

## Romig Hill Ski Slope

### Estimated Dates of Operation

*February 1957 to March 27, 1964*

### Why did the Ski Slope Close?

Unfortunately, the Romig Hill Ski Slope's demise was due to the "Good Friday Earthquake," which occurred on March 27, 1964. With a magnitude of 9.2, there was a significant amount of damage to virtually all areas of Anchorage. The massive earthquake, essentially, caused all the land in Southcentral Alaska to subside, changing the layout of Chester Creek and the base of the Romig Hill Slope. According to *A neighborhood planning program for Anchorage, Alaska, 1965-1970*, "The Romig Hill ski slope has not been used since the earthquake because the foot of the slope is now subject to flooding during high tides." This statement is further confirmed by a West High School alumni, Paul Crews. In 1964, Crews was a Freshman in high school, and he notes that the hill's popularity decreased immensely after the earthquake. Crews further elaborates on the severity of the tide change by stating that "there were icebergs that would drift under the trestle of the Rope Tow," and the bottom of the hill was "a land of icebergs."

### West Chester Lagoon

In 1964, the popularized West Chester Lagoon that is now utilized for ice skating and other recreational activities, was not existent. In the Lagoon's place was the outflow of Chester Creek, making the environment similar to modern-day Fish Creek Estuary. So, the slope of Romig Hill previously extended onto the tidal flats that are now underwater. This 1964 aerial photograph of Anchorage clearly shows Chester Creek's outflow into the Inlet.

Moreover, if you look at the bottom right-hand side of the photo, you can also see the Student Parking Lot at West Anchorage High School. Opposite of the parking lot, and on the other side of Hillcrest Drive, you may notice a slope that is cleared of trees. That slope is Romig Hill Ski Slope. Slightly to the right of the slope, you may notice another, even smaller area cleared of trees, that was a parking location used for the slope.

In 1977, the entire appearance of Chester Creek's outflow changed. Instead of a continuous creek



(Spotlight Anchorage, 1964, Anchorage Museum, B1969.006)

that flowed towards the water, the city dammed the creek, and constructed a Lagoon in its place.

Additionally, as you can see from the modern-day photo to the right, the Lagoon now covers the entirety of the tidal flats. Also, within the aerial photo, I labeled the locations of both the Romig Hill Ski Slope and a popular parking destination that is now paved over to offer an outlook of the Lagoon. Further, you can see the location of West Anchorage High School in relation to the slope.



Google Maps, West Chester Lagoon, 18 Aug 2020.

## Who built the Romig Hill Ski Slope?

The creation of Romig Hill Ski Slope most definitely took cooperative effort. Specifically, Romig Hill was “cleared and developed through cooperation of the city, the Spenard Public Utility District, the Anchorage Independent School District, the Kiwanis, and the Mt. McKinley Lions” (“Romig Hill Ski Slope Begins Operations Tonight.” Anchorage Daily Times, 30 Nov. 1960, p.12). Also, there was a significant amount of assistance and labor from Sgt. Ray Beam and staff from Special Services at Ft. Richardson, Anchorage Jaycees, and Spenard and Fairview Public Utility District.



(Christine M. McClain. Christine M. McClain Papers, APU/UA Consortium Library, #HMC-0370, Box/Folder: 6/16, Item 33-35. Romig Hill ski slope ski class.)

## Facilities

### *Portable Rope Tow*

The first rope tow located at Romig Hill Ski Slope is from the historic City Ski Bowl, which was in operation from 1917 to 1957. Unfortunately, that ski area is no longer present. In 1952, the Alaska Native Service Hospital’s construction on the superior part of the ski hill made the popularity of the site dwindle. In 1997, the hospital was torn down, and the “Alaska Native Medical Center” was relocated to a different location six miles away. Fortunately, after the hospital’s construction, the rope tow at the City Ski Bowl remained in place for five more years, allowing for small ski events to occur. Yet, in 1957, the portable rope tow was relocated to the Romig Hill Slope location. Essentially, this created a new City Ski Bowl and provided skiers with an accessible skiing slope. But, this portable rope tow was only on Romig Hill Ski Slope for a short period of time. The first documented use of the portable rope tow on Romig Hill was February 12, 1957, and the rope tow was only used on the slope (excluding seasons that experienced a lack of snow) until October of 1958.

## *High-Speed Rope Tow*

Noting the increasing popularity of the ski slope, on October 15, 1958 there was a request for a different rope tow to be installed on the hill. Instead of a portable rope tow, the request called for a high-speed rope tow to be permanently installed on the ski slope. The Greater Anchorage Chamber of Commerce received this request, but were not immediate in their response. Other variables were present, such as the estimated \$2,000 + dollars that the Rope Tow would cost to install. One week later, the Anchorage Chamber approved the request, but there were some new regulations present. To repay the loan, they implemented a \$0.50 rope tow fee for adult skiers and planned on keeping the fee for a minimum of two seasons. On January 16, 1959, three months after the initial request, the high-speed rope tow had successfully been installed. The rope tow took roughly three days to correctly install in the hill, completed by the Arctic Valley Ski Area manager, Sgt. Ray Beam, along with multiple soldiers. But, it is noted that the rope tow did not start operating until a safety bar was positioned around the 30 horsepower motor, which ensures everyone's safety utilizing the tow. Roughly a month later, on February 7, 1959, the Parks and Recreation director, Miss Alice E. Moffat, announced that the Romig Hill Ski Slope rope tow was in operation. The Rope Tow spanned approximately  $\frac{2}{3}$  of the hill, as it is noted that the Romig Hill Ski Slope is 600 feet long, and the rope tow had a length of roughly 400 feet. To this day, the high-speed rope tow remains on the hill. Although the posts have fallen over, and the rope tow is covered in snow and leaves, its remains are still present over 60 years later.



