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### Granite Peak: From Erosion of Quartzite to One of the Best Ski Areas

One of the oldest ski resorts in the country, Granite Peak, has a deep history tracing back two billion years. Now it has 74 trails and attracts people from all over the world. Although named for granite, the hill is made from quartzite. For years it was believed to be the highest point in Wisconsin, but Timm's Hill is barely 20 feet higher. The Chippewa used it as a lookout and guide and called it "Opigeganama", the first part means "rib". In 1893 it was used for sandpaper manufacturing and unsuccessfully mined for gold. The Wausau Kiwanis club began the process of the mountain's recreational function and it was named a state park in 1927. While men had tried to climb to the top to prove they could do it, the park remained undeveloped. It was not until 1935 that walking paths, road widening, and the building of a campground and gazebo were initiated. However Chamber of Commerce leader, Walter Roehl, began working on making the area available for skiing.

Rib Mountain opened for skiing in 1937 as one of the first ski resorts in North America. "We have just enjoyed that mountain," Elnora Buechler, age 99, said. "I skied because we were here, it was available, why not take advantage of it." She started skiing at Rib Mountain at a young age and experienced the changes from the rope tow, T-bar, and chairlift. "You could almost take a nap on the slow chair before you got to the top," she said. "Now that speed chair goes so fast! It has improved tremendously." When the hill first opened, it had the longest ski lift in the country. In 1938, the Marathon County Civic Corporation began funding a chalet, and in 1939 it opened. Described as "probably the finest structure of its kind in the midwest states," by the Wausau Daily Record-Herald, it cost \$32,000 and still stands as the "Historic Chalet." Elnora reflected on the chalet, which has changed since she was skiing there. "It was so different back in the past. They didn't have inside toilets! That was kinda cold." Luckily, in 1957, bathrooms would be inside, along with a glassed-in sun porch and a ladies lounge. In 1954 snowmaking technology had developed in New York, though it would not be used on the hill until 1958. "With the snowmaking we have now, which is excellent, and the natural snow we get