



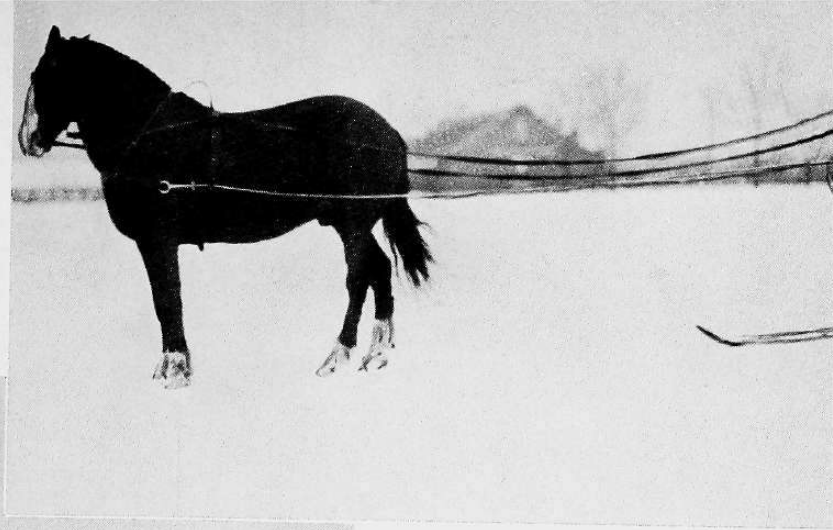
## Winters of Content

“THE MERCURY often, during the coldest season, drops to five and ten degrees below zero. . . . The human system . . . seems braced and strengthened by it. It is indeed a luxury to breathe this pure air in winter.” These words, written in 1857, may have been defensive, but surely they were also a defiant call to Minnesotans to make the best of what often seems the longest of the four seasons.

These pages illustrate some of the ways in which Minnesotans over the years have made sport of winter. The skaters above were photographed at Perch Lake in Polk County about 1914; the soapbox sled at the left was a forerunner of many modern models. Tobogganing, shown below, has claim to being one of the oldest cold-weather sports in northern climes. In 1823 a diarist described Indians and voyageurs using “little sleighs made of a single piece of thin, flat wood, bent up at one end in a curl.”

Innovations provided added challenge to skilled sports enthusiasts: skjoring, shown here at Fort Snelling; golf on skis; skating on stilts; and sleighing behind young moose. Freezing temperatures produced the necessary icy surface for team games such as hockey, pictured on page 386 as played at the College of St. Thomas in 1924, and curling, introduced into the state by Scotsmen in 1884 and enjoyed here on the Mississippi River. And there were individual sports — iceboating and snowballing, of course. These photographs, all from the Minnesota Historical Society’s picture collection, clearly indicate that winter in the North Star State was not always tough sledding.









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