

# PIONEER DAYS OF SKI-ING IN WESTERN CANADA



*The following article is comprised of excerpts from the 1928-29 Canadian Ski Annual. Photo: standing, left to right - Olav Tellefsen, who went east last year as the Olympic candidate from the Coast; Lindsay Loutet, secretary Grouse Mountain Ski Club; W. Walkinshaw, president Grouse Mountain Ski Club; Drinnan Holten, president Revelstoke Ski Club. Front row - J. White, Banff Ski Club; Gordon Billingsley, secretary western branch Canadian Amateur Ski Association; Nels Nelsen, captain Revelstoke Ski Club; Rudolph J. Verne, president western branch C.A.S.A. These are the men who have succeeded in lining up the various ski clubs in British Columbia. Hitherto ski-sport has been working more or less at cross purposes with little understanding as between Banff, Revelstoke and Vancouver, which has entered the field within the last couple of years. Now, however, due to the efforts of R. J. Verne, the major clubs have been united in the western branch of the C.A.S.A.*

THE EARLY mining booms of British Columbia are surrounded by a colorful romantic glamour of which stalwart pioneers give graphic accounts, if they are in the right mood and you refer to some little incident that happened in days gone by when men were men with hobnail boots and sinews of steel. On a beautiful winter day back in 1913 we ran across the king of them all, Olav Gjeldnes; he was a grand old man whom you could not help taking a real liking to and admire. He had come all the way from Rossland, that picturesque mountain top mining town, to take in the thrills of a Revelstoke ski meet. He was sorry that the sport of the modern Vikings had faded away in his home town where it once was the centre of attraction at the historically famous old Rossland Winter Carnivals.

But he liked Revelstoke all right, and the big hill seemed just to catch his fancy. If we remember right, he was one of the judges. Among the many competitors was another well-known figure in ski circles, J. Engen from Penticton. He was an exponent of the old style and created a great sensation among the many spectators as he made his landing in the telemark position and holding it to the end of the runway. When the other judges, to whom this was something new, seemed somewhat undecided about giving him full points for style, Mr. Gjeldnes strongly contended that there was no docking to be made.

Messrs. Gjeldnes and Engen became the most popular men in this ski loving little railroad town, for Revelstoke had put heart and soul in the sport and therefore fully appreciated these two ski pioneers. Gjeldnes, who had made and lost fortunes in mining at Rossland, was the originator and

backer of the far-famed Rossland Winter Carnivals; Engen, the first to introduce ski-ing to the American Continent. So to him may be attributed the honour of being the father of ski-ing in the New World.

In those days the elite of ski riders was represented by Anders Haugen, Lars Haugen, Carl Hall, Henry Hall, "Daredevil" Hansen, Sigfried Steinwall, and last but not least, the idol of the West, our own Nels Nelsen. Revelstoke justly claims the honour of being the birthplace of competitive ski-ing in the West and has been holding its leading position ever since 1914. Its magnificent hill has been developed till it at last reached such proportions that 200 feet jumps were looked upon as commonplace and from the point of projection no hill in the world can compete with it. If you are fortunate enough to be able to take in their great ski tournament, you will be heartily welcomed. Dave Orr, the energetic Club secretary, Drinnan Holten, the popular president, and Nels Nelsen, the famous Club captain, with a great bunch of followers, will meet the visiting skiers at the train, put you up at the best hotel in town and make you feel right at home.

Next February, the Revelstoke Ski Club will hold the most important meet in Western Canada, the Championship of the West, and it is hoped that our Eastern Ski Clubs will endeavour to send their best skiers West in return for the several occasions the West has been represented in the East.

Since those days of pioneer ski-ing in the West, this part of the Dominion has shown rapid development, especially through the forming of the Western Branch of the Canadian



Amateur Ski Association. In this organization are now registered four clubs from British Columbia, two clubs from Alberta, while several more have signified their intention of joining. From Winnipeg comes good news of two new Clubs being organized - Winnipeg Ski Club and Norge Ski Club. In British Columbia the Vernon Ski Club has already proven itself by arranging some good competitions last season. We also have heard interesting news from Princeton, B.C., where an organization for skiing is said to boast some hundred and fifty members. A very special interest in the great outdoor sport has grown up in Vancouver where three clubs are affiliated with the Western Branch. In addition there is rumour of still another Club being formed, while the local well-known track and field organization, the Viking Athletic Club, has decided to add winter sport activities to its programme. The 1929-30 season thus promises to be a banner year in the history of Ski-ing in the West, a full dozen clubs preparing for a busy season. With this wonderful development of ski-ing in the Western Provinces, it is only fair that the next Dominion Championship be awarded to one of our strong Western Clubs, especially since our Western Champion, Mr. J. Nordmoe of Camrose Ski Club, brought the Dominion Championship title West after his splendid feat of winning the Sir Henry Thornton trophy, emblematic of the all-round Amateur Ski Championship of Canada.

