

Along the Snow Trail

“Four members of the Deering Ski Club made the first trip of the season to Mount Washington. They skied up the new Sherburne Trail leading into Tuckerman Ravine but made no effort to reach high altitude because the wind velocity was 128 mph at the summit.”

Starting in 1936 the Portland Press Herald had a full page, *Along The Snow Trail*, devoted to the newly popular sport of skiing. The story of the Deering Ski Club was on that page, February 4, 1936.

In the same issue, under the headline *More Than 20 Winter Carnivals Are Slated*, the article began, “February is Carnival month in Maine. Starting with the mammoth 13th Rumford Winter Carnival every weekend in the month will have its quota of gay and colorful carnival events and every one will have its grand finale – a Carnival Ball at which some lucky girl, elected by popular vote, becomes Queen of the Carnival.”

The Maine Central Railroad advertised a Snow Train from Portland to Rumford for \$1.75. LL Bean showed a, “Ladies Ski Boot \$4.85”

Skiing had been in Maine since the Swedes arrived in New Sweden in 1870. However, in 1936, as a sport, it was fairly new. In the mid 1930’s the country was emerging from the Great Depression and people were looking for leisure and, for the first time in many years, they had money to spend. That page of *Along the Snow Trail* had ads from seven companies selling ski clothing. Benoit’s was selling ‘Everything in the right kind of Winter Sports Clothing.’ Smiley’s offered, ‘Warmth in Winter Sports.’ Owen Moore’s said, “You’ll be the best dressed person in your party if you’re in a ski suit from Owen Moore’s.” Their ski suits ranged from \$8.95 to \$13.95. Porteous, Mitchell and Braun advertised, “Ski Suits – as gay as a Rainbow \$16.95”. The ad went on to say, “The blue, black and orange horizontal stripes make a striking appearance on the ski trails. Of fine woven quality snow cloth – water resistant and snow repellent”.

King and Dexter advertised a new Ski Harness because, “Any old sort of ski rigging will not do. It is being realized by skiers that proficiency in running and turning can be tremendously increased by fitting their skis with a proper harness.”

An article announced the opening of more space at the bottom of Jockey Cap in Fryeburg, Maine's first rope tow. Before the clearing of the trees, "Skiers coming down the slope had to stop, or crash into the trees." An ad for the Fryeburg Ski Tow said, "Now illuminated for evening use. Ride uphill all day for 50¢".

Along The Snow Trail announced, "The Pleasant Mountain ski trail received its first thorough tryout last week as Win Durgin of Lewiston and former Dartmouth ski star, went over the down mountain course in a critical frame of mind. Win, well known for his work on the Mount Washington trails, was more than pleased with the Bridgton speed course. They pronounced it as good as any of the long-established New Hampshire trails.

That "speed course" was built by the men of the CCC (Civilian Conservation Corps). The top of the trail was so steep they didn't think the skiers could manage the turns in the trail. They used logs, cut from the mountain, to build banked turns to help the skiers negotiate the terrain. Walter Soule commented on those banked turns, "we liked them, we could carry speed around those corners. Of course we did lose a skier every now and then over the edge."

Since skiing was a new sport, to most people, these weekly pages offered advice on where to ski, what was new and, in general, helped educate people about the skisport. It was an exciting time for the sport.

Looking back at *Along The Snow Trail* we can see how the sport has changed. Understanding where we have come from adds a richness to our appreciation of the sport we so enjoy. In recognition of those who helped create and promote the skisport the Ski Museum of Maine named its magazine *Snow Trail*. With *Snow Trail* we hope to share with you the stories and the memories of skiing's past, in many cases those same stories and memories so well told in *Along The Snow Trail*.