



Founding History

The guest book contains the entry:

Enraptured by nature, thrilled by sport, imbued with the need to create a modest gathering place on the Arlberg for the friends of this noble pleasure, the excursionists involved in the extempore felt moved to found a Ski Club Arlberg!

St. Christoph, January 3, 1901

Club Chairman:	Carl Schuler
Club Chairman Deputy:	Dr. Rybizka
Club Cashier:	Josef Schneider
Club Warden:	Oswald Trojer
Club Member:	Beil, Assistent
Club Member:	med. F.Gerster
Club Member:	Liesl Trojer
Club Member:	Rudolf Schuler





This was accompanied by a drawing of the club badge that is still valid today: crossed skis with ski pole standing vertically. First of all, it is noticeable that this club has a female quota of 1/8 = 12.5% already at its foundation. Many clubs are still far from this a hundred years later.

"ex tempore"

The expression, no longer in use today, means "off the cuff." But what was happening off the cuff? The excursion or the founding of the SCA? In the first annual report of the SCA, which appears only six years later, Ing. Rudolf Gomperz speculates that the "ex tempore" must have referred to the excursion. Now, foundations require a certain aura, a festive consecration glow that outshines years and decades from the beginning - in short: a mythical essence that makes a slight shiver of sublimity trickle down the spine of all those born later. Unfortunately, at the moment of foundation, one does not know what will become of it - certainly not if the foundation takes place "ex tempore", which should mean: without preliminary work, intentions and concerns - let us say it frankly: on a whim. If then - as with the SCA - a foundation has become something significant, the lack of solemnity becomes painfully noticeable. This can be remedied: In the commemorative publication for the 75th anniversary, the author lets "...the slopes glisten on the moss, gilded by the sun and like a miracle of light" already during the climb to St. Christoph." There is immediately a completely different tone in the matter, a secret shine - but just projected from today into a yesterday that could know nothing of 75, even 100 years of existence. The further one moves away from a beautiful event, the more splendid it becomes. It has to be that way, because with a brightened, colorful memory, the present can be better endured.

That the newly founded club would have developed tremendously immediately was not to be expected from such an "ex tempore" idea. The members increased in the first year from eight to 17 and these members skied, otherwise there was not much going on.



In the second year the number of members rose to 43 and on March 1, 1903 a race was held. This race, the very first ski race of the Ski-Club Arlberg, clearly shows how little to give to alleged omens and foreshadowing: It did not take place at all due to bad weather, it was postponed to the next year and held on January 5 and 6, 1904 as the "I. Ski-Rennen in St. Anton am Arlberg".



Here it is worth taking a closer look at the program. The sports enthusiast of our days will miss dear program points and will find neither "downhill" nor "slalom". Instead, there was a so-called "long-distance run". The "long" is to be taken literally: Start at the Ulmerhütte in 2280m above sea level, then up the Schindlerferner in 2756m back to the Ulmerhütte, down to the Arlensattel in 2020m, back up to the Galzigspitze (2181m), down to St. Christoph in 1797m and via Moos to St. Anton in 1304m. This tour of violence is 25 kilometers long and includes almost 900 meters of ascent, no talk of descent yet. The weather was too bad, the route was shortened and now went from St. Christoph to the Galzigspitze, then downhill through the Steißbachtal via Moos to St. Anton. Seven men competed. Who won? Hans Handl from Innsbruck, member of the SCA as well as the German and Austrian Alpine Club. Time: 1 hour, 28 minutes and 5 seconds.



The first time of a "real" race gives me the opportunity to make a basic remark: I do not believe that any of the esteemed readers hope to find the race results of the last hundred years in this volume. This hope would be as absurd as futile - it would then also be a work better written with the help of a spreadsheet.

Even the most hardened ski fanatic could not deny a certain monotony to the result. You ski downhill and one is the fastest, the next the second fastest. The hundredths of a second are then converted into centimeters, because even the sports journalists have the dull feeling that 0.02 seconds are no longer associated with any sensory experience (for example, it takes 0.02 seconds for an eraser to fall from a height of two millimeters. If you don't believe it, try it out).



At this point, I may quote the old master Sir Arnold Lunn, who already said in an interview in 1971: "...in skiing there is too much professionalism and not enough pleasure. Skiers today ski ten months of the year. It's absurd, and I think they should be curbed. From them, people get an unreal idea of skiing..."



The first SCA race of 1904 still provided a real idea of skiing, with which even Sir Arnold would have agreed. In addition to the long-distance race, there was also a fast run of 2.5 kilometers in length with a 150-meter difference in altitude and nine participants - now that would be our downhill run, but not in terms of speed: The winner Josef Jennewein skied the course in one minute and 35 seconds, after all just under 95 km/h. Already the runner-up reached only 69 km/h. Then there was a women's downhill race with a length of two kilometers and a difference in altitude of 110 meters and four participants, as well as a youth race for boys under sixteen, in which 13 took part. Before the prize-giving ceremony, welcome telegrams from the Glarus and Black Forest Ski Clubs, from his Imperial and Royal Highness Archduke Eugene. Highness Archduke Eugene, from the German ski pioneer Prof. Paulcke, who dashing telegraphed "Ski-Heil!" in old loyalty.

