



#101

George Newett

Born: 1856 Died: 1928

While George Newett did not ski, he was very much a ski fan and did everything in his power to publicize skiing whenever he had the opportunity.

The National Ski Association of America was founded in February 1905, at a meeting in Ishpeming, Michigan. George Newett, an American newspaperman and an influential editor-publisher of Ishpeming's *Iron Ore*, a leading weekly newspaper in Michigan's Upper Peninsula, was part of this meeting.

Newett was unique among the founders of the association in being the only American-born of the group. George, a blend of Scotch-English, was born in Janesville, Wisconsin, on October 6, 1856.

Newett was also unique in being the only non-ski jumper among the founding members. George had a dedicated love for the sport and his contribution was to promote and develop skiing by giving the sport its first prominence in American newspaper columns. However, he was named as a member of the first board of directors to serve the National Ski Association and became

recognized as "the man who Americanized the ski sport."

Newett also gained notoriety when he wrote a daring political editorial about Theodore Roosevelt while Roosevelt was campaigning for U.S. President in 1912 as part of the Progressive "Bull Moose" party. He made statements about Roosevelt's lying, cursing, and frequent drinking of alcohol. Teddy then filed a lawsuit against Newett, and in May of 1913, a trial was held in Marquette, Michigan. Roosevelt brought numerous character witnesses to Northern Michigan, who defended the twenty-sixth president's reputation. Roosevelt won the case and accepted a settlement of six cents!

Some years before his death in 1928, Newett compiled a History of the Ishpeming Ski Club, which now is a part of the National Ski Association records. He is listed among the men who struggled in the early days to create interest in a sport which today has become one of America's most thrilling outdoor winter activities. Newett was not only capable of writing the Ishpeming Ski Club history due to his profession, but he was an eye-witness – HE WAS THERE. He was there when the first ski club in the Lake Superior country and one of the first in the nation, The Norden, was organized in Ishpeming in 1887. He was there when the Norden Club gave its first public exhibition on February 25, 1888, the second on March 14 of the same year and the third on February 22, 1889.

After the second tournament in 1888, Newett, in the *Iron Ore*, wrote this about the man who sixteen years later became the first president of the National Ski Association: "Carl Tellefsen, a stranger employed in the Ishpeming National Bank, arrived too late to take part in the tournament, but he jumped 42 feet, 6 inches. He is an elegant rider who handles his skis gracefully and quickly."

Newett was also there when the first "Central" ski association was formed on January 16, 1891, in Ishpeming. He was listed as a "referee" in the tournament the following day. He also served as an official in the first two National Ski Association championship tournaments in Ishpeming in 1905 and 1906.

In his history of the Ishpeming Ski Club, Newett gave a colorful account of the ski-jumping sport from 1887 until World War I interfered with the sport in 1917. In the preface to the history, he wrote: "When Odin, one of the greatest of gods, went over the mountains to the north of Norway to dispose of the god, Thor, he wore skis. . . . Certain it is, that the ski has long been in use and its invention was due to necessity, it being worn for many years as a practical agent assisting in locomotion, before it was introduced in tournaments for the pleasure of users and spectators."

Of Newett, the late Harold A. Grinden, Duluth, Minnesota, former National Ski Association President, Secretary, and Historian, wrote: "The late George Newett was one of the pioneers in the ski sport and did much to create and develop interest in the early days. His writings add much light to the development of the ski sport in the pioneer days."

George Newett was elected to the U.S. National Ski Hall of Fame in 1970.

