



Outdoor Loyalty

Reward...Outdoor...Activities
est..2015

Gold and Silver; The Genesis of Skiing in America

OutdoorLoyalty.com and this blogsite have written many blogs



Gold and Power.

about Outdoorists and the emergence of the Ski Industry in America. The very beginnings, of this phenomenon and epic stages of it's growth, capture the Heart and Soul of a new outdoor experience. The exploration and sustaining of the many mountainous regions across America, during the snow season (better known as "Winter") is an Outdoorist's goal in life.

One of the Pioneers to challenge the accessibility to these snow-filled regions was John Albert Thompson better known as Snowshoe Thompson. Snowshoe was born in Norway, speaking of snow, in 1827. After the

death of his Father, at the age of 10, John

and his Mother looked for a better life, leaving everything behind in 1837 when they came to America. They met up with his Brother Tostein and Sister Kari at a Norwegian Immigrant Settlement in Shelby County, Missouri. In 1857 Snowshoe and his brother migrated along the Oregon Trail in search of a mountainous region similar to their home country. They reached Sacramento Valley in California and homesteaded a ranch in the California's Alpine Country.

Shortly after settling on the ranch, Snowshoe began delivering mail from Placerville to South Lake Tahoe during the winter months in 1856.

Snowshoe utilized skis (10 ft. In length) and a stout single ski pole which were called "snowshoes" back in Norway. The journey took 3 days of exhausting travel one way. Snowshoe Thompson was never paid for his services delivering the U.S. Mail. In 1876, Snowshoe Thompson died of Appendicitis. That year a grave stone was placed at his grave site in Genoa, NV on the east side of Lake Tahoe. The view captured the mountains and the many silver and gold mines he delivered mail. The miners, during that time, recognized Snowshoe's important participation in connecting the communications to the outside world. A 100 years later, those



Snowshoe Thompson
from an old postcard
(Courtesy of Ingrid
P. Wicken)

Outdoorist Extraordinaire

mining communities in Squaw Valley, became a major ski area. In 1901 a statue of Snoeshoe was placed in Genoa honoring Snowshoe Thompson. The statue had been etched with a



Gone but not Forgotten.

statement "Gone but not Forgotten".

Fast forward to 1960 when the VIII Olympic Winter Games took place in Squaw Valley Ski Area. This event was held between Feb 18-28, 1960. Amazingly, when Squaw Valley Ski Area was chosen in 1956, it was a very underdeveloped ski area. So, from 1956 to 1960 the Winter Olympic Games, in Squaw Valley, invested \$80 million to create a venue designed to be an "intimate environment" allowing spectators and competitors to walk to nearly all the venues. Today, Squaw Valley Ski Area fulfills the "intimate" and "engaging" environment for skiers and visitors alike 12 months out of the year. Visitors are able to reflect on its history including mining in the 1800's and also visit the grave site of Snowshoe Thompson.

Four hundred miles East of Lake Tahoe, in the 1850's, another mountain town was born in Utah after a miner, Parley P. Pratt, discovered the potential of Silver, Gold and Lead existing in the area. The reality of this area, on the eastern slopes of the Wasatch Mountains, was a major source of these precious metals. The area "boomed" and Utah's version of the Gold Rush began.

The town of Parley's Park City became the center of the mining culture. The mining boom brought a large migration of miners and entrepreneurs serving the needs of the miners and in some cases

the families of the above mentioned miners. The Ontario Mine and Silver King Mine focused on silver and became the most famous and successful silver mine in the world. Eventually the town became known as Park City. In 1898, the town of Park City was virtually destroyed by fire and in 1902 a large mine explosion killed several miners. Thus, the mining heritage began to dissolve. The straw that broke the camel's back came in the late 1950's when the value of Silver plummeted to a level making silver

not profitable to mine.



Park City Ski Area.

At this point, in Park City, the miners did not flee the cultural devastation, but they shifted their hopes to a new Gold Rush in the 1960's. There was a rising interest amongst Outdoorists in the West and the sport of Skiing. As a result of the vision of the miners to transition from the "Mineral Rush" to the "White Powder Rush" resulted in the pick of the 2002 Winter Olympics to Salt Lake City, Utah. This event's choice focused the spotlight on Winter Sports in Utah. It captivated winter sport activists, around the World, to migrate to the new winter venue.



Alta Ski/Mining...

A parallel evolution occurred in a small Utah town of Alta, just 10 miles west of Park City, on the western slopes of the Wasatch Mtns. The mining in Alta was targeting similar minerals to Park City. The area around Alta, at 9,000', was founded in 1865 to house miners working at the Emma Mine, Flagstaff Mine and other Silver mines in Little Cottonwood Canyon, about 8 miles from Salt Lake City. The rich silver ore, being extracted from the mines surrounding Alta, brought forth interest from around the globe.

Alta generated huge profits from the sale of the enriched silver till in 1878 a huge fire destroyed most of the original mining town. In sequence, in 1885, a massive avalanche buried several of the mines in the area. The mines, on a limited scale, persisted into the 20th Century. By the 1930's only one resident miner, George Watson, remained in the town. In 1935, in a desperate move, Watson donated much of the land to the Forest Service with the stipulation that the land usage was to become a ski area. Norwegian skiing legend Alf Engen was hired to help develop the ski area and Alta opened its first ski lift in 1938.

In the early 1940's, when World War II was raging in Europe, Alta became a training center for the 10th Mountain Division (10th Mountaineers) to simulate the winter conditions of the Alps and confront the military's of Germany and Italy who were attacking innocent villagers in the area. The 10th Mountaineers became war Heroes to all Americans for their valor in stopping the surgent

armies from these countries know as The Axis Powers (Axis of Evil). The Mountaineers skiing techniques came from their training at Alta Ski Area. In the 1970's Alta was incorporated becoming one of the highest Ski Area Base. "Alta" came from the Spanish language meaning "High".

OutdoorLoyalty.com/blog sees the value of Historical Knowledge in reference to the outdoor experience so an Outdoorist can, with the sense of confidence, pass on that knowledge to future generations. The seed of this blog emerged from a long weekend at a log cabin, in the High Uinta Mountains, with 2 Millennial Outdoorists and myself, sitting around the fire place engaging in a collaborative discussion, suggested as a topic for a blog to be the history of the sport of skiing becoming what it is today. We reached back into the 1800's, with some Googling, to come up with the Genesis of the Ski Industry overlaying the Gold/Silver Rush in America. "Thanks for the Journey Guys".



10th Mountaineers.

Below is an article that details the evolution of Park City from Gold to Skiing in a little over one hundred years. Enjoy this extension of our blog above.

<http://blog.parkcitymountain.com/site/blog>

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