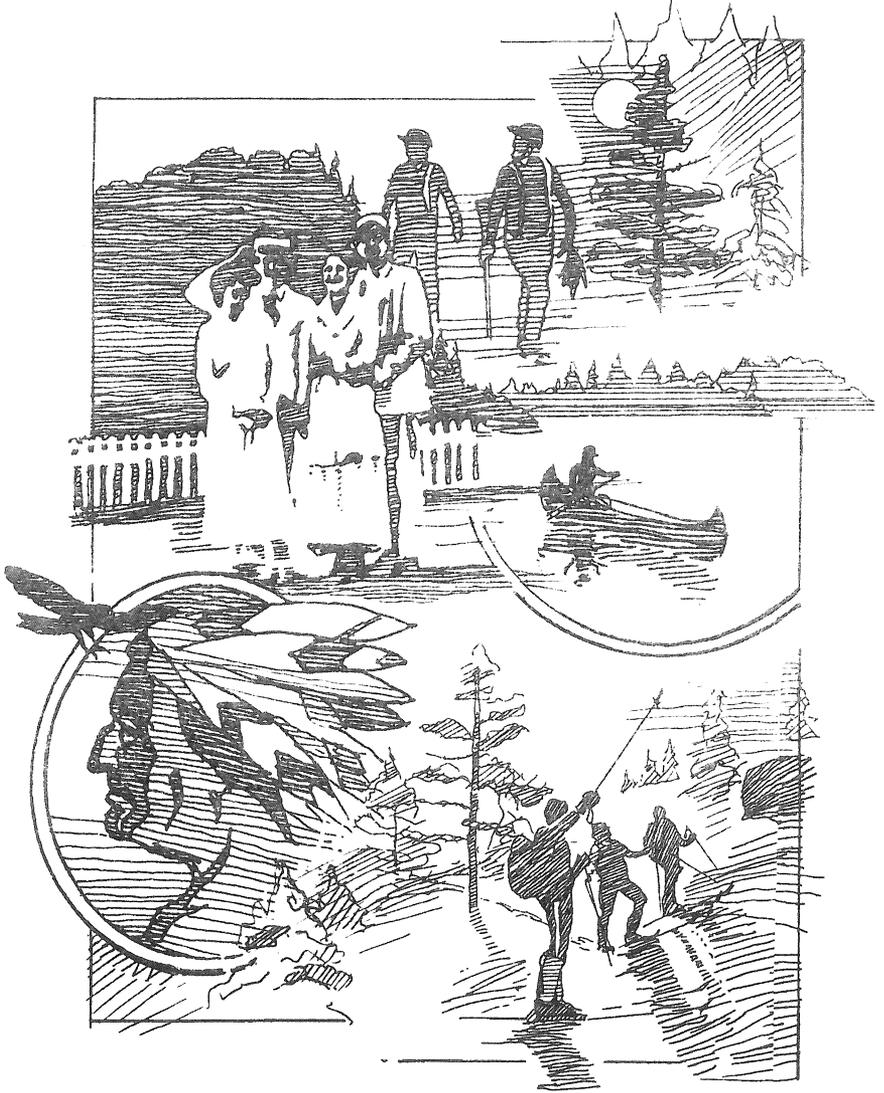


# Gibson River

PAST AND PRESENT



A FIVE WINDS CHRONICLE

*Michael Naughton*



# Gibson River

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## PAST AND PRESENT

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## Gibson River Past and Present

Quietly flows the water through the channel below the chute on McDonald river, before debouching into McCrae lake. A virtual torrent in winter McDonald tames to a pleasant deep stream in the summer. Bordered variously by Alder brush, stands of White Pine clinging precariously to bedrock of the Canadian Shield, and by Paper Birch showing where the creeks are, the river meanders past a beaver pond hidden by banks of reed sometimes over six feet high.

Twenty years ago in the early sixties, the sun was shining out of a deep blue sky, glistening on the last few remaining patches of snow among the trees. A turkey vulture soared effortlessly above the small pond which was hidden from passing canoeists by the tall reeds “which served in the office of a wall, or as a moat defensive against” the intrusions of man. At the head of the pond, a beaver, busy on some engineering work looked up and saw the slim bow of a fibreglass kayak poking through the reeds at the edge; behind came two more, and the turkey vulture did a graceful chandel to examine the intruders who sat quietly in their boats enjoying the surroundings.

The water was still winter cold, but the air, warmed by the spring sun, carried the scent of pine which overlaid that indefinable in between redolence that is neither scent nor sight nor feel. Winter gone and spring just feeling her way back into the ground!

“What a beautiful place!” somebody said, “It feels as if we are the first people ever to see it. We should come and explore this area on skis next winter.” And so it came about; it was late February in 1963 and our beaver friend of last year, out looking for breakfast, was surprised to see ski tracks all over his pond. To his even greater surprise he saw a skier approaching him with eyes tightly closed, and apparently going round in cir-

cles while his companions watched with evident amusement. The follies of man were not entirely unknown to the beaver and his kin, but evidently deciding that he had seen enough nonsense for the day, he scuttled hastily for cover. The three skiers were Joe Herwig, Brenda Köchlin and the writer, all founder members of Five Winds on their first trip on skis to the area; the purpose of the exercise, though not appreciated by the beaver, was to demonstrate the inability of an individual without a reference point, to move in a straight line. Of course we were there to ski as well, and that day, as well as many other days through the next few years, we followed our noses through a land so beautiful and peaceful that we wondered aloud all the time how it was that we had never found it before.

The memory of that day will be a vivid and lively one. Everything was new and enchanting, and every fresh vista was a breathtaking experience. I remember one occasion when Brenda stopped us all with an urgent command for silence. Ahead of us an open winding creek, and on the other side a stand of hemlock.

“Listen!” said Brenda, “Can you hear it?” We listened intently, and after a while we all caught it too. A sort of rustling, scratching noise, and for a while none of us could identify it, or where it came from. The answer was simple when we found it – a dead leaf a hundred yards away was moving slowly across the faint crust, impelled by a gentle zephyr that would barely have moved the smoke of a camp fire. In the quiet peace of that country undisturbed by man’s machinery – well most of the time – one’s senses become tuned to the sounds of the bush on a quiet winter’s day.

