

MONEY FEVER IS RUNNING IN ASPEN AGAIN



OTTO SCHNEIBS once said of skiing, "It's not a sport, it is a way of life," and this photograph silently but poignantly explains his statement. Skiing is possible in many states, but in the surroundings as are pictured here is rare. The three skiers shown here are touring, a variation of the fast downhill and slalom aspects of the sport. They carry packs containing food and equipment to use in case of an accident.



THE BOAT TOW already installed on the Roch run loads skiers halfway up the practice hill, where they are brought by a rope tow, and takes them 550 vertical feet to the top of the 1600-foot long practice slope. Three skiers are shown with their skis loaded on the racks, the high-altitude sun full upon them, set for the trip to the top. The girl in front is Virginia Heidecooper, one-time woman's national champion skier. The girl in the back is the author.



THE FAMED ROCH SKI RUN, downhill course known to skiers over the world for its punishing steepness and roughness. More than two miles long, it takes maximum power and courage and skill to ski it at the speed required to compete in the annual Roch run race. Upper left in the picture is the renowned Corkscrew, so steep a skier attains a speed of over sixty miles an hour.

Famed Silver Town Looks to Day When It Will Be World Ski Capital

By Jane Nes.
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THE money fever is running high in Aspen again. Aspen, silver mining town lying between the great ranges of the western slopes of Colorado, long embraced in slow decay and approaching oblivion, is astir with hope, with expectation of prosperity and renewed vitality. Almost a ghost town since the death of its fabulous mining days near the close of the last century, it has been chosen by a group of wealthy industrialists as the site for the development of what will be, if present plans are realized, one of the greatest resorts in the United States, playground of the world's rich, fishing, hunting and climbing enthusiasts.

The swing from boom to slump and back is nothing new for Aspen, once a lusty town of 15,000 and until lately a dying one of 850. Fortunes were wrested from the surrounding hills from the 1880s until 1893, when the United States senate repealed the purchasing clause of the silver purchase act.

ALL photos on this page were taken by Frank True, brother of the author of the accompanying article, and Richard A. Rucker, veteran of Eighty-seventh mountain division, who trained at Camp Hale.

For housing for their families, very often brought from lands far across the oceans. The solid old hotel Jerome, opened with magnificent circumstances in 1890, has been September, 1880, has been known as the Aspen, the Brown and the Chitwood blocks, are to be dormitory-type lodges with moderate rates.

Two diningrooms will operate in the Jerome—the main dining hall and a coffee shop. Fifteen houses, among them the famous "Pioneer Park" and the Lamb house, have been purchased by Paepcke and are to be remodeled. Approximately 200 lots are owned by him, to be turned over, as is most of the real estate he has bought, to the Aspen company soon, with the purpose of controlling the construction of commercial establishments in downtown Aspen and preventing a rash of cabin camps, shooting galleries, road-houses and other fly-by-night enterprises from breaking out.

Pioneer Park, built by Henry Webber in 1880 with profits from the Emma mine, is a stately Georgian type brick house, fronted by a formal row of trees, and is known through the western slope. It will be the Paepckes' private residence.

The big Hoagland ranch, largely comprising the section known as Hellam's addition to Aspen, was bought during January. This property is bounded on three sides by the Roaring Fork stream and on the fourth by Castle creek, and offers the best open flat country near the town. Rumors of the use to which it will be put range from the establishment of a political science college on its broad pastures to that of a cheese factory.

Back taxes on lots and houses purchased by Paepcke already have brought \$20,000 into Pitkin county, of which Aspen is the county seat. Many of the properties had no taxes paid on them since 1893.

ALTHOUGH the excellent hunting and fishing around Aspen have been known to sportsmen for a long time, the possibilities for developing a magnificent resort there have been realized only in recent years. A short rope tow and a wooden boat tow serving the hill on which the famous Roch Run race course facing Aspen cannot compare with lifts and skiing facilities elsewhere.

But in the country directly south of this hill more than forty-five miles of trails, including easy ones engineered for the safety of beginners, are planned.

A LREADY wholesale purchases of houses, lots and public buildings by Paepcke has started a real estate boom unprecedented since the days thousands of miners were shouldering each other about the boot-trampled streets looking



DEEP SNOW FILLS THE STREETS OF ASPEN and settles on the roofs of the "business" section buildings. Here the Aspen block, two-story apartment building, and the corner of the Brown block, three-story dwelling unit, are shown. The Aspen and Brown blocks are to become dormitories.

nearly all included in a government-owned area marked "primitive" and held inviolate to development of any kind, thus guaranteeing no encroachment. The stir of excitement in Aspen has been heralded by four months of intensive activity, much of it caused by the return of many of the Tenth division mountain infantry who trained at Camp Hale and skied the splendid terrain near here during their weekend leaves and who came back for a last vacation before returning to civilian life.

The great peaks named Hayden, Daly, Maroon Bell, Star Pyramid and Hagerman, all easily accessible from Aspen, are by the lack of tows, who put sealskins on their skis and climb high into the timberline sun for the glory of the view and the pleasure of finding untracked runs down silent slopes, have come to Aspen well in advance of the real development.

Mingling with the skiers on the packed-snow streets are cowboys from outlying ranches, in to sniff the boom town exhilaration, carpenters and plumbers beginning work on the restoration projects, and enterprising businessmen. One real estate man came all the way from Florida with the hope of

buying a small lodge or apartment building, another from Texas looking for a suitable dude ranch.

