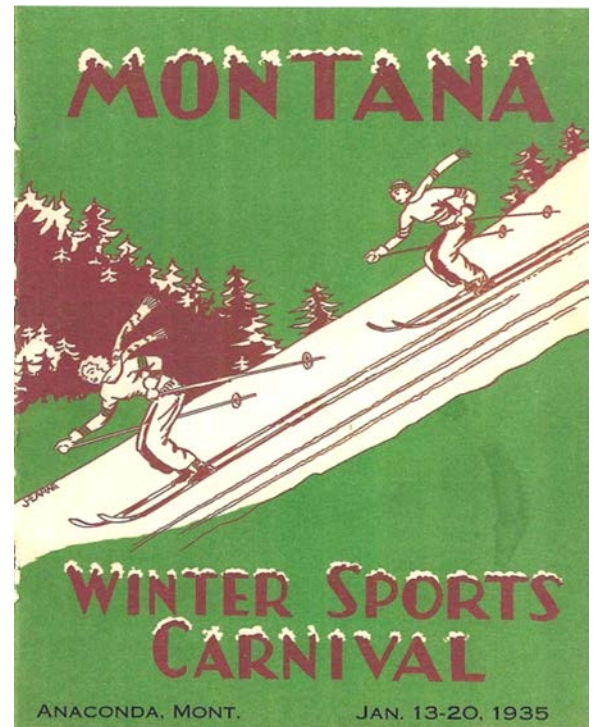


2025 is 90th Anniversary of Anaconda's 1935 Winter Carnival!

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Anaconda's inaugural Winter Sports Carnival was held in 1935, and was crammed with outdoor sports events and indoor activities:

- ✧ Olympic ski jumping
- ✧ Speed skating
- ✧ Curling
- ✧ Toboggan races
- ✧ Snowshoe races
- ✧ Cross-country ski races
- ✧ Couples', men's, and women's figure skating
- ✧ Masquerade skating party (best costume prizes)
- ✧ Hockey tournament
- ✧ 3-day dog sled race
- ✧ Barrel-jumping on ice skates
- ✧ Ice sculptures
- ✧ Bonfires and nightly fireworks
- ✧ 112 competitors for Winter Carnival Queen prize
- ✧ Men's beard growing contest
- ✧ Pie-eating contest
- ✧ Bowling tournament
- ✧ High school basketball tournament
- ✧ Professional wrestling
- ✧ Live music and dances
- ✧ Card parties
- ✧ Store window display contest
- ✧ Banquet at the historic Montana Hotel
- ✧ Grand Ball: Carnival Queen crowned by Governor.
- ✧ Competitors came from as far away as Illinois and Banff, Canada.
- ✧ Crowds of up to 10,000 watched the ski jumping competitions.



Patrick Morris wrote *“the year 1935 was a memorable one for Anaconda. In fact, nothing quite so exciting had happened to it since the fight for the capital back in 1894.”*

Organizing for the Winter Carnival began in 1934 when a group of local businesses and professionals began to produce a plan to revive the city's business community which had suffered due to the depression. Something had to be done! The group came up with an idea for a winter carnival, not just any carnival, but one that would bring people from all over and set the stage for future events.

Speakers were sent to other cities in the state to urge participation in the winter carnival.



The local newspapers were extremely supportive, running articles about the carnival and urging statewide support. One article in the Standard called the carnival “*one of the greatest sports celebrations Montana has ever known.*” Civic and fraternal organizations were encouraged to change their annual conventions or meetings to convene in Anaconda during the carnival.

To promote the Winter Carnival, organizers started two contests, the election of the carnival queen and a beard growing contest. It was decreed that all males should stop shaving and let their beards grow. 112 women became early candidates for the prize of being elected carnival queen.

An ambitious line up of events was crammed into the Sunday-to-Sunday schedule, beginning, and ending with ski jumping performances and other competitions that included the foremost athletes in the world. The Winter Carnival was a vibrant affair with a variety of entertainment options and some quirky contests beyond the winter sports.