(Steve McCutcheon, McCutcheon Collection; Anchorage Museum, #B90.14.5.Sp7.136. Sp Ski Romig Hill February 1963 Skiing 25 January 1968.)



The photographs to the left are what remains of the Rope Tow. Although the pole has fallen, there are still apparent, tangible remains of the tow. After 60+ years, the tow has remained in roughly the same location on the slope. So, there's no doubt that the rope tow visible in the historic photographs is the same tow that currently lies amongst the leaves.



## Warm-up Hut

According to past documents, there was a Warm-up hut at the Romig Hill Ski Slope. Although its remains are missing, you can imagine that it would be necessary during the cold, Alaskan winters. With evidence from past documents, the warm-up hut was heated and located at the hill's top, West side. According to Paul Crews, a local skier in the area at the time, the hut was very small. Crews even described it as having the resemblance of a shack, rather than an actual hut. Also, they had a small concession stand in the hut, often containing items such as Coffee and Tea. Further, the Mt. McKinley Lions (a local club), had a vital part in constructing the warm-up hut, as seen in the 1959 Newspaper article excerpt to the right.

W. J. Wellenstein, past president of the Mt. McKinley Lions, picked up the award for the club, which sponsored the Little League and Pony League and a ski school for youngsters.

Other projects of the club were a sight conservation program, the warm up hut for the Romig Hill ski slope, donations to the Alaska Crippled Children's Assn. and a blood bank, scholarships and contributions to the foreign exchange student program.

Anchorage Daily Times, STAFF ed., 25 Aug. 1959, p. 9, NewsBank; Access World News - Historical and Current, info@newsbank.com/apps/news/documents-view/?p=WORLDONE%20S&docid=753A14454275A04DAA79540E&NX-NB-1658E3B40B677B0A75402456806-16F83F55A860H0027408-16F38AB000D2740.

## Parking

There were multiple parking locations in the area. Primarily, you could use the West Anchorage High School student parking lot; or park on top of the hill. As you can see from the photos to the right, the shrub is significantly younger on the top of the hill, than the hill's slope. The smaller foliage growth on the slope's top is because the area used to be utilized as a parking location, which would give skiers easier access to the hill. After the ski hill fell in popularity, individuals still utilized the parking lot for other purposes. According to *A neighborhood planning program for Anchorage, Alaska, 1965-1970*, the top of the bluff still offered Anchorage residents "an accessible place to enjoy the fine view of the city and inlet," and "with picnic tables and benches this site could be utilized by picnickers and sightseers." Further, parking was available to the side of the hill as well. Now paved over, the old parking area offers an overlook of the lagoon to modern-day Anchorage citizens.

## Public Address System

On December 12, 1959, Alice Moffat, a city parks and recreation director, decided that the Romig Hill Ski Slope would open for the winter season. In the brief newspaper article, she states some facilities that would be available. Among these facilities, she mentions a public address system. Although no other documents mention this PA system, it's possible that it was only used for a short period of time. I feel that a PA system

Top of Hill



Slope of Hill



Anchorage Museum of History & Art. Library & Archives.

(AMRC. Ward Wells Collection. Anchorage Museum of History and Art. Library Archives 1959)



of this sort would have been a great contribution to the slope, as it would be very beneficial if any announcements were necessary.

### *Illumination lights/Flood lights*

During the years that Romig Hill Ski Slope was operated, it is mentioned that there are illumination lights in the area. Although no documents specifically reference the location of the lights, various photos hint that they might have been attached to posts on the outer edges of the slope.

### **Approximate Location**

Coordinates - 61°12'09.6"N 149°55'08.2"W

Romig Hill Ski Slope is located to the North of West Anchorage High School student parking lot, to the East of Wildwood Lane, and to the West of a small outlook outside of West High School. If you desire to visit the slope, the easiest access is from a small trail that connects to the outlook. The slope goes down towards the water's edge and was previously measured 600 feet, prior to the 1964 Earthquake, and the flooding of West Chester Lagoon.

Modern-day, the hill is no longer used for downhill or cross country skiing. Yet, two trails on the hill stayed somewhat maintained due to public use. These dirt trails are now utilized for other recreational activities

during both the winter and summer. The hill now offers a good sledding location for young children, as well as a place for pedestrians to walk their dogs. Additionally, West Anchorage High School still utilizes the slope for cross country running workouts. Due to the fact that the hill is very steep, the West High XC team often takes advantage of the hill. The photos to the right demonstrate the location of Romig Hill Ski Slope. It's very evident that the slope has had a substantial amount of foliage growth. The red lines indicate the modern-day trails that make up



(Steve McCutcheon, McCutcheon Collection; Anchorage Museum, #D90.14.5Sp7.137. Sp  
Ski Romig Hill 20 February 1963 Ski 28  
February 1969.)



Google Maps, Hillcrest Drive, 18 Aug 2020.



the slope, creating a shortcut between Hillcrest Drive and Wildwood Lane.

Google Maps, Hillcrest Drive, 18 Aug 2020.

### Who Operated the Tow?

The rope tow was operated by John Trautner, who was employed by the city of Anchorage as Area Ski Manager of Romig Hill. He performed this task for multiple years. According to the *Anchorage Daily Times*, Dale Kellerblock (a ski instructor) was also employed to operate the Rope Tow. Still, there is no additional information concerning whether or not he actually performed this task. Yet, Trautner's role on the slope did not last forever. On November 25, 1961, a newspaper article was released stating that Romig Hill needed a new skiing supervisor because John Trautner was inducted into the army.



