

Salisbury's Olympians

It seems improbable.

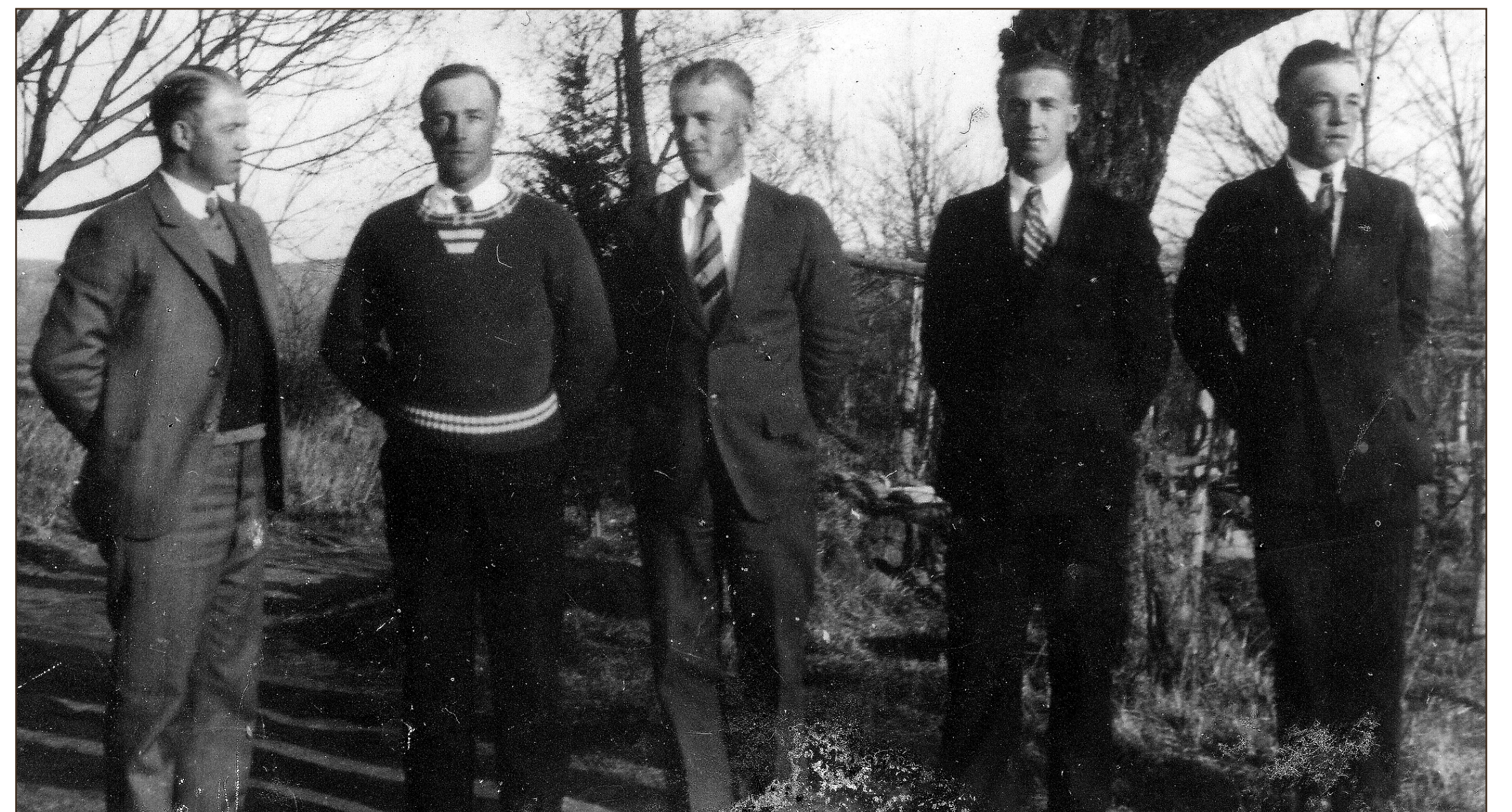
How could a small town nestled in the northwest corner of Connecticut become an epicenter of ski jumping? The answer lies with a group of Norwegians who immigrated to Salisbury in the 1920s and 30s. They brought a love of Nordic sports and introduced the town to ski jumping. They also happened to be among the best skiers in the world and talented instructors.