*By Rudolph J. Verne*

## **SECOND WESTERN CANADA CHAMPIONSHIP AT BANFF**

FROM a ski-ing point of view the second Western Championship Tournament at Banff was a great success, but unfortunately not so as far as attendance was concerned. The disruption of traffic, caused by the railway accident and collapse of a train bridge near Revelstoke, B.C., paralyzed the entire transportation system of the West with the result that all tournaments west of Calgary suffered heavily through lack of attendance.

In spite of this, however, all the skiers kept their appointments and gathered at Banff in great numbers. No less than seven clubs were represented, being the greatest number ever recorded at a Western meet. The variety of clubs naturally stimulated the interest and made the competitions far more enjoyable to both the performers and the public than on earlier occasions, when only one or two outside organizations were represented, although numerically there were as many entries.

One of the features of the event was the try-out of the metric system in scoring, which earlier had been adopted by the Western Branch and which proved very successful. A special 150 feet tape was used, with metres recorded on one side and feet on the other. The different jumping lengths were megaphoned to the spectators in feet and to the judges in metres, which were easily turned into points by means of the International scoring table.

The Cross-Country event was won by N. Jorstad of Winnipeg on the approximately 9 mile course in 46 mins. 46 secs. P. Gotaas of Camrose had four seconds better time but did not partake in the jumping event. Second was J. Nordmoe, Camrose, 47 mins. 20 secs.; third, K. Engstad,

Camrose, 47 mins. 40 secs.; fourth, Axel Sneis, Hollyburn Pacific, 49 mins. 15 secs.; fifth, T. Jacobsen, Camrose, 49 mins. 43 secs.; sixth, P. Sandnes, Burns Lake, 52 mins.

*By Rudolph J. Verne*

## **HOLLYBURN PACIFIC SKI CLUB**

THE past season proved to be a banner one for the ski sport on the Pacific Coast, and as our Club took a leading part in all its activities, we had a very busy and successful season. The general public in Vancouver are taking a more active interest in ski-ing and are beginning to realize the possibilities for recreation on our mountain tops during the winter months. The average Vancouverite does not know that when it is dull and foggy in the city, the sun is often shining on the mountain tops 4,000 to 5,000 feet above them. Once they have been up top and taken a few deep breaths of the invigorating mountain air and have seen the bright sun shining on the clean white snow, they are soon converted to winter sports.

Ski-ing takes the lead as a winter attraction because conditions are so suitable for it. It is rarely cold enough here for outdoor skating but there is always five months of fine ski-ing weather. Our snow came to stay early in November last year, and the keen skiers were still at it when May 24 rolled around. Our average depth of snow was six feet up to the end of February, but then it started to snow and by the end of March there was twelve feet which stayed a long while.

Last year was a busy one with competitions every week-end for nearly three months at home and in other parts of the province, and as all our supplies and skis have to be back-packed up to the camp a competition away from home means some hard work.

Fifteen members of the Club made the trip to Banff and Revelstoke where our A Class men gave a good account of themselves, although they did not win any first places. This trip took ten days and the party travelled nearly 2,500 miles in that time. The week-end following the Western Canada Championships at Banff, four of our members motored 375 miles south to Portland, where a newcomer to our Club, Fred Finckenhagen, won the U.S. Pacific Coast Jumping Championship. At Vernon, which is about 250 miles inland in the Okanagan Valley, on the next Friday and Saturday, Axel Sneis, our Club champion, placed second in the cross-country race, and third in the combined. Sneis proved to be our most consistent winner as he placed in every competition he entered. He is outstanding as a cross-country man, and is the present city cross-country champion. He was never in competitive ski-ing until three years ago, so we have great hopes in him for the future.

