

## Lost Resorts: Hidden Valley & Berthoud Pass

Some Colorado ski areas influenced and affected by 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division veterans are no longer in operation, including Hidden Valley (Ski Estes Park) and Berthoud Pass.

### Hidden Valley

Hidden Valley, in the Estes Park region, opened officially in 1955, but many local skiers used the area before lifts were installed. Hidden Valley was run by Estes Park Recreation District, and then purchased by the Park Service. The T-bars, one double chair and surface lifts eventually sold to Vail Resorts.

Grant Ford, a Lieutenant in the 10<sup>th</sup>, returned to Colorado after finishing college at Amherst and being captain of the ski team. He began competing, patrolling, officiating and organizing skiing, and was President of the Southern Rocky Mountain Ski Association, director of the National Ski Association and patroller on the original Denver Metro Ski Patrol. He was very active in the development of both Hidden Valley and Loveland ski areas.

However, Hidden Valley's layout was awkward, and 70% of the terrain was rated "most difficult." So the National Park Service removed a chairlift just five years old, and it closed in 1991 due to financial difficulties. Trails still exist, and many backcountry skiers enjoy skinning up the trails and skiing down, but no avalanche control work is done and there is no ski patrol.



### Berthoud Pass

Starting in the mid-1930s, the road over Berthoud Pass was kept open in the winter, attracting local skiers. Beginning in 1937, the first lift was powered by a Ford engine donated from Denver and run by volunteers on weekends. Although debated, many maintain that Berthoud Pass was Colorado's first ski area.

With close proximity to Denver, Berthoud Pass enjoyed continued success after World War II from the beginning and catered to both expert skiers and family experiences. In addition to building the first double chair, the area was also the first to use a severely discounted and transferable season pass, as well as the first in Colorado to allow snowboarding on the slopes.

Dick Stillman grew up skiing in New York and served in Italy with the 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division. During a 30-year career with the U.S. Forest Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, he established and maintained the High Alpine Avalanche Research Station at Berthoud Pass from 1950 to 1963. Stillman developed criteria for snow safety, created training materials, conducted courses, lectured and determined hazard and control techniques. As one of the top authorities on avalanche control in the U.S., his work at Berthoud Pass was essential to the industry.

In 1987, Berthoud Pass was sold to Timberline Mountain Inc., who renamed the area Timberline and expanded terrain. After being sold again in 1989, Berthoud Pass

experienced chairlift and T-bar replacements, which allowed it to handle a larger number of skiers.

Financial troubles required the ski area to liquidate assets in the 1990s. The lodge burnt down, the U.S. Forest Service prevented reopening. Berthoud Pass was closed in 2001 due to financial issues. Today, the top of the pass has a new warming hut and parking area. Due to the challenging terrain and great snow, the pass is now a destination for backcountry skiers.

With their expertise and drive, both Dick Stillman and Grant Ford helped these ski resorts rise after World War II and enjoy some success. Although these areas are not officially in place today, local enthusiasts can still enjoy the traces of these mountains impacted by 10<sup>th</sup> veterans.

Sources:

- David Leach's 2005 senior thesis for Middlebury College, "The Impact of the Tenth Mountain Division on the Development of a Modern Ski Industry in Colorado and Vermont: 1930-1965."
- Colorado Ski & Snowboard Museum archives