They were international ski jumping and Nordic sports champions and Olympians—superstars of their day. They taught generations of local youngsters who became champions and Olympians, who in turn, taught succeeding generations of champions.

Willie Hallihan once compared the Norwegians to a fantasy baseball “field of dreams” team. Suppose Babe Ruth, Ty Cobb, and Lou Gehrig settled in a small New England town, started up a youth league, and taught the villagers the game of baseball. Imagine the influence their celebrity and talent would have had on the kids. That actually is what happened with ski jumping and Nordic sports in Salisbury in the 1930s.

First Generation

John Satre was the first to arrive and he soon was joined by his brothers and other Norwegian ski jumping and Nordic champions. John cobbled together a makeshift ski jump off the roof of a hillside shed and gave a ski jumping demonstration to a crowd of 200 in 1926. The community was enthralled. A group formed the Salisbury Outing Club (SWSA's precursor organization), built a ski jump, and hosted its first major ski jumping competition January 29, 1927.



The Satre brothers c.1930s (l-r): John, Olaf, Magnus, Ottar, and Sverre. John's life was cut short in an accident, Magnus and Ottar went on to become Olympians, and Sverre helped create the Biathlon event for the 1960 Olympics.

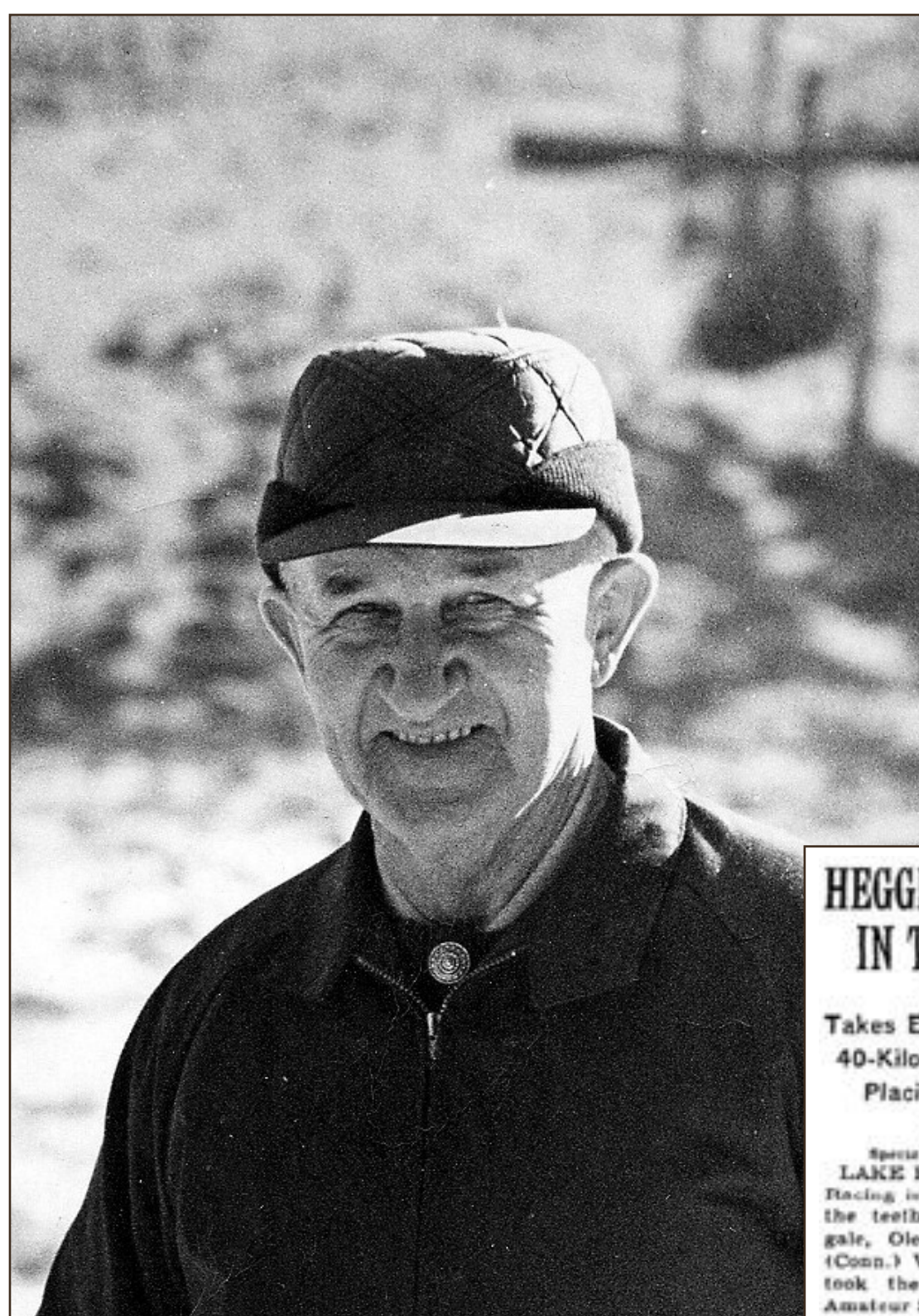
Ottar Satre at Eastern Championships at Lake Placid in 1931, taking 1st in Nordic Combined.