The second race of the SCA was held at the end of January 1905. Again there was a long-distance race, whereby because of the weather "the shorter track, less endangered by avalanches, had to be chosen," writes Ing. Gomperz. Strangely enough, it is then no longer called fast run, but Men-Speeding. This is not an empty renaming, because the course is now a loop and must have had the character of a cross-country skiing course, because the winner needed 21 minutes and 12 seconds after all. After the women's speed race there is an innovation, namely the jump run, which was held under the aegis of skiing pioneer Viktor Sohm. He led the creation of the jump hill, trained the young jumpers and then acted as a referee during the competition. Dr. Fussenegger from Dornbirn came first with 13.80 meters. Afterwards, there was a youth race and a barrel stave race. "Amid lively merriment, Robert Habicher from St. Anton crossed the finish line first", i.e. a joke event; the barrel stave was obviously no longer a serious piece of sports equipment at this point (if it ever had been). At the end, for reasons of aesthetics, there was a show run, with two club members demonstrating art skiing.



So we find a strange mixture of skiing styles and "runs" that today have migrated to different areas of skiing: Long-distance running and jump run into the nordic disciplines, art skiing no longer exists on skis at all, only on skates. In 1904, these areas are not yet separated and differentiated.

A few days after the race, there is the first hint of a development that was to become of decisive importance for alpine skiing: A detachment of the I Tyrolean Kaiserjäger Regiment under the command of Lieutenant Count Thun was "detached" to St. Anton. The soldiers were to learn skiing. They were "warmly welcomed by the SCA and the entire population." This is a strange, alien tone for us today; this self-evident gliding over into the military, the annexation of sport by the military, but which is not felt as such at all. Why should soldiers be able to ski? This is not explained in a single word, and it is clear to the contemporary reader of the annual report of the time anyway: everything can be used and exploited for military purposes, every new technology, every new process, including sport. The military itself does not appear as a foreign body, but as the backbone of the state order, as indispensable as the air we breathe. In the annual report of 1907, the military appears in the person of Lieutenant Count Thun and his department as if in passing, as a small paragraph. Ten years separate the military ski course



in St. Anton from the insane high mountain battles of the Dolomite front, only ten years. We will come back to this point with the person Hannes Schneider yet.

In the same year, the SCA was a founding member of the Austrian Ski Association, the number of members had already grown to 99, the club was spending money, organizing races and its reputation was constantly growing, as can be seen from the observation of the race in 1906. It took place on January 5 and 6 and included no less than nine different competitions, including four for children and youth and one for seniors. However, one must not lose the context when reading the annual report: It is all there, you just have to make sense of it. Ing. Gomperz does not give us any interpretations, of course.

For example, his Imperial an Royal Highness Archduke Eugene: Two years before he had excused himself by telegraph, but now look, he is present himself and "followed the sporting performances on both days". He also donated prizes. In his company are Major General v. Kövess and the commander of the I Tyrolean Kaiserjäger Regiment, Colonel v. Grivicic. The Minister of the Single Railway, Dr. Heinrich v. Witteck, was there with his sister. The Inspector General of the Austrian Railways Gustav Gerstel was right there with the family. Wait a minute! What is going on? The year is 1906. Six years earlier, this club had been founded, by a counted eight people, "ex tempore" it is expressly said, on a whim, in a guest house room, inspired by sport as well as mulled wine - and now, six years later, the military aristocracy and the Minister of Railways come to watch the race? Ski racing seems to have been an incredibly popular thing in 1906. There must have been a lot going on behind the scenes, which of course you don't read a word about in the 1907 annual report. Oh yes: One of the new items is the military race, significantly combined of uphill and downhill. 17 men take part. "The ten prizes received Kaiserjäger." They did not receive the honor of being named. Ing. Gomperz thinks nothing of it. Whoever is in the military is a man, no longer a bourgeois individual. It already smells a bit like material. On the other hand: The ladies' race could not take place due to lack of participation. (Where did the five ladies from last year's ladies' speed race go? Did fathers, husbands or fiancées "interfere" - so between us it is a fun, but in the presence of his Imperial



and Royal Highness? I would like to know; Gomperz, of course, does not give the slightest hint. In any case, "eight Innsbruck gentlemen jumped in, who executed an immensely cheerful, brilliantly sporting downhill run from Moos in somewhat questionable ladies' quarters." Military downhill and joke race, schoolchildren's race and senior jumping race - a strange amalgam.

The impression is reinforced by the supporting program. In the evening, a ski drama was performed: "The finery of St. Christoph", written by the wife of the founding member Gerstel. There were "musical and declamatory performances" in the breaks between the sporting events, whatever that might have been. In any case, the sister of the Minister of Railways, Irma v. Witteck, was in charge. For the ski ball on the evening of the second day, most seem to have been too tired.

One also thinks one is dreaming when one reads that after the race there was a debate about the amateur status of some participants - in 1906! Who is meant, is nobly concealed, but it can only be the mountain guides, because advertising contracts have not yet existed. At the end of 1906, the SCA has 155 members. It is enough to skim the membership list to consolidate the vague impression we have gained so far: The SCA is a bourgeois affair, well, a very bourgeois one. Hardly anyone doesn't put down their profession, and that profession is generally an upscale one. "k.u.k. Hauptmann" (with "Hauptmannsgattin"). "Stationmaster", "Senior teacher", "University professor", "Staff veterinarian, Ulan regiment No. 19, Ulm", "Notary candidate" and so on.

Of the 155 members, only 37 are from the Arlberg, which is 24%. Most of them just stand there, for example as "Schuler Walter, St. Anton" or as "Schmied Franz, St. Jakob". Without title or profession. Homeland as the only addition to the name. St. Anton, St. Jakob. Homeland must be enough. Because, isn't it true, the others from Ulm, Vöcklabruck, Innsbruck and Reutlingen have to introduce themselves - say who they are. Art painter or notary candidate. Or k.u.k. Lieutenant. We from there don't have to. We know who we are. Home must be



enough. One hundred years later, we can say that home was enough. The whole world knows the Arlberg.