

# Quebec's All-Time Ski-Area Inventory

Pierre Dumas has undertaken a project to identify every ski area and ski jump in the history of his home province. **BY JEREMY DAVIS**

COURTESY LAURENTIAN SKI MUSEUM



The Hill 60 Ski Tow, now closed, is just one of the 412 unique lift-served alpine ski areas that have operated in Quebec.



Skiers ride to the top of a rope tow powered by a car at Little Alps Hill, a defunct ski area in Ste-Agathe-Des-Monts.

**U**ntil 2017, the total number of ski areas that have historically operated in the Canadian province of Quebec was a mystery—one that Pierre Dumas has largely solved.

A lifelong skier and engineer, Dumas has always been fascinated with maps and Quebec's rich skiing history. Three years ago, he embarked on a mission to find all of the ski centers in the Laurentians. Once finished, he expanded the project to find every ski area and jump in the province. Using dozens of maps and lists, 30 regional newspapers, *Zoneski.com* posts, conversations with skiers and operators, *Canadian Ski Annuals* and site visits, Dumas now believes nearly every area has been identified. The oldest documents consulted include the *Canadian Ski Annuals* that began in 1923.

The result? Over the years, Quebec has had 412 unique lift-served alpine ski areas, 36 satellite sites to larger areas, 59 sites not served by lifts but heavily used by local skiers or for competitions, and nine areas that were closed and later absorbed into larger operations, for a total of 521 alpine ski sites. (Of those, 150 survive in 2017.) If you take into account 49 locations used for backcountry skiing, 88 jumps and 27 miscellaneous sites, the grand tally is 685 sites, past and present, where people have skied in one form or another.

In addition to a detailed database and summary chart (see page 13), Dumas has created a Google Maps file that

displays the exact location of each area. And as skiers have learned about the project, more areas have been found.

While the list includes many famous areas, such as Tremblant and Le Massif, others are far less known. These informal areas include places where "a farmer used to drive his tractor, take a wheel off, and run a cable up a part of the mountain he had cleared. All of the village would meet there during the weekends," says Dumas.

The earliest area to appear on Dumas' list is Big Hill in Shawbridge, which held the first slalom race in Canada on February 24, 1927. The area later became the site of the first rope tow in North America, owned by Alec Foster. (For more information, see "Loads of Fun on Ski and Snow" in the May-June 2017 issue of *Skiing History*.)

Some of the ski areas documented are certainly unique. One such area operated in Saint-Janvier, as told by Dumas: "In January 1948, there was an article about a hill with a ski-tow that would be inaugurated on the next Sunday, in Saint-Janvier. I asked the daughter of the owner, 'How could you have a ski hill in Saint-Janvier, where the highest drop is about four feet?' She told me that 'the river is carved in clay and the tow ran between our farmhouse and the riverbank!'"

Another Dumas favorite is the private ski area that has been operating since 1989 behind the owner's home in l'Annonciation. "The man bought an old T-Bar from Mont Allouette and installed it in his backyard," says Dumas.

"It's 600 feet long with a 130-foot drop. He goes out at night, lights up the hill, starts the six-cylinder Drumlin motor, rides up and skis down. Since he installed it 28 years ago, the motor has run almost 33,000 miles."

The most surprising discovery for Dumas was the sheer number of areas that existed in the farthest reaches of the province. It seems as if nearly every town had its own ski area. By way of example: While preparing his report for submission to the Laurentian Ski Museum, he noticed a "hole" with no ski areas between l'Annonciation and Mont-Laurier. He called the mayor of the nearest village, who informed him of a ski area there and another two in adjacent towns—upping his total by three.

While the project has taken years, Dumas has found the work to be rewarding. "Most of it is talking and communicating with people; that's my pleasure," he says. "The rest is to report, map and organize the information; that's my job. The result is a legacy; that's my reward."

In June 2017, Dumas installed his databank of 11,500 documents, photos, articles and maps at the Laurentian Ski Museum in Saint-Sauveur, to be available for public research. Eventually, the museum will develop a Website or exhibit to showcase this extensive work.

In the meantime, readers can view Dumas' detailed reports on the Laurentian Ski Museum's Website (in French) at <http://www.museuskideslaurentides.com/index.php?q=node/221>

*Three-time ISHA Award winner Jeremy Davis is founder of the New England Lost Ski Areas Project ([nelsap.org](http://nelsap.org)).*



COURTESY LAURENTIAN SKI MUSEUM

An early downhill trail at Lac Masson.



COURTESY PIERRE DUMAS

Lifelong skier Pierre Dumas has spent years documenting the ski areas of Quebec, past and present. The database is now available on the Laurentian Ski Museum's Website.

## Historical Directory of Québec Ski Sites

### Regional distribution

	alpine ski					other activities on skis						total
	with	without	total	still in	never	back-	ski	acrobatic	on	on	ski-	
	ski-lift	opération		opened	opened	country	jump	skiing	road	sand	joering	
<b>Northern Québec</b>	5	0	5	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5
<b>Abitibi-Témiscamingue</b>	8	1	9	3	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	10
<b>Outaouais</b>	33	7	40	8	1	0	5	0	0	0	1	46
<b>Laurentides</b>	179	30	209	29	3	3	28	7	0	0	2	249
<b>Lanaudière</b>	41	2	43	9	1	4	4	1	0	0	1	53
<b>Mauricie</b>	18	6	24	5	0	2	7	0	0	0	0	33
<b>National Capital</b>	28	3	31	13	0	6	13	3	1	0	1	55
<b>Saguenay-Lake-St-John</b>	28	1	29	10	0	2	5	0	0	0	2	38
<b>North Coast</b>	14	1	15	2	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	16
<b>Laval</b>	2	0	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
<b>Montréal</b>	8	5	13	0	0	0	8	1	1	0	0	23
<b>Montérégie</b>	24	1	25	11	0	1	4	0	0	0	2	32
<b>Québec Center</b>	6	1	7	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	7
<b>Eastern Townships</b>	20	5	25	7	1	2	4	0	0	0	1	32
<b>Chaudière-Appalaches</b>	12	1	13	8	1	2	6	1	0	0	1	23
<b>Lower St-Lawrence</b>	20	0	20	19	0	11	3	0	0	0	0	34
<b>Gaspé</b>	11	0	11	22	0	16	0	0	0	0	0	27
	<b>457</b>	<b>64</b>		<b>150</b>	<b>7</b>							<b>685</b>
			<b>521</b>				<b>49</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>11</b>
												<b>685</b>