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A Brief History of Andover Ski Slopes

By Pat Cutter
 Andover Historical Society

Skiing for me never got past slipping my winter boots into the single leather straps on my wooden skis, schussing down the local hill, and then climbing back up for another run. My parents did not ski, and there was no facility close to where we lived.

But in Andover in the 1940s and '50s, there were seven local hills with rope tows. Creating a ski area was fairly simple before things got fancy and expensive. You needed a hill – preferably north facing – an old truck, and a lot of rope. Attach the rope to the back wheel of the truck so the rope tow would move around, anchor it at the top and hang on.

There were seven such areas in Andover in the 1940s and '50s, three on

Proctor Academy property. The largest was today's Blackwater Ski Area off Lawrence Street, but there was also Silo Hill behind the field house and South Slope behind the football field.

In West Andover there was skiing at the former Viking Inn on Depot Street; in Andover Center at Blake's Hill; and behind the Andover School. These ski areas were just for fun, not for profit, and there was no charge to ski.

Sunny Slopes off Sam Hill Road in East Andover was one of the largest and was run by the Franklin Outing Club. In 1939 it had a 1,000-foot tow with a slope almost half a mile long and a vertical drop of 300 feet. By the 1940s it offered novice and intermediate skiing and a warming and observation hut. It closed sometime in the 1950s.

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Reminiscence
On the Road in 1949

Sunday, August 21, 1949 found us riding up to Mount Hood with the Clarkes. We drove as far as the Timberline Lodge, then took the ski lift the rest of the way.

Back at Portland, we went with the Clarkes to a picnic beside a lake whose name I did not record. We ate and watched fast boats hot-dogging on the large lake. We got back to Portland about 6 PM, where we were fed again and where we slept in our bags on their back yard again.

August 22 was almost a work day. Those good people let us use their machines, and we all did a lot of laundry. We had all been playing tennis in our work shoes, so our feet suffered, and by this day I could work without too much pain! After supper, we got in our wash and talked with our hosts until about eleven and then went to bed out back.

Tuesday, August 23, found us eating a

August 24 found us on the road at 7:30 AM. Later, we found a place to park and had a lunch of blackberries which we had picked beside the road the night before. We crossed into California at 10:40 AM, where we were stopped



Hal and Skip get ready to spend a rainy night outside of Reno.

and inspected for fresh fruit. Later we got a grease job on the car and then visited the Trees of Mystery. "Really worth seeing," says my diary.

We then headed for Trinidad, population 95, where mail was waiting for us. Skip got some cookies, so we had them and milk for supper.

I was up at 5:45 AM on the 25th and wrote 15 post cards for family and friends back East. Later, we went back into town for breakfast and to check the mail again, where Harold found two letters. We then drove a short distance until we found a place where we could go for a swim, which we did, but found it so cold we could not stay in very long.

Our next stop was Willow Creek, where we got gas and after much talk and discussion took in a fellow who rode to Redding after paying for our gas. We hit the sleeping bags about 8:15 PM.

Friday morning, August 26, found some guy going by in a truck yelling at us to get up! When we got around to it, we did. We arrived in Greenville around 11 AM, where we got cleaned up and had breakfast.

The next installment finds us hitting the hot spots in Reno, Nevada.

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Indians fish for salmon in the Columbia River.

large breakfast, packing up the Olds, and saying goodbye to the Clarkes around 8:45 AM. At 11:06, we got our first look at the Pacific. After driving a way, we found a place to park beside the ocean and ate our lunch there, then took our pants off and went wading in the water. Harold got wet so went in all the way! Later we saw the sea lions dive, which was quite a sight. We drove until about 8 PM, then pulled off the road and went to sleep.