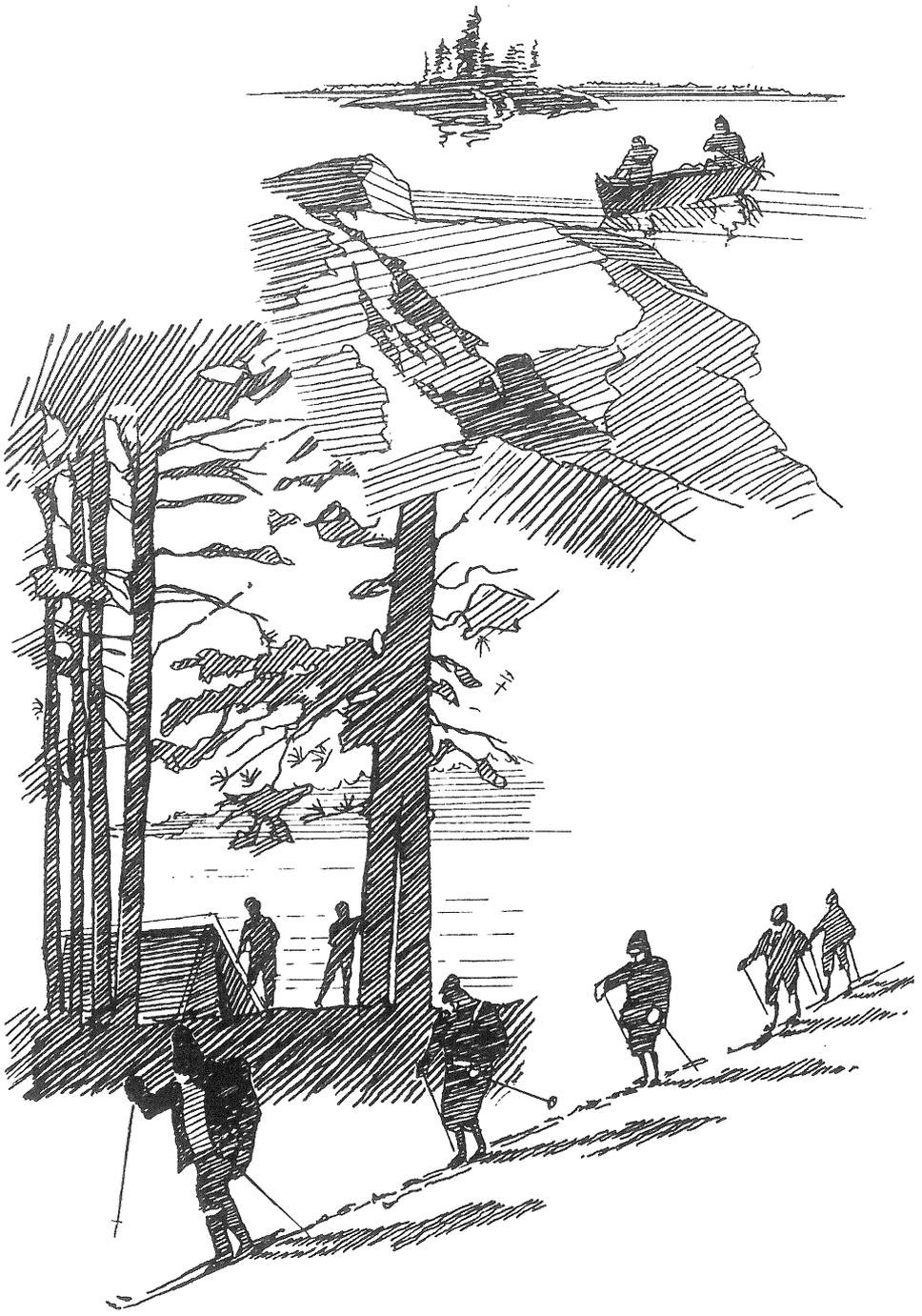
That day was a turning point for all of us, and it was not surprising that our lives displayed some new trends. Trends which were to become a way of life for many. Already in those days, cross country skiing and touring was beginning to be seen as an alternative to the long line ups and expense of downhill. Wilderness skiing however was virtually unknown, but to us it was fast becoming a happy obsession. In that first

year we went back to McCrac almost every weekend, and before the snow had gone many friends had joined us in our euphoric existence. It never seemed to be cold, and lunchtime campfires became a ritual, sometimes Bacchanalian, always hilarious, and rarely less than an hour and a half. I still have pictures of people stretched out on their old fashioned skis, and taking the midday sun that always seemed to be with us.

Those were carefree days, no less so than, though different from, today, and our enjoyment of them was marred only by the ever present problems of transportation between Toronto and this ‘God’s Country’ that we had stumbled into. However driving was the premium that we paid for the pleasure of being there, and somehow we suffered it gladly – for a few years at least. However, as time went by, organizing people and getting them up there on an ad hoc basis was becoming rather too much of a chore. It was a ‘catch as catch can’ arrangement at the best and of course we were always at the mercy of the, fortunately, few people for whom time keeping was anathema, and to be or not to be a decision to be made half an hour before departure time!

It was not until 1971 however that we decided to form a club which, it was hoped would attract a nucleus of keen skiers and provide all levels of ambition and technique from which several homogeneous parties could be assembled, and what was more important give us the chance to get a properly organized car pool into operation.

After some minor advertising which was largely ineffective, we held our first meeting at St George’s church on Duplex Avenue. It was attended by about fifteen people more or less equally divided between the faithful and the hopeful. Of these fifteen only Prue Allonsius, who was the first to walk in, and the writer are still members of the club. In view of what followed through the years one could say that that was an eventful evening. We decided to call ourselves the “Four Winds Touring Club” to be run by a committee of four – Joe Herwig,



Brenda Köchlin, Lucia McGuire – now Herwig – and the writer. Since it was rather cold in the church we retired later to the Barmaid's Arms on Yonge Street near Davisville, to complete our business. That was a Tuesday, and it seems that there was rather more business to discuss than had been imagined, for it took us every successive Tuesday from October to March of the following year to complete it – at the Barmaid's Arms each time, of course. It would be untrue to say that our business discussions were not always unmixed with a certain amount of revelry, and on one occasion we found Bill Deagan of CFRB occupying, unwittingly it must be said, the chair!

That winter our numbers grew to close on one hundred, and though I cannot say that all were hardened wilderness skiers, and indeed, what with the extended lunchtimes and other merriment we rarely did more than five miles in a full day, we always seemed to have enough people out of a Sunday to make the place look as if a herd of elephants had gone through! Small parties were in the order of ten or more, one of our leaders usually managed to get himself lost before he had even assembled his party, and it was not uncommon for the odd splinter group to take off into the bush without bothering to let anyone know! Notwithstanding, our lives must have been charmed for we never had a mishap, everybody found his way back to the cars without too much delay, and the weather was always kind to us both in the bush and on the road.

I think however we all realized that we were only living on borrowed time, and that if we did not clean up the act pretty soon, we might be called upon to pay the piper before very long! Our first steps were to improve trail discipline, and to help people to understand their responsibilities, not only toward themselves but also to their companions when travelling through wilderness country.

By the end of that year leaders were beginning to emerge, and individual parties started to think of themselves not only as a group out for enjoyment, but as a unit whose combined energies, abilities and resources were available toward the

common weal if ever it found itself in a survival situation – injury, bad weather, disorientation. I won't say that our original carefree days had gone; just that people began to realize that while back country skiing and hiking is great, one has to be prepared to cope with personal and objective emergencies at all times. Not to jump into a lake full of sharks and expect some sort of 'Deus ex machina' to perform a rescue operation at the last moment!

The winter of 1971/72 was an important milestone in the history of the club. From a relatively unorganized group with a haphazard sort of operation, and people doing their own thing when out in the bush, we had developed into a compact and reasonably responsible group, and with smaller and faster homogeneous parties we began to see much more of the country. It was at this point that the need for trails was to dominate much of our forward thinking.

At Horseshoe Valley, about a mile to the East of the downhill club, we already had about nine miles of trail on some very pleasant terrain. Not particularly difficult, though with plenty of opportunities for the more adventurous, and barely an hour from Toronto, it was an ideal place for those who were not ready to tackle the more challenging country around the Gibson river.

