

#3 Aksel Holter

Born: 1873 Died: 1950

Aksel Holter was drawn into the movement to form a national ski organization and was one of the founders of the National Ski Association. He served as its secretary from its birth until 1919. It is said that the fledgling N.S.A. would have floundered in its infancy had it not been for Aksel's tireless devotion to it as an instructor, judge, and editor of the early N.S.A. Ski Annuals.

Aksel Holter was born in Oslo, Norway, in 1873, and immigrated to the United States as a young boy, settling first in Saint Paul, Minnesota, and later in Ishpeming, Michigan. Upon his arrival in Ishpeming, Aksel joined the Norden Ski Club, which a few years later became the Ishpeming Ski Club.

Holter worked closely with Carl Tellefsen who was considered the

"Father of Skisport in America," and George Newett, publisher of the newspaper *Iron Ore*. Holter considered the year 1900 as the year

Skisport was reborn. For a period of 10 years prior to this, skiing had been all but forgotten on an organized competitive level. Ishpeming had its share of top local ski runners including Charles Dudley, Olaf Holemo, Conrad Thompson, Tom Lokken, Peter Handberg, the Trosvig brothers, Tom Walters, the Hoyseths (father and son), Ole and Albert Oas and Simon Wahlman. In 1901, members of the Redwing Ski Club were invited to join the Ishpeming skiers as guests to stage an exhibition. It was successful beyond belief and the seed for rebirth had been sown.

Seven local men met in Carl Tellefsen's office in February 1904 – Carl Tellefsen, Fred Braastad, Ole and Albert Oas, George Newett, Eric Hoyseth, and Holter to discuss organizing as a national skiing body. The following year the National Ski Association was born, with Tellefsen the first president and Aksel Holter its first secretary. Aksel remained as the National Ski Association secretary until 1919. With Holter's tireless devotion to the organization, the NSA would have almost certainly floundered in its infancy,

particularly when the strike of the Professional skiers occurred in Ishpeming in 1906, nearly causing the NSA to fold. Aksel also served as the editor of the first *American Ski Annuals*.



Grinden Papers

Aksel H. Holter sent this photo of himself to Harold Grinden in February 1938.



Holter moved to Ashland, Wisconsin, in 1905, where he encouraged skiing in that area. He was instrumental in establishing a ski manufacturing facility in Ashland.

Holter founded the Ashland Hiking Girls' Club for his daughter and her friends, and it became one of Ashland's outstanding organizations, emphasizing high physical, moral, and spiritual values – the three primary forces in this fine man's life. Holter continued to be active as a ski instructor and judge.

Aksel Holter died in Ashland in 1950 and was elected to the U.S. National Ski Hall of Fame in 1956.