Downtown businesses were encouraged to participate in a competition for the best window displays. Scenes suggestive of a Hans Christian Anderson’s fairy tales or a Disney scene made for difficult judging, and results had to be postponed for more careful consideration.

Adding a layer of excitement to the carnival, participants raced down snowy hills, trying to get the fastest times during the Toboggan Races, making the

event fun and entertaining for everyone involved. Artists and amateurs alike chiseled away at blocks of ice, creating intricate sculptures that dazzled spectators with their Ice Sculpting abilities.

Participants competed to see who could devour the most pies within a set amount of time during the Pie-Eating Contest. Competitors strapped on traditional snowshoes and raced across a designated course in the Snowshoeing Race, and many laughed at the skaters during the Barrel jumping at the commons, adding to the festive atmosphere.



Card parties of bridge, pinochle and whist were hosted at the Montana hotel by local townswomen as well. Helping to create a festive atmosphere during the carnival included live music, evening dances where locals could gather, socialize and enjoy music, theatre performances from local theatre groups, bonfires and socials which provided an opportunity to warm up and share stories, and view mesmerizing nightly firework displays that astonished the crowds with their colors and patterns. There was a carnival dance at the AOH Hall, a Ski Jumpers dance, and a club banquet at the Montana Hotel.

Throughout the week the carnival dominated the news. Festivities began with a masquerade skating party at the commons open to the public with prizes for the best costumes. Tuesday featured the parade that ended at the Montana Hotel with a grand ball where the carnival queen, Ms. Mary Catherine "Kay" McCarthy was crowned by the governor. She won the honors with over two million votes and was attended by her princesses Ann Haffey and Helen Swanson, 2nd, and 3rd in line for the crown.



1935 Anaconda Winter Carnival

There were many sporting events planned during the carnival. Events such as cross-country ski races, figure and speed skating on the Commons, professional wrestling at the Daly Gym, dogsled races, a men's, and women's bowling tournament, curling as well as a hockey tournament.

The rest of the bill was filled with a professional basketball game between the Anaconda Anodes and the New York Harlemites, as well as a high school basketball tournament, and of course, the Ski Jumping.

The stars of the figure skating were Gordon Thompson and his young protégé Betty Davidson, both from Banff Canada. Many local favorites, such as Melva Luxton and Ben Middleton, competed and performed in couples, men's, and women's figure skating events. Along with the numerous skating competitions, there were many skating exhibitions that impressed the crowds.

Casper Oimoen, a Norwegian bricklayer came to the US in 1925. Bill Wraith saw Casper ski jump at the opening of the 1933 World's Fair in Chicago and offered him a job at the Anaconda Smelter as a mason but mainly to create, develop and maintain the sport of skiing and ski jumping in Montana. Casper had been a national ski jumping champion and was the captain of the US Olympic ski jumping team in 1932.

Although championship ski jumping was a novelty to most Anacondans, it became the center of the carnival planning with Casper's participation and encouragement. The organizing committee secured government funds to build a ski jump southwest of town beyond the cemetery in sheep gulch south of the courthouse with Casper Oimoen supervising the construction.

Ski jumping was the main event during the carnival with top class ski jumpers participating from all over the west. It was not surprising that the ski jumping drew the most attention and public attendance. On the first Sunday of the carnival, there was an estimated crowd of 10,000 at the bottom of the ski jump and at no time during the week was there less than 3,000 in attendance. Luckily two feet of snow had fallen on January 7 which provided excellent conditions for the ski jumping.



The following ski jumper categories were listed in the program during the week's events: Class A, Class B and Junior Jumpers. In addition, the program listed a section where observers could view the best jumps in the Amateur and Pro categories. Professional Ski Jumping, outstanding jump – Alf Engen, 205 ft. on Jan. 14; Amateur Ski Jumping, best of the carnival – Casper Oimoen, 202 ft. on Jan. 14.