One might say we had everything going for us. Good trails in a relatively civilized area not too far from home, and the real backwoods country for the "afficionados" a bit farther to the north. It also meant that our combined effort was becoming fragmented, and what with the need for trails around Gibson we were soon going to have to make a choice - Gibson or Horseshoe. But not that year!

Just twelve months after starting Four Winds, we decided to incorporate, and while all the arrangements went forward with hardly a hiatus, our biggest problem was the club name. As an incorporated club we found ourselves sharing the same name with other groups whose interests were diverse from our own, and in order to avoid any ambiguity we decided to change our name to something more original. Not to belabour the point,

after a weary three hours of fruitless discussion it was unanimously decided to “add a wind” and so we became Five Winds Touring Club Inc.

In 1973 we began to plan our trail system in the Gibson river area. At this time we did actually have some disconnected beginnings just to the south of McDonald river. Still following our noses in a country which had the last word every time, we were the proud possessors of two or three trails that only people not quite right in the head would even dream of attempting. I think most of us fell into that category at the time, and anyone who could have seen some of the obstacles that had to be overcome would have had no difficulty in agreeing with that premise. Precipices were numerous, and in order to surmount them – nobody ever took off their skis – fixed ropes or close standing trees provided a convenient way to the top. On one occasion somebody was half way up a big white pine, still with his skis on, and was attempting to bridge the gap between the tree and the top of the precipice. However fortune did not smile upon his endeavours, and in desperation he removed his skis, threw them across and jumped after them. That he is still around to tell the tale is a matter of good luck rather than judgement. Later I overheard some remarks between himself and a friend:

“How come you took off your skis back there, Ted?” he was asked, “Nobody else did!”

“Nobody else climbed the bloody tree with them on. That’s why!” says Ted.

Some of the runs down were not much better, and on a lot of them large trees had been placed in a commanding position at the bottom. Some people thought this was unfair and insisted on blaming the trail designer, accusing him of malignancy. The fact that it was God who put the trees there and not the trail designer, never seemed to be taken into consideration during the course of such altercations. At such times it was generally felt, and most particularly by the trail designer, that laying down trails was, to say the least of it, a thankless task!

Suffice to say all those original trails have since been either

abandoned or improved, and one can now traverse the whole of the trail system without having to climb one single tree.

Mind you, there are still some other minor obstacles for which the writer can take no responsibility, and around which God has not yet seen fit to provide an alternate.

Well, that was 1973, the turning point for Four, sorry, Five Winds. Since then we have built close on one hundred miles of trail extending from Nine Mile Lake near Gravenhurst to Georgian Bay, and the system is covered by a two inch topographical map produced and regularly updated by the club.

In those early days, Five Winds was subject to much, though benevolent change. As the trail system grew and improved steadily, so did the operation of the club both in committee and in the field. Charter buses replaced car pooling, trails became better marked and more skiable, and on the trail smaller, more homogeneous and better led parties were the order of the day.

By 1978 we had settled down to a smooth operation that seemed to work well with most members and resulted in full buses at weekends.

In those days it was almost unknown to meet other people in the woods where we had our trails, and in a way some of us, including the writer, came to regard the lands around Gibson River as our own preserve. Of course nothing was farther from the truth, and as time went on we began to realize that we were only a very insignificant part of the life and history of that country. During the past one hundred and fifty years, loggers, trappers, Indians, and soldiers as well, had all left their mark and imprint upon the story of Gibson River, and if Five Winds was to make any contribution at all to that saga, it was to be expected that the club should take the time and trouble to acquaint itself with the activities and interests of those with whom it shared the land – past and present. If in the process of making that acquaintance, errors and omissions are made, it is hoped that those readers who are more familiar with the fact will give us the benefit of their knowledge.

## Something of the History of the River

To reiterate what by now must be a conviction shared by most of our companions, we are fortunate, not apparently to be in competition with other interests in the area, and to be able to pursue our activities without let, and at our own rate. As, for the most part, resident Torontonians, many of us tend to regard the area as something God put there for our own purposes. And since few of us have much knowledge of the history of that part of Ontario, or of the people with whom we share it, perhaps we may be forgiven for sometimes thinking that we are the only ones who appreciate and love a beautiful and unspoiled land that we see and feel each year in all its moods.

But whether it is Coldgray, or McCrae, or the river itself, we are far from being alone in there. We share it with others whose diverse interests are as legitimate as our own, trappers and hunters whose livelihood depends upon the land, recreationalists such as snowmobilers, canoeists, hikers, snowshoers, and skiers. Many of these people have cottages on the fringes of the trail area, and some of them are members of Five Winds. North of the river the Gibson Band who live in the reservation at Sanatien are active in the area, and have a keen interest in what other people are doing there. There are others in there too, poachers, out of season hunters, careless recreationalists who scatter garbage and leave fires smouldering, and sometimes four wheelers whose activities seem directed to the destruction of the land they travel in. Fortunately their numbers are few, and though we never know if we have met any of them, we all hope they will never come back again.

On the positive side there is much from which we can learn and profit. That about which we know least, and to

whom we are well known, at least by our deeds, is the people of the Indian reservation. Mohawks of the Iroquois Confederacy, first came to this area from Quebec about a hundred years ago.

Originally converted to the Roman Catholic persuasion, and living on the Isle de Montreal, they were moved to the Lake of Two Mountains in Quebec in 1717, and their settlement became known as Oka, which gives its name to the well known cheese made by the monks of the local order of San Sulpice. In 1770 another wave of proselytism, this time by the Protestants, engulfed our Mohawks, and no less than twenty five percent were reconverted.

Some five years later the lands of the settlement were deeded by court order to the seminary of San Sulpice. It is said that the Indian Council was not informed of the decision until it was a 'fait accompli'. Subsequent to these moves the Protestant Wesleyan Methodist church was demolished by the French Canadians who apparently were not too enthusiastic about the opposition. In what could have been a reprisal against this and other related incidents the Mohawk Band, so it was alleged, fired a cannon through the front door of the catholic church. No doubt the message was received in the appropriate quarter!

It will come as a surprise to few Canadians, that after a couple of years, the Mohawks were moved out of Quebec, lock, stock, and barrel, and no doubt the San Sulpicians breathed a sigh of relief – though one feels that they got off rather lightly.

The Indians were taken to Bala in late November and had to clear the land and build cabins, and somehow survive though the winter. A few of their number, mostly old women and children, were housed in Bala until the next spring, but most of them faced the elements under their leader Chief Fleecy Lowi Sanatien (pronounced Sanation) who gave his name to the present settlement on Highway 660 – now Muskoka Rd. 38.

Today, numbering over two hundred, the Gibson Indians, as they prefer to be known, live an active and productive life

on the reservation. Many of them hunt and trap the area, and although it is a rare occasion when any of them are to be seen, we sometimes run across their tracks in the winter. A frequent traveller in those parts, and one who traps regularly between between McCrae and Gibson river is Sid Commandant whose brother Kenny is chief of the band. Sid lives in a delightful spot on the east side of La Force lake, and I have been fortunate to have several pleasant and informative chats with him there in the past. We have to thank Sid for many of the names currently appearing on the Five Winds map, particularly those in the area between Sanatien and Nine Mile lake on the north side of the river.

