

New Mexico Ski Hall of Fame

2011



Ferdinand A. Koch



Ferdinand A. Koch was born in Denver, Colorado in 1898 and moved with his family to Santa Fe in 1912 where his father started the Santa Fe Electric Laundry.

Ferd was an all-around athlete at Santa Fe High School as well as a Boy Scout. After serving in the U.S. Army during World War I, he returned to Santa Fe and developed his fathers' laundry business into a dry cleaning business called New Method Cleaners and helped reorganize the Santa Fe County Boy Scout Council.

In 1935, while serving as President of the Santa Fe Chamber of Commerce, he and fellow member, Daniel Kelly, introduced the concept of a winter sports business opportunity in the Sangre de Cristo Mountains.

This idea led to a feasibility study in 1936, financed by a group of investors formed by and including Koch. The study, known as the Santa Fe Winter Sports Prospectus conducted by Graeme McGowen, concurred with Koch's assessment and propelled him to form the Santa Fe Winter Sports Club. In 1937, Koch and Charles LeFebre purchased and installed a rope tow, and the Club opened Santa Fe's first ski hill at Hyde Park. By 1946, with a Forest Service road now as far as the Big Tesuque, Koch negotiated with the Forest Service to

relocate skiing to a higher elevation and more challenging slopes. Koch's Winter Sports Club financed tree clearing and rope tows for the new area known as Horse's Head.

In 1948, after a further Forest Service road extension to Aspen Basin, Koch helped establish a new investment group, Sierras de Santa Fe, who built the first chairlift at the Santa Fe Ski Basin. In 1949, Sierras de Santa Fe purchased an old mining lift from the Eureka Mine in Silverton, Colorado. Charles LeFeber and Clarence Via converted and installed it as a chairlift. It had a 603 foot vertical rise, and a detachable grip, bi-cable system built in 1888. Surplus Army Air Corp C-47 bomber seats were converted to be used as chairs on the lift.

In 1954, Koch negotiated the sale, on behalf of Sierras de Santa Fe, of the Santa Fe Ski Basin to Joe Juhan of Texas with Ernie Blake as manager.

Ferd Koch served for forty years on the Board of Directors of the Mutual Building and Loan Association and was active in numerous other civic and business associations. He was active in his dry cleaning business and promoting skiing and Santa Fe until his death in 1982.