(Spotlight Anchorage, 1964, Anchorage Museum, B1969.006.3.152)

### When was the slope open?

February 12, 1957 - November 30, 1959

*Weekdays from 7:00 p.m - 10:00 p.m.*

*Weekends/Holidays from 1:00 p.m to 5:00 p.m.*

December 1, 1959 - November 29, 1960

*Weekdays from 7:00 p.m - 9:00 p.m.*

*Weekends/Holidays from 1:00 p.m to 5:00 p.m.*

November 30, 1960 - March 27, 1964

*Weekdays from 6:00 p.m - 9:00 p.m*

*Weekends/Holidays from 1:00 p.m to 5:00 p.m.*



(Steve McCutcheon, McCutcheon Collection; Anchorage Museum, #B90.14.5.Sp7.134. Sp Ski Romig Hill 20 February 1963.)

### Attendance per Season

5,000 to 15,000 people used the slope over the course of a winter season. The use of the slope was free of charge; however, the use of the Rope tow was not.

### Price of the Rope Tow

February 12, 1957 - October 21, 1958 - Free of Charge



October 22, 1958 - November 30, 1959 - **\$0.50** for Adult Skiers

December 1, 1959 - November 29, 1960 - **\$0.25** for Children (High Schoolers and younger) and **\$0.50** for Adults.

November 30, 1960 - March 27, 1964 - **\$0.50** for both Children and Adult Skiers.

*The gradual increase in prices here is due to multiple reasons. Primarily, maintaining the condition of the tow, heating the warm-up hut, and providing electricity to the illuminated facility was expensive.*



(Steve McCutcheon, McCutcheon Collection; Anchorage Museum,  
#B90.14.5.Sp7.135. Sp Ski Romig Hill 20 February 1963.)



## **Anchorage Daily Times Timeline of Romig Hill Ski Slope (February 12, 1957 - February 2, 1962)**

February 12, 1957

- The “City Ski Bowl” on Romig Hill was open each evening 7 to 10 p.m and on the weekends from 1pm - 5pm.
  - There was no charge for the ski hill
    - Facilities included a portable tow, floodlights and a warm-up hut.

January 18, 1958

- First recorded use of the hill for students.
  - Anchorage High school uses the hill as a practice run for all of the members of the ski team. (States that students were packing down the snow in anticipation of the ski practices).
- Noted that the hill is not in great condition due to the lack of snow.
  - Although the city normally maintained a portable tow, warm-up hut and flood lights they did not provide these aids due to the lack of snow.

- According to Miss Alice Moffet (city park and recreation officer) the city would provide the facilities if there were at least 12 more inches of snowfall in the particular area.

- Art Allen (Anchorage High school winter sports director) states there will NOT be skiing classes instructed at the highschool this year. But, the school decided that they will, indeed, sponsor the ski team (& four student hockey teams). These teams were composed of “a Freshman team, a Sophomore Team, a Senior Team, and the A Club Team.” (“Tall Eagles Defeat Fired - U” Anchorage Daily Times, 18 Jan. 1958, p. 14).
  - Use of Ski Hill is open to the public.
    - The High School Ski team utilizes the Romig Hill Slope to practice.



Anchorage Daily Times, 18 Jan. 1958, p. 14. NewsBank: Access World News - Historical and Current, [infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=WORLDNEWS&docref=image/v2%3A14454275A04DAA79%40EANX-NB-16ECE9579698B114%402436222-16EB959972055112%408-16EB959972055112%40](http://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=WORLDNEWS&docref=image/v2%3A14454275A04DAA79%40EANX-NB-16ECE9579698B114%402436222-16EB959972055112%408-16EB959972055112%40)

- The Anchorage High School team is supposed to compete with Juneau High School in March, 1958. Students will be competing in events such as cross country, and downhill events (Slalom).

October 15, 1958

- Previously, Romig Ski Hill had a portable rope tow for the citizens of Anchorage to use; however, with the hill's rising popularity, a request was made for a high-speed rope tow to be installed on the hill.
  - Estimated to be approximately 2,605 dollars (roughly \$23,000 adjusted to modern inflation) The Greater Anchorage Chamber of Commerce delayed the request in order to evaluate the costs involved.
    - An idea was brought about that the loan could be repaid over the course of 1 to 2 years if they implemented a 50 cent tow fee (roughly \$4.5 adjusted to modern inflation).

Action on a request by the Greater Anchorage Chamber of Commerce for \$2,605 for completion of a high speed rope tow for the Romig Hill ski area was delayed until the next meeting to allow further study of the costs involved. It was brought out that the \$2,605 loan could be repaid in one or two years by a 50-cent tow fee for adults.

Herbert Stern president of

Anchorage Daily Times, 15 OCT. 1958, p. 14.  
NewsBank: Access World News - Historical and Current,  
info@newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=W  
ORLDNEWS&docref=image/v2%3A14454275A04DAA7  
9%40EAXN%NB-16ED114D807A091C%4022436492-16  
EC94B8DA88F45C%4014-16EC94B8DA88F45C%40

October 21, 1958

- Official City Council meeting that discussed the improvements of Romig Hill met 8:00 on October 21, in the Z. J. Loussac Library.

October 22, 1958

- The Chamber of Commerce approved the request for a loan of about \$2,000 for the construction of a high-speed rope tow at Romig Hill Ski Area.
  - Planned to repay the money by collecting a 50 cent tow for adult skiers for two seasons.