Magnus Satre at Lake Tahoe in 1932

The Satre brothers were champions who traveled all over the country to compete. Shown here with trophies won in Norway, Canada, and the U.S. are (clockwise from lower left): John, Olaf, Ottar, and Magnus.

Salisbury's Olympians



Ole Hegge,
World Champion: 1926, 1927, 1928 and, as of 1931, the undefeated Norwegian National Champion. Ole represented the Norwegian Olympic Cross-Country Teams in 1928 and 1932, and later settled in our area. Member of U.S. National Ski Hall of Fame.

HEGGE HOME FIRST IN TITLE SKI RACE

Takes Eastern U. S. Amateur
40-Kilometer Crown at Lake
Placid in Zero Weather.

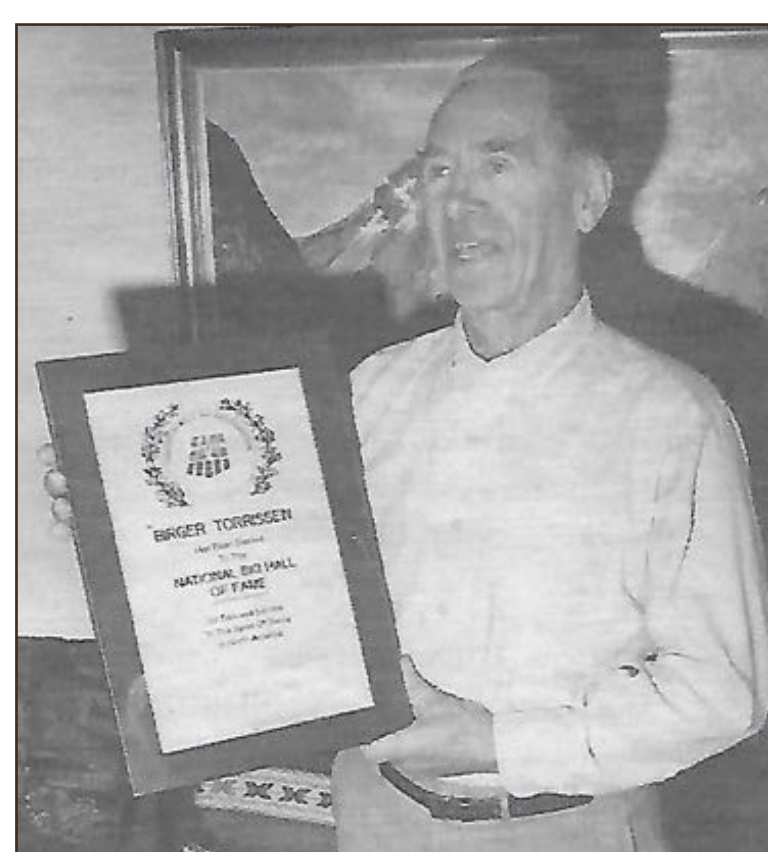
Special to THE NEW YORK TIMES.
LAKE PLACID, N. Y., Feb. 23.—
Racing in zero temperature and in
the teeth of a forty-mile-an-hour
gale, Ole Hegge of the Norfolk
(Conn.) Winter Sports Association
took the Eastern United States
Amateur Ski Association title in the
grueling 40-kilometer race today.
Hegge's time was 2 hours 27 min-
utes 29 seconds. This was the con-
cluding event of the three-day meet.
In second place came Birger Tor-
rissen, team-mate of Hegge. He
was 9 minutes and 35 seconds be-
hind the winner.
Nils Backstrom of the Swedish-
American Ski Club of New York
placed third in 3 hours 13 minutes
15 seconds.
Magnus Satre of Salisbury, Conn.,
four times winner of the national
cross-country ski title and a former
Eastern United States champion,
was sat out with severe cramps just
short of the 30-kilometer point and
was forced out.
Hegge made it a double triumph
by his victory today as he placed
first in the 18-kilometer race on
Wednesday.
The three men who finished had
frost-bitten faces, but otherwise
were in excellent condition.
Hegge has raced several times for
his native Norway in Olympic com-
petition, and his prowess is well
known in Europe. He is now rap-
idly coming into his own in the
United States. His triumph today
gives the Norfolk veteran the first
leg on the Head-to-Head trophy of the
Lake Placid Club Sno Birds, the
organization sponsoring the meet.

