



PHOTO BY STILLMAN ROGERS

The New England Ski Museum has the evolution of skis among its displays.

## Ski Museum serves up history and memories

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### Franconia, N.H. -

The Cannon Mountain Aerial Tramway in New Hampshire's Franconia Notch carried some of America's first skiers to the top of the mountain, so its base is a fitting location for a museum dedicated to the history of downhill skiing.

The New England Ski Museum documents the sport with permanent collections of vintage equipment, skiwear and art, along with exhibits on the World War II 10th Mountain Division, the "ski troopers." Changing special exhibits focus on subjects that might range from the first ski trail to the current feature on the creation of the National Ski Patrol.

The museum's collections are presented in displays that show skiing not only from its technical aspect with the evolution of equipment, but from its aesthetic, nostalgic and even whimsical side. Skirts worn by the Women's Olympic team in the 1930s join historic skis and bindings in the displays.

Ski legend Hannes Schneider, visitors learn, had begun popularizing recreational skiing in the Austrian Alps even before his arrest by the Nazis and subsequent emigration to North Conway, N.H. His small following of European skiers were called schnee hasen - snow bunnies - and an artist created cartoon rabbits shown in one of the earliest

ski posters, surrounding Schneider on a mountainside.

In addition to the films presented with the current ski patrol exhibit, documentaries about ski history are shown continuously in the museum's theater. These films of early skiers remind viewers just how far the sport has come from the days of long, straight wooden skis to the turn-carving parabolic skis of today. And the clips of great - and not so great - racers are fun to watch.

America's first alpine ski trail was opened in 1933 at Cannon Mountain - it was created by a Russian Duke. And the Cannon Mountain Aerial Tramway opened in 1938 so skiers could ascend the mountain in 20 minutes instead of a climb of several hours. One of the original cars, replaced by much larger ones in 1980, is displayed outside the museum, within sight of the current tramway to make the size comparison even more dramatic.

For lifelong skiers, the museum is a trip down a memory trail; for non-skiers, it's an interesting look at New England history.

The New England Ski Museum, Franconia, N.H. ([www.skimuseum.org](http://www.skimuseum.org)), is located at the base of the Cannon Mountain Aerial Tramway. Open daily 10-5. Admission is free.

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