After decades of controversy, women’s ski jumping became an official Olympic sport at the 2014 Winter Games, held in Sochi, Russia. That landmark event marked the end of a long struggle by women ski jumpers — a contentious struggle that had played out before the International Olympic Committee and in courts of law and public opinion in the U.S., Canada and other countries.

The efforts by the world’s women jumpers to gain official Olympic status was highly publicized in the news media. But few people knew that the long and winding road to Sochi ran through Maine.

In 1996 the Chisholm Ski Club hosted the first-ever International Women’s Ski Jumping Championships at its Black Mountain venue in Rumford. It marked the first time that a women’s championship had been held under official auspices.

This year marks the 20th anniversary of that milestone on the road to Sochi — and a perfect opportunity to tell that story.
Founded in 1995, the Ski Museum of Maine is a 501(c)(3) charitable organization established with the mission to celebrate and preserve the history and heritage of Maine skiing. The Ski Museum exhibits artifacts, photographs, artwork and documents at its location in Kingfield, conducts educational programs to ski clubs, schools, libraries, historical and civic organizations, and hosts social events and activities throughout the year.

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From the president ...

Maine women have always been in the vanguard of the sport and business of alpine and Nordic skiing. I’m proud to count myself among them, having been one of the first female ski area general managers and first female president of Maine’s ski trade association, Ski Maine Association.

A popular adage states: “Behind every good man is a good woman.” As my professional career launched in the 1970s, this adage flipped subject and predicate to become: “Behind every successful woman was a great man.” My mentors included Harry Baxter, Sugarloaf general manager, H. Devereaux “Dev” Jennings, executive director of the Ski New England Group, and Bill Hoffman, radio ski-reporting personality.

I’ll be forever grateful to them for teaching me the ins and outs of ski area management and marketing. I can only hope that along the way, I have influenced the next generation of ski industry leaders, both male and female.

We should all reflect and give thanks to those in our personal and professional lives who helped us to achieve success and fulfill our dreams both on and off the trails and slopes.

I hope to see many of you in person this March 26, when the Ski Museum of Maine and the Bethel Historical Society present a special program on women’s history. It’s titled Sisters of Skade: Women in Maine Skiing 1870-2016. (Details on page 11.)

Wende Gray
President, Ski Museum of Maine

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High-flying pioneers

On Tuesday, February 27, 1996, readers of the Lewiston Sun-Journal learned about a history-making event at Black Mountain in Rumford:

“Pioneers aren’t easy to find these days, but 20 of them convened to make sports history at Black Mountain of Maine Monday. These iron-willed competitors weren’t the Daniel Boone type of pioneers — the coonskin cap-Kentucky rifle type — but they were trailblazers in every way. They were female ski jumpers, and their ground-breaking forum was the United States Ski Association Women’s Jumping Championships, the first officially scored women’s jumping event ever.”

Although reporter Sean Moores misstated the official name of the competition — it was the Women’s International Ski Jumping Championships as officially recorded on the medals and other documents — he was correct about the pioneering.

It was a landmark event in the history of ski competition that helped establish the legitimacy of women’s ski jumping at a time when its Olympic status was still very much in doubt and far in the future, according to Becky Mauch, a co-organizer of the tournament. Mauch served as the chairwoman of the Advisory Committee for Ski Jumping for Women of the United States Ski Association, Nordic/Jumping Division.

Mauch had a son and daughter who jumped with a hometown ski club in Eau Claire, Wisconsin. Most of the competitors in Rumford came to jumping the same way: A father or brother jumped and got them into the sport. Most were from the Midwest, the only region of the U.S. that still has a large ski jumping fraternity. Eau Claire is a center of activity; the city has hosted a ski jumping tournament since 1886.

Mauch’s ultimate goal was to create a separate division for women jumpers under the USSA auspices, and to press the International Olympic Committee to include women’s jumping competitions in the winter games. At the time, advocates for women’s ski jumping hoped to gain admittance to the Olympics in 2002, which would be hosted in Salt Lake City. They were turned away. Ditto in 2006 and 2010. Women’s ski jumping finally made it into the Olympics in Sochi, Russia, in 2014.