The New York Times,
February 24, 1934.

Birger Torrissen

was a member of the U.S. Cross-Country and Nordic Combined Team 1936, and member of the U.S. National Ski Hall of Fame. He and Sverre Satre developed the format of the Biathlon Competition introduced at the 1960 Olympics.

Salisbury native Gunner Jansen was a member of the first U.S. Olympic Biathlon Team that year.



Salisbury native, **Richard Parsons** was a member of the U.S. Olympic Cross-Country Ski Team in both 1932 and 1936.



Olle Zetterstrom,
member of the U.S. Olympic Cross-Country Team in 1932.



Members of the
U.S. Olympic Cross-Country Team 1932 (l-r):
Bob Reid, Dick Parsons, Olle Zetterstrom,
Nils Backstrom, and Corky Billings.

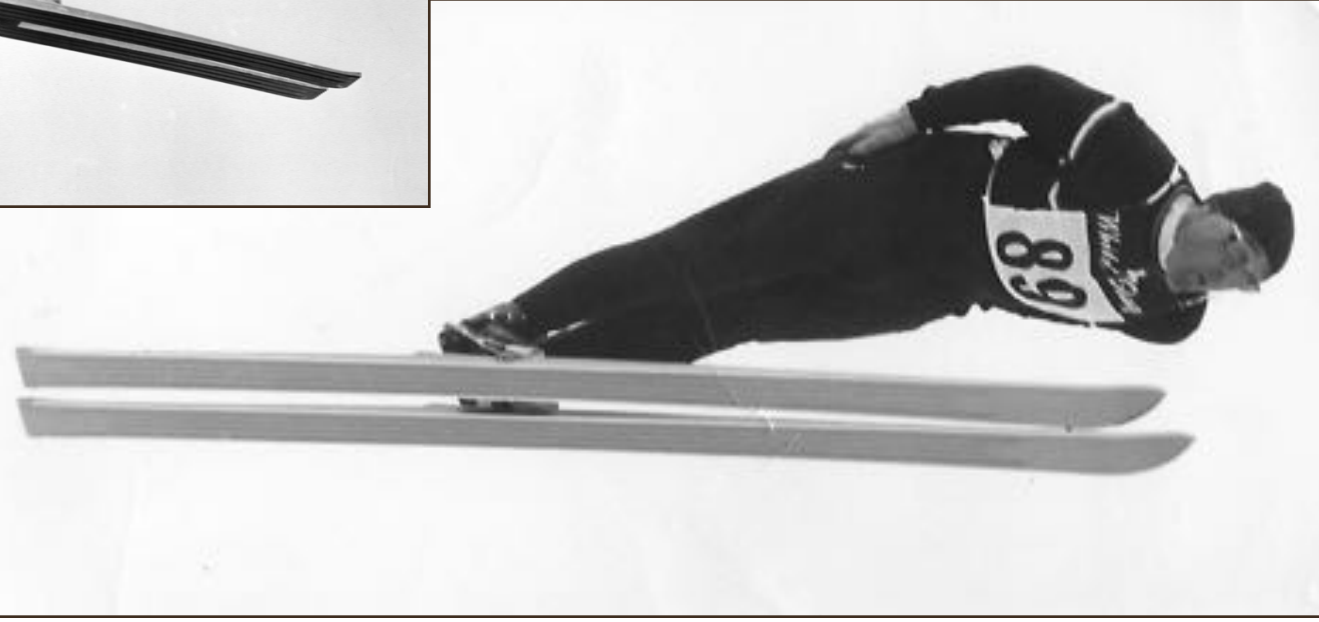
U.S. Olympic Cross-Country Team 1936 (l-r):
#1-Ottar Satre, #3-Birger Torrissen, #8-Magnus Satre,
#9-Richard Parsons.



