



## DOWN THE SLIPPERY SLOPE INTO HISTORY...

*The 1932 Winter Olympics at Lake Placid ignited a passion for skiing among New Yorkers, and the Catskills quickly got on board.*

*Ski jumps, wooded trails and cleared slopes – including Jay Simpson Memorial Ski Slope in Woodland Valley, Phoenicia, built in 1935-36 by Margaretville and Boiceville Civilian Conservation Corps enrollees beckoned outdoor lovers. Ski clubs were formed, resorts added skiing to their amenities, tourism promoters touted the Catskills as a winter destination.*

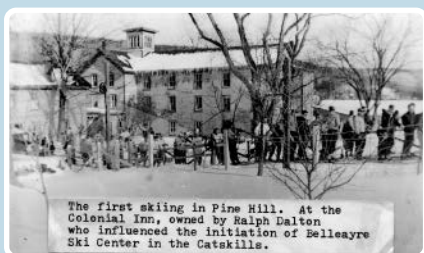
*In 1946 the Davenport family and partner C. Lincoln Christensen went big and built Highmount Ski Center. New York State followed with Belleayre in 1950, after getting voter approval to build it in the "Forever Wild" Catskill Forest Preserve. Their success encouraged many others to ride the snowy wave, encouraged by the Central Catskills Association, a business booster group focused on the Route 28 corridor they called the "Onteora Trail."*

*By 1964, the Catskill Mountain News reported that there were 16 ski centers in the Catskills. More than 40 years later, there are only four – Belleayre, Hunter, Windham and Plattekill. What happened to the rest of them? The vagaries of the weather, personal tragedies, and a little gathering called Woodstock put the kibosh on many.*

### **The Colonial Inn, Pine Hill. c. 1940-50**

This venerable hotel, in business since the mid-19th century, was purchased in 1939 by Ralph Dalton, a Jersey shore hotel manager who had been born in Germany in 1906 and immigrated to the US in 1929. He and Mary Zumpft of New York had leased the Park Plaza Hotel in Fleischmanns in 1937, and began to encourage guests and fellow innkeepers to consider visiting in the winter to try out this new skiing thing.

In 1939 they had acquired the Colonial Inn and added The Wellington next door as an annex. Sometime in the early 1940s a ski slope was carved on the hillside behind the hotel, and a rope tow installed. Major. J. H. Cruikshank



Skiers wait on rope tow behind Colonial Inn.

The first skiing in Pine Hill. At the Colonial Inn, owned by Ralph Dalton who influenced the initiation of Belleayre Ski Center in the Catskills.

was ski instructor there in 1946.

Mr. Dalton, recently returned from service with US forces in WWII, became an enthusiastic backer of the proposal to develop the Belleayre Mountain Ski Center. A well loved civic leader, he died in 1954 at the age of 48. Though his wife and parents continued to run the hotel for many years, the ski slope was abandoned to the forest.

### **Highmount Ski Center. 1947-1997**

The Davenport Brothers – Francis and Maurice -- and Conrad Lincoln Christensen opened a new ski center on the

back side of Belleayre Mountain for the 1946-47 season. It lasted 50 years.

The north-facing slopes offered skiing between 2300 and 3100 feet and that meant a dependable snow pack most years. A \$50,000 investment yielded three



The lodge at Highmount Ski Center rope tows on three slopes. Harry Craft of Roxbury was charged with keeping the place running. Another, 400-foot rope tow was added in 1955, when a 1500-foot T-bar lift was also built by Slavin's Construction of Halcott.

## *It's holiday shopping time!*



When you shop at AmazonSmile, Amazon donates 0.5% of the purchase price to Historical Society Of The Town Of Middletown Delaware County.

Bookmark the link  
<http://smile.amazon.com/ch/01-0834413>  
and support us every time you shop.

# ANOTHER LOOK AT HOLMES MILL, ARENA

Low water in the Pepacton Reservoir this summer and fall revealed a large concrete relic that those of a certain age recognized as part of Holmes Grist Mill in Arena. Information provided by Leonard Utter and research done in property records stored at the NYC DEP's East Delaware Tunnel Intake Chamber tell an interesting story about a water-powered mill of long ago.



