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MILL TOWN MESSENGER

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Ski Jumping in Newport



Mark Fields & Bill McCrillis

For those who remember ski jumping as part of Newport's winter sports programs, the recent sight of work underway on the 30-meter ski jump is more than a construction project. It is a reminder of the determination, ingenuity and community spirit that brought the jump here nearly 50 years ago—and of a new generation of volunteers determined to keep that tradition alive.

This fall, that commitment is taking visible shape as volunteers and local businesses work to restore the jump and prepare it for a return to action. Their efforts build on the vision of the people who first saw an opportunity in a disassembled structure in Lake Placid and imagined a new future for it in Newport.

The story began in the mid-1970s, when Lake Placid N.Y. needed to remove its ski jump to make way for an Olympic hockey arena. Newport was looking for a larger jump, and word spread through ski-jumping circles that the structure might be available. Lake Placid was willing to give it away to whoever could arrange to remove it. According to Bill McCrillis, the effort to bring the jump to Newport grew out of the work of the Newport Nordic Club and a group of people who understood what it could mean for local skiing. Coach Roland Tremblay, Jim Lantz, John C. McCrillis, Carl Merritt, Bob Rollins, and Harold LaValley were among those involved.

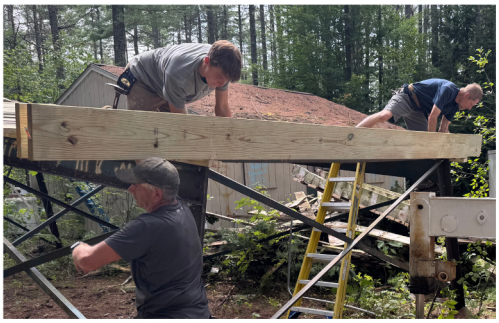
Getting the structure was one thing. Moving it was another. Mike Patten, whose business (Remember P A K? – Ask Cory someday) had a trucking outfit. Mike offered to make the trip to Lake Placid N.Y. Using two tractor-trailers, his team brought the steel trestle, in pieces, back to Newport. Then came the challenge of putting the pieces together. Fortunately, a conversation in an insurance office led John C. McCrillis to Gordon Drake, the grandfather of Paul Manson of The Village Forge in Guild. Drake explained that he had erected steel skyscrapers in Boston. When asked whether he could assemble the ski jump, he agreed—for $500!

Raising that money required another community effort. John W. McCrillis and others traveled to a meeting of the Eastern Ski Association in Brattleboro, where they presented the project. The association agreed to contribute the $500 needed to erect the trestle… A worthy pursuit if John W. McCrillis was making the recommendation.

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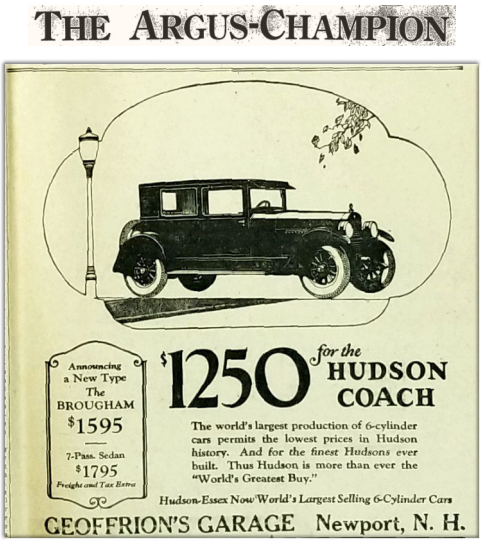
Ski Jumping is statistically a rare sport. The individuals that are drawn to the sport are even rarer. It takes a bit of bravery to position yourself with a pair of enormous skis at the top of a very steep and slippery track and push off. What comes next is a sensation that is difficult to express but resonates deeply. So deep in fact that the character this sport builds often becomes a family, and in many cases a generational pursuit. Newport is fortunate to have members of our community that share this spirit.

VOLUNTEERS REPLACING THE "LIP" OF THE INRUN





Thrift shopping is a great activity many people enjoy. The types of Thrift Shops vary from tables with bins of items to a more upscale "Boutique" shopping experience. Newport has had many thrift stores over the years but for a good reason, the Newport Thrift Shoppe located on the John Stark Highway has stayed in business well over 50 years!


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Top Round Steak	12 pts.	LB 43¢
Rib Roast	7" CUT 10 points	LB 35¢
Chuck Roast	Blade Style 8 points	LB 28¢
Rump Roast	BONELESS 10 points	LB 43¢
Boneless Brisket	pts.	LB 35¢
Short Ribs	For Braising 5 points	LB 21¢
Pork Chops	Best Center Cuts 9 pts.	LB 42¢

In 1968 when thrift shops were very few, and yard sales and flea markets were unheard of, the Newport Hospital Auxiliary was inspired to open a thrift shop in Newport.

That was the beginning of what is now the Newport Thrift Shoppe run by the "Ladies of the NSO".

Over the years the shop had numerous locations. One of the earliest was in the old railroad depot. Throughout the years, due to too little space or rent being too high-the shop moved into and out of several Main Street locations.

When fire destroyed its Eagle Block store, the shop again moved and has found a home in its current location in the Newport Shopping Plaza.

FIRE on the Eagle Block July 25, 1993



In 1990, the hospital closed, and the Newport Hospital Auxiliary re-established itself as the Newport Service Organization. Today the NSO is an independent, non-profit, all volunteer organization. The Newport Thrift Shoppe is its major fundraiser. The Newport Service Organization has received many local and state awards lauding their work and the grants awarded providing essential financial support for health and safety needs in our community and surrounding area.