Salisbury's Olympians

First Generation Passes it Forward

Ski jumping was more than a winter amusement in Salisbury—John Satre and others made it into something much bigger. Local kids at a young age learned to ski and were trained and coached by the Norwegians. Salisbury hosted national and international champions and held major meets. A number of local boys became Olympians and made their mark on the ski world.



Roy Sherwood was Salisbury's hometown hero. He was National Champion 1954, U.S. Olympic Ski Jumping Team member 1956, coach and trainer to local and Olympic teams, and a volunteer and benefactor to SWSA.



Birger Torrissen teaching youngsters the finer points of cross-country skiing on Selleck Hill.



John Harney, Jr., (right) member of the U.S. Olympic Biathlon Team 1980.



Larry Stone was mentored by Roy Sherwood, Ottar Satre, and others of the First Generation. A Class A jumper, Larry has profoundly influenced generations of ski jumpers for the past 30 years at local, national, and Olympic levels. He is a member of the American Ski Hall of Fame.

Judges at a 1990s Jumpfest. Salisbury's champions and Olympians continued to give back to their sport and the next generation of skiers long after they hung up their skis. Judges at a 1990s Jumpfest included (l-r): Jack Shultz, Art Togle, Jr. (a Class A Jumper), Roy Sherwood*, Art Togle, Sr.*
*indicates Olympian



Summer Jump 1953. Even fun and games are serious! Salisbury hosted a summer jump in 1953. In the tower on the right are the judges, Olympians Ole Hegge and Ottar Satre.



Salisbury's Olympians

Roy Sherwood

No other Salisbury native ski jumper achieved more fame than Roy Sherwood. He was a natural-born jumper with talent and unprecedented focus. His personal achievements won honor and distinction, not only to himself, but also his country and community. Yet, it was his perseverance that propelled him to greatness.

Roy started jumping when he was 7, and by age 15 he was winning meets at Satre Hill and out-jumping more experienced and older talent. By the time he turned 18, Sherwood found his stride as a competitor and became one of the top talents in the



Roy Sherwood in perfect form.



Rees Harris, a SWSA founder, presenting a trophy to Roy Sherwood in 1950.

nation. Largely self-taught, Roy watched and emulated expert jumpers he admired. Salisbury's Art Tokle, Sr. and Birger Torrissen, among others, encouraged him. An injury sidelined Roy and kept him from earning a spot on the 1952 Olympic team. However, he came back from it to become National Ski J u m p i n g Champion in 1954 when he was 21 years old.



Roy Sherwood after winning the National Ski Jumping Championship in 1954; (l-r) Roy, his mother, and twin brother, Bill.



U.S. Olympic Ski-Jumping Team 1956, in Cortina, Italy: Roy Sherwood is center back row.

had on ski jumping was legendary, not only as a competitor, but also as coach, mentor, and ambassador for the sport. After he stopped jumping, he judged competitions on his home hill and all over the country. Roy was a tireless volunteer for SWSA, taking on nearly every task and position possible. When Salisbury needed a new steel tower to keep ski jumping going, Roy was a generous benefactor who helped make it possible. He wanted to make sure youngsters today had opportunities that had been given to him.

Then tragedy struck. After the 1954 National Championships, Roy contracted polio. By sheer determination and an arduous training regimen, he overcame the effects of the disease and reached his dream to represent the U.S. at the 1956 Olympic Games in Cortina, Italy.

The impact Roy Sherwood



Roy achieved his dream to make it to the 1956 Olympics.