The toppled "surge tower" (above) was part of the system whereby water was taken from the impounded (and aptly named) Mill Brook stream and carried by gravity 2,000 feet to the mill in a two-foot diameter wooden pipe beneath the sidewalk on the east side of Church Street. The water powered a turbine in the sub-basement of the 87x26-foot mill building, operating the equipment to grind corn and other grains. The surge tower blew off air in the pipe before it ran through a steel penstock to the turbine. After running

through the mill, water was discharged to a binnekill of the East Branch of the Delaware River nearby.

The mill was part of the George W. Holmes estate when it was taken for the reservoir in 1954. NYC Board of Water Supply employees collected information on every piece of property claimed in order to arrive at an offering price. (Although property was taken by eminent domain, property owners were paid, whether through direct negotiation with the city, or after damage appraisal commissions established awards based on hearing testimony.)

In 1951, BWS staffers visited George Clum next door to the mill. He told them the mill had been moved to Arena from Big Pond about 1890. It operated as a grist mill until the 180-foot long wing dam on Mill Brook was washed out in a flood Oct. 6, 1932. The mill stood idle from then until 1943 when it was leased to Crawford Brothers as a feed store and warehouse. That enterprise ceased in December of 1944.

The BWS appraiser who visited it in 1951 said "the mill appears to be in the same condition as when grinding stopped in 1932, with small amounts of grain and hulls in hoppers and bins."

When the grubbing contractor came to demolish the structure, all of the essential mill equipment remained intact.



The surge tower was so sturdy, it was simply tipped over and left for the waters to rise. When reservoir levels drop from time to time, it speaks to us again of a time when Arena lived.

Holmes Mill as it looked in Arena (above), with concrete surge tower in place (left), and emerging from the waters of the Pepacton Reservoir. Photos by NYC BWS and Ann Roberti

## Lucky winners!

Three wonderful, hand made prizes in our annual raffle went to the following lucky winners:

Eleanor Mager went home with the beautiful framed cut-paper art piece made by Marcia Guthrie;  
Randy Sanford won the colorful ceramic fish platter crafted by Ros Welchman;  
and Nate Hendricks claimed the half-gallon of maple syrup made by John Riedel and donated by Anne Sanford.  
Many thanks to these generous donors and congratulations to the winners!

## The Past as a Present!



Looking for a meaningful holiday or birthday gift for a loved one or a treasured friend?

Think out of the box and consider making a donation to HSM or purchasing an HSM gift membership in their name. Our work to preserve local history will reflect the love they feel for their community and its heritage and we'll say so in a personalized card!

# BARN AGAIN ON MARGARETVILLE MOUNTAIN

A barn that has looked out over the village from Margaretville Mountain for almost 100 years has been saved in the nick of time.



Preparing to close up the new roof on the barn Orson VanBenschoten built c. 1915.

Peter and Carol Molnar have had a new roof and supporting rafters put on the c. 1915

barn at their Margaretville Mountain Inn, the farm where the region's commercial cauliflower growing industry got its start when it was



Jack Valek and crew did the difficult work of reshingling the gambrel roof. A new foundation has stabilized the hillside structure.

owned by William and Thankful VanBenschoten.

Craftsman Paul Waddington of Highmount engineered a fix to a gaping hole in the gambrel roof which had caused the

arched laminated rafters on one side of the building to bend and shift. While there were many who said it was past saving, Waddington devised a system of steaming, bending and glueing boards

together to fashion a new skeleton on the damaged side, so that Phoenicia roofer Jack Valek and his crew could apply planking and shingles.

A molded concrete foundation has also been replaced in the back of the huge structure, and a bridgeway stone foundation and deck was constructed from the earthen bank to the second level. Contractors

on this work were Josh Construction and mason Dean Hunter.