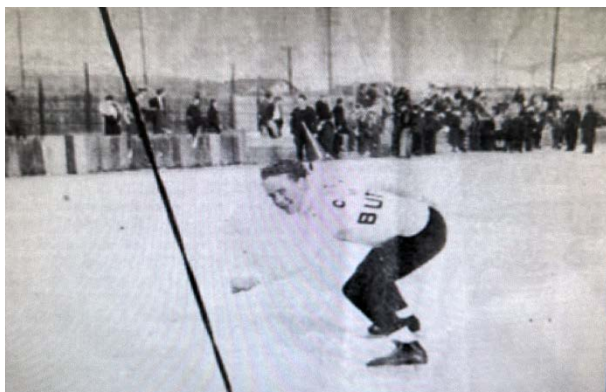
Fierce winds down the gulch caused slight difficulty for some of the jumpers trying to keep their skis straight while in the air and a blizzard caused cancellation of the ski jumping on Wednesday. One of the jumpers, Alf Engen, praised the Sheep Gulch ski jump which was named "Oimeon Hill." He estimated the longest jump that jumpers could travel safely was probably 210 feet which is two-thirds of a football field.

"There are ski jumps in the United States where longer jumps could be made but there were none that the jumpers were so high above the crowd," Engen proclaimed. He further stated that not only was it the highest but also the scariest since you were looking straight into the cemetery!!



January 1935, After the Races
Mr. Middleton and Bernice Platt Speed Skating Champion
Anaconda Montana

Relay skating and speed skating were another popular event taking place at the commons ice rink. Bernice Platt from Butte was the big winner in the women's speed skating, winning all the women's events. Babe O'Farrell, also from Butte, won his first junior speed



1935 Anaconda Winter Carnival



skating event and went on to win the state speedskating title in 1935, 36, 37, 38 and 39.

The dogsled races had ten entries from Montana, Idaho, Wyoming, and Illinois. Ten of the best dog sled teams in the country came to compete during the carnival. Wearing the Phillipsburg colors and backed by the Granite County seat, Mrs. Thula Geelan was determined to further the glory of womanhood by winning Montana's first annual dog derby. It was stated that she was a favorite to win and reportedly, there were many bets placed in her favor.

The dogsled races were run over a period of 3 days for a total of thirty-six miles. The first prize of \$500 would go the driver with the lowest total time for the three days. The dog team drivers unanimously declared "it was the hardest race they had ever ran due to small blizzards, drifting snow on the course and the mercury at five above."

The major highlight of the wrestling events featured Jumping Joe Savoldi, a former Notre Dame football star who turned professional wrestler. Other notable wrestlers included Gorilla Man Rodgers, Pat O'Shocker, and Rebel Jack Russell.



Playing to a sold-out crowd in the Daly Gym, the Anaconda Anodes challenged the New York Harlemites to two different nights of basketball. The New York lads won the first game 3-35 and the second game, 28-25. Several hundred crowded the gym to watch these battles.



Visitors familiar with the Lake Placid winter carnival favorably compared Anaconda's effort to it, commenting that within a few years, Anaconda would become just as famous, attracting the biggest names in winter sports from the US and abroad. Anaconda was dubbed the "ST Moritz of the Rockies" because of the carnival. Mayor Frank

Provost stated that "Anaconda's first Winter Carnival was a week-long blaze of activity that was backed by the entire state, and it passed all expectations!"

Because of the Winter Olympics being held in 1936, and as Casper had been named the captain of the US Ski Team, it was decided that the next Anaconda Winter Carnival should be scheduled prior to the Olympics and was hosted December 27-29, 1935, the same year as the first carnival.



The Winter Sports Carnival of 1935 brought a new feeling of life and confidence for Anaconda after the tough times of the Great Depression. It is fascinating how events like these can uplift a community and leave a legacy. Casper Oimeon's contributions to skiing in Montana is a testament to the enduring spirit of sports and the impact individuals can have on their communities.

