

Cataloochee Ranch and Ski Area ^[1]

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by Kathleen B. Wyche, 2006

Additional research provided by Marilyn Wright.

Cataloochee Ranch and Ski Area, the first ski slope south of Virginia, encompasses approximately 1,000 acres on a ridge above Maggie Valley in [Haywood County](#) ^[2]. Forester Tom Alexander and his wife Judith Barksdale Alexander opened the original Cataloochee Ranch in 1933 as a rustic trout fishing, horseback riding, and pack tripping resort in the Cataloochee Valley. They leased a farm there from the National Park Service, which had acquired the land for inclusion in the fledgling [Great Smoky Mountains National Park](#) ^[3].

In 1938 Tom Alexander purchased the present property on Fie Top, just across the Cataloochee Divide from old Cataloochee and adjoining the national park. The Alexanders employed local residents and developed the tract as a working sheep and cattle farm and a guest facility. The new Cataloochee Ranch opened to visitors in 1939. It accommodates guests in the main ranch house, a lodge, and individual cabins and offers horseback riding, hiking, and fishing in a serene, scenic 5,000-foot-high setting near the remains of several former pioneer settlements.

In 1961 the Alexanders acquired four snow-making machines and opened skiing facilities. Winter skiing subsequently became extremely popular in the region. Cataloochee Ski Area expanded and moved to 5,400-foot-elevation Moody Top in 1968. Both the ranch and the ski area continue to operate under the management of the Alexanders' children and grandchildren.

References:

Tom Alexander, *Mountain Fever* (1995).

Faris Jane Corey, *Exploring the Mountains of North Carolina* (1972).

Sara Pacher and Lynda McDaniel, *The Insiders' Guide to the North Carolina Mountains* (1996).

Additional Resources:

Cataloochee Ranch and Ski Area, <http://cataloochee.com/> ^[4]

Subjects:

[Parks](#) ^[5]

[Pastimes](#) ^[6]

Authors:

[Wright, Marilyn](#) ^[7]

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Origin - location:

[Haywood County](#) ^[9]

From:

[Encyclopedia of North Carolina, University of North Carolina Press.](#) ^[10]

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