



Jasper-Yellowhead
Museum & Archives

JASPER-YELLOWHEAD MUSEUM & ARCHIVES PRESENTS

OUR JASPER STORIES



People started Skiing in Jasper almost 100 years ago. Our skiing history states that Roy Hargreaves made the first pair of skis used in Jasper. Pete Withers, who came to Jasper in the 1920s, thought that he and Teddy James had the first skis, so the debate continues. When Vern and Doug Jeffery returned from their schooling in Revelstoke, they were well versed in skiing techniques and soon joined Withers on his warden patrols in the Maligne district using the cabins at Maligne Canyon and Lake for their exploration of the Bald Hills, Shovel and Evelyn Pass areas.

In 1927 Sam Rossum, Doug and Vern Jeffery, Frank Burstrom, Pete Withers and Dave Hartley explored the Tonquin Valley on skis via Meadow Creek staying at the Maccarib warden cabin. Warden Percy Goodair was along on the trip but chose to travel on snowshoes. Everyone agreed that the Tonquin had some of the finest skiing terrain but that Meadow Creek was not the best way to get there.

The Jasper Ski Club was formed in the 1920s and trails in the Patricia and Pyramid Lake area were cut by hand. Many club outings used Hap Riley's horses to pull a sleigh of skiers along with a big pot of beans to Patricia Lake for a day of races and skijoring. Some skiers were pulled behind a galloping horse or an old Cadillac with Doug Jeffery at the wheel. Ski jumping was also popular and some of the first ski jumps were built at the base of Signal, behind the golf course and above the Wynd Road west of town.

Ski races were popular with young and old. Short races ran along Connaught Drive and longer ones ran up Pyramid Road to Tent Town or Suicide Hill and down to Cottonwood Creek. Perhaps the longest race ran from Maligne Canyon to Medicine Lake and back to town. Among the top skiers in the lady's race were Dorie Horsfall, Dolly Johnstone, Edna Bowen, Jessie Saladana, Pat Routledge and Verna Bowen.

In January 1930 Frank Burstrom, Vern and Doug Jeffery, Pete Withers and Joe Weiss travelled

over 200 miles (320 kms) on skis from Jasper to Banff to arrive just in time for the Banff Winter Carnival. This was the first of several multi day ski trips pioneered by Jasper skiers.

Jasper skiers explored many of the valleys and drainages in the area. It was possible to drive up the Cavell Road to the "view point" and ski the Cavell meadows for the day. Slalom and downhill courses were set up for racers. The Cavell Road also gave skiers access to the Tonquin Valley where the Memorial Hut was located on Penstock Creek or they could travel a little further to Fred Brewster's camp on Amethyst Lake. Weeklong trips to the Tonquin were a highlight of the ski season.

In the 1930s a trail was cut out by Curly Phillips on Signal Mountain to give skiers access to the terrain below Mount Tekarra. Skiers could spend the day there or continue on to tent camps and cabins in Tekarra Basin, Big Shovel Pass, Watchtower Basin and Snowbowl before dropping down to Maligne Lake where deluxe accommodation could be found at the Maligne Chalet. From there you might choose to ski in the Bald Hills or spend a night or two in a tent camp up Trapper Creek. Travel up the Maligne Valley from Maligne Canyon was also possible with cabins available on Medicine Lake. Later, Fred Brewster offered skiers the option of travelling by horse drawn sleigh.

Once a road was established to the Columbia Icefields in the early 1940's, skiers could ski on the Athabasca Glacier where tent cabins were used before the first Icefields Chalet was built. Summer skiing on the glacier was also an option. Later, snowmobiles were used on the Athabasca Glacier and at other locations in the park.

Many of these areas continue to be used even after downhill skiing was developed at Whistlers and later when Marmot Basin was established in 1964. Jasper skiers were ever on the lookout for new areas to explore but sometimes the terrain could be dangerous. It was while exploring the Elysium Pass area that Curly Phillips and Reg Pugh were killed in an avalanche in 1938. We owe a great debt to Jasper's ski pioneers.



SPONSORED BY