The NSO annually donates thousands of dollars earned at the thrift shop to the Newport and surrounding area. These proceeds provide financial support for underfunded, much-needed services and financial aid to our next health care professionals.



The Ladies are immensely proud of their ability to assist these individuals and organizations. They have received hundreds of thank you letters from these recipients; most addressed to "The Ladies of the NSO".



Are you a "Thrifter"?



David Lantz, who had competed with the U.S. Ski Team, coached the Newport Nordic Club ski jumpers along with Roland Tremblay in the 1970's and 1980's. He recalls helping to clear the trees where the present trestle stands and the excitement by the group constructing the new hill.

Doug Lantz, David's brother became the first to ski off the jump in 1976, using a lower starting point because the structure was not yet fully decked. And, maybe it was Doug because nobody else dared. Official competitions followed, and the hill became a place for local and visiting jumpers to test themselves.

The jump was not simply a piece of sporting equipment. It was the result of many people each stepping forward with what they could offer: transportation, construction skills, fundraising, labor and a shared belief that Newport should have a place in the sport. Today, it can be considered "The Crown Jewel" of the sports complex surrounding it!

Matt O'Clair, a former Newport ski jumper who owns Matt O'Clair General Contracting, has taken a leading role in the current renovation. In August, he and a crew began replacing the wooden decking on the 30-meter trestle. Jeremy Tetreault, owner of Lawson Crane and Rigging LLC, has provided a large crane and a crew to help with the work.

Their contributions have been extraordinary: both businesses are donating their time and equipment to the project. LaValley's Building Supply has also generously donated decking materials for the 30-meter trestle. A steering committee consisting of Bill McCrillis, Stelios Ambargis, Matt O'Clair, David Lantz, and David McCrillis is overseeing the ski jump renovations. The work also honors the earlier contributions of Roland Trembly and Ron Beaudet, whose coaching, maintenance and improvements helped sustain Newport's ski-jumping program over the years.

February 1991 - Argus Champion



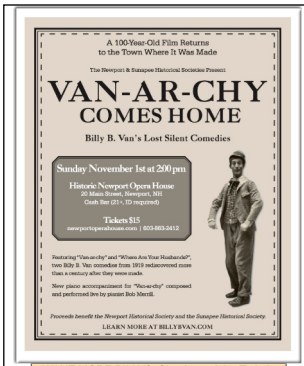
ROLAND TREMBLAY, Newport ski Jumping coach, gives Paul Beaudet, 11, some last-minute instructions before the young ski jumper journeys down the 20-meter slide.

Lantz, who went on to compete at the national level in Nordic combined skiing, knows firsthand what a ski-jumping program can mean to young athletes. He remembers the mentors who helped him develop both as a skier and as a person. He also understands the importance of giving young people an opportunity to discover the sport.

The present renovation is, in many ways, a tribute to the people who built and maintained the jump in the first place. As Bill McCrillis has emphasized, bringing the structure to Newport was a community-wide undertaking. The tradition it created is worth preserving.

The 111th Annual Winter Carnival, scheduled for Sunday, February 14, 2027, is expected to feature ski jumping on both the 10-meter and 30-meter ski jumps for the first time since 2019. Organizers are also preparing to install new artificial tracks on the 30-meter jump's inrun. Additional needs remain, including reconnecting electrical power and repairing a judge's stand. The renovation will require continued coordination, hard work and continued community support.

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WANT MORE BILLY? Check out John Tariot's Website about Billy B. Van's Film career at BILLYBVAN.COM

BILLY B. VAN MOVIES



NOVEMBER 1, 2026 2:00 PM

The screening will show the newly rediscovered "Van-ar-chy," the classic comedy "Where Are Your Husbands?," with a special introduction to Billy B. Van's filmmaking career, and live piano accompaniment by Bob Merrill.

Tickets will be available at the Newport Opera House on their website and Proceeds benefit the Newport Historical Society and the Sunapee Historical Society. Join us for a truly hometown Hollywood historical event!

Ski Jumping in Newport

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In an update earlier this fall, the project had raised $22,000 toward its $35,000 fundraising goal. That progress reflects the generosity of local businesses and supporters, but the work is not finished. Donations are still being accepted to help complete the renovation and prepare the facility for future use. To make a donation or for more information on the ski jump renovation, email Newportskijumping@gmail.com.

The steering committee would like to thank New England Ski Jumping & Nordic Combined (NESJNC) for its critical financial support. NESJNC has been the largest financial contributor to date. The committee would also like to thank the Andover Outing Club for its administrative support to help move the renovations forward.

The greater New England ski jumping community recognizes the importance of the Newport ski jumps and wholeheartedly supports the ongoing renovations. For Newport, the ski jump represents more than memories of competitions and winter excitement. It tells a story of people who saw an opportunity, worked together to make it possible, and created something lasting for their community.

Now, with the trestle being renewed and plans taking shape for young skiers, today's volunteers are carrying that story forward. Their work honors the original visionaries while opening the door for new athletes to discover the thrill of the jump.

The people who brought the structure from Lake Placid could hardly have known how many years later their effort would inspire another community undertaking. But the lesson remains the same: a tradition survives when people care enough to invest their time, skills and resources in its future.

In A Newport Minute,



created by the Newport Historical Society as part of Newport's contribution to America Turns 250. Each installment highlights a moment in American history and how it relates to Newport within a ten-year span, beginning in 1776 and continuing to the present day.

The segments were written by Pamela LaFountain and associated with imagry from various sources including the NHS archives. The voices you hear are from members of our community and recorded on their cell phones or during interviews. The final edit was mastered by Rachel Benoit who put everything together to make it flow. An incredible team!



Calista Thurlow and Pamela LaFountain Preparing to narrate a segment of "In A Newport Minute".

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