

# 1920s saw advent of local skiing

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Did you know there have been several local ski hills prior to Big White?

With the ever-perennial support and persistence of Max de Pfyffer, skiing in the Kelowna area began circa 1920, and continued through the war years until the opening of Big White, in the 1960s.

With the help of people like Maurice Meikle, Lyman Dooley, George Flintoft, Verne Ahrens, and many more too numerous to mention, bigger and better locations were found.

At one time, circa 1937, skiers enjoyed the Gallagher Canyon area. There was also a hill in Glenmore.

During the war years, a ski hill, including a jump, was built on the Weddell property in the Joe Rich (e) area. At this location, there was a small cabin, and several tournaments were held.

When we local diehards couldn't reach the upper slopes, and there was enough snow, we went across the lake by ferry. We either carried our equipment or skied (hiking) up the side of the road.

Then, skiing across country, we reached our destination. This location was to the left and just above the west end of the present day bridge.

There was no tow, so we packed the hill with our skis then hiked up and had the thrill of skiing down, doing this for most of the day.

During the 1940s and 1950s, one

of the last and best locations was on Black Mountain, on part of the Wallace Ranch. For the first few years, we would park at the old Wallace log house and barn, and hike the one mile to the log ski cabin. All the water and food was brought in on a toboggan, and the garbage was taken out the same way.

A road was put in, in 1947, and a new chalet was built in 1948, with windows across the front, facing the hill. There were no snow packing machines in those days, so again the human packer was used. Indeed, sometimes before the tow could be started (if we had had a nice fresh snowfall), we had to pack the hill.

Over the years, the short rope tow was extended, and we had a nice hill to ski. Each fall, several work parties were organized to clear more brush and tidy up the cabin.

In 1953, Ralph de Pfyffer brought honor to our city and local hill, by becoming the Canadian Junior Ski Champion. At this location, we had a wonderful, friendly, fun-loving club, and many long lasting friendships were made. Can you believe that our dues were under \$10?

*Written by local "old-time" skiers: Alice Lundy, George and Bea Flintoft, Doug Sutherland, Jack Ritch, and Charles de Pfyffer. All are members of the Kelowna branch of the Okanagan Historical Society.*