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Conrad Thompson
Born: 18 ____ Died: ?



Although Conrad Thompson was one of many excellent ski jumpers at the turn of the 20th century, what made him unique was that he was American-born when almost all other jumpers were Finnish or Norwegian.

The Ishpeming Ski Club was established on January 24, 1887, as the Norden Ski Club, the third organized ski club in the country – after the Nansen Ski Club of Berlin, New Hampshire (January 15, 1882), and the Aurora Ski Club of Red Wing (January 19, 1886). A year after its founding, the Norden Ski club changed its name to Den Nordiske (Nordic) Ski club to reflect its ethnic makeup and held the first formal tournament, on February 25, 1888. Business during club meeting was mostly transacted in Norwegian. The club prospered for a few years, after which jumping in the Midwest experienced a brief and unexplained slump in the mid-1890s.

With the arrival of the Finns, the name of the club was changed again, on April 18, 1901, to the Ishpeming Ski Club, under the leadership of Carl Tellefsen, (called “Father

of the American Ski Sport”) and a dedicated group of men: Albert and Ole Oas, George Newett, Conrad Thompson, Christ Peterson, Fred and Arvid Braastad, Anton Hansen, Lars and Eric Hoyseth, Ole Sundlie, Simon Wahlman, Thomas Lokken, and Aksel Holter. This was the first membership list of the Ishpeming Ski Club.

Conrad Thompson was one of the members who worked hard to form a national organization. Grand tournaments held all over the Midwest drew thousands of spectators, while Ishpeming Ski Club member George Newett wrote glowing articles on the meets which helped publicize the sport.

On February 22, 1904, the Ishpeming Ski Club held its 18th annual ski jumping tournament on the club’s Brasswire Hill. A large crowd estimated between 6000 and 8000 gathered to watch 200 athletes jump for prize money. Con Thompson, who had been coached by top jumpers Carl Tellefsen and Aksel Holter, beat out the competition with a jump in the eighty-foot range. His win of \$60 boosted Thompson into the professional class. He continued competing for the Ishpeming Club until 1909.

Although the National Ski Association was not formed until February 22, 1905 (thanks in large measure to the Aurora and Ishpeming Ski Clubs), some people consider Conrad Thompson to have been the first U.S. National Ski Jumping Champion for his first place win in 1904 – thus backdating history. An old photograph shows him sporting a double-breasted overcoat during one of his jumps.

Conrad Thompson was elected to the U.S. National Ski Hall of Fame in 1966.