**B**ack in the nineteenth century when the Georgian Bay Lumber Co was cutting timber up the Gibson river, they used to portage their equipment and supplies along what is now the access route we use from Lost Channel to Portage Bend – hence the name. In those days the water along the river was a good deal higher than today – by design rather – so that timber could be floated down to Gibson Lake. Just above the bend, there used to be a two level dam known as the Double Decker. Time and water erosion have taken their toll of it, and today it is a rather messy set of rapids immediately below Brotherson’s Bay, and anyone negotiating this passage on skis is enjoined to treat it with great caution.

Downstream from Portage Bend, a mile or so, is Art D’Angio’s hunt camp, and the tractor that one sometimes sees at Lost Channel is used to bring in his supplies and equipment. Once, quite a few years ago, we were paddling down the Gibson from Nine Mile lake, and we came across Art standing outside his cabin. We stopped to chat for a while, glad to find some company, though surprised to find someone so well set up in a place where access was not the best. We were even more surprised when he asked us if we would like a bottle of cold beer out of the fridge! It goes without saying, there were no refusals. It was quite a few years later when we were cutting

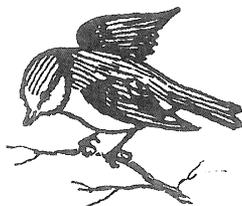
the Pipeline trail that we came across an occasional piece of red painted metal hanging in the bushes, and before long we realized that we were following the only feasible route through the country to the east. Needless to say, Art D'Angio had been there before us many times.

Just to the east of Double Decker are the two bodies of water, identified on NTS maps as Twin Lakes. It seems likely that, in the absence of information to the contrary the name was applied in default. In fact they are not really lakes at all, because the water does not flow through their length- only across their southern extremity. The eastern of these two bays, to give them their correct description, was known as Ripley Bay after one of the logging families during the last century. Harry Brotherson whose descendants have not yet been identified, gave his name posthumously to the lower of the two bays; it was thought that he was drowned in Ripley Bay and his body was washed downstream where it was found just above Double Decker Rapids

A lot of people see little except the fringes of the country around Gibson River, and along Highway 69, and following the various Muskoka roads one can stop off anywhere and enjoy the woods, but it is surprising how quickly signs of human passage disappear as one gets farther away from the comforts of civilisation. Around McCrae Lake one is almost in danger of getting trampled to death by the many hundreds of people who go in from the highway or from Georgian Bay. On a fine weekend in the summer one can stand on the top of Crow's Cliff and spend all of ten minutes trying to count the many camps and boaters, and our well tramped trail gives mute evidence of the popularity of the area. But go in and walk along the Pipeline and Trappers trails on the north side of the river, and see how many people you run into!

It is fashionable and customary to bewail the inability of ordinary people to enjoy the quiet and faraway places, whether in the bush, or among the mountains or even in the desert. Some of the singular charm of the more remote parts

of this world of ours is the loneliness, and that feeling of being in another time and life where no other can intrude; where the city of ones daily struggle is some vague miasma in the mists of memory. It doesn't matter if it is the North Pole, or the Takla Makkan, or even good old handy Gibson River which isn't too far from home. The important thing is being remote from the amenities of civilization, and knowing that one is entirely dependent upon one's own resources. In that country, the country of our adoption one might say, the history of Gibson River interwoven with its familiar features, its geology and topography, is like a deep stream that flows through our subconscious as we become more familiar with the nuances of the land.



## The Land and Its Peoples

When the snows begin to run off the land each year, my thoughts always take me back to the days when the British soldiers were fighting the Ojibwa; to the coming of the logging industry in 1850 to the arrival of the Mohawks, now known as the Gibson Band, in 1880. From logging to farming and the growth of small towns and settlements to our modern world where many people are going back to the land to enjoy it in all its moods, rather than to exploit it.

One hundred and fifty years ago Gibson was covered with original stands of white pine – seventeen to the acre, so I am told – some so big that two men could not span the trunk holding hands. Today there are few pine trees of any size, but many open areas of bare rock covered sparsely with moss and juniper, areas that will need a hundred years or more before the timber succession will have asserted itself – that is, of course, if neither man nor God has intervened in the meantime.

Logging destroyed most of the original cover, but had it not been for the two disastrous fires of 1919 and 1933, the white pine could well have been on its way to establishing its thrall over the land by now. It is said that the fire of 1933 was the worst in living memory, perhaps the worst ever in those parts; it was preceded by a long period of hot dry weather, and burnt for so long that even the overburden was consumed down to the underlying rock. Then the rains came! The Gibson Indians say that it rained for weeks without letting up, and when it eventually stopped, the rock was washed clean with nothing to show but a desolate country punctured by a mosaic of stark blackened stumps. The workings of hell itself could not have produced such a poignant picture of the death of a beautiful land.

Fortunately nature has a way of creating life and beauty

out of death and destruction, and today after fifty years the starkness of the land has been replaced by new growth. Birch and Alder surround the beaver ponds, stands of Hemlock and Spruce are making their appearance, and higher on the ridges, Poplar, Maple and Oak fight for supremacy while in the open areas and mostly on the ridges, a carpet of juniper and moss covers much of the rock. And quietly the White Pine is gaining a footing, a few trees here and there, and next year a few more. As time passes dominant stands will begin to suppress all other growth, and eventually, if undisturbed, will take over the country once more.

It is well known that fire is the catalyst for regrowth, and though the immediate effects are unpleasant and sometimes tragic, the long term benefits to the flora are legion. One of the more immediate visible results of the great fire is that there are many open areas particularly on the ridges, and when traveling through the country one's passage is considerably facilitated by the increased range of vision.

It's an ill wind, so they say, that blows nobody any good, and from the point of view of people like ourselves, those treeless ridges make delightful skiing and easy trail clearing.

Anybody who travels regularly in the Gibson River area is bound, sooner or later, to come across the name of Lovering. The MNR District Officer at Parry Sound is a Lovering; north of Coldwater on the Big Chute road is a small settlement by the same name, and perhaps not strange to relate, many of the local families are Loverings, or descendants from them. Even some of the members of Five Winds are descended from related families. And on the Gibson River, the fortunes of the Georgian Bay Lumber Co. and the Lovering family have been inseparably linked for over a hundred years.

The influence of the Loverings on the area in which we ski and spend many of our weekends dates back to 1841 when William Drue Lovering (Sr.) with his wife and eight children emigrated from St. Columb in Cornwall, England and settled

in Medonte Township at, surprise, surprise, St.Columb now known as Eady near Coldwater. W. D's life in Canada was not a happy period for him. His wife died the day after they landed in Montreal, and he never really adjusted to the hard life of the backwoods. In 1823, two years after landing in this country he rejoined his wife in what all hoped was a happy reunion.

The mark of the Lovering family on Medonte and the surrounding country was made by the children of W. D.(Sr.), and perhaps most significantly by the eldest son W. D.(Jr.) who purchased his first piece of Canada in Matchedash near Coldwater from Sophia Sarah Darling whose name the old settlement and the CPR stop to the north of our Trappers trail bear.

Some time I would like to follow the fortunes of those eight children who came to Canada with W.D.(Sr), and from the little that I know of them, it would make fascinating reading. For the moment however I must confine myself to the activities of W. D. (Jr).

