The tracks of skiing through three Vermont mountains

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This scrapbook will provide a glimpse into the history of alpine skiing in the state of Vermont. Skiing has had a tremendous impact on the lifestyles of Vermonter and the economy and landscape of this state. It will follow the development and transformation of three mountains: Burke, Stowe and Killington.
before the tracks emerged:

three mountains before skiing

Before alpine skiing emerged on Mt. Mansfield other tracks did— a road was constructed to the top of the mountain in 1870 for horses and later adapted for automobiles in 1920. Guests often stayed at the Summit House, later named the Mansfield Hotel.
before the tracks emerged:

three mountains before skiing

Burke is located in a very rural part of the state of Vermont and is described by Jules Older as a ‘mountain surrounded by abundant beauty and little else.’ The mountain remained relatively untouched, with the exception of a devastating forest fire that nearly deforested the mountain at the turn of the century. From Killington peak in 1763 Reverend Samuel Peters christened the state of Vermont and the mountain remained in contention as the highest peak in the state for decades.
before the tracks emerged:
three mountains before skiing

Fire tower on the top of Burke Mountain
Burke, Vermont 1930

Road with view of the mountains
Killington, Vermont 1900-1910

Early development for both mountains was slow- including a fire tower for Burke Mountain and a road to the base of Mount Killington.
fresh tracks:

three mountains and the beginning of skiing

Stowe hosted its first Winter Carnival in 1922 and, along with an ice acrobat and sculptures, the town created a ski jump. A decision that, literally, propelled Stowe to the forefront of alpine skiing.
fresh tracks:

three mountains and the beginning of skiing

A combined public and private effort was needed to create most ski resorts including Burke, Stowe and Killington. In 1933 Craig Burt, the owner of the Mansfield Hotel, and Perry Merrill, the director of the Vermont Forest Department, persuaded the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) to build a trail down Mt. Mansfield. Stowe’s first trail was named
Burke Mountain had a road and two trails built by the CCC in the 1930s, including Wilderness and Bear’s Den, both still in use. Land for ski mountains were often bought by or donated to the Vermont Forest Department and later developed by private investors.
Burke Mountain developed by thirteen local business men incorporated as ‘Ski Burke Mountain!’ The group received an appropriation from the Legislature to create ski trails designed by ‘trail design master’ Charles Lord. The mountain officially opened in 1956.
early days:
three mountains and the development of skiing

The development of Stowe continued throughout the 1940s and 1950s, marked by the introduction of the chair lift in 1940 and increasing expansion.

Killington, originally purchased by the young Pres Smith in 1958, began as a small, rural mountain.
early days:
three mountains and the development of skiing

Throughout the 1950s skiers began to flock to the sport, and programs such as Killington’s Gradient Learning System expedited learning to ski. In the early 1960s ski resorts and their coupled towns were expanding at a rate far greater than that of towns without ski mountains.
early days:
three mountains and the development of skiing

Killington expanded unlike any other mountain: when the mountain opened in 1958 it was one hill. Today it is composed of six different mountains covering 77 miles of alpine ski terrain. The town of Sherburne had a 1038% increase in the housing units in its community from 1960 to 1970.
Concerns over Killington’s further expansion resided in two prominent arguments: Only five mountains in Vermont rise above 4,000 feet, and three of these are already marked with ski trails. Second, many identify Vermont with a certain quaint New England feel, which a sprawling modern resort village might spoil.
becoming an industry: three mountains and the expansion of skiing

Chair to the summit
Burke, Vermont
date unknown
LS 07992

Skiers on the trail
LS 05839
Killington, Vermont 1971

“[The] desire to conserve natural resources and preserve a rural way of life sometimes runs counter to the American Dream- the dream of pushing back the wilderness to eke out a living, of pursuing an opportunity and creating a better life with hard work, determination and vision. Carried to an extreme, a contemporary ‘no-growth’ attitude would even discount the historic importance of recreation and tourism as an integral and sustaining component of the Vermont economy.” –Karen Lorentz
becoming an industry: three mountains and the expansion of skiing

As ski areas and the ski industry continue to expand across Vermont, towns and citizens are called upon to make vital decisions that will effect the future of not only their lifestyles but also their economy, and their landscape.
the mountains today:

To take a look at what the mountains look like today, click on the following links to their web pages (works only in powerpoint)

- Burke Mountain
- Killington
- Stowe

Stowe, Vermont
LS 08086