



ALTA IS FOR SKIERS.
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ALTA POWDER NEWS

HISTORICAL EDITION

Online edition available at alta.com



Early Alta, about 1878. Note snow fences upper right.

Early photograph of Alta
circa - early 1870s.

Patsey Marley

Who was he or she?

Most skiers and visitors to Alta are familiar with the massive mountain ridge located on the far eastern side of the Alta basin, just south of Grizzly Gulch, that carries the name Patsey Marley. Questions still prevail as to who owned the namesake of Patsey Marley Ridge. Two differing explanations exist.

Charles "Chic" Morton's Version

Charles "Chic" Morton was the past President and General Manager of the Alta Ski Lifts Company. His version goes like this:

"Patsey Marley was the Madam of a brothel located on the east end of Alta Basin, where the Alta Ski Area Maintenance building currently stands. Ironically, this building is often referred to as the Cat House because the snow cats are skillfully parked and serviced there. The miners knew Madam Patsey Marley so well that they named the entire hillside Patsey Marley in tribute of her special skills."

Many of us at Alta took Chic's version as truth incarnate and repeated his version many times. Sometimes we embellished the story a bit, or a lot, when it seemed the right thing to do.

Charles L. Keller Version

Charles Keller is a professional historian. His version states that Patsey Marley was a man, not a woman! His birth name was Patrick Marley. He was born in Ireland around the early 1840s and immigrated to the United States arriving in Utah in the early 1870s. What drew him to Utah is not known, but he ended up coming to Alta during the peak mining period and filed a mining claim in his name, dated May 23, 1870, on the hillside which now carries his namesake.

Marley was in his early 30s at that time and apparently had acquired substantial prospecting and mining skills before arriving at Alta. Over the next year, Marley's claim gained attention when the Salt Lake Herald newspaper posted an article that a man by

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ALTA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The AHS Mission Statement

The Alta Historical Society is a not-for-profit organization, approved by the IRS under 501 (c) (3) guidelines. It was formally established in 1995, chartered by direction of Alta Mayor, Bill Levitt and initially set up under the umbrella of The Friends of Alta.

The specific mission of the Alta Historical Society is to:

- *Collect and preserve valuable historical photographs, film, documents, artifacts and oral histories that are directly tied to Alta's past.
- *Facilitate ways and means to tell the story of Alta's rich history in ways that will enhance the cultural awareness for visitors and citizens of the Alta community.
- *Work in support of, and collaborate with, other organizations having a focus on Utah history and goals which are compatible with the Alta Historical Society.



Little Cottonwood Canyon
miners map detail

the name of Patsey Marley had brought into Alta City a sizable amount of bullion from his mine and smelter—which was known as the "Marley Furnace."

Patrick Marley did not stay long in Alta. He was prone to altercations with other miners. Some of these altercations ended with him being taken to police court or jail. He left Alta in the mid-1870s and floated around the Utah-Idaho area, ultimately being separated from all of the money he had gained during his Alta mining years. He died a virtual pauper in Salt Lake City on 12 December 1916. His unmarked gravesite is in Mount Calvary Cemetery.

Your Version Welcomed

Possibly, you have a third version that explains how Patsey Marley ridge got its name. If you do, write it down, include a detailed provenance of your version, sign and date each of your documents, and send them to David Davenport, Alta Historical Society, Alta, Utah, 84092.





Rush Speddon and Alan Engen

The “Wild Old Bunch”—Alta’s Senior Skier Ambassadors

Over the years, Alta has been the ski home to many enthusiastic outdoor supporters of Utah’s scenic Wasatch Mountains. Perhaps no group has provided a more exuberant, happy, and fun-loving presence to the Alta environment than a gathering of skiers who range in age from the 50s to the mid 90s and who go by the name The Wild Old Bunch.

Rush Speddon, a retired business executive and a western historian of merit, deserves the primary credit for getting the group started in the late 1960s and early 70s and for coming up with the now-well-known name via a home movie he filmed and produced titled “The Wild Old Bunch.”