January 16, 1959

- Robert Renkert (Chamber ski committee chairman) stated that Romig Hill Ski Slope is in need of more snow and proposed that a snow machine would take care of the dilemma.
  - Machine estimated to cost around \$3,000 to \$5,000 (works in freezing temperatures).
    - Robert Renkert stated that "Right now Romig Hill could use it," and that "the wind made the snow hard and there are some bare spots." ("Anchorage Needs A Snow Maker" Anchorage Daily Times, 16 Jan. 1959, p. 1).

**Anchorage Needs A Snow Maker**

Anchorage, largest city in the land of ice and snow, needs a snow machine.

At least, this is what the Greater Anchorage Chamber of Commerce directors were told today.

Robert Renkert, Chamber ski committee chairman, said more snow is needed on the Romig Hill ski slope and suggested a snow machine to take care of the problem.

Such a machine would probably cost between \$3,000 and \$5,000. It funnels compressed air and water together through nozzles. It works in freezing temperatures.

"Right now Romig Hill could use it," Renkert said. "The wind made the snow hard and there are some bare spots."

He also reported that the tow has been installed on the slope but that it will not be put into operation until a safety bar, to keep skiers from the 30 horse power motor, is also put in place.

He gave credit for installing the tow to Sgt. Ray Beam, manager of Arctic Valley, and several soldiers who spent three days putting in the tow.

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- Robert Renkert further announced that the Rope Tow has been installed on the Romig Hill slope, but that the tow will not be operating until a safety bar is placed around the 30 horsepower motor.
- Sgt. Ray Beam (manager of Arctic Valley) along with several soldiers spent approximately three days installing the Rope tow.

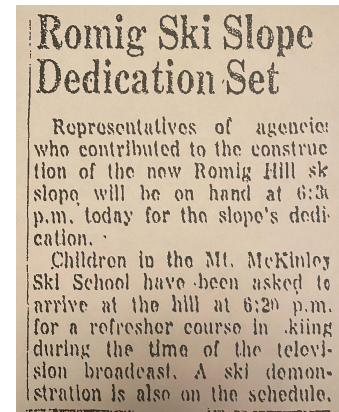
Anchorage Daily Times, 16 Jan. 1959, p. 1. NewsBank: Access World News - Historical and Current, infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view/?p=WORLDNEWS&docref=image/v2%3A14454275A04DAA79%40EANK-NB-16ED12C0F36242E4%402436585-16EC94C099643736%40-16EC94C099643736%40.

February 7, 1959

- According to Miss Alice E. Moffat, the Romig Hill Ski Tow is now in operation (after finishing the necessary safety devices).
  - The Romig Hill Rope Tow will officially be in operation on weekdays from 7 to 10 p.m and weekends from 1 to 5 p.m.
  - With completion of the tow, there is now a 50 cent charge for adults - people who are out of highschool - and no fee for the children.

February 14, 1959

- At the Greater Anchorage Chamber of Commerce directors meeting, Robert Renkert announces that the Romig Hill Ski Area will be dedicated on Tuesday evening.
  - Program begins at 6:45 p.m & is televised.
  - Kip Hiddleston (Chamber president) is supposed to serve as master of ceremonies.
    - Children that attended Mt. McKinley Ski School, and other representatives of units that contributed to the Ski Slope will partake in the event. Also, they planned a ski demonstration.
- Development of the Ski Area undertaken by the Chamber of Commerce with the help (both funds/labor) of multiple organizations listed below.
  - Mt. McKinley Lions, Sgt. Ray Beam and staff from Special Services at Ft. Richardson, City of Anchorage, the school district, Anchorage Jaycees, and Spenard and Fairview Public Utility District.



Anchorage Daily Times, 17 Feb. 1959, p. 7. NewsBank: Access World News - Historical and Current, infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view/?p=WORLDNEWS&docref=image/v2%3A14454275A04DAA79%40EANK-NB-16ED5AC59344D3DB%402436617-16EC4B2099845F3%40-16EC94B2099845F3%40-16EC94B2099845F3%40.

April 24, 1959

- Miss Moffat approximates that the season's attendance at Romig Hill Ski Slope was 5,000 people.

December 1, 1959



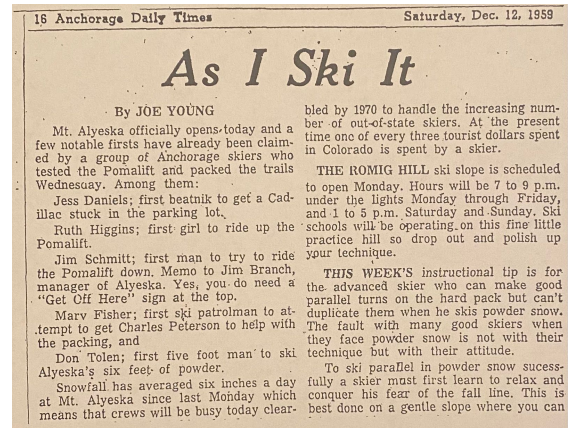
- Alice Moffat (Parks and Recreation Director) announces that the Romig Hill Ski Tow is going to be put into operation if snow falls during the week.
- "Tow is located near Hillcrest Drive north of the Anchorage High School" ("Ski Tow May Operate Soon on Romig Hill." Anchorage Daily Times, 1 Dec. 1959, p.10).
- Dale Kellerblock is employed to operate the Rope Tow. Kellerblock has previous experience with skiing, as he's been a ski instructor since the year 1944. (No evidence if Kellerblock acted upon this role).
- Fee will be \$0.50 for adults and \$0.25 for children
- Tow is going to operate from 7 - 9 p.m. on weekdays and 1-5 p.m on weekends and holidays.