To interest the public and to get more skiers in competition a team event was held last winter. This is to be an annual affair open to all Western Clubs, and takes the form of a short cross-country race in the morning, with jumping in the afternoon. There were two competitions, with the clubs entering eight men each, one on Grouse Mountain and the other on Hollyburn Ridge, with the trophy going to the club getting the most points in both competitions. Our Club won both events in competition with the two other local clubs so



we are now the proud possessors of the Tupper and Steele Trophy. This trophy is a magnificent one, and the ski sport is indebted to Messrs. Tupper and Steele for their generosity and sportsmanship.

A marked improvement was shown by our novices last year, and with the able coaching of our hard-working Club Captain, Chris Johnson, they will soon be giving a good account of themselves.

As it is a 4 1/2 mile hike from Marine Drive in West Vancouver to the ski camp which is 3,000 feet above the city, the boys and girls do not start ski-ing at as early an age as in the East. The hike serves as a very good conditioner, however, so progress is usually rapid once they get started. We are looking forward to the time when the Eastern skiers will make the trip West to tryout our hills and wonderful ski country, and we feel sure they will be as enthusiastic about it as we are. Our members are always ready to show any of you who are fortunate enough to be out here the trails which lead to our snowy playgrounds, and we hope to have that pleasure soon.

*By G. Billingsley, Secretary-Treasurer*



SKI SAILING AT HOLLYBURN PACIFIC SKI CAMP

## SKI-ING ON HOLLYBURN

ON HOLLYBURN we have our own peculiar snow conditions - wet and sticky in the middle of the day, with an icy crust early in the morning and late in the evening, making very fast running in the early and later part of the day, and waxing necessary. The snow begins to fall about the middle of November, lasting until the latter part of June, with a depth of from nine to twenty feet and even deeper on the Peaks. Hollyburn Ridge is a plateau, two miles wide by five miles long. Sparsely wooded and with gentle rises, an ideal ski country. The Club members start out from Vancouver in the late afternoon with a good two hours' hike before them, but the time passes quickly and before we know it we are at the Camp, three thousand feet above sea level. Some spend the evening dancing, a crowd gather around the piano for close harmony, while other fix their skis for an early morning run. The girl members show keen interest in the sport, taking part in all cross-country runs, the more ambitious making long trips to Mount Strahan and Hollyburn Peak - true sportswomen all. The boys of the Club also have shown sportmanship of the highest order.

In the crisp morning air, any time between March and June,

you will see parties of from five to twenty boys and girls starting for Hollyburn Peak or Mount Strahan. On the way to the Peak we first encounter the morning mists, these giving place to the bright sunlight which comes stealing through the trees. When we arrive at the Peak we find a wondrous beauty of sunlit snow hanging from the trees in sparkling crystals. We are now forty-eight hundred feet above sea level, with the Fraser River winding to the south, Howe Sound and Vancouver Island to the south-west, and majestic snow-clad peaks stretching as far as the eye can see to the north and north-east. Dropping down fifteen hundred feet into the valley between Hollyburn Ridge and Mount Strahan we approach Strahan Meadows, an ideal spot for ski-ing, open and rolling country. Next we encounter more wooded areas, soon arriving at our destination - the top of Mount Strahan, a snow-clad plateau.

From here a magnificent view of Howe Sound with its many islands is obtained. We rest for a while, awed into silence by the grandeur of the scene. Then comes the return journey. Speeding with the flight of a bird we reach the valley between Mount Strahan and Hollyburn in about three minutes. From here we climb fifteen hundred feet to the plateau of Hollyburn, with a swift descent from there to the cabin. Arriving safely at the cabin we put away our skis until the next week-end.

After enjoying a mug of Oscar Pearson's famous coffee we gather our belongings and light our bugs (old cans with holes punched in the bottoms in which we stick our candles), groups of which, like fireflies, are soon twinkling down the trail.

A short trip on the ferry takes us back to Vancouver and to the duties of everyday life, which we attack with fervor, feeling very fit after our healthy, invigorating week-end trip.

*By Clarke W. Hoffman*

## GROUSE MOUNTAIN SKI CLUB

THE 1928-29 Season was a most successful one for the Grouse Mountain Ski Club. Although we were hampered by lack of accommodation, the membership increased considerably over that of the previous year. In the Inter-Club Competitions held on Grouse Mountain during the winter our team far exceeded expectations, and the members gained competitive experience which will be invaluable to them in the coming season. The first competition of the season, held on January 27, between the Vancouver Winter Sports Club and ourselves, resulted in our carrying off the Cup presented by Mr. V. E. Nichols, manager of Grouse Mountain Chalet.