Olympic Importance

John Satre Memorial Hill

Ski Jumping is a Salisbury Tradition

Ski jumping and Nordic sports have been part of Salisbury's heritage since its improbable start in 1926 with John Satre's demonstration off the roof of a hillside shed. Time and again, the community stepped forward to ensure the tradition would endure.

A jump was built within months of Satre's demonstration and the town held its first competition January 1927. Leading up to, and during WWII, ski jumping went quiet. By war's end, the hill and jump had deteriorated and would need serious work. An intrepid group formed the Salisbury Winter Sports Association in 1945, reconfigured the hill, and built a new jump. At the January 8, 1950 opening ceremonies, the hill was dedicated in honor of John Satre ("say-tree"), the man who brought ski jumping to Salisbury. Two smaller jumps were added in the 1950s on nearby Hewat Hill to support youth development.

As the 21st Century got underway, the 50-year old jump looked every bit its age and Salisbury faced another turning point. Replacing the old structure with a state-of-the-art steel tower would cost \$850,000. Would there still be enough support in this small community to raise the level of funds required for a new jump to keep this unique tradition alive? Salisbury responded brilliantly.



Salisbury's new tower, built in 2011. The town hosted the Eastern Championships and its first Junior Olympics that year. Photo by Joe Meehan

Salisbury and the Junior Olympics

The Junior Olympics serve as the U.S. Junior National Championships and are geared towards athletes age 17 and below. It is the first national level competition these youngsters face as they progress up the pipeline to international competition.

In the 1980s, ski jumping was dropped from National Collegiate programs. The change adversely impacted young athletes who then had to compete at ski centers with larger jumps out of the comfort and skill levels for J-2 skiers. To address the problem, competition was divided into two categories: the Junior Olympics and the North American Championships.

Creation of the Junior Olympics opened national competition to sites like Salisbury's whose K-65 meter hill is more appropriate for younger athletes. Because the U.S. has few good hills of that transitional size, Salisbury has an opportunity to once again become a factor at the national level. In fact, for Eastern Division ski jumpers, Salisbury's is the only K-65 meter jump and a prerequisite before they can advance to the 90 and 120 meter Olympic jumps.



Richard Parsons Junior Ski Racing 1927 silver medal.

Olympic Importance

John Satre Memorial Hill

Salisbury's Ski Jumps

1927

Salisbury's first ski jump saw its share of great champions and Olympic contenders. It hosted meets through the 1940s, including Eastern Division tryouts for the U.S. Olympic team in 1931.



S-K-I-E-R ON THE HILL!!! c.1940s.



Past greats have jumped on Satre Hill including, (l-r): Ottar Satre, Martin Jensen, Birger Torrissen*, Magnus Satre*, and Ole Hegge*, c.1930.*

