



**SNOWMASS: A HISTORY BEYOND AND BETWEEN THE SLOPES**  
**The spirit of the old west lives on in Snowmass through its rodeo, historic buildings, place names and more.**

**Snowmass Village, CO (Spring, 2008)** – If you think Snowmass Village came into existence when the ski area opened in 1967, you’d be missing centuries worth of local history. Long before skiers and even settlers discovered Snowmass’ Brush Creek Valley, the Ute Indians hunted, fished, and gathered wild foods here in the summers.

The first European/non-natives explored the Elk Mountains as early as 1853 during the Gunnison Survey, but it wasn’t until the Hayden Survey in the 1870s that the prominent peaks visible from Snowmass were named. Mt Daly with its unusual white stripe is named after then-president of the National Geographic Society, Augustus Daly, while distinctive triangular Capitol Peak paid tribute to the Washington, D.C., building.

**Early Ranching Days**

While there is some evidence of exploratory digging by prospectors in Brush Creek Valley, the land proved to be more conducive to ranching interests. By the 1880s the Utes had been banished from the valley, although some suggest that the Big Burn area on Mt. Baldy was formed either by lightning, by Utes trying to discourage settlers from trespassing (or the other way around), or by settlers trying to clear the land. Eventually between 11 and 19 ranches running sheep and cattle would occupy the Brush Creek Valley. Sam’s Knob, for instance, is named after rancher Sam Stapleton who once ran sheep up on the mountain. His family’s camp was located at the current Divide parking lot in Snowmass. Elk Camp is named for the elk calving grounds where hunters used to set up camps in the fall. Katherine Jensen Lindvig, also known as the “Cattle Queen of Snowmass,” ranched a 640-acre parcel just over the hill in what today is called Old Snowmass.

One of the most prominent ranchers, Charles Hoaglund, immigrated with his family from Sweden to Aspen just in time for the silver crash, and he was hired to close down Aspen’s Smuggler mine. When he padlocked the doors for good in 1910, he and his family took their wagon over Owl Creek Road and acquired land in Brush Creek to raise cattle, sheep, wheat and hay. Hoaglund built his house and outbuildings out of timbers from the nearby hillsides, and today several buildings including the main house have been incorporated into the renowned Anderson Ranch Arts Center to create a unique facility melding ranching history on the outside with state-of-the-art studios on the inside. According to former Anderson Ranch Director of Communications Jeremy Swanson, Hoaglund always intended his home to be a place for the Brush Creek community to gather, and he even built his home’s second story with windows large

enough to haul a piano up through so that community celebrations could take place there.

Life in Snowmass wasn't easy and included such drudgery as hauling water up from the creek to wash clothes or making the three-hour roundtrip wagon ride each Saturday to sell butter and eggs in Aspen. Hoaglund's daughter Hildur was raised on the ranch as well, and she lived there for over 40 years. Hildur attended the community's one-room school house which was then called the Brush Creek Frontier School and today is known as The Little Red Schoolhouse.

The schoolhouse celebrated its centennial in 1994 and still functions as an early childhood learning center today. Hildur eventually taught at the school herself and was known as a talented musician and accordion player. She married Bill Anderson (hence the art center's name) and raised four children on the ranch.

### **A ski area is born**

In 1958 Olympic Skier Bill Janss began buying up ranches in the valley with an eye toward emulating the Aspen ski area's success. By 1961 he owned six ranches at the base of Baldy and Burnt Mountains and planned to build a ski area served by a European-style ski community on 3,300 acres. Although the area above Divide Road was known as "Snowmesa" at the time, the developers chose to name the resort after Snowmass, a mountain located one drainage over instead.

In December of 1967, Snowmass-At-Aspen opened with five chairlifts, fifty miles of ski trails, seven hotels, and six restaurants. Lift tickets cost \$6.50. A decade later the town of Snowmass was incorporated, and the rest, as they say, is history.

### **Snowmass Today**

Today visitors can catch glimpses of Snowmass' past throughout the Brush Creek Valley. The Snowmass Rodeo on Wednesday nights each summer is the oldest continuously running community rodeo in Colorado at 36 years in 2008. Other Snowmass events have shown impressive longevity as well, including the Snowmass Balloon Festival which celebrates its 33rd anniversary, the Snowmagical Family Fun Fest which celebrates 27 years in 2008, and Mardi Gras in the wintertime which reached a quarter-century old in 2007. In 2008 a new crop of festivals will honor their fifth anniversaries, including the Chili Pepper & Brew Fest, the Snowmass Wellness Experience, Oktoberfest, and St. Paddy's Day.

Ranching continues its historical presence in the valley today. At the entrance to the valley stands the privately-owned Brush Creek Ranch, while Anderson Ranch Arts Center buildings and the Little Red School House still pay tribute to the valley's founding roots. At the Snowmass Center, the BJ Adams building is a classic example of Victorian architecture, but behind its clapboard façade resides another hewn-log home from the turn of the century. The log Alpine Bank building next door is an amalgamation of old ranch building and new architecture. Up on the mountain the Burlingame and Lynn Britt Cabins are both historic, having been built as summer cabins in the early 1900s, while

various sheds and outbuilding ruins can be found throughout the valley. Rumor has it that even on the mountain you can find remnants of old cabins tucked into the trees.

Both the Snowmass Club and the Snowmass Conference Center are excellent locales to glimpse Snowmass' early history as their walls are lined with photos of Snowmass' yesteryears. Even many of Snowmass' developments, places, streets, and trails bear the names of the valley's earliest settlers and pay tribute to the valley's rich history and the pioneering spirit that perseveres today. In 2006, a new western heritage museum opened on the Snowmass Village Mall to pay tribute to the town's history and the first-ever history of Snowmass is due out in the next year as well.

For more information, visit the official Snowmass Village website at [www.snowmassvillage.com](http://www.snowmassvillage.com) or call 1-800-SNOWMASS.

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