he did not waver from "the standard fatalism that skiers had, at that time, about ski accidents."<sup>70</sup> He took a more proactive perspective two months later, after the friend who was with him at Stowe was asked to enter a club race for which he was too inexperienced. Dole advised him against it, "but Frank the explorer was too excited about this new possibility to think cogently." Frank died, after running into a tree on the edge of the race course. His death forced a change in Dole's perspective that would ultimately result in Dole's formation of the National Ski Patrol.<sup>71</sup> Initially, however, skiers argued that each must accept the dangers inherent in the sport. Perhaps romanced by the masculine power of facing skiing's danger, or overcome by the excitement of the sport's risks, a number of skiers responded to Dole's subsequent investigation into ski accidents by calling him and his committee "sissies, spoilsports, and frighteners of mothers."<sup>72</sup> These skiers consciously--and vigorously--defended skiing and its dangers as a masculine realm.

With increased use of ski areas in the late 1930s, accidents and injuries became more visible. Some skiers behaved as if they would not get hurt no matter what they did. Although Colorado did not suffer its first recreational skiing fatality (other than by avalanche) until two years later, Denver skier Graeme McGowan observed in 1937 that if skiers had "a moderate amount of assured snow, mountains, easy access, and uphill transportation," they "will happily hurl themselves over cliffs or rip trails through jungles."<sup>73</sup> Ski area landscaping and

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<sup>70</sup>Dole, *Adventures*, 50-52.

<sup>71</sup>Dole, *Adventures*, 53.

<sup>72</sup>Dole, *Adventures*, 54.

<sup>73</sup>Colorado's first fatality occurred when Berrien Hughes ran into a rock on Loveland Pass on May 21, 1939. Fay, 21. McGowan had extensive experience with downhill skiers; he helped found the Arlberg Club and scouted out skiing terrain in

trail design reduced the danger from avalanches and traffic congestion, but skiers' uncontrolled "schussing" caused most falls and collisions resulting in injury.<sup>74</sup> As skiing grew more popular and more people "hit" slopes made accessible by ski tows, a greater variety of skiers mingled there. Each savored the freedom to turn, stop, and schuss where they liked. Wide ski lanes cleared of all trees (common in the 1930s), McGowan argued, "are dangerous not only to the mentally deficient who careen wildly down them at speeds far in excess of their ability to control but also to the timid soul who, with panic gripping his heart, 'stems like hell.' How often," he asked rhetorically, "have we seen collisions between these two opposites?"<sup>75</sup> Skiers sitting in the middle of the trail, rearranging their ensemble after a fall, unknowingly offered themselves as further targets. Deep foot holes left by hiking skiers and larger ones from the much maligned sit-and-run culprits compounded the problem.<sup>76</sup>

Because ski areas before World War Two operated only short rope tows for a local clientele, this circus of skiers was confined to one or two slopes accessible by tows. Those willing to hike to longer and more challenging slopes generally fell into the category of experienced skiers and outdoorspeople. The growth of the ski industry after the war, however, turned everybody loose. With the advances in ski lift technology and growing appeal of the sport, Minot Dole noticed by 1948, "a great number of mountains were suddenly opened up." "Where previously only hardy and capable skiers had ventured," he continued, "now, every bunny or basher who had the price of a ticket found him or herself at the top of the mountain with no

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the Southern Rocky Mountains for the Forest Service. Graeme McGowan, "Ski Landscaping and Improvements," *Ski Bulletin*, 29 January, 1937, 7.

<sup>74</sup>Graeme McGowan, "Future Skiing in the National Forests In the Rocky Mountains," *Ski Bulletin*, 1 January, 1937, 5.

<sup>75</sup>McGowan, "Ski Landscaping," 7.

<sup>76</sup>Roland Palmedo, "Ski Patrols," *Ski Bulletin*, 8 January, 1937, 5.

one to tell him where he could or could not go."<sup>77</sup> Not only did this new population of skiers represent physical danger, Dole's language implied, but they infringed upon skiing's heretofore upper-class Eastern landscape. Beyond skiing where they should not, most bunnies and bashers wanted to ski faster than they knew how. "The average American," wrote one observer, "has a desire to enjoy the thrill, dash, and zip experienced in traveling at high speeds. This trait," he continued, "comes out strongly in the novice stage of skiing."<sup>78</sup> Such circumstances pitted the dangers of crowded ski areas against the individual skier's right to ski when, where, and how s/he wanted. Less explicitly, these circumstances placed upper-class skiers who "belonged" on the slopes, against middle- and lower-class "bunnies" and "bashers," who did not. These Eastern class dynamics took a slightly different form in Colorado, however, where local club skiers were the ones who had established the tradition of skiing.

Faced with the reality of increasingly crowded slopes and reluctant to curtail skiers' freedom to choose where and how fast they skied, ski areas relied instead upon Minot Dole's National Ski Patrol. Established in 1938 by Dole and his colleagues in the Amateur Ski Club of New York, the National Ski Patrol System (NSPS) trained volunteers at ski areas across the country who were willing to assist accident victims and transport them off the mountain. Local patrolmen who demonstrated "leadership, devotion to patrol work, tact in handling problems of skiers, and practical proficiency in first aid" were eligible for promotion to national status. A national structure and leadership hierarchy unified this national volunteer organization: Divisional (regional) Chairmen oversaw Section Chiefs, who in turn took responsibility for local ski club patrols. Recreational skiers

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<sup>77</sup>Dole, "Wither American Skiing?" 15. Dole's implication was that novices skied down trails that were too advanced for them, not that they skied outside the ski area's boundaries.

<sup>78</sup>Robert S. Monahan, "Skiing in the National Forests," *American Ski Annual* (1938), 129, CHS.

quickly learned to look for the distinctive rust colored jackets of NSPS patrollers when they ran into trouble. Ski area managers, too, appreciated the organization's work and handed out free lift tickets to any member willing to work for the day.<sup>79</sup> After the war these patrollers kept busy. The ski industry--in Colorado and elsewhere--embraced the NSPS as the solution to their safety problems. Resorts such as Aspen, too far from a city to depend on volunteers as New England ski areas did, hired their own professional ski patrollers who were certified and registered with the NSPS. Aspen's 1947-48 ski patrol, for instance, consisted of 13 men who packed, shoveled, and maintained skiing areas, flagged, roped off, or otherwise marked danger areas, patrolled all areas in use, checked all trails at the end of each day for stray skiers, gave "any and all assistance possible to all skiers," organized and ran recreational races, and gave first aid and evacuated all who suffered injuries.<sup>80</sup>

If that sounds like a lot of work, it was. Aspen's patrol that year sidestepped up and down each trail on their skis to pack firm base of snow at least once; they spent ten days cutting brush, filling holes, and building ramps for the Little Nell lift; they put up over 50 signs and three bulletin boards on the mountain; strung five emergency telephones; gave 121 injured skiers toboggan rides down the mountain; and they treated 34 fractures, two dislocated shoulders, five lacerations, two knee injuries, and seven people who managed to get punctured by ski poles.<sup>81</sup> As Dole would have predicted, 75% of those who suffered fractures were novice skiers. Still, the accident rate was low--especially compared to the sense of mounting danger that new post-war skiing crowds fostered. Fifty injuries out of an

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<sup>79</sup>See Dole, *Adventures*, for the founder's account of how the NSPS developed.

<sup>80</sup>Leonard Woods, "Annual Report of the Aspen Ski Patrol, 1947-48 Season," manuscript, 2, Skiing-Ski Patrol file, AHS. The Aspen Skiing Corporation soon divided up these duties between the ski patrol and a trail packing crew.

<sup>81</sup>Woods, "Annual Report," 2, 5. Seventy-one skiers who got rides down the mountain had only minor injuries, mainly sprained ankles.

estimated 21,000 skier-days during the 1947-48 season gave Aspen a .2% accident rate. Even twenty years later, with about 2 million American skiers, a report published in *Medical World News* estimated that only 12,000 would injure themselves (a .6% rate). More injuries occurred in water skiing or hunting, one reporter noted.<sup>82</sup> This level of safety was quite acceptable to ski area managers, who wanted to provide an enjoyable skiing experience to as many people as possible. To that end, area managers crafted increasingly constructed landscapes for their clientele. They groomed snow to reduce risks from poor snow conditions; they paid attention to traffic patterns and safety concerns in their trail layout; and they worked to control avalanche danger on their slopes. The National Ski Patrol System grew along with the ski industry and worked hard to prevent and treat injuries, protecting skiers from their own love of exhilaration and lack of judgment. Ski areas embraced this organization and its bureaucracy, preferring to introduce yet another mediating force between skiers and the mountain landscape rather than to limit skiers' freedom to ski how and where they wanted. Ski patrollers shaped the mountain landscape in their efforts to make it safer and adopted roles as on-slope managers.

#### The U.S. Forest Service and Regulated Skiing Landscapes

Post-war skiers thus enjoyed their sport in a "patrolled" landscape largely crafted by the ski industry and its supporting organization, the NSPS. Ski areas kept the mountains' wild landscape at a distance--outside ski area boundaries but visually accessible from the lifts and lodges--so people could imagine themselves within the "wild," "pristine," and "rugged" mountains and still feel safe. Still another layer of policy, bureaucracy, and control of the landscape affected skiers'

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<sup>82</sup>"12,000 Skiing Injuries Predicted in U.S. This Year," *Denver Post*, 22 January, 1967, 24, clipping, Skiing file, AHS.

experience because they often skied on public land. Ski patrollers, mountain managers, and ski area owners all interacted with the U.S. Forest Service and its land. Colorado skiers did at least 90% of their skiing on public land in 1946, with every one of the state's developed winter sports sites either on or adjoining national forest or park land.<sup>83</sup> That meant that along with the NSPS, trail designers, ski area developers, and lift engineers, the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) had a say in how skiers experienced the Rocky Mountain landscape.

The relationship between the Forest Service and the ski industry took shape slowly and changed from one of support to one of control and regulation from the 1930s through the 1960s. During the 1930s "the personnel of the U.S. Forest Service, long accustomed to skis, snowshoes, and toboggans for timber cruising, wildlife estimates, snow surveys, and other administrative duties," one USFS representative wrote, "observed this growing interest in winter recreation with a sympathetic personal understanding of the fundamental appeal of adventure in a winter wonderland."<sup>84</sup> Rangers appreciated skiers' love for the outdoors and the sport, and the USFS appreciated skiers' recreational use of the national forests. Upon the organization of the Forest Service in 1905, the federal government established that it would let people use national forest resources rather than preserve the land as wilderness. Since then Americans have logged and grazed on forest land with the government's permission, and often with the benefit of government-built improvements. Americans have recreated there, too--in summer and winter. During the 1936-37 season, for instance, winter sports participants made almost one million visits to America's national forests.<sup>85</sup> Since

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<sup>83</sup>Fred H. McNeil, "The Skier and Uncle Sam," *American Ski Annual* (1946-47), 114, CHS.

<sup>84</sup>Monahan, 125.

<sup>85</sup>Monahan, 125.

skiers used the national forests in winters, tensions between them and different forest users--ranchers, for instance--were slow to arise.

This volume of skiers on national forest land introduced a problem to the U.S. Forest Service with which ski area managers were also struggling: how to provide skiers with a recreational resource and keep their use from damaging that resource? Or, in the language of the Forest Service, "the planning, construction, and maintenance of sufficient facilities to meet the demand for the various forms of winter sports present to the Forest Service an administrative problem of considerable magnitude." Even before the war, in 1938, one ranger noticed that "the lone winter adventurer has for years made the most of existing conditions and has gloried in his self-reliance. But the increasing army of novices," he warned, "congregating in favored areas, necessitates the introduction of artificial improvements of a wide diversity."<sup>86</sup> So the USFS got into the business of parking-lot widening, ski trail cutting, and shelter building. "Fortunately," the author noted in 1938, "most winter sports that are enjoyed by the great mass of winter visitors require only simple facilities, which, if wisely planned, do not measurably mar the intrinsic winter beauty of the National Forests."<sup>87</sup> Within the context of Colorado's local club skiing, this argument rang true. After the war, however, and the subsequent increase in skiing's popularity and ski area development, skiers would place greater demands upon the national forests.

After the war the USFS continued to maintain a supportive relationship to the ski industry despite skiers' increased demands. No one was quite sure how the Forest Service would figure into the post-war ski industry. "The few skiers in the Forest Service were also feeling their way in a little-understood use of National Forest land," one ranger explained. "In fact," he wrote, "those of us in the agency

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<sup>86</sup>Monahan, 126.

<sup>87</sup>Monahan, 126. See also Henry I. Baldwin, "Forestry and Ski Trails," *Ski Bulletin*, 29 January, 1937, 5.

who skied were considered slightly crazy by the dominant timber and grazing resource-oriented personnel at the time."<sup>88</sup> Some skiers argued that the USFS, rather than private ski clubs or commercial organizations, ought to administer ski areas on public land.<sup>89</sup> Others argued that since the national forests were for all to use, and since skiers represented such a growing percentage of that use, the USFS should increase appropriations "to make possible more installations for the winter sports public," which would include clearing trails and slopes, building shelters, warming huts, and comfort stations, and hiring more trained personnel "to care for the throng."<sup>90</sup> One Rocky Mountain forest ranger pointed out in 1948, however, that "today skiing has definitely become [sic] of age; it can stand on its feet, and the need for being subsidized has passed."<sup>91</sup> While the Forest Service continued to plan ski area expansion and development, post-war ski companies such as the Aspen Skiing Corporation and Arapahoe Basin Inc. took over responsibility for making improvements and placed the ski industry squarely within the private sector. "The change," the ranger noted, "has resulted in fine ski lifts, better tows, and vastly improved slopes and trails," not to mention "good resort facilities . . . in the offing."<sup>92</sup> The USFS thus relinquished the responsibility to provide facilities for skiers' on national forest land and turned it over to corporations, which were only too happy to take over.

Even though it stopped building ski lodges, trails, and parking lots, the Forest Service continued to promote skiers' recreational use of the national forests through the 1960s. Policy required ski areas to apply for commercial special use permits before they cut trails or built on public land. In the years immediately

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<sup>88</sup>Hauk, "A-Basin Chronology," 3.

<sup>89</sup>William C. Kamp, "Administration of Skiing Areas--By Whom? How Much?" *American Skiing Annual* (1944-45), 93-96, CHS.

<sup>90</sup>McNeil, 111.

<sup>91</sup>Slim Davis, "U.S. Forest Service Develops Skiing," *Rocky Mountain Skiing*, 10 November, 1948, 5, general ski collection, GCHA.

<sup>92</sup>Davis, 6.

after World War Two, the Forest Service made it simple for ski area developers to get the necessary permits and approved of subsequent area expansion. Friedl Pfeifer negotiated the rights to build a chair lift on Aspen Mountain in 1946 with the local ranger. His initial permit was only three pages long and set the annual use fee at \$10.<sup>93</sup> As only 18% of the ski area lay on USFS land, subsequent development proceeded with little further discussion. Further relationships between Aspen managers and the USFS describe a permit system that was completely taken for granted, only inconsistently enforced, or both. As area manager in the late 1940s, Dick Durrance recalled "no Forest Service regulations." When cutting a new trail "we didn't ask permission, we simply got rid of the trees." As far as lift construction went, Darcy Brown, director and later president of the ASC, said "we just went out and built one--never thought about asking anyone."<sup>94</sup> (Aspen Mountain's permit was amended, however, to cover the No. 3 lift in 1954, and again in 1957 to increase the annual use fee.) Even at ski areas wholly on forest land the USFS seemed rarely to interfere with development. Gordy Wren managed Loveland Basin and Steamboat Springs ski areas and said "I never thought about [the area] being on Forest Service land. If we wanted to cut a trail, we'd cut a trail . . . put a lift in . . . that was all there was to it."<sup>95</sup> The USFS was supposed to approve every ski area development on forest land. It approved Berthoud's double chair lift and Arapahoe Basin's new area, as well as Aspen's lifts and others. Significantly, area managers hardly remember getting such permission. During the 1940s and 1950s the permit process moved along so quickly and seemed so inconsequential to some area managers that they may have overlooked it altogether. Even in the early 1960s, when Forest Service concerns

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<sup>93</sup>Pfeifer and Lund, 136; Hauk, "Aspen Ski Area Chronology," 2.

<sup>94</sup>Durrance, 1993; Brown, 1979.

<sup>95</sup>Wren, 1995, 7.

rose along with skier populations, Chet Anderson got a permit to develop Purgatory soon after he wrote a slim three-page letter to the Forest Service.<sup>96</sup>

The USFS did more to promote skiing on public land than simply grant permits quickly and allow development. As they had since the 1920s and 1930s, Forest Service rangers continued to scout out the best places to develop ski areas.<sup>97</sup> The USFS planned where ski areas ought to be for the same reason they planned where roads, logging activity, and grazing ought to be: to coordinate the forests' public use and the wisest use of its natural resources. Locating the best ski resort sites was equivalent, for the USFS, to choosing the most appropriate grazing ranges or timber lots. It was within this context that the USFS promoted skiing on Colorado's national forests. Forest Service rangers had first discovered the skiing potential at Arapahoe Basin in 1941. It was about to call for bids on the site in 1946 when the members of Arapahoe Basin, Inc. submitted their proposal to develop the area. The company got its initial permit eleven days later.<sup>98</sup> Given the popularity of Aspen Mountain and the growth of its lift lines in the 1950s, the USFS sought to open another ski resort in the area. Local rangers approached Whip Jones, who had purchased a ranch at Aspen Highlands and was "just going to have some horses on it," and suggested he develop a ski resort there. After Jones got some feasibility reports done and the Forest Service approved them, he found himself in the ski business.<sup>99</sup> Aspen Highlands opened for the 1957-58 season. In

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<sup>96</sup> It didn't hurt that Anderson himself had worked for the USFS as a wildlife biologist and snow ranger, or that he applied his graduate degree in forest ecology to his ski area planning. Mike Elliott, interview by the author, 7 June, 1994, Purgatory, Colorado.

<sup>97</sup> Paul Hauk scouted the White River National Forest for potential ski area sites and accompanied developers interested in a particular area. Chet Anderson and his colleagues did so for the San Juan National Forest after having worked as snow rangers at areas including Loveland Valley, Winter Park, and Arapahoe Basin. See Paul Hauk, "Ski Area Chronologies;" Charlie Langdon, *Durango Ski: People and Seasons at Purgatory* (Durango CO: Purgatory Press, 1989), 11; and Anderson, 1994.

<sup>98</sup> Hauk, "A-Basin Chronology," 2.

<sup>99</sup> Whip Jones, interview by the author, 12 July, 1994, Aspen, Colorado.

the fall of 1959 the Forest Service presented a comprehensive master plan for Colorado "to keep order in the state's booming ski business." According to USFS calculations, Colorado would need at least two new chairlifts each year to keep up with the current growth in pleasure skiing. After surveying potential sites, the Forest Service presented a list of 21 that could be developed.<sup>100</sup> More than simply doling out permits, then, the USFS helped plan and promote ski area development.

As the ski industry boomed, however, USFS planning and promoting began to seem more like regulation than full-fledged support. The Forest Service set "a target date year by which skiing demand at the current rate will support construction of a new ski area," for each of the 21 sites proposed for development.<sup>101</sup> Ski corporations, therefore, would not be allowed to build as fast as they might like. In the fall of 1957, snow ranger Paul Hauk field-checked six different sites and proposals on the White River National Forest alone.<sup>102</sup> Friedl Pfeifer had trouble getting a permit for Buttermilk to open the same season as neighboring Aspen Highlands, since the USFS had already committed to Jones' area and there was "no definite public need for another area" yet.<sup>103</sup>

Forest Service permit fees also became more complicated during these years, changing from a flat fee to one based on a percentage of a percentage of the net lift ticket sales, plus an annual fee. Aspen Mountain's permit fee, for instance, jumped up from its original \$10 in 1946 to \$300 plus "one and a half percent of 12% of the net sales for the 76 acres of National Forest land" in 1957. By 1976 the Aspen Skiing Corporation (which by then owned and operated three areas in addition to Aspen Mountain), paid \$278,277 to the Forest Service for its use of

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<sup>100</sup>"Forests Draw Ski Boom Plan," *Denver Post*, 4 October, 1959, 7E, clipping, Skiing 1956-60 file, AHS.

<sup>101</sup>"Forests Draw Ski Boom Plan."

<sup>102</sup>Hauk, "Buttermilk Chronology," 1.

<sup>103</sup>Hauk, "Buttermilk Chronology," 2.

public land.<sup>104</sup> Having initially welcomed the cheap use of national forest lands, ski area owners, managers, and developers now faced a growing federal bureaucracy and complex fee system. Nor did the problem of overcrowding disappear with federal planning and control over special use permits. In its effort to address these issues, federal legislation further complicated USFS policy.<sup>105</sup> The Wilderness Act of 1964 established the means to set up "wilderness areas" within the National Forests to "secure for the American people of present and future generations the benefits of an enduring resource of wilderness."<sup>106</sup> This act prohibited any kind of construction or machinery in these wilderness areas, thereby removing that land from any possible ski area development. Skier-tourists appreciated the view and the added sense of wilderness, nature, and adventure they lent neighboring resorts. More important for the ski industry, however, was the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, or NEPA. After this act took effect, every proposal for ski area development or expansion had to include an interdisciplinary examination of the environmental impact of that development, a consideration of alternative courses of action, and the opportunity for public

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<sup>104</sup>Hauk, "Aspen Mountain Chronology," 3-4; "Interview: DRC Brown," *Aspen* (February-March 1976), 20, DRC Brown biography file, AHS. It is not clear how much of the \$278,277 went towards Aspen Mountain's permit fees. Organizations like the National Forest Recreation Association sprouted up in the early 1960s and spent hours of their annual meetings discussing and negotiating permit fees. "Summary of National Forest Recreation Association Winter Sports Section Meeting," 10 May, 1963, Reno, Nevada, Aspen Skiing Collection, AHS. This document refers to discussions of the fee system held in 1961, 1962, and 1963 meetings.

<sup>105</sup>The Multiple-Use Sustained-Yield Act of 1960 redefined the policy of highest use by declaring "the National Forests are established and shall be administered for outdoor recreation, range, timber, watershed, and wildlife and fish purposes." Forest Service policy, therefore, had to let everyone of these interest groups share forest resources and manage the forests "so they are utilized in the combination that will best meet the needs of the American people." Multiple-Use Sustained-Yield Act of 1960, Act of June 12, 1960 (P.L. 86-517, 74 Stat. 215; 16 U.S.C. 528(note), 528-531, Section 1, Section 4(a).

<sup>106</sup>Wilderness Act, Act of September 3, 1964 (P.L. 88-577, 78 Stat. 890 as amended; 16 U.S.C. 1131 (note), 1131-1136), Section 2.

involvement in the decision.<sup>107</sup> NEPA forced the ski industry to examine the effects its lifts, lodges, trails, and snowmaking had upon the physical mountain landscape and to document them for public appraisal. Visual impact, effect on vegetation and fish and wildlife populations, and community concerns all became issues ski area developers had to address self-consciously. NEPA complicated the ski industry's relationship to the landscape--and to the federal government--to such an extent that it made permits extremely difficult to win and so slowed ski area expansion in the 1970s.

#### Managing Colorado's Ski Areas

By the late 1960s and early 1970s the ski industry had changed character. Providing newer, longer, faster lifts, comfortable mountain restaurants and lodges, complex trail systems, snow making and grooming equipment, safety precautions, and complying with Forest Service regulations created complex, multi-layered mountain landscapes. Running a ski area, moreover, required more employees, technology, money, and financial savvy than in 1946. As a result, ski area management grew increasingly complex as well. Ever larger corporations controlled ski areas, combining development of the mountains with that of the base area and the surrounding real estate. Winter Park historians, for example, characterized the 1970s as a "new era of management refinement, sophistication, and expansion." The area changed its organization in 1975 when it placed Gerry Grosword in the new role of President and CEO of the Winter Park Recreation Association.<sup>108</sup> In the next two years the area installed snowmaking systems worth \$1.2 and \$1.4 million, celebrated the opening of its adjoining Mary Jane area,

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<sup>107</sup>National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, Act of January 1, 1970 (P.L. 91-190, 83 Stat. 852; 42 U.S.C. 4321 (note), 4321, 4331-4335, 4346a-b, 4347), Section 101; "Planning Considerations for Winter Sports Resort Development," 1973, 1.

<sup>108</sup>*Winter Park: Colorado's Favorite*, 125.

which included four new double chair lifts, and then built a new restaurant and bar, cafeteria, and nursery in 1978.<sup>109</sup>

During this transition men with business degrees often replaced outdoorsmen and 10th Mountain Division veterans as ski area owners and managers. Though representative of an elite class of skiers, 10th Mountain veterans looked positively working-class compared to the businessmen who replaced them. This new class of business ski elites constructed ski landscapes correspondingly different from those built by their predecessors. At Steamboat Springs, 10th Mountain Division and Olympic team veteran Gordy Wren managed the Mt. Werner ski area from 1967 to 1970. Already condominiums, lifts, and a new airport studded the landscape. Development really boomed, however, when the Texas firm LTV Aerospace Corp. bought the area in 1970. Wren lost his job. "I think they were glad to get rid of me, and I was glad to leave," he recalled.<sup>110</sup> Able to invest larger sums than the earlier local corporation, LTV installed a gondola, five double chairs, and three triple chairs within ten years. "From bottom to top it's a 15 minute ride" on the gondola, the *LA Times* travel editor wrote, "which looks off toward Rocky Mountain peaks all the way to the horizon." Real estate and base area development accompanied new corporate ownership and investment. "Besides the ski rigs," the writer continued, "the Texans built a couple of shopping plazas, a rash of condominiums and a seven-story hotel which the locals call the 'Dallas Palace'."<sup>111</sup>

Transformations such as this occurred at other Colorado resorts in the 1970s as well. Texas oil man Harry Bass bought control of Vail Associates in 1976, a move that led to the ouster of the original developer, Pete Seibert. The

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<sup>109</sup> *Winter Park: Colorado's Favorite*, 134-138.

<sup>110</sup> Wren, 1995.

<sup>111</sup> Jerry Hulse, "The Idea Is to Keep Them Captive After the Snow Melts . . .," *Los Angeles Times*, 26 October, 1975, clipping, Routt County Collection, Ski Town file, BWML.

Aspen Skiing Corporation continued to grow in size. In addition to owning Aspen Mountain, Buttermilk, and Snowmass ski areas, it bought Breckenridge ski area in 1970. That transaction spurred plans to develop a \$52 million "New Town" at the base of Peak 9 in Breckenridge.<sup>112</sup> Even the ASC changed hands, narrowly escaping being bought out by a bowling alley corporation before it finally merged with 20th Century Fox Films in 1978.<sup>113</sup> This kind of conglomerate ownership became a pattern in the 1970s. The giant Ralston Purina Company took over ownership of the Keystone ski area in 1973 and bought Arapahoe Basin five years later. As one area manager put it, "Thirty years ago area managers and presidents were hard core mountain men--they knew the mountains and they knew how to construct things on the mountain." Now CEOs and ski area presidents lead the ski industry, men who "are good businessmen, hard chargers, who can think and talk on their feet and know all aspects of the business from marketing to engineering." (But not, necessarily, all aspects of the sport.)<sup>114</sup> This shift turned the ski industry into "big business," where financial organization and power grew to match--and extend --ski areas' increasingly complex position in Colorado's landscape.

#### Colorado's Ski Areas - The Best the Ski Industry and Nature Have to Offer

After World War Two the ski industry constantly struggled with problems that arose from increasing access to the sport and to mountain landscapes. The result was the growth of a built, designed, groomed, man-made, patrolled, regulated, and developed landscape--a landscape within which skiers were supposed to feel free, empowered, alone, and personally connected to wild, adventuresome mountains. Rather than undercut business, however, these environmental tensions attracted crowds of skiers to areas everywhere. The ski

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<sup>112</sup>Hauk, "Breckenridge Chronology," 7.

<sup>113</sup>Nitze, 1994.

<sup>114</sup>Elliott, 1994.

industry boomed precisely because of the environmental contradictions which it embraced. Colorado's status within the ski industry, furthermore, resulted from the degree to which the region maintained these self-contradictory landscape images.

Ask any skiers and they will testify to Colorado's image as the best skiing region in America, if not the world. "The perception and connotation that Colorado carries is second to none," one competitor who joined the ski industry argued, "not even to the French or Swiss Alps."<sup>115</sup> Colorado's resorts drew skiers from across the country. The developer of Stowe, VT complained in 1957 that "a great increase of traffic to the Rockies . . . drained off hundreds of customers."<sup>116</sup> Some came to Colorado from even farther away. When asked if Colorado held a special place within the ski industry, one Aspen lodge owner who had skied all over the world replied "there's no question about it --[the Rocky Mountain region is a] very special place, because of the landscape and the snow."<sup>117</sup>

The very size of Colorado's mountains prompted some to travel across the country. One Austrian who found himself in New York City after the war "looked at a map and saw the Rocky Mountains," promptly bought himself a bus ticket to Denver, and never looked back.<sup>118</sup> While the Rockies ran through other states, Colorado boasted more and higher peaks. "Colorado has perhaps the greatest immediate potential of the entire chain of mountains," the Director of Winter Park pointed out in 1958. "The Colorado Rockies have the greatest depth east to west, a vast rugged area compounded of many ranges, with mountains of consistently greater height than any other section."<sup>119</sup> Furthermore, he reminded readers,

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<sup>115</sup>Elliott, 1994.

<sup>116</sup>Roland Palmedo, "Too Many Lifts?" *Ski* (December 1957), 41.

<sup>117</sup>Paterson, 1994, 9.

<sup>118</sup>Paterson, 1994, 2.

<sup>119</sup>Steve Bradley, "Rush to the Winter Rockies," *Colorado Adventureland*, 1 (Winter 1958), 12.

Denver's accessibility from points across the nation encouraged skiers to try its neighboring ski areas. In their size, scope, and accessibility, Colorado's mountains reigned supreme.

Compounding the beauty and breadth of Colorado's high mountains, the region's climate and snow conditions made the state's ski areas even more attractive. Sunny days and dry snow enhanced all skiers' outdoor experience no matter what their skill level. Colorado could offer both regularly, since it shares the southern latitude of Naples, Italy and the dryness of the Rocky Mountain region. "Aspen has a climate where the snow is dry, the weather is warm and pleasant," one well-traveled Aspen local argued, "I think it's exceptional."<sup>120</sup> Light, dry powder snow--and lots of it--turned skiing into an exquisitely smooth, soft, and quiet dance of which skiers could not get enough. "To eastern visitors," wrote one skier in 1936, "it is a remarkable phenomenon to be skiing more than knee deep in light feathery snow."<sup>121</sup> Dolores LaChappelle explained it in more cosmic terms. "Skiing, especially powder snow skiing," she wrote, "provides the ultimate experience . . . between the members of a human group, the gravity of the earth, and the snow from the sky."<sup>122</sup> The snow's depth and texture in Colorado enhanced skiers' freedom and connection to the landscape.

Colorado's mountain landscape, sunny climate, and dry snow impressed skiers so much that they compared the region favorably to the very heart of alpine skiing: Europe's Alps. Otto Schneibs called Colorado "America's Switzerland" and drew attention to "the beauty and the possibilities of this great ski country" in his 1939 book, *American Skiing*.<sup>123</sup> Colorado Mountain Club members needed no

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<sup>120</sup>Paterson, 1994, 8.

<sup>121</sup>Frank M. Ashley, "Colorado Skiing," *American Ski Annual* (1936-37), 110, CHS.

<sup>122</sup>LaChappelle, 4.

<sup>123</sup>Otto Eugen Schneibs, *American Skiing* (New York: E.P. Dutton and Co., Inc., 1939), 1, 36.

convincing. A winter outing to Rocky Mountain National Park in 1932 led one member to write that "the high country around Fern Lake is unbeatable in the dead of winter, and needs to offer no apologies to Austria or Switzerland."<sup>124</sup> In quantity as well as quality Colorado stood up to the Alps, boasting 54 peaks over 14,000 feet in altitude compared to Switzerland's seven.<sup>125</sup> Being generally higher in altitude, Colorado's snow and sunshine are more dependable than Europe's and its snow conditions better. "In Europe the tree line is a lot lower," explained one Austrian native, "so you get a lot of this high alpine skiing, where it's completely exposed to the wind and the sun. . . . We have so much better snow here [in Colorado] and in Utah--these two places are incomparable."<sup>126</sup> Colorado's landscape passed the ultimate test when well-traveled outdoorspeople and expert skiers ranked it above the Alps in terms of mountain beauty and ideal snow conditions.

The region's status within the ski industry, however, derived not just from its climate and natural landscape. Utah, for instance, had better powder snow. Since the 1930s that state's ski areas have become legendary for the huge amounts of powder snow that falls on a regular basis there, attracting hordes of self-proclaimed "powder hounds" who could not get their fill of its intoxicating qualities. What Colorado has that Utah does not is that strange mix of rugged landscape, good snow, and massive ski area development. One 10th Mountain veteran from Maine said that Colorado was his favorite region for skiing because "in 100 miles from Denver," he said, "you can ski at probably six of the best areas in the world."<sup>127</sup> And you could ski at any number of lesser-known, but still

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<sup>124</sup>Karl Arndt, "Skiing at Fern Lake," *Trail and Timberline*, 161 (March 1932), 32.

<sup>125</sup>Roland Palmedo, "Crystalline Empire," *American Ski Annual* (1941-42), 66, CHS.

<sup>126</sup>Paterson, 1994, 9. See also Roch, 1967.

