

SKIING

Is Big Business In Michigan

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Come late November or early December, there's a noticeable change of mood in Michigan.

Resorts shift the emphasis from boating, swimming and other aquatic aspects of Michigan's "Water-Winter Wonderland" slogan to skiing, skating and other vacation pastimes that accompany powdery snow and slippery ice.

Growth of Michigan's winter sports industry during the past decade has been as spectacular as the state's winter sports events.

During the 1954-55 season, it was estimated that some 65,000 skiers spent \$2.5 million at 28 ski areas. William T. McGraw, director of the Michigan Tourist Council, has reported:

Last winter, at 87 developed winter resorts, a quarter million skiers paid out \$25 million for lodging, meals, ski tow fees and other recreational services.

The army of skiing enthusiasts is expected to be even larger this winter, and their outlay will grow accordingly.

FAMILY ACTIVITY

Of Michigan's 87 winter sports centers, 16 are in the Upper Peninsula, 20 in West Michigan, 20 in East Michigan and 31 in the southeastern region bordering the Detroit metropolitan area.

There's a trend toward families taking a portion of their vacations in winter. Resorts are offering special rates for them.

With an eye toward promoting safe skiing, the Michigan Legislature has created a Ski Safety Board. Inspection of ski areas is the responsibility of the State Department of Labor.

During the past five years, there has been heavy investment in ski development, ski towes, housing and other facilities.

Caberfae Ski Area, near Cadillac, has installed \$80,000 worth of snow-making equipment for the coming winter. James Clark is the new manager, succeeding Fred Backus, who resigned to take a similar position at Mt. Ascutney in Vermont.

One of the popular attractions of Caberfae is the "super leap" which attracts school classes and many other people. The maple sap run keeps the skiers from working here in the spring breakups and the beginning of summer work projects.

Bob Meyer will again head Caberfae's Ski School, which again will have the Austrian instructors, Heinz Achmer and Horner Jack, as well as others.

FIG. SIX

Before the turn of the century, Petoskey, Harbor Springs, Walloon Lake and the surrounding Little Traverse Bay region were popular summering places — the Newport area of the Middle West.

Summer resorting has continued, but now winter sports activity is ranked of equal economic value, some say more to the communities in the area.

There are 2,500 acres of skiing in the Big Six ski areas that form the basis of Petoskey's bid for the title of Ski Capital of Michigan. They include:

Boyne Mountain, on US-131 at Boyne Falls, the first winter resort in Michigan to have a chairlift, year-round ice rink, heated outdoor swimming pool and snow-making equipment. Now it claims the first four-place chairlift in the world, along with five double chairlifts and T-bar and J-bar lifts. Ottavio Schaefer, former Olympic skier, heads an instructor staff of 25.

Lift tickets are interchangeable with Boyne Highlands, another resort founded by Everett Kierker, four miles north of Harbor Springs, just off US-131. For the new season, guest capacity at the Old Europe Chalet has been increased from 79 to 83 rooms.

Other resorts in the Big Six group are Nub's Nob, a rustic lodge five miles northwest of Harbor Springs; Thunder Mountain, five miles east of Boyne Falls; Walloon Hills, five miles east of Walloon Lake and Burn Mountain, the former Avalanche, via at Boyne City.

In addition to the Big Six, the West Michigan region has

more than 20 other areas. Among them the Cannonburg Ski area, about 10 miles northwest of Grand Rapids, will open for the first time this season.

ABOVE THE STRAITS

Farther north, across the Straits of Mackinac in the Upper Peninsula, preparations are being made for a season that will likely extend through Easter.

First Mountain and, interestingly, "Spiride Hill," which also offer recreational sking, will have their annual tournaments in February when the world's best ski jumpers will compete.

Michigan Technological University is spending \$125,000 for a chairlift, T-bar lift and other improvements at the Tech Ski

Hill, near Houghton, operated by the school's athletic department. Of northern white color construction, the chairlift will cost about \$60,000.

The state-maintained skiing area, in the Porcupine Mountains park in the western section of the Upper Peninsula, near the shore of Lake Superior, is another area growing in popularity.

DETROIT AREA

The Detroit metropolitan area has the population, but it doesn't have the steep slopes of the northern, sparsely settled highlands. However, what it lacks in altitude it makes up for in ingenuity.

Mort Grisdale, developer of the Mt. Holly winter resort near Pontiac, installed snow-making equipment a decade

ago to compensate for the warmer climate in that southeastern part of the state.

Nor did lack of big hills stump Grisdale, a building contractor, who began skiing in New England while attending Columbia University. He broadened the elevation by 20 feet by moving several hundred thousand cubic yards of earth. Mt. Holly now has a vertical drop of 190 feet with a run of 1,400 feet. Grisdale plans to move a half million more yards to the summit within the next three years.

Despite some rainy work-ends, Mt. Holly had an 80,000 attendance last season and is looking forward to exceeding 100,000 this winter.

John Bartz, an apple orchardist near Freeland, also built his own mountain.

John and his wife, Joan, settled on the Bartz farm seven years ago. Having decided to cater to tourists, they began operating an old-fashioned cider mill, then built a roadside stand for selling cider, doughnuts and sundaes.

Encouraged by the success of their venture, the Bartzes decided there might be opportunities in the winter tourist business. But they had no hill.

So they invested about a quarter million dollars to have bulldozers and scrapers move 1½ million cubic yards to make a hill 100 feet high. In doing so, they created a seven-acre lake for skiing, swimming and fishing. Then they built a ski lodge, installed snow-making equipment, and now have a winter resort that draws many vacationists from the surrounding cities.

CALLS INCREASE

There is a tremendous interest in skiing in the metropolitan area, said L. H. Thomson, secretary-manager of the Southern Michigan Tourist Association, Detroit.

"Our 24-hour-a-day taped recording phone service, which we maintained from Dec. 15 to March 15 last season, received over 4,000 calls for information on skiing conditions in our 18 areas. This was an increase of about 4,000 calls over the year before."

SKI ENTHUSIASTS START YOUNG
Practice Makes Perfect, and It's Fun



GETTING BACK UP IS PART OF THE THRILL
Triple Chair Lift in Operation at Boyne Highlands Near Harbor Springs

