

It is our hope that thru the holding of the III Olympic Winter Games of 1932 in the United States the general interest and participation in Winter sports on this side of the Atlantic will be set forward by at least a decade, if not a generation. Our part has been done. May the example of the Games carry on where we leave off.

The 1932 Olympics were well reported by the press, radio, and film industry and did encourage women's interest in skiing. It was not until 1932 that the first downhill race for women was conducted by the Woodstock Ski Runners Club of Vermont. Racing, in the alpine events, was just beginning to be introduced to women of the United States. In Europe, however, the women entered the nordic events of the 1929 International Ski Federation in Zakopane, Poland and had their own alpine Kandahar in 1931.

#### Period of International Competition

In 1930, Alice Damrosch Wolfe (Kiaer) had gone to Switzerland on a mountain climbing expedition. While there, she learned to ski and took her first medal at the 1931 Parsen Derby at Davos, Switzerland. She was responsible for assembling the team upon her return to the States. To be eligible, women had to be on the 1935 United States International Ski Federation team, be one of the three best racers in the national championships at Mt. Rainier, or be recognized by Alice Damrosch Wolfe (Kiaer) as being good enough to justify their training on the Olympic squad.

Roland Palmedo, then the president of the Amateur Ski Club of New York, was the prime organizer and backer. Friedl Pfeifer served as coach. Otto Furrer was the trainer; Thomas Dabney acted as assistant manager. Alice Damrosch Wolfe (Kiaer), also a member of the Amateur Ski Club of New York became the manager.

It was not until the 1935 Olympic trials that the women began taking turning seriously. Working with Otto Schniebs and the Dartmouth College team was the beginning of women's attempt to learn the skills that the men utilized.

The Americans questioned attending the Games. The Summer Games at Berlin had brought displeasure and the S. S. Black Guard in the Bavarian Alps looked menacing. Heywood Broun, in a 1935 printing of the Nation, advocated a boycott of the 1936 Games. "Preserve the Olympic Ideal" was the title of a statement by the Committee on Fair Play in Sports in New York. Westbrook Peglar warned of the Fascist threat. The controversy did result in the failure of the skiing team to secure sufficient funds. However, the 1932 Games had survived the hardships of the Depression and the team continued their preparations.

Much credit must be given to the women who competed in the 1936 Olympics, for it was at Garmisch-Partenkirchen, Germany where women won the right to be on the slopes as equals to the men. The first women's Olympic ski team was selected to compete in the IV Olympic Winter Games. Thirteen women were on the team but three were injured before the Olympics and only four were permitted to race. The competitors were Mary Bird (Young), Helen Boughton-Leigh (McAlpin), Clarita Heath (Reiter Bright), and Elizabeth Woolsey. Alternates were Dorothy Brewer, Grace Carter (Lindley McKnight), Hanna Locke (Carter Caldwell), Marion McKean (Wigglesworth), Ellis Ayr Smith, Ethyllynne Smith (Law), Lillian Swann (Saarinen), Lilo Schwarzenbach, and Kathryn Ward.

The United States men on the 1936 team went to Europe as a group. The women stopped training in December, before the holidays. They met abroad and officially started to train January 2. For two weeks, intensive training was conducted at St. Anton-am-Arlberg, Austria. The names of the eight team members had to be submitted to the Olympic Committee on January 12 and the Games were scheduled for February 2-16, 1936. Therefore, during the two week training period, selections were being screened. Alice Damrosch Wolfe (Kiaer), Helen Boughton-Leigh (McAlpine) as captain and Thomas Dabney made the selection, which was then approved by the United States Olympic Committee. The list of eight, verified from numerous factual sources, in addition to Mary Bird (Young), Helen Boughton-Leigh (McAlpine) Clarita Heath (Reiter Bright), and Elizabeth Wooslay, consisted of Grace Carter (Lindley McKnight), Marion McKean (Wigglesworth), Ellis Ayr Smith, and Lillian Swann (Saarinen).

The ninety representatives mingled with more than one thousand athletes from twenty-eight nations and saw Hitler declare the opening of the IV Winter Games. As for the results, Elizabeth Woolsey was 19th in the combined, 14th in the Downhill, and 7th in the Slalom. The other three women on the United States team placed in the last bracket.

Following the Olympics, the team returned to St. Anton to prepare for the International Ski Federation race to be held at Innsburck in March. In order to determine the women who would race for the United States, the Olympic squad held a downhill and a slalom race. Grace Carter (Lindley McKnight), who had missed a month of Olympic training because of travel time, and Hannah Locke (Carter Caldwell) made this team. In addition, Helen Boughton-Leigh (McAlpin) Clarita Heath (Reiter Bright), Marion McKean (Wigglesworth), and Betty Woolsey were named to the 1936 FIS Team.

The story of the men's downhill set the stage: six broken legs, two fractured collar bones, and twenty-one DNF's out of fifty-seven racers; thirty paid heed to an announcement that any who wished to race did so at his own risk, and went touring. It was fifteen degrees above zero and the course was a sheet of ice.

When Alice found out the girls would have to run the same course as the men because it was too late to change the electrical timing, she had an order telephoned to the top forbidding her American team to race. This upset the officials enough to shorten the course by 500 yards . . . . .

Half of the women's field did not cross the finish line; all of the American women completed the course and none were injured. Betty Woolsey placed tenth.

Following representation in the 1936 Olympic Winter Games and International Ski Federation competition, women continued to display interest in the sport and racing. In 1938, the first women's national alpine meet was conducted at Stowe, Vermont; Marion McKean (Wigglesworth) won the downhill and Grace Carter Lindley (McKnight) won the slalom. Later that year at Reno, Nevada, Catherine Rodolph (Wyatt Wegeman) won the giant slalom title.

The years 1920 to 1935, the pioneer phase, have been called the "devotional period". The "big time" followed with the expansion of facilities and development of participation. Catherine Reed reported that in 1935, the first year of operation, seven thousand lessons were given; in 1936, the number rose to twenty-five thousand. Hannes Schneider came to the United States as a refugee in 1939 and in the winter season of 1939-1940, he took over what is now the Hannes Schneider Ski School at Cranmore Mountain in North Conway, New Hampshire.