To be sure, women had jumped occasionally and unofficially before the Rumford championships, but always as junior tag-alongs at events otherwise dominated by men. Black Mountain hosted the first-ever all-women’s event under the official rules and auspices of the USSA. The previous year an exhibition women’s tournament had been held in Canada, which served as a prototype.
**Austrian Luster**

Despite the official title, “women” was a bit of an exaggeration and “international” was also a slight stretch. The competitors were mostly teenage girls from the U.S. and Canada. The oldest, Austrian Eva Ganster, the only competitor from outside North America, was 17. Despite her age, Ganster already had an international reputation as a champion ski jumper.

Ganster’s well-publicized prior achievements added luster and prestige to the Rumford championships. In 1991, at the age of 12, Ganster had finished first in an Austrian national competition, beating all the boys in her age group. As an official adult entry in 1993 she placed third. In the 1994 Olympics in Lillehammer, Norway, she was chosen as a pre-jumper — think forerunner.

Chisholm Ski Club provided the venue and a team of trained volunteers to run the event, continuing a long tradition of hosting ski competitions that dated back to the 1920s. In the mid-1990s the club was in the midst of a significant revitalization campaign. Danny Warner, sparkplug of the revitalization, was the chief organizer of the 1996 championships.

The proverbial snowball got rolling in May of 1995 when Warner traveled to Park City, Utah, for annual conference of USSA Nordic officials.

Warner recalls: “In the jumping meetings, women’s jumping was one of the topics. My good friend from Lake Placid, Larry Stone, had moved out to Park City to start up a ski jumping program using the new facilities that had been built to get the Olympic bid for 2002. “He had a small stable of young girls, with Lindsay Van being one of them. Other divisions also had similar programs going as well. The Central Division had a real good group of young ladies skiing and the East had a small field at some events. In Europe the Austrians and Swedes were letting girls jump. And Canada as well. Larry had been to a ladies exhibition in Austria.

“A lady from the Midwest, Becky Mauch, was heading up an informal women’s movement for the U.S. girls. We got to talking and I told her that I thought our club would host a for-women-only competition in Rumford. So I
brought up the idea at Chisholm, saying that the U.S. should be first at something — and not wait for the Europeans to do it. And that’s just what we did. The rest is history.”

**Supportive host**

Chisholm Ski Club fully supported this pioneering competition, and Aurele Legere — the reigning patriarch of Chisholm’s jumping community — was among the most enthusiastic. Every Sunday he could be found at the Black Mountain jumps, maintaining the towers and the landing zones, and he made sure that everything was in tip-top condition for this championship. And Legere was amply rewarded.

Warner recalls: “When the women arrived for training before the competition he had the hills in wonderful shape. We had good snow. We had just started putting tracks in by hand with a template made out of four pieces of wood when the Austrian gal (Ganster) and her coach and mom came up to the site to take a few practice rides. I was thinking as to how lucky we were to have her come to Maine. “Her coach looked thing over, nodded his approval, and up the tower she went, and all the other ladies at the site gathered on the side of the hill to watch. Her legend had preceded her. I think Aurele was bit nervous as she pulled out of the start. Down she came in a perfect in-run position. Off the end she came and out over her skis, hands to her side and chin up searching for air like she was floating with no effort. She landed about 60 meters. Quite a first ride.

“I looked over at Aurele and he grinning from ear to ear. A well-made jump relieved the pressure. All his hard work over the years came to a head. As the weekend wore on there were many more grins!”

Ganster dominated the competition, followed by Allison Carroll, who hailed from Calgary, Alberta, Canada. Third was Karla Keck, from Oconomowoc, Wisconsin.

Allison Carroll, a Canadian ski jumper, took second place.

Karla Keck, of Oconomowoc, Wisconsin, was third.
In retrospect, the top name was Lindsey Van, a 12-year-old who hailed from Park City, Utah. Years later Van would emerge as the top U.S. woman, with innumerable victories to her credit. Van was also a leader of the group of highly vocal athletes who incessantly pushed the International Olympic Committee to admit women’s ski jumping to its roster of competitions. At age 30, Van finally got her wish, jumping at the 2014 Olympic Winter Games in Sochi, Russia.

Editor’s Note: The superb photos by Rob Curtis that appear on the cover and pages 5-7 are courtesy of the Lewiston Sun-Journal. We wish to thank chief photographer Russ Dillingham and reporter Scott Thistle for their efforts in retrieving them and making them available to the Ski Museum of Maine.