Orson VanBenschoten, only child of William and Thankful, would again recognize the barn he had built c. 1915 to house his dairy herd and the tons of hay the cows



A patented truss system was used in the VanBenschoten barn. The original rafters are at right, the newly engineered side, meticulously reconstructed by Paul Waddington, is on the left.

consumed. A milk house and an addition for manure handling equipment were constructed much later. Dalton Sanford purchased the farm in 1936 and named it Sunny Acres. He and wife Shirley ran a dairy operation there for nearly 30 years, finally subdividing the property in the 1960s and '70s.

At some point in the future the Molnars, who turned the Queen Anne Victorian into a bed and breakfast in 1990, hope to renovate the newly stabilized barn as a venue for weddings and other gatherings. But for now, they are happy to have kept it standing to proudly face its centennial year and hopefully another century on Margaretville Mountain.

## HONOR THEM. HELP HSM.

Have you recently lost someone special? A donation in memory of a history-loving friend or relative will be gratefully received and acknowledged.

### HSM EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Diane Galusha • PRESIDENT

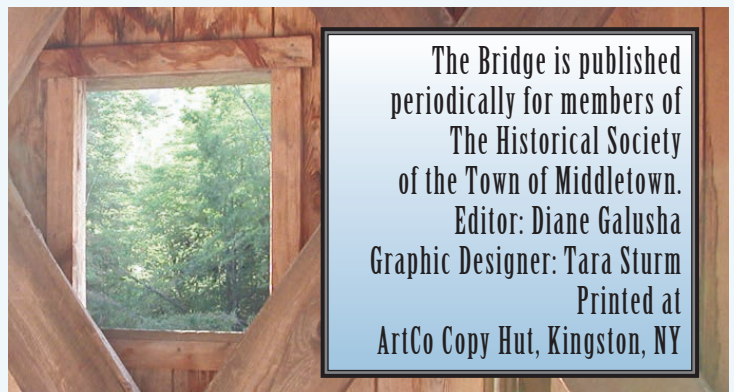
Tina Greene • VICE PRESIDENT

Marilyn Pitetti • TREASURER Jackie Purdy • SECRETARY

TRUSTEES • Henry Friedman • Anne Sanford

Fred Travis • Amy Taylor

• [www.mtowntownhistory.org](http://www.mtowntownhistory.org) • [history@catskill.net](mailto:history@catskill.net)



The Bridge is published periodically for members of The Historical Society of the Town of Middletown.

Editor: Diane Galusha  
Graphic Designer: Tara Sturm  
Printed at ArtCo Copy Hut, Kingston, NY

# DOWN THE SLIPPERY

Continued from page 1

John McGrath was ski school director until 1956 when Cal Cantrell took over. McGrath also laid out the trails at the Roxbury Ski Center and later opened ski shops in Phoenicia.

From the start, Highmount was a magnet for skiers who appreciated a challenge, and for spectators who enjoyed watching the "flying hickories." On February 28, 1947, the Catskill Mountain

News reported that 300 people skied at the new center the previous Sunday, 200 of them arriving on a special ski train from

New York City. They were shuttled from the Highmount railroad station to the mountain by chartered buses and by taxis.

A year later, "Many former European skiers continue to enjoy their favorite sport and they comment favorably on the variety and scope of the well laid-out trails. A high percentage of them are experts and they provide many thrills as they race down Belle Ayre Mountain via the new Ulster Trail or the ultra-fast racing trail, the Catskill Run."

Indeed Highmount became known for its annual Catskill Downhill ski races, and later the Highmount Cup and the Pine Hill Arms Cup races. Great skiers, and members of many ski clubs from far and near participated in these events. Highmount became an incubator for young ski racers with the formation in 1970 of the Highmount Ski Club coached by Phil Davenport and Abel Garraghan.

*"The average skier spends \$20.78 per day. This is above the average tourist expenditure. . . He will pay up to \$6 a day for a lift ticket and up to \$60 for a season ticket, and he considers the overall cost of skiing too high."*

*Catskill Mtn. News, Jan. 20, 1967*

Although the development of the State-owned Belleayre Ski Center which was closer to Route 28 siphoned off some its business, Highmount had a loyal following and continued to make improvements to its facilities. In 1960, anticipating greater traffic with the coming reconstruction of Route 28 from Shandaken to Highmount, the owners brought Slavin Construction back to build a second T-Bar lift. In the mid-1980s, a double chair lift acquired from another ski area was added.

