Ottawa Ski Club

Encouraged by a strong Norwegian presence, the Ottawa Ski Club was formed in 1910 for the purposes of ski jumping and cross-country skiing. The first jumping tower was built in Rockcliffe Park, close to the heart of the city and Parliament buildings. Disbanded in the early years of World War I when many of its members enlisted, the club was re-organized and incorporated in 1919 with 19 members and $19 from membership fees.   C.E. Mortureux was the first president, and remained so for 27 years. The initial aim was to foster all disciplines skiing with cross-country skiing as the main focus. There were fewer ski jumpers but the sport was very popular with the public at large with crowds of up to 5,000 gathering on the outrun on the frozen Ottawa River.

The first Ottawa Ski Club jumping competition was held at Rockcliffe Park in 1912, and was won by local resident, Sigurd Lockeberg. Four thousand spectators attended the Canadian Championship hosted by the Ottawa Ski Club in 1914. Several jumps were constructed over time; all were eventually dismantled or collapsed. A rival ski club called Cliffside Ski Club was formed in 1919, spurring the Ottawa club to push even harder to be the best. In 1919, the founding year of the Ottawa Ski Club, another organization was also founded, the Cliffside Ski Club, that provided direct and friendly competition.

By the 1920s, most of the skiing activity in the Ottawa region was centred on the Gatineau hills north of Ottawa and, specifically, around what was to become the permanent site of the Ottawa Ski Club, Camp Fortune. From 1924-1932, a group called the Night Riders (lead by Joe Morin) using machetes, brush hooks, saws, axes and dynamite, cleared bush to provide an interconnecting network of cross-country trails linking a number of lodges. At its peak, there were 62 miles of trails although the network has been reduced in length

in response to current needs. As befits the name, the Night Riders toiled at night with or without the benefit of moonlight.

The first hill at Camp Fortune, known as Slalom, was cleared in 1932 in response to the growing demand for a new variation on skiing, alpine-style or downhill. As adherents to the emerging sport grew so did the realization that equipment used for cross-country was only marginally useful, and sometimes dangerous, for pure alpine skiing. New technological developments from Europe were revolutionizing alpine skiing, among them and to name but a few, were stiffer boots, cable bindings, metal edges on skis, and a number of often strange devices, most short-lived, to secure the heel firmly to the ski. It was not until 1940, that the first rope tow was installed on the Slalom hill. As alpine skiing grew ever more popular, visitors to the club's lodges became fewer with some of these facilities being moved to Camp Fortune itself. As the area's infrastructure expanded with improved access roads, public transportation, parking facilities, cleared slopes and more ski tows, so did the club's membership. In 1958, the club installed a snowmaking machine by John Clifford Ski Tows Company, a pioneer in its development.

The Ottawa Ski Club produced many Olympic hopefuls and even a medal winner. J. Landry, H. Bagguley, John F. Currie and J.P. Taylor, all OSC members, selected and trained by SR Lockeberg attended the 1932 Olympics Winter Games, Lake Placid, New York. Other OSC members selected to go to Olympic Winter Games included: Bud Clark in 1936 (Garmisch-Partenkirchen, Germany), Harvey Clifford and John Clifford (as an alternate) in 1948 (St. Moritz, Switzerland), Claude Richer in 1952 (Oslo, Norway) and Anne Heggtveit, Andy and Art Tommy in 1958 (Cortina D'Ampezzo, Italy). The 1960 (Squaw Valley, California) Games were attended by Nancy Holland, Gerry Gravelle and Anne Heggtveit who won Canada's first ever Olympic Gold medal in the Slalom event.

In 1948, Doug Carman and Verne Tant founded the Trail Riders. A new Lockeberg jump to replace an earlier structure was also built that year, and opened by Governor General Viscount Alexander. The jump would be rebuilt again in 1966-67 to conform to FIS (Fédération Internationale de Ski) standards. Two more ski jumps would be built, an intermediate jump in 1956 and Junior jump hill in 1960.

Bankruptcy forced the Ottawa Ski Club to disband and to be reformed in 1991 as the Fortune Ski Club. Its purpose was to carry on the tradition of competitive skiing at Camp Fortune. In 2000, the Fortune

SC reverted back to the name of Ottawa Ski Club. In 1994 the Fortune Race Academy was formed, also for the purpose of competition. The Fortune Race Academy and the Ottawa Ski Club merged, in 2006, to form the Camp Fortune Ski Club, which remains active today. To learn more visit: www.campfortuneskiclub.ca