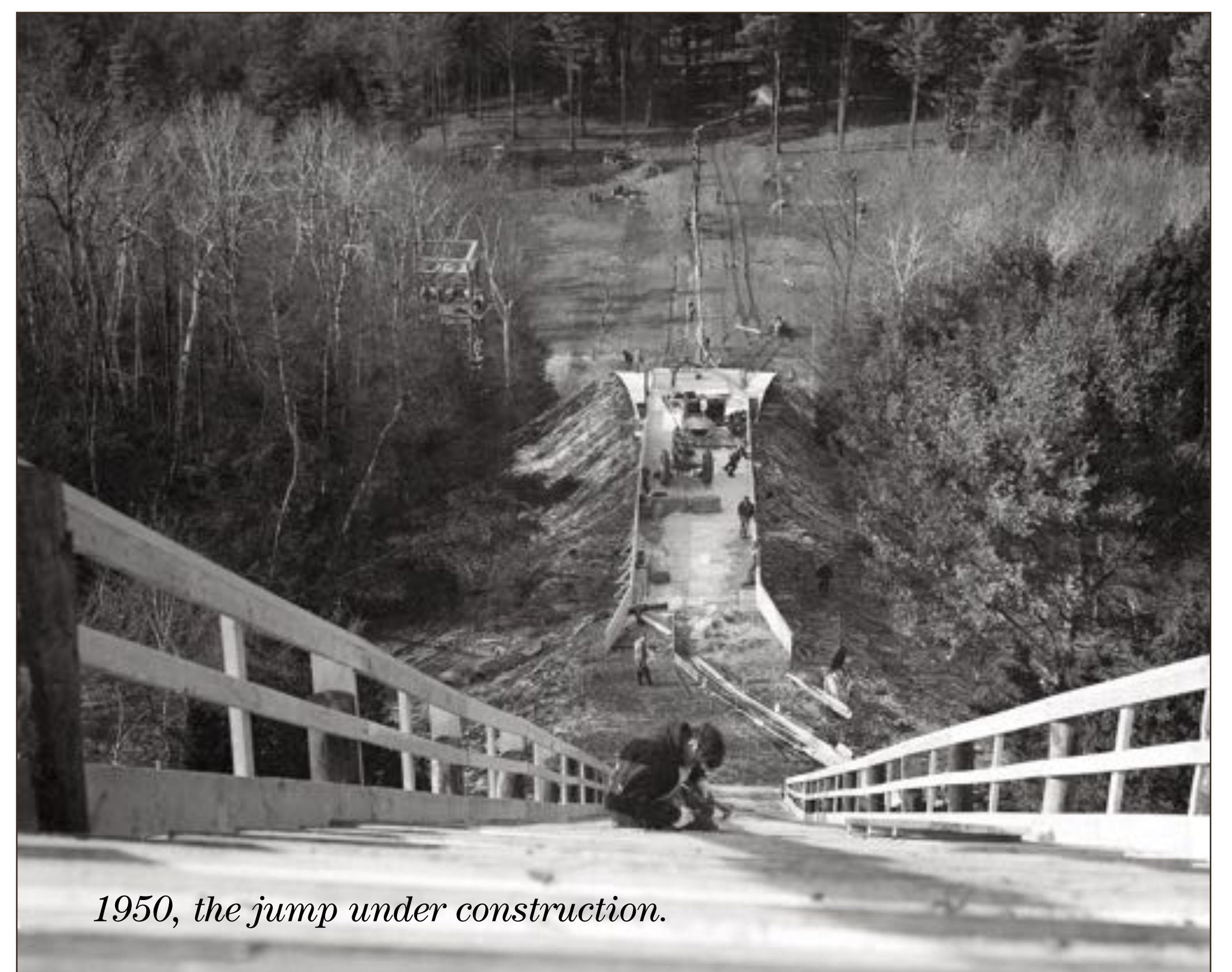
**Olympian and U.S. National Ski Hall of Fame member*



John Satre beside Salisbury's first ski jump, 1927

1950

The hill was upgraded and a new ski jump built in 1950 to conform to the U.S. Ski Association's standards. Salisbury hosted the U.S. Eastern Ski Jumping Championship that year. To help inaugurate the new jump, the world-champion Norwegian team, the Canadian team, and several top-ranked American stars joined the field of regional skiers.



1950, the jump under construction.