In 1964, C. Lincoln Christensen, an engineer who had served as president of the center, resigned to concentrate on his

consulting business. That left Francis Davenport as CEO, with son Phil and brother Maurice as ski center partners.

After a storied run of half a century, the Davenports called it quits in 1997.

## Tom's Tow/Shayne's Belleaire, Highmount. 1950-?

In the early 1950s, a skiing fanatic named Benjamin Thomas McCanna ran a ski slope called "Tom's Tow" just off Greene Hill/Gunnison Road in Highmount, below the state's Belleayre Mountain Ski Center. It was advertised as "The Famous Parallel School, The Perfect Slope for Beginners," with a 1,000-foot J-Bar lift reportedly hand-built using water pipes from Montgomery Ward.

New York ski shop owner Arja Shayne acquired the adjacent Munro/Gunnison estate in 1954, and by 1956 had turned it into a year-round destination by folding in the Tom's Tow ski slope and outfitting a ski lodge with a cafeteria and ski shop.

The palatial property had been built in 1904 by shipbuilder John Munro and included a 19-room mansion, 300-foot long carriage house and stable, 3 tennis courts, a swimming pool and bath house, golf course and 2 smaller houses on 50 acres. John and Matilda Munro's daughter Effie later married Herbert Gunnison, editor of the Brooklyn Daily Eagle. He died in 1932; she in 1947.

On Sept. 9, 1957, in the midst of a severe drought, the mansion, centerpiece of Arja Shayne's resort, was destroyed by fire. That winter, Shayne's partners in the business, Mr. and Mrs. Boris Tarna, sold their interest to Shayne, who relocated the hotel rooms and ski lodge into the converted carriage house. That building burned too, in 1965.

Building foundations and rusted remnants of Tom's Tow can still be seen in the woods. The property is part of the proposed Belleayre Resort.

## Bearpen/Princeton Ski Bowl, Prattsville. 1955-1959

This center had a brief but colorful run. It was started by Princeton University junior Ben C. Lane who convinced his parents to invest \$80,000 into developing a ski area rich with snowy potential but long on logistical problems.

Lane was just 24, "the youngest ski mogul in the nation," one reporter wrote when, in 1954, he settled on the Greene County side of Bearpen Mountain after two years of scouting potential ski sites all over the northeast. The president of the Princeton Outing Club, he enlisted club members and Princeton faculty to help him study possible sites, analyzing contour, exposure, snowfall, wind and other factors before deciding Bearpen



A happy Spring Party crowd at Highmount.



J-Bar drive at Tom's Tow in Highmount rusts in the woods.

Continued on next page

# SLOPE INTO HISTORY

was the place.

With help from Paul Johnson in Halcott, and Trowbridge Construction, he established several trails descending from the 3,600 foot northwest-facing summit, the highest elevation of any Catskill ski area.

This meant it got plenty of snow, with only Stowe and Mad River Glen ski areas in Vermont boasting more.

Bearpen Mountain and its approaches straddle three towns – Prattsville, Halcott and Roxbury. An existing right of way from Little Westkill Road in Prattsville to the head of the Denver-Vega Valley in Roxbury was improved and renamed Ski Run Road, connecting at its height with a two and a half mile access road along the summit ridge leading to the Lodge in the Town of Halcott. Parking was available on both sides of the mountain. In Vega, he made arrangements for parking with Bruce German and Romeo Signini who the following year would open their own ski center on that side of Bearpen, effectively eliminating the access to Princeton.

The lodge, designed by Princeton's architecture department, foreshadowed today's renewable energy movement. Constructed of local timber milled at Rikard's sawmill in Prattsville, it was built into the hill for insulation, and situated for maximum solar gain, as well as for a potential windmill. Ralph Felter of Kelly Corners helped build the lodge, with its circular brick fireplace, and also set up the rope tows.