<sup>127</sup>Litchfield, 1994, 5.

high-quality areas. In 1967, for instance, there were 29 ski areas operating in Colorado.<sup>128</sup> Yet "despite thousands of new skiers annually who flood the [Colorado] mountains," one booster insisted in 1968, "there are still slopes and trails where a skier can feel almost alone in the white wilderness, and especially on weekdays."<sup>129</sup> Skiers tended not to notice the conflicts within this argument. Tourists as well as skiers, these people appreciated the accessibility, scenery, and the amenities that Colorado ski areas offered. "By the convenience of its location, the excellence of its snow, the extensive and varied ski area developments, and the pleasantness of its winter climate," Winter Park's director summarized in 1958, "Colorado is destined to become a major playground for the skier-vacationist."<sup>130</sup> Juxtaposed with its high mountain peaks and 13 million acres of National Forest land, the state's extensive developments placed Colorado ski areas in a rather tense relationship to its wild, rugged mountains.

Colorado ski areas--and their clientele--seemed content with this arrangement. Beyond sustaining these contradictory landscape images, moreover, Colorado ski areas marketed them vigorously, pointing out Colorado's wilderness and scenery in the same breath that they applauded its restaurants and luxury hotels. The state's ski areas even organized their own promotional group. "Colorado Ski Country USA" sprouted from the Rocky Mountain Ski Area Operators' Association in 1963. Membership extended to all ski areas in the state who cared to join, led by a board of directors and a paid executive. As a promotional organization, Colorado Ski Country USA (CSCUSA) got permission to use state funds allocated for advertising skiing and set its object as "a mutual effort to promote,

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<sup>128</sup>*Colorado Guestguide*, 12 (Winter/Spring 1968), 50. For slightly different statistics for the season before, see Roy Pace, "Colorado is 'Ski Country, U.S.A.,'" *Durango-Cortez Herald*, 27 November, 1966, 3.

<sup>129</sup>Cal Queal, "Colorado Skiing 1968," *Empire*, November, 1968, clipping, Skiing 1968 file, AHS.

<sup>130</sup>Bradley, 12.

advertise, and sell skiing, lodging, transportation et al in this area to the world."<sup>131</sup> As CSCUSA's first executive director, Steve Knowlton advertised Colorado skiing at ski shows across the country and through local promotions, developed the Ski Country Map of Colorado areas, and hired Bauhaus artist Herbert Bayer to create a distinctive logo to put on brochures, posters, and trail maps. "Everything I did," he recalled, "was to get more people to ski."<sup>132</sup>

In its efforts to bring skiers from Europe and the eastern U.S. to Colorado, CSCUSA embraced the environmental contradictions that made the region's skiing distinct and embellished them with "western" images. "There's gold in them thar hills," one promotional article began, "and the rush is on! Sheep pastures sprout overnight into shining alpine villages. Mining towns resurrect sights and sounds of their past. Networks of steel strung on mountainsides bridge peak upon peak," and "the anxious jet to the foothills to carve into a natural resource."<sup>133</sup> Confronting readers with a cacophony of images, this passage celebrated the growth of "shining" resort villages out of lowly pastures, the re-creation of industrial activity in isolated towns, and the construction of steel nets atop the Rockies, finally encouraging readers anxious for a vacation to "jet" there and use this "natural" resource. These images embodied the tensions between ruggedness and development under which Colorado's ski industry operated.

That these images continued to attract skiers to the state earned Colorado's ski industry the backing of its government. Thoroughly supportive of the ski industry and the tourist expenditures associated with it, state politicians allocated annual funds to advertise Colorado skiing. Governors and Senators appeared at grand opening ceremonies such as those for Aspen's and Steamboat Springs'

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<sup>131</sup>Steve Knowlton, "Proposal by Rocky Mountain Ski Area Operators' Association-Ski Country USA," letter to Darcy Brown, 14 March, 1963, Aspen Skiing Collection, AHS.

<sup>132</sup>Knowlton, 1995, 6.

<sup>133</sup>*Colorado Guestguide*, 50.

chairlifts, demonstrating personal as well as political support of the industry's growth. When two Denver oil men proposed a \$2 million ski area development at Grand Lake, Congressmen Gordon Allot, John Carroll, and Wayne Aspinall all voiced their support for the project and the tourist dollars it would draw to the area.<sup>134</sup> Similar sentiments from state politicians and the ski industry prompted special committees to put forth bids--albeit unsuccessful, and, in the 1970s, very much contested--to host the Winter Olympics in 1960 and again in 1976.<sup>135</sup> Even without the Olympics, Colorado's ski industry represented a significant part of Colorado's economy. "Largely due to the development of a viable ski industry," one reporter noted in 1968, "the Colorado money tree is ever green, bearing fruit on a year round basis. In the winter the money pours into the state's economy," he explained, "and during the summer a great portion of the profits are plowed back into the slopes to make them even more attractive to the spenders the next year."<sup>136</sup> Colorado's businesses and workers thus benefited from the \$20 million ski areas spent on improvements and base area developments in the summer of 1968 as well as from skiers' expenditures during the season. Out-of-state skiers spent significant amounts of money in Colorado, from an estimated \$3 million in 1955-56 to \$41 million in 1966-67.<sup>137</sup> As Colorado's ski industry established its own niche in the state's economy, many politicians and members of the ski industry understood the region's snow and mountain landscape as ever-present natural resources, available for sale to any paying skier-tourist.

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<sup>134</sup>*Denver Post*, 6 August, 1961, clipping, GLHS.

<sup>135</sup>Knowlton, 1995; 1960 Olympic Bid newspaper clippings, Skiing 1950-55 file, AHS; Mark S. Foster, "Denver 76," *Colorado Magazine*, LIII, 2 (1976), 163-186, CHS; Organizing Committee for the XII Olympic Winter Games, Denver 1976, "Denver 76 Official Bulletin," 1 (Spring 1972), AUCL; "Olympic Bubble," *Colorful Colorado* (January/February 1971), 43-48.

<sup>136</sup>Morton L. Margolin, "Colorado Ski Money Tree is Ever Green," *Rocky Mountain News* "Ski Colorado" supplement, 10 November, 1968, 13.

<sup>137</sup>Allen, "Colorado Ski and Winter Recreation Statistics," 35.

## Vail and Snowmass - Culminations of Construction

Colorado's Rocky Mountain landscape set the state's ski areas apart from those in other regions because of its ruggedness and its degree of development. Maintaining these contradictory images had become, by the 1970s, a multi-million dollar industry. Ski areas were so successful in crafting a built environment in which skiers could enjoy themselves that they altered skiers' expectations of that environment. By the 1960s many skiers never knew or expected anything different from the constructed landscapes Colorado's ski industry offered them. Skiers came to demand the contradictory relationships to the landscape that ski area development had created. Far from experiencing the outdoors in all its potential ugliness and danger, skiers sought out a mediated landscape of lifts, lodges, groomed slopes, and ski patrols. "You might say that skiers from the rugged days," one veteran of the industry put it, "are getting fewer and farther between."<sup>138</sup> The ski industry became increasingly dependent upon technological advances as skiers demanded more man-made snow in times of drought, faster lifts, longer runs, and carpet-like groomed slopes. Lawsuits increased in the 1970s as skiers transferred the responsibility of their safety from themselves to the ski patrol and ski areas in general. As skiers demonstrated different expectations of the ski area landscape, they forced those areas to invest increasing amounts of money in the built environment from which skiers enjoyed the "wilderness." Restaurants, hotels, bars, and retail shops in base areas and ski towns completed the skier-tourists' vacation experience and thoroughly encapsulate them in a planned landscape. As Vail's owner put it in 1989, "we're not selling just skiing anymore, we're selling entertainment! We're selling an entire entertainment experience."<sup>139</sup>

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<sup>138</sup>Paterson, 1994, 9.

<sup>139</sup>George Gillett in William Oscar Johnson, "A Vision Fulfilled," *Sports Illustrated*, 70, 4 (30 January 1989), 82.

Vail and Snowmass, which opened in 1962 and 1967 respectively, represent the earliest culminations in mediated, planned, and constructed ski resorts. While ski resort planners have long known that they must have hotel accommodations and adequate ski lifts to attract any customers, planners at Vail and Snowmass took the job a few steps farther.<sup>140</sup> Unlike local ski areas or areas within a two hour drive from Denver, Vail and Snowmass developed as "destination resorts," aimed at attracting customers for a week or more at a time. They shared characteristics that helped put them on the forefront of Colorado's--and the United States'--ski industry. Most importantly, they each seemed to grow, fully formed, from places that had previously only entertained summer livestock. At the junction of Gore Creek and Mill Creek along U.S. Highway 6, and up Aspen's Brush Creek, Vail and Snowmass took shape specifically to meet the needs and wants of America's skier-tourists.

Developers bought up the ranch land below the National Forest and, once they had acquired the necessary Forest Service permits, built the base areas along with the ski areas. Vail quickly achieved what Snowmass developers planned from the start: an entire ski resort community. During Vail's first season, for instance, three hotels and four restaurants complemented the mountain's gondola, two chair lifts, lodge, and mid-Vail restaurant. By 1966 the Town of Vail had incorporated, real estate sales were booming, and the base area had been transformed into the now-famous Vail Village. Swathed in European references, "every building is built with an eye to an entire architectural concept," one observer noticed. "Shops, apartments, lodges and homes all adhere to a plan to give the effect of a casual but unified village. Even the gondola house," he added, "conforms to the styling."<sup>141</sup> This writer went on to rave about Vail's vast bowl skiing, its great hotels, and its

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<sup>140</sup>For an early discussion of resort planning, see Franziska Porges, "On Planning Ski Resorts," *American Ski Annual* (1946-47), 131-134, CHS.

<sup>141</sup>Alex Katz, "Skiing," *Colorful Colorado*, 1, 3 (Winter 1966), 67.

European restaurants--a tough combination to beat. Snowmass developers tried. After quietly accumulating 3,400 acres of local ranch land, developer Bill Janss signed a contract with the Aspen Skiing Corporation under which the ASC would operate the ski area and he would develop the base area. Janss hired architect Fritz Benedict to design a resort made up of separate villages, each to be "a balanced community of homes, shops, restaurants, lodges, swimming pools, tennis courts, stables and ice rinks" built with architectural harmony in mind, to accompany a huge ski mountain with an extensive lift system.<sup>142</sup> "The efficiency with which the area was studied, planned, developed, and sold," one reporter exclaimed, "was without precedent."<sup>143</sup>

The degree to which these areas were planned testifies to skier-tourists' rising expectations of resort landscapes--and the degree of construction they are capable of integrating into the "natural" experience of skiing. The town of Vail, for instance, lies in a narrow valley along Interstate 70. Skiers driving there park their cars in an underground garage and walk through a covered pedestrian bridge, straight into what looks like a Bavarian village from Disneyland. Hordes of pedestrians carrying their skis clutter the narrow streets, congregating around the outdoor restaurants that lie between expensive retail shops and creating an air of alpine festivity. After a wait in line to buy tickets and another to get on the high-speed lift, skiers find themselves airborne, looking down upon people zigzagging down a maze of trails or hanging out at the mid-mountain lodge. Finally at the top of the mountain (after another ride), lift buildings, snowcat tracks, ski patrol huts, another lodge, and a dizzying array of signs greet them, pointing them down different trails on which they can enjoy the Rocky Mountains. That the ski

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<sup>142</sup>"Snowmass-at-Aspen--exciting new Shangri-la of skiing," *Denver Post*, 12 November, 1967, 19, clipping, Snowmass file, AHS.

<sup>143</sup>"All you add is people . . .," clipping, n.d., Snowmass file, AHS. See also Anne Gilbert, "Re-Creation Through Recreation: Aspen Skiing from 1870-1970," manuscript, 1995, 90-92, AHS, for a more complete history of Snowmass.

industry has altered this landscape is clear. It has also thoroughly mediated skiers' relationship to the mountains. In its effort to make the Rockies accessible to America's middle class, the ski industry created ski area landscapes that are built, groomed, designed, patrolled, regulated, marketed, and highly financed.

Ski area developers have constructed landscapes they hoped would elicit awe-inspired silence and whoops of joy, as well as sighs of relaxation and comfort. Skiers proved the industry's success by traveling to and throughout Colorado and spending their money--especially at big destination resorts like Vail.<sup>144</sup> Every landscape, geographers Donald Meinig and Pierce Lewis remind us, "is at once a panorama, a composition, a palimpsest, a microcosm," both an accumulation and a code through which we can decipher cultural and social meaning.<sup>145</sup> Vail's ski resort landscape both reflected important changes in the understanding of skiing landscapes, and encouraged its visitors to perceive skiing in a certain way. As a carefully crafted resort, Vail represents a landscape of leisure--one built expressly for large numbers of skiers, both middle- and upper-class, and one built entirely self-consciously. The post-war context in which skiers came to Vail further emphasized leisure and consumption. Far from the local community skiers that characterized the sport in the 1930s, these skier-tourists came from all over to a place in Colorado that represented some of the best skiing and vacationing that American's ski industry had to offer.

Skiers thus understood the experience of skiing as more than a physical and psychological feeling; it had become part of a *vacation*, only one aspect to a trip that included shopping, dining, and socializing. As such, skiers expected that landscape to be constructed for their enjoyment. Their experience of the sport and their

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<sup>144</sup>In 1994 Vail ranked first in both *Ski* and *Skiing* magazines' lists of the best ski resorts.

<sup>145</sup>D.W. Meinig, editor, *The Interpretation of Ordinary Landscapes: Geographical Essays* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979).

relationship to the landscape thus took on new meanings. Previously the domain of Colorado ski club members ranging from elite Arlbergers to the local working- and middle-class skiers of ski clubs in mountain towns across the state, after the war Colorado's ski areas welcomed skiers from everywhere. Skiing thus became not an act that defined one's place of residence or one's class, but an act of popular leisure. Upper-class and local Colorado skiers had to put up with "bashers" and "bunnies" skiing and falling around them. Women skiers, moving through a "female" landscape and experiencing a kind of freedom in the process, could do so without threatening gender norms because they did so within the context of leisure and consumption. The resort landscape that offered them exhilaration on the mountain also placed them in the female landscape of the village or base area, where bars, restaurants, and shops encouraged women to re-establish any femininity they may have lost on the slopes. Male skiers similarly experienced skiing differently after World War Two. In a landscape crafted for enjoyment and patrolled for safety, skiing lost much of its risk and its powers to masculinize. When Tenth Mountain division veterans relinquished their places at the top of Colorado ski areas to new, corporate leaders with more business savvy but less knowledge of the mountains and skiing, the sport moved even farther away from its "manly" roots. Ski area advertizers continued to sell manliness, but one closer to the sexy, European variety than to that of nineteenth-century mail carriers or twentieth-century mountain troops.

In its growth from a local community sport to an industry focused on leisure and consumption, participants in the Colorado ski industry transformed mountain landscapes and offered a new experience to skiers. Beyond altering the meaning of the experience, these new ski area landscapes also fundamentally changed the towns in which they grew. After World War Two, Colorado's destination ski resorts were inextricably entwined with their own consumer-

oriented tourist culture. Skiing took on new meanings not only for skiers, then, but for Colorado mountain town residents who welcomed these skiers, as well.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### Skier-Tourist-Consumers Meet Colorado's Resort Towns

"Plymouth's on the move," Chrysler Motors Corporation announced boldly in 1962, "with a skier's lust for acceleration" (Figure 1). Making an imaginative leap comfortable for *Ski* magazine's audience, Chrysler's advertisement equated skiing with sex, and both with its new car. "Maybe there's no thrill like a 'schuss,'" it continued, "but Plymouth 63--the new Plymouth--comes as close as anything on wheels!" Speed, lust, and the thrill of acceleration--on the slopes and on the road--described a masculine power that both Chrysler and the ski industry hoped consumers would pay to experience. With this car, the ad implied through its photo of a smiling blond leaning out the passenger side window, you could get the girl and "schuss." But, the text reminded, "you have to own one to catch one!" Making a three-way link among fast cars, fast skiing, and fast women, Chrysler thus encouraged skiers to associate buying cars and "lusting" with their favorite sport.

Nor was Chrysler alone in connecting its products to the growing ski industry. Consumer goods abounded in the early 1960s, simultaneously boosting and refining the sport. "It was a time when everything was falling into place in the ski world," 10th Mountain veteran Ben Duke recalled of 1962. Duke remembered Head skis, Bogner stretch pants, buckle boots, release bindings, and airline promotion of winter travel as all part of Vail's opening day that year. These consumer goods appealed to a wide range of skiers. Vail and the ski industry set out to remake traditional associations between skiing and masculinity, often in ways that made manliness more woman-friendly. Consumer culture and western

*Ski*, 27 (December 1962), 11.

Figure 1. Chrysler Motors Corporation advertisement, 1962

landscapes met in places like Vail, Aspen, and Steamboat Springs. Purchasing products like new skis, sexy cars, or vacation packages, after all, encouraged people to converge upon these destination resorts. In the process, they re-shaped the sport of skiing at the same time that they altered the landscape of mountain towns. Skiing merged post-war leisure practices and a powerful consumer culture through advertisements like Chrysler's, for example. Skiers--even 10th Mountain Division types--transformed themselves into consumer/tourists. Ski areas, once the province of local club skiers from their own towns and Denver, developed into destination resorts attracting skier-tourists from across the country. This is different aspect of the landscape reshaping already discussed. The post-war transformation of ski area landscapes and business organizations accompanied a transformation in the ways consumers, business people, and mountain town residents understood skiing.

#### The Skier-Tourist-Consumer is Born

The industry and its resort culture took shape alongside skiing's growing popularity in post-war America. As more and more Americans tried it, bought equipment, and traveled to ski areas, the sport itself was transformed. By the end of the 1970s skiing had become a re-gendered, Americanized, and commercialized version of its past self. Skiers took on hybrid identities--skier, tourist, vacationer, and consumer. To them, Vail's high-powered lifts snuggled in Colorado's Rockies made perfect sense. To them, a Plymouth advertisement spoke volumes about suave athleticism, exciting resort landscapes, leisure, and purchasing power.

From the 1950s through the 1970s skiing changed most dramatically in its volume. Skier visits from the 1956-57 season to the 1965-66 season, for instance, jumped from 33,000 to almost 90,000 at Arapahoe Basin; from 83,000

to 143,000 at Aspen Mountain; and from 70,000 to 213,000 at Winter Park. Vail entertained only 310 skier-visits during its first season in 1962-63, but had reached 189,000 by 1966.<sup>1</sup> State totals for skier-visits rose equally dramatically through the 1960s, increasing anywhere from 8.7% to 37.6 % each year between 1963-64 and 1974-75, leaping from 801,000 in 1963-64 to over 5,194,000 eleven years later.<sup>2</sup>

These numbers tell a story of dramatic and sustained growth in Colorado skiing and hint at a similar national trend. These statistics leave unsaid, however, exactly who made all those new skier-visits every year. Qualitative change accompanied quantitative in America's post-war skiing world. Many of the people who took up skiing in the 1960s had never thought of doing so before. Skiers from unexpected places climbed on busses *en masse* to vacation with friends old and new. One ski author noted with awe, for instance, that by 1967 every city in Texas had a ski club and some had two or three. "There are now," he wrote, "between 15,000 and 20,000 active skiers in the unspeakably unskiable state of Texas!"<sup>3</sup> Previously associated with wealth, education, and cosmopolitan life styles, the sport began to attract middle-class Americans during the 1960s. Aspen ski instructor Fred Iselin remembered in 1968 that "in the 1940s people came to Sun Valley like they would go to Kenya on safari--it was new, challenging, an adventure. . . . its better now," he explained, "because [skiing's] for the masses and then it was only for the people who were wealthy."<sup>4</sup> One businessman in Jackson Hole, Wyoming bet his future on skiing's wider appeal when he opened The Hostel, a

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<sup>1</sup>J. B. Kline, "Western Mountain Region Study," Business Research Division, Graduate School of Business Administration, University of Colorado, 1967, 32. One skier-visit consists of one skier spending one day at any given area.

<sup>2</sup>Page Dabney, "An Impact Study--The Colorado Ski Industry: A Study of the Influence of the Industry Upon the Economies of Selected Mountain Counties and Communities," Colorado Ski Country USA, 1974, updated 1976, 17, BRL.

<sup>3</sup>Morten Lund, "The Texans Are Coming!" *Ski*, 32, 5 (December 1967), 90.

<sup>4</sup>Cal Queal, "Skiing's Still Fun For Fred," *Empire Magazine*, November, 1968, clipping, Fred Iselin biography file, AHS.

no-frills hotel that offered rooms that slept four for \$10 a night. "Some of our customers really have to watch their budgets," he explained.<sup>5</sup> The statisticians concurred: one study done during the 1967-68 season counted 14% of skiers at Colorado areas earning annual incomes between \$7,500 and \$9,999 and a quarter of them earning between \$10,000 and \$14,999. Another study from the same season reported 22% of all skiers in Colorado lived on an annual family income of less than \$7,500.<sup>6</sup> Wealthier skiers still hit the slopes as well, as 23% fell in the \$15,000-24,000 bracket and 21% in the \$25,000 and over group.<sup>7</sup> Supporting the statisticians with their own observations of the broadening ski area clientele, ski instructors described people showing up for their classes as "middle aged, not overly sophisticated, and, from an appearance point of view, not especially well-to-do." As one Seattle instructor put it, his class looked like the Wednesday night bowling league.<sup>8</sup>

This shift towards a less exclusive market took on dimensions beyond those of class; it encompassed women and new constructions of gender, as well. After World War Two the gendered implications of skiing changed. During the 1940s,

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<sup>5</sup>Al Greenberg, "Lodging on a Shoestring," *Ski Area News* (Spring 1969), 45, 61.

<sup>6</sup>Gerald L. Allen, "Colorado Ski and Winter Recreation Statistics, 1969," Business Research Division, Graduate School of Business Administration, University of Colorado, 1969, 4. Many of those skiers earning little family income were probably students, who tended to drive from Denver and surrounding areas to ski for a day or for the weekend. This economic division reflected earlier trends established in the 1920s and 1930s, when working-class people skied if they lived in the mountains.

<sup>7</sup>Henry Alfred Scullo, "An Analysis of Skiers to Colorado" (Ph. D. diss., University of Missouri, 1971), 56. During the 1971-72 season, even Aspen skiers represented a broad range of socio-economic groups. More of them came from households with annual incomes between \$10-15,000 than from those earning over \$50,000. The \$10-15,000 group represented 16.9% of skiers surveyed, second in number only to those earning between \$35-50,000, which made up 20.2%. C. R. Goeldner, "The Aspen Skier: Lift Survey," Business Research Division, Graduate School of Business Administration, University of Colorado at Boulder, 1974, 20. In each study, those in the lower income brackets mainly represented skiers who lived in Colorado, while most of the wealthier ones had traveled to Colorado from out of state.

<sup>8</sup>John Henry Auran, "New Realities for the Ski Retailer," *Skiing Trade News*, 9 (Spring 1972), 248.

rugged outdoorsiness still characterized the quintessential skier. Access to the Rockies and the ability to speed down their "treacherous" slopes remained firmly associated with masculine power, despite women's involvement in the sport. This association grew especially intense during World War Two when the 10th Mountain Division's formation as an elite fighting force became national news. Their victories in Italy turned them all into heroic, larger-than-life figures whose public identities centered upon the mountains. Tenth Mountain Division veterans became preeminent skiers in America's imagination, and their involvement in post-war ski areas only reinforced that fact. As veteran Ben Duke recalled, "back in the [early] 1960s skiing was a very macho sport."<sup>9</sup> This gendered skiing ideal translated directly to the landscape. "In an era when skiing still retained a lingering aura of danger," Duke explained, "a 'good trail' was a steep trail."<sup>10</sup>

During the 1960s, however, skiing--and ski areas--took on a more complicated shape. Skier surveys from 1957 to 1977 record the proportion of women skiing in Colorado as a fairly constant 35%; anecdotal evidence indicates that in the years before 1957 a significant minority of women skied, as well.<sup>11</sup> Although women ski instructors had also appeared on the slopes since the 1930s, their numbers were relatively small. The regendering of skiing, then, relied less

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<sup>9</sup>Ben Duke, in Beth and George Gage, *Fire on the Mountain* (Gage and Gage Productions: Telluride CO, 1995).

<sup>10</sup>H. Benjamin Duke, Jr., "Skiing Soldiers to Skiing Entrepreneurs: Development of the Western Ski Industry," paper given at the Western Historical Association Annual Meeting, 2 August, 1989, 13.

<sup>11</sup>During the 1956-57 season 65% of skiers surveyed in Colorado and New Mexico were male (28% said they were female; 7% did not respond). In 1968 Colorado skiers split 65% to 35% male/female in two different studies; Aspen skiers in 1971-72 were 66%/34% male/female, and two years later they were 63%/37%. By 1977-78 Aspen skiers were closer to even with a 59/41% balance, but when combined with four other Colorado area skiers the balance turned out to be 65/35% once again. See L. J. Crampon and Ronald D. Lemon, "Skiing in the Southern Rocky Mountain Region," Bureau of Business Research, University of Colorado at Boulder, 1957, 4; Sciullo, 60; Allen, 6; Goeldner, 1974, 20; C. R. Goeldner, "The Colorado Skier: 1977-78 Season," Business Research Division, Graduate School of Business Administration, University of Colorado at Boulder, 1978, 8, 33.

on an increasing number of women skiing and more on the widespread redefinition of the sport. One sign of this redefinition--and of a 1950s culture that defined women largely in their relationships to men--was that women instructors earned their positions by virtue of their marital status as much as their technical skill on the slopes. Unlike the female instructors before the war, women in the 1950s and after did not have to demonstrate their skiing ability on the international racing circuit in order to get an instructor's job. Quite a few, rather, were married to male instructors.<sup>12</sup>

Skiers in the 1950s also reflected middle-class American culture in their concern with the consumption of fashion. Designer Willy Bogner kicked off the growth of the "fashion factor" in skiing with his introduction of stretch pants in 1955. Women helped redefine skiing after that because they literally showed up better on the slopes. "What before had been a sea of navy, tan, and black," one ski historian noted, "suddenly became a pallet of every conceivable color."<sup>13</sup> Upper-class women reaffirmed traditional roles as fashionable socialites at the same time they emphasized their presence on the slopes, by working hard to properly outfit themselves for skiing. In the process they gained power within the ski industry as consumers. And some, like ex-Olympic racer and ski instructor Elli Stiller Iselin, opened retail businesses of their own.

Nor was their economic power limited to buying clothes. Women bought lift tickets as well, and ski areas came to recognize that fact. One area in Pennsylvania's Pocono Mountains, for instance, tried to improve its mid-week crowds by promoting Tuesday as Ladies' Day, Wednesday as Men's Day, and Friday

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<sup>12</sup>Thelma Sabbatini, for instance, came to Aspen with her Italian Olympic team member husband, who joined the ski school under Friedl Pfeifer. "I started instructing in 1954 or 1955," she said, "in the meantime I was a housewife." Thelma Sabbatini, interview by Ruth Whyte, 12 August, 1986, Aspen, Colorado, AHS. Friedl Pfeifer's second wife Bunny similarly taught some classes in Aspen's ski school. Pfeifer and Lund, 167-69.

<sup>13</sup>Auran, 51.

as College Day. The area's mid-week business shot up 60% from the year before and Ladies' Day proved to be the most successful magnet. Local housewives gathered to buy discounted lift tickets, take lessons from ski school instructors--half of whom were women--and participate in workshops including exercise classes and lectures on cosmetics. Their behavior, however, was not a simple reaffirmation of acceptable female gender norms. Slenderizing classes and advice on how to apply make up for skiing reinforced these women's femininity at the same time they experienced the more gender-ambivalent freedom and independence of skiing without their husbands. Initiated by the area's female hill director and ski school head, the program earned national publicity when the *Skiing Area News* published an article touting it in 1970.<sup>14</sup> Women's visibility thus improved both physically and economically during the 1960s--and their participation shaped the ski industry itself as well as the sport.

Skiing became re-gendered, too, when groups of people disempowered by physical disabilities--and so in a sense feminized--found power and mobility through skiing. Skiing had been a masculinizing activity in different ways since the nineteenth century. Its cultural function transformed within the context of physically disabled skiers. Unable to perform the physical act of skiing in the same way as most, disabled skiers re-defined the sport's gendered significance. Until the 1960s skiing for disabled people was available only to those with uncommon individual drive, creativity, and resources. Dr. Ernst Fischer, blinded in 1951 from a World War Two injury, took it upon himself to ski again. He called

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<sup>14</sup>Rose Marie Cleese, "Building the Middle Week Throng," *Skiing Area News*, 15 (Summer 1970), 23. Purgatory ski area started a similar program during its first season in 1966; its Wednesday Ladies Club attracted beginners from Durango, Farmington, and other nearby towns. Mothers took turns baby-sitting for one another in the lodge and taking runs down the mountain. The club became a permanent fixture in Purgatory's traditions, hosting parties and even blessing the ski racks annually. Charlie Langdon, *Durango Ski: People and Seasons at Purgatory* (Durango CO: Purgatory Press, 1989), 47.

an old ski companion and they headed for the Alps to practice. Before long he and his "Skiing Eye " Gretl grew quite comfortable using voice commands to ski up and down the Alps together. "Words fail me," Fischer wrote in 1953, "to describe the feeling of triumph I experienced."<sup>15</sup> He proceeded to gather seven other blind war veterans so they could feel this triumph, too. While practical and optimistic in his discussion of blind skiers, Fischer also hinted at the gender and power implications of their endeavor. Disempowered by their loss of vision, blind skiers had to re-learn the sport and trust those around them for help. "A suitable companion, or Skiing Eye," Fischer emphasized, "is indispensable." Moreover, he wrote "women are to be preferred, as their motherly instinct and greater patience make them ideal companions."<sup>16</sup> Likening women skiers to kind matrons and blind war veterans to children, and then empowering them both, Fischer redefined traditional gender categories and power relationships when he celebrated the degree of autonomy women could give veterans on the ski slope.

Physically disabled people of all ages and sexes found access to the sport during the 1960s and 1970s. These new skiers, and their understanding of the sport, broadened the scope of skiing and empowered themselves. War veteran amputees, like the blind, had to cope with the sudden loss of their physical power and freedom of movement. Disabled veterans and the people who worked with them sought rehabilitative help through skiing. Tenth Mountain veteran Jim Withers started a group of his wounded war buddies skiing again at Donner, California in 1953. After the Korean War informal programs had started up in California, Colorado, Oregon, and the Northeast.<sup>17</sup> By the 1960s, when disabled vets starting returning from Vietnam, programs popped up across the country. In 1967 the

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<sup>15</sup>Dr. Ernst Fischer, "'I Ski, Though Blind'," *Ski* (January 1954), 17, 24.

<sup>16</sup>Fischer, 26.

<sup>17</sup>Cindy Walker, "'If I Can Do This, I Can Do Anything'," *Ski* (November 1975), 117.

National Amputee Ski Association formed in California. Originally started to help Vietnam veterans, the organization enlarged its scope when it changed its name to the National Inconvenienced Sportsmen's Association (NISA). Adopting the motto "If I can do this, I can do anything," NISA organizers understood skiing as an enjoyable recreational activity that was rehabilitative in nature. Colorado skiers and vets also reached this conclusion. Larry Jump started the state's first amputee ski program at Arapahoe Basin in 1968 through a joint venture between Children's Hospital in Denver and Fitzsimmons Army Hospital.<sup>18</sup> Though the veterans moved to Loveland, and Winter Park took over the amputee program in 1970, both continued to grow. So did other programs across the country. In the early 1970s regional ski associations for disabled and amputee skiers formed and sent teams to the National Championships; in 1974 the U.S. and NISA sent a team of fourteen men and three women to compete against eleven other national teams in the World Handicapped Ski Championships.

The success and popularity of skiing among disabled Americans testified to the sport's physical and psychological rehabilitative powers. "What's really beautiful for us," one woman amputee racer and instructor said, "is the feeling of complete control, the feeling of speed and motion for the first time. It's a thrill that's possible for the amputee," she said, "only in skiing."<sup>19</sup> Disabled veterans, children, men and women thus discovered a rare freedom and power through the sport of skiing. For disabled war veterans that freedom and power helped restore their masculinity; for women it relieved both physical and societal limits on their mobility--without, however, turning them into men. Disabled skiers' presence and visibility on the slopes both caused and reflected a broader move away from the

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<sup>18</sup>Grand County Historical Association volunteers, *Winter Park: Colorado's Favorite for Fifty Years, 1940-1990* (Winter Park Recreation Association, 1989), 153. See also Langdon, 56-58.

<sup>19</sup>Walker, 117.

elite masculine skiing ideal represented by the Tenth Mountain Division and towards a more inclusive one.

Ski area designers and managers encouraged skiing's inclusiveness by shaping ski area landscapes accordingly. After World War Two, ski area managers and designers consciously built trails to welcome skiers with a wide range of abilities and different degrees of daring. They no longer assumed their skiing subject was male and bent on taking big physical risks. Winter Park's Steve Bradley published an article entitled "What's the Ideal Ski Hill?" in 1967. In opposition to the "historic and pioneering days," when "the general trend was toward the big mountain with steep, narrow, expert slopes," Bradley argued that beginner and intermediate skiers now deserved more attention. Well-groomed easy and intermediate slopes, he said, balanced with a few expert trails, characterized the ideal ski area of the 1960s.<sup>20</sup> Other ski area managers had been discovering this on their own. Vail opened in 1962 with skiing terrain consciously designed for skiers of all levels, and other Colorado areas followed suit. Improved amenities such as base area restaurants and shops and mid-mountain facilities offered a more feminine landscape to accompany the masculine-gendered mountain. These skiing landscapes filled out the picture of ski area development epitomized by the big new resorts of Vail and Snowmass and made the sport more accessible, comfortable, and appealing to skiers ranging widely in their skill-levels and gender identities.