December 12, 1959

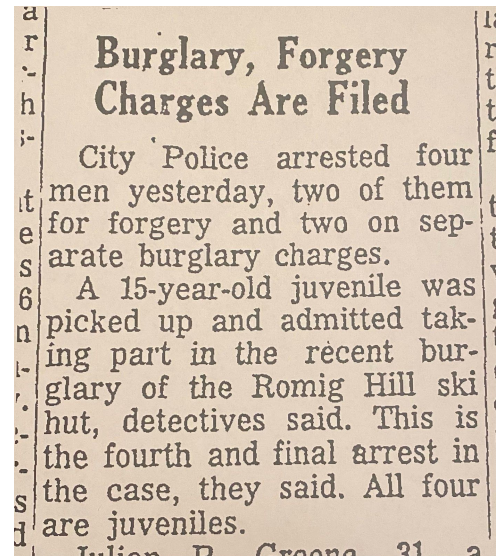
- Miss Alice Moffat announces that due to the sufficient amount of snow that has fallen, the Romig Hill Ski Slope will open December 13 at 1:00 p.m.
- Facilities at the slope include a Rope Tow, a small food/drink concession, warm-up hut, public address system, and illumination lights for night skiing.
  - Schools will be utilizing the practice hill.
- Throughout the Christmas Holiday season, the Romig Hill Ski Slope is open for the full periods daily.
- Tow is to be operated by John Trautner (Employed by the city of Anchorage as Area Ski Manager of Romig Hill), who performed the same task the year before.
  - For each operation period, tow fees are 25 cents for highschool students and younger, and 50 cents for adults.

January 5, 1960

- Anchorage City Police arrested 4 men on January 4, 1960. Among those individuals, a 15 year old "admitted to taking part in a recent burglary of the Romig Hill Ski Slope hut." ("Burglary, Forgery Charges are filed" Anchorage Daily Times, 5 Jan. 1960, p.5).
  - This person was the last arrest in the burglary case, which consisted of three other adolescents.



Anchorage Daily Times, 1 Dec. 1959, p. 10. NewsBank:  
Access World News - Historical and Current,  
info@newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?pr=V  
ORLNEWS&docref=image/v2%3A14464275A04DAA7  
9%40EANK-NB-16F8E78459E09989%402436904-16F8  
18E59E53A895%40.



Anchorage Daily Times, 5 Jan. 1960, p. 5. NewsBank:  
Access World News - Historical and Current,  
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January 27, 1960

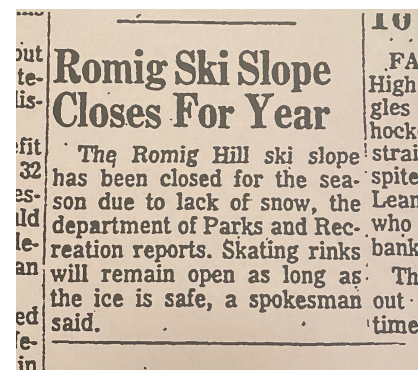
- Gary King's Ski School plans to offer physical education to the junior high school and high school in skiing.
  - Courses begin February 8 for the High School students, and the classes start the succeeding week for the Junior High School. The courses are approximately one week long, free of charge, and the ski instructors provide ski equipment.
- The Ski School will additionally begin slalom classes each Sunday at 2:30 p.m. (these classes will also be free of charge)
  - The first three place winners each week receive medals.
    - Before the weekly slalom races, instruction is offered by the coaches and following the races the instructors provide critique.
- Located to the right is a Gary King Ski School advertisement from the 1961 *Anchorage Daily News*.



Anchorage Daily Times, 29 Sept. 1961, p. 20.  
 NewsBank: Access World News - Historical and Current,  
 infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?pw=ORLNEWS&docref=imagesv2%3A14454275A04DAA79%40EANK-NB-16ED58172420746F%402437572-17EC959CCD9A96E3%4019-16EC959CCD9A96E3%40.

March 14, 1960

- The Department of Parks and Recreation reports that the Romig Ski Slope is closed for the year due to a minimal amount of snow in the area.



Anchorage Daily Times, 14 Mar. 1960, p. 1. NewsBank:  
 Access World News - Historical and Current,  
 infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?pw=ORLNEWS&docref=imagesv2%3A14454275A04DAA79%40EANK-NB-16ED58172420746F%402437572-17EC959CCD9A96E3%4019-16EC959CCD9A96E3%40.

November 30, 1960

- Romig Hill Ski Area opens at 6 p.m.
  - "Located on Hillcrest Drive across from the Anchorage High School parking lot, the comparatively small, but easily accessible ski facility is expected to provide weekend and evening skiing for approximately 20,000 people this winter." ("Romig Hill Ski Slope Begins Operations Tonight." *Anchorage Daily Times*, 30 Nov. 1960, p. 12).
- It is reported that in the last season (December 12, 1959 - March 14, 1960) more than 15,000 skiers used the hill.

- The Spenard Lions hold free skiing lessons each Saturday afternoon that the slope is in operation.
  - Hans Metz Ski School and John Trautner instruct adults and children who use the facility.

- December 7, 1960



- The Gary King Ski School will have instruction at Romig Hill.
  - Ownership of the school has switched over to John “Butch” Sohrweide.
- Romig Hill will have skiing mentorship from the Gary King Ski School on weeknights.
  - Sohrweide estimates that roughly 1,200 skiers will undergo lessons from the Gary King Ski School this winter season.
    - Reportedly, the Gary King Ski School will operate at various locations this year. This includes Elmendorf’s Hillberg Ski Area, Arctic Valley, and Fort Richardson’s Dyea Slope.
- Hans Metz Ski School will also offer instruction at the Romig Hill Ski Slope. The Hans Metz Ski School is run by Hans Metz, who has been a ski instructor for many years.
  - Along with working with two other military slopes, Metz got approval to instruct at Romig Hill.