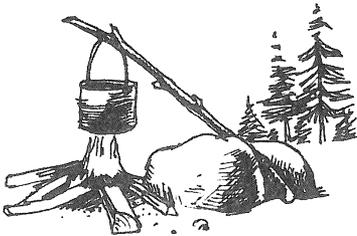
Most of the area that we ski today was logged by the Georgian Bay Lumber Co. whose major shareholder was W. D. Lovering (Jr.), and one of his ten children, Charles Turver (Charlie) was logging boss on the Gibson River in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Charlie had his logging camp on the south side of the river about a mile up stream from Art d'Angio's hunt camp at the end of the 'Tractor Trail' from Lost Channel. Supplies from this camp were brought up from Lost Channel along the route of the Portage Trail we use to reach our system on the south side of the river – the point which has always been known as 'Portage Bend'. (See Appendix A). Charlie's impact on the history of Gibson River is considerable as may be seen from the many feature names in the area which relate to the activities and personalities of the Georgian Bay Lumber Company. Charlie, who had eleven children (see appendix D, page 40), was eighty one when he died in 1946, and many of his old friends and family are still to be found around Gibson and Coldwater, his memory ever strong in their minds.



*Charlie at Gibson River 1930*

I'm sure that many of the trees and lakes and creeks that we pass with barely a thought could tell a few tales about Charlie and his doings, and I for one, whenever I am on the river, be it the saw-dusty remains of the logging mill where the waters run out into Go Home Bay, or just humping around above Indian Pond, can sense the mark of the old man on the country.

When the shadows are growing long one day and you are somewhere up there, a long way from home, if you happen across a square faced old man with his trousers rolled up carrying a bucket, treat him with respect. He may know a lot more than you do about Gibson River!



## Mapping and Trail Development

The country bordering the watershed of the Gibson River was explored, summer and winter for quite a few years before trails were even thought of. As early as 1955 the writer and some friends began to paddle the eastern shores of Georgian Bay travelling out from Honey Harbour and spending camping weekends among the islands and channels which abound between there and the Bustards which mask the outflow of the French River at the north end of the Bay.

It was not long before our travels led us to the Musquash and the Gibson rivers, and into McCrae Lake past the Shrine where it flows out through the narrows into Georgian Bay. Each river, from the MacDonald and Gibson, by the Moon to Giroux and the Key; by Go Home Bay and Monument Channel out to the Pines, Beckwith and Hope, and on to the Western Isles where the lighthouse keepers never failed to roll out the welcome mat for visitors. And farther north paddling out into the North West wind past Franklin to the Minks and the McCoys where camping was the sort of thing one only dreamed of, and inland to the Shawanaga Inlet which funnels the wind so fiercely that it is often impossible to paddle against it. One could talk and write about that country and never tire for a moment, such is its magic and its infinite variety. And to this day its draw is as strong and as irresistible as ever. It is not to be wondered at that so many people, many of them through Five Winds have come to love the land and cherish its beauty and loneliness through all the seasons.

From those early days in the sixties though we paddled the length and breadth of the Bay, our wandering ski tracks led us inland from McCrae and MacDonald to the inner reaches of Gibson past the Hayponds and Lone Lake, and then later to

Coldwater and Gray lakes which dominate the area we now know as Coldgray. We followed our ski tips, and in a country that never failed to enthrall, they led us through a land that was to become a magnificent obsession for so many.

The sun was our compass and our ski tips pointed out the course for us to follow. The fact that we always seemed to get back to the cars at about the right time must have had a large element of luck in it, though tempered, we liked to think, by the exercise of a little judgement. The surprising thing about our peregrinations was that only after nearly ten years did anybody give a thought to the question of building trails.

The catalyst that really got us started on trail cutting was a canoe trip we took from Nine Mile Lake down the Gibson River. By the time we reached the highway on the other side, we had passed right through the country that later was to encompass the major part of our existing trail system, and I think we all realized that at our normal rate of bushwacking – rarely more than ten miles in a day – it would take us a good three days to see very much of what looked like delightful country both for skiing and for hiking, and where one could wander for ever and a day without much danger of getting trampled to death.

Had we been catering only for ourselves, an elite few that were beginning to discover some of the secrets of the land by which one could use ponds and creeks and open areas to link up between some of the more remote sections, we might well have never cut a trail in all our lives. However we were becoming very much aware of the limitations of operating with such a small group, the most frustrating of which was the fact that we were rarely able to plan anything until we knew who was coming out, and that was often not before the day we set out for the north country.

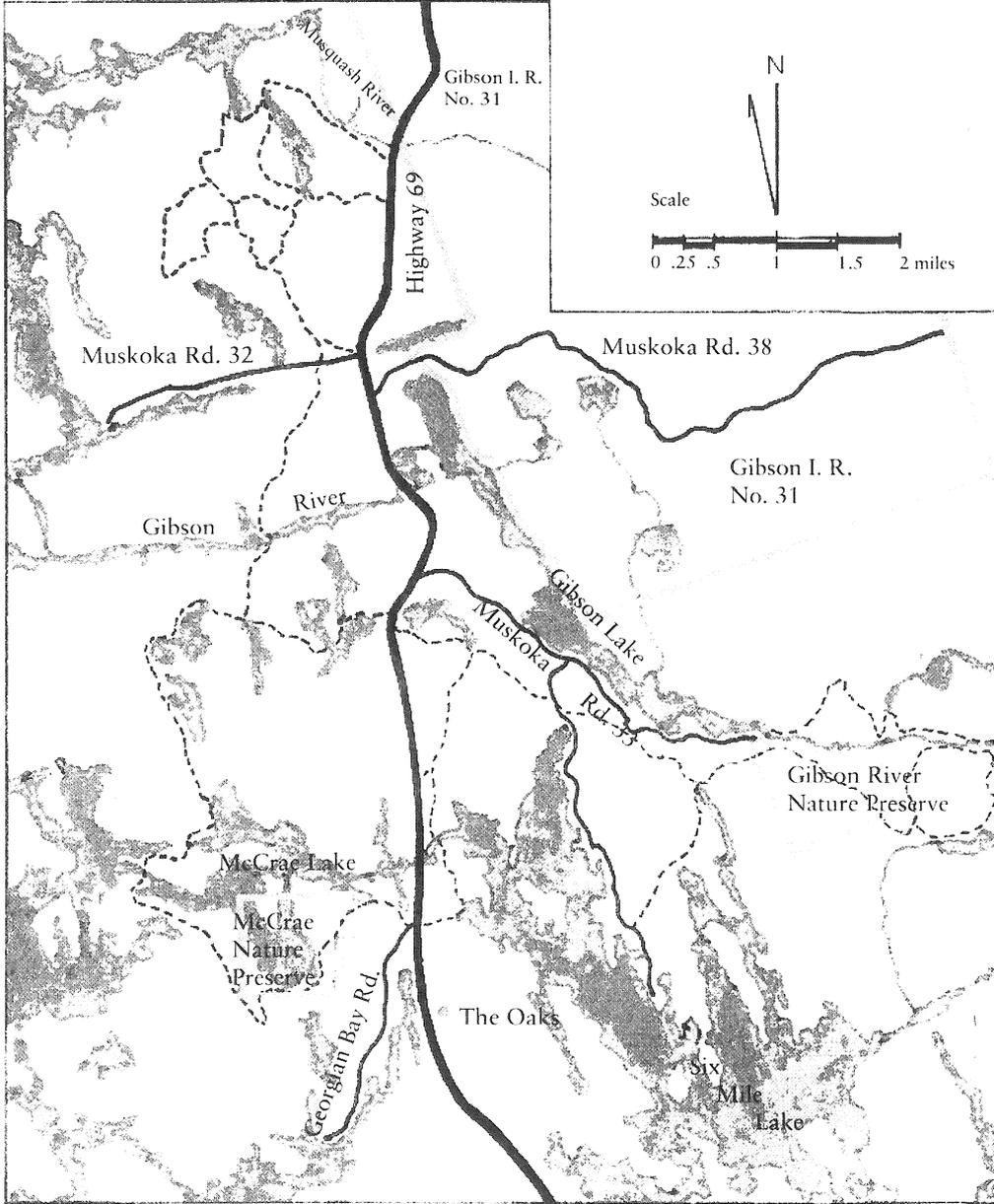
With increasing public interest in the area, and in the trail system, our concerns with not getting anyone lost and the consequences of disorientation, the addition of mapped trails began to rank high in our priorities. Not many of the people