The Wild Old Bunch began when Rush Speddon and a good friend, the late Annie Noy, took a powder lesson at Alta in the mid 1960s and immediately fell in love with skiing the “Greatest Snow on Earth.” Wanting to share this pleasure with others, they began gathering others who shared a similar interest in powder skiing. In 1971, Annie Noy, at age 64, lost her life in a tragic ski accident; however, the group stayed together, with the core members being, in addition to Speddon, Johnny Bell, Art Wilder, Ray Hinkle, Foley Richards, and Walt Katzenberger. This group became the unofficial hospitality greeters at Alta.

Over the span of almost a half-century, The Wild Old Bunch has grown from just a handful of dedicated powder skiers to over 200 members. They can be recognized on the Alta hillsides by a distinctive round patch on their ski wear, featuring a smiling face. When not skiing, they can usually be found inside Alta’s Alf’s Restaurant, enjoying lunch and “holding court” with other interested skiers. Some well-known Alta skiers have been or are current members, include the late Alf Engen, the late Lowell Thomas, Suzy Harris Rytting, Nic Nichol, Alan Engen, Keith Lange, and Ruth Rogers Altmann.

According to Speddon, there are no rules to join this group and there are no dues. The only requirement is that you enjoy skiing and the companionship of others who have like interests. The group has been interviewed and written about by such legendary ski personalities as the late film producer, John Jay, and by the Associated Press. In 2006, a local TV station made a short special that featured the group and extolled the special contribution they make to Alta.

As a tribute, skier Bruce Sherman wrote a reflective poem titled The Wild Old Bunch. A few selected stanzas follow:

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There’s a group that skis at Alta
That stops at Alf’s for lunch.
A gang of grizzled veterans...
They’re called “The Wild Old Bunch!”
Each one has skied for many years,
Their first lift a rope tow...
But now that they’re “in the bucks,”
Heli-skiing’s where some go.

You’ll find them on the mountain
From the first day to the last...
And it will just amaze you
That they can ski so fast.

Their style and form are varied,
Stein Erikson they’re not,
But regardless of conditions,
They don’t really fall a lot. . . .

Their clothing runs the gamut,
Obermeyer and Bogner, too.
All of them wear helmets...
Concussions? There have been a few.

They show up when it’s snowing...
They love it when there’s sun,
Regardless of the weather,
You’ll spot them on every run.

They come from many places,
From the plains to the shining sea.
When the snow begins to fall,
Alta’s where they want to be.

Long live The Wild Old Bunch!



The original four members of the Wild Old Bunch. L to R: Art Wilder, Foley Richards, Johnny Bell, Rush Speddon
Photo circa 1973



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From Left: Chic Morton, Ruth Altman and Alf Engen

A Tribute to Ruth Rogers Altmann, A Friend of Alta

Ruth Rogers Altmann is a long-time devotee of Alta, having first come to Alta in 1944. "I fell in love with Alta at first sight," she says. Ruth used to come to Alta three or four times a year. Now she usually visits Alta once a year during the quiet time after Thanksgiving and before the Christmas holiday. She also comes for special occasions, such as to participate in Alta's 50th anniversary celebration held during the 1988-89 season. We hope that she will be able to come for the 70th anniversary celebration, which will be held during the 2008-09 season.

A Few Facts About Ruth Rogers Altmann

Chronologically, Ruth Rogers Altmann is 90 years young. Spiritually, she is a charming sprite, maybe 9 or 10 years old. Ruth claims that she was supposed to be born in 1918, but she could not wait. As usual, she was a little ahead of her time. She was born 30 minutes and 1 second early, at 11:30 p.m. on 31 December 1917 in Vienna, Austria, where she grew up and was educated. When she was 16 years old, to improve her English skills and to learn new things, Ruth spent a summer living with a family on the Isle of Wight. She emigrated from Austria to the United States in 1938, and with her help, her parents emigrated in 1940, escaping to freedom just before the Nazi Germany Anschluss of Austria. Ruth now lives on Park Avenue in New York City.