At the same time that skiers redefined the sport's class and gender categories, they also re-created it as distinctly American. After World War Two and through the 1960s Americans began to understand skiing less as a European import and more as their own. This process was due in part to the sport's inclusion of American middle-class skiers who had little to do with European resort culture,

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<sup>20</sup>Stephen Bradley, "What's the Ideal Ski Hill?" *Skiing Area News*, 2 (April 1967), 36-38.

but owed more to members of the 10th Mountain Division and American racers and ski instructors. The Americanization of skiing began most visibly with the publicity surrounding Camp Hale and the 10th Mountain Division. Lt. John Jay, member of the 87th Regiment and a ski film maker by trade, became the mountain troop's public relations director in 1942. He set up radio broadcasts from Camp Hale, wrote press releases to newspapers and magazines, and made a movie called *Ski Patrol* from footage he shot at Camp Hale.<sup>21</sup> Designed to fill the ranks of the 10th Mountain Division with volunteers, his film footage and magazine articles instilled national pride in America's skiing mountain troops. Tenth Mountain Division soldiers on skis, featured on the cover of the *Saturday Evening Post* (March 23, 1943), became imprinted upon the popular imagination. Furthermore, that such renowned European skiers as Friedl Pfeifer, Walter Prager, Luggi Foeger, Florian Haemmerle, and Toni Matt had signed up for the 10th seemed to mean that American skiing was on the rise, worthy of even European experts' endorsement and participation. When the American public pinned their military hopes on these elite troops, furthermore, they linked skiing with ardent war-time nationalism. The Tenth lived up to their end of the bargain. America's skiers and outdoorsmen laid low soldiers from Germany, Austria, and Italy-- countries credited with skiing's very genesis, thereby establishing America's military and symbolic dominance of the mountains.

What the mountain troops accomplished in war, American skiers hoped to repeat afterwards on the race course. Challenging the European dominance of international skiing competition proved extremely difficult but possible, perhaps for the first time since Dick Durrance challenged it in the 1930s. More Americans, it seemed, were learning how to ski fast. "By the war's beginning," as one reporter put it, "U.S. skiers felt they were approaching European

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<sup>21</sup>"John Jay: I Am A Camera," *Skiing Heritage*, 7 (Fall 1995), 7.

standards."<sup>22</sup> Their first big chance to prove this came in 1948. As the first post-war Winter Olympic Games, this competition was an important international event in which Americans could invest their patriotism and nationalism. Thirty men and women skiers represented the United States at the 1948 Olympics in St. Moritz, Switzerland; a few would make names for themselves. Colorado's Barney McLean won the pre-Olympic downhill and combined races against a strong field of European skiers. Gordon Wren from Steamboat Springs became the first (and only) skier to make both the alpine and nordic American Olympic teams. Wren's Olympic jump was the competition's second longest; the judges, however, scoring his form against the European style, dropped him to fifth place.<sup>23</sup> But the U.S. women racers shone more brightly in the Olympics than the men, whose team included some of the famed 10th Mountain veterans. The men's alpine team suffered after having applied the wrong wax to their skis before the race--a mistake that their skill could not overcome. American Gretchen Fraser had no such trouble. She sped past European women to win a silver medal in the Alpine Combined competition, and followed that performance up with a gold in the slalom. Hers were the first Olympic medals ever won by an American skier.

American women also placed better than men at the 1950 FIS Championship races held in Aspen, Colorado. Colorado's own Katy Rudolph was the top U.S. finisher in downhill and giant slalom placing fifth and eight respectively, and Vermont's Andrea Mead took sixth in the slalom. The men's highest placings were 18th in downhill, 27th in giant slalom, and 4th in the slalom.<sup>24</sup> Andrea Mead

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<sup>22</sup>Jane True, "FIS Spells 'A Word on Skis' at Aspen," *Rocky Mountain Empire Magazine*, 8 January, 1950, 3, CUA.

<sup>23</sup>Jane True, "Colorado Skiers at St. Moritz," *Rocky Mountain Life* (March 1948), 13-16.

<sup>24</sup>The top American men finishers were Jim Griffith and Jack Reddish, who placed 27th in the giant slalom and 4th in the slalom, respectively. "FIS World Championship Results--Alpine Events," *Ski*, 15 March, 1950, 8; Nicholas Howe, "Goodby, Katy and Thank You," *Skiing Heritage*, 7 (Winter 1995), 42-44.

Lawrence continued the American women's Olympic spree in 1952 by bringing two gold medals home; Ruldolph took fifth in giant slalom; and both enjoyed national publicity upon returning home. In the ski world of the late 1950s and early 1960s Toni Sailer, Stein Erikson, and Buddy Werner became household names as racers who won international meets. And, as one chronicler put it, "the trials and tribulations of American racers--Tom Corcoran, Penny Pitou, Ralph Miller, Betsy Snite, Brookie Dodge and Sally Deaver--were widely covered as they made their lonely assaults on the great racing trails of Europe."<sup>25</sup>

Skiing became even more tightly linked to American national identity through the charismatic racer Buddy Werner. Steamboat Springs' Werner became an American folk hero, winning international races all over Europe and becoming the only American to will the Holmenkollen in Norway--twice. Werner represented national prowess in a Cold War era when Americans sought such an American hero. "As the most exciting personality in skiing today," *Ski* magazine published in 1960, "he has become a symbol to young and old."<sup>26</sup> Americans cheered and cried as Werner alternately won more important races than any other American and reached for Olympic medals that thrice eluded him. He died in an avalanche in 1964 while skiing for a Willy Bogner film, an event that forever identified him with skiing and characterized him as an American martyr.

Though the most heart-wrenching, his was not the only story to capture Americans' imaginations. His sister Skeeter Werner made a name for herself as an international competitor, too, before returning to Steamboat Springs and heading the ski school there. And at long last, under coach Bob Beattie, two American men won Olympic medals. Billy Kidd and Jimmie Huega won silver and bronze medals,

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<sup>25</sup>Auran, 52.

<sup>26</sup>"1960 Olympic Issue," *Ski*, as cited in John Rolfe Burroughs, *"I Never Look Back": The Story of Buddy Werner* (Boulder CO: Johnson Publishing Company, 1967), 136.

respectively, in the 1964 Olympic slalom. With their victories (more so than with those of Gretchen Fraser and Andrea Mead Lawrence), Americans claimed some ownership over the competitive sport of skiing. These American athletes also became role models for skiers all over the country who were just taking up the sport.

A different kind of competition over skiing had begun four years earlier--one which emphasized American skiers' authority outside of the race course--and it centered around the way in which these new skiers would learn the sport. As well as producing the world's top racers, Europe sent talented ski instructors to the United States--often they were one and the same people. Stein Erikson, Fred Iselin, and Pepi Stiegler, for instance, all made their names as international competitors before directing ski schools in the United States. Resort owners snapped them up, banking on their reputations as teachers and technically expert skiers and giving them the freedom to hire anyone they deemed qualified to teach skiing. In an effort to regulate this growing business, a group of instructors--ironically led by a former Swiss racer and instructor--founded the Professional Ski Instructors of America (PSIA) in 1960. They developed an "American Method" of skiing and implemented it at member areas throughout the country.<sup>27</sup> The PSIA was ostensibly aimed at ensuring skiers a high standard of quality ski instruction but clearly represented an effort to consolidate control and status for its members. As a result, the PSIA and its American Method alienates some European ski school directors who defined themselves and their skiing styles outside those categories. They understood the organization and its methods as challenges to their authority as

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<sup>27</sup>"Veteran Ski Instructors Honor Three PSIA Founders," *Skiing Heritage*, 7, 1 (Winter 1995), 32; James A. Mokres, "They Called Him 'Mr. Ski'," *Aspen the Magazine* (February-March 1976), 63, clipping, Fred Iselin biography file, AHS. The Board of Directors of the PSIA noted that "success in ski competition has led to nationalism and ultimate commercialism of ski techniques," leading, in part, to their own "American Ski Technique." *The Official American Ski Technique*, 2nd ed. (Salt Lake City: Professional Ski Instructors of America, Inc., 1966), ii.

directors and their skills as ski technicians. Aspen's Fred Iselin "dismissed the system as idiocy" and refused to teach it at his school. When the Aspen Skiing Corporation forced the issue, he quit and accepted a contract with the independently owned and operated Aspen Highlands nearby. Iselin fought the American technique and PSIA's bureaucracy in print and in person through the late 1960s, by which time the controversy had reached a level of bitter intensity.<sup>28</sup> At stake lay more than authority on ski technique; the national character of the sport was on the line. What, after all, was American about a sport whose roots led directly to the Alps and the almost mythic figure of Hannes Schneider? The fight ended in a draw. Ski school directors such as Iselin, Steigler, and Erikson remained popular and Europeans retained their images as the best instructors. Many lost their status as autonomous directors, however, as ski corporations took control over their ski schools in the 1960s and instituted PSIA organization and instructors. While successfully constructed as an American sport, then, skiing also retained its appeal as an exotic, cosmopolitan European sport. Skiing in post-war America thus attracted skiers as both an American sport and one associated with elite European ski culture. These different national skiing identities existed in constant, and often creative, tension with one another within the context of a growing American ski industry.

#### Colorado's Place in a National Ski Industry

American racers and ski instructors improved their visibility at the same time that ski areas dotted the national landscape. If the end of World War Two, Olympic medals, and a national skiing technique fostered ideological connections between Americans and the sport of skiing, the boom in ski area development during the 1960s gave those connections physical and economic reality. Skiing had

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<sup>28</sup>Mokres, 63-64.

moved on to American soil and taken root: in Nevada, California, Oregon, and Washington; up and down the Rocky Mountains; throughout the Northeast; even as far south as the Poconos. The very presence of new or expanding ski areas placed the sport squarely in America and gave it a sense of permanence and national scope.

Colorado's increasing number of ski areas testified to skiing's growing significance to the western economy and to its western identity. Colorado resorts new and old sought to attract the growing variety of skiers in the state. Small areas had catered to local clientele and larger ones to Denver skiers and more distant vacationers since the 1930s; these distinctions continued throughout the 1960s and beyond. One student of Colorado's ski areas categorized them into four different groups in 1967. The first group he characterized as accommodating mainly vacation skiers from outside of Colorado who spent more than three days at a time skiing. Aspen's ski areas (Aspen Mountain, Buttermilk, Aspen Highlands, and Snowmass) fit into this group, as did Vail. He classified areas including Breckenridge, Crested Butte, and Steamboat Springs' Mt. Werner as areas attracting mainly Colorado residents (also for extended periods of time). The third group, areas patronized largely by one day or weekend skiers (typically from Denver or the Front Range) included Arapahoe Basin, Loveland, and Winter Park; and the group of smallest areas, open only on weekends and holidays for local crowds, included Berthoud Pass, Fun Valley, and Cooper Hill.<sup>29</sup> His generalizations agreed with Coloradans' own informal characterizations of the areas.<sup>30</sup>

Unlike Colorado's ski areas of the 1930s, however, these resorts constantly sought to increase the volume of their regular market and worked to attract skiers from outside that market, as well. As the sport broadened in scope and took root in

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<sup>29</sup>Sciullo, 6-7, 32.

<sup>30</sup>Gordon Wren, interview by the author, 25 August, 1995, Steamboat Springs, Colorado, tape recording and transcript, 5-6; Steve Knowlton, interview by the author, 14 November, 1995, Denver, Colorado, tape recording and transcript, 8-9.

America during the 1960s, the ski industry incorporated it into the swirling consumer and leisure cultures of post-war America. In this context, skiing acquired new meaning as a commodity that contrasted greatly with its pre-war community roots. Increasingly commercialized from the 1950s on, the sport of skiing acquired its own industry which entered the national economy as a significant player. As ski area owners and managers recognized their common interests and concerns within the ski industry, they created structures through which they could further those interests. They joined together to form the National Ski Area Association (NSAA) in 1962, for instance, an organization which boasted 95 dues-paying members five years later and 554 by 1972.<sup>31</sup> The ski industry also spawned its own publications: *Skiing Trade News* in 1964 and *Ski Area News* in 1966. *Ski Area News* enabled area managers to share ideas, technology, and solutions to common problems; *Skiing Trade News* focused on business. With annual buyers' guides for apparel, equipment, and ski area equipment, directories for retail suppliers, ski area suppliers, and sales representatives, reports on the annual trade show's fashion and equipment, sections on repair services, late season retailing, displays, and even a sales training manual, *Skiing Trade News* told how to point out and fill every possible consumer need.

Editors documented an increasingly large and complex retail industry. With the application of modern technology to the development and production of ski equipment like plastic ski boots, prestige name producers and retailers were forced to share the market with newer companies. Scarce materials and skilled labor no longer limited the supply of goods, and manufacturers diversified their products. Ongoing research and development meant that new, better models--of skis, boots, bindings, and poles--came out every year. Technological advances made it necessary to purchase new equipment every single year to keep up-to-date;

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<sup>31</sup>"Inside NSAA." *Ski Area News*, 7 (spring 1972), 28.

changing fashion mandates similarly reinforced the importance of buying new clothes regularly. Retailers thus found themselves with more complicated and annually out-dated inventories. They encouraged consumers to keep buying the newest, "hottest" equipment.<sup>32</sup> Ski industry wheels churned to create and market products that were as fashionable as they were practical. Contemporary American culture reinforced this kind of marketing. The effect was great retail sales. Controlling their constantly out-dated inventories led retailers to cut prices on older merchandise, a practice which consumers loved and came to expect. In January of 1968 "shops were reporting sales increases well in excess of the 10 to 15 percent gains that had been considered the industry's norm," and one trade magazine editor predicted bigger and bigger retailers would get involved in the industry. The next season, the industry enjoyed 20% growth and the editor exclaimed "what was a slowly developing trend now looks like an invasion." Giant sporting goods companies including Brunswick, Spalding, Wilson, and others had joined the ski business, promising to increase production and sales of ski equipment and improve the sport's visibility.<sup>33</sup>

In this world, growth was gospel and sales meant everything. Those with desire and a little training could go a long way. "Want to turn your skiing knowledge into cash?" one article asked. "Learn, young man," the author responded, "and grow into the industry." "Just as the hunter must learn to stalk his prey," he continued, "the [ski] salesman must learn to capture his sometimes elusive sale."<sup>34</sup> Targets caught in the industry's crosshairs, skiers found themselves convinced, cajoled, and bullied into spending their money on products

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<sup>32</sup>John Henry Auran, "New Realities for the Ski Retailer," *Skiing Trade News*, 9 (Spring 1972), 247-248.

<sup>33</sup>AHG, "From the Editor," *Skiing Trade News*, 5 (January 1968), 6; AHG, "From the Editor," *Skiing Trade News*, 6 (Spring 1969), 8.

<sup>34</sup>Frank Coffey, "A Sales Primer for the Rookie," *Skiing Trade News*, 8 (Fall 1971), 43.

ranging from new skis, boots, and parkas to the date-getting Chrysler Plymouth. Advertisements and marketing campaigns peeked out from around every corner. Articles in *Skiing Trade News* popped up with titles including "Selling Dixie, the Over-looked Southern Ski Market," and "How to Transform a Non-Skier into a New Skier-Customer by Throwing a Big Bash on a Mountain." These articles taught that aggressive marketing and "a pioneering outlook" could "turn potential into actual skiers, and, not so coincidentally, make the cash register jingle;" or, how "Atlanta's unmined skiing population can be the nugget of the retailer who out-promotes all comers."<sup>35</sup> At once prey, cash register jinglers, and precious nuggets, skiers' identities grew increasingly complex. Advertisements further encouraged skiers that they could be anyone at all, if properly outfitted and attired, of course. Streeter and Quarles' ads, for instance, poked fun at skier stereotypes at the same time they enticed customers to emulate them by purchasing appropriate equipment and clothing (Figure 2).<sup>36</sup> Other advertisements for ski fashion promised beauty, sex appeal, and European charm along with the clothes. Skiers during the 1960s who visited destination resorts found themselves inextricably entwined with the process of consumption.

Nor could they simply escape to the mountain. As clothing stores and equipment retailers courted customers, so did ski areas themselves. America's post-war consumerism rested, in many respects, on a corresponding leisure culture that encouraged Americans to get out of the house and take a vacation. By 1960 Americans had twice as many hours for recreation as they did in the 1920s, an increase in leisure that led to the rise of mass tourism. Skiing and tourism dovetailed nicely. As early as 1946 one Aspen local declared that skiing is "part of

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<sup>35</sup>Mike Maginn, "Selling Dixie, the Over-looked Southern Ski Market," *Skiing Trade News*, 7 (Winter 1970), 38-41; George Schelling, "How to Transform a Non-Skier into a New Skier-Customer by Throwing a Big Bash on a Mountain," *Skiing Trade News*, 7 (Spring 1970), 172, 181.

<sup>36</sup>"Funny Ads," *Skiing Trade News*, 6 (December 1969), 56-57.

"Funny Ads," *Skiing Trade News*, 6 (December 1966), 56-57.

Figure 2. Streeter and Quarles advertisement, n.d.

a winter vacation, and a vacation is a thing that people will want as long as they remain to be people." "More and more people," he noticed, "are finding that winter vacations can be as much fun if not more fun than summer holidays."<sup>37</sup> His predictions for Aspen's success as a ski resort held true for Colorado as a whole. Neither Aspen nor the state, however, simply fell into prosperity. As new cars and two week family vacations became the norm, states found themselves competing for tourists' business. Colorado and its ski areas entered the fray with vigor. Governor Ed Johnson appealed to the U.S. Senate to fund an interstate highway over the Continental Divide in Colorado, arguing that tourism was Colorado's second largest industry and the state could not afford to see tourists diverted north and south of its Rockies.<sup>38</sup> Ski area owners teamed up with Colorado politicians and highway officials who, along with President Eisenhower himself, convinced Congress in 1957 to grant the state federal assistance for a four-lane highway over the mountains and a tunnel under the Continental Divide.<sup>39</sup>

Ski industry market analysts interpreted this event as an important contribution to growth since it would tremendously reduce travel time to Colorado's Rockies.<sup>40</sup> It was also a sign of good things to come, proof that the state's mountains merited visiting. Although the Eisenhower Tunnel did not open until 1973, Colorado's roads ushered unprecedented volumes of traffic through the state and to its ski areas in the 1960s. "From every state (and many foreign nations) they come," one author noted in 1966, "skiers bound for Colorado snow centers

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<sup>37</sup>Leonard Woods, "Aspen Ski Club to Celebrate Opening of Longest Chair Lift," *Aspen Times*, 12 December, 1946, 1.

<sup>38</sup>"Big Ed Makes Plea for East-West Link," *Denver Post*, 13 April, 1955, 1, as cited in Thomas Alexis Thomas, "Colorado and the Interstate Highways: A Study in the Continuity of Western Tradition" (M.A. thesis, University of Colorado, 1991), 17.

<sup>39</sup>Thomas, 17-18, 30, 71-72, 77-78, 90-92.

<sup>40</sup>J. B. Kline, "Western Mountain Region Study," Business Research Division, Graduate School of Business Administration, University of Colorado, Boulder, 1967, 4-5.

that rival the long-established ski spas of the Continent."<sup>41</sup> Aspen Mountain, one of the most remote ski areas, more than doubled its attendance from 1960-61 to 1970-71. In spite of several new areas in Colorado and the western U.S., the area went from 107,000 visits to 276,000.<sup>42</sup> Between 1966 and 1970 in La Plata County, home of Durango and Purgatory ski area, auto tourists increased annually by 11%, air tourists by 17%, and lodging receipts increased annually by 14%.<sup>43</sup> This growth represented the rise of a national leisure culture and a growing tourist industry, and emphasized Colorado's ski industry as embedded within them both.

The pursuit of tourism compelled Colorado's politicians to lobby for their own highway. It also fostered competition between ski areas and other destination resorts, and among ski areas themselves. Sometimes it called for cooperation. In this context, marketing and public relations departments became invaluable. Vail initiated the trend. Robert Parker, a former editor of *Skiing* magazine and 10th Mountain veteran, became Vail's first director of marketing in 1961. Instead of relying on instructors or area managers to use their social contacts to talk up the area or produce the occasional ski film as Aspen had in the 1940s, Vail hired Parker to focus on public relations full time.<sup>44</sup> Thanks to him, according to one author, "ski journalists and industry flacks everywhere were pounding the drums for Vail long before the first lift ticket was sold."<sup>45</sup> By the later 1960s the *Skiing Area News* was publishing articles explaining how other ski areas could market themselves better and attract more business, winter and summer. "For Summer

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<sup>41</sup>Alex Katz, "Skiing," *Colorful Colorado*, 1 (Winter 1966), 65.

<sup>42</sup>Paul Hauk, "Aspen Mountain Ski Area Chronology" (U.S.D.A. Forest Service, White River National Forest, 1979), 5.

<sup>43</sup>Langdon, 53.

<sup>44</sup>John Litchfield, interview by the author, 29 September 1994, Denver, Colorado, audio tape and transcript, 5, AHS; Pfeifer and Lund, 134; Dick and Miggs Durrance, interview with Jeanette Darnauer, 18 August, 1993, Aspen, Colorado, video tape and transcript, 14, AHS.

<sup>45</sup>William Oscar Johnson, "A Vision Fulfilled," *Sports Illustrated*, 30 January, 1989, 77.

Profits, Try A Little Imagination" described one California area's efforts to grab their share of tourists. "This business is too competitive to allow you to overlook any possibilities which might build clientele," said the area's manager. He hosted summer events such as beauty pageants, marathon runs, camera contests, straw skiing, and bicycle races to attract summer business and improve the area's visibility.<sup>46</sup> Other articles explained how best to use radio and television in marketing plans, even how to use methods that Disney's "imagineers" had developed to tackle the parking, crowd control, and lift line problems that threatened to keep customers from coming back to ski areas as well as theme parks.<sup>47</sup>

While individual ski areas did what they could to advertise on their own, they also teamed up with surrounding areas to attract tourist dollars to their region. Colorado's resorts created a powerful coalition, bringing out-of-state dollars to the Rockies and establishing the ski industry as a significant part of Colorado's economy. Colorado Ski Country USA kicked the marketing spree off in 1963, actively promoting the group and its areas on radio and television and at regional ski shows. In the mid-1960s Robert Parker of Vail started a campaign called "Ski the Rockies" with the support of ten major Rocky Mountain resorts. Their goal was to get Eastern skiers who had been skiing in Europe to come to the Rockies instead, and they achieved it by convincing tour operators and travel agents to promote the region.<sup>48</sup> Airline companies joined in and advertised vacation

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<sup>46</sup>Burt Sims, "For Summer Profits, Try A Little Imagination," *Skiing Area News*, 2 (April 1967), 30.

<sup>47</sup>Martin Padley, "Are Radio & TV Good For You?" *Skiing Area News*, 4 (Spring 1969), 50; Ron Taylor, "Add One Large Crowd," *Skiing Area News*, 5 (Spring 1970), 24.

<sup>48</sup>Member areas included Aspen Highlands and Aspen Skiing Corporation areas, Breckenridge, Winter Park, Steamboat Springs, Vail, and Taos Ski Valley, Sun Valley, Park City, and Jackson Hole outside of Colorado. As destination resorts with similar characteristics but different strengths, member areas complimented each other and offered tourists from the East and even Europe a variety of skiing experiences. Johnson, 77; Mike Korologos, "Bringing Our Skiers Back Home," *Skiing Area News*, 6 (Fall 1971), 34.

packages to the Rockies. United Airlines supported the campaign since it was a domestic carrier interested in keeping tourists in America; later on other airlines ran similar ads. "Colorado's spectacular high country skiing is the best," one brochure exclaimed in 1976, "and, to save you money, Continental has a wide selection of special low-cost air fares. Nothing," it insisted, "can hold you back!"<sup>49</sup> Once teamed up with airline carriers and travel agents, Colorado's ski industry took off.

First formed in the 1940s and 1950s, Colorado's identity as the ideal skiing region only improved with this kind of industry marketing. Skier-tourists from all over the country turned the sport into one of the state's most important industries, but frequented a small group of cosmopolitan resorts and left the rest for locals. People from Texas, Arizona, and New Mexico fleshed out the local skiing population at areas in the southern part of Colorado such as Purgatory.<sup>50</sup> Larger destination resorts including Aspen, Vail, Winter Park, and Snowmass appealed to skier-tourists from the Midwest, the East, and the South, as well as to those from other western states and within Colorado.<sup>51</sup> Indeed, more out-of-state skiers spent their vacations in Colorado through the 1960s than ever before. Numbering 30,000 in the 1955-56 season, thirteen years later out-of-state skiers accounted for over 986,000 skier-visits state-wide.<sup>52</sup> More out-of-state skiers came to Colorado than to any other western state. Part of America's post-war

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<sup>49</sup>"Ski Colorado," Continental Airlines brochure (1976-77), pamphlet, 3, Recreational Skiing file, CHS.

<sup>50</sup>Chet Anderson, interview by the author, 7 June, 1994, Durango, Colorado, tape recording and transcript, 2. They also frequented ski areas in New Mexico such as Sierra Blanca and Taos Ski Valley. See Lund, "The Texans Are Coming," 90.

<sup>51</sup>Scullo, 32.

<sup>52</sup>Allen, 35. Based on a total skier-visit figure from a different study, out-of-state skiers made up over 42% of Colorado's total skier-visits that season. The state total for skier-visits that season was 2,329,546 according to Page Dabney, "An Impact Study--The Colorado Ski Industry: A Study of the Influence of the Industry Upon the Economies of Selected Mountain Counties and Communities," Colorado Ski Country USA, 1974, updated 1976, 17.

leisure and consumer culture, they and their in-state companions spent over \$23.5 million on Colorado ski trips during the 1963-64 season.<sup>53</sup>

The 1960s thus mark the period during which Colorado skiers took on powerful new identities as vacationers, tourists, and consumers. Their increasing numbers and broader representation changed the sport and its meanings. Their economic power carved a niche for them in Colorado's economy and encouraged members of the ski industry to create destination ski resorts geared towards their needs and desires. Such changes in the sport translated directly to the physical, economic, demographic, and ideological landscape of Colorado's ski resorts.

#### Ski Culture Meets Place: Colorado's Destination Resorts

The highly constructed and managed landscapes of Colorado's ski areas represented more than mere accommodations for growing numbers of skiers. They attracted and reflected the particular kind of skiers that frequented their slopes. Smaller areas or those within a two hours' drive of Denver attracted skiers for a day or a weekend. Those who courted customers from farther away developed into "destination resorts," where skiers stayed for a week or more. Small communities or merely grazing land before the war, these resorts became playgrounds for vacationers from all over the country and even the world. The ski industry and its accompanying consumer culture took on new significance in these places and altered much more than the physical landscape. Colorado's destination resorts acquired a new economic focus that merged sometimes uncomfortably with older ones; they sprouted new homes, businesses, and condos; they attracted new residents who set themselves apart from the "old timers" yet eventually called themselves "locals" in

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<sup>53</sup>California had the most skier-visits of any western state during the 1964-65 season, followed by Colorado and then Washington. Twenty-five percent of Colorado's skiers came from out-of-state, however, compared to 2% of California's and 7% of Washington's. Kline, 21, 23, 25.

contrast to the still newer residents arriving regularly; and they adopted images for themselves, usually stereotypically western or European, which attracted tourists and further shaped their towns. Economically, physically, demographically, and ideologically, then, the ski industry and America's skier-tourists changed the face of Colorado's mountain landscapes. This complex and sometimes difficult process crafted destination resorts into places that looked and acted very differently from other Colorado mountain towns.

As the residents of Aspen, Colorado learned, achieving destination resort-hood could be a confusing process. Accompanying economic, demographic, and ideological transformations rarely occurred in a clear or predictable manner; they usually crept up behind visions of wealth and pounced all at once when residents were looking the other way. The story of Aspen demonstrates the close and complex relationship among these transformations--a point that deserves emphasis before discussing each one in more depth.

Many locals in the 1940s anticipated Aspen's Lift No. 1 as a welcome relief to the depressed mining, farming, and ranching economy that had characterized their town for the last fifty years. "The opening of the long-awaited chair lift," ski club member Leonard Woods declared, "is perhaps the first large and really tangible sign that Aspen has found a new, good, and profitable way of life." Town residents excited about the ski area, moreover, encouraged the community to follow up on the economic potential the area represented. "There are many things other than skiing that go to make up a fine winter resort that people will constantly want to come back to," Woods continued. "It is up to us to find out what these things are, and to improve, develop, and institute them here."<sup>54</sup> As a ski club member and local booster, Woods spoke for a varied group of Aspenites. Tenth Mountain

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<sup>54</sup>Leonard Woods, "Aspen Ski Club to Celebrate Opening of Longest Chair Lift," *Aspen Times*, 12 December, 1946, 1.

Division veterans eager to embark upon careers in the ski industry had joined the ski club and supported Aspen's growth as a resort by 1946. Local support for skiing, then, had already been influenced by newcomers who settled in town and began to call Aspen home.

Aspen's development as a resort took an even more complicated turn when another set of newcomers acted on their own vision of the town's future. Chicago businessman and patron of the arts Walter Paepcke, with his wife Elizabeth, had stumbled on to the town more or less by chance and decided it would make a perfect cultural oasis. They set out, accordingly, to revive and rebuild Aspen as "the ideal American town," where intellectual activities, cultural events, and Rocky Mountain scenery would recruit and inspire an elite population. Paepcke envisioned a town landscape to match these high expectations and so bought up town lots and their dilapidated buildings for back taxes, sprucing them up with the help of architect Walter Gropius and Bauhaus designer Herbert Bayer. By 1948 the group had restored the nineteenth-century Hotel Jerome and Wheeler Opera House, as well as a number of homes, to their Victorian splendor. Not particularly fond of skiing, Paepcke wanted to attract intellectual elites to his new mecca. "We want writers and scientists and artists and businessmen," he said, "and we want them to be citizens of Aspen, not seasonal visitors."<sup>55</sup> He organized and advertised a bicentennial celebration of Goethe's birth for 1949 in a grand effort to promote culture and attract such a citizenry. Albert Schweitzer, José Ortega y Gasset, Thornton Wilder, the Minneapolis Symphony, and Artur Rubinstein, among others, came to town. The celebration drew a select audience from all over the country--plus some skiers who had decided to stay in town for the summer--and it spawned the Aspen Institute and later annual events including the Aspen Music Festival and

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<sup>55</sup>Leavelle, Charles, "Design for Real Living Found by Chicagoan in Ghost City He Revived," unidentified article clipping, 1947, Walter Paepcke biography file, AHS.

the International Design Conference.<sup>56</sup> As Paepcke had hoped, a number of social and cultural elites from Denver and Chicago bought vacation homes in Aspen from which they enjoyed scenery and summer activities as seasonal residents.

In the meantime, skiers had come to town and set up local businesses to support themselves, imposing a different vision upon the mining, farming, and ranching landscapes left from the nineteenth century. Small sport shops, restaurants, lodges, and retail businesses opened their doors, counting on Aspen's growing population of seasonal residents and visitors to keep their owners employed. Layers of economic development thus piled up in this small community, as did proponents of each model, old and new. Such activity drew the attention of the national press in the late 1940s. *Look* magazine wrote that "sportsmen, artists, architects, actors and teachers have brought excitement to former Colorado ghost town," and *Collier's* noted that "for forty years the once bustling town of Aspen, Colorado was virtually abandoned. Then someone fitted it with skis and now everything's booming again."<sup>57</sup>

"Old timers" watched this process with varying emotions. Still hoping for the resurgence of silver mining, some long-time residents welcomed tourism only as a temporary antidote to slow times. One man who had come to Aspen in 1879 said of tourists in 1955: "we're getting used to 'em. They bring in the most money," he explained, "so we like to see them come."<sup>58</sup> Of Paepcke himself they were less sure. Some of the "more corrugated characters," one local writer noted, "looked upon the change with a wry distaste." "To them," he wrote, "this sudden

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<sup>56</sup>For more on Paepcke see James Sloan Allen, *The Romance of Commerce and Culture: Capitalism, Modernism, and the Chicago-Aspen Crusade for Cultural Reform* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983); for more on Paepcke and his relationship to Aspen's ski history, see Annie Gilbert, "Re-Creation Through Recreation: Aspen Skiing from 1870-1970," manuscript, 1995, AHS.

<sup>57</sup>Patricia Coffin, "Aspen," *Look*, 8 (November 1949), 59-67; Evan Wylie, "Ghost Town on Skis," *Colliers*, 7 February, 1948.

<sup>58</sup>Pearl Anoe, "Aspen Was No Ghost Town," *Chrysler Events Owner's Magazine*, August, 1955, 15.

imposition of a symphony orchestra, erudite professors explaining the nature of man and why he should read Great Books . . . is simply a nightmare in lace pants, too big to ignore but not too big to detest."<sup>59</sup> When presented with the offer of free house paint on the condition that Herbert Bayer choose the colors, the now-famous story goes, Aspen residents turned Paepcke down to a person. Aspen was still their town, their actions implied, and they refused to accept his authority over them or their houses.

Locals who enjoyed skiing themselves or had kids in the ski club embraced the idea of Aspen's winter development with more enthusiasm. The Willoughbys, who ran the Midnight Mine on the back side of Aspen Mountain in the 1930s and '40s, shuttled visiting skiers up the mountain in their truck before any lifts offered smoother rides. The Marolt boys, whose family had come to Aspen in the nineteenth century and survived the transition from mining to ranching, helped ease the town into the skiing world by becoming world-class skiers in the 1950s and '60s and taking local pride along with them. Still others found themselves employed by Paepcke or the Aspen Ski Corporation. By then old-timers had watched a series of newcomers move to town and settle in, redefining themselves as "locals." Such demographic changes accompanied Aspen's economic shift as the town grew into a destination resort.<sup>60</sup> Old timers who abstained from the world of tourism and skiing distinguished themselves as outsiders; those more accepting of change joined in. By the mid-1950s one author's description of the Red Onion bar

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<sup>59</sup>Luke Short, "Nightmare in Lace Pants," *Empire Magazine*, n.d., 1950, 12-13, clipping, pam file, CUA.