October 10, 1961

- A building materials firm and four generous contractors contributed materials/equipment towards the improvement of Romig Hill Ski Slope.
  - The main goal of improvement was to construct a better beginners’ ski hill, while simultaneously making preparations “for draining a hillside spring which causes icing on the ski slopes” (“Ski Slope Improved. Contractors Donate Workmen, Materials.” Anchorage Daily Times, 10 Aug. 1961, p. 6).
  - “Caughran Excavating Co. donated the use of a tracked tractor and two operators” along with “a loader and operator.” (“Ski Slope Improved. Contractors Donate Workmen, Materials.” Anchorage Daily Times, 10 Aug. 1961, p. 6).
- On behalf of city engineer Robert Smith, the Romig Hill Ski Slope “is the start of a longer and better ski run, which may be completed next year.” (“Ski Slope Improved. Contractors Donate Workmen, Materials.” Anchorage Daily Times, 10 Aug. 1961, p. 6).



Anchorage Daily Times, 10 Oct. 1961, p. 6. NewsBank: Access World News - Historical and Current, info@web.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view/?p=WORLDNEWS&docref=image/v2%3A14454275A04DAA79%40EANX-NB-16ED581E468DB916%402437583-16EC95A32215C805%405-16EC95A32215C805%40

November 25, 1961

- Alice Rhoden, a Parks and Recreation Director, states that Romig Hill Ski slope is ready to open, but that she cannot seem to find a supervisor for the Rope Tow.
  - Previously, John Trautner was the supervisor, but Trautner was recently inducted into the army, so he was unable to perform the task.
- Rhoden states that “we are looking for a man or woman over 21 who is an experienced skier to supervise the tow and the slope”



("Need Skiing Supervisor." Anchorage Daily Times, 25 Nov. 1961, p. 6).

December 15, 1961

- Apparently, there was a heat wave in Anchorage, as all the ski slopes are now reopening due to previous warm temperatures and rain.
  - Romig Hill Ski Slope opened December 14, for the first time after the bad conditions brought by the temperatures.

December 20, 1961

- To the right is an excerpt from the *Anchorage Daily Times*, displaying Gary King's Ski School operations on the Romig Hill Ski Slope.

Gary King Ski School operated at Romig hill from 12:00 p.m to 5:00 p.m on Dec. 26 - 30. Only beginner classes were held at the slope, and only children ages 7-14 years old were allowed to attend. The ski school was a 5 day lesson/supervision, and the admission price was approximately \$40.00. The first three days of the ski school were held at Romig Hill, while the last two were held at Arctic valley.

Anchorage Daily Times, 20 Dec. 1961, p.13.  
Newsbank: Access World News - Historical and Current, infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=WORLDNEWS&docref=image/v2%3A14454275A04DAA79%40EAX-NB-16ED1C33891F8272%402437655-16ED1ABA9C5533AE%4013-16ED1ABA9C5533AE%40

December 21, 1961

- Below is an additional excerpt from the *Anchorage Daily Times*, displaying Hans Metz Ski School operations at various ski slope locations.

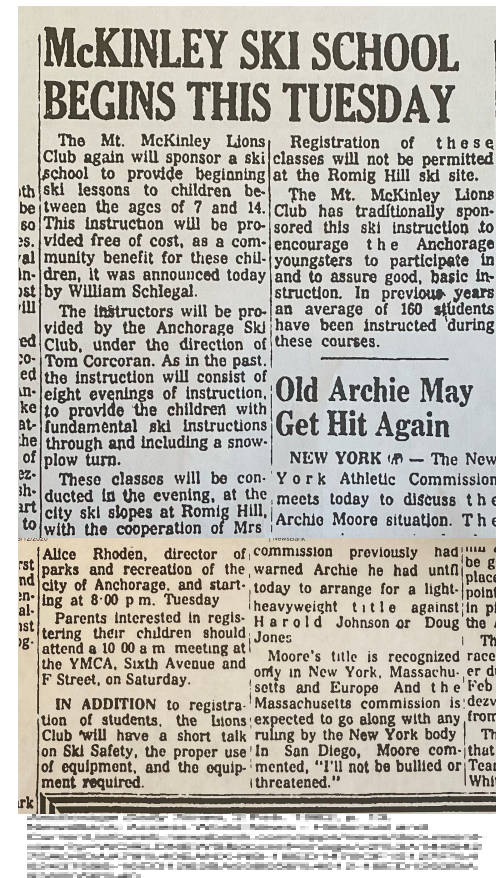
Anchorage Daily Times, 21 Dec. 1961, p. 14. NewsBank: Access World News - Historical and Current, infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=WORLDNEWS&docref=image/v2%3A14454275A04DAA79%40EAX-NB-16ED1C33891F8272%402437655-16ED1ABA9C5533AE%4013-16ED1ABA9C5533AE%40

Although it does not specify the exact times in which the school operated at the Romig Hill Ski Slope, the excerpt clarifies that you would attend the school from December, 26 to December 30 for the price of \$20.00. Over the course of this 5 day period, an individual would attend half-day lessons. The Hans Metz Ski School further operated at various locations. This includes the golf course in Forest Park (located at the current Atwood Residence), Romig Hill and Arctic Valley.