In the meet with the Hollyburn Pacific Ski Club and the 'Vancouver Winter Sports Club, held on Grouse Mountain and also on Hollyburn Ridge, we managed to obtain the majority of the points in the Jumping event, but the Hollyburn Club more than made these up in the Cross-Country races, and were successful in winning for the year the Tupper and Steel Shield, emblematic of the Pacific Coast Ski Championship. Axel Sneis of Hollyburn was first in the Combined Competition, Olav Tellefsen of Grouse being second, and Jack Turner of Hollyburn third. The most important of the Inter-Club Competitions was the Vancouver City Championships held on Grouse Mountain





SKI-ING ON THUNDERBIRD RIDGE

during the Easter weekend. This competition was unique in Vancouver, there being the greatest array of trophies and prizes ever awarded for a Ski Competition in this city, the largest number of spectators ever to attend such a meet, and the keenest competition, skiers from Revelstoke, Victoria and Portland vieing for honors with the local stars. A pleasing feature of the Competition was the co-operation between the three Vancouver Clubs towards its success, and all details were consummated without a hitch.

Last season marked the inauguration of cross-country ski trips from Grouse Mountain. We found that, contrary to general opinion, there are many ideal ski trips, marked by wonderful scenery and splendid runs. Our favourite trip was over Grouse Peak and around Dam Mountain to Thunderbird Ridge, high above beautiful Kennedy Lake. This ridge, which is nearly two miles long, provides ideal ski-ing for the novice as well as for the more expert skier. Every Sunday found more and more skiers disporting themselves on its slopes until it became even more popular than the jumps on Grouse Peak. This winter will see us settled in our new and larger headquarters and we are looking forward to another highly successful season.

## OMINECA SKI CLUB

WITH the winning of the British Columbia Combined Championships at Revelstoke, and longest U.S. Pacific Coast Championships by Peter Sandnes, our club captain, members of the Omineca Ski Club are justly proud of their young organization. These achievements followed a very successful two-day tournament held in Burns Lake on January 29 and 30, 1929. Nels Nelsen, world famous ski jumper, was here and lent eclat and thrills to the occasion. After having delightful weather all winter, it was regrettable that the Ski Tournament Week should suddenly turn extremely cold, and with the thermometer below zero, many refused to enter the Cross-Country races because of the risk entailed. In spite of this, however, the entries were well filled out in most of the events. Times for the racing events, however, were appreciably slowed up on account of the extreme temperature.

Officers for the year are: - V. Schjelderup, President; J. Berg, 1st Vice-President; Kathleen Goodwin, 2nd Vice-President; L. Mulvany, Secretary; A.M. Ruddy, Treasurer; and Peter Sandnes, Club Captain.

The following are the results of the first day's sports:-

Class A - Combined Event; Cross-Country; 12 miles; Free for all: Knute Nysven, 1.34.50,U; Pete Sandnes, 1.35.50; K. Lindaas, 1.38.00; Nels Nelsen, 1.51.20; O. Martinsen, 1.56.20.

First place in the Class B 12-mile Cross-Country event was won by V. Schjelderup, whose time was 1.40.45; second by A. L. Peterson, 2.03.03; and third by John J. McKenna, 2.18.14. Johnny had raced in a class higher than his own in order to make this race possible and won much sincere praise for his sportsmanlike conduct.

Class E - Combined Event; Cross-Country; 4 miles; Boys 14 to 18 years:Walter Smith 27.50, Sam Kerr 28.30, F. Rush 28.43, Earl Gerow 29.20, A. Lougheed 34.54.

Class H - Cross-Country; 1,U miles; Girls between 10 and 15 years:Sylvia Truhell 17.50, Marjory Stanyer 18.55, Myrtle Gerow 19.20, Thelma Petersen 25.00, Ruth Troussel 31.00.

Class G - Cross-Country; 1 mile; Boys and Girls under 10 years:Roy Stanyer 14.20, Rojer Schjelderup 16.55, Hughbert McPhail 18.12, Of the girl entrants, Mia Schjelderup made the best time.

Class I - Cross-Country; 3 miles; Ladies Free for All:- Miss Gertrude Wahman 37.40, Mrs. John Berg 40.25; Miss I. M. Marshall 42.00.

By K. M. Godwin



## The Call of the Ski

**C**OME where the white snow blankets the hills and the keen wind whistles "Be alive! Be alive!"—come where the lean, cold birches, bleach-barked stand sentinel against the dark green pines—put wings of skis on your feet and ride the air like a Valkyrie.

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