<sup>60</sup>For more on Aspen's transition from mining and ranching to skiing, as well as more in the Willoughbys and Marolts, see Bill Marolt, interview by the author, 11 August, 1994, Boulder, Colorado, tape recording and transcript; John Litchfield, interview by the author, 29 September, 1994, Denver, Colorado, tape recording and transcript, 3-4; and Elizabeth Paepcke, "Memories of Aspen," manuscript, n.d., Elizabeth Paepcke biography file, AHS.

fit the town as a whole: "A mixed crowd is found here," she wrote, "as the old-timers sit in remote corners and watch society rallying around the bar."<sup>61</sup>

Aspen became transformed into a destination resort. New people arrived, local real estate and the ski area boomed, and long-time residents and families evolved into supporting cast or local characters. While distinct in its particular story line--in the interests of Walter and Elizabeth Paepcke, for instance--Aspen's complex relationship among its residents old and new, its physical development, and its changing economic focus characterized the growth of Colorado's destination resorts in general. Neither full-fledged support, all-out conflict, nor simple abandonment described the range of local reactions to resort development. Residents involved themselves in every aspect of their area's growth to different degrees, helping the ski industry alter the economic, physical, and demographic landscapes of their town and shaping its public image, as well.

While some of Colorado's destination resorts virtually appeared from nowhere, most represented an economic transition from mining or ranching to tourism. Aspen, Breckenridge, Crested Butte, and Telluride all started originally as mining towns in the nineteenth century. Durango and Fraser, base towns for Purgatory and Winter Park, grew along with the railroads. Steamboat Springs and the areas around Vail and Snowmass all supported ranchers and farmers before skiers, though only Steamboat could boast its own town.<sup>62</sup> From the 1930s to the

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<sup>61</sup>Anoe, 15.

<sup>62</sup>For local histories of these areas, see Richard L. and Suzanne Fetter, *Telluride: From Pick to Powder* (Caldwell, ID: The Caxton Printers, Ltd., 1990); David Lavender, *The Telluride Story* (Ridgway, CO: Wayfinder Press, 1987); Carl Ubbelohde, Maxine Benson, and Duane A. Smith, *A Colorado History*, 6th ed. (Boulder, CO: Pruett Publishing Co., 1972); Duane A. Smith, *Rocky Mountain Boom Town: A History of Durango, Colorado* (Niwot, CO: University Press of Colorado, 1980); June Simonton, *Vail: Story of a Colorado Mountain Valley* (Denver: Knudsen Printing, 1987); John Rolfe Burroughs, *Steamboat in the Rockies* (Fort Collins CO: The Old Army Press, 1974); Jean Wren, *Steamboat Springs and the "Treacherous and Speedy Skee"* (Steamboat Springs CO: Steamboat Pilot, 1972); Mark Fiester, *Blasted Beloved Breckenridge* (Boulder: Pruett Publishing Co., 1973); Duane A. Smith, *When Coal Was King: A History of Crested*

'50s most of these areas were experiencing something less than economic booms. Of Aspen in the 1930s and 40s one local said "it was all dead, dormant here."<sup>63</sup> As in other declining mining towns or places that could sustain only a small agricultural community, younger generations had fewer and fewer reasons to stay home. They left in search of education, better jobs, and more exciting times. One Telluride miner recalled that "people would go to high school here and go to college, they weren't going to return to go to a mine, so we had a population made up of babies up to eighteen year olds, and from that eighteen year old the next person was 35 or 40 years old, and it was starting to get worse and worse." "Our children would not be here today, that's for sure," he emphasized, if it were not for the ski area.<sup>64</sup> Indeed, some farm and ranch families even encouraged their sons and daughters to leave because, as one Roaring Fork Valley mother put it, ranching was "just a lot of hard work for not much in return."<sup>65</sup> During the 1950s and '60s mountain valley farmers and ranchers worked to keep up with rising costs of land, labor, machinery, taxes, and federal grazing permits on top of the environmental limitations placed on them by their high altitude and short growing season.

Many miners, farmers, and ranchers across Colorado's Rockies reached the decision to sell their land and move to warmer, less isolated climes--not coincidentally at about the same time that resort developers began noticing the

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*Butte, Colorado, 1880-1952* (Golden CO: Colorado School of Mines Press, 1984); Malcolm J. Rohrbough, *Aspen: The History of a Silver Mining Town, 1879-1893* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), Anhe M. Gilbert, "Rural People With Connections: Farm and Ranch Families in the Roaring Fork Valley, Colorado" (MA thesis, University of Colorado, 1992).

<sup>63</sup>Red Rowland, interview by Elli Fox, 12 February, 1987, Aspen, Colorado, tape recording #C57, AHS.

<sup>64</sup>Bill Mahoney, interview by the author, 6 June, 1994, Telluride, Colorado, tape recording and transcript, 5.

<sup>65</sup>Art and Amelia Trentaz, interview by the author, 26 March, 1992, Aspen, Colorado, tape recording, AHS.

potential for skiing and tourism in these areas.<sup>66</sup> The landscape that had offered up its ore, grazing land, or both, drew new attention with its snow, skiing terrain, and scenery. In some Colorado towns skiing and tourism thus represented yet another chance at the economic success that had proved so short-lived with mining and so elusive with farming and ranching.

Neither was skiing radically different from these earlier mountain economic systems. Mining, ranching, farming, and skiing have all depended upon natural resources within a particular landscape for their survival, be they mineral deposits, mountain grasses, fertile soil, or beautiful landscapes covered with snow five months out of the year. Each have faced bust cycles as a result of outside forces --in the ski industry's case, slowed growth due to years of little snowfall or national declines in leisure spending--and they have all tried to smooth out natural and economic cycles by improving technology. Each industry has finally depended upon the use of federal land for its success, and so ski area managers and developers, like miners, ranchers, and farmers, have had to establish a working relationship with the federal government and its land use policies. Their common dependence upon the mountain landscape and its resources compelled participants in each economic system, as well as the federal government, to try and minimize risks and maximize profits by altering the mountain landscape and increasing their dependence upon technology. Trail design, snow making, and special use permits were the ski industry's equivalents to the mining techniques and laws, farm equipment and subsidized land use practices, and range management and grazing permits that supported the previous economies. Changes in mountain landscapes brought about by destination resorts and their accompanying tourist

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<sup>66</sup>See Mahoney; and Annie Gilbert Coleman, "A Hell of a Time All the Time': Farmers, Ranchers, and the Roaring Fork Valley During 'The Quiet Years,'" *Montana: The Magazine of Western History* (forthcoming, Spring 1997).

economy, therefore, took vaguely recognizable forms and depended on dynamics reminiscent of earlier endeavors in the same places.

This new layer upon the economic landscape incorporated some of the same people, too. While many local residents sold their land to developers or remained in the margins of the growing ski industry as skeptical observers, some joined in. Their experience in the mines or on farms and ranches, in fact, sometimes made them indispensable. To turn to an example outside Colorado, one ski area in Minnesota earned a reputation for its high quality snow grooming. "If I had to pinpoint one thing [to explain our success]," one of the owners said, "it would have to be our farm background." As farmers, the area's two owners approached the problem of snow grooming by adapting farm equipment to the task.<sup>67</sup> Their success speaks to the technical similarity between farming and skiing, as well as to the continuity some residents experienced between the two economies--a continuity not limited to Minnesota. Some ranchers in the Roaring Fork Valley earned money in their off-seasons (winter) by running lifts. They did such a good job that *Skiing Area News* published an article commending Aspen's lift operators as key public relations figures--ironically for an industry that had displaced many of them from their ranches.<sup>68</sup> A few local residents rose to higher positions within the ski industry. Red Rowland, the son of an Aspen miner, grew up working on local ranches and building diversion tunnels. He started working for the Aspen Skiing Corporation in 1946 as a private contractor and quickly rose to the status of assistant manager, a post from which he would retire thirty years later.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>67</sup>Dick Dillman, "Snow Grooming: A Harrowing Experience," *Ski Area News*, 1 (January 1966), 22-24.

<sup>68</sup>John Henry Auran, "Lift Attendant: No. 1 P.R. Man," *Skiing Area News*, 2 (October 1967), 58-59.

<sup>69</sup>Sam Stapleton, Art Trentaz, and two of the four Gerbaz brothers, at least, worked as lift operators for the Aspen Skiing Corporation. Stapleton did so for 34 years. Sam and Elizabeth Stapleton, interview by the author, 24 March, 1992, Aspen, Colorado, tape recording, AHS; Arthur and Amelia Trentaz, interview by the author, 26 March, 1992, Aspen, Colorado, tape recording, AHS; Cherie Gerbaz

People with mining backgrounds, too, helped ski areas with their technical knowledge and forged a link between old and new economic landscapes. Telluride miner Keith Blackburn, who "knew tramways," started working at Purgatory building lifts before it opened and stayed on as a lift operator. Bill Mahoney used his mining expertise, local business connections, and familiarity with the mountains around his home town to help develop and manage Telluride's ski resort.<sup>70</sup> Despite their reputation as crotchety critics, quite a few Aspen miners went to work for the Aspen Skiing Corporation as well.<sup>71</sup> While far from the majority, these long-time local residents participated in the ski industry and by doing so supported the argument that skiing, even as it radically altered Colorado communities, represented the latest in a series of economic landscapes inscribed upon the Rocky Mountains.

Along with a new economic layer, the ski industry also introduced its own demographic scene to mountain communities. Connected locals, newcomers with vision, and investors with cash combined their efforts to help skiing and its accompanying tourism take root in these places.<sup>72</sup> Success for them, the industry, and the town depended upon attracting business and tourists. In place of a mining

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Oates, interview by the author, 13 July, 1994, Aspen, Colorado, tape recording and transcript, 12, AHS; Joy Caudill, interview by the author, 26 July, 1994, Aspen, Colorado, tape recording and transcript, 4, AHS; Mary Eshbaugh Hayes, "Red Rowland and the Ski Lifts," *Aspen Times*, 16 December, 1976, C1; Kathleen Daily and Gaylord T. Guenin, *Aspen: The Quiet Years* (Aspen, CO: Red Ink Inc., 1994), 415-416.

<sup>70</sup>Mike Elliott, interview by the author, 7 June, 1994, Purgatory, Colorado; Mahoney.

<sup>71</sup>The locally-known Tekoucich and Dolinsek brothers, for instance, all put time in with the ASC doing everything from maintenance work and building lifts to acting as trail boss and filling in for Red Rowland as assistant manager. Daily, 495, 499, 223.

<sup>72</sup>Locals eager to promote the economic health of their home often invested in the ski resort that would change the shape of their town. Telluride residents invested in the ski resort in the late 1960s, even after losing money on a similar venture a decade earlier. They sold Frank Zoline their land and bought stock in his company. Durango residents, too, invested in Purgatory ski area through the San Juan Development Corporation, a company formed by area developers Ray and Vincent Duncan. Mahoney; Elliott.

economy's plethora of transient single men and the more permanent, family-centered economy typical of farming and ranching areas, therefore, skiing and tourism attracted waves of small businesspeople, second home owners, workers, and vacationers to mountain towns that came and went with the tourist seasons.<sup>73</sup> Many of these temporary residents, moreover, enjoyed themselves so thoroughly that they decided to stay. As a result, the small group of long-time residents left over from the area's mining or ranching days found themselves accumulating layers of increasingly recent residents eager to define themselves as locals.

From the start, visitors found themselves enamored with the landscape and the chance to be a part of a small community. Historian John Jakle has defined tourism as "a principal means by which modern people define for themselves a sense of identity."<sup>74</sup> Coming from cities and towns across the country and even the world, visitors could take on a new identity in the western towns and ski areas that were transforming into destination resorts. Visiting places like Aspen, Vail, and Steamboat Springs not only offered a relaxing, scenic, and adventuresome contrast to their everyday lives, it also tantalized them with the opportunity of making that world their own. The chance to get in on the ground floor of a burgeoning resort and call its scenic landscape and local community home has attracted people to Colorado's mountain towns since the 1940s. During World War Two, some Tenth Mountain Division members plotted their return to the area surrounding Camp Hale. "We had already talked during the time we were at Camp Hale," Percy Rideout recalled, "about wouldn't [Aspen] be a great place to come after the war--wouldn't

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<sup>73</sup>For more on these demographic models, see Walter Nugent, "Frontiers and Empires in the Late Nineteenth Century," in Patricia Nelson Limerick, Clyde A. Milner II, and Charles E. Rankin, eds., *Trails: Toward a New Western History* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1991); and Gilbert, "Rural People With Connections."

<sup>74</sup>John A. Jakle, *The Tourist: Travel in Twentieth-Century North America* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1985), 22.

this be a great place to live, have a ski school, and work together."<sup>75</sup> More than a beautiful landscape, Aspen represented a place where Rideout and his companions could work at what they loved and do so together. Veterans like Rideout and other hopeful skiers moved to Aspen and other towns, opening up businesses ranging from ski schools and ski shops to restaurants, lodges, and architectural practices.<sup>76</sup>

The sense of community in resort towns like Aspen--a result of their geographic isolation and their small, "colorful" populations of old-timers--drew city folk to the country for their vacations. Many of them bought second homes so they could participate in that community from the inside rather than as visitors. Walter and Elizabeth Paepcke told their friends they should come out to Aspen, that "we love it and want to start something big and make it well known." They convinced photographer Ference Berko and Bauhaus designer Herbert Bayer to move there in the 1940s, when "it was a beautiful place but all the town was 300 miners."<sup>77</sup> June Hodges told her husband, who was a prominent Denver lawyer and president of the Arlberg Club, "we have just got to have a little place in Aspen--it is the most wonderful little town, beautiful mountains, and the locals all were wonderful."<sup>78</sup> Friends of the Paepckes from Chicago, Arlberg Club members from Denver, and other upper-class urbanites invested in summer homes in Aspen--homes they used in the winter, for skiing, as well. As John Litchfield remembered

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<sup>75</sup>Percy Rideout, interview by Ruth Whyte, 24 March, 1991, Aspen, Colorado, tape recording and transcript, AHS.

<sup>76</sup>For example, in Aspen Steve Knowlton bought and operated the Golden Horn, a bar and nightclub; John Litchfield helped run the ski school and owned the Red Onion, a restaurant and popular gathering place; Charles Paterson opened the Boomerang Lodge; Elli Iselin opened a clothing store, as did Claus Obermeyer and Thelma and Sandro Sabbatini; and Fritz Benedict worked as an architect after his initial effort at ranching failed. These are only some of the businesspeople attracted to Aspen after the war. Of the many who came to Aspen, quite a few moved on to other ski resort towns as those areas developed, bringing their experience from Aspen along with them.

<sup>77</sup>Ferenc Berko, Music Associates of Aspen "High Notes" talk, 29 June, 1994, Aspen, Colorado.

<sup>78</sup>June Hodges, interview by the author, 19 June, 1994, Denver, Colorado, tape recording and transcript, AHS, 1.

it, "pretty soon [after Paepcke spread the word about Aspen] people came out of the woods and took the place over."<sup>79</sup>

Visitors who came specifically to ski also succumbed to the attractions of the town. Arriving in town for a week or two of vacation and ski lessons, many chose to settle there. "People just came and stayed all winter," Friedl Pfeifer remembered, "and the next thing you knew they were building a house!"<sup>80</sup> Natalie Ginoux first came to Aspen because her aunt asked her to make sure her cousin went back to New York instead of staying in the West. "I came out and I made sure that she went back," Ginoux explained, "but I stayed." Ginoux worked odd jobs for a year or two until she took over the town's only taxi service in 1950.<sup>81</sup> Charlie Paterson bought some land in town after his first visit to ski in the late 1940s; he still runs his Boomerang Lodge on that property.<sup>82</sup> By the 1950s enough skiers visiting Aspen had found ways to stay for the season or even longer that they earned a collective identity. "They'd call themselves ski bums and they'd work in restaurants, cook, set tables, or be waitresses," one long-time resident recalled. "They'd have the day off, and the minute the lifts would close they would head down to work at night."<sup>83</sup> Second-home owners, business people, and employees thus joined local families and old-timers to make up Aspen's community in the 1950s. While separated by occupation and class, these people each made the decision to settle in Aspen for at least part of the year. They all wanted to call the town home and participate in its community as "locals," winter or summer. Visitors, too,

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<sup>79</sup>Litchfield, 4. Litchfield remembered Harold Ross, editor of *The New Yorker*, Bill Douglass and his father, who was chairman of Quaker Oats, a Mr. Bingham who ran the *Louisville Courier*, and Henry Stein from Chicago, all coming out to take a look at Aspen.

<sup>80</sup>Friedl Pfeifer, interview by the author, 21 July, 1994, Aspen, Colorado, tape recording and transcript, AHS, 3.

<sup>81</sup>She sold the taxi business in 1962 but continued to work for different companies in Aspen until 1977, when she retired. Natalie Ginoux, interview by Ruth Whyte, 16 September, 1986, Aspen, Colorado, tape recording and transcript, AHS.

<sup>82</sup>Paterson. See also Caudill, 2.

<sup>83</sup>Oates, 11.

flocked to the area for summer culture and winter sports, adding yet another layer of less permanent Aspenites. "This influx of outsiders," a *Saturday Evening Post* reporter noted in 1950, "has imposed on the old mining community a heady, almost incredible mixture of diverse personalities, ideas and interests."<sup>84</sup>

Aspen developed earliest in this regard; as other Colorado ski areas grew into destination resorts they, too, acquired their own layers of locals. Vail's community, for instance, resulted directly from its development as a destination resort. The town of Vail was incorporated in 1966, four years after the ski area opened and largely shaped by its parent organization, Vail Associates. By 1970, 484 residents lived within the town and hundreds of others lived nearby. The resort's vacation-home owners, tourists, and business people hailed from countries from all over the world; its workforce came from all over America.<sup>85</sup> These disparate people held in common their identities as Vail locals no matter from whence they came. The ski resort united, at least physically, what Vail's pastor described as the town's diverse constituents: "skiers and nonskiers, old-timers and newcomers, hard-nosed businessmen who own expensive houses here and have-not local employees."<sup>86</sup> Nor has this demographic picture simplified. Layers of locals continue to accrue in mountain towns along with resort business and real estate sales, turning destination resort communities into distinct western landscapes.

Physical changes, of course, accompanied ski resorts' new demography and economy. And, while analogous to the growth mining towns saw during their

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<sup>84</sup>Joe Alex Morris, "Aspen, Colorado," *Saturday Evening Post*, 14 October, 1950, 27, pamphlet file, UCBLA.

<sup>85</sup>Peter J. Ognibene, "The Travail of Instant Tyrolia," *DenverPost Empire Magazine*, 10 October, 1971, 11; Home owners hailed from places including Texas and Mexico; business people and resort managers came from as far away as the Northeast and Europe. See Simonton, 166-187. See also Hauk, Vail Ski Area Chronology, 6-7.

<sup>86</sup>Johnson, 78.

nineteenth-century boom years, these changes often startled residents with their speed and scope. Impressive construction on the mountains and at the base areas proved to be only the beginning. Real estate boomed. According to a 1946 article, one real estate man came to Aspen all the way from Florida hoping to buy a small lodge or apartment building, and another from Texas came looking for a dude ranch.<sup>87</sup> By 1950 property that had been unsold at ten dollars a lot in 1945 was worth \$250, and houses once for sale at \$1,200 were hard to get for \$12,000.<sup>88</sup> Sixteen years later the starting price for a good 30-foot lot (two of which were necessary to build a house) had risen to \$7,500, and one woman supposedly rejected a \$90,000 offer for her "hillside shack" and homestead land, originally valued at \$950.<sup>89</sup> New buildings and refurbished old ones rose on this land right along with prices. Retail establishments in Aspen sprouted up too; in the first four years after the lifts opened (from 1946 to 1950) about a dozen more bars had started business.<sup>90</sup> In 1961 alone the town issued licenses to 29 hotels with 1,139 beds, and the next year brought with it resort towns' most characteristic physical feature: condominiums. To accommodate such growth the city authorized a new electric system and decided to pave 14 of its downtown blocks.<sup>91</sup> The "condominium craze," sparked by the prospect of affordable vacation homes, affected resorts across the country and did not slow for over a decade. *Skiing Area News* published an article discussing the relative appeal of condominiums and lodges in destination resorts in 1969. Convincing developers that they needed to build was unnecessary; they wanted only to know what sort of construction would

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<sup>87</sup>Jane Nes, "Money Fever Is Running in Aspen Again," *Denver Post*, 17 March, 1946, clipping, AHS.

<sup>88</sup>Morris, 174.

<sup>89</sup>Al Nakkula, "Aspen, Where Everyone Skis," *Rocky Mountain News*, 9 January, 1966, 52, clipping, AHS.

<sup>90</sup>Morris, 176.

<sup>91</sup>Peggy Clifford and John Macaulay Smith, "The Distressing Rebirth of Aspen," *Denver Post Empire Magazine*, 16 August, 1970, 9.

attract the most customers.<sup>92</sup> Between building vacation homes, lodges, and condominiums, real estate threatened to overtake skiing itself as a catalyst for growth. Ski corporations balanced their management and personnel accordingly, creating real estate divisions within their corporate structures and concerning themselves with growth off the mountain as well as on.<sup>93</sup> "Some small towns are changing," one Coloradan noted in 1970, "sacrificing their singularity to become plush look-alike playgrounds for urbanites."<sup>94</sup> Destination resort communities thus metamorphosed, their landscapes blanketed by a patchwork of architecture beckoning vacationers.

These changes came with their own sets of problems. Old-timers and long-time local families who chose not to participate in the new economic landscape, or who could not keep up with its snowballing momentum, found themselves pushed to the margins of their community. "The people who started [Aspen skiing] and who were enthusiastic in the beginning have mostly sold their homes and moved," Dick Durrance explained in 1993. "The new ones have come in and it's become a community, of, well you might say, outsiders."<sup>95</sup> This layering had political as well as social and economic meaning. "There can be no sense of community without

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<sup>92</sup>John Jerome, "Condominiums or Lodges: Which Should You Have?" *Skiing Area News*, 4 (Spring 1969), 32-33.

<sup>93</sup>This change in emphasis by the LTV corporation which bought Steamboat Springs led general manager Gordon Wren to retire. "Eventually the land became more and more important," he said, "I was too much of an old-timer to believe that things could change that much." Wren, 8. Other men, like Telluride-born Johnny Stevens, worked his way up the corporate ladder to become Senior Vice President of Telluride Ski Resort, the ski company's real estate division. Johnny Stevens, interview by the author, 6 June, 1994, Telluride, Colorado. Aspen had a separate corporation founded by Walter Paepcke which focused on real estate from the start, freeing the Aspen Skiing Company to focus on skiing. When it developed Snowmass developer Bill Janss controlled the real estate development there, leaving operation of the ski area up to the ASC. Both real estate developers and the ASC, needless to say, have profited from each others' activities. For a discussion of Vail's development, see also John Henry Auran, "'Vail-Type Operation'--A Dissection," *Skiing Area News*, 1 (April 1966), 38-42.

<sup>94</sup>Clifford and Smith, 8.

<sup>95</sup>Durrance, 1993, 15.

a sense of power," explained New York Mayor John Lindsay, the keynote speaker at Vail's 1971 Symposium.<sup>96</sup> He was concerned with giving Vail's residents a voice in the town's development to counter the ubiquitous influence that Vail Associates initially exercised over its company town. In Telluride, established residents wielded political power, not the ski company. Newcomers thus came into conflict with old-timers in their effort to shape local growth and define themselves as insiders. "The new finally took over the politics and they liked to make a big to-do about it," one old-timer noted. "They called themselves 'the slate' [and] they got rid of the old cronies in Telluride, guys like me." With the continuous movement of people to resort towns, however, "the slate" could not last. Achieving political status as "locals" placed these people in the same position as those they had worked so hard to oust upon their arrival. Newer residents, in turn, threw them out of the political arena.<sup>97</sup> Defining local and outsider status in this way often placed the newest (and wealthiest) at odds with the families and old-timers who had supported the resort's initial development.

Much of what local residents lost in the political arena, they gained through their cultural power as locals. The consumer and leisure-oriented ski industry sold town and resort images to vacationers as much as they sold the experience of skiing, fashion, or equipment. As a result, ski resorts altered the imagined landscape of mountain towns along with their demographic and economic landscapes. Those imagined landscapes, moreover, usually hinged upon a romanticized version of the town's history. Ski corporations thus refused to let old-timers retreat to complete invisibility. "Locals" provided colorful characters and images for the town that attracted more tourists, who increasingly outnumbered the original locals. Resort developers and marketing experts carefully cultivated these images-

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<sup>96</sup>Ognibene, 11.

<sup>97</sup>Mahoney, 5.

-of western mining towns, cowtowns, or European villages--in order to set their particular ski area off from the competition.<sup>98</sup> They based each image partly on the area's history and partly on what management thought would sell. Vail thus became defined as Bavarian, Steamboat became a wild western cowtown, and Breckenridge, Telluride, and Aspen acquired nineteenth-century mining town identities. Tourists noticed and responded to these images, thereby perpetuating a new ideological landscape to which old-timers lent personality and color. Early Aspen boosters proclaimed "its atmosphere of the old mining days," and the ranching legacy of children ski-joring to school behind the milk truck, as images that would attract tourists and skiers alike.<sup>99</sup> Publicity that emphasized the town's history with headlines like "Aspen Booms Again" reinforced its image as a small mining town on the rise; residents from the mining days validated this image just by their presence and gave the town a character and charm, according to one resident, that set Aspen apart from other resorts.<sup>100</sup> Wized ranchers, too, lent an atmosphere of the "Old West" that appealed to tourists. By 1979 Andre Roch was proud to announce that "Aspen has become not only a winter resort, but a place of culture combining the saga of the wild West, cowboys, and mining with all the modern day entertainments. Long live Aspen with its wild surroundings."<sup>101</sup> The ski industry had, by the late 1970s, crafted an image of Aspen--as part of the "Wild West"--that few long-time residents recognized in the town's history. The personal embodiment of this Aspen image, ironically, was DRC Brown, a man whose career changes made him as exceptional as he was powerful. A "local" who was

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<sup>98</sup>For a discussion of this issue, see Donald J. Mrozek, "The Image of the West in American Sport," *Journal of the American West*, 17 (July 1978), 3-15. For an example of how different areas came across to skiers, see Alex Katz, "Skiing," *Colorful Colorado*, 1 (Winter 1966), 65-67, 84.

<sup>99</sup>Leonard Woods, "Aspen, Now," *American Ski Annual* (1946-47), 159, CHS.

<sup>100</sup>Bill Marolt, interview by the author, 11 August, 1994, Boulder, Colorado, tape recording and transcript, 1, AHS.

<sup>101</sup>Andre Roch, letter or speech, 10 December, 1979, Geneva, Switzerland, Andre Roch biography file, AHS.

born into one of Aspen's founding families, went into the ranching business, and then became president of the Aspen Skiing Corporation, Brown became an important symbol for the town as well as its company boss. His family's extensive landholdings in Aspen, his Yale education, and his management position set him apart, needless to say, from Aspen's other "local" population.

Other resorts--those developed from scratch--exercised even more freedom in shaping their image for tourists. Vail Associates, in particular, could choose "the look, the atmosphere, the layout [they] wanted," because the company controlled the town's development as well as that of the ski area.<sup>102</sup> Vail's managers cultivated a European image designed to appeal to skier-tourists who wanted a cosmopolitan-feeling vacation without traveling to Europe. Colorado Ski Country USA founder Steve Knowlton said Vail's developers knew "they couldn't be another mining town, so the idea was to have a gondola, which most European resorts have, and to build the hotels and the main street . . . [with which] Vail tried to be another European resort."<sup>103</sup> In doing so, the area's founder referred directly not only to alpine skiing's historical roots, but to an elite, European resort culture, that upper-class Americans had followed since the 1910s, and that Averill Harriman had tried to recreate in Sun Valley during the 1930s. Vail's designers made this cultural reference self-consciously. Marketing director Bob Parker described the original reasons for building a gondola at Vail as "prestige, glamour, [and] promotional advantages against major European and domestic resorts." These same reasons, plus the unquestionable popularity of the first gondola, prompted Vail to build a second one in 1968. (An eye towards real estate further convinced them; the new Lion's Head gondola would raise property values at its base area to

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<sup>102</sup>Auran, 38. Vail founder Pete Seibert had attended hotel school in Switzerland after his stint in the Tenth Mountain Division on the assumption that he would some day develop his own ski area--he used his experience and expertise to shape Vail.

<sup>103</sup>Knowlton, 1995, 9.

the same level as those in the original Vail Village.)<sup>104</sup> Vail's choice of lifts, architecture, businesses, and base area development in general created a distinctly European image, and it worked. Developers cashed in on their assumption that skier-tourists--the same clientele responding to Aspen's Old West image--would find it appealing.

Developers at Steamboat Springs worked a different angle. They chose, as Aspen resort managers did, to play off the town's past. Steamboat Springs' roots as a ranching town and the legacy of community skiing which Carl Howelsen started in the 1910s gave them plenty of material. As early as 1946 proponents of Steamboat compared themselves with the "young and brash" Aspen by highlighting a historical "skiing tradition" and an unprecedented level of community involvement in the sport. In these claims they did not lie. The town actually owned the local jumping and skiing area, Howelson Hill, and its schools produced world-class athletes on an amazingly regular basis. "Juvenile delinquency is almost unknown," one reporter explained, "the kids keep busy, tired and happy skiing, and their interests are directed into sports rather than into mischief."<sup>105</sup> *Collier's* published an essay in 1955 that said it all: "Everybody Skis At Steamboat." Indeed, five of the sixteen U.S. Ski Team members in 1954 hailed from the town, population 2,000. Also characterized as a "Ski Happy Town," and more popularly "Ski Town, U.S.A.," Steamboat entered skiers' consciousness as a fun, family, community resort.<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>104</sup>Bill Tanler, "Vail's Case for the Second Gondola," *Skiing Area News*, 4 (Fall 1969), 35-36. See also Mrozek, 9.

<sup>105</sup>Francis Smith, "Ski Town--Ski Padre," *Rocky Mountain Life* (December 1946), 50; Bob Collins, "Steamboat's Unique Plan Produces Ski Champs," *Rocky Mountain News*, 14 February, 1954, 36.

<sup>106</sup>Lucile Maxfield Bogue, "Everybody Skis At Steamboat," *Collier's* 4 February, 1955, clipping, "Ski Town" file, BWML; "Ski Happy Town," *Denver Post Empire Magazine*, 2 November, 1958, 9, clipping, "Ski Town" file, BWML.

Despite its origins as a ranching community, Steamboat Springs only highlighted that part of its history after 1970, when Olympic racer Billy Kidd "came to town." As a teammate and friend of the late Buddy Werner, Kidd reminded people of their lost local hero despite the fact that his own roots lay in Vermont. Kidd's personality and his name --combined with his desire to earn some money in the ski business--provided the perfect cowboy link for Steamboat to capitalize upon its ranching past. By 1970, as well, a downhill ski area at Mount Werner (previously known as Storm Mountain) had taken shape and fallen into the hands of LTV, a large corporation interested in marketing its product to skier-tourists across the country. LTV did not wait long, one ski writer noticed, "to besiege the nation with advertisements full of cowboys, stagecoaches, horses and a sheepishly grinning Bill Kidd."<sup>107</sup> Vermont racer Bill Kidd had transmogrified into Colorado cowboy Billy the Kidd while Steamboat Springs basked in romantic images of the Wild West. No skier or photographer has seen Kidd--a paid employee of the ski area--without his Stetson hat since.

Steamboat Springs, Vail, and Aspen developed distinct images for themselves in the ski world, each one based in part on the area's past (or the sport's European past, in the case of Vail's image). These imagined landscapes re-created local history and infused it with colorful characters and personalities for skier-tourists' consumption. By doing so the ski industry began to mythologize certain people and aspects of the sport's history, merging the European and western influences that shaped each place. Skiers could thus partake in Aspen's second "boom" by staying in the Victorian Hotel Jerome at night and skiing with the legendary Friedl Pfeifer during the day. Vail skier-tourists got a taste of the Old

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<sup>107</sup>Jeff Frees, "The Steamboat Aura," *Steamboat Magazine* (Winter 1974-75), 7, clipping, "Ski Town File," BWML. See also Jerry Hulse, "On the Go" The Cow Town that Kowtows to Skiers," *Los Angeles Times*, 26 October, 1975, X1, clipping, "Ski Town" file, BWML.

World and alpine skiing's earliest roots at the base village. Then they could ski down "Riva Ridge," a trail named in honor of the Tenth Mountain Division, many veterans of which were instrumental in Vail's founding and development. And in Steamboat Springs, skiers found themselves transported to the land of cowboys and sharp shooters--also the hometown of Carl Howelsen and some of America's most successful ski jumpers and alpine racers.

At every turn, it seemed, Colorado's destination resorts merged increasingly mythic images from skiing's international roots with stereotypically western ones. No one seemed to mind. Colorado's resorts and the ski industry continued to grow; skier-tourists flocked to Aspen, Vail, and Steamboat Springs and other well-marketed destination resorts. The resorts that grew up in Colorado's Rocky Mountains presented new economic, physical, demographic, and imagined landscapes to their visitors--landscapes that enabled skier-tourists to experience the myth and magic of western ski towns as well as the freedom and power of skiing down a rugged mountain. In the context of a ski vacation, Victorian mining towns turned ski crazy, European villages in the Rockies, and cowboys transplanted from Vermont all made sense.

