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From Skisport To Skiing: One Hundred Years Of An American Sport, 1840-1940



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Synopsis

The first full-length study of skiing in the United States, this book traces the history of the sport from its utilitarian origins to its advent as a purely recreational and competitive activity.During the mid-1800s, inhabitants of frontier mining communities in the Sierra and Rocky mountains used skis for many practical reasons, including mail and supply delivery, hunting, and railroad repair. In some towns skis were so common that, according to one California newspaper, "the ladies do nearly all their shopping and visiting on them."But it was Norwegian immigrants in the Midwest, clinging to their homeland traditions, who first organized the skisport. Through the founding of local clubs and the National Ski Association, this ethnic group dominated American skiing until the 1930s.At this time, a wave of German immigrants infused America with the ethos of what we today call Alpine skiing. This type of skiing became increasingly popular, especially in the East among wealthy collegians committed to the romantic pursuit of the "strenuous life." Ski clubs proliferated in towns and on college campuses and specialized resorts cropped up from New England to California. At the same time, skiing became mechanized with tows and lifts, and the blossoming equipment and fashion industries made a business of the sport.On the eve of World War II, as the book concludes its story, all the elements were in place for the explosion in recreational and competitive skiing that erupted after 1945.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"A landmark study of American skiing that integrates the facts of the sport’s history with the social

and economic environment in which it developed. This richly illustrated narrative is comprehensive in scope and as historically accurate as it is readable."Ã¢â ¬â ¢Linda Gray, Executive Director, New England Ski Museum"A solid, well-researched book. It is an immensely important contribution to sport history and fills a huge gap in the literature. Allen uses the source material well to evoke vivid pictures of skiers, merchants, marketers, and many others who made this history."Ã¢â ¬â ¢Stephen Hardy, University of New Hampshire

E. John B. Allen is professor of history at Plymouth State College.

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