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## Hannes Schneider

Born: 1890 Died: 1955

*Hannes Schneider was not only a competent skier by the age of eight, he was following a handful of Austrian ski pioneers who were trying to adapt Norwegian cross-country techniques to the steep Tyrolian slopes.*

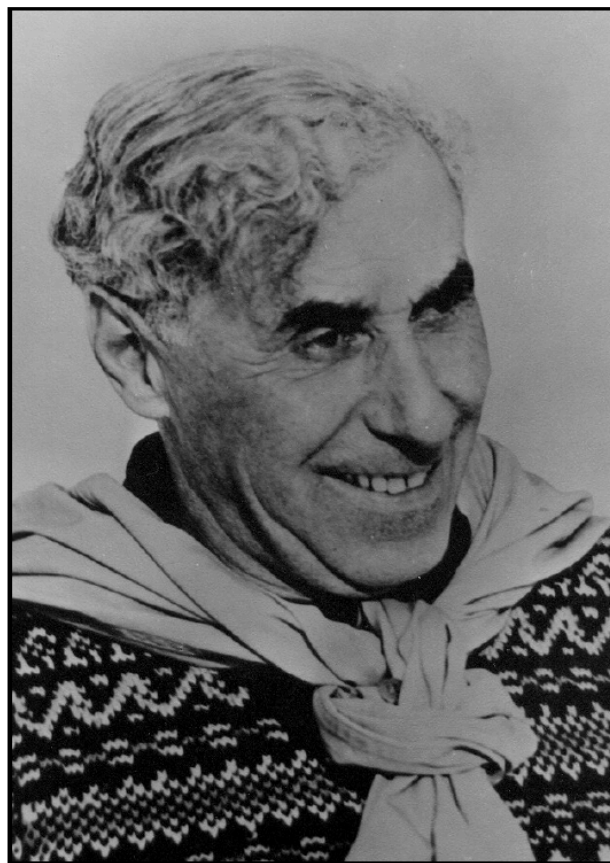
Johann Schneider was born in Stuben in the Austrian Tyrol in 1890. Shortly, he was being called Hannes. Beginning his skiing at age eight, he followed the attempts of a handful of pioneers to adapt Norwegian cross-country techniques to the steep slopes of the Alps. He was mentored by Victor SohmI, an experienced skier who was experimenting with new ways to turn.

By the time he was seventeen, Schneider was considered the most accomplished skier in the Arlberg and was engaged by the Hotel Post in St. Anton to instruct guests on skiing. After trial and error, he developed a system of teaching by progressive classes through slow turns on gentle slopes to high speed control. Soon, however, World War I broke over Europe and Hannes was conscripted. He was sent first to Russia and then to the Italian front where his system of constructive progression in teaching mountain troops was adopted.

Hannes returned to St. Anton in 1919 where his Arlberg teaching method evolved into an internationally famous ski school which was probably his greatest achievement. His method brought countless numbers of people throughout the world to learn and enjoy the sport of skiing. He was featured in several ski films which brought him further fame.

As his stature grew, he resisted pressure to join the Austrian wing of the Nazi Party which was rapidly gaining power in Germany. When Hitler invaded Austria, his school was seized and Hannes, in March 1938, was imprisoned. His release was effected almost a year later by Harvey Gibson, a New York banker who wanted to establish a ski school at Cranmore Mountain in North Conway, New Hampshire, his home town. Applying financial pressure to debt-ridden Germany, Gibson was able to negotiate the release of Hannes and his immediate family for travel to the USA. They arrived in North Conway on February 11, 1939. Several of Hannes' top instructors were already in the area, notably Benno Rybizka who, with the maestro's blessing, had set up the first sanctioned American Arlberg ski school, the Eastern Slopes Ski School, down the road in Jackson, New Hampshire. Harvey Gibson placed Hannes in charge of the new Cranmore area and brought Benno Rybizka over to assist, along with Hannes' son, Herbert. A one-of-a-kind uphill contraption went up at Cranmore. Called a Skimobile, it looked like a series of kiddy cars on a track. Slow but durable, it ran for more than fifty years, winter and summer.

As Hannes Schneider's school progressed, he became increasingly famous, an icon instructor whose methods were adopted at most prestigious ski resorts in the USA. For his scientific and structured approach to ski instruction, fostered by his books and movies, Hannes Schneider was elected to the U.S. National Ski Hall of Fame in 1958, the twelfth person so honored. He died on April 26, 1955, an irreplaceable loss to the sport of skiing.



*Hannes caught as he was doing a jump turn at Cranmore Mt., NH*