Showing perfect form, an unidentified competitor at the 1996 Women’s International Ski Jumping Championships heads down the in-run of the 65-meter hill.
Women’s History Month created both need and opportunity for an innovative collaborative program that will be presented to the public in Bethel on March 26 -- and all over the state for many years to come.

The program is titled “Sisters of Skade: Women in Maine Skiing 1870-2016.” Skade is an ancient Norse goddess who is closely associated with hunting, mountains, winter and skiing.

The primary partner is the Ski Museum of Maine. The Bethel Historical Society will play host and provide assistance. The event will take place at the Bethel Inn.

“Sisters of Skade” comprises two parts. Scott Andrews, the Ski Museum’s research director, will give a PowerPoint talk on the subject of women in Maine skiing from its inception in the late 19th century through the present day. About 60 historic photos, spanning a spectrum that ranges from recreational skiers to competitive champions, will be shown. Andrews’ narrative will provide thematic unity.

In Maine, women’s participation in the sport runs the gamut from ordinary to extraordinary, a theme that will repeat throughout the evening, says Andrews. The first section of the talk, titled “Oyster Stew, Apple Pie and Background Music,” will look at ordinary women who made a major, positive impact on the sport via traditional women’s roles. By contrast, “Fast Flying Females” will recount some of the world’s most extraordinary athletes and their connection to Maine.

According to Andrews, one highlight of the talk will be Maine’s role in advancing the cause of women’s ski jumping, the cover story of this current issue of Snow Trail. It was a topic that generated headlines and lawsuits in the early 2000s when advocates tried to convince the International Olympic Committee to include women’s jumping in the Winter Games. The women were repeatedly rebuffed by the IOC until they finally earned their right to jump in the 2014 Sochi Olympics.
Andrews notes that a long and tortuous road preceded that landmark event. One of the early positive milestones was the International Women’s Ski Jumping Championships, hosted by Maine’s oldest ski club and held in Rumford in 1996. One of those 1996 competitors, Lindsey Van, later emerged as the principal voice for women’s ski jumping; still later she was one of the American women who jumped in Sochi.

The second part of the program will be a panel discussion featuring women leaders -- both past and present -- in several fields of the sport and industry of skiing. Panelists will include high-profile championship skiers and snowboarders as well as women whose work behind the headlines drives Maine snowsports forward.

The list of panelists is still being finalized. At press time the list includes Julie Parisien, Nikki Pilavakis, Leslie Miller and Barbara Schneider.

“Sisters of Skade” began when Randy Bennett, executive director of Bethel Historical Society, asked Ski Museum president Wende Gray whether a women’s history program could be assembled. The two organizations have collaborated on numerous occasions.

It’s a natural fit. Bethel is Maine’s busiest ski town, home to two alpine and three Nordic ski resorts. In the past two years the Kingfield-based Ski Museum has created a number of public events in Bethel to increase awareness and boost membership. The Ski Museum is looking to enlarge its footprint in the town with the goal of opening an annex in the near future. The Ski Museum’s goals jibe with Bethel Historical’s plans to ramp up its public profile during its 50th anniversary year.

“Bethel Historical Society has had a Women’s History Month program for at least 10 years, with an emphasis on the experiences of Maine women,” explains Bennett. “We felt that a program that focused on women in Maine skiing would be both obviously interesting and new and fresh.”

Gray, a Bethel woman who has been involved in the Maine ski industry for decades, concurred.

“Maine women have always been in the vanguard of the sport and business of alpine and Nordic skiing,” says Gray. “The ‘Sisters of Skade’ lecture and follow-on discussion will be the foundation for the Ski Museum’s continued research and promotion of these Maine women’s accomplishments.”

Andrews adds that the program perfectly aligns with the Ski Museum’s core mission.
“One of our central tenets at the Museum is that skiing is an essential, integral element of Maine’s culture and economy, from the beginning to the present,” Andrews explains. “So to re-examine Maine’s 146 years of skiing history and re-tell it from the woman’s point of view will prove to be both enlightening and enlivening.”

The panel discussion will be video-recorded by the historical society and made available through both organizations’ websites.

Gray and Andrews note that this March’s women’s history program will be the prototype for others in the future, and that the Ski Museum plans to offer it around the state for many years to come.

(See advertisement on page 11 for details.)

