

#82

Frederick August Pabst

Born: 1899 Died: 1977

Fred Pabst put the Milwaukee Ski Club on the map with an energetic ski jumping program that taught four hundred youngsters to jump.

Fred Pabst of the Big Bromley Ski Area, nestled in the foothills of Vermont's rugged Green Mountains, had an impressive skisport building career. The Milwaukee-born snow sports entrepreneur already was well established in Canada when the Milwaukee Journal in 1936 editorialized "Why Can't Wisconsin Have a Winter Resort?" Fred provided the answer by installing rope tows on nearby Wausau's Rib Mountain.

Rope tow installations by Fred came first to Canada, where he was among the early-day persuaders for special trains to carry customers to his snow sports resorts. Ski business began booming in North America.

When Pabst was 19 years old, he organized the Badger Ski Club at the University of Wisconsin and became instrumental in having a jumping scaffold constructed. He took the Badger Ski Team to Lake Placid, New York, where the squad's jumpers won honors in the Marshall Foch trophy tourney. This post World War I effort put Pabst on the ski trail. Although, for a time, he worked in the family brewery and helped make Milwaukee famous via business administration learned at Harvard University.

Fred placed the Milwaukee Ski Club on the map in 1925 with a junior program which taught ski jumping to over 400 youngsters. In 1926-27, he toured Norway, became a member of the Ski Club of Great Britain, and enrolled in the noted Hannes Schneider Ski School at St. Anton. From teaching ski jumping to youngsters in Zermatt, he rapidly advanced to participating in the downhill and slalom tests sponsored by the Ski Club of Great Britain. Soon there was no stopping him.

During the early 1930s, Pabst searched the western United States for possible ski area locations but finally settled on Ste. Sauveur, P.Q., Canada, in recognition of the self-evident principal that snow sports areas had to be within reasonable distance of population centers. His rope tow installations were on Hills 68, 69 and 70 in Ste. Sauveur, also Hill 60 in Ste. Marquerite. The areas were named in memory of World War I battlefields of the Canadian Expeditionary Force. He then joined other ski leaders to encourage scheduling of special snow trains from nearby Montreal. This was in 1935, but after one year Fred drifted back down across the border.

Next, rope tows were installed at Stowe, Vermont; Lake Placid and Ticonderoga in New York; Houghton and Iron Mountain in Michigan; Minneapolis, Minnesota; and others near Manchester. Renowned for his widespread use of J-bars and T-bars, he, at one time, owned and operated 17 different ski areas. He was overextended and most of them went broke. This conglomerate ski business soon created management problems too difficult even for the enthusiasm of Pabst, who in 1941 decided to place all his eggs in one basket at Big Bromley.

Thus the man who had been busy popularizing ski trains from Boston, New York and Chicago to depots close by his far-flung ski resorts soon centered his lecturing, advertising and promotion on the development of Bromley.

The East's first major snow-making operation was established at Big Bromley in 1965 by Pabst. It came in the wake of vast slope grooming and established Pabst as a king of "king of the hill." Few skisport builders can look back as far and colorfully as Fred Pabst. Inspired by the early-day Scandinavian emigrants into what became the Central Ski Association of the National Ski Association of America, Fred had the confidence, willingness and great skisport savvy to invest private capital for area development leading the way to growth and popularity of a sport he took to soon after learning to walk. It was a love affair all the way!

Fred Pabst was elected to the U.S. National Ski Hall of Fame in 1969.