As the sport of skiing appealed to more middle-class people during the 1960s, grew increasingly accessible to women and physically challenged people, made a stronger claim as an American sport, and dove into the commercial world of retail sales and marketing, it infused Colorado's economy with in- and out-of state tourist revenues. The sport also acquired new meanings because skiers were no longer an isolated set of athletes or outdoorspeople--they were skier-tourist-consumers, and they exercised every aspect of their identity at Colorado's destination resorts. Distinct landscapes in the Rocky Mountain West, resort towns evolved into havens for skier-tourist-consumers. The consumer/leisure culture of skiing and resort town landscapes each shaped the other. Ski companies and

their related real estate businesses worked hard to attract more skiers by building lodges and creating attractive images. As skiers told their friends about their vacations and perhaps invested in a condo, they perpetuated resort towns' particular images, reinforced their tourist/skiing economy, and reshaped the local population. Ski culture and resort landscapes directly influenced each other, and in their mutual growth they reinforced each other. Skier-tourists and the destination resorts they frequented took on significant roles within Colorado's economy; they also changed the physical, economic, demographic, and imagined shape of many mountain communities.

This combination of skiing culture and destination resort landscape produced a powerful resort ski culture increasingly characterized by its allegiance to conspicuous consumption. This white, wealthy, sexy, and fashionable culture reproduced itself in advertising campaigns and further altered ski resort landscapes. In its celebration of care-free leisure and consumption, it successfully camouflaged the relationships of labor and ethnicity that supported it. Colorado's resort culture also helped shape the mythically European or Western images that destination resorts crafted in their landscapes and redefined them as integral to Colorado skiing. Destination resort culture reinforced and redefined these images so well that Vail's alpine village, Aspen's Victorian mining town, and Steamboat's wild west came to represent the best possible ski vacation experience in the country.



## CHAPTER SIX

### From Ski Bunnies to Shred Bettys: Colorado's Destination Resort Culture

Bogner stretch pants demanded attention. Their rise to the height of ski fashion in the 1950s and 1960s emphasized women's roles as consumer, fashion plate, and sex object at the very time women were enjoying greater movement and freedom on the mountain. Bogner stretch pants signified wealth, beauty, sexuality, and European savoir faire--they conferred status upon their wearer and advertised her membership among the top echelons of resort ski culture. Thus clad, women skiing down a mountain at once flirted with the power of speed, the majesty of the Rockies, and the men around them. The stereotypical Ski Bunny, short on technique but long on looks and style, moved with authority through the mountain landscape confident that her whiteness, wealth, beauty, and fashion ensured her a secure place within resort ski culture. "This new fashion factor," one ski writer noted in 1958, "along with the new socializing possibilities of the sport, are frequently underestimated as contributors to the startling growth of skiing over the last ten years."<sup>1</sup> Needless to say, Bogner sold a lot of clothes in the process. His stretch pants and the women who wore them acquired cultural meanings at destination ski resorts and within the context of a resort ski culture that traced its roots back to the 1950s.

When skier-consumer-tourists visited destination resorts for a fun vacation, they participated in a destination resort culture characterized by

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<sup>1</sup>Editors of *Ski* magazine, *America's Ski Book* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1973), 51.

conspicuous consumption. Unlike local skiers on a day or weekend trip, destination skiers invested in skiing's consumer and leisure culture for weeks at a time. They wanted the package deal: beautiful scenery, great skiing, comfortable lodging, good food, lots of shopping, an exciting nightlife, and stories to tell their friends back home. Separated from their normal lives and identities by the transformative powers of "vacationing," skier-tourists reveled in resort culture. They consumed signs and symbols that emphasized whiteness, wealth, fame, fashion, and sex; they accepted a culture in which appearance could overshadow the act of skiing itself, where looking and acting as if they belonged to the ski culture was enough to make them into authentic skiers. Resort culture proved more than simply seductive; it was powerful enough to hide the tensions upon which it was based, increasing its appeal and further shaping the surrounding landscape in the process. Relationships of labor disappeared from view, along with the constructedness of the resort itself. When unsavory realities surfaced, the ubiquitous (and economically powerful) ski industry absorbed, coopted, and otherwise dispatched with those who pointed the problems out. Destination ski resorts thus grew beyond havens for skier-tourist-consumers and became islands of whiteness, fame, fashion, and wealth. The significant role that Colorado's ski resorts acquired within the state economy and the influence they exercised within the national ski industry made these places seats of real economic and cultural power. We have seen how Colorado's resorts became highly constructed landscapes, defined as "natural" and "wild" and built to produce a specific skiing and vacation experience. A destination resort culture emerged and interacted with those places, attaching meanings to the landscape and defining ski resorts as playgrounds for white, upper-class men and women.

## The Unbearable Whiteness of Skiing: Resort Culture's Celebration of Whiteness, Wealth, Fame, Fashion, and Sex

Except for its manual labor and service employees, who have been in many ways hidden from view, the ski industry has crafted unusually "white" settings within the American West. That is not to deny the significance of these workers; the ski industry has come to depend upon them, especially in the last decade or two. But its reliance on people of color for wage work lurks deep in the shadow of the glitz, glamour, powder snow, and vacationing commonly associated with western destination ski resorts. These resorts brought equipment, fashion, restaurant, hotel, and real estate businesses into the fold of the ski industry, and their owners and managers shared the common goal of creating and selling attractive commodities to skiing tourists.<sup>2</sup> As the ski industry sold winter vacations and other ski

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<sup>2</sup>New Labor Historians have recently examined the relationship between whiteness and class identity, arguing that social constructions of race--and of whiteness in particular--divided working-class people since the seventeenth century. White workers chose to set themselves apart from their black colleagues so they could enjoy the status and privileges conferred by whiteness. Women's historians, too, have explored whiteness and its implications for the construction of gender identities. As one author put it simply, "race shapes white women's lives." Living up to white cultural standards of femininity often required setting oneself apart from women of color. Rather than act as additive characteristics, historians note, race, class, and gender take shape in relation to one another. Both sets of historians agree that seeing whiteness as a social construction and a position of privilege is the first step in challenging the oppressive power relations that hamper working-class and feminist solidarity. Discussing the construction of whiteness in terms of western skiing places it in the less overtly political realms of consumption, sport, and region. Skiers' whiteness earned them status and authenticity, power within destination resort culture roughly akin to that which Irish workers sought in nineteenth-century politics. Like women and workers, skiers too have perceived and defined class through their whiteness. "'White,'" one feminist author has noted, "is as much as anything else an economic and political category." Skiing further complicates the issue, however, by idealizing a particular construction of whiteness--a "European" ethnicity that has drawn attention to itself and placed people of color on the periphery. David R. Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class* (New York: Verso, 1991), 13. See also Theodore Allen, *The Invention of the White Race* (New York: Verso, 1994); Noel Ignatiev, *How the Irish Became White* (New York: Routledge, 1995); Alexander Saxton, *The Rise and Fall of the White Republic: Class Politics and Mass Culture in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Verso, 1990); Eric Lott, *Love and Theft: Blackface Minstrelsy and the American Working Class* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993); and Roediger, *Towards the*

commodities, its resort culture connected dynamics of ethnicity, consumption, and class, "whitewashing" western destination ski resorts and transforming them into islands of wealth and celebrity.

The whiteness of these places had clear historical roots, from "Norwegian snowshoeing" in western mining towns to the European alpine skiing that Denver ski club members enjoyed. European immigrants, be they miners or mountaineers, introduced and shaped the sport of downhill skiing in the American West. Skiing history and ethnic history are closely connected in that regard.<sup>3</sup> This historical context of the sport, however, does not explain why the growing ski industry and its clientele managed to retain such an enthusiasm for whiteness even after the influence of European immigration fell off. Taking advantage of a growing middle and upper class ready to spend their money on tourism and recreation, the skiing and advertising industries worked together to market destination ski resorts. They did so by creating an attractive image of "European" ski culture that helped create an ethnic whiteout on the ski slopes.<sup>4</sup>

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*Abolition of Whiteness: Essays on Race, Politics, and Working Class History* (New York: Verso, 1994). For a broader discussion of ethnicity, see Ronald T. Takaki, ed., *From Different Shores: Perspectives on Race and Ethnicity in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994) and Takaki, *Iron Cages: Race and Culture in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Knopf, 1979). Women's historians discussing whiteness include: Ruth Frankenberg, *White Women, Race Matters: The Social Construction of Whiteness* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 1. See also Phyllis Palmer, *Domesticity and Dirt: Housewives and Domestic Servants in the United States, 1920-1945* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1989), Chap. 7; and Elizabeth V. Spelman, *Inessential Woman: Problems of Exclusion in Feminist Thought* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1988), Chaps. 5-7. Quote from Frankenberg, 11.

<sup>3</sup>David Emmons emphasized the significance of European immigrants to the history of the American West during the mining era in his *The Butte Irish: Class and Ethnicity in an American Mining Town* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989), and called for further exploration of the variety of European immigrants and their roles in western economy and culture in "A Trip through Western Time and Western Space: A Review Essay," *Montana, The Magazine of Western History*, 45 (Spring 1995), 64-68. Skiing offers one avenue through which historians can see the cultural impact of certain European immigrant groups--and of their immigrant identities--on the West.

<sup>4</sup>This raises an as yet unexplored issue: the degree to which skiers "fled" to European-styled resorts in response to growing racial tension in American cities.

Like many advertisements in the 1950s, ski industry advertisements featured blonde women and handsome white men achieving fulfillment through the purchase of a certain parka, ski or package tour. As yearly vacations became the norm rather than the exception, and ski areas grew along with America's burgeoning tourist industry, visiting ski resorts and participating in the accompanying consumer culture took on new meaning. Unlike a day trip to a local ski area, where images of consumption had less power and relevance, resort skiing after World War Two had become a symbol for a life-style, a means of expressing oneself and impressing others. Success for skier-tourists hinged on having the physical ability, financial wherewithal, and will to live that life-style.

The images that defined this resort ski culture came wrapped in representations of a white, European ethnicity. Given the sport's historical context, such representations made sense. In the 1930s most good skiers learned in Europe, and afterwards many learned from Europeans who had emigrated to the states. Practical concerns also supported the appeal of European images: St. Moritz, St. Anton, Val d'Isere, and Garmisch Partenkirchen attracted skiers from all over the world; the most knowledgeable and experienced ski instructors came from Europe; Europeans consistently dominated international competitions; and European countries developed the newest technology in lifts and ski equipment. Images from Austria and Norway took on even more appeal in postwar America because popular culture romanticized those countries' war-time resistance movements. It was easy, for example, for Americans to visualize Austrian ski instructors guiding the family Von Trapp across the Alps to freedom. Norwegian

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Ski resorts may have represented an escape from a "corrupted" society, mirroring a much older characterization of the West as pristine, pure, and the place where easterners could get away from it all. Indeed, the very function of resorts--whatever their ethnic or racial make up--has been to offer their clientele a rather isolated setting for rest and relaxation, from which they could return to their "real" lives rejuvenated. I have, as yet, little evidence to support the conclusion that white vacationers used ski resorts to escape urban or eastern racial tension, but the question deserves more study.

skiers represented ideals of health, fitness, and masculinity, and things European seemed generally cosmopolitan, sophisticated, and sexy. This idealization of European-ness coexisted with the sport's Americanization in the 1950s and '60s; Americans seemed to have no trouble seeking out European images at resorts and simultaneously celebrating the growth of the sport in the United States. European and Scandinavian images thus appealed to American skier-tourists on moral, physical, and aesthetic levels.

Rather than emphasize specific national identities, however, American ski culture eventually lumped all Europeans and Scandinavians together under a lily-white "European" image. Austria, Switzerland, Germany, Italy, France, Norway, and Sweden all produced excellent skiers and ski products, so fostering a general European alpine image proved more useful from a marketing standpoint than concentrating on particular national identities. This European ski ideal--which emphasized a geographical region, in this case the Alps, over political ones--allowed American skiers to accept German instructors and lift engineers who had fought against the United States in World War Two.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>Artur Kuen, a German engineer, came to Buttermilk and Snowmass to build lifts after having built them for German officers during World War Two; Willy Schaeffler also fought for Germany during the war before emigrating and becoming director of the ski school at Arapahoe Basin, as had Sepp Uhl before he came to instruct in Aspen. Artur Kuen, interview by the author, July 13, 1994, tape recording, AHS; Mary Eshbaugh Hayes, "Longtime Aspenite Sepp Uhl Dead at 76," *Aspen Times*, Aug. 28, 1993, p. 18B. Slovenian competitors were also welcomed under this rubric, and Yugoslavian competitors in the 1950 Fédération Internationale de Ski (FIS) Championships were especially welcomed in Aspen, because a number of mining families were from the same region as the skiers. *Rocky Mountain News*, Feb. 4, 1950. These examples demonstrate the cultural power of geographical boundaries and how they can override those drawn by governments and armies. Walter Paepcke, a Chicago businessman largely responsible for Aspen's revival as a cultural/tourist mecca, worked explicitly to reunite German and American culture by organizing a lavish and highly publicized celebration of Goethe there in 1949. While not a personal interest nor part of his initial plan, skiing came to play an integral role in Paepcke's re-creation of Aspen as a cultural center. He probably approved highly of Kuen and Uhl's incorporation into the Aspen skiing scene. See Allen, *Romance of Commerce and Culture*.

The prominence of European images in American ski culture may have proved even more evocative than advertisers could have hoped. Sociologists have pointed out that in the past decades fewer societal barriers and cultural distinctions exist to differentiate white ethnic groups from each other, and the broad extent of ethnic intermarriage among whites has produced a large group of Americans with ethnically mixed ancestries. As a result, white Americans have the ability to choose a particular ethnic identity and express it to varying degrees (or not to express it at all) whenever and wherever they want. These developments, one sociologist argued, have caused the emergence of a broad ethnic option based on European ancestry--a generic white ethnicity.<sup>6</sup> White Americans identifying themselves as "European," rather than as a combination of distinct ancestries, could easily accept the ski culture's images and ideals as their own.

While it is difficult to know how American skiers identified themselves ethnically, there is no doubt that the ski industry tried to capitalize on the appeal of things European. Ski industry businesses created ethnic images in material forms fit for consumption. They made it possible and appealing literally to buy a European identity while remaining physically in the American West. Marketing western mountains, clothes, restaurants, hotels, and ski instructors as European enabled the ski industry to legitimize its products in the international ski world at the same time that it helped its clientele to acquire a culturally constructed white identity through their behavior as skiers, tourists, and consumers.

As early as 1936 the new Sun Valley resort compared itself to St. Moritz, suggesting that skier-tourists could experience the same activities and ambiance in

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<sup>6</sup>Mary C. Waters, *Ethnic Options: Choosing Identities in America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990); Richard D. Alba, *Ethnic Identity: The Transformation of White America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 1-21; Werner Sollors, *Beyond Ethnicity: Consent and Descent in American Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986).

Idaho that they could in Switzerland.<sup>7</sup> Transforming the Rockies into the Alps proved popular among ski industry promoters, and they followed the lead of tourism boosters who had been performing this feat since the mid-nineteenth century. Earl Pomeroy noted that many nineteenth-century tourists sought the Old World in the New. "Senator [Thomas Hart] Benton had compared the Colorado Rockies to the Alps," he wrote, "and thereafter Alpine similes . . . helped the traveler to transport himself in fancy to more famous scenes."<sup>8</sup> Decades later the state of Colorado launched a campaign which advertised the Rockies as "the 'other Alps'," featuring alpine bowls, gondolas, and even ski villages to go with the state's high quality snow and "genuine western camaraderie." A number of Rocky Mountain resorts have tried to alter the identity of their mountains since then, constructing them--both physically and culturally--as a European landscape and implicitly limiting access to that white ethnic space in the process.

Referring to the Rockies as the American Alps allowed "European" westerners access to far-away places; ski fashion let them look the part. Clothes from Europe, like European ski equipment, transferred a sense of legitimacy and

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<sup>7</sup> Indeed, Averill Harriman's goal was to recreate a Swiss resort. Before he had even heard of Ketchum, Idaho, he wrote a note to a friend saying "It has occurred to me that some day there will be established a ski center in the mountains here, of the same character as in the Swiss and Austrian Alps." "I believe it is worthwhile," he went on, "for us to investigate the present centers of the sport in our [Union Pacific Railroad] territory, having in mind we might assist through our advertising and otherwise in promoting these places." When Count Felix Schaffgotsch, sent to find a suitable winter sports center, came upon Ketchum, Idaho, he wrote Harriman: "This is it. Among the many attractive spots I have visited, this combines more delightful features than any place I have seen in the United States, Switzerland or Austria." The publicity and Hollywood movie stars such as Claudette Colbert and Robert Young whom Harriman attracted to Sun Valley contributed to its feel as a European resort, where the rich and famous gathered for socializing and sport. Pfelfer and Lund, *Nice Goin'*, 61-62, 65; see Bernard, *Rush to the Alps*, for a discussion of early Swiss resorts.

<sup>8</sup>Pomeroy, *In Search of the Golden West*, 33. In 1869, for instance, Samuel Bowles published an account of his summer vacation in Colorado under the title *The Switzerland of America*. Samuel Bowles, *The Switzerland of America: A Summer Vacation in the Parks and Mountains of Colorado* (Springfield MA: Samuel Bowles and Company, 1869).

style to their owner. Klaus Obermeyer's clothes and German ski boots were popular in America, and he stressed their Bavarian roots in images as well as words by posing a St. Bernard dog next to his model in one ad. Norwegian sweaters approached the status of uniforms for any self-respecting skier; and Bogner's stretch pants revolutionized American ski fashion altogether. Bogner's pants did not look especially German; but they were German, and they were much more sexy than the older "baggy look" fashions. For women skiing in the late 1950s and '60s they were almost mandatory. Scandinavian Ski Shop ads highlighted their BOGNER parkas and s-t-r-e-t-c-h pants in the text and on their blond model, nonchalantly converging ethnicities by advertising German clothes for a "Scandinavian" ski shop located in Midtown Manhattan (Figure 1). American designers accepted this convergence along with the status of European clothing styles, freely producing their own variations on the theme. Ski slopes provided space to display feats of consumption as well as athleticism, infusing a skier's visibility with signs of class as well as whiteness and further incorporating consumer culture into the landscape.

Restaurant and hotel owners at western ski resorts also shouted their European intentions. Names like the Hotel St. Bernard, the Alpenhof, the Innsbruck Lodge, and the Edelweiss resonated with meaning even in the unlikely spot of Taos, New Mexico (to take, briefly, a step outside of Colorado). Copies of European architecture visibly reinforced European ethnic images conjured up by business names, restaurant menus, and general ambiance. Warren Miller described the St. Bernard when it opened in the late 1950s as being "more European than Europe." "They had all French dishes and silverware," he said, "and the service was exactly like a small place in Chamonix or Val d'Isere."<sup>9</sup> Kaarlo Jokela's Finnish Thunderbird Inn complete with sauna rounded out the European flavor of Taos Ski

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<sup>9</sup>Richards, *Ski Pioneers*, 103.

*Ski*, 24 (November 1959), 17.

Figure 1. Scandinavian Ski Shops advertisement, 1959

Valley.<sup>10</sup> Aspen, for all its western mining town images, also boasted European restaurants including Gretl's and the Weinerstube as well as a spattering of Tyrolean-style buildings.<sup>11</sup> The developers of Vail emphasized Europeanness most blatantly by building a Bavarian village at the base of the area. Hotels and restaurants adhered to the image. The Lodge at Vail exuded Austrian flavor, and the Vail Village Inn was eager to compete. When he hired Ed Kilby, a local construction crew cook who had an Indian wife and specialized in chicken fried steak, the owner of the Vail Village Inn announced that French chef Pierre Kilbeaux had arrived to preside over the kitchen.<sup>12</sup> Austrian racer Pepi Gramshammer went on to open, among other Vail businesses, the Gastof Gramshammer and Pepi's Restaurant, filling out the town's alpine aura. When cooks from Minturn transform into French chefs and Taos, New Mexico, attracts skiers with its European hospitality, European images had clearly acquired a market value.

The most visible and powerful ethnic images in the ski industry were people--the European ski instructors who imparted their knowledge of the sport (and displayed their good looks and foreign accents) to their pupils. Ski resorts made certain to hire as many European ski instructors as possible, and to publicize the Europeanness of their ski school. Sun Valley was the first resort to capitalize on this ethnic image; Averill Harriman established an entirely Austrian ski school in 1936 and encouraged the instructors to wear native costumes. It seemed at any moment they would yodel and burst into song. Through the 1960s western resorts touted ski school directors and instructors from all over Europe, including Willy

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<sup>10</sup>Ernie Gay, "Tough, Beautiful Taos," *Ski*, 38 (February 1964), 82. Personal heritage influenced architectural decisions as well as commercial goals.

Proprietors of hotels like the St. Bernard generally hailed from alpine Europe.

<sup>11</sup>Those Europeans who came to Aspen to work built houses or restaurants of their own in a style Elizabeth Paepcke characterized as "bastard Tyrolean." Elizabeth Paepcke, "Memories of Aspen," manuscript, n.d., Elizabeth Paepcke biography file, AHS, 13.

<sup>12</sup>Simonton, *Vail*, 72.

Schaeffler, Friedl Pfeifer, Fred and Elli Iselin, Alf Engen, Otto Lang, Pepi Gramshammer, Pepi Steigler, and Jean Mayer. "That was the big thing then," one Aspen instructor remembered. "People were very into all the foreign [instructors], the 'funny talkers.'"<sup>13</sup> Stein Erikson, Olympic gold medalist and director of the Aspen Highlands ski school, returned to Norway regularly in the late 1950s and brought at least fifteen skiers from his homeland to instruct with him in Colorado. Like others before him, Erikson's expertise and success as a competitor, enhanced by his European heritage, helped him to embark on a successful career as a professional skier and instructor in America. His handsome European style created an identity for Erikson that resonated in a ski culture infused with sexual images, as well. Guitarist Bob Gibson, for instance, referred to "Stein Erikson up on Ajax" in a song called "The Golden Stud."<sup>14</sup> In the 1960s Erikson helped American skiers who sought his advice on technique by writing a number of articles and books encouraging them to "Come Ski with Me." Other European competitors-turned-professionals, including Fred Iselin and Jean Claude Killy, took on similar roles and became noted spokesmen for their ski school programs or ski equipment.<sup>15</sup> European ski instructors may have emigrated before the war for political reasons, but they continued to emigrate afterwards because American ski culture created such a demand for their image that they could

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<sup>13</sup>"That probably enhanced [Pfeifer and Iselin's] ability to get lessons," he went on to say, "just the fact that they had the accent." Jim Snobble, interview by the author, 11 July, 1994, Aspen, Colorado, tape recording and transcript, AHS, 6.

<sup>14</sup>John Sabella, "The Mountain Moguls," *Aspen Times*, 8 December, 1977, 2B.

<sup>15</sup>Mary Eshbaugh Hayes, "Norwegian Invasion Brought New Blood to Skiing and Aspen," *Aspen Times*, Dec. 6, 1984, C1; Paul Anderson, "He Never Ages, He Never Changes," *Aspen Times*, 15 January, 1987, C9. See Stein Erikson, *Come Ski with Me* (New York, 1966); Fred Iselin and A.C. Spector, *The New Invitation to Skiing* (New York, 1958); and Jean Claude Killy with Doug Pfeiffer, *Skiing . . . The Killy Way* (New York, 1971). Ski movies became popular in the 1930s and showed Americans the winning form of European skiers such as Otto Lang, Friedl Pfeifer, Stein Erikson, and Fred Iselin, contributing to their fame and status. These skiers appeared on film as instructors of technique, promoters of resorts, and as stunt doubles for bigger stars in the ever-popular ski chase scenes.

be sure of employment, if not fame. Contemporaries tellingly described Pfeifer and Erikson--and the image they gave their respective ski schools--as "glamorous."<sup>16</sup> Once in America these instructors became masculine icons of the ski culture and their labor itself became an imported commodity crafted around ethnic images--a transformation that resort owners were quick to recognize, encourage, and market.

As members of the ski industry used the language of whiteness to attract customers, the historical memory of European skiing and emigration dwindled in importance and became detached from the European ethnic images and references themselves. Owners and advertisers blithely made the conscious choice to "go Bavarian."<sup>17</sup> Vail marketers emphasized European image over all else in an ad that began in German. This ad tempted readers to discover Europe in Vail, where the skiing, continental flavor, and "the kind of name-your-game apres that never quits" would provide a vacation that "comes off like it just came in from the Alps."<sup>18</sup> Consumers, of course, did not expect to find all of Europe happily ensconced in Vail. They responded to the ad and embraced these aspects of European ski culture because they gave priority to the image associated with their purchases, not to commodities' origins or practical uses. This is what happens when goods acquire social meanings through advertising and marketing; they become cultural more than functional goods, with symbolic meanings that grow separated from and more important than the reality of the commodity's production. Taking a lesson from a handsome Swiss instructor, in other words, mattered as much as actually learning how to ski, and eating a *filet de boeuf au poulet frit* prepared by Pierre Kilbeaux was far different from eating Ed Kilby's chicken fried steak.

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<sup>16</sup>Paterson, 1; Whip Jones, interview by the author, 12 July, 1994, Aspen, Colorado, notes, AHS.

<sup>17</sup>Timothy Egan, "Kellogg's Journal: Mining Town Given Lift in Effort to Be a Resort," *New York Times*, July 13, 1989.

<sup>18</sup>*Skiing*, 21 (October 1968), 41.

Skier-tourists embraced their role as consumers. Buying a ski lesson, staying at a particular hotel, or wearing Bogner stretch pants made a statement about one's personal identity and allowed individuals to feel a part of the "European" ski culture. Participation in this culture grew continuously more expensive as fashion, ski technology, and the hotel and restaurant business grew along with ski resorts. The language of white ethnicity thus became the language of class as well. Bogner pants, after all, cost a pretty penny; and one employee explained the plethora of European instructors at Sun Valley by saying the resort "had a lush clientele."<sup>19</sup> Ski images that emphasized "Europeanness" established, in effect, a new kind of ethnicity--full of savoir faire and glamour--with which many white Americans could identify. They could become "discriminating skiers" by purchasing la Dolomite ski boots (Figure 2), an act that granted--or reaffirmed--their access to brandy served on silver trays. As they consumed products of the ski industry and internalized the ethnic symbols surrounding those commodities, white skiers purchased Europeanness and demonstrated the convergence of whiteness and class in the ski culture.

Nor was this a solitary process. Ski culture celebrated whiteness and wealth within an explicitly social, heterosexual atmosphere. Emphasized in the European resorts of the 1920s and '30s and even visible in nineteenth-century Colorado mountain communities, skiing's social aspects took on new importance when placed in Colorado's consumer- and leisure-oriented destination resorts. After World War II socializing on and off the slopes offered valuable opportunities to share stories, show off new clothes, and consume symbols of ethnicity and class--not to mention get dates. When asked what she thought of the Rocky Mountain Empire skiing boom in 1946, racer Barbara Kidder replied "you mean social

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<sup>19</sup>Kingsbury Pitcher, in Richards, *Ski Pioneers*, 145.

*Ski*, 33 (Holiday 1968), 29.

Figure 2. Dolomite advertisement, 1968

boom, don't you?"<sup>20</sup> Ski resorts' apres ski scene thus grew as an integral part of ski culture--especially at destination resorts where skier-tourists could go out every evening--and it combined images of class, gender, and sex.<sup>21</sup>

Representatives of the ski industry made sure to sell this scene to every vacationer looking for some fun. One airline advertisement promised that "apres-skiing fun galore is yours for the asking." Park City (Utah) advertisers exclaimed that "Park City has 5 miles of lifts going up. Park City has 30 miles of runs going down. And Park City has a swinging time at the bottom." Nor did the adventure necessarily end when the bars closed. A boot-carrier ad, featuring a sultry blonde reclining in the background, stated with a wink and a nudge "When boots are off . . . they're better off in a Boot-In."<sup>22</sup> Even *Business Week* noticed the trend and declared in 1964: "It's apres-ski, or the business of making skiers happy from the end of the ski run to the wee hours--and its making Aspen and other ski spots happy, too."<sup>23</sup> Restaurants, bars, and retail stores flourished as they catered to skier-tourist-consumers' vacation desires.

The significance of the apres-ski scene encouraged the ski industry to infuse its culture with images of sex. One skiwear ad--playing off stereotypically western images--showed photos of a man on horseback roping and leading away two

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<sup>20</sup>Eugene F. Pilz, "Barbara Kidder--Queen of the Slopes," *Rocky Mountain Life* (December 1946), 47.

<sup>21</sup>Smaller ski resorts geared toward day or weekend customers operated within a different kind of ski culture, one that emphasized skill on the slopes and local status over visible feats of consumption and leisure. Even the apres ski world, moreover, heralded its European roots. Resort developers, bar owners, and restaurateurs alike sought to emulate alpine *gemütlichkeit* in their establishments--the "spirit that goes along with skiing and apres skiing, the happy atmosphere"--by decorating in a European style or simply encouraging their clientele to enjoy themselves. Steve Knowlton, interview by the author, 14 November, 1995, Denver, Colorado, tape recording and transcript, 9.

<sup>22</sup>Continental Airlines, "Ski Colorado" (1976-77), pamphlet, CHS, 3; *Ski*, 34 (January 1970), 5, 21.

<sup>23</sup>"Aspen's New Silver Lode," *Business Week*, 25 January, 1964, 30, clipping, Skiing 1963-64 file, AHS.

smiling women. The text read: "Roffe captures what every skier wants."<sup>24</sup> The ski fashion industry typically emphasized sexual images more than anyone else. A *Ski* fashion photo essay entitled "How the West Was (Re)Won" similarly incorporated western images and sex into its composition by picturing beautiful models in the Colorado ghost town of East Tincup. The text explained "In the old days, it was the gunslingers, miners and wily sheriffs that conquered the West and pushed into the mountains. . . . This year," it went on, "SKI reports a reconquest: pretty girls in gold and glamorous ski clothes invading the Rockies (and elsewhere) together with their handsome consorts."<sup>25</sup> Women skiers seeking to act out their own sexual conquests supported a massive fashion industry in the process. Their beauty and ability to spend, of course, determined the degree to which women could fulfill this dream. One woman ski racer bemoaned the success that some "racer-chasers" had in luring male racers away from their female colleagues. "The racer-chaser always seems to be rich, blond, dressed in fantastic apres-ski outfits, driving a hot sports car and offering to take the guys surfing in California after the last race," she said.<sup>26</sup> Real life seemed to bear out what the advertisers promised: dress right, look right, and spend money, and you can catch a man. Whether married or single, men and women seemed to transform into explicitly sexual beings once in destination resorts. One writer described Aspen, for instance, as "a town where the waitresses exude sex appeal despite the fact their shoulder-length hair is windblown, they are wearing bulky, formless sweaters and skin-hugging ski pants, and they have peeling noses and complexions like tanned leather."<sup>27</sup> Men brought with them to resorts, perhaps, certain attitudes and goals that encouraged this kind of transformation. (Movies like "On Her Majesty's Secret Service" (1969) and

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<sup>24</sup>*Skiing Trade News*, 7 (Spring 1970), 54.

<sup>25</sup>*SKI*, 27 (November 1962), 72.

<sup>26</sup>Nancy Greene, "The Woman Racer as a Woman," *Ski*, 34 (January 1970), 57.

<sup>27</sup>Al Nakkula, "Aspen, Where Everyone Skis," *Rocky Mountain News*, 9 January, 1966, 52, clipping, Skiing 1966 file, AHS.

"The Spy Who Loved Me" (1977) offered James Bond's sexual skiing exploits as an example.<sup>28</sup> Or, maybe the scenic and apres-ski atmosphere of resort towns were enough for skier-tourists to create magical landscapes well-suited for romance.

Linked with the sexy aura of the resort culture was the notion that people there somehow mattered more than most. As early as 1946 one skier emphasized that "skiing is rapidly becoming *the thing to do*." "In Denver these days," she said, "you must learn to ski to be *in*."<sup>29</sup> Indeed, skiing had signaled social status for decades already, distinguishing Americans who vacationed in the Alps in the 1920s, Ivy League college men during the 1930s, and Tenth Mountain Division veterans in the 1940s and '50s. Many of the industry's movers and shakers, for instance, held Yale degrees--or membership in some such exclusive group--in common with their upper-class clientele.<sup>30</sup> When the ski industry opened the sport to people outside these groups in the 1960s, it still held them up as ski icons. Rich, influential people continued to frequent destination ski resorts. Famous skiers included, for instance, Norma Shearer, the Shah of Iran, Leonard Bernstein, Leon Uris, Norman Mailer, Ernest Hemingway, members of the DuPont, Mellon, Ford, and Rockefeller families, Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara, Supreme Court Justice Byron White, Sargent Shriver, his wife, "and a whole platoon of other Kennedys and Kennedy in-laws." Skiing was, in the words of one writer, "the sport of the establishment."<sup>31</sup> While not everyone could achieve such wealth and power, skier-tourists could get a taste of that world by visiting destination resorts. Taking a skiing vacation, then, became a sign of status. Developers, too, realized

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<sup>28</sup>Jonathan Runge, "A Brief History of Sex and Skiing," *Skiing*, 49 (October 1996), 73-78.

<sup>29</sup>Pilz, 47.

<sup>30</sup>Some who graduated from Yale include: Walter Paepcke, William Hodges, George Berger, and Minot Dole. The Tenth Mountain Division, which established a powerful group of ski industry insiders, was made up largely of volunteers from similarly elite colleges.