who go out into the bush even possess a compass, and of these, few really know how to use it. It is the same with maps; unless it is used and referred to frequently it will remain forever at the bottom of the pack. If its owner gets into trouble, and is under pressure of time as one usually is when disoriented, the map is unlikely to be consulted, and crashing through the undergrowth becomes the order of the day. On the other hand, with a reasonable amount of concentration there are many who can follow a marked trail, though not necessarily in the desired direction. There is however the odd individual who is not going to get lost, and one can always hope that in every party there will be one such person who will emerge as a leader when the chips are down. Ergo, the provision of mapped trails, and the availability of maps to members of the public who wish to use the trail, would greatly reduce the danger of parties getting lost in the bush.

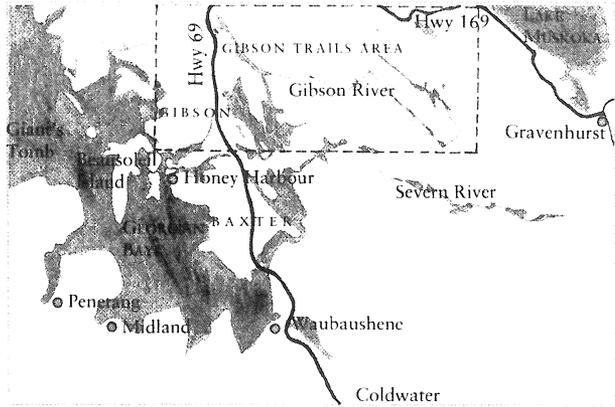
And within the club, even with organized parties and qualified leaders, all we wanted was to be able to enjoy our skiing and hiking without having to worry about other people.

The decision to start work on a trail system in the Gibson River area was also influenced, and to a certain extent, fragmented, by the fact that we already had and were regularly using trails in the country to the immediate East of Horseshoe Valley. All on private property, we had about nine miles of trail through some very pleasant terrain, and it was a rare occasion that a weekend went by without a couple of dozen of our group – then nameless – tramping through the country on skis.

A lot of work was done in contacting local farmers and residents from whom we had no difficulty in obtaining handshake agreements to mark trails and ski across their land. Chief among these were Clarence Alexander and Dr Sellars, both of whom are honorary members of the club. It would have been convenient to keep this area as a closer to Toronto introduction to the more demanding nature of the country farther north, and for a while we succeeded in dividing our energies and

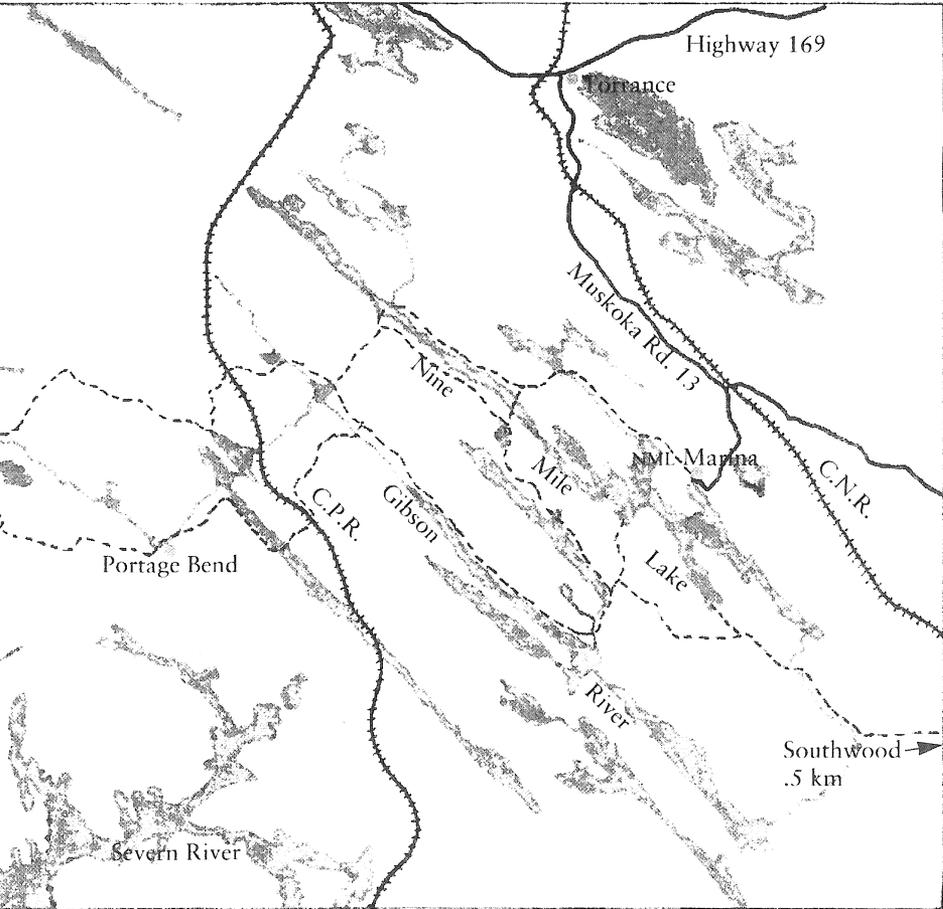


Gibson Trails Area and Surrounding Region



## Map of Gibson Trails Area

*Various Five Winds trails are designated by dotted lines.*



resources between the two areas. At this time we had less than ten miles of trail on the south side of McCrae Lake, and even with our few members – not more than one hundred – we managed to keep the systems in pretty good order, and to car pool to both each weekend.

However, portents were beginning to appear on the horizon that would change our whole operation, we hoped for the better. Around MacCrae the trails were getting longer, and consequently more man hours were needed to service them. Also about this time, Horseshoe Valley was beginning to expand its own system of trails which began to overlap some of our own for which we had been unable to obtain any meaningful agreements. The signs of the times were there for anybody who cared to read them, and it was obvious to us that our time there was limited.

Fortunately, the decision to concentrate our efforts up in the Gibson area was facilitated, if not taken out of our hands, by the fact that we now had enough members to fill a bus, this being a very desirable substitute for car pooling. It also meant that we were no longer able to ski both areas since the delays would have meant at least one hour less skiing for those who went beyond Horseshoe.