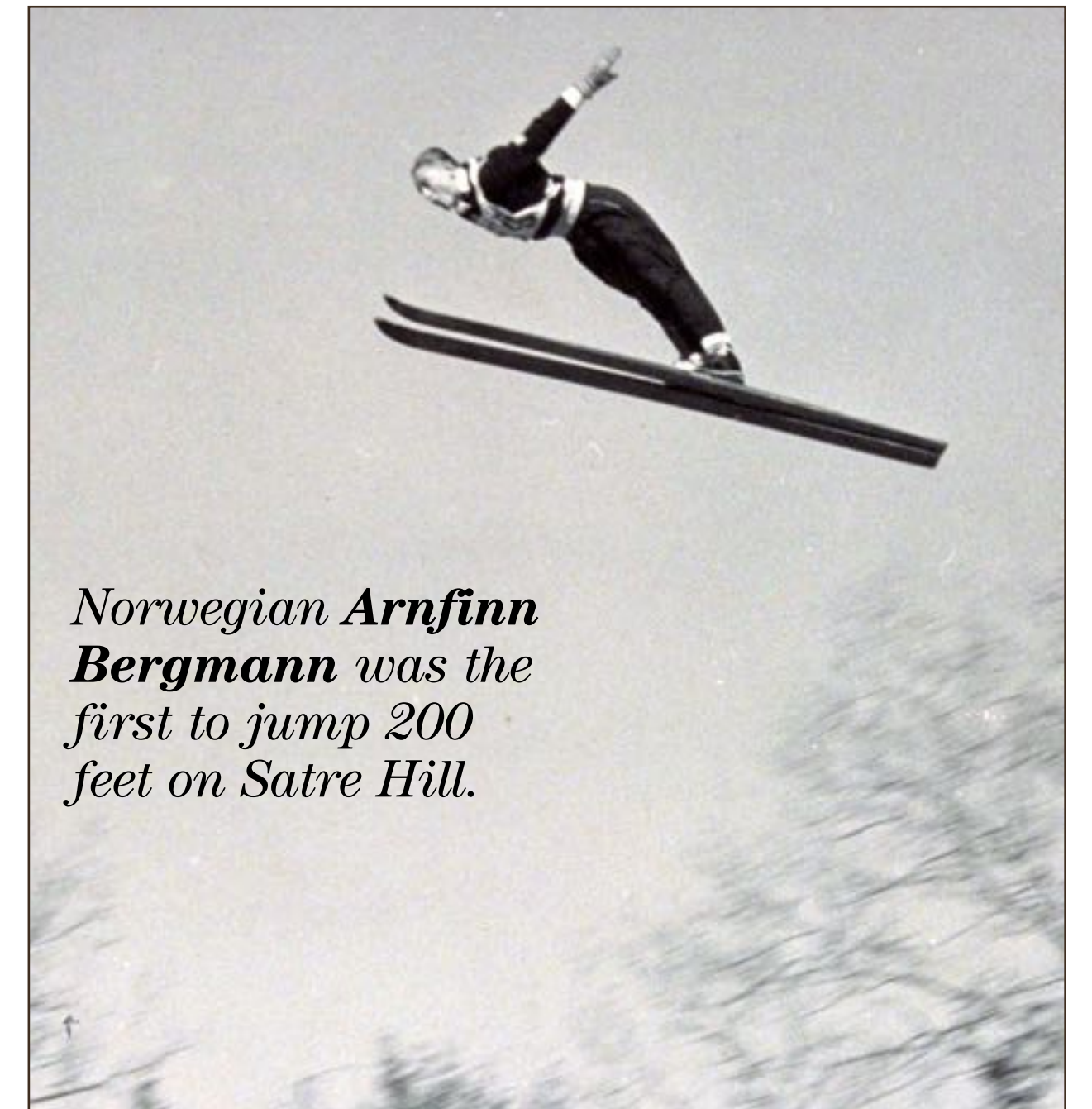
Olympic Importance

John Satre Memorial Hill

Norwegian Arnfinn Bergmann made the first ever 200-foot jump at Satre Hill witnessed by a crowd of 10,000. Two years later at the Oslo Olympics, Bergmann took home gold. Championship meets at Satre Hill in the 1950s and 60s continued to attract large crowds. Among the jumpers who dazzled them was Salisbury's own, Roy Sherwood.



Roy Sherwood on Satre Hill 1956, the year he became an Olympian.



Norwegian **Arnfinn Bergmann** was the first to jump 200 feet on Satre Hill.



National Olympic Trials were held at Satre Hill in 1963.

2011

Since 2011, Salisbury has hosted the Junior Olympics every 5th year, alternating with Anchorage, Minneapolis, Park City, and Steamboat Springs. Numbers of skiers coming to Satre Hill have moved on to become Olympic ski jumpers. Women's ski jumping finally became an official Olympic sport in 2014. Representing the U.S. as a member of the first women's ski jumping team was Lindsay Van, a skier well known to Salisbury.



Lindsay Van, U.S. Olympic Ski Jumping Team 2014.
Photo by Ernie Larsen

Salisbury offers a warm, friendly, and intimate setting where young jumpers can hone their skills before moving on to Olympic and international competitions. For a community that seems to have ski jumping in its DNA, it is thrilling to discover these talented youngsters as their careers are just taking flight.

Come to Satre Hill and watch the latest crop of ski jumping youngsters. One day they may be Olympians and you can tell your grandkids, "I saw them jump in Salisbury way back when..."



Gathering of Junior Olympic skiers at the White Hart Inn, Salisbury 2016.
Photo by Joe Meehan.