



RACING THE TECUMSEH SKI TRAIL



At the time of his induction to the National Ski Hall of Fame, the great ski writer Frank Elkins was described as having done “more than anyone else to interest the American public in skiing.” Elkins started covering the ski beat for the *New York Times* in the 1930s and kept on writing about skiing until his death in 1973. He was a fan of Waterville Valley. In his regular reports, he would assess where the snow quality was best, and Waterville Valley frequently came out on top. In an update on March 22, 1946, he says the best skiing in the East is to be found in two places: “Waterville Valley, beyond Plymouth in New Hampshire, and Pinkham Notch’s Mount Washington report the best skiing at the present time. Five feet of snow is to be found in the Waterville snow-hole, where the Tecumseh Trail rates as one

TITLE TESTS TODAY FOR WOMEN SKIERS

Strong Field Seen in Annual Eastern Downhill, Slalom and Combined Events

MISS FRASER IS FAVORED

Rivals at Waterville Valley Include the Misses Dent, Hodder and Gile

By FRANK ELKINS  
Special to THE NEW YORK TIMES.

WATERVILLE VALLEY, N. H., March 21.—Feature competition of the 1941-42 ski season for women in this part of the country is slated tomorrow when the United States Eastern Amateur Ski Association holds its annual downhill, slalom and combined fixtures under the auspices of the Black and Blue Trail Smashers of Lowell, Mass.

A small but strong array of speedsters was out early this morning trying to solve the problems offered by the challenging one-mile Tecumseh descent in the White Mountain National Forest which drops 1,450 feet and has a maximum grade of almost 42 degrees. The trail, one of the finest in the East, provides a stern test, and contestants also will have to combat the variable snow conditions there.

The course was quite fast today with alternate frozen granular and corn snow packing the run that has a depth ranging from forty-five to sixty inches.

Variable Snow Conditions

While skiers would be content to depend upon the conditions today in order to prepare the proper compounds for their hickory runners, the possibility of warm sunshine and rising temperature would provide slower and trickier running, requiring an entirely different wax job by tomorrow.

A new champion will be crowned in each phase of the title competition since Miss Dorothy Hoyt, mathematics teacher at Schenectady's Mont Pleasant High, winner of the three tests the past two years—an unexpected achievement—will not be on hand.

An injury has prevented her from doing much skiing this Winter following her splendid performance in the international races at Mont Tremblant.

Thus the odds favor a 17-year-old Woodstock (Vt.) High School girl, Miss Rebecca Fraser, who has scored in keen competition despite her youth. She surprised the ski world last year by placing third in the Harriman Trophy races held in conjunction with the F. I. S. meet at Sun Valley, then was third in the amateur phase of the nationals at Aspen.

Lead International Field

This Winter Miss Fraser annexed the Vermont slalom crown, placed second to Miss Marilyn Shaw, former national ruler, in the New Hampshire title race, then led an international field in guiding the American women's team to a brilliant triumph over a Canadian squad at Mont Tremblant.

While regarded as the likely winner, the Woodstock senior faces keen competition as several others figure to have excellent chances.

These include the 16-year-old Hanover High School representatives, the Misses Jean Dent, Polly Hodder and Jane Gile, who have been among the winners in the meets thus far.

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of the finest descents in this part of the country.” Then comes the bad news: “However, there are no ski lifts or rope tows serving this White Mountain National Forest area.”

Well, who needs lifts? The Tecumseh Trail, originally cut by the CCC in 1937, was a descent fine enough to inspire many to climb to the top just for the pleasure and challenge of going down. For over 20 years it was an important racecourse, sponsored by the Waterville ski club, the Black and Blue Trail Smashers, with an annual Spring competition that could make or break a young racer’s skiing career.

One such competitor was Rebecca Ann Fraser, who on March 22, 1942 had her opportunity to climb in the rankings. In his special report to the *New York Times*, Elkins predicted that “Miss Rebecca Fraser,” a 17-year-old from Woodstock, Vermont had the best chance to win the Tecumseh race, since the reigning champion, US Olympic team member “Miss Dorothy Hoyt”, was injured. The teenager did not disappoint, and her victory on Mt. Tecumseh vaulted her to the Eastern Division championship. The next year she went to Middlebury College, was captain of the women’s ski team there, and after graduation made the US Olympic Team. She participated in the 1948 Winter Olympics in St. Moritz, Switzerland.

The Tecumseh Trail Race was briefly revived by Tom Corcoran in 1966. It was the last time the trail would be without uphill lift access, with the mountain opening as a ski area the following year. Corcoran won the race, as did his wife Birdie in the women’s division. If you want to retrace the route, it can be followed like this, today: Starting near the top terminal of the White Peaks Quad, zoom down White Caps, Terry’s Trail, Old Tecumseh, Lower Periphery, and into the Pasture slope.

Maybe the Tecumseh ski trail is what inspired the idealized 1958 poster, at left, which blends Waterville Valley with Tuckerman’s Ravine.