

Three Stallion Inn

Randolph, VT

Nordic Skiing Then & Now at Three Stallion Inn

by Charles Sutton

When Sam Sammis purchased the 1,300-acre Green Mountain Stock Farm in Randolph, VT, in 1971 he had no idea the rundown farm was shortly to become a cross-country ski touring center attracting U.S. Olympic Nordic skiers.

It was one of those lucky moments for all concerned when Sam told Olympic skier Kim Mumford, then a student at nearby Vermont Technical College, that she and fellow Olympic skier Bob Gray (whom she was soon to marry) could house-sit the farm and open an informal ski touring center there in exchange for some sweat equity and looking after the place.

The old farmhouse was in poor condition (farm animals had even been kept in it), and plumbing and heating were primitive at best. In the beginning only a few skiers, who were willing to rough it stayed there, although Kim and Bob put on hearty meals and kept the woodstoves going.

Then, during their first winter, a New York Times travel writer got stranded nearby in a blizzard and ended up at "Gray's Inn." His front page article on this adventure in the Vermont wilderness put the place on the map and attracted many curious skiers looking for an unusual challenge with lessons from the pros. Among their early students were Sam and his wife Jinny and their two children, Jesse and Suzanne.

Bob recalls he and Kim did everything, from cooking the meals and making beds to giving ski lessons. Produce from their farm in Hartland, VT—vegetables, beef, pork and sausage—fed the hungry skiers. They also made their own homemade fresh bread and hard cider.

"We'd charge \$75 for the weekend," Kim recalls. That included home-cooked meals, a place to sleep, usually in a bunk room, and skiing lessons. Tired skiers could also relax in a sauna bath the Grays had built in the blacksmith's shop.

The extensive 35 km trail system, which one can ski on today, was initially laid out and maintained by the couple. There are routes for beginners to experts. Deer and wild turkeys are often seen, adding to its natural setting.

Kim remembers renting the whole farmhouse out for weekends, and having Olympic Nordic ski team members, coached by Mike Gallagher, stay over.

"It was a lot of fun going there," Mike recalls. "A mom and pop place. When skiers were with me between competitions, we'd go over there. They wouldn't let us pay for meals or anything."

Another skier-guest was Bill Koch, now living in Peru, VT, who was the first American to win an Olympic medal in Nordic skiing—the silver in the 30 km for the 1976 Olympics. He is still the only North American male to win an Olympic medal in this event.

Bill recalls going to the Gray's for a little informal skiing with Bob Gallagher, who he said had the single most influence on his development as a professional skier. "Whatever Bob does, it's first class!"

Later Koch developed a new cross-country skiing technique that resembles ice skating, now known as the free-style cross-country skiing technique which has been used in Biathlon competitions since 1985. These days he has a small ski park next to his home where young people are encouraged to see what they can do on skis, maneuvering around a varying terrain with walls, jumps and dips.

Today The Green Mountain Ski Touring Center is part of a larger resort including the Three Stallion Inn, which Sam Sammis has been developing over the years. In addition to cross-country skiing and snowshoeing, other recreational activities include hiking, biking and golf. Trails are groomed to suit the different styles of cross-country skiing (classic, telemark, and skating.) Tim Schroeder, managing director of the inn's ski touring center, says he grooms the trails regularly with mechanized equipment—about a six-hour job, with half of the trails being prepared for skate track skiing for which a firm and smooth snow or snow crust is needed.

This past year the inn acquired the adjacent Montague Golf Club with its 18-hole course, so there is now a mile-and-a-half flat area just below the inn for skiers who prefer that type of terrain. Behind the inn about two-thirds of the trails are in a wooded area with the balance in open meadows.

Sam and Jinny continue to be avid skiers. Sam attributes his affinity for cross-country skiing to training for a year with the U.S. Army's Ski and Biathlon team during the winter of 1961–62 in Garmisch-Partenkirchen, Germany, a site of previous Winter Olympics. He had been stationed in Ankara, Turkey when the opportunity came to compete for a place on the Army's team. He qualified with a 5th place finish in this competition.

Sam attributes his success to advice from Joe Pete Wilson, a fellow classmate at St. Lawrence University and later an Olympian skier and coach, whose formula was one-third the right wax, one-third



Sam Sammis, Jinny Sammis (on left) with Tim Schroeder, director of the Three Stallion Inn's ski touring center in Randolph, VT.

technique, and one-third endurance!

Kim and Bob ran their ski touring center at the Stock Farm for five winters in the late 1970s.

The "no snow" winter of '79 forced the skiers to practice elsewhere. "So we had to work out on some powder on nearby frozen lakes," Bob remembers.

The couple eventually relocated their farm from Hartland to Newbury, VT, where they now own The Four Corners Farm, known for its wonderful strawberries and vegetables and other fresh produce. Bob skis regularly and still races when he can.



The Three Stallion Inn offers winter vacationers a special winter sports package which includes free cross-country skiing and snowshoeing (including equipment) for \$150 a night (double occupancy) on

weekdays or \$175 on weekends. The rate includes breakfast, inn amenities including fitness center and hot tubs, and hot chocolate, tea and coffee round the clock. Additional persons can stay in the room for \$25 a night.

A special incentive to dine at Lippitt's Restaurant at Three Stallion Inn allows guests a deduction of the total amount of the dinner from the room rate. The restaurant prides itself on using local produce and meats from neighboring Vermont farms. Morgan's Pub provides light fare. The inn was recently awarded a Triple AAA Three Diamond rating for lodging and the restaurant.

Day visitors have free use of the trail system, but donations are accepted and appreciated for maintenance. Skis, boots and poles can be rented for \$22 for adults and \$12 for children 12 and under. TSL snowshoes made in Burlington, VT rent for \$16 for adults and children.

There are lots of other winter activities nearby. Ice skating is available at the public rink in downtown Randolph and at Silver Lake in Barnard. Killington and Stowe are close by for downhill skiing. Winter carnivals take place through February.

World-class entertainment and concerts are offered at Chandler Music Hall right in Randolph, and at Dartmouth College's Hopkins Center and the Barre Opera House.

Another winter treat is a sleigh ride with Bavarian Oberlander draft horses, thanks to Merle Buck of Brookfield, VT who is available to the inn by appointment. Sleigh rides also are offered at Billings Farm and Museum in nearby Woodstock, VT.

Three Stallion Inn is located at 665 Stock Farm Rd. off Rt. 66 near I-89, exit 4, in Randolph, VT. For reservations or information call (800) 424-5575 or (802) 728-5575 or e-mail info@threestallioninn.com. For more information visit www.threestallioninn.com.



Back in the mid-seventies, Bob and Kim Gray, on far left in aprons, host a group of cross-country skiers from Connecticut, at Green Mountain Ski Touring Center.

photo courtesy of Bob Gray