The decision was made for us, and once we had the bus, we never went back to Horseshoe, and I don't think I ever heard a complaint!

By 1975 we had completed the loop around McCrae, made a significant start on the Coldgray area, and had skiable trails to the east of Muskoka Road 33 on both sides of the Gibson to Long Falls where now the Pipeline starts. By the end of the year, with Roger Goodwin's able cooperation, we had produced three four inch maps in two colours, which were entitled McCrae Perimeter, Coldgray, and Middle Gibson. At that time, although there was no connection between the three systems, they were in close enough proximity that the bus could service all three without any inconvenience.

It was the end of the beginning, one might say, to quote the great man, and from then on we never looked back.

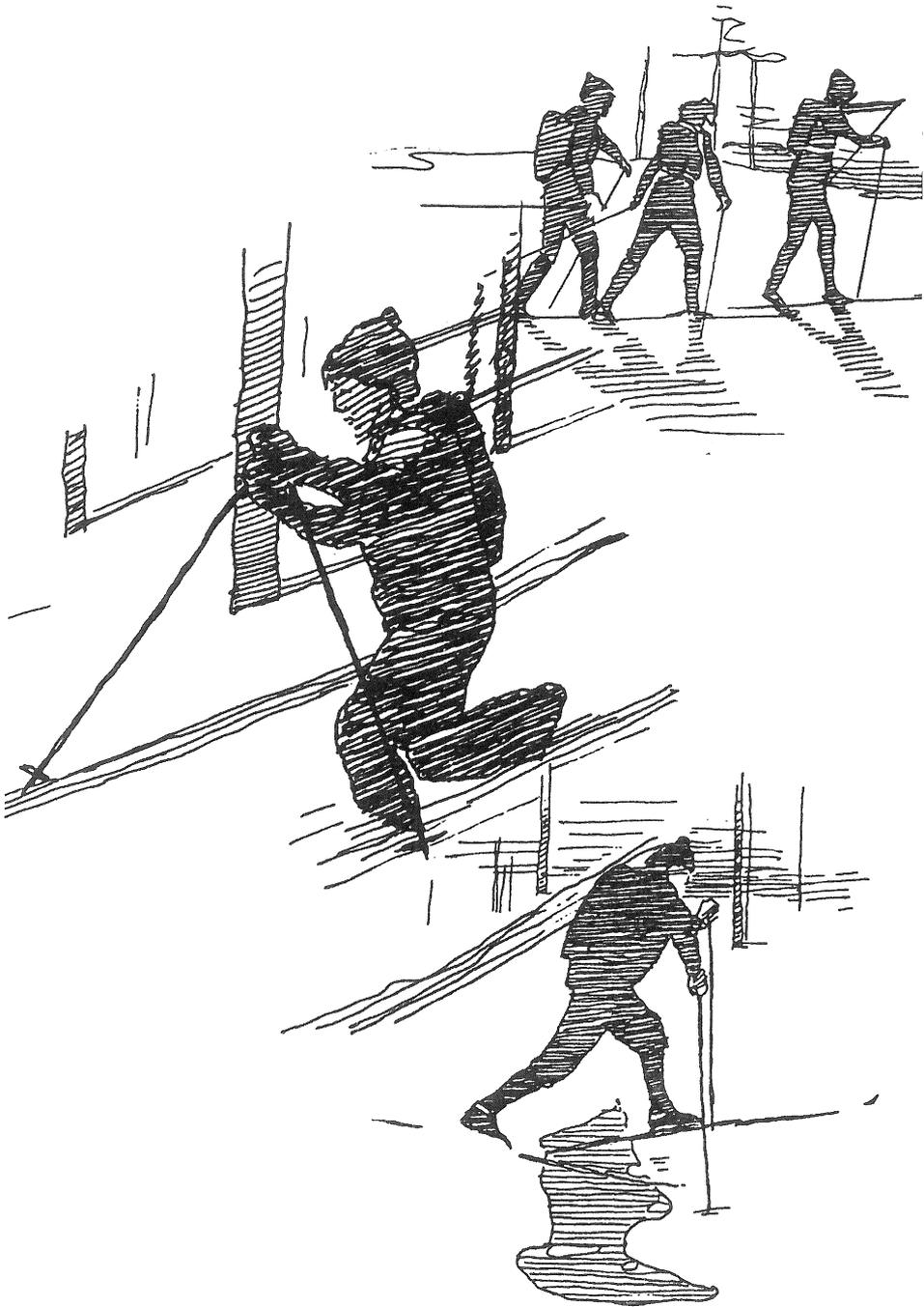
## Gibson River Today and its Influence Upon Five Winds

**I**ts twenty years or more since the members of Five Winds began to explore the country around Gibson River, and though not very much has changed in the area, the club itself, though nominally unchanged, has seen many differing trends in its own philosophy. During the early years not very much was known of the country – by Five Winders, that is – and it was difficult to find good tour leaders who were familiar enough with the country to lead with confidence through terrain that, to say the least of it, abounds in natural obstacles such as beaver ponds, deep creeks and precipices, and impenetrable bush.

In a little known part of the world between Russia, China and Pakistan there is a game played on horseback called ‘boz kashi’ which involves carrying – against all odds – a sheepskin filled with wet sand, in a circle around a field which never saw grass. The combatants all carry whips between their teeth to encourage their mounts, and to discourage their opponents – mostly the latter. Anybody who comes out of the fray without getting a lash across the face could not be said to have taken an active part in the game! In those early days of thrashing around in the bush it might be said that at the end of the day most of our combatants, sorry participants, had taken their part in the game with full honours, only it was not whips that had lashed their faces!

These days blood is let much less frequently, and most of those who come out looking a bit the worse for wear, have been off the trail for the better part of the day.

The difference between today and yesteryear up there on the Gibson is that the trails are for the most part well cleared and maintained, and improvements over the past years have got rid of the bad sections so that one can move along comfortably, and with few exceptions, take all the hills with the



reasonable assurance that disaster does not lurk around a nasty bend at the bottom. However, the nature of the terrain does not willingly support the comfortable sort of skiing that one has come to expect in resort areas, and in fact when God made that country, I am quite sure that skiing was not the first thing He had in His mind!

Today however, after many many man weeks of blood and sweat and tears on the part of Five Winders it can be said, seriously, that the trails are now in good enough condition for an intermediate skier to have an enjoyable and comfortable day without any of the alleged discomforts of the past.

To add to one's enjoyment, most of the leaders know the country well enough to take their parties on off-the-trail trips to and through areas that are rarely visited. One of the most popular trips in the past has been on the north side of Coldgray, through the Heronry to Gray Rapids; another beautiful area well worth visiting is Brophy Lake on the north side of Gibson Lake, and for enthusiasts the round trip from the Second Hydro Line through the Hayponds to the top end of the Pipeline and back along the trail to Long Falls is well worth trying. The possibilities are endless, and once one has taken the bait, February and March skiing become an absolute obsession. Not that anything has changed really, just that we are getting to know our way a little better around the Gibson River.

