

SKIING
AND
THE UNITED STATES SKI
ASSOCIATION

By Gloria C. Chadwick

Skiing is both a sport and big business in the United States. From a meager start, it has grown by leaps and bounds in the number of persons participating and the number of resorts catering to the devotees of the slats. Many wealthy persons were influential in rise of resorts. They invested money in skiing for recreation rather than for income and as a result this country boasts many magnificent skiing areas open to the public.

The sport has many intriguing features that attract enthusiasts, accounting for its growing popularity over the last 25 years. Skiing is challenging to the beginner and expert; it offers beautiful natural settings for recreation; it offers a chance to speed, and it provides pleasant surroundings and opportunities for friendship.

The earliest ski runners presumably were bones from large animals, strapped to the shoes with leather thongs, as were snowshoes. When man sought a faster way of proceeding over frozen wastes, where the land was flat, or progressing over the icy surface of lakes or rivers, he, no doubt, used smaller bones and those probably were the pioneer skates, the joints of the bones being smoothed so as to produce a flat surface which permitted a swift, gliding motion.

There appears to be basis for the conclusion that skis were used in the northern part of Europe and in Asia prior to the Christian Era, but there is little in the way of definite fact to substantiate the date. A pair of skis, pronounced the oldest known to the world, are in the Djugarden Museum at Stockholm, Sweden. Guesses have been made that the skis might be at least 4,000 years old.

The analytical method of determining the ages of ancient ski finds was developed by the Swedish scholars, Lennart von Post and Erik Granlund. Through research by famous ethnologists, the ages of many skis found in the bogs of Norway, Sweden and Finland have been determined. A few of those finds and their determined ages establish that the ski found at Hoting in Angermanland is estimated to be between 4,000 and 5,000 years old; the Riihimaki ski found in southern Finland dates back to the Bronze Age; the Arnas ski found in Arnas, Dalarna, Sweden, is estimated to be about 2,500 years old and skis from Kalvtrask in Vasterbotten, Sweden, date back to 2000 B.C., while Evreboe ski pollen is presumed to be about 2,500 years old.

Skada, the giant goddess who in legend was married to Njord, one of the Scandinavian gods, is known as the Goddess of Ski (Odurrdis) in the northern countries of Europe. Uller, the god of winter, always is pictured walking on skis with curved toes, which created the idea that he was so huge that he trod the snow with ships lashed to his feet.

So far as actual history is concerned, skis were first used in warfare in the Battle of Oslo in Norway in 1200 A.D. King Sverre of Sweden equipped his scouts with skis and sent them to reconnoiter the enemy, camped in deep snow, which had marooned him. This makes it appear that skis were not numerous even then, else the entire armies on both sides would have been equipped with them, enabling the troops to navigate through snow and over ice in flat countries.