The Summit Lodge had awe inspiring views from both sides. But getting up there through all that snow proved to be an ironic challenge. Merlin Cable, Town Supervisor of Prattsville, organized six Army trucks, known as "snow jitneys," which carried skiers from the parking lots to the lodge. This radio-serviced fleet was nicknamed "the cableless chairlift." Once at the summit, skiers (who paid \$3 a day) could try trails, sit around the "Round Hearth," maybe go skating on the hockey-sized ice rink (made by enlarging a bear wallow) and end the day with a nearly two-mile ski back to the valley floor, at 1900 feet the largest vertical drop in Catskills skiing.

Snows, however, were often too deep for even the jitneys to manage. Joe Hewitt worked there soon after it opened in 1955 and recalls 108 inches of snow "on the level." In mid-Jan-



College student Ben Lane started Princeton Ski Bowl and named it for his alma mater.

uary the following year it rained everywhere but snowy Bearpen, which was overwhelmed with 1,000 skiers who really couldn't be accommodated.

The unique ski center and its owner, who was making his way through optometry school at Penn State while developing it, was the subject of several big-city newspaper features. The local press was also smitten with his brother, Kenneth, vice president of the ski center and a professional opera singer who performed on stage and on television.

But in 1957, Lane's father had a heart attack and died on Easter Sunday while driving on the Ski Bowl Road. The ski center opened for the 1957-58 season, but it was its last, as Lane, who graduated in 1958 and started practice in New Jersey that summer, had a career to establish. He owned the Bearpen property for several more years, and welcomed its use by snowmobilers and hikers.



Princeton Ski Bowl was noted for incredible snow, which ironically contributed to its demise. Snow jitneys were used to transport skiers to the summit lodge.

## Roxbury/Big Bear/No-Name Ski Center, Vega. 1956-1971

This ski center in "Buffalo Hollow" at the end of the Denver-Vega Valley first opened for the 1956-57 season on farmlands belonging to Bruce German and Romeo Segnini, who became the operation's first president. Unfortunately, the 45-year-old Segnini did not live to see it open, as he was killed in an auto accident on December 20, 1956.

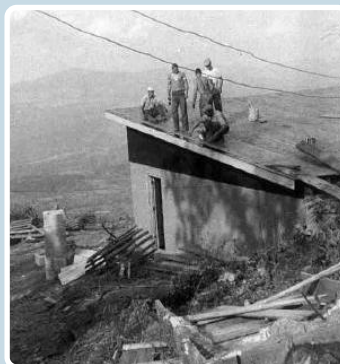
Roxbury Ski Center was located on the west side of Bearpen Mountain,



Roxbury Ski Center, c. 1956, later known as Big Bear and No-Name Ski Center, was located opposite Princeton Ski Bowl.

opposite Princeton Ski Bowl which opened in 1955. The Roxbury Ski Center featured a 2,000-foot T-Bar lift servicing the half mile Avalanche trail with its 33% grade, and the mile-and-a-half Boulevard. Both started at 3,000 feet. The lodge, according to Joe Farleigh, who was one of the initial ski patrollers as the center got off the ground, "was more or less a big shed, nothing fancy." But it was expanded later and once again Ralph Felter helped build it.

In 1963 the Roxbury Ski Center changed hands and names. Now known as Big Bear Ski Center, it was managed by Richard Burlingame and Harold Margraves of Woodstock.



Construction of the Princeton Ski Bowl lodge at the summit of Bearpen Mountain in 1954.

Despite its out of the way location the center drew many local skiers and groups who came by the busload. In late February of 1964, ski clubs from Plainfield, Tenafly, Trenton and Staten Island made their way there – many others headed to Plattekill. They stayed at Reeds Hotel in Roxbury and at boarding and guest houses on the Morse, Hewitt and Shultis farms in the Denver Valley.

The winter of 1969 was an especially snowy season; 700 to 800 skiers thronged Big Bear one weekend that March. Local youth, like Tom Sherwood, Ed Shultis, Jim Woolheater and others, skied free, which pleased their parents no end, remembered Tom's mother, Betty.

In 1970, the ski center changed hands yet again, and the new owners held a contest to come up with a new moniker, offering a trip to Europe and other prizes for the best names. None surfaced apparently, and the center, known ever after as No-Name, struggled for the next two years to gain footing.