I have tried, and I hope to some measure succeeded in getting anybody who is patient enough to read this article to see something of the Gibson River, its peoples and its history, its fauna and its flora through our own eyes. I think that enough has been said in this context to present a reasonably adequate picture of the land, though no mention of the aims and purposes of the club has been made. It is a good thing that people who travel in the country, for whatever purpose, should know something, both of its past and present, and it has always been the policy of Five Winds to seek out and talk to others whose lives and interests bring them into contact with us. Many people have asked if

they could ski our trails without being members of the club, and the answer to that question is that we have always welcomed and encouraged the general public to use them as they would their own, and with as much care and consideration.

The labour and expense of building the Gibson River trail system was borne entirely by the members of Five Winds without recourse to public funds or recreational grants. Each year over one thousand man hours, and as many dollars are provided by the club for the upkeep and improvement of the trails, and we are grateful to the Ministry of Natural Resources, and the District Offices of Parry Sound, Bracebridge and Huronia, now only Parry Sound due to Ministry regrouping, for their help and cooperation in the development and maintenance of the system.

The club currently holds a Land Use Permit administered by the Huronia District, now Parry Sound, under the terms of which we are entitled to make a charge to other trail users. However it is not, and will never be the policy of the club to charge anybody for using our trails. We are grateful that others may get some enjoyment and pleasure from them, and indeed many other clubs and individuals visit the area frequently for skiing and hiking and canoeing, and we welcome their presence and their enjoyment of the country we hold so dear.

Through the years we have been always concerned with the need to keep the impact upon the land by recreationalists like ourselves as minimal as possible, and to encourage among all users the awareness of their responsibilities in terms of survival when travelling through the country. We hope that all who go into that area will avail themselves of the trail maps published by Five Winds which, when complemented by the application of good common sense, should help to keep most people out of trouble.

To date such troubles have been few, and thanks to the helpful cooperation of all users, littering and vandalism has been virtually nonexistent. Perhaps what is more to the point, barring some minor cases of disorientation, search and rescue operations have not been a feature of our affair with Gibson River. And to that may I add, Amen!

## Conclusion

I would not like to come to the end of this booklet without saying something about the way most of my friends and those many who share the land with us feel about its future.

Gibson River and its surroundings comprise the lands to the south of the Musquash, west of Nine Mile Lake and the village of Southwood to the southern extremity of McCrae Lake. Bordered to the west by Georgian Bay it is unique in its location so close to urban centers, yet protected from the inroads of civilisation by a geology and topography that sets it in a class of its own. Deeply scoured by the glaciers with deep transverse rifts it presents a mosaic of fractured rock that discourages most forms of travel except on foot or by canoe.

Although the rugged structure of the underlying igneous rock does not present a particularly pleasant scenario to the itinerant traveller, its recent history of fire and flood has clothed its harsher lines with moss and juniper attended by gnarled and twisted oak trees and maple with, always, the ever encroaching white pine.

In the summer one can walk along these ridges with beautiful open vistas and dramatic views that the mind has difficulty in encompassing. In winter one can ski those same ridges or travel along the frozen creeks and beaver ponds that invite exploration. And one is never without company. To be seen only by the sharp eyed, the fisher and wolf and beaver, snowshoe rabbits, owls and the many small animals who leave their tracks across the snow, all are there, living their varied and often tumultuous lives, and closely aware of the passage of humans.

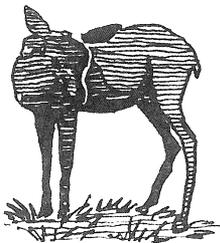
Rarely does one come across such an unusual and beautiful land so close to the amenities of man, and yet from the few

roads along which people and their cars wend their daily way, few would suspect what unspoiled and seemingly virginal country lays beyond.

It is the earnest hope of the many who have discovered some of the secrets of Gibson River that one day it will be set apart from the petty endeavours and ambitions of man, and be left to nature to preserve in its own way.

A legacy perhaps from those who still care about the future of unspoiled places and the ability of posterity to enjoy them.

*Mike Naughton*  
*Five Winds Touring Club*



## Acknowledgments

On behalf of Five Winds I would like to thank the many people without whose help and friendly cooperation I could not have written this booklet nor made the numerous corrections to our map. The list given below is far from complete and I beg forgiveness for any errors or omissions.

Sid Lyle Commandant, Mohawks of the Gibson Band.  
Mrs. Rennie, also of the Gibson Band. Now sadly deceased.  
Art D'Angio whose hunt cabin above Long Falls is well known.  
Clarence Marshall, long time trapper along Shaw Creek.  
Now retired.  
Art Simon, trapper to the south of Lone Lake.  
Tom & Gordon Hewitt, trappers in the Six Mile area.  
Eli Lamoureux, trapper.  
Hilton Hoyle & Henry Ellis. Black Lake near Coldwater.  
Glen Lovering, grandson of Charlie.  
Johnny Boleau.  
Jack Lovering, MNR District Manager Parry Sound.  
Bernice Isobel Lovering compiled the Lovering Family Record & Tree.  
Bill Beach, Proprietor Shell station, Coldwater.  
Jim Vanderleck.  
Margaret Plue.

Carl Mandel's lively and gifted sketches are well known to readers of the Five Winds Newsletter. All the illustrations in this article were contributed by Carl, to whom I offer my most grateful thanks.

Many thanks also to Judy Karamoto of the Geographic Names Board of Ontario who responded to my endless bombardments with sympathy and good humour.

## Appendix A

### *A note on the subject of Portage Bend*

A traveller to the top end of Lost Channel may come across an old tractor sitting among the trees and wonder what on earth it is doing there. The fact that it belongs to Art D'Angio who uses it to get to his hunt cabin on Gibson River is not really a part of this article, but it does mark the beginning of a very old portage trail from there to the river.

About one kilometer from there takes one to a very clearly defined right angle bend on the Gibson River from where Charlie Lovering's lumber camp could be seen downstream – circa 1890.

It became a well known feature through the years, and was known as Portage Bend certainly until the time of Charlie's death in 1946. In 1975 we came across the name from at least two different sources, and then later from Glen Lovering who is Charlie's grandson. Our first full size map was published the following year, and not surprisingly Portage Bend was on it. That was 1976.

The Second Edition of NTS 50,000 31D/13 published in 1973 did not give a name to the bend, but in September 1978 the Geographic Names Board of Ontario approved another name. They called it "The Elbow", and yet not more than ten miles away on the Black River near Mordolphin is a very obvious elbow, and such has been its name in general use for many years.

In 1980 the Third Edition of the NTS map was published, and guess what name was given to Portage Bend! The reversal of decisions are notably unpopular with governments but it is hoped that Queens Park may in this case see valid reason for returning to the original name.

Portage Bend is a name that is unique to the history of Gibson River. It is descriptive of the topography and the custom, and was in common and general use for well over fifty years, and to abandon it would be to turn one's back on a significant part of our history.

Note: Since the original printing of this booklet the name

'Portage Bend', UTM 17 – 6071 – 49762, was approved on the 18 December 1987 by the then Minister of Natural Resources, the Honorable Vincent Kerrio, on the recommendation of the Ontario Geographical Names Board. The name 'Portage Bend' will appear in the next issue of the Penetanguishene sheet, Map No. 31D/13, Edition 4, NTS A751.

## Appendix B

### *Origins of Place Names*

The latest edition of the Five Winds trail map looks very much like the previous issues. Certainly the general content and format is the same, and