Around the stools at local bars, now numbering two or three where there used to be fifty roaring saloons, stories of Aspen that was and Aspen that will be vie for attention.

THE hectic atmosphere of free-flowing money is a familiar one to old-timers, whose multi-hued ancestry includes Welsh, Scotch, Irish, Scandinavian. Proof of the presence in Aspen in early days of Manx people, now for the most part lost in the American melting pot, lies in the strange birch now and then in Aspen to ordinary, undistinguished cats of tailless kittens. The Manx cats traveled west with their masters in search of riches.

From the early 1880s, when Aspen was a prospector's camp with women "mighty scarce article" until 1893, when the bottom dropped from under silver, high living and imaginative spending were the rule of the day.

Typical of many of the rude but rich western communities is the splendid opera house, built at the height of Aspen's glory by Jerome B. Wheeler, who made his stake in Leadville and then moved down thru Independence pass to enjoy it. He also built the Jerome hotel.

The opera house, a three-story building, today has a grocery store and the town library on the ground floor, an empty store room on the second, and the charred and silent remains of a most startlingly gracious stage on the third. Originally the town's biggest bank was on the first floor and an ornate bar on the second.

White and slate-gray pigeons walk the boards of the stage now, and glide from the creaking rafters across the beautiful and uniquely off-center sweep of the balcony across the orchestra circle and the remains of the two boxes on either side of the stage. Fire destroyed most of the front proscenium arch, but enough remains to hint at the loveliness lost.

No seats are left on the main floor—they having been made of wood. But in the balcony the seats were wrought iron and still stand in ghostly formation, with blackened name plates marking in burned out letters the names of their one-time occupants.



Friedl Pfeifer, famous Austrian skier, soaks up good Colorado sunshine in front of the timberline house at the foot of the Roch run. He heads the ski school at Aspen.

long destroyed and Cornish musicians called "Cousin Jack" bands, played on the street corners. Memories of crowds around the musicians so great that it was impossible to walk thru the streets are fresh in the minds of men and women born here in the early days. As children, their favorite treat was to be allowed to follow the bands as they moved about the town under the bright lights.

The lights of Aspen were one of its prides. It is believed that Aspen was the first town in Colorado, in 1888, to have electric street lights. Miners coming down from the late shifts at the Smuggler, the Mollie Gibson, the Camp Bird, the Thunder, the Justice saw the lights below them in the valley and knew they lived in an "up and comin' village."

SINCE the life blood of Aspen poured from her mine shafts, stories of the mines and the men who discovered and developed them are legion.

There is the story of the extraordinarily rich carload of ore that was mined at the Mollie Gibson, named for the cook in the boarding house where it was discovered and billed for a smelter at Leadville. Between fifteen and twenty tons of ore were on the car, valued at around \$20,000 a ton. After the car left Aspen on the railroad, it vanished. No trace of it was ever found, and no proof was ever established of what happened to it.

Rumors swept the town. One of the partners in the Mollie, who at that time was in financial straits, was suspected of bribing the railroad hands and making off with the loot, disconcerted to accept only a small share of the proceeds. This, like the other rumors, was never proved.

And there is the story about the beautiful daughter of a penny-pinching mine owner, whose father promised her, in a magnanimous moment, the proceeds of a day's diggings from the mine as a wedding present. The daughter, who was wise as well as handsome, hired sixty extra hands to gouge out the silver ore that day and cleared a neat \$62,000. Father's reaction was not recorded, but no man dared go back on his word and live longer in gallows than in jail.

The inevitable result of much easy money—gambling—enjoyed a fabulous vogue in the back rooms of Aspen's saloons. The biggest and bravest of them all was the Branch saloon, where fortunes as large as \$100,000 changed hands over poker and roulette, Black Jack and crap tables. One of the habitués of Branch's was Alec MacDonald, who lost a small, very small, fortune in Aspen, and went to Alaska to become the King of the Klondike, worth 62 million dollars. Relatives of the king still live in Aspen.

Many quiet oldsters still living in homes built sixty years ago, wonder what the influx of easy money will bring them. Mr. and Mrs. Milton Conner, who celebrated their seventy-first wedding anniversary Jan. 18, and came to Aspen in 1890, view the changing picture with alarm, having loved the town and associated it with their many years together.

Others, including the mayor, Dean Robinson, and the five councilmen who have spent several one years trying to keep the town from disintegrating, look to the future with great pride and hope. An almost universal respect is felt for the men who have brought their ideas, wealth and energy into Aspen.

What Aspen will become, none can foretell. Architecturally, the town is to be kept as near its present form as possible.

It may well be that "Aspen" will become a name famous in the world over for a place where men may forget for a few days the tribulations of the workaday world in a land basking in the royal benediction of the Colorado Rockies.



VIEW OF ASPEN, looking north toward the Never Summer range from the summit of Aspen mountain down which the famous Roch ski course runs. The doll-village appearance of the town has been likened to the appearance of small hamlets in the French and Spanish Pyrenees. The Hotel Jerome can be seen as the large building between the tops of the two trees in the foreground. Directly in line with it, to the right of the right-hand tree, partially obscured by its branches, is the old opera house. This picture gives a feeling of the steepness of Aspen mountain.