<sup>31</sup>John Fry, "The Sport of the Establishment," *Ski* (January 1963), 41-43.

this and counted on the fact that "there's nothing quite as chic as dropping into the cocktail party conversation back in the city that you're going to spend Christmas at your condominium." "That's the kind of advertising," one crowed, "money can't buy."<sup>32</sup>

As images of class, sex, whiteness and status converged and grew stronger within American ski culture, they eventually threatened to overpower the culture's physical origins. Skiing itself, in other words, became almost optional. A social sport from its beginning, skiing could consist mainly of a vacation of drinking on the mountain and visiting local night spots in the evening. This schedule maximized opportunities to show off achievements of consumption and minimized the need for physical exertion. Pretending to ski and looking the part was enough. One advertisement for (European) indoor footwear claimed that "some of the best skiing is done right here," reclining by a coffee table. The ad went on to explain that "Half the fun of skiing is in the telling and half the fun of the telling is in the snug warmth of these Swiss-made after-ski boots."<sup>33</sup> Talking, and wearing imported clothes, rivaled the act of skiing in importance. Earl Pomeroy noticed this trend occurring as early as the 1930s and 1940s. "Since [the opening of Sun Valley in 1936]," he wrote, "visitors who come to the ski resorts simply to wear the latest in ski clothing from Abercrombie and Fitch, ride the chair tow, and recuperate from the trip over hot buttered rum or moose milk have sometimes exceeded the skiers."<sup>34</sup> One Colorado racer noticed in 1946 that "the slopes are jammed with well-dressed people who ride the tows a couple of times and sit the afternoon out in the warming house."<sup>35</sup> This trend has only increased. The Italian clothing line Fila appealed to such performances of consumption by stressing the significance of

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<sup>32</sup>John Jerome, "Condominiums of Lodges: Which Should You Have?" *Skiing Area News*, 4 (Spring 1969), 33.

<sup>33</sup>*Ski*, 27 (October 1962), 22.

<sup>34</sup>Pomeroy, *In Search of the Golden West*, 209.

<sup>35</sup>Pilz, 47.

"stand[ing] in the lift line looking cool." "Lift lines aren't all bad," it declared, "they give everyone a chance to admire your NEW Fila skiwear."<sup>36</sup> One Aspen local noted more recently that "we're getting an awful lot of people who come here for the nightlife and the shopping and to wear their fur coats around town and they never go up on the slopes."<sup>37</sup> In a world where seeing and being seen was the ultimate goal--on the slopes and around town--fashion mattered more than skiing. Being visible and demonstrating appropriate feats of consumption had practically overtaken the act of skiing as authentic destination resort behavior.

In this world fame was powerful. Indeed, famous people helped put destination resorts on the map. Celebrities have lived in ski resort towns since the 1930s, when Averill Harriman and his public relations guru convinced Gary Cooper, Claudette Colbert, Rosalind Russell, and others to move to Sun Valley. Movies such as Claudette Colbert's "I Met Him In Paris" (1937) and Sonja Heni's "Sun Valley Serenade" (1941) further publicized the town as a never-never land where beautiful people and beautiful scenery came together almost magically. After World War Two many of Sun Valley's ski instructors, clientele, and famous residents moved to Aspen. Friedl Pfeifer, Gary and Rocky Cooper, and Claudette Colbert appeared in promotional films for the new resort along with well-known skiers like John Litchfield, Percy Rideout, Fred Iselin, and Dick Durrance, crafting Aspen as a mountain resort where celebrities and less famous--but definitely upper-class--outdoorspeople could relax together.<sup>38</sup> During the 1940s and '50s Aspenites understood these stars as just classy neighbors or, as

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<sup>36</sup>*Ski*, 60 (October 1995), 23.

<sup>37</sup>Charles Paterson, interview by the author, 28 June, 1994, Aspen, Colorado, tape recording and transcript, AHS, 8.

<sup>38</sup>Three such films produced by Dick Durrance are "Snow Carnival," "Until We Meet in Aspen," and "The Aspen Album;" H.J. Heinz produced one called "Little Skier's Big Day," starring Fred Iselin in 1956; videotapes, AHS.

one resident put it, "part of the [town's] whole fabric."<sup>39</sup> When Aspen's population included such personalities as Walter and Elizabeth Paepcke, Herbert Bayer, Harold Ross (editor of *New Yorker*), Thornton Wilder, and a lot of other well-educated, well-traveled people from New York and Chicago, famous movie stars might seem colorful and interesting, but not so strange they seemed foreign. In its "golden days" as the penultimate authentic ski resort, many people in Aspen were famous and visible. Gary Cooper once jokingly complained, for instance, that "no one pays any attention to me up here!"<sup>40</sup> Later on, however, when resorts successfully attracted a larger group and broader range of skier-tourists to their towns, famous residents and visitors turned into objects of tourism.

So yet another layer in this complex ski culture emerged: that of people visiting resort towns to spectate--to watch upper-class and often famous people participate in the ski culture by displaying signs of status and wealth associated with skiing. Sun Valley, Aspen, and more recently Telluride have acquired some rich and famous residents (Bruce Willis, Don Johnson, and Oprah Winfrey among them), visible people who have helped create a glitzy atmosphere in those destination resorts. This atmosphere, foreign to most Americans' daily lives, has appealed to skier-tourists by offering tantalizing images of wealth and fame. Recalling the number of movie stars they spotted has become part of the vacation ritual for many skier-tourists. Spectators have consumed wealthy ski culture icons so they can identify with wealth and fame in the same way the wealthy have consumed commodified European images in order to identify themselves as members of ski culture.

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<sup>39</sup>Joy Caudill, interview by the author, 26 July, 1994, Aspen, Colorado, tape recording and transcript, AHS, 5.

<sup>40</sup>June Hodges, interview by the author, 19 June, 1994, Denver, Colorado, tape recording and transcript, AHS, 3.

Image practically overpowered skiing itself in this culture infused with symbols of whiteness, wealth, fame, fashion, status, and sex. Authentic skiers and visible consumers became almost indistinguishable and the ski industry offered both skiing and visible symbols of the sport for sale. "Now," one instructor and developer noted recently, "the perception of being a skier is really what matters."<sup>41</sup> One ski trade article accordingly reminded retailers to "Sell the Look First." Such a culture often produced strange behavior. Even those who encouraged it could not help but notice; a store owner in Winnetka, Illinois explained "How to Sell Expensive Fashions to the Nabob," in an article with the telling subheading: "Oh, the Rich People. They just love to buy strange things."<sup>42</sup> These wealthy people--and the skier-tourists who came to watch and imitate them--flocked to destination resorts in the mood to recreate. Their behavior often matched their clothes in its distance from every-day norms. The Reverend Don Simonton noted of his parishioners at Vail: "Well, we have a lot of pure and simple gold-plated hedonists around here, a lot of people who are wholly dedicated to remaining young and good-looking."<sup>43</sup> For most people, this decadent resort culture remained a distant reality, one they viewed through glossy magazines or glimpsed only briefly while on vacation.

After March of 1976 reporters gave the American public a shocking look into this resort culture in Aspen. "Escorted by her celebrity ex-husband and followed into court by an international pool of newsmen," a Denver paper reported the next January, "entertainer Claudine Longet went on trial here for the shooting death of her lover." Pro skier Vladimir "Spider" Sabich had been shot in the

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<sup>41</sup>Jim Snobble, interview by the author, 11 July, 1994, Aspen, Colorado, tape recording and transcript, AHS, 6.

<sup>42</sup>Alex Katz, "Sell the Look First," *Skiing Trade News*, 3 (January 1966), 38; "How to Sell Expensive Fashions to the Nabob," *Skiing Trade News*, 8 (Fall 1971), 55.

<sup>43</sup>William Oscar Johnson, "A Vision Fulfilled," *Sports Illustrated*, 70, 4 (30 January, 1989), 78.

\$250,000 home he shared with Longet in the fashionable Starwood subdivision near Aspen.<sup>44</sup> The trial, the murder itself, and even the couple's lifestyle made an impressive spectacle--one which is now ingrained in America's collective memory of the ski resort. That the names Spider Sabich and Claudine Longet still conjure up vivid images of decadence and intrigue--images rooted, moreover, specifically in Aspen and by implication in other destination resorts--testify to the cultural power that Colorado's ski resort landscapes wield as islands of whiteness, wealth, fashion, fame, and sex.

#### Silver Queens and Ski Bums: Resort Culture's Great Disappearing Acts

Resort ski culture proved as powerful as it was peculiar. Its emphasis on image and visibility allowed skiers to change their identities while on vacation. Buying the right clothes, going to the appropriate social spots, and flirting with others transformed men and women, no matter their occupation or marital status, into members of the jet set. So, too, did resort culture mask the built landscape behind an attractive facade, enabling skier-tourists to feel both close to nature and the wilderness and embraced within a safe, familiar world. In this world ugly development and working people vanished from view.

Just as resort culture dressed up skier-tourists in images of class, white ethnicity, and status, it also dressed up the landscape. Skier-tourists' willingness to internalize those images personally, furthermore, encouraged them to accept destination resort landscapes that would have otherwise stretched the limits of credibility. Hotels, condominiums, restaurants, and shops that would have scarred the town with their quantity and form became, instead, architectural tools to help Colorado visitors transport themselves to quaint Victorian mining towns, the "Old

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<sup>44</sup>Douglas Kreutz, "Claudine Longet Trial Opens in Aspen," *Rocky Mountain News*, 4 January, 1977, 6. Prince Bandar of Saudi Arabia, John Denver, and Barbie Benton currently live--and entertain lavishly--in huge Starwood homes.

West," or the Alps. Breckenridge restored its Victorian buildings and houses on Main Street, for instance, to emphasize the town's mining past. Restaurants, shops, bars, and ice cream stands thus evoked images of nineteenth-century mining rather than the tourist economy that supported them.<sup>45</sup> Even Vail's parking garage, hidden below ground for the most part, carefully guides people from its depths into the heart of the area's European walking village. Developments on the mountains carefully crafted mythical resort images, as well. Huge high-speed lifts fit almost seamlessly into resort settings once christened the "Vista Bahn" or the "Silver Queen." That John Denver presided over the Silver Queen's opening ceremonies only added to the swirl of western images associated with Aspen and its new gondola.

The Rockies' majestic scenery and its plethora of fourteen thousand-foot peaks helped visitors experience destination resorts as places completely separate from their everyday landscapes. Vail Associates (as usual) took this one step farther. They actually imported a 400-pound piece of the Swiss Matterhorn and placed it in their Lions Head Plaza.<sup>46</sup> Their skier-tourists did not have to settle for just the Rockies; they had a piece of the Alps, too. The awesome reality of the Rockies (and perhaps, too, of the baby Matterhorn) encouraged visitors to suspend their everyday assumptions about landscape. Ski trail names helped incorporate physical development into the resort culture and allowed skiers to focus on images rather than reality. Aspen Mountain's Tourtolette Park, Silver Queen, Zaugg Dump, and Last Dollar trails recalled the town's earlier mining days. Telluride emphasized similar images with some of its trails: Prospect Trail, Mine Shaft, Apex, and Silver Glade; not to mention its summit, Gold Hill. Steamboat Springs pushed its "Old West" image when it named a mid-mountain lodge Rendezvous

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<sup>45</sup>See Michael Carlton, "Breckenridge," *Denver Post*, 18 October, 1987, T1.

<sup>46</sup>Duane Thompson, "Vail Preparing for 'Big' Winter Carnival," *Rocky Mountain News*, 10 January, 1985, 21, clipping, CHS.

Saddle, lifts Rough Rider and Pony, and various ski trails Chute One, High Noon, Flintlock, Buckshot, and Quick Draw.<sup>47</sup> Nor did these names languish quietly on trail maps. Skier-tourists animated resort images when they made plans to meet friends on the mountain, described to each other where they had skied, and flaunted their athletic exploits later on in the bar.

Ski culture thus permeated the physical space of destination resorts and promoted a certain understanding of that space--one that glossed over the constructed nature of the landscape and focused instead on the almost mythical images in which skier-tourists had come to participate. Visitors could accept without question amazing degrees of physical development on the ski area and in town. The ski industry succeeded to such a degree that one company considered bottling water from Vail and Aspen and selling it as a domestic alternative to imported brands. While these towns certainly fit the definition of scenic resorts, they were hardly the pure, pristine places that consumers associate with bottled water.<sup>48</sup> Re-packaging their constructed landscapes as pristine was no mean feat.

Destination ski areas and their culture performed an equally impressive disappearing act on human beings. No typical workers or service people--the human infrastructure that made tourist economies work--seemed to exist at all. In Colorado's big ski resorts, the people who held the lowest jobs managed to become icons of ski culture rather than its drudges. Ski Bums: the name itself conjured romantic images of mobility, independence, and a life (or at least a season) dedicated to the pursuit of skiing. The term--coined in the late 1940s--referred to the young, college-aged people who put their regular lives on hold,

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<sup>47</sup>Vail exercised a self-conscious sense of humor in this naming process--its famous Riva Ridge trail connected to a trail called Tourist Trap.

<sup>48</sup>Carolyn Dougherty, "Idaho Firm May Bottle Vail and Aspen Water," *Rocky Mountain News*, 22 October, 1987, 18, clipping, CHS. Aspen, in fact, suffered a minor catastrophe in the 1950s when a dead skunk contaminated the entire town's water supply. Artur Kuen, interview by the author, 13 July, 1994, Aspen, Colorado, tape recording and transcript, AHS.

moved to ski resort towns, and took whatever jobs they could so they could ski all season. Charlie Paterson and a friend, for instance, took a bus from New York to Denver simply because they wanted to live near the Rockies. They took jobs at the Denver and Rio Grande Railroad "so we could stay alive," and spent every weekend skiing "all the different resorts around." Paterson heard about Aspen from a girl he met at Arapahoe Basin; the next week he and his friend hitchhiked to town, slept wherever there was room, and earned lift tickets by volunteering to gate keep for the race that day. Paterson eventually moved to town and opened the Boomerang Lodge.<sup>49</sup> Natalie Gignoux, too, began as an Aspen ski bum in 1949 and ended up owning her own business--a taxi service. Before that she worked making handpainted scarves for skiers (until she broke her leg and went home to recuperate). She returned that summer and worked making reservations for the Goethe Festival and as a clerk at the Hotel Jeromie, and then she ran a small travel office on Main Street. Her living arrangements were as flexible as her jobs. "The first eighteen months I was in Aspen," she recalled, "I believe I moved eighteen times."<sup>50</sup> For Paterson and Gignoux--as for ski bums in general--simply living and playing in resort towns took precedence over the details of their housing and employment. Some stayed for a winter, some for years; others started their own businesses and became permanent residents. Only some of them had money to spare; most who started their own businesses did so slowly and from the ground up. In spite of their often meager standard of living, ski bums occupied a powerful place within resort ski culture.

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<sup>49</sup>Paterson arrived in Aspen the weekend that the 1949 National Alpine Championships took place--he had a hard time finding a place to sleep and so says he was destined to become a hotel keeper there. Paterson, 3-4. Paterson's transformation from ski bum to lodge owner happened only gradually. He bought a small piece of land onto which he moved a cabin, enlarging it later to become the original lodge.

<sup>50</sup>Natalie Gignoux, interview by Ruth Whyte, 16 September, 1986, Aspen, Colorado, tape recording and transcript, AHS, 1-2.

That ski bums accepted menial jobs in order to ski every day made them interesting rather than lower class. Writers recommended such a lifestyle, in fact, to people who would otherwise spend money on a ski vacation. One 1947 article, for instance, advised skiers to ask a hotel manager for a job that will allow you three hours during the day to ski. "Take a job as a waitress, a bellboy, a barboy, or waiter," the author said, "but beware of those executive positions" that take up too much time. The very worst sounding jobs, in this scenario, were the best. Making beds, for instance, ranked well above management positions because it gave workers more time to ski. In response to the prospects of "getting your hands dirty" or "mingling with the masses," the author assured readers, "have no fear." "Your hands may get slightly soiled," he said, "but the people you meet on the job will be tops." You will meet, in other words, "skiers like yourself who have flown the coop for the winter."<sup>51</sup> Sharing a love for skiing and the mountains put bellboys and paying guests on similar terms--both had invested in the resort ski culture, albeit one with their labor and the other with their vacation budget. As a result, upper-class young people could take menial jobs at no social cost. At one New Hampshire inn, for instance, "the employees form an inner circle to which the more socially minded guests hope someday to be admitted." "Every morning a charming young Boston debutante picked up the rooms and made the beds," the author observed, "and in the evening, before she set the table, she dropped into the bar for a cocktail with the guests."<sup>52</sup> That some service workers had more social clout than their customers only added to the peculiarity of ski resorts.

Those employees with less social clout benefited from the status afforded them by their investment in resort ski culture. Their physical labor and their "ski bum" identity connected them intimately to a culture and a sport characterized

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<sup>51</sup>William A. Allen, "How to Ski for Free," *Ski*, 12 (December 1947), 22.

<sup>52</sup>Allen, 35.

by status and wealth, some of which rubbed off on them. Too, ski bums got to live and ski at idyllic resorts others could only visit briefly--they could claim a kind of ownership over magical mountain places even if they busied tables and lived in a tiny apartment. "Have you every noticed that the environs of most large ski areas harbor enough over-qualified milkmen, bricklayers, floor moppers, bartenders, salesmen, chambermaids and waitresses to staff a good sized university?" one author asked in 1967. "These are the people," she answered, "who got tired of being one of 'them' (the ski tourists) and decided to become one of 'us' (the ski community)."<sup>53</sup> They were, in a word, "in." Regardless of their particular jobs, then, ski bums enjoyed status as local residents and as part of the ski industry.

In resorts like Aspen--which had become by 1970 the mecca for young adventurers, skiers and swinging travelers--ski bums became icons of the ski culture. Usually college-aged, athletic, and focused on skiing and socializing, they brought to life the youthful, sociable, freewheeling ski culture ideal. The ski bum, explained one ski writer, "lived to ski, so to the squares who went home to work on Monday morning, he was a folk hero, the object of envy as much for his ski ability as for his lifestyle: drinking, dating, and skiing."<sup>54</sup> In its ski bums and its culture, Aspen continually pushed to extremes. Drawn by the town's swinging reputation, young people who had money to spend and wanted to experience the inside of Aspen's social ski culture moved there and defined themselves as ski bums. "They're Beautiful!" exclaimed one *Ski* magazine article in 1970. "Not all of the ski bums of Aspen rent luxury condominiums, make \$300 a week, have \$200 Hart Javelins [skis], wear groovy clothes, have a great love life and eat deliciously at places like the Paragon," he wrote, "but enough of them do to make this the era of

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<sup>53</sup>Janet Nelson, "Help Wanted in the Ski Industry," *Ski*, 32 (December 1967), 61.

<sup>54</sup>Janet Nelson, ". . . But They're Employed," *Ski*, 34 (January 1970), 71.

the Beautiful Bum in Aspen, which is likely to highlight the annals of bumming."<sup>55</sup> These characteristics exemplified the resort culture's ideals: conspicuous consumption of food, lodging, clothes, and ski equipment; (relative) wealth; and "a great love life." As models for Aspen's culture, these bums were indeed beautiful.<sup>56</sup> Their jobs ranged from "nothing visible" to cashier, ski instructor, lift operator, wine steward, and bar owner. They internalized their cultural power--couched in terms of "beauty," or "unlimited access to the inner circles of the ski establishment" as another author put it--by distinguishing themselves from skier-tourists and defining them as outsiders. Deemed "tourists," vacationing skiers were "virtually invisible to the beautifuls." "It's crazy to get involved with a tourist, even for a date," one ski bum explained. "What would you say to one? I have no idea."<sup>57</sup> That social differences separated service workers from skier-tourists was not surprising. That cashiers and lift operators could enjoy higher status than wealthy vacationers was. Resort ski culture had erased menial laborers from the scene and put in their place living examples of the free-wheeling, date-getting stylishness it advertised to skier-tourists. When the ski industry came to depend upon a permanent working class of laborers in the late 1980s, a group largely defined by their color, destination resort culture hid their labor from view in different ways.

#### Resort Culture Contested

Destination resorts and their culture continued to grow throughout the 1970s and '80s, by which time they had become well ensconced in the Rockies. In 1974 the senior market research analyst for Colorado confirmed that skiers were less predominantly male and the sport more recreational and social in emphasis

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<sup>55</sup>Morten Lund, "They're Beautiful!" *Ski*, 34 (January 1970), 66.

<sup>56</sup>Lund, 66.

<sup>57</sup>Lund, 96.

than in earlier years. "It is also necessary to give the vacation skier much more today than in the past," he said. "Not only is good skiing required, but also good food, good accommodations, good entertainment, good shopping, and good apres ski activities are essential. Colorado ski areas," he concluded, "provide most of what today's vacation skiers want and have gained a competitive advantage by doing so."<sup>58</sup> Colorado's destination resorts had become the standard by which others measured their success. Continued growth during the 1970s and 1980s, however, slowed after the boom years of previous decades. The average annual increase in skier-visits to Colorado areas in the 1960s was an amazing 20.5%. During the 1970s the average fell to 14.5%, and for the 1980s this increase had slowed to 3.3%.<sup>59</sup>

These figures described an industry increasingly dominated by large destination resorts in competition with one another for business. Vail, Aspen's four areas, Breckenridge, Steamboat, Keystone, Winter Park, and Copper Mountain accounted for about 73% of the industry's market share through the 1980s--of which Vail alone made up about 14%.<sup>60</sup> Skier-tourists dominated the consumer side of the equation. Out-of-state destination skier-visits grew from 55% of Colorado's total skier-visits in 1981-82 to 62% for the 1986-87 season.<sup>61</sup> Millions of dollars of annual capital improvements became the norm as big resorts competed for skier-tourists' business.<sup>62</sup> In 1982 Colorado ski areas and related facilities represented a \$3.6 billion total capital investment. The industry had also

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<sup>58</sup>C.R. Goeldner, "The Nature and Scope of Competition in the Colorado Ski Industry," Business Research Division, University of Colorado, Boulder, Colorado, 1974, 18.

<sup>59</sup>C.R. Goeldner and R.L. Wobbekind, "The Colorado Ski Industry: Highlights of the 1992-93 Ski Season," Business Research Division, Graduate School of Business Administration, University of Colorado, Boulder, Colorado, 1993, 4-5.

<sup>60</sup>Goeldner and Wobbekind, Table 3, Rank by Lift Tickets Issued, 1982-83 to 1992-93; Table 4, Market Share 1981-82 to 1992-93.

<sup>61</sup>Brown, Bortz & Coddington, Inc., "Executive Summary: The Contribution of Skiing to the Colorado Economy 1987," Ski Country USA, 1987, 3.

<sup>62</sup>It is, of course, difficult to generalize about a period of over 20 years. Capital investments varied from year to year, 1983 and 1985 ranking as uncharacteristically high (\$137 and \$130 million, respectively).

created about 39,000 jobs statewide--including over half the total jobs in Summit, Eagle, Pitkin, and Grand counties, and over 4,000 ski-related jobs in Denver.<sup>63</sup> Colorado's ski industry continued to grow during the early 1990s, albeit more slowly than in early decades, and set a record of 10.42 million skier-visits in 1991-92 and another of 11.07 million visits for the 1992-93 season. (The 1993-94 numbers were still high if not record-breaking: 10.93 million skier-visits.)<sup>64</sup>

This growth established destination resorts as the backbone of Colorado's ski industry and reinforced resort culture. Conspicuous consumption of European ethnic images, fashion, famous people, and members of the opposite sex continued to characterize resort culture and turn resort areas into complex places. Such growth, however, also stretched resort development and its culture to a critical point--where the physical, economic, and ethnic relationships upon which the resorts were based could no longer be hidden. Troubling issues including environmental impacts of development, obviously constructed landscapes, urban problems in resort towns, and the exclusivity of ski culture had previously remained in the margins. Starting in the 1970s they moved to center stage. The environmental consequences of mountain development became an issue for the U.S. Forest Service and ski area companies. It grew more difficult to convince skier-tourists that they were skiing in a pristine, natural, wild setting. Resort towns began recognizing the urban problems that accompanied their growth as tourist meccas. Even the ski culture itself came under question as its whiteness, wealth, heterosexuality, and passion for celebrity felt increasingly exclusive to Americans watching and participating in the ski industry's growth.

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<sup>63</sup>Alan Prendergast, "The Mid-Life Crisis of the Colorado Ski Industry," *Denver Post Empire Magazine*, 8 April, 1984, 13.

<sup>64</sup>Deborah Frazier, "State's Skier Numbers Drop 73,000 for Season," *Rocky Mountain News*, 24 June, 1994, 14A.

Environmental issues formed the first crack in resort culture's veneer. Within the context of a society increasingly aware of environmental problems, the U.S. Government found itself regulating rather than supporting ski area development. A clear advocate of local ski area development in the 1930s and after the war, the U. S. Forest Service (USFS) in the 1970s had to acknowledge the increasingly popular perspectives on land use put forth by the environmental movement. As the overseer of National Forests and their use, the USFS continued to issue special use permits to most ski areas. (Only a small percentage of ski areas were entirely on private land; those using Forest Service land for trails, lifts, or both had to apply for a permit.) Gifford Pinchot first established the general direction of USFS policy in 1905 around the concept of "wise use." Congress has changed and refined policy guidelines since then through federal legislation. Pinchot's initial ideas as well as those of more recent legislation stressed the need to balance the public use of forest resources with their conservation. During the 1960s--the same decade in which skiing's popularity boomed--Americans grew increasingly concerned about the protection of their scenic and recreational resources. The environmental movement took shape during these years.<sup>65</sup> Federal legislation reflected the broad, public shift towards these concerns.

In signing the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) into law on January 1, 1970, Richard Nixon brought the government a step closer to the public's growing concern over the environment. This law set the government to the task of "creat[ing] and maintain[ing] conditions under which man and nature can exist in productive harmony, and fulfill the social, economic, and other

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<sup>65</sup>For a brief history of the environmental movement see Kirkpatrick Sale, *The Green Revolution: The American Environmental Movement, 1962-1992* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1993); Riley E. Dunlap and Angela G. Mertig, *American Environmentalism: The U.S. Environmental Movement, 1970-1990* (Washington DC: Taylor and Francis, 1992); Roderick Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind*, 3rd ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982).

requirements of present and future generations of Americans."<sup>66</sup> To that end, NEPA created the giant Environmental Protection Agency and introduced what would become the bane of the ski industry, the environmental impact statement (EIS). From 1970 on, every government agency had to forecast the environmental impacts of any future project on public lands "significantly affecting the quality of the human environment." Each EIS, furthermore, would go through a review process in which federal, state, and local agencies, as well as the public, had opportunities to voice concerns over the proposed action and the EIS itself. This law provided the substructure for all environmental reform legislation in the following decade and created a new industry to support the new need for EIS preparation.<sup>67</sup>

NEPA similarly affected the ski industry, introducing environmental issues as significant and focusing attention, time, and money on the now-necessary EIS. In other words, NEPA forced ski resorts to anticipate the environmental consequences of their built landscapes. Subsequent legislation--the Endangered Species Act of 1973, the Archaeological Resources Protection Act of 1979, and amendments to the Clean Water Act--added to the issues resort developers had to face and increased the Forest Service's role as guardians of the National Forests. Future Silver Queens and Vista Bahns could no longer simply emerge as part of ski resort culture and spirit skier-tourists up mountains into a world of natural, scenic, adventure. Instead, each would have its size, placing, design, and means of installment examined, questioned, and argued over--on paper and in public.

Predicting the consequences of their building resort landscapes through the EIS process took the romance out of creating a ski area. Before the USFS would

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<sup>66</sup>National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, Act of January 1, 1970 (P.L. 91-190, 83 Stat. 852; 42 U.S.C. 4321(note), 4321, 4331-4335, 4341-4346, 4346a-b, 4347), Sec. 101.

<sup>67</sup>Sale, 26-27.

grant new areas (or old areas' expansion projects) a special use permit, they had to conduct extensive studies on how the proposed development would affect cultural resources, animal populations, water quality, and vegetation, as well as look at its visual impact and its social and economic effects on the local community. This process, and the review process that came next, could add years and millions of dollars to ski resort projects. One author argued with dismay that had Aspen's developers proposed to build the area in 1971 instead of 1946, legal red tape, bureaucratic delays, and environmental objections would have stymied the project altogether.<sup>68</sup> Whip Jones recalled that he got his special use permit to develop Aspen Highlands (which opened in 1958) in six months. "When asked how long it takes to get a permit these days," a reporter noted in 1977, "Jones just laughs."<sup>69</sup> As a result, fewer and fewer new areas opened for business in the 1970s.

Vail's development of Beaver Creek--originally planned for use in the 1976 Olympics that Colorado voters declined to host--became the focus of a Herculean struggle between development proponents and opposing factions. Begun in 1970, Vail Associates' planning and negotiations for Beaver Creek had cost them \$6 million by 1974 when the Forest Service filed its draft EIS. Without the Winter Olympics to help justify their project, Vail Associates entered a bureaucratic black hole. "The state's 13-agency review of the EIS was so critical," ranger Paul Hauk wrote, "that even development-oriented Governor John Vanderhoof requested the Forest Service to delay issuing a permit to Vail Associates."<sup>70</sup> After a long debate between the USFS and Governor Lamm (who opposed the site's development and worked to reverse outgoing Governor

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<sup>68</sup>"An Aspen Fantasy: The Story of A Ski Area," *Skiing Area News*, 6 (Fall 1971), 33.

<sup>69</sup>John Sabella, "The Mountain Moguls," *Aspen Times*, 8 December, 1977, 2B, clipping, Whip Jones Biography file, AHS.

<sup>70</sup>Paul Hauk, "Beaver Creek Ski Area Chronology," U.S.D.A. Forest Service, White River National Forest, 1979, 5.

Vanderhoof's last-minute approval of the area), the Sierra Club filed an appeal to block the development. Finally, after more studies, plans, and compromises, Vail Associates got their special use permit for Beaver Creek in March of 1976. Still, two more appeals, from the Environmental Defense Fund and from an individual from Gunnison, delayed ground-breaking ceremonies until July of 1977. The resort finally opened in 1980.<sup>71</sup> Few ski corporations dared propose new resorts after that, lest they be subject to the same costly delays and controversies; no new ski area has been developed since.<sup>72</sup>

Even planning an expansion could raise problems. Proposed expansions at Colorado destination resorts raised a variety of environmental issues that stirred up local communities, generated regional and usually unfavorable national press, and galvanized opposition from environmental groups toward ski resort developers. In the early 1990s Snowmass resort planned to build ski lifts and trails on Burnt Mountain, thereby extending the resort to the edge of the Maroon Bells-Snowmass Wilderness Area and endangering local elk habitat. Plans for increased snowmaking, which would divert water from local streams during Brown trout spawning season, prompted the Aspen Wilderness Workshop to bring the case before the Colorado Supreme Court. A *New York Times* reporter picked up the story (as had regional reporters) and introduced the environmental issues

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<sup>71</sup>See Hauk, 3-10; Abbott Fay, *Ski Tracks in the Rockies: A Century of Colorado Skiing* (Evergreen CO: Cordillera Press, Inc., 1984), 59-61.

<sup>72</sup>Some tried anyway. The Little Annie Ski Corporation based in Aspen won the support of the Pitkin County Commissioners, but found itself mired in financial, environmental, and logistic concerns from which it could not extricate itself. An area near Rifle similarly failed. A proposed resort outside of Steamboat Springs called Lake Catamount Resort and one near Beaver Creek called Adams Rib are still fighting. Jack Cox, "Obstacles Still Strewn in Path of Little Annie," *Denver Post*, 20 September, 1981, F1; U.S. Department of Agriculture, White River National Forest, "Little Annie, Proposed Ski Area Aspen, Colorado: Draft Environmental Impact Statement," n.d., pamphlet, Little Annie file, AHS; "1984 White River NF Forest Plan and Ski Area Statistics," U.S. Forest Service, Aspen Ranger District (1984).

surrounding snowmaking to the national public.<sup>73</sup> The local population divided when it had to judge the relative importance of protecting the local elk herd, the integrity of the wilderness area, and Brown trout spawning habitat against additional jobs and business for the town. These issues raised tempers across the state and placed the environmental consequences of resort development in the public forum.<sup>74</sup>

Telluride experienced similar controversy. In 1993 federal investigators accused ski area developers of violating the Clean Water Act when they built an 18-hole golf course, a parking lot, roads, ski runs, restaurants, and condominiums at the new Telluride Mountain Village. Between 1984 and 1990, the government declared, the company had filled in 40 acres of wetlands. Valuable as wildlife and waterfowl habitat, as filters for leaching toxins from groundwater, and as protection against floods, wetlands had recently become recognized as valuable natural resources. Telluride's corporation found itself in a sticky situation. Negotiations for a settlement with the EPA took years; delays boosted development costs by at least \$2.5 million. Telluride executives agreed to pay a penalty, restore some wetlands at the resort, and construct new wetlands on land in the next county. Local public protest, however, criticizing the small size of the financial penalty and the fact that wetland restoration would be outside the Telluride watershed, caused a U.S. District Judge to reject the offer. The EPA later broadened

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<sup>73</sup>Dirk Johnson, "On Ski Slopes of Colorado, A Battle of Snow vs. Water," *New York Times*, 14 November, 1994, A1, A10; John Brinkley, "Snowmaking Imperils Snowmass Creek?" *Rocky Mountain News*, 20 April, 1994, 8A; Hugh Dellios, "Ski Resorts, Environmentalists Battle Over Snowmaking," *Denver Post*, 22 January, 1995, 4C; Mark Obmascik, "Fish Can Only Squirm Over Race to Make Snow," *Denver Post*, 14 October, 1995.