Local support waned when the owners announced plans for a music festival just months after nearly half a million celebrants made history on Max Yasgur's farm in Bethel. The "Citizens to Preserve Roxbury" quickly banded to oppose the anticipated pollution, traffic, "dope peddlers" and "lasting damage to the Denver-Vega Valley." The town board passed an ordinance to regulate large gatherings. The festival never happened.

After one more season of skiing, No-Name faded away. Its lodge continues to be used, though, by a private hunting club.

### Andes Ski Center. 1963-1968

Jim and Frances Finkle, living on his father's farm at the top of Palmer Hill in 1962, were anxious for a place of their own. So when Jim's uncle Gilbert and his wife Ruth (Frances' sister, as it happens) offered to sell them their farm down in the valley nearer Andes, the young couple seized the chance, though they



Trails at the Andes Ski Center next to Route 28 on Palmer Hill were cut through woods on the farm of James Finkle. The Ski View Hotel (foreground left) and Diner (out of photo to left) were run by Fred and Muriel Donnelly Abrams for several years after the ski center closed in 1968.

knew working that steep, hardscrabble land would be tough.

They hardly had time to get used to it though. One day, when Jim was out in the hayfield, came a knock at the door. Ernest Eicher and

Robert Squires, New Yorkers looking for a place to put a ski center, asked Frances if they'd consider selling. So they packed up again, sold their 35 cows, and relocated to the village. "We moved in in July and moved out in October," remembers Frances.

The Aronde Corp. had just purchased 200 acres along Route 28. Principle Robert Squires occupied the farmhouse, and the barn was renovated as a ski lodge. A T-bar was installed so skiers could access two trails at right angles to and visible from the highway. They also built a pond and a parking lot. Estimated

cost: \$45,990, reported the Catskill Mountain News.

By 1965 there were six trails, in addition to the novice slope, which had three mechanized rope tows and was lighted on Saturday nights. In January of that year they christened a state of the art chair lift, 2800 feet long, with 85 double chairs that carried passengers at 450 feet per minute. The German-made lift was installed by Arnold Banker, a farmer, welder, truck driver, contractor and general mechanical wizard from Dry Brook, Arkville. Banker was the manager of the ski center when John

*8,000 saw sled dog races in Stamford. There were 27 teams and the featured race was 10 miles long. Next year's race will be in the area of the new half-million dollar ski center now under construction (Scotch Valley).*

*Catskill Mtn. News, Feb. 2, 1963*

Asher worked there as a high school senior in 1966-67. His dad worked there too. So did Jack Pardee whose lunch often included "the best venison jerky you'd ever want to eat."

Young John mostly worked the chair lift at the top, and spent many hours in a little shack where one very cold day he discovered a mouse had burrowed into the pocket of his wool pants in an attempt to stay warm. "He and I became friends that winter, and I fed him pieces of my sandwich every day," John chuckled half a century later.

The ski center would get two or three buses of skiers on a weekend. "People said they were some of the best laid out trails they'd ever skied on," John said. Sunny, too. Which is not a good thing for a place that depends on snow. The slopes' southwest exposure, and to some degree competition from nearby Bobcat, contributed to the Andes Ski Center's closure in 1968.

### Catskill Ski Center/Bobcat, Andes. 1963-2006

Joining the network of ski areas in late 1963 was an enterprise developed by Waldemar Derke and Paul Grommeck on Grommeck's farm at the end of Gladstone Hollow, Andes. It featured a new lodge, Big and Little T-Bar lifts, and two miles of trails descending from Mt. Pisgah, highest peak in Delaware County (3,345'). Mrs. Grommeck presided over the snack bar, son Harold handled rentals. Eric Saubert was ski school director.

Among the first to buy \$4 lift tickets were six members of the McIntosh family: father Charles, a cattle dealer, and siblings Roger, Richard, Timothy, Carol and Chuck. They had learned to ski at Princeton Ski Bowl in Prattsville, and had enjoyed Simpsons, Belleayre, Big Bear and Plattekill. Charles McIntosh never used poles and the kids honed their mogul riding skills while being towed, on skis, behind a jeep driven by dad.

The weather that first year was great. So many people came that the lodge Ken Conine had built had to be doubled in size for the next season. But the winter of 1964-65 was awful. A fierce windstorm in January of '65 blew all the snow off the novice area and piled it against the lodge. Shovels were employed to put it back. Derke and Grommeck, stretched, offered half the business to the McIntoshes if they'd assume the debt. "I didn't want to be a farmer all my life, I thought this is a great opportunity," recalled Chuck McIntosh. In 1971, they bought out the original owners, and made improvements to the

Continued on next page

facilities, including adding snowmaking on the lower area in 1976.

Family members wore many hats running the family-oriented ski center. All took pride in seeing kids learn to ski there. But a fitful Mother Nature, and rising costs of everything, made the business a tough one, so in 1987 the center was put up for auction. It was purchased by Seymour Schumann, a wealthy real estate investor in New York City. Chuck and brother Roger stayed on as co-managers until the economics of running a small ski area finally forced the facility's closure in ???

The Schumann family still owns Bobcat and 1,000 acres of Mt. Pisgah.

### **Elliott Lodge, Arkville. 1961-64**

One of many single-trail ski slopes that striped the region in the 1950s and '60s was operated by Clifton "Chick" and Etta Draffen Elliott at their inn on Route 28 just east of Arkville. The Elliotts offered night skiing which attracted "a happy crowd of more than 40 skiers" on a Tuesday evening in February 1961.

There was coffee and pizza and instruction for newbies. The Catskill Mountain News reported that an exhibition by children -- and by instructors from Belleayre -- was planned for Saturday "so folks can realize how easy it is to ski." Bud and Peg Barnes sure enjoyed it. "It was fun, you didn't have to be an expert skier," Bud says.

*The Central Catskills Snow Queen and her court: Janet Horton representing Scotch Valley, Joan Sanford representing Belleayre, Elizabeth Dugan representing Big Bear, and Karen Ritter representing Shaynes. Other participating ski areas included Catskill, Plattekill, DePitts, Highmount, Simpson, Windham and Hunter.*  
*Catskill Mtn. News, March 11, 1965*

The Elliotts also encouraged folks to come for Sunday dinner "and watch the skiers from our dining room windows." Etta, a nurse at Margaretville Hospital, had always wanted to start a little inn (she'd grown up in Grand Gorge where her family had a store next to the railroad station that catered to travelers.) So the Elliotts bought the former Olney Redmond house known in earlier days as "The Rock" and 80 acres right on busy Route 28.

Bob Elliott, their son, was married to Shirley Kelly by then, and they lived in Clovesville. Bob had taught himself to ski there and had rigged a crude rope tow by driving his car up the hill, jacking it up, taking the rear wheel off and stringing telephone cable between it and a rim hung in a tree. (He worked for the Fleischmanns phone company and had plenty of cable.) The car was kept running, in gear, as long as he needed a lift.

The same system was devised at Elliott lodge. Fran Haynes, a mechanic at A. H. Todd & Son where Chick Elliott worked, cobbled together a rope tow using an old car for power. The slope was largely an open south-facing field, though, which made skiing in late winter a dubious proposition.

Bob remembers that Irene Stewart cooked for parties, banquets and wedding receptions his mother hosted in the elegant house. On summer weekends, Etta and Chick sold barbecue chicken halves (75 cents to go, or you could eat in, with chicken, salad, chips, drink and a roll for a buck and a half). "Pick-a- Chick" operated out of a little building near the road, with a few picnic tables outside. In 1962 they expanded the menu to include hot dogs, and charcoal broiled cube steak sandwiches.

In March of 1964 the Lodge was sold to Bob and Carol Wilson and skiing ended in Arkville. The Elliotts installed a manufactured home on what had been the ski slope, and subdivided much of the property along what is now known as Elliott Hills Road.