Ruth has served and promoted Alta for many years. She remembers well her participation in the planning and surveying of the Albion-Sugarloaf area with James Laughlin, Chic Morton, and Alf Engen. She remembers helping Dr. Andre Roche of Aspen fame complete a lengthy, complex U.S. Forest Service questionnaire about avalanche control work in Alta. Then Roche was an expert from Switzerland who was investigating a new avalanche control technique.

Today, while recharging her spiritual batteries in Alta, Ruth usually skis part of the day and paints part of the day, using her truly unique painting methods and style. When Ruth returns to her home in New York City, fortunately for us, part of her spirit remains here in Alta—always to be felt and never to be forgotten.

Some Business Particulars

Ruth Rogers Altmann served as President of Ruth Rogers Enterprises Int., a consulting, design and marketing firm. She was the Fashion Director of Six Continents Ltd., the Import Division of Cluett, Peabody International. Ruth has traveled the world, serving clients such as Koret of California, White Stag Manufacturing Company, and Hercules Fibers, helping design, merchandise, and market their products and services. Ruth served for more than a decade as a Special Consultant to the Costume Institute of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City.

Awards and Commendations

Ruth has received many awards. We list only a few:

- Awarded the outstanding Designer of the Year—from both Time and Newsweek.
- Showcased as an eminently successful business executive and artist who left Austria prior to the start of World War II by the creators of "Persecuting Grandfathers, Interviewing Grandsons."
- Received the highly distinguished Silver Medal of Honor from the City of Vienna for her life-long business and artistic achievements.
- Inaugurated as an Honorary Member of the Alf Engen Museum Foundation at its opening.
- On 9 April 2004, Ruth was inducted as an Honorary Citizen of the Town of Alta by Mayor Bill Levitt, with a Certificate of Recognition that eulogized her for "dedicated and loyal service above and beyond the call of duty" to the Town of Alta.

Artist Beginnings

Ruth Rogers Altmann is the daughter of the well-known Austrian architect Arnold Karplus. Ruth was reared in a cultured environment that included many influential Viennese architects and artists. She developed a strong love of the arts, particularly painting. Her formal fine-arts training began at the Frauenakademie and continued at the Kunstgewerbeschule under the tutelage of Professor Paris von Guetersloh, a noted European artist. Her love of art led to a career in fashion design. Ruth also studied dancing, ballet, acrobatics, and 3-meter diving because she enjoyed the beautiful discipline and the rhythm. In retrospect, Ruth

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says, "Well, skiing was my very first love. I enjoyed being in the mountains, where the air was fresh, and being with people who shared my love for the sport."

For the next half-century, her creative genius influenced sports fashion. Ruth tells that she "... brought stretch fabric from Paris [to the U.S.]. That was the first time stretch fabric was brought here in garments for skiing. I advised Harold Hirsh, then president of the White Stag organization, that it needed to be the first mass-producers of stretch ski pants in the ski fashion industry. He followed my recommendation, and the rest is history."

In 1938, Ruth designed the world's first ski jacket that had a concealed hood built into the collar between the outer shell and an inner lining and enclosed with a zipper. "I designed it this way because I did not like the look of ski jackets with the hood hanging outside. I created the first design of the concealed hood and then had it manufactured. It was an almost immediate hit, and the concept was patented. I consider this one of my more significant successes."

Ruth loved to mix styles from many nationalities in her fashion designs. She said, "I would mix things from different cultures to show how ideas and fashion design from one place influence ideas and fashion designs in another places. I would take a Chinese hat, add an Austrian top, and maybe a Greek bottom. I mixed different countries in one outfit, showing that the seeds of fashion come from all over the world and are mixed together. In other words, the ideas interact."

Without a break, Ruth shifted to another topic. "I made special cardboard dummies; the limbs could be moved. Sometimes I would have the dummies sit next to me in the car and the cops would stop me. Very humorous."

