

# DICKINSON COUNTY HISTORY – SPORTS – PINE MOUNTAIN SKI SLIDE

*[Transcribed from Website by William J. Cummings]*

## PINE MOUNTAIN SKI SLIDE IRON MOUNTAIN, DICKINSON COUNTY, MICHIGAN

The Pine Mountain ski slide at one time was the highest artificial ski jump in the world. It was the culmination of constant interest of a small number of skiing enthusiasts, later augmented by a growing group of winter sport devotees in Iron Mountain and Kingsford.

In 1929, an artificial slide was built on Hemlock Street, facing Brown Street, on land donated by **E.G. Kingsford**. The slide was built by local riders.

Poor snow in 1930 dampened skiing enthusiasm, and nothing was done until 1933, when the original jumpers and a second group which had been riding **Lightning Hill**, combined, and, with funds contributed by local merchants and manufacturers, constructed the **Devil's Hill Slide**, the first all-metal slide in the Upper Peninsula. Shortly after the new slide had been put in use, riders, with the support of the **Kiwanis Club**, formed the **Kiwanis Ski Club** on January 5, 1934. The Devil's Hill Slide was dedicated January 21 of the same year before a crowd of 5,000 persons. Tournaments were held on Devil's Hill annually for the next four years. This slide was **near Crystal Lake** and was dismantled for scrap iron during World War II.

The development of Pine Mountain was undertaken by the Dickinson County Board of Park Trustees in 1937 at the request of various civic and governmental bodies. Some work had been done earlier by **Ted Kingsford** and **Harold Eskil**, then Breitung Township supervisor, but the job was unable to be completed, so the deed to the property was given to the park group with the understanding that the park trustees complete the construction.

The board submitted a W.P.A. project covering all necessary remaining work, calling for the construction of a steel scaffold, 156 feet high, and clearing and grading of the landing area. Work on the ski slide was completed late in 1938, and the first tournament was held early the following year, with the Kiwanis Ski Club as host, and the newly-formed **Iron Mountain-Kingsford Winter Sports Association**, a non-profit organization, acting as sponsor.

At the first Pine Mountain Tournament, **Bob Roecker**, riding for the Duluth Ski Club, shattered the American jumping record held by **Alf Engen**, of Salt Lake City, with a leap of 257 feet for a new American record.

Pine Mountain Slide has been renovated several times. In 1948 the landing hill was dug out for longer jumps, and in 1977 a fire burned out the top of the slide. New starting gates were added and the slide made higher.

Pine Mountain Slide is known throughout the world as one of the best jumping hills. The Kiwanis Ski Club hosts the best tournament in the United States. Year after year, they have the top foreign jumpers competing. All classes of records have been set on Pine Mountain, and the record of the U.S at 140 meters/459 feet is still held here. Annual attendance is over 20,000 spectators.

You can walk up the ski jump to the top. Any time of the year, it's a grand view from this hilltop, looking out 30 miles and encompassing seven lakes.

### How Does Pine Mountain Ski Jump Measure Up?

- **The Pine Mountain ski slide is one of the highest artificial Ski Jumps in the world.**
- **Scaffold Height, 176 feet**

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- Scaffold Length, 380 feet
- Length of Underhill (end of take off to outrun), 632 feet
- Length of Underhill (end of scaffold to end of outrun), 1,032 feet
- Critical point (K-point) of landing hill, 394 feet
- Pitch of Landing Hill, 39 degrees
- Estimated speed of skiers at takeoff, 55 mph

The Current Hill Record was set at the Continental Cup Competition in 2006 by Stefan Kaiser of Austria with a jump of 468 feet.

## Pine Mountain Ski Jump Hill Records

### Iron Mountain, Michigan

Records are made to be broken, and they have been on Pine Mountain as the U.S. ski jumping distance mark has been shattered or matched 16 times on this world-famous King of American ski-jumping hills.

**1939** – **Bob Roecker** was the first rider to set the North American record at Pine Mountain when he sailed 257 feet in the inaugural tournament of 1939.

**1941** – Roecker's standard fell as **Alf Engen** extended the distance by 10 feet with a jump of 267 feet.

**1942** – **Torger Tokle** surpassed his own standard in the 1942 Pine Mountain meet with a 289 footer, his third straight record breaking performance.

**1949** – The North American Record was broken three times on Pine Mountain. Ishpeming's Jumping **Joe Perrault** was the first with a 293 foot ride. **Matti Pietkainen** took the record away from Perrault with a 294 footer, then Joe came back with a 297 foot effort to regain the title of North American record-holder.

**1950** – **Billy (The Kid) Olson** tied the 297 foot record on Pine Mountain

**1960** – **Jim Brennan** matched the record of 316 feet set at Steamboat Springs in 1951.

**1962** – **Pekka Tirkkinen** tied the new record of 317 feet on Pine Mountain.

**1965** – The record was broken three more times before **John Balfanz** returned it to sole possession of Pine Mountain with a 325 foot jump in the 1965 classics.

**1968** – **Adrian Watt** set a record when he sailed 337 feet during the Olympic trials at Pine Mountain.

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- 1971** – **Jerry Martin**, one of the most popular jumpers in the history of Big Pine Mountain, established a new distance mark when he flew 345 feet.
- 1978** – Austria's **Gebhart Aberer** put his name in the record book at Pine Mountain when he jumped 371 feet.
- 1980** – Another Austrian, **Armin Kogler**, set a new U.S. ski jumping distance mark when he flew 399 feet. Kogler also leaped 421 feet but fell on landing.
- 1991** – Austrian **Werner Schuster** flew to a new hill record of 400 feet or 122 meters.
- 1996** – At the World Cup Jumps, **Masahiko Harada** of Japan established a new Pine Mountain record with an incredible jump of 459 feet or 140 meters.
- 2002** – At Continental Cup Competition at Pine Mountain, the hill distance mark of 459 feet was tied by **Kalle Keituri** from Finland.
- 2006** – Austrian **Stefan Kaiser** set the new hill record of 468 feet at Continental Cup Competition at Pine Mountain.
- 2009** – The hill record of **471** feet was set by **Stefan Thurnbichler** of Austria at Continental Cup Competition at Pine Mountain.