February 2, 1962

- The Mt. McKinley Lions Club also operated on the Romig Hill Ski Slope.
  - Lessons were free of charge, and instructors were contributed by the Anchorage Ski Club, under the main authority of Tom Corcoran.
  - Lessons took place over the course of 8 evenings, and provided the children with an abundance of fundamental knowledge regarding skiing technique.
    - It is noted that roughly 160 students have been previously enrolled and instructed in these courses.
- If one desired to register their children for the ski school, they would do so at the old YMCA location, on 6th Ave and F St.
- Further, the Mt. McKinley Lions Club “has traditionally sponsored this ski instruction to encourage the Anchorage youngsters to participate in and to assure good, basic instruction.” (“McKinley Ski School Begins This Tuesday.” Anchorage Daily Times, 2 Feb. 1962, p. 13).



*Below is an aerial photograph of West Anchorage High School in 1959.*



Anchorage Museum of History & Art. Library & Archives.



## Romig Hill Ski Slope Artifacts

(AMRC, Ward Wells Collection, Anchorage Museum of History and Art, Library and Archives 1959)

### *Numismatics*



Above is a small collection of coins excavated from the Romig Hill Slope site and the surrounding area of the bluff. The pennies, ranging from the dates 1951 to 1964, demonstrate the slope's popularity throughout all years of use. There were two different types of pennies located from the site, Lincoln memorial pennies and wheat pennies. Both coins have defining characteristics, which make it quite simple to identify the specific type of penny. The wheat penny, made by the U.S mint from 1909 to 1958, is slightly different from the common pennies circulated today. On the reverse side of the penny, two stalks of wheat line the sides of the penny, and the middle of the coin contains the words "One Cent," underlined with "The United States of America."

Additionally, the Lincoln memorial penny is easy to identify, and contains the popular Lincoln memorial on the penny's reverse side. The Lincoln memorial penny was produced from the U.S mint from 1959 to 2008 until it was replaced by the Lincoln Bicentennial one cent, which has an evident shield on the back. Both the wheat penny and the Lincoln memorial penny are identical on the coin's obverse side, which displays Abraham Lincoln facing left.

Moreover, if you take a closer look at a penny, you will notice that most of them have a letter marked on the obverse side underneath the date. This displays which mint location the pennies were made. The three United States Mint Facilities in which pennies are produced are

either 1. D (meaning the coin was minted in Denver), 2. S (meaning the coin was minted in San Francisco), or 3. No mint marks (which displays that the coin was made in Philadelphia).

Furthermore, both wheat pennies and Lincoln memorial cents consist of roughly the same amount of copper (95%). However, October 22, 1982 the material that Lincoln memorial pennies were made of changed drastically. Instead of the 95% copper that the penny previously consisted of, the U.S mint began producing pennies that were made primarily out of zinc, and coated in copper. Since 1982, the Lincoln memorial pennies have been made of 97.5% zinc, and only 2.5% copper.

### *Other Artifacts*

Pictured to the right is the top of a can excavated from the Romig Hill Ski Slope. Unlike familiar, modern-day cans, you can see the odd, hour-glass impression made by a pull tab on the top of the can. In simple terms, a pull tab is a metal tab used to open a can/container effectively. Yet, surprisingly, pull tabs have only existed for a relatively short amount of time. This hour-glass shape is only present in the first pull tab that was ever invented. Known as the “zip-top tab,” this pull tab was invented in the year 1961. As seen in the photos below, I also located zip-top tabs on Romig Hill. These pull tabs look quite different from modern pull tabs, which are recognized by their two holes through them. The zip-top pull tab spiked in popularity in the early 1960s, but its end came to a short halt in 1965. Due to complaints regarding the pull tab’s sharp edges, the zip-top tab was replaced with the pull ring, characterized by a large, accessible loop that was easy to pull.



Zip Top Pull Tabs excavated from Romig Hill Ski Slope

Additionally, while metal detecting the area, I found a key. As you can see in the photos to the right, the key is in relatively good condition. With some research, I found out that the key went to an OEM Ford 1957-1964 ignition & glove box lock. This key is from the hill's original time period, and it's likely that an individual lost their key while they were skiing on the slope.



Furthermore, other items were located on the slope, such as aluminum beer cans. Pictured here is a Coors Banquet from 1959. If you take a closer look at the images, you may notice that there is no pull tab present at the top of the can. As I stated previously, pull tabs did not become popularized until the early 1960s. In place of a pull tab, people would use an item known as a “church key can opener,” which would create a whole on either side of the can, allowing airflow and easy drinking. But, oftentimes, adults would not have a church key opener available, so they would use other accessible items that were capable of opening the can. As seen in the can below, it is evident that a church key was not utilized, so it's possible that a fork was used in its place.





### Other Artifacts *continued*

Located to the right is a metal stake that I excavated from the Romig Hill Ski Slope. After analyzing the remains of the Rope tow on the site, I realized that the stake was actually a part of the tow. As seen in the Rope Tow below's remains, the tow was previously attached to the post with four metal stakes. One stake remains in the post, while the other three stakes have fallen off.



Further, I located the artifact to the right near the bottom right of the slope. Initially, I was unsure of what the object could be. Yet, after some additional analysis, I believe there's a possibility the object could be a broken end of a ski basket. Typically, ski baskets are circular and attached towards the end of a ski pole to prevent the pole from going too far into the snow.



### Other Artifacts *continued*

The photo to the right displays the bases of two lightbulbs that I found on the slope. Everyone knows Alaskan winters are particularly dark, and since the slope was primarily open during the night, illumination lights were necessary. So, it's possible that these lights were used to help illuminate the area. On the other hand, there's a chance that these lights were used in the surrounding structures, such as the warm up hut.