<sup>74</sup>Paul Anderson and Brigid Kelly, "Snowmass Power Struggle," *Aspen Times*, 11 April, 1992, 1A; Cameron M. Burns, "Snowmass Unchained," *Aspen Times*, 12 March, 1994, 1A; Paul Larmer, "Does Aspen Need Thousands More Skiers?" *High Country News*, 4 October, 1993, 4; U.S.D.A., White River National Forest, Aspen Ranger District, "Record of Decision Snowmass Ski Area: Final Environmental Impact Statement," (March 1994).

the suit and claimed the resort had actually destroyed 62 acres of wetlands.<sup>75</sup> As one of the largest wetland fill cases in Colorado, the Telluride case helped the EPA advertise a lesson one executive learned early on: "Don't do anything to violate the Clean Water Act. Avoid it at all cost, like you avoid the IRS."<sup>76</sup> The federal, regional, and local outcry that ski resort development prompted, signified people's willingness and even desire to face the consequences of their built landscapes.

New public concern over environmental issues and the growing momentum of the environmental movement in the 1970s made resort managers aware that skier-tourists probably recognized the constructedness of their surroundings. Ski area managers, at the urging of the USFS, proceeded to construct mountain landscapes even more self-consciously than before. Area developers should "make the ski area look more like natural terrain." "Failing to produce this visual effect," one planner argued, "is the crux of much criticism of ski developments."<sup>77</sup> Indeed, by the 1990s the USFS was employing computer technology to assess the visual impact of area expansion and stressing the need to paint lift towers an appropriate color.<sup>78</sup> Their efforts, though unconsciously appreciated by thousands of skiers, could not hide resorts' built landscape as they had in the past. The awkward relationship between the environment and ski resorts had reached the point of being funny. (Figure 2) Not only were skiers themselves more aware of

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<sup>75</sup>Katie Kerwin, "Settlement Nearing in Wetlands Destruction," *Rocky Mountain News*, 26 September, 1993, 6A, 10A; Mark Obmascik, "Resort, Feds Reach Wetlands Deal," *Denver Post*, 20 October, 1993, 1B, 5B; Katie Kerwin, "Judge Rejects Telluride Wetlands Plan," *Rocky Mountain News*, 21 April, 1994, 8A; Joseph B. Verrengia, "EPA Broadens Telluride Wetlands Suit," *Rocky Mountain News*, 7 November, 1994, 14A; Katie Kerwin, "Telluride Wins Round in Fight Over Wetlands," *Rocky Mountain News*, 5 May, 1995, 27A.

<sup>76</sup>Kerwin, "Settlement Nearing," 10A.

<sup>77</sup>Mike Maginn, "The Problem with Doing Business in the Woods," *Skiing Area News*, 5 (Summer 1970), 42; *Planning Considerations for Winter Sports Resort Development* (U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, in Cooperation with National Ski Areas Association, 1973), 30.

<sup>78</sup>H. Peter Wingle, *Planning Considerations for Winter Sports Resort Development* (U.S. D.A., Forest Service, Rocky Mountain Region, 1994), 28-31.

Sam Watterson, *Calvin and Hobbes*, 28 December, 1993.

Figure 2. Calvin and Hobbes, 1993.

development's environmental impacts, but area expansion--especially after NEPA--barely kept up with the rising numbers of skiers.

For skiers who had been drawn to the sport by the serene mountain landscape and the chance to feel alone in the wilderness, Colorado destination resorts had lost much of their appeal. As local communities and the federal government wrestled with constructed resort landscapes on legal and environmental terms, skiers struggled with them in more personal physical and psychological ways. Some skiers abandoned downhill recreational skiing in the 1970s for a sport more akin to its nineteenth-century roots: cross-country skiing. Foregoing the convenience of mechanized lifts renewed the possibility of skiing silently alone in the woods. A national survey conducted by the Forest Service in 1978 supported the claim that cross-country skiing was on the rise. Thirteen percent of the country's active skiers, it found, skied cross-country exclusively; and 21% of downhill skiers participated in cross-country skiing as well. Most, moreover, were new to the sport; the median length of experience was about 2.5 years.<sup>79</sup> The *1978 Guide to Cross Country Skiing* reader survey reiterated that cross-country skiing was a fairly new trend; over half of the respondents (51.8%) had started cross-country skiing just that year or last. This trend was a direct response, in part, to the increasing development of alpine resort areas. Only a minority--28.3%--were alpine as well as cross-country skiers; of those who were not alpine skiers, 40.2% had been and quit, or "tried alpine skiing and did not like it." Almost 80% of respondents said they liked cross country skiing because it allowed them to "get into the country"--an impossible feat at destination resorts from most perspectives.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>79</sup>U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, "Growth Potential of the Skier Market in the National Forests," Research Paper WO-36 (1979), 6.

<sup>80</sup>Almost 90% said they liked it because it is good exercise, and just over half said they liked it because it is less expensive than alpine skiing. "Highlights from the

Back-country skiing and extreme skiing have been recent manifestations of this desire to get away from the crowds and construction of ski resorts. Searching for an experience unmediated by lifts, lodges, and carefully designed trails, these skiers embark on trips between mountain huts or camping sites and climb rugged peaks for the thrill of skiing steep, narrow, and rocky terrain on the way down. Both the wilderness and the extreme descents that these skiers seek, respectively, exist only where development and management does not. This fact poses both an attractive and frightening--or more probably an attractively frightening--situation. For where there are no crowds, lifts, or signs funneling skiers to the "easiest way down," there are also no signs to mark cliffs, no avalanche control, and no ski patrol. The unmitigated danger that has drawn skiers from resort areas to this scenic adventure candyland called "the backcountry" has also brought them to the emergency room. In the seven years from the 1988-89 season to 1994-45, forty-one skiers died while skiing outside of ski areas.<sup>81</sup> Avalanches claimed these victims; exposure and frostbite left their marks on many others. Despite--and often because of--these real dangers, back-country skiing and extreme skiing continue to attract people for whom ski resort landscapes seem too mitigated, managed, developed, designed and constructed.

The vast majority of skiers continue to flock to such resorts, however. Rather than opt for a "real wilderness experience," complete with all its discomfort and danger, they have appreciated a certain degree of development. Destination skiers, especially, made skiing part of an overall vacation experience and so counted on resort amenities and apres ski activities to keep them busy. Skiers who took up the sport in the 1960s began, in the 1970s and later, to bring

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1987 Guide to Cross Country Skiing Survey," *Cross Country Skiing* (April 1978), 1-2.

<sup>81</sup>Howard Pankratz and Chance Conner, "Liability Ruling Assessed," *Denver Post*, 20 December, 1995, 4B.

their children with them. They welcomed day care facilities, special ski school classes, and conveniently designed lodges. Those just learning (and others, too) appreciated groomed snow, easy trails, and clear signs to lead them down safely. Ski areas, moreover, continually advertised such services and amenities as reasons to visit their resort. Most skier-tourists, accordingly, took such development for granted. They might move happily within the cultural images crafted by the resort, not noticing the degree to which the mountains had become a built landscape. They could read the papers exclaiming how many millions of dollars Colorado areas were spending on improvements without any sense of environmental degradation. That skier-tourists had come to expect such constructed resort landscapes, however unconsciously, meant also that they had a particular understanding of the area's legal responsibility to keep them safe. So when that landscape fell short of their expectations they noticed, and then they went to court.

This is a landscape fraught with contradictions. Skier-tourists want to ski in the adventuresome wilderness, but they also want to feel safe and comfortable; and they want to experience personal freedom without accepting responsibility when something goes wrong. Since the 1970s, then, ski resorts have had to cope increasingly with the legal repercussions of their developed landscapes--above and beyond what they faced from the EPA and members of the environmental movement. People within the ski industry noticed this change early on. "The old image of the skier as a rugged individualist does not necessarily hold true today," a Denver attorney said in 1972. "The rapid growth of the sport has made the public aware that not only super athletes ski, but also friends, neighbors, secretaries, and children." This changing public attitude towards the sport, he predicted, would affect how courts rule on ski area liability cases. In the 1951 case of *Wright vs. Mt. Mansfield*, where a fairly experienced skier broke her leg when her ski struck a five-inch stump hidden beneath the snow, the court ruled that the case could not

be submitted to the jury. The ski area could not be expected to guard against every hazardous condition unless it had knowledge of it, the court said, and Mrs. Wright had assumed the risk of the dangers of skiing "so far as they are obvious and necessary." A snow-covered stump beneath a smooth trail, the court explained, was a normal danger. This decision would probably not hold up, the author argued, in 1972.<sup>82</sup> While the idea that skiers assume the normal risks of skiing when they buy a ticket had not changed, ski resort standards of performance improved so much by 1972 that minimizing liabilities became a real issue.<sup>83</sup>

Dangers associated with weather, snow grooming, lift operation and safety, and trail maintenance, combined with potentially crowded conditions and people skiing out of control, could turn beautiful slopes into frightening places. In the seven years from the 1988-89 season to the 1994-95 season, for instance, forty-one skiers died while inside ski area boundaries.<sup>84</sup> Skiers have sued resorts since *Wright vs. Mt. Mansfield* for all kinds of reasons; some won, some lost, and some settled out of court. Every suit filed, no matter what the outcome, cost ski resorts time, money, and negative public exposure. A 1990 law seemed to uphold the precedent of the Wright case by preventing skiers from suing ski areas for injuries resulting from the "inherent dangers and risks of skiing," including variations in steepness or terrain. The tables turned in 1995, however, when the Colorado Supreme Court ruled that not all dangers encountered on the ski slope were "inherent dangers and risks of skiing." With this decision, one reporter noted, "the court refused to give Colorado ski-area operators blanket immunity

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<sup>82</sup>Carol Kocivar, "The Lawsuit Tide: Ebb or Flood?" *Skiing Area News*, 7 (Winter 1972), 30.

<sup>83</sup>"Ski Area Liabilities," *Ski Area News*, 7 (Spring 1972), 39-41.

<sup>84</sup>These fatalities resulted from collisions with people or objects; the figures do not include deaths from health-related problems like heart attacks. This figure is, amazingly, the same as that of skiers killed by avalanches out-of-bounds. Pankratz and Conner, 4B.

from lawsuits by skiers injured on their slopes."<sup>85</sup> Legal battles over ski resort liability turn on a variety of factors, ranging from the specific facts of each case to the prevailing attitudes towards skiing, the ski industry, and personal responsibility in general. With skiers' increasing expectations of a constructed, managed, developed, and designed landscape came the assumption that those landscapes would be safe. The tools and procedures that provided such a place, however, could also add to its dangers. As a result, critiques of the resort landscape--in the form of lawsuits--grew more common.

Ski industry growth and the success of its resort culture also elicited critiques from those who subscribed to that culture. Just as the environmental, physical, and legal realities of ski lifts demystified images of the Silver Queen and Vista Bahn during the 1970s, so did the economic and racial realities of ski industry labor undercut the world of the ski bum. Part of the problem stemmed from the nature of ski bum employment. Skiers who took jobs within the ski industry because they loved skiing, one author noted, often ran out of time to ski.<sup>86</sup> So they left, or they took on management positions, bought their own businesses, and turned into legitimate local businesspeople. As the ski industry grew more corporate in structure and management style, too, self-proclaimed ski bums appealed less to employers. Accouterments of the 1960s youth culture--long hair, marijuana, and a lagging respect for elders--frightened many potential employers out of hiring them. If hired on, ski bums could look forward to long hours, hard work, and bleak stretches of weather to go with their season of skiing no matter what their job.<sup>87</sup> Bum-hood proved difficult, from this perspective, to sustain.

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<sup>85</sup>Howard Pankratz, "Ski-Area Lawsuits Upheld," *Denver Post*, 19 December, 1995, 1A, 18A.

<sup>86</sup>Nelson, "Help Wanted," 61.

<sup>87</sup>Nelson, "But They're Employed," 71, 99.

Along with the growth in resort development and real estate during the 1970s, and the success of the conspicuously consumptive resort culture, came a rise in the cost of living. Such a trend quickly excluded most young people from ski bumming. Two ex-Aspen workers lamented in 1979, "it's just damn expensive being a ski bum these days." By their conservative figuring, a dishwasher or maid in Aspen who skied would owe \$141 a month on top of what they could earn.<sup>88</sup> Resort managers across the country supported the spirit of this claim. Sixty percent of major destination resorts surveyed in 1979 reported a definite drop in the number of applications for ski area jobs in the previous two or three years. The lack of reasonably-priced housing near ski areas--a problem across the country that was especially acute in the West--posed a significant obstacle. Low wages and rising prices for housing, food, lift tickets, and incidentals prevented service workers from earning enough to support themselves and still having the time to ski.<sup>89</sup> At the same time, continued growth of the ski industry and its accompanying culture created more service-oriented jobs than typical ski bums could fill. Menial and service jobs, without the status of the ski bum persona and time off to ski, were nothing but hard work for minimum wage. Hiring seasonal workers grew increasingly difficult. Destination resorts eventually reached the point of recruiting a distinct working class of people to support them. The ski culture's idealized image of the ski bum fell victim to the harsh reality of low-wage labor in wealthy resort towns.

And as relations of labor and class reared their ugly heads in these beautiful and mythic towns, so too did it become more difficult to hide the industry's growing reliance upon workers of color. Heretofore islands of

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<sup>88</sup>Scott Bowie and Stacy Standley, "Ski Bum, R.I.P.," *Ski*, 44 (November 1979), 143.

<sup>89</sup>Martha Stine, "Ski Bum Shortage? Areas Say 'Yes,'" *Ski*, 44 (November 1979), 204; Mahoney, 7-8; Deborah Frazier, "Ski Resorts Offer Blizzard of Good Jobs," *Rocky Mountain News*, 13 November, 1988, 28.

whiteness, destination resorts came to reflect the ethnic diversity of the West more accurately. Mexican Americans, Mexicans, eastern Europeans, and even Africans began filling manual labor and service jobs, building a multiethnic labor force to support American ski culture. During the 1980s Mexican immigrants and their families began coming to the Roaring Fork Valley because Aspen businesses recruited them as seasonal labor. As of 1994 there were at least 8,000 Hispanics living in the valley, and an estimated 7,000 undocumented workers at different resorts between Leadville and Aspen. At least twenty Africans ended up in Summit County, Colorado, after signing up with a particular employment agency in Manhattan. Some workers lived as far as sixty miles (often treacherous ones) away from their work, cleaning hotel rooms and moonlighting at fast food restaurants in an effort to make ends meet.<sup>90</sup>

Most ski industry workers--no matter their racial or ethnic identities--cannot afford to live in or even near the resorts their work supports. Thirty-nine of Vail's forty-eight policemen and firefighters cannot afford to live in town.<sup>91</sup> Ski-resort workers live in broken-down trailers, government-subsidized housing, cheap apartments two mountain passes away from their jobs, tents on National Forest land, and even vans parked in maintenance garages.<sup>92</sup> Housing problems--and other problems associated with a new, largely immigrant work

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<sup>90</sup>Guy Kelly, "Picking up a Spanish Accent," *Rocky Mountain News*, Sept. 4, 1994, p. 12A; Bruce Finley, "'A Better Life': New Wave of Immigrants Lured by Resorts," *Denver Post*, Oct. 30, 1995, pp. 1A, 13A; Ray Ring, "The New West's Servant Economy," *High Country News*, April 17, 1995, pp. 10, 12; Deborah Frazier, "Undocumented Workers Tax Ski Counties," *Rocky Mountain News*, Nov. 9, 1993, p. 8A. A recent sweep that the Colorado Immigration and Naturalization Service made of the Aspen and Vail areas netted thirty illegal aliens. "Aspen-Vail INS Sweep Nabs 30," *Denver Post*, Dec. 7, 1995, p. 9B.

<sup>91</sup>Ring, "New West's Servant Economy," 1.

<sup>92</sup>Ring, 1; Ray Ring, "Ski Bums Wrapped in Concrete," "Pedro Lopez, Entrepreneur," and "The Leadville-Indy 500," *High Country News*, April 17, 1995, pp. 8-10; Gary Massaro, "Aspen Workers Commute from 'Edge of Hell,'" *Rocky Mountain News*, Sept. 4, 1994, p. 13A; Deborah Frazier, "Privacy Exacts Price in Telluride," *Rocky Mountain News*, Feb. 15, 1995, p. 10A; Guy Kelly, "Resorts Face Urban Woes," *Rocky Mountain News*, Sept. 4, 1994, pp. 12A, 18A.

force--have made much of Colorado's ski country look like part of the Third World. Even the Catholic church took notice. Sister Annette Carrica of the Ohio-based Sisters of Charity, seeking to help Latin Americans, went not to Central America but to the heart of Colorado's ski country. She joined Roman Catholic Archbishop J. Francis Stafford, who started the Villa Sierra Madre housing project in Silverthorne to help poor Hispanic workers on the Western Slope. Sisters Mary Jo Coyle and Mary Ellen Beyhan run a similar low-income apartment complex in Glenwood Springs for the Denver Archdiocese, and plans are underway for another in Carbondale and one near Winter Park.<sup>93</sup>

This landscape of ethnicity and class produced by the Colorado ski industry has raised still more development issues for resort towns, which have come to resemble surprisingly urban places despite their rural settings. Housing and child care problems plague ski resort employees throughout the state. Though these men and women work in places characterized by whiteness and wealth, the surrounding communities they call home have more in common with urban slums than popular images of ski resorts. In a reversal of typical urban geography, wealthy and white people live in the center--albeit an isolated mountain town center--while people of color and lower classes live outside. They commute out of necessity, spending much of their pay on high-priced gasoline and much of their time on the road in a ritual that only reinforces their economic situation. When placed in high mountain landscapes, moreover, urban problems such as traffic jams and pollution grow more deadly. The scenic winding road from Glenwood Springs to Aspen, for instance, on which every worker must travel twice a day, is often covered with snow and ice, hidden in darkness, or both. Locals call it "Killer 82." Like their

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<sup>93</sup>Ring, "New West's Servant Economy," 1; Ray Ring, "He Came to Ski and Stayed to Help," *High Country News*, April 17, 1995, p. 13; Kelly, "Resorts Face Urban Woes," 12A, 18A; Guy Kelly, "Church Housing is a Godsend," *Rocky Mountain News*, Sept. 5, 1994, p. 17A; Gary Massaro, "Nun Steers Hispanics to Shelter," *Rocky Mountain News*, Sept. 5, 1994, pp. 17A, 26A.

traffic, resort towns produce larger amounts of particulate emissions than mountain landscapes can handle. Well-used fireplaces in second homes and condominiums, cars, and the general activity of resort towns concentrate pollution in their high mountain valleys and box canyons, where it usually stays. These characteristics give new meaning to the phrase "its a nice place to visit but I wouldn't want to live there." Those people who do live there cope daily with the repercussions of tourism and resort development.

Ski resorts thus struggled to retain their images as quaint, idyllic, and scenic mountain landscapes at the same time that the realities of their tourist economies threatened to scar those landscapes. Maintaining this tension between images of wilderness and the realities of development gave destination ski resorts their appeal, but that struggle had to remain behind the scenes. Skier-tourists expected wilderness and development, adventure and comfort, but they did not want to see the unromantic framework supporting their vacation experiences. Bringing it into the open endangered the integrity of skier-tourists' vacation experience. Since the 1970s, however, ski resort culture could no longer completely contain from view the environmental, physical, economic, and racial relationships upon which it was based. Resort culture itself, like the landscapes to which it gave meaning, promoted and depended upon racial, economic, and sexual assumptions that proved difficult to maintain. The appealing images of whiteness, wealth, and sex so long integral to ski resort culture came under scrutiny in the years after 1970.

The National Brotherhood of Skiers (NBS), for instance, began this process in 1973. An organization made up of black skiers, NBS recognized the racial, economic, and cultural barriers that have kept minority children from the sport. Since its inception, the organization has been helping children of color learn to ski and trying to place a black skier on the U.S. Olympic Ski Team. As of January 1993

the group had seventy-five ski club affiliates in sixty-two cities and twenty-two states, with an total membership of over 14,000. Despite their numbers and the fact that members spent an estimated \$36 million skiing during the 1993-1994 season--a statistic which does not include the other estimated 100,000 black skiers in the country--advertisers and manufacturers have yet to support either the organization in particular or black skiers in general.<sup>94</sup> One spokesman noted that black skiers spend nearly \$200 million a year on skiing. "If you look at the advertising here," he said, "you don't even see photos of blacks skiing in their brochures."<sup>95</sup> African Americans, helping the industry grow but remaining invisible, are using their power to question the ski culture's overwhelming whiteness.

Gay and lesbian skiers, similarly, have critiqued resort culture's heterosexual assumptions by celebrating and emphasizing their own presence on the slopes. In Aspen, for instance, gay and lesbian skiers have organized an annual Gay Ski Week since 1977. In 1993 about 3,000 gay and lesbian skiers flocked to the town. They came on their own and with clubs from places including Kansas City, Florida, New York, New Jersey, Boston, and Los Angeles.<sup>96</sup> By accepting--even reveling in--resort culture's social atmosphere in a frankly homosexual context, these skiers have highlighted the heterosexual relationships upon which the industry has depended. At the same time--during that one week in Aspen--gay and lesbian skiers as a group spent millions of dollars on the ski industry. Like the

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<sup>94</sup>Robert Jackson, "Make Pitch to Black Skiers, Industry Told," *Rocky Mountain News*, Feb. 14, 1995, p. 12A.

<sup>95</sup>Jackson, 12A. See also Robert Jackson, "Lack of Sponsors Puzzles Ski Group," *Rocky Mountain News*, Feb. 15, 1994.

<sup>96</sup>Deborah Frazier, "Gays Skiers Converge on Aspen," *Rocky Mountain News*, 24 January, 1993, 10; Deborah Frazier, "Gays Stress Fund Clout at Aspen Ski Week," *Rocky Mountain News*, 25 January, 1993, 10; Gil Rudawsky, "Gay Ski Week's Goal: A Gay Time," *Rocky Mountain News*, 22 January, 1994, 6A.

National Brotherhood of Skiers, gay and lesbian ski organizations have used their economic power as a tool for broadening destination resort culture.

The power that black and gay skiers used to enter the ski industry and make their voices heard--if only faintly--proved inaccessible to many. Those without such money, no matter what their racial or sexual identity, have had less and less influence upon the ski industry and its destination resort culture. While the middle class led the industry's boom during the 1960s, they were also amongst its casualties. Middle-class skiers dropped by the wayside as lift tickets and the trappings of destination resort culture grew beyond their means. They chose instead to ski less frequently, at less expensive, smaller ski areas, or both. Appropriate dress and behavior at places like Aspen and Vail cost a lot to start with. Lift ticket prices have risen steadily since the beginning of the ski industry; big resorts which have had to pay for big development and big insurance premiums led the way. Aspen Mountain and Vail charged, respectively, \$6.50 and \$5 for a full day adult ticket during the 1962-63 season. They charged \$9 during 1972-73, and by the 1982-83 season their prices had skyrocketed to \$22.<sup>97</sup> The annual household income of Aspen skiers jumped accordingly. While during the 1973-74 season 23% of those surveyed reported an income of over \$50,000, ten years later 27% said they earned over \$100,000. Of all income brackets in the 1983-84 survey, more skiers fell into this top one by far.<sup>98</sup> By the mid-1990s skier-tourists were paying \$50 for a lift ticket at destination resorts and the class dynamics of skiing had become a source of humor (Figure 3). Such jokes brought

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<sup>97</sup>Colorado Ski Country USA, "Statistics," Denver, Colorado, n.d., III-R-1, III-R-3; Charles R. Goeldner and Karen Duea, "Colorado Ski and Winter Recreation Statistics, 1982," Business Research Division, Graduate School of Business Administration, University of Colorado, Boulder, Colorado, 1982, 70.

<sup>98</sup>The next largest income bracket represented was the \$50,000-\$75,000 group, with 17.4%. C.R. Goeldner and Jim Manire, "The Aspen Skier, 1983-84 Season," Business Research Division, Graduate School of Business Administration, University of Colorado, Boulder, Colorado, 1984, 11.

Hans Bjordhal and Holley Irvine, *Cafe Angst*, 30 March, 1996.

Figure 3. *Cafe Angst*, 1996

laughs precisely because readers understood the truth behind them. Big resorts have tried to attract local skiers by offering coupons and special discounts, but wealth was fast becoming a requirement for visiting these areas, especially if one planned on staying for more than a day or two.

One of the most powerful critiques of destination resort culture came from American young people. Rather than focus on specific aspects such as race, sexuality, or class, they made a cynical statement about a culture that had grown to represent the skiing establishment. There was little room, they seemed to say, for young people to express themselves within a sport and a culture that had, since its heyday in the 1960s, become the status quo. Adopting distinct clothing and an attitude reminiscent of the 1960s youth culture, snowboarders first appeared at ski areas in the early 1980s. Their baggy clothes, rough language, and legendary lack of manners immediately alienated most skiers and representatives of the ski industry. Their weird sport, slang terms like "bonk," "fakie," "jib," and "tweak," and their very appearance emphasized snowboarders' dismissal of--if not contempt for--skiing and its culture.<sup>99</sup> The feeling, at least in the 1980s, was mutual. In 1985 only 7% of U.S. ski resorts allowed snowboarding. Aspen and Keystone banned snowboarders from their slopes. Animosity between skiers and boarders became expected. One running skier's joke went: "What's the difference between a Boarder and a catfish? One is a bottom-dwelling, disgusting, rejected muck sucker and the other is a fish." The sport's freshness and its youth culture frightened most skier-tourists. That, snowboarders would have argued, was exactly the point.

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<sup>99</sup>Their critique of ski culture, however, incorporated skiing's relationship to the snow, slopes, and mountain. In that sense snowboarding was both an affirmation (of skiing's relationship to the landscape) and a critique (of its cultural trappings).

## Resort Culture Reigns

As much as destination resorts and their ski culture have come under fire since the 1970s, they have still managed to grow. The economic and cultural power behind Colorado's ski industry enabled it to absorb, ignore, or coopt its criticisms and emerge relatively unscathed. (Some smaller ski areas, in contrast to large destination resorts, have fallen by the wayside.) Destination resorts and their ski culture have become even larger and more powerful than before. Their ownership has reached gargantuan proportions as areas have frequently changed hands to form ever-greater corporations. The largest and latest merger will add Keystone, Arapahoe Basin, and Breckenridge to the already substantial holdings of Vail Resorts Inc., (owners of Vail, Beaver Creek, and Arrowhead), sometime in 1996. These areas account for a total of 4.8 million skier-days and will make their owner the largest ski resort company in the Western world.<sup>100</sup> Kamori International Corp., which owns Steamboat and Heavenly Valley, California, is also huge. Its areas account for 1.8 million skier-days. The Aspen Skiing Co., of Aspen Mountain, Buttermilk, Snowmass, and Aspen Highlands too, as of 1993, boasts 1.4 million skier-days.<sup>101</sup> In terms of size and capitalization, then, Colorado's destination resorts are alive and well to an amazing degree.<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>100</sup>James Brooke, "The Business of Skiing Gets Bigger," *New York Times*, 9 September, 1996, B8.

<sup>101</sup>Other giant corporations own multiple ski resorts in other areas of the country. American Skiing Co., for instance, owns Killington, Mt. Snow, and Haystack and Sugarbush in Vermont, Sugarloaf and Sunday River, Me., and Attitash, N.H.. This company controls 3.0 million skier-days. Intrawest Corp. owns Blackcomb and Panorama in British Columbia, Mont Tremblant in Quebec, Mammoth in California, Stratton in Vermont, and Snowshoe/Silver Creek in West Virginia and accounts for 2.5 million visits. "The Urge to Merge," *Skiing*, 49 (September 1996), 38; "Merger Madness, Part II," *Skiing*, 49 (October 1996), 32.

<sup>102</sup>For another perspective on the industry's growth from 1976-1993, see Charles R. Goeldner, "We've Come A Long Way," *Ski Area Management*, 33 (July 1994), 41.

They also continue to expand across Colorado's mountains despite the plethora of environmental regulations.<sup>103</sup> Resorts with such large corporations behind them could afford to comply with these laws. The USFS has recognized this fact; one forest ranger said "give me a huge multinational corporation anytime."<sup>104</sup> Extremely conscious of their public image, destination resort marketers have recently found it worthwhile to highlight their environmental sensitivity from a public relations point of view. A 1994 survey found that skiers as a whole were more active and informed about environmental issues than the general public. Ski industry reporters told their readers: "If you have an environmental program, stick with it. If you don't, get one."<sup>105</sup> Ski resorts could thus use their money for two jobs at once--creating an environmentally sensitive ski area and promoting themselves. Eagle awards for environmental excellence, established in 1994 by the industry itself, have also helped serve this dual purpose. Those areas with the best programs or design in a range of categories get rewarded by having their names and awards listed in the major ski magazines. Following environmental laws and competing for environmental awards, however, have not kept destination resorts from expanding. Vail, for instance, doubled its size to 3,787 acres in 1989 when it built two lifts and opened four bowls on the area's back side. Resort landscapes are still constructed and developed, and skier-tourists are more aware of that reality than ever before. Rather than stop expanding or building, however, ski resort developers have visibly addressed their customers' environmental

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<sup>103</sup>While it has become prohibitively difficult for brand new ski areas to acquire permits for development, established areas have consistently won approval for expansion. The U.S. Forest Service, and presumably local populations as well, see growth of older resorts as less environmentally threatening than the development of new ones.

<sup>104</sup>Ken Kowinya, Routt National Forest, Hahn's Peak Ranger District, interview by the author, 24 August, 1995, Steamboat Springs, Colorado.

<sup>105</sup>David B. Rockland, "The Environment and Your Customer," *Ski Area Management*, 33 (July 1994), 40, 58.

concerns, thereby advertising their area and accomplishing their own less environmentally-friendly goal: increasing business.

To those skiers who dismissed resort landscapes as too constructed or too tame and so changed sports, resort managers replied: wait and see. The industry recognized the growing popularity of cross-country skiing and extreme skiing and has managed, largely, to incorporate them both--and within resort landscapes. As early as 1978 one reporter noticed that most ski areas offer organized touring centers with miles of maintained trails. Most cross-country skiers, moreover, despite their desire to "get into the country," preferred to ski on a prepared track and have come to depend upon snowmaking to insure the trail's quality.<sup>106</sup> While rejecting downhill ski resort landscapes, these skiers came to accept similarly constructed ones which were often owned and operated by the very same developers.

The ski industry similarly coopted the sport of extreme skiing. Once the province of mountaineer-alpinist dare-devils, extreme skiing acquired a wide following in America during the 1980s. The sport grew to the point of having its own World Extreme Ski Championships in 1991. Rather than accept the implicit criticism of resort landscapes that these thrill-seeking people acted out on the steeps, ski resorts welcomed them, too, into the fold. They reversed their 1960s decision to focus on intermediate terrain and opened steep, narrow chutes for skier-tourists who wanted to test their skill and nerve. As of 1996 Breckenridge, Copper, Crested Butte, Telluride, Snowmass, Arapahoe Basin, and Loveland all opened and patrolled areas of difficult terrain. Extreme skiers who appreciated the lift service and the peace of mind that came with resort safety measures--at the same time they plunged down steep, rocky chutes--could thus enjoy their sport

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<sup>106</sup>Meyers, "It Will Be 'Hotter,'" 15; "Highlights from the 1978 Guide to Cross Country Skiing Survey;" Jonathan B. Wiesel, "Cross Country Snowmaking: Where It's Been . . . Where It's Going," *Ski Area Management* (March 1982), 64, 67-68.

more than ever.<sup>107</sup> Destination resorts altered their landscapes in response to those disillusioned with the typically constructed resort ski slopes, attracting them, ironically, to equally constructed spaces. By creating a wider variety of trails for skiing, large resorts continue to grow in size and popularity.

Real estate developers, too, rode along with the ski industry's growth and have kept building places based on traditional ski resort images. Their landscapes, while crafted as environmentally sensitive, more varied in terms of terrain, and frequented by minority and gay skiers as well as snowboarders, perpetuate resort culture's emphasis on whiteness, wealth, fame, and fashion. The luxurious Peaks Hotel in Telluride, for instance, where people such as Donald Trump, Kevin Costner, Tom Cruise, Paula Abdul, and Sylvester Stallone stayed, closed its doors in 1994 for a \$3 million face lift. Its owners decided it needed a sense of place and wanted to give it a "more rustic, traditional feel." "We'll go to leather-covered furniture, Indian prints and artwork that reflects its history and location," the president said.<sup>108</sup> With his choice of "going western," this developer recognized the importance of matching ski culture with an image-laden resort landscape. Nor are stereotypically western images the only option. Today the ski industry still speaks the language of whiteness through European symbols. The expanse of whiteness and wealth it has created--especially in the West--has approached the absurd. The Game Creek Club recently under construction at Vail costs between \$20,000 and \$75,000 just to join and will "create a warm atmosphere and a retreat for members reminiscent of some of the fine mountain restaurants found on the high slopes of the Alps--not unlike the Eagle Club in Gstaad or the Corviglia

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<sup>107</sup>Michael Romano, "Going to Extremes," *Rocky Mountain News*, 16 March, 1994, 1B; Charlie Meyers, "Taking the Risk Out of Extreme," *Denver Post*, 16 February, 1996, 12D. Even back-country skiing, while impossible to do in-bounds by definition, entered the ski industry through its high-tech fashion and equipment-oriented culture.

<sup>108</sup>John Rebchook, "Telluride Hotel Going Western," *Rocky Mountain News*, 10 May, 1994, 42A.

Club in St. Moritz." Another spokesman for Vail wallowed in the contradictory dynamic: "We don't want this to be an elitist thing, but there was a large specialized market for this service."<sup>109</sup>

Conspicuous consumption of whiteness and class created a need for places like the Game Creek Club. Finding people to staff such places has become more difficult. Lacking a sufficient source of ski bum labor, resort businesses now depend upon a multi-ethnic workforce to fill their many service jobs. These workers have yet to infuse ski culture with color, however. Outlandish housing prices, a high cost of living, and low wages have enabled ski resorts to accomplish physically what they had done culturally before. When resort culture could no longer cloak relations of labor and class behind the idealized role of the ski bum, resort landscapes hid them in kitchens, on commuter busses, and in low-income housing developments miles away from the pristine slopes.