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Ruth in the early 1940s, perhaps her first Alta trip

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Ruth at Alta, 2005 Peak Photo

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Before retiring from fashion design in the late 1980s, she was honored in Florence, Italy, by being made a “knight” for her contributions to the fashion industry, particularly for her unique, colorful cashmere sweaters, dresses, and outfits. According to Ruth, “the Italians wanted to exhibit my outfits in the Pitti Palace. To show them in such a prestigious place, they had to give me a special title, so they ‘knighted’ me by Italianizing my name to connect my fashion to Italy.” Because of this, Ruth Rogers Design became di Roggero Design. Ruth’s paintings are a delight of color. They capture the feeling and the experience of the place. An unknown art critic partially captured the spirit of her paintings with the following figurative sentence: “The paintings transcribe and define a rhythmic dance of choreographed vivid color hues.”

Ruth remains an internationally celebrated artist, having exhibited her paintings in such places. We list only a few:

- Ashawagh Hall in East Hampton, Long Island, New York.
- Columbia University, New York.
- Ann Harper Gallery, Amagansett, Long Island.
- Vienna, Austria in 1994.
- Elaine Benson Gallery in Bridge Hampton and Brownstone Gallery, New York City.
- In Alta, the Goldminer’s Daughter, Alta Peruvian Lodge, and the Alta Lodge.

Teaching Art At Alta

Ruth tells of “dragging my children to art exhibitions so that they would be stimulated. I would take them to the children’s department, sit them down, and have them paint what they saw. And here at Alta, I have done the same—having children paint what they saw. It was wonderful what they would do. I sometimes had parents help the children. But they would tell the children what to paint and how to paint. I would tell the parents ‘Get out of here.’ That’s what is wrong with the education of art. We must let the children spit it out themselves, not just paint what their teacher or parents want.” When asked if this principle of freedom applied to teaching skiing, Ruth replied: “Yes, children must have some freedom of movement.”

Learning to and Teaching Skiing In Austria

When Ruth was about 5 years old, her father taught her to ski. He had been taught by Mathias Zdarsky. A few years later, she became a children’s instructor. Ruth says, “. . . Zdarsky taught volunteers, like my father, to teach the farmers. There were no fees paid, and in my family, my parents, my siblings, and I were all expected to teach. So as a small child, I taught other children how to ski.” This was in the 1920s.

Ruth probably is the only person still living who personally taught in Mathias Zdarsky’s ski school. Zdarsky (1874-1945) is often referred to as the father of the Alpine (downhill) Ski Technique. Zdarsky’s technique differed markedly from the Norwegian Telemark (cross county). He transformed the cross-country skiing to downhill skiing during the late 1800s and the early 1900s. Zdarsky developed a highly disciplined skiing technique and systematic teaching methods that matched the equipment, worked in the steep mountains, and met the needs and the customs of the Austrian people.

Mathias Zdarsky wanted to teach the people who lived and worked in the high mountains of Austria (who primarily used snowshoes) how to ski downhill—and he did. Zdarsky was one of the first to teach Alpine skiing successfully. By 1908 Zdarsky had more than 1,200 pupils (some accounts double this number) in his ski school.

Ruth deviated somewhat from Zdarsky’s systematic, even rigid, teaching methods and his highly disciplined skiing technique. She gave herself “freedom of movement,” and later when teaching, she gave the children as much “freedom of movement” as was technically and customarily possible. Ruth, when racing, would lift the single, long pole off the snow, balance it across the skis in front of her, reducing drag and increasing speed—which won races. “In doing that, I was already using the Hannes Schneider technique,” which used two short ski poles, put weight predominately on the downhill (outside) ski, and leaning away from the mountain—quite a different technique from Zdarsky’s dragging one long pole and leaning into the mountain. “But that [lifting the single pole off the snow] was my trick to win,” said Ruth.

