

Why Skiing Was Moved to Spout Springs¹

Reference is made to Mr. Barber's letter of March 8, 1948: "Would you please elaborate some on your statement that you moved the skiing activities from the Bowl to Spout Springs, giving us some data as to the work involved, area, topography, conveniences, etc, which would indicate to one reading the history some idea of this activity."

During the CCC days various places were opened up for skiing. As the activity became more popular and skiers advanced it was learned that the first developments were outdated. The activity moved from Woodward Creek to the Ski Bowl. This area was found to be too small for the enlarged crowds and also it was located too far from the highway.

A movement was started to get all of the skiing activity moved to Spout Springs where all types of skiing could be had and where snow conditions were better. At the Bowl the courses sloped to the south and west and icy conditions were common.

By reason of the increase in interest in skiing, and a need for parking space, the Oregon State Highway Commission widened the road at several points which provides about 5000 feet of end parking for cars. The grading has all been done and the strip is in use this winter but the oiling was delayed until 1948.

In moving the center of activity to Spout Springs it was necessary to move one tow house and the tow to Spout. The work was done cooperatively by the Blue Mountain Ski Club and the Forest Service.

Three tows are now in operation at Spout Springs. The terrain is good and the snow conditions are good most of the winter. One small warming hut was constructed by the Blue Mt. Ski Club. The hut and other facilities and conveniences are far less than the need.

A large amount of work was done on ski runs, tows and tow houses, mostly contributed by skiers.

It is expected that the number of recreational visitors at Spout during the winter of 1948 and 1949 will total some 15,000 to 20,000.

2/2/1956: First Ski Season

We have been having large crowds out on the Spout Springs Winter Sports Area. We have been averaging about 1,500 people per weekend. The JC ski school

¹ This brief history of early activities at the Spout Springs Ski Area, located on the Walla Walla Ranger District of the Umatilla National Forest near Tollgate, Oregon, was compiled from annual reports and clippings.

on Saturday is well attended by two hundred juniors. It is not uncommon to see 6 or 7 chartered busses in the parking lots on Saturdays plus 100 cars.

We had our first lost skiers on the night of January 29. We started organizing a search plan at 12:30 AM on the 30th. The advanced searchers found the men about 7AM. They had dug into a snow bank for shelter and kept each other feet from freezing by tucking them under each other's armpits. They suffered some frostbite of the feet but no permanent damage. Both were students at Walla Walla College, one of who came from Austria. (He was the one that got them lost. Guess the land doesn't lay the same as in Austria).

1958 Spout Springs Skiing

There was less snow at Spout Springs than any time in the last 10 years, during November and December. Desperate skiers were using the high hill successfully, on less than 12 inches of snow. The interesting thing about this is that the number of skier visits was about normal and Ski Club income was normal.

1959 Spout Springs

Spout Springs Ski Area is continuing to expand with the moving of one tow to a larger, more desirable location and the installation of a new T-bar lift in place of the two rope lifts in front of the lodge. These new additions should handle the anticipated increase of skiers this year. Additional tows and increased skiing areas are planned for future development.

1959 Spout Springs

Continual increase in winter sports use of the Spout springs ski area will be guaranteed with new facilities available and improved skiing areas. A new ski venture will be started by the organization of a ski club in and around Pomeroy, Washington. They plan to install a small rope tow near Pataha Creek on the forest. Limited use is expected this winter.

1959 Spout Springs

The Spout Springs Ski Area special use permit was transferred from the Blue Mountain Ski Club to the Spout Springs Lodge, Inc. This marked the end of 25 years of various ski area operations by the Blue Mountain Ski Club. The ski business was getting to more than a volunteer organization could handle. The High and El tows were removed. They had been judged unsafe for some time because of the necessity of uphill sheaves. A new Hall t-bar was installed from in front of the ski lodge to the top of the hill at Spout Springs lookout. The El tow was moved to the new instruction area that has been in the process of being cleared for the last three years.

1961 Spout Springs

Our Spout Springs Ski Area has continued to receive increased use. This is due to many factors: its location, the increased interest in winter sports as more people learn to ski and the in-

creased amount of leisure time. Furthermore, the size of the skiing area has been increased and a "T" bar lift has been installed.

A new ski venture is being started by the Baldy Butte Ski Club. This club is developing a ski area at Arbuckle Mountain near Heppner, Oregon. Limited use is expected this winter.