**Thanks to the following for their sponsorship of “Sisters of Skade.”**

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Women in Maine Skiing 1870-2016
Fireside Chat & Panel Discussion

Presented by
The Ski Museum of Maine and Bethel Historical Society
in celebration of Women’s History Month

Saturday, March 26,
4:30-6:30 p.m.
at the Bethel Inn

FREE
All are welcome
www.skimuseumofmaine.org
‘Show and share’ is theme of April 16 Skee Spree

Show your memorabilia and share your memories: Those are the twin themes of an upcoming event at Sunday River that benefits the Ski Museum of Maine. Slated for April 16 at Barker Mountain Lodge, Skee Spree is an important fund-raiser that supports the Ski Museum’s mission to preserve and present our state’s 146-year heritage of skiing and snowboarding.

“The Ski Museum looks forward to opening a branch in the Bethel area,” says board president Wende Gray. “This event will help to raise money toward that goal. Plus it’s an opportunity to acquire historic ski equipment, apparel, photographs, documents and other items that skiers may wish to donate.”

Although Skee Spree is scheduled for late in the season, Gray notes that it’s the time of year when ski chalets, lodges and condos are being cleaned out.

“It’s a golden opportunity that we don’t want to miss,” she says.

Ski Museum board members and volunteers will set up displays of historic photos and equipment at Barker Mountain Lodge at 8 a.m. Barker was Sunday River’s first building. The original portion opened to skiers on December 19, 1959.

A silent auction, slated to run between 8 a.m. and 1 p.m., will offer dozens of items, including tickets and passes for summer cultural and sporting events. A live auction will be conducted at 2 p.m. The top item will be a $3,000 Bic-Earth stand-up paddleboard, complete with paddle and PFD, donated by Kittery Trading Post.

Barker Mountain Lodge was the first building constructed at Sunday River Skiway. Shown above is the original portion of the building in a view from the 1960s. (Courtesy Sunday River Mountain Resort)
2nd Annual Skee Spree
Saturday, April 16th, 2016

Barker Mountain Lodge
Sunday River Ski Resort

8 am- 1 pm Show Your Memorabilia & Share Your Memories
8 am- 1 pm Silent Auction
2 pm Live Auction

www.skimuseumofmaine.org ~ (207) 265-2023
The Ski Museum raised nearly $11,000 in two events over a four-day span last month.

The Ninth Annual Maine Ski Heritage Classic, held at Sugarloaf, netted $8,600, while the Sonny Goodwin tribute celebration, held in Camden, added another $2,200 to support the Ski Museum’s mission of preserving and celebrating our state’s rich heritage of skiing and snowboarding.

Approximately 100 people attended the Heritage Classic, which began in the base lodge and later moved downhill to the Sugarloaf Inn.

The annual Heritage Classic is the Ski Museum’s most important fund-raising event. This year it has a new chairman. Gerry Thompson, Ski Museum vice president, has assumed responsibility.

At Camden about 80 people turned out to honor Orman “Sonny” Goodwin, a longtime supporter of the Snow Bowl. (His contributions to the town’s skiing community were detailed in the most recent past issue of the Snow Trail.) The celebration began at the Snow Bowl itself and later moved to the Waterfront restaurant, hosted by owner Sam Appleton.

Ski Museum president Wende Gray was pleased with the results. “Our winter fund-raising events have exceeded our expectations thanks to the enthusiastic support from our loyal Sugarloafers and the burgeoning support from the Camden Snow Bowl community,” she said. ✿
**Business partners**

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Memberships are an important part of our ability to sustain the Ski Museum. Please support generously. Please either go to our website at www.skimuseumofmaine.org or use the application below and send to:

Ski Museum of Maine, P.O. Box 359, Kingfield, ME 04947

Name: _____________________________
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Would you like to become a Ski Museum Volunteer? Let us know how you would like to help:

- [ ] at events
- [ ] be a Saturday host at the museum
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- [ ] $250 • SMoM logo coffee mug
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- [ ] Additional Donation: $ ___________

**Mission Statement**

“To celebrate and preserve the history and heritage of Maine skiing.”
March is Women’s History Month!

See cover story and “Sisters of Skade” article on pages 8-10 inside.

Roberts Farm Preserve, a 165-acre property in Norway that is owned and maintained by the Western Foothills Land Trust, is the venue for many schoolboy and schoolgirl cross-country ski competitions. Above is the start of a girls race hosted by the Oxford Hills Middle School. (Brewster Burns photo, courtesy Western Foothills Land Trust)