In May 1938, the Alpen-Ski Club, located in Vienna, Austria, provided official documentation attesting to Ruth’s teaching contributions and skiing skills as a young racer. This document was signed by the Director and Commissioner of the Alpen-Ski-und Wander-Vereins und Des Neuen Ski-Touristen-Clubs.

Continued Learning At Alta

Building upon her early ski experiences in Austria, Ruth expanded her skiing skills by following in the tracks of Alta’s ski school directors Sverre, Alf, and Alan Engen over a period of six decades. And through the years, Ruth has kept pace with the changing techniques and improved ski equipment. Today she skis the piste and the powder wearing plastic ski boots and standing on twin-tipped Pocket Rockets.

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In 1988, Ruth decided to become a ski racer—no matter that she was in her eighties. Ruth felt she should give it a try, particularly since she had been specially invited to compete in a rather prestigious ski event—the Gerald Ford American Ski Classic in Vail, Colorado. After training with Alan Engen in the gates at Alta for 2 weeks, off she went to Vail.

After beating everyone in two heats of competition, she was paired with a young lady in her twenties. No handicap was given to Ruth—instead the handicap was given to the young woman Ruth was racing against! Ruth says, “that made me mad! So I went as fast as I could and passed her up. The crowd was yelling so loudly I lost my concentration and fell just before the finish line. The only thing hurt was my pride. However, I did get a nice jacket out of the experience.” To Ruth, Alan Engen has written, “Nice going, Ruth! Don’t ever let go of your special spark. You are indeed an inspiration to us all!”

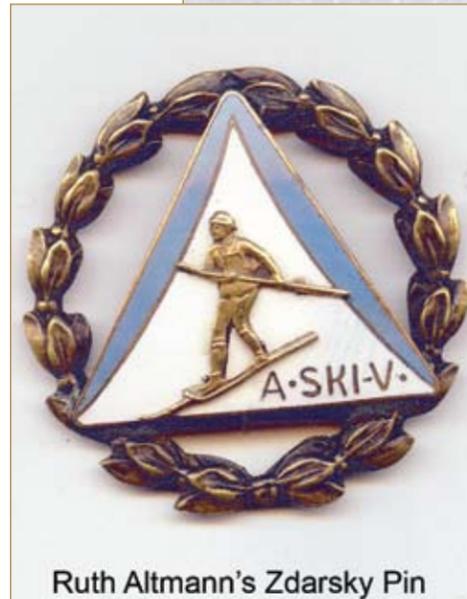
Ruth again speaking. “Yes, What I enjoy . . . is not so much that I win or do not win. I really don’t care, but that . . . [my skiing] is an inspiration for the younger people. They come to me and say that it is an inspiration for their future. Also, they want their older family members to be encouraged by it as well.

Ruth continues, “that is what I also enjoy with my painting. The people who buy my paintings tell me that they enjoy looking at them because they give them pleasure and inspiration and that the pictures make them feel happy. So that is my dividend, my best dividend, of the paintings I do. Not that they are unique in the way I paint [which they are], where color is one of my big strengths [which it is], but that they inspire and give pleasure to other people.”

Ruth Rogers Altmann’s Tribute to Alta

Ruth smiles demurely when she hears that Victoria and Alexandra Thorson (her daughter and granddaughter) have been skiing Hammer Head, a steep run directly under the Supreme Lift, in 2 feet of powder. Ruth is pleased that Alta is bringing up Alexandra’s skiing to match her snowboarding—and especially that Alexandra has returned to skiing.

Today when asked what Ruth likes best about Alta, she answers as she has often answered before: “Alta remains my very favorite area to ski, paint, and refuel my energies. It is the only resort where I return yearly and where I can happily share it with some of my family, my daughter, Victoria Thorson, who shares my feelings for Alta, and who generally joins me for Thanksgiving. Although I ski in many parts of the world, nothing can top the beauty of Alta, the special congenial atmosphere I find with the Engen family, and the very special treatment and ambiance of the Alta Lodge created by Mimi and Bill Levitt and their family.”



Ruth Altmann’s Zdarsky Pin

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