While conspicuous consumption of class and white ethnic images persist unabated, the managers within the ski industry have refined their perspectives on gender and sex. Gay and lesbian skiers are welcomed every year in Aspen and have been demonstrating their economic power as consumers. So, as a group, have women. Beginning in the 1980s ski areas began to offer special workshops and ski school classes for women. More recently, equipment manufacturers have produced skis and boots designed specifically for women's bodies. Both developments suggest that women have become, in the eyes of the ski industry, economically and socially independent. They are valuable customers in their own right and not merely well-dressed accessories to male companions--if, indeed, their companions are male. Moreover, the ski industry has recognized that women have a specific learning style and physical shape that make their skiing and equipment needs different from

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<sup>109</sup>Chance Connor, "Vail Plans Mountain Social Club," *Denver Post*, Sept. 14, 1995, p. 1C.

men. Advertisements now appeal to women more as athletes than as social beings. While they have not let go of sexual, sensual images, advertisers have sometimes removed them from an explicitly heterosexual context.

At the same time that resorts and ski culture have tried to attract women in new ways, so have they worked to attract and coopt young people on snowboards. Market analysts have warned the industry for years that skiers are getting older. Who to replace them with, especially given the huge amounts of capital now at stake, has become a pressing question. The answer: snowboarders. During the 1980s these creatures frightened and offended many skiers--and ski area operators, too. The sport's freshness and its youth culture, however, had definite appeal. Initially carried by young males, boarding eventually caught on with a wider audience and the rude snowboarder stereotype has faded. By 1995 over 97% of U.S. ski areas allowed snowboarding and boarders accounted for 13% of all lift tickets sold.<sup>110</sup> Ski resorts went out of their way to attract this fast-growing segment of the ski market, hiring snowboarding instructors, building half pipes and snowboarding parks with special grooming machines, playing grunge music, and placing friendly, snowboarding ambassadors around the area to answer questions and ease any residual acrimonious feelings. Entire sections of industry trade publications are dedicated to studying and demystifying this economically significant but culturally foreign market for area managers. The ski industry, for its part, has benefited from snowboarding. Without the new sport the ski industry would face a flat or even declining market of ever-aging skiers. Instead, young people are coming to the slopes on their own terms, prompting ski areas to build snowboard parks, play alternative music, and otherwise change to fit

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<sup>110</sup>Scott Turner, "Stick Speak," *Boulder Quarterly* (Ski Guide 1996), 10; Deborah Frazier, "Ranks of Snowboarders Growing," *Rocky Mountain News*, 13 February, 1994, 23A.

snowboarders' needs. Boarder style and youth has revitalized the ski industry and its culture.

No longer a jarring counter-culture, snowboarding now finds itself inside the very industry it first spoke against. Like skiing's boom in the 1960s and '70s, snowboarding is reshaping resort landscapes around its followers' needs. Snowboard parks, which offer varied terrain for jumps and tricks and prohibit skiing, have become common at most areas. In its fashion and equipment snowboarding has mimicked the development of skiing, generating its own separate industries which are now overwhelming their skiing counterparts at annual trade shows.<sup>111</sup> As if taking advice from the ski industry, moreover, boarding fashion and equipment companies have moved away from the extreme baggy look and started developing more feminine clothes and boards designed specifically for women boarders. Like skiing, too, snowboard culture has its own icons in Jake Burton and Kevin Delaney--young American counterparts to Friedl Pfeifer and Stein Erikson. These famed boarders ride in a ski resort culture that has changed only partly since the 1960s. More upper-class but not quite so white, cosmopolitan but distinctly American, still sexy but not necessarily heterosexual, and made up of parents and grandparents as well as young rebellious types, today's ski culture is as prevalent as ever. In our post-industrial world the appeal of mountain landscapes and consumer culture has only grown. Gone are the Bogner stretch pants, Dolomite leather boots, and alluring smile of the ski bunny. Here are clothes by Cold as Ice, boots by Airwalk, Burton, or Killer Loop, and the reckless abandon of the shred betty.

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<sup>111</sup>Snowboard-related exhibits outnumbered skiing exhibits two to one at the 1996 trade show in Las Vegas, only three years after the show's organizers first invited snowboard exhibitors. Ski exhibitors tend to be larger, more established companies, however, than their snowboard colleagues. Scott Willoughby, "Boarding Stealing the Show," *Denver Post*, 8 March, 1996, 12D.

## CONCLUSION

### From Europe to Colorado and Back

Since Vail opened in 1962, it has epitomized the Colorado destination resort ideal. Ensclosed in Colorado's Rockies along I-70, the resort has consistently provided skier-tourists with great skiing, impressive scenery, a sexy apres ski life, European food, and luxury accommodations, all in a cosmopolitan yet distinctly western setting. The resort has finished regularly at the top of national skier surveys and magazine ratings. In response to this success, the resort has continued to expand and develop, as has its corporate owner. Vail Associates added Keystone, Breckenridge, and Arapahoe Basin to its own Vail and Beaver Creek resorts in 1996, making it the largest ski company in North America. The company has started a \$100 million upgrade at Vail, put \$55 million towards improvements at all five resorts, and allocated another \$20 million annually for marketing. The company has made sure, furthermore, that its investments would be noticed. In 1996-97 it arranged for daily flights to the Vail-Eagle County airport from Newark, New Jersey and Los Angeles, twice daily flights from Chicago, three times a day from Dallas-Fort Worth, and three times a week from Miami--not to mention flights four times a day from Denver. With its established image, consistent expansion, corporate growth, and access to major cities, Vail and its new sibling resorts will account for nine percent of all American ski ticket sales.<sup>1</sup> Vail and its parent company have become, to say the least, large.

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<sup>1</sup>Brian Metzler and Erika Gonzalez, "Ski Resort Merger Brings a Shudder," *Boulder Daily Camera*, 24 July, 1996, 1A; "Vail: More Flights; More Mountain," *Boulder*

One of Vail Associates' most significant investments in 1996 involved one man. Alberto Tomba, an Italian racer who has won more World Cup alpine races than anyone except Ingemar Stenmark, signed an agreement with the company designating Vail his North American home. As a token of their new relationship Vail spokespeople gave the Italian skier a horse and a Stetson hat. In doing so, the company brought the story of Vail full circle. Founder Pete Seibert built Vail after training with European skiers at Camp Hale, fighting with them in Italy, and attending hotel school in Switzerland after the war. His ski resort landscape spoke to the inseparable relationship between alpine skiing in Colorado and its European parent. Seibert incorporated European signs and symbols so successfully into his resort that visitors not only enjoyed themselves there, but began to associate the setting with Colorado rather than Europe. Vail's Bavarian Village, that is, came to signify the pinnacle of western ski resorts rather than a Bavarian village. When Tomba accepted his horse and Stetson hat he reaffirmed this symbolic switch. Vail Associates hope, furthermore, that Tomba will take the resort's Euro-western image to European skiers, back where it all began, and use it to bring them to Colorado.

Seibert's development of the Rocky Mountains and skiers' understanding of that landscape are both products of history. Skiers have been skiing in Colorado's Rockies since the mid-nineteenth century, shaping the region's landscape according to their economy and culture, and having, in turn, their economy and culture shaped by that landscape. Men and women amidst this historical process of interaction, while experiencing the act of skiing in remarkably similar ways, have attached meanings to their experience that differed over time and across boundaries of class, ethnicity, and gender. The history of skiing in Colorado incorporates a set

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*Daily Camera*, 27 June, 1996;"Vail Scoops Up Summit Resorts," *Ski*, 61 (October 1996), 23.

of diverse groups, who have understood the sport in very different ways, and brings them all together in the Rocky Mountain landscape.

During the second half of the nineteenth century, mountain residents in Colorado relied on Scandinavian immigrants to teach them how to move from place to place in the winter. "Norwegian snowshoes" served as a necessary means of transportation for anyone who needed to travel in the Rockies; the knowledge of how to make them and use them spread rapidly among mining camps, ranching areas, and the odd homesteader. The physical characteristics of the Rockies, combined with the region's economy in which Denver acted as center and mountain camps and communities as distant peripheries, made winter travel both difficult and dangerous. Those hardy few who crossed the Rockies regularly, connecting isolated communities to Denver and the outside world by carrying the mail, did so on skis. Their movement through this landscape, moreover, and the risks they faced in doing so, turned these skiers into icons of masculinity. In the meantime, residents of mining camps and towns skied shorter distances on a daily basis to keep their community together. Miners skied to and from the mines, women skied to do their errands and visit each other, and they both incorporated the sport into their social activities through such events as "snowshoe parties" and races between rival camps. During this period skiing was tightly linked with the men and women who lived and worked in Colorado's isolated mountain communities, and they understood it through the context of work and local recreation.

Scandinavian immigrants arriving in Denver in the early twentieth century found a population receptive to their nordic skiing and jumping traditions that encompassed skiers of different economic class and place of residence. Working-class themselves, immigrants such as Carl Howelson brought a community-oriented tradition of skiing and jumping to residents in Hot Sulphur Springs and Steamboat Spring, as well as to upper-class urbanites like Marjorie Perry.

Howelson was able to do so for two reasons. First, the path of railroads from Denver led him to Hot Sulphur and Steamboat Springs, where he found working-class communities receptive to his form of skiing and jumping. Second, by the 1910s and 1920s many upper-class, urban residents had embraced outdoor recreation as both healthy, rejuvenating, and as a needed escape from city living. When Howelson arrived in Denver and began traveling to the mountains to ski, members of the Colorado Mountain Club and similar outdoor enthusiasts seized upon the sport as a new form of recreation. They, like earlier upper-class visitors to the Rockies, understood mountain landscapes as scenic playgrounds rather than landscapes of work or community.

Skiing united these disparate groups of Coloradans. They formed separate ski clubs in Denver and in mountain communities, which came together in a series of winter carnivals and ski competitions that drew participants and spectators from Denver as well as Hot Sulphur and Steamboat Springs. During the 1920s and '30s, with the development of transportation routes and the continued spread of the sport, this circuit of carnivals and competitions grew to include local ski clubs from Colorado Springs to Estes Park, and from Aspen to Denver. The 1930s also marked the period when a new kind of skiing came to Colorado, this time from the European Alps. Alpine skiing, or downhill skiing, developed in Europe as part of an elite, cosmopolitan tourist culture based in resort villages such as St. Anton, Austria and St. Moritz, Switzerland. As a result, it spread in America--via European ski instructors and people who had visited alpine resorts--through the upper classes. Colorado worked differently. While the elite Arlberg Club in Denver and upper-class outdoor enthusiasts in the CMC adopted the sport first, downhill skiing became incorporated into the community-based ski club circuit rather than forming the base of a separate, elite resort culture. After a brief but ultimately failed attempt by the Highland Bavarian Corporation to build a resort

near Aspen, Averill Harriman's Sun Valley resort represented the West's only example of upper-class resort culture until after World War Two.

The failure of the HBC and the simultaneous growth of small, local ski areas during the 1930s reflected, to a large extent, the economic context of the Depression. Most Coloradans did not understand skiing as participants in elite leisure activities. Instead, they saw it as a local and regional sport that could help their communities economically as well as recreationally. So, Colorado ski clubs fostered political and economic ties to local businesses, Forest Service rangers, and federal New Deal agencies like the WPA and the CCC. These connections, combined with a slowly developing transportation network within the state, created a supportive environment for clubs to build small ski lifts, clear a trail or two, and participate in regional competitions. Colorado skiing remained local and regional until after World War Two, by which point members of the 10th Mountain Division had formed their own personal network of outdoorsmen and linked it to Colorado's ski areas. The 10th Mountain Division brought together a wide range of outdoorsmen and united them around a core of talented skiers from Europe, Ivy League colleges, and skiing communities throughout the country. These skiers were not necessarily wealthy; they participated in elite ski culture by virtue of their European ethnicity or their skill on the race course, if not their upper-class status. After the war these men constituted a tightly-knit group of skiers who were distinctly American in identity, and, after having trained for years at Camp Hale, a group with close connections to Colorado's Rocky Mountains. When many of them chose to find work in Colorado related to skiing, their national reputations, personal network of friends, and the post-war economy helped them build new ski areas and establish a national industry around the sport.

Within the context of a national, and leisure-oriented consumer culture, skiing took on new meanings. No longer just a mountain community sport or part

of an upper-class, cosmopolitan, resort culture, skiing became accessible to new populations of middle-class Americans. Ski area designers and managers struggled to provide exciting, scenic, and safe skiing experiences for growing numbers of people and did so by self-consciously constructing ski trails, lifts, and lodges. To control the public use of ski area landscapes, the National Ski Patrol and the U.S. Forest Service patrolled and regulated a designed, constructed, managed, and groomed landscape. The sport became part of a complete winter vacation for many, and some ski area developers encouraged the practice by building destination resort landscapes which offered shopping, dining, and lodging as well as skiing. Colorado's post-war destination resorts like Aspen, Telluride, and Steamboat Springs introduced an American resort culture to mountain communities and reshaped those communities. Business owners, second-home owners, "ski bums," and visitors who decided to stay created a layered pattern of self-defined "locals." The new tourist economy, its demographics, and the accompanying real estate development pushed most old-time residents to the economic and political periphery; a small minority remained, becoming involved in the new economy and serving as colorful "old timers" in the growing destination resort culture. Promoters seized upon skiing's or their community's past and mythologized it to create imagined Victorian mining towns, "wild west" ranching communities, and alpine villages like the one Pete Seibert built at Vail.

These destination resort landscapes, as sites of consumption and leisure, quickly acquired their own ski resort culture in which fame, fashion, and sexiness became important marks of status. The European roots of the sport, combined with the images crafted by resort marketers and ski fashion advertisers, successfully fostered the development of a European, white ethnicity centered around skiing. This ethnicity soon became linked with class status when it became apparent that skiers could buy and consume goods that promised to impart an elite, cosmopolitan,

European image upon their bearer. Being visibly engaged in this consumer culture grew even more important than skiing itself, and the sport once filled with middle-class Americans became increasingly characterized by wealth. Reinforced at almost every turn by resort landscapes, this culture grew to the point that it could no longer hide its constructed environments and elitist characteristics.

Environmentalists, local community members, and the U.S. Forest Service demanded that resort developers acknowledge and respond to the environmental consequences of development. Workers' poverty, local housing problems, and traffic have surfaced as urban problems that accompany such resort development in mountain landscapes. Backcountry and extreme skiers left ski areas in search of less constructed, managed, and patrolled skiing landscapes. Minority and gay and lesbian skiers used their economic power to make themselves visible in an overwhelmingly white, heterosexual culture; and finally, snowboarders launched an all-out critique of skiing and its high-brow resort culture. Colorado's ski industry has proven quite resilient in the face of these criticisms. In fact, destination resorts and their culture have successfully integrated, brushed off, or coopted practically all of them. What remains is an even larger ski industry in Colorado, whose destination resorts attract skier-tourists from all over the world.

The history of skiing in Colorado takes place within the larger context of the American West's economy. Skiing has interacted with regional economic forces, moreover, on a variety of levels. During the nineteenth century skiing allowed miners, ranchers, and settlers to exist in isolated, economic peripheries year-round. As a means of winter transportation that enabled them to mine, care for livestock, communicate through the mail, and function as a community, skiing became an integral part of Colorado's mountain economies. As an upper-class form of leisure, too, skiing brought CMC members and other Denver outdoorspeople to Hot Sulphur and Steamboat Springs as early as the 1910s, linking these places

economically as well as socially. Mountain communities attracted nearby competitors and recreationists to their ski areas during the 1930s, and even qualified for New Deal support to build tows and clear trails, but skiing would not support a winter tourist economy until after World War Two. At that point, the ski industry entered the post-industrial service and tourist economy whole-heartedly. Colorado's resorts became, in fact, the best-known and most popular ski areas in the country.

Destination ski resorts and their culture have re-shaped Colorado's mountain landscape, physically and imaginatively, from one of production and extraction into one of consumption and leisure. In attracting millions of skiers to the Rockies, Colorado's ski industry has become a multi-million dollar industry and made itself indispensable to the state's economy. In the process, Rocky mountain scenery, ski areas, and resort towns have become commodities as well as landscapes of leisure. Destination ski resorts thus offer opportunities to consume both the material, concrete West, in the form of scenery and skiing terrain, and the imagined West, in the form of mythic resort images. In its early support of mountain peripheries, in its creation of a powerful consumer culture centered in Colorado, and its sale of the western landscape real and imagined, skiing plays a central role in western economic history.

The ski industry, furthermore, can be understood as typically western in its relationship to the western landscape. While skiing is based on consumption and leisure more than on extraction and production, it shares much in common with mining and ranching. All three industries rely heavily on the surrounding mountain landscape: mining for ore; ranching for summer range; and skiing for snowy and scenic terrain. As industries rooted in the West and dependent upon landscapes that exist largely federal land, they all have developed long and sometimes tense relationships with the U.S. Forest Service. Mining, ranching, and

skiing too, in their dependence upon natural resources, have turned to technology and corporate organization to reduce that dependence. Each industry, then, has grown in size and capitalization.

The question is whether the ski industry will experience a bust to match its boom, as such a comparison would imply. Here is where the similarity between extraction and consumption breaks down. The physical shape of Colorado's skiing landscape and the success of its consumer culture predict continued, albeit slower, future growth. The distinction between extraction and consumption also matters in terms of labor. Like mining, for instance, the ski industry requires significant amounts of labor, and can support an entire community with its industry. Ski towns including Aspen, Telluride, and Vail, for instance, have taken on characteristics consistent with earlier "company towns." Unlike miners, however, ski area workers are rarely unionized (the ski patrollers at Aspen are an exception), and the ski industry requires little skilled labor. Service workers, who make up the large majority of labor in the ski industry, are replaceable. As a result, ski industry workers earn less than miners and have less leverage within the company to improve their wages. Given the inflated real estate market in resort towns, moreover, ski area workers have little chance of living near their place of work. Housing problems and working-class poverty thus characterize Colorado's ski industry as much as second homes and wealth. The ski industry recalls earlier western economies in its dependence upon the mountain landscape, its relationship with the federal government, and its increasing dependence upon technology and capital. The ski industry also points towards a new kind of western economy based on outdoor recreation and tourism that will continue to shape the western landscape much as earlier economies have.

The ski industry grew as it did, in part, because ski area developers and their skier-tourist customers have both come to understand Colorado's mountain

landscape as one of consumption and leisure. This was not always the case. Indeed, skiers' relationship to the mountain landscape, their understanding of that landscape, and their corresponding use of that landscape has differed and changed through the history of Colorado skiing. Colorado's destination resorts are the result of two distinct traditions of skiing which carried their own assumptions about the mountain landscape. One was community-based, practiced as early as the 1880s and part of some mountain towns today. Skiing in the Rockies, according to this tradition, meant skiing at home. Residents lived in these towns for reasons other than leisure; they sought extractive wealth from the land rather than scenery or athletic thrills. They skied because the mountains were nearby, the whole community did it, it was fun, and there was little else to do during the long winters. Skiing thus became an integral part of community life and united town residents around sport.

In contrast to the more working-class character of community skiing, a more elite kind of skiing emerged from city dwellers traveling to the mountains expressly for scenery and outdoor recreation. Relying first on railroads, then on automobiles, and finally on airplanes, upper-class outdoorspeople sought physical and moral rejuvenation in the mountains. Rather than "home," they understood the Rockies as a scenic "other," where they could be physically and morally renewed. They often described the Rockies as an American version of the Alps, an image that defined Colorado's mountains as places to find scenic beauty and leisure. This upper-class form of skiing began in Europe and spread to the Northeast, where wealthy city-dwellers made up a large portion of skiers during the 1920s and 1930s. The most elite western practitioners of this perspective on the skiing landscape vacationed at Sun Valley; those who lived in Denver and sought a more modest version of resort culture traveled to Aspen, or Berthoud Pass and Winter Park nearby.

Although skiing at Camp Hale in the context of combat training, some 10th Mountain Division soldiers actively sought out mountain landscapes worth developing as ski areas after the war. Tenth Mountain soldiers such as Friedl Pfeifer took their perspectives toward the landscape from the elite ski culture in which they had participated and introduced them to mountain communities in Colorado after the war. As a result, community-based skiing met elite resort skiing in places like Aspen, Steamboat Springs, and Breckenridge. Mountain residents came to see "home" also as a place that others might visit for vacation, and supported resort development there accordingly. This decision, while seeming like a big change, remained consistent with residents' desire to earn a living from the mountains around them--part of that living would now come from tourism, however, rather than mining or ranching. Problems arose when the ski industry grew and local residents slowly lost control over development decisions. Community members grew more critical of resort development when it produced such side effects as traffic, pollution, housing problems, and high property taxes. Ironically, the "locals" most vocally opposed to continued development were often people who had moved to town after vacationing there and displacing older residents in the process. Selling the Rockies as natural and wild scenic landscapes for vacationing skiers has prompted a degree of development and use that makes their characterization as natural and wild absurd. Environmental groups have been quick to point out that ski area development has exacted a high price from local fish, wildlife, and human community habitat. Visions of the mountain landscape as "home," as "scenic other," and more recently as "commodity," therefore, have become increasingly confused and contested.

Implicit in these definitions of the landscape are constructions of class and ethnicity. Community-based skiing was first introduced in Colorado by working-class Scandinavian immigrants, and it grew in small mountain towns made up of

mainly working-class residents. Upper-class recreational skiing, in contrast, originated in European resort towns characterized by their scenery and their wealthy, cosmopolitan clientele. As icons of this elite resort culture, Austrian ski instructors merged identities of class and ethnicity through skiing. Most of the Arlberg instructors, for instance, came from local Austrian farming families. Their expertise as instructors and racers, however, gained them entrance into--and places at the top of--European ski resort culture. Even the wealthiest of visitors looked up to them. And when instructors came to American ski areas and resorts, they kept their status--status which implied wealth that they rarely had. During the 1920s and '30s, identities based on class, ethnicity, and skiing expertise were so entwined in this elite culture that skiers could gain access to it through any channel. As Austrians entered it via their ethnicity, and wealthy skiers via their class, extremely skilled skiers from Norwegian or Colorado mountain towns could gain access to it through international competition. Competing in Europe not only demonstrated great talent and skill, it also made local racers into cosmopolitan world-travelers. It seemed as if skiing at resorts like St. Anton, Kitzbeuhel, and St. Moritz initiated one into this culture--that moving with authority and skill through an upper-class landscape of leisure automatically imparted upper-class status upon the skier. It was through these connections of class, ethnicity, and expertise that 10th Mountain Division soldiers formed such a close and elite group of skiers. That group included European instructors, Scandinavian jumping champions, Ivy League skiers, and talented competitors from small towns all over the United States. Tenth Mountain veterans were elite, not necessarily wealthy. In a similar process, rural woodsmen, ranch hands, and Ivy League students acquired status as elite outdoorsmen by virtue of their membership in the 10th.

Post-war destination ski areas incorporated elite European resort culture into their own culture. In doing so, people and objects imparting a generic "European" whiteness became attractive commodities. Skier-tourists purchased French food, Swiss lodging, Italian ski boots, German stretch pants, and Scandinavian sweaters--along with Austrian ski instructors' accents--in an effort to become more cosmopolitan themselves. Skier-tourists invested money in this pursuit, and ski industry advertisements encouraged them to keep spending. Ironically, commodities infused with signs of white Europeanness came to represent an elite and an upper-class status far greater than that enjoyed by most Europeans themselves. They, while perhaps famous, continued working as ski instructors, hoteliers, or small business owners. The white ethnic images thus connected to destination ski resorts and their consumer culture outgrew the historical roots of the sport and reinforced whiteness to the extent that ski resort visitors remain overwhelmingly white. It is a testament to the connections between ethnicity and class that the skiers of color who have successfully incorporated themselves into Colorado's resort culture--Mexican families at Vail, for instance, or Oprah Winfrey at Telluride--have done so by virtue of their extreme wealth, fame, or both.

Just as skiers have constructed class and ethnic identities through the sport, so have they constructed gender identities. For men, skiing has shaped and defined different kinds of masculinity based on class and ethnicity. In the nineteenth century, skiing mailmen became legends of toughness, strength, endurance, and daring--icons of a western, individualistic masculinity based on taming the mountain landscape. The use of Norwegian snowshoes and the context of work located this masculinity economically and ethnically; the daunting winter environment of the Rockies located it in place. This kind of ideal, akin to that of the explorer-mountain man, faded in the twentieth century when new forms of

transportation took over the skiing mailman's job. Scandinavian immigrants like Carl Howelson demonstrated a related masculine skiing ideal in Colorado's mountain communities, impressing one and all with his endurance and ability to jump long distances. His was a strength, endurance, and daring expressed through competition and recreational community outings, however, rather than lonely treks into the stormy unknown. For men of a different class, Austrian ski instructors shaped and embodied a different skiing manliness. They skied for pay as instructors and sometimes mountain guides, and most of them competed in races, as well. But their location at the center of European resort culture and their roles as instructors within that culture emphasized style, grace, and a kind of sexiness, as well. Upper-class outdoorsmen in the 1920s and '30s sought that savvy, cosmopolitan, elite, and rugged kind of masculinity. Trapped behind their desks in cities and suburbs, these men understood skiing as one of their few opportunities to get outside and into the adventuresome wild--but they usually did so within a resort setting.

The 10th Mountain Division soldiers effectively brought these different constructions of masculinity together within a new context. Their training at Camp Hale placed them in the middle of Colorado's Rocky Mountains and tested their strength and endurance, sometimes to the breaking point. For these men skiing was part work and part war. The elite status and European ethnicity of some soldiers, however, tempered this construction of masculinity with aspects of elite resort culture manliness. And when soldiers traveled to Aspen or Winter Park or Steamboat Springs on the weekend and joined a race, they alluded to a more community-oriented and competitive masculinity. Tenth Mountain soldiers became extremely powerful masculine figures after the war, by which point they had become military heroes as well as skiing icons. Common to all of these types of masculinity was the physical act of skiing.

As a sport both graceful and tough, individual and social, skiing has left room for plenty of gendered ambiguity. So has the landscape in which it occurred. The act of moving down a mountain landscape on skis would seem challenging and empowering at root, and therefore typically manly. Within the constructed resort landscapes of Colorado's post-war ski areas, however, where groomed snow, directional signs, and ski patrols mediated skiers' relationship to the landscape, skiers were more pampered than adventuresome. Ski resort landscapes also affected construction of masculinity by providing opportunities to socialize with women on lifts, at lodges, and in bars and restaurants after the lifts closed. Lots of men enjoyed this kind of sexy, social maleness over the more individual, man-meets-nature-head-on type. Those desiring to act out the latter had to leave resort landscapes and ski in the back country. Only recently has the ski industry recognized the appeal of more wild forms of skiing and incorporated extreme chutes and trails into their own mountain landscapes. Vail's decision to choose Alberto Tomba as their spokesperson further reflects the industry's sensitivity to constructions of gender--as well as their desire to package masculinity and sell it. Not only is Tomba an appealing masculine figure because of his strength and his dominance on the international racing circuit, but he is also a sexual figure with a well-known reputation as a playboy. "Alberto Tomba is the most recognized name in alpine skiing," the chairman of Vail Associates crowed.<sup>2</sup> A large part of that appeal--and a correspondingly large part of what Vail is paying for--is a masculine identity tied to skiing.

Vail Associates probably hope that Tomba's masculinity will appeal to women as well as provide an attractive role model for men. This assumption illustrates how the ski resorts and their culture have incorporated women skiers

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<sup>2</sup>Chance Connor, "Vail Gets Lift from Tomba," *Denver Post*, 22 February, 1996, 1C.

into their landscapes largely by defining them as social, or, more specifically, heterosexual beings. While men have consistently been able to shape and define their masculinity through skiing, women have skied in tension with dominant constructions of femininity. That they have been able to do so without open conflict testifies to the sport's gender ambiguities--the same ambiguities that enable men to construct a variety of masculine ideals through the sport. Women skiing, like men skiing, can be both tough and aggressive and, alternately, graceful, beautiful, and sensuous. Sports writers describing women racers juggled masculine and feminine attributes accordingly, calling Louise White a "conqueror" at the same time they highlighted her status as a wife, and characterizing Barbara Kidder, one of Colorado's most successful racers in the 1940s, as a "kid sister" who may exhibit tomboy-ish athletic traits, but who would surely grow out of her pigtails and into womanhood. This characterization of Kidder pointed towards a new kind of femininity crafted through skiing, which emphasized youthful athleticism and cuteness. It is the appeal of this femininity that has caused the American public to become so enamored with Picabo Street, a current world-class racer whose obvious strength, determination, and competitiveness are tempered by her name (pronounced peek-a-boo), her freckles, and her carefree style.

The most common way to mitigate tension between skiing and dominant constructions of femininity has been through skiing's social community and resort cultures. Women's outdoor athletic pursuits, in the context of community or resort, acquired meanings consistent with their roles as girlfriend, wife, mother, or caretaker of the community, emphasizing their social roles and heterosexuality along with their expertise on the slopes. As early as the nineteenth century women's skiing at snowshoe parties, on winter errands, and in local competitions has been couched in these terms. Winter carnivals further lifted everyday gender norms and often featured women's competitions in ski jumping, ski-joring,

downhill races, and even obstacle courses (the infamous "Ladies' free-for-all"). Once begun within the context of carnival, women's competitions became part of the 1930s local club circuit, which provided another kind of community orientation for their skiing. Upper-class resort culture defined women's skiing slightly differently. Rather than mothers or kid sisters, resort women skied as sex objects, mothers and wives, and consumers. The apres ski scene, present in 1920s Europe as well as post-war Colorado resorts, emphasized women's skiing within an explicitly social context. In demonstrating their participation in elite resort culture such women consumed expensive ski fashions, which reiterated the wearer's femininity, and dated European ski instructors. This behavior gave rise to the pervasive "ski bunny" stereotype, which alluded to the fact that beauty and fashion could ensure a woman's entrance into resort ski culture even if she had trouble actually skiing. At the other end of the spectrum, women racers who had more talent and daring than money or beauty could gain entrance into elite resort culture through international competition. Like their male counterparts, women racers earned elite status by moving through elite landscapes like St. Anton and Sun Valley, where the U.S. Women's ski team trained during the 1930s.

In Colorado's post-war destination resorts, women move through a landscape that enables them to ski and remain "feminine." The mountain landscape is most ambiguously gendered. It is at once crafted by men for a male skiing subject and marketed as challenging and wild, but feminized by its trails' range of difficulty, its careful grooming, and its patrolled safety. While ski trails exist as landscapes of consumption where women and men can advertise their equipment and clothes--and their corresponding ethnic and class images--lodges, base areas, and resort towns contrast the skiing terrain as explicitly social landscapes of consumption. Women moving through these places act out their gendered identities as shopper, wife, or potential girlfriend. Colorado's destination ski resorts ease

the tension generated by women skiing in the Rocky Mountains through their different landscapes and their complete investment in consumer and leisure culture. This process of feminization-through-consumption, furthermore, has proven powerful enough to coopt even the industry's most emphatic gender critics: snowboarders. In their critique of ski culture, snowboarders initially defined themselves as young, rude, male, alternative dressers. Their baggy clothes and surly looks made them visible from miles away. Female snowboarders, moreover, looked and acted just like the male boarders. Their message seemed to include a critique of ski resort constructions of gender. Recently, however, women boarders have earned their own moniker, the "shred betty," and have increasingly distinguished themselves from men through their own fashion and equipment styles. Rooted in an initially counter-hegemonic boarding culture that is now becoming incorporated into the larger and more powerful ski industry, shred bettys are consuming products designed specifically for women and subscribing to more dominant constructions of femininity in the process.

The story of the Colorado ski industry hinges upon culture on multiple levels. Colorado's destination resort ski culture has acted as an important site for ongoing discourse among cultural constructions of landscape, whiteness, class, and gender. The act of skiing and the mountain landscape of Colorado acquire meaning, moreover, within the larger context of post-war consumer culture. Finally, ski resort culture is a powerful culture itself, growing from a specific regional landscape and imaginatively subsuming the regional cultures that preceded it. In their mythic interpretations of Rocky Mountain mining and ranching history, and of skiing's European roots, Colorado ski resorts and their culture have redefined these histories as at once European, western, and integral to the experience of skiing in Colorado.

It is within this context that Alberto Tomba's endorsement of Vail makes sense. The Italian racer's new horse and hat symbolize the westernness of Vail's European-style resort. Linked with Tomba's masculine persona they will carry Vail's European resort image along the World Cup racing circuit and back to Europe--but with the express purpose of selling Colorado resorts. Colorado's ski resorts and their culture have thus become powerful enough--and distinct enough --to compete successfully with the very resorts after which they were modeled.

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- AHS - Aspen Historical Society, Aspen, Colorado
- BRL - Business Research Division Library, Graduate School of Business Administration, University of Colorado, Boulder, Colorado.
- BWML - Buddy Werner Memorial Library, Steamboat Springs, Colorado
- CHS - Colorado Historical Society, Denver, Colorado
- CUA - Archives, University of Colorado at Boulder Libraries, Norlin Library, Boulder, Colorado
- DPL - Denver Public Library, Denver, Colorado
- GCHA - Grand County Historical Association, Hot Sulphur Springs, Colorado
- GLHS - Grand Lake Historical Society, Grand Lake, Colorado

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The following includes a list of collections, files, and sources I found relevant to Colorado skiing and the ski industry, as well as a list of some specific documents I have used in this study. I have not included the numerous clippings found in and amongst these collections, files, and scrapbooks; nor have I listed each and every source individually--specific citations for these clippings and sources are available in the footnotes.

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