*A presentation at HSM's annual meeting October 26 by George Quinn, author of Skiing in the Catskill Region, inspired this article, which is indebted to the vintage, online Catskill Mountain News for much of the detail. Our thanks to the following people who contributed additional information, memories and photographs: Betty Sherwood, Dan Underwood, Lew Kolar, John Asher, Chuck McIntosh, Frances Finkle, Bud Barnes, Bob and Shirley Elliot, Mark Loete, Marty Donnelly and Ralph Felter.*

*Information and photos of Tom's Tow came from a website devoted to Lost Ski Areas of New York and New England:*

*[www.nelsap.org/ny/toms.html](http://www.nelsap.org/ny/toms.html)*

*A very detailed history and photos of Bearpen/Princeton Ski Bowl can be found at*

*<http://skikabbalah.com/lostNY/bearpen/BEARPEN.htm>*

### **Other ski areas that have come and gone in the greater Catskills region:**

**Buck-Horn Lodge, East Branch  
Scotch Valley/Deer Run, Jefferson  
Bonticou Hill, New Paltz  
Cortina Valley, Haines Falls  
Timberlane Ski Ranch, East Jewett  
Ohayo Mountain, Woodstock  
Mount Cathalia, Ellenville  
Grossingers, Liberty  
Concord, Kiamesha Lake  
Silvermine Ski Center, Bear Mountain**

## ***Just a thought . . .***

Please consider naming HSM in your will to help ensure the preservation of local history well into the future.

# REALITY CHECK

In the midst of the ski fever gripping the Catskills in the 1950s, Carmen Prior felt his temperature rise.

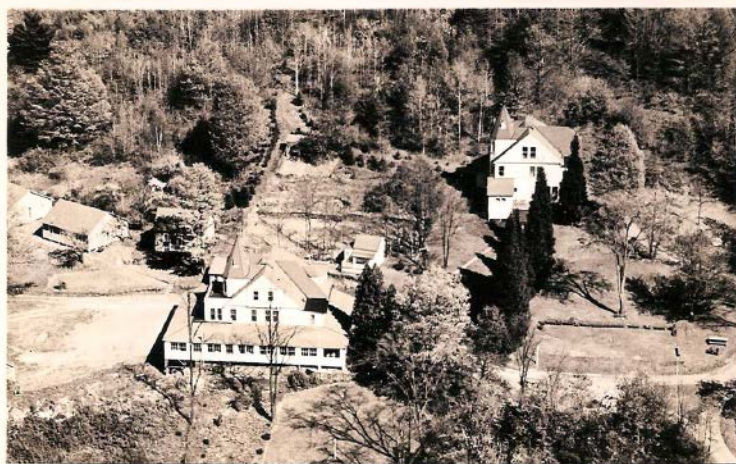
The machinist from Yonkers, who had been bringing his family to a weekend place in Seager, Dry Brook every weekend for years had a thought that maybe Eagle Mountain in his backyard would be a good place for a ski slope.

"My dad was a dreamer, I guess," said Vincent. "He thought skiing was an up and coming business." The hill side had been grazed by dairy cows till just a few years before, so there weren't any trees to clear.

Carmen bought all the apparatus for a rope tow from a resort that had gone out of business. He actually had it running, and started to install poles up the mountain-side.

Then --Vince doesn't remember who or why -- Carmen Prior consulted a ski expert. "I was there when he told dad, "It's a beautiful slope, but it's the wrong exposure, southwest. You get sun all day, even in the winter. It'll be difficult to keep snow on the slope."

"So dad thought about it," remembered Vince. "And that was the end of his ski dream."



14 De Pitts Mountain Lodge, Fleischmanns, N. Y.

DePitts Mountain Lodge above the former Fleischmanns family compound in Fleischmanns was run by Louis and Ruth DePitt. This photo was apparently taken before ski slopes and rope tows were added in 1958. It also had lights for night skiing. The big house burned in 1970; a motel unit survives. Another Fleischmanns slope was developed by the Lake Switzerland Ski Club across the lake from the St. Regis Hotel. It was developed in 1946 and '47 and a rope tow was installed in January 1948. Does anyone remember this slope?



HISTORICAL  
SOCIETY of  
MIDDLETOWN,  
*Delaware County*

✻ P. O. BOX 734 ✻ MARGARETVILLE, NY 12455 ✻