Also, while metal detecting, I located two metal zippers. The first practical zipper was constructed in 1917, but was only utilized for rubber boots. Yet, as advancements in the technology continued, the zipper soon became popularized in an abundance of other clothing. By 1940, metal zippers had overtaken the, once popular, “button fly fastening” on men’s trousers. Now, instead of buttons, zippers were located on dresses, coats, bags, shoes and more! Due to this item’s rapid increase in popularity, it is not surprising that I located multiple zippers on the slope. Fortunately, the zipper on the left has an identification mark on it. After cleaning off the zipper, I found the word “JOLAN” printed on the obverse side. With some

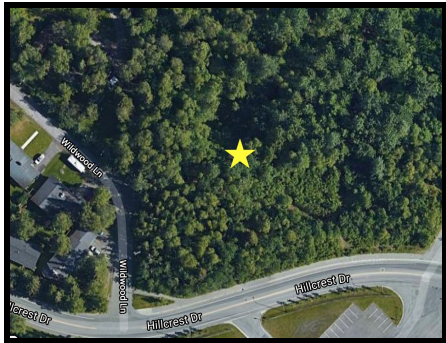


additional research, I found out that *JOLAN* was once a popular purse brand during the 1950s and 1960s! This dates perfectly to the time range of Romig Hill Ski Slope. Unfortunately, someone’s zipper broke 60 years ago, but that unlucky circumstance provided me with some history of the slope. Although we’ll never know why the zipper broke, it’s fun to imagine all the possibilities that could have taken place. After all, maybe a child aggressively opened their parent’s bag for some coins to buy a snack at the warm-up hut.

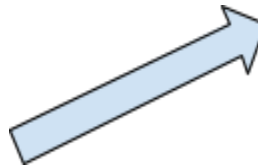


## Other Structures

Aside from the Rope Tow, there are additional remaining structures on Romig Hill Ski Slope, such as this wooden post to the right. This post is located on the top right side of the slope, slightly North East of Wildwood Lane. If you take a closer look at the post, you may notice the metal brackets that are attached. Although there is no photo evidence of what these brackets could have held, I'm assuming they took part in holding either the public address system or illumination lights mentioned previously. The yellow star below demonstrates the location of the post on the slope.



Google Maps, Hillcrest Drive, 12 Nov 2020.

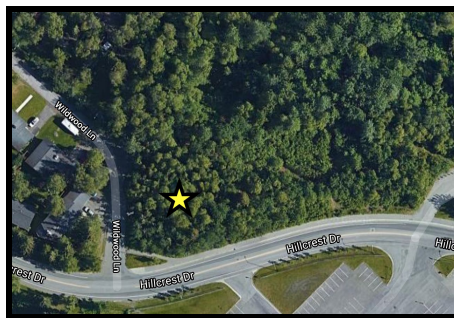


Electrical Wires



(Steve McCutcheon, McCutcheon Collection; Anchorage Museum, 0B90.14.5.Sp7.137. Sp Ski Romig Hill 20 February 1963 Ski 28 February 1969.)

Furthermore, there was another wooden post located in the trees on Hillcrest Drive and Wildwood Lane. Yet, this post appears to have been used entirely for electrical purposes, as the top of the post has old, cut electrical lines. As depicted in the photo to the above right, electrical wires were going across the top of the slope. I'm presuming that this post provided electricity to areas of Romig Hill (i.e the warm-up hut or illumination lights). While visiting the slope, I looked for the other wooden post on the opposite side of the hill, but there was no post existent. There's a possibility that construction in the area could have removed it. The location of the old, electrical post is marked by the yellow star below.



Google Maps, Hillcrest Drive, 12 Nov 2020.





## Modern-Day Site Photographs

*\*Photo Locations Marked by a Yellow Dot\**

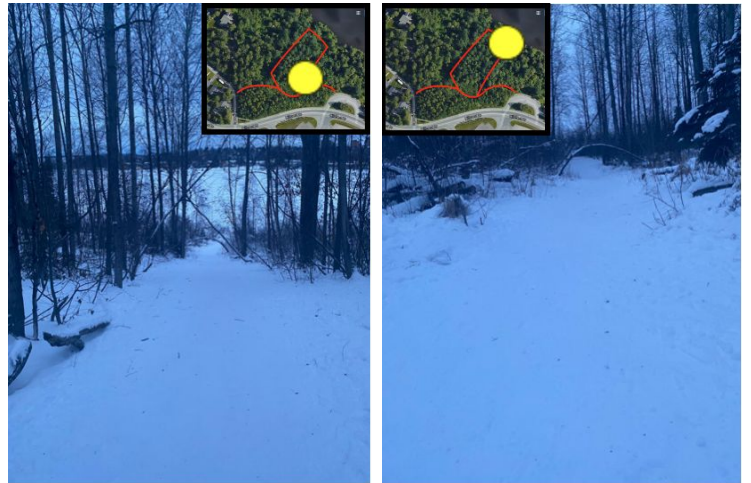
Here is a photo overlooking the Romig Hill Ski Slope from the East side, slightly West of the overlook. As you can see, the slope has gained a substantial amount of foliage growth since closing in 1964. You can see West Chester lagoon on the right hand side of the photo, which is frozen over and covered in snow.



Here is a photograph picturing the bottom North-West side of the slope. You can see the two public trails in the photo, one proceeding up the hill, and the other going parallel to the Lagoon on a relatively flat surface.



Photographed to the right is one of the public hills on the Slope. The photo on the left side shows the view down the hill, and the photo on the right side shows the view up the hill. You can see why the slope is used by West High cross country runners, as its incline is quite severe. This incline also brings a moderate number of children to the area who like to sled the slope.



The photo to the right displays the flat trail on the top of the hill. Generally, pedestrians use the trail as a shortcut between Wildwood Lane and Hillcrest Drive. But, it's also a great place for people to walk their dogs, or go for a stroll.



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