

#70

LeMoine Batson

Born: 1898 Died: ?

Starting with a pair of skis that were hand-hewn by his brother-in-law, LeMoine Batson learned the basics, and when one of his Norwegian pals sold him a pair of "store-bought" skis for a dollar, Batson was off to the races.

LeMoine Batson was born August 6, 1898, in Eau Claire, Wisconsin, and lived in the section of town where many Norwegians lived. This was an area of many hills including Mount Washington, where the National Ski Association's National Jumping Tournament was held in 1910. Too young to participate in this tournament, he did view it from a tree and really whet his appetite for ski jumping.

In the early days LeMoine's skiing was most difficult, since his mother was very much against his participation. His father was a logger and away from home during the winter, so getting any backing from his father was difficult.

His brother-in-law could see LeMoine's desire to ski and fashioned him his first pair of skis. They were far from perfect but did slide and were very much appreciated and used. By 1914 or 1915, he was able to purchase a pair of good skis from a Norwegian for a dollar.

In 1917, LeMoine began to participate in tournaments. One of his first tournaments was at Menominee, Wisconsin, where he won first place in the Boys' Division. However, this day nearly ended his fledgling career. The extra long standing jump was run after the regular tournament. The tracks had become faster, and as a result, he over jumped the landing and had a nasty spill. He slept for four days.

Eau Claire did not have a ski club in those days, the old club having folded years before. Even the scaffold had been torn down. Four local skiers rebuilt the scaffold and put on tournaments for several years. Proceeds were used to get these skiers to meets.

In 1921, he jumped on the Norge Hill for the first time. This was a hill Batson liked and always did well on. Up to this time, there were three classes: Professional, Amateur, and Boys' Class. In 1922, it was decided that skiing would become an Olympic Sport in 1924 at the first winter games, and the Professional Class was eliminated. Batson was chosen to tryout for this first Olympic Team and made it, going to Chamonix, France, to represent the United States. He also made the 1932 Olympic Team for the Lake Placid Olympics.

In 1925, LeMoine went to LaCrosse, Wisconsin, to go to college and joined the Westby Ski Club. While skiing for Westby, Batson won the Westby meet by equaling the hill record of 183 feet held by Anders Haugen in a meet in which Haugen was participating. He also won in Ishpeming, Michigan.

In 1926, the Central United States Ski Association was formed, and Batson acted as temporary chairman until a permanent president was elected. He also later served as president of the Central Division in 1939 and 1940, at which time slalom and downhill clubs were admitted. Under his administration the Central Division initiated ski schools for youngsters.

LeMoine Batson was both an athlete and an administrator. He was a very influential person in the Central Division, instituting training programs and was instrumental in seeing some of his programs instructed on a national level.

LeMoine Batson was elected to the U.S. National Ski Hall of Fame in 1969.

