

Sahalie Historical Note #7: The Snoqualmie Pass Ski Lodges

The history of club lodges at Snoqualmie Pass begins in 1914 and expands through the 1920s and 1930s, when enthusiasm for winter recreation first began to take off in the Northwest. The earliest general news article that describes the various accommodations at the Pass dates from 1933.¹ It describes the Kendall Peak Lodge “built by a group of Seattleites” and the College Club’s lodge above Lake Keechelus, called either Mountain Goat Lodge or Roaring Creek Lodge; the article also notes a lodge run by the Helen Bush School for Girls. All have since disappeared, to my knowledge. (If you know differently, or can provide background, speak up.) Newspapers around 1940 also mention a Sno-Owl Ski Club with a cabin at the Pass, but I can’t find anything more about it.

Another good summary article of ski clubs in the area was published in late 1944.² Enos Bradner noted that, “Skiers who reside in the vicinity of Seattle have spread out before them as varied and as exciting a ski terrain in the Cascades and the Olympics as will be found anywhere in the United States....”

The main anchors over the years at Snoqualmie Pass include the Mountaineers, Seattle Ski Club, Sahalie, Washington Alpine and, more recently, Berghaus. Here is a quick snapshot with some history for each.

The Mountaineers. This venerable organization (founded in 1906) is the oldest club to have had a lodge in the Snoqualmie Pass area. The Mountaineers built its first lodge just west of the summit above Rockdale in 1914. Rockdale was the stop on the Milwaukee Railroad at the western end of the RR tunnel under the Pass. The Mountaineers’ lodge was built to the north and about 500 vertical feet up from there, above the old Milwaukee RR grade abandoned when the tunnel was completed in 1915. (See a great map of the Pass area from 1931 at: <http://www.alpenglow.org/skiing/patrol-race-2004/map-1931.html> which shows the location of the lodge.) Lodge Lake still appears on modern maps of the Pass, named for this early cabin. The Mountaineers are said to have run ski tours and tournaments from this lodge as early as 1922.³ This lodge was one end of the famous “Patrol Race” which ran 18 miles between the Mountaineers’ Meany Lodge near Stampede Pass and Snoqualmie Pass.⁴ The Patrol Race was held annually from 1930 to 1942. (For a wonderful description of this race and its terrain, see: <http://www.alpenglow.org/skiing/patrol-race-2004/index.html>.) The original Mountaineers’ Snoqualmie Lodge burned to the ground in 1944. After the war, the club secured a parcel of land just east of the Summit ski area, and built a new lodge there in 1948, including a rope tow

and a large open slope for skiing. This “new” Snoqualmie Lodge operated for more than 50 years, but burned to the foundation in 2006.⁵ Since then, the club has operated the spot between Summit Central and Summit West as a “campus” for camping and picnics, but has not rebuilt the lodge. The Mountaineers still operates its Meany Lodge near Stampede Pass.

Seattle Ski Club – Early Norwegian immigrants founded this club in 1928 and used as their first lodge “an abandoned construction camp”⁶ right at the summit of the Pass beginning in 1929. They were primarily interested in ski jumping, and built a large wooden ski jump uphill of their camp near Beaver Lake (basically strait up what is now the main Summit West open slope). This ski jump was noted in 1931 as having “one of the steepest landings in the world – a hill three or four degrees steeper than the famous Hollmenkollen Hill in Norway.”⁷ A famous early member, Olav Ulland, promoted ski jumping at the Pass and helped to attract world class jumpers to competitions there (including some of his old buddies from Norway). The Seattle Ski Club built a fancy new lodge in the summer of 1931; it was dedicated in mid-October of that year.⁸ Seattle Ski Club was the premier ski race promoter in the early 1930s, and fielded some of the best slalom racers as well as cross-country and jumpers throughout the ‘30s and ‘40s. One of its early presidents was Steve Boyle’s grandfather, Charles Hageman. Seattle SC’s lodge burned to the ground on Christmas eve, 1991.⁹ The club continues today at a new, low-key lodge near Hyak from which to ski or snowshoe in winter and hike in summer.¹⁰



Seattle

Washington Alpine Club – Alpine has its origins in a group that called itself the Cooperative Campers in 1916. They purchased the adjacent quarter-quarter-section of land just west of Sahalie around the same time as the Turn Verein, and built their lodge there in the summer of 1932. The club refers to this lodge as **Guye Cabin**.



Alpine used to operate a rope tow after WW II into the 1960s, but its ski slope has reverted to trees since then. WAC is a diverse club focused on mountaineering and back-country travel. It runs many climbing, snowshoeing and back-country ski trips throughout the Cascades and beyond, and is famous in the outdoor Northwest for its

excellent classes in climbing, telemark skiing, mountain first aid and similar topics. See my historical note #9 for more background on this neighboring club.

Continental Club/Berghaus – The Continental Club runs the most recent of the club lodges at the Pass, built in the 1970s at Hyak by a group of post-WWII German immigrants. The Continental Club invested money, made in the late '60s and '70s offering charter flights to and from Germany, in a ski lodge at Hyak, which they called the Berghaus. The Club also used to run large-scale German festivals in Seattle, celebrating Fasching and Oktoberfest. Today, the Continental Club still has some of its original German members, but is mostly a diverse ski club with members of many national origins.¹¹

And then there is **Sahalie**. The **Commonwealth Ski Club**, sponsored by Seattle TurnVerein/ Gymnastics Society, began building its lodge on the edge of Commonwealth Creek in 1931, completing it in 1932.

Commonwealth changed its name to Sahalie in 1936. The original lodge burned in 1943, and the current structure was raised in the late 1940s and early '50s, with the major day-room addition in the early '70s. More historical notes will focus on the



details of our lodge and its interesting history.

- Dave Galvin

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[As in all of these historical notes, if you read this and have comments, corrections, additions, or stories to tell, let me know at galvind53@gmail.com . We hope to keep these historical notes accurate and up-to-date.]

¹ Virginia Boren, 1933, "Practice Yodeling, For Ski Days Are at Hand: Skiing High, Skiing Low," *Seattle Daily Times*, November 10, 1933, p. 20.

² Enos Bradner, 1944, "Pacific Northwest is Skiers' Paradise," *Seattle Daily Times*, December 10, 1944, pp. 39, 42.

³ Lowell Skoog, 2002, Alpenglow Ski Mountaineering History Project, on-line at: <http://www.alpenglow.org/ski-history/chronology/snoqualmie.html> .

⁴ Lowell Skoog, 2006, "Chasing History – Snoqualmie to Stampede Pass – The Mountaineers Patrol Race," on-line at: <http://www.alpenglow.org/skiing/patrol-race-2004/index.html> .

⁵ Sara Jean Green, 2006, "Historic Mountaineer Lodge at Snoqualmie Pass Burns to the Ground," *Seattle Times*, May 13, 2006.

⁶ "Whence Goes Western Haut Monde for Skiing," *Seattle Daily Times*, January 25, 1931, p. 25.

⁷ "Whence Goes..."

⁸ "New Ski Home to be Thrown Open Sunday," *Seattle Daily Times*, October 15, 1931, p. 27.

⁹ "Snoqualmie Ski Lodge Burns to Ground," *Seattle Times*, December 25, 1991, p. E2.

¹⁰ "Seattle Ski Club," on-line note at: <http://www.skisite.com/clubsDetail.cfm?id=6254> .

¹¹ "Continental Club," German heritage archives at U.W., on-line at: <http://depts.washington.edu/heritage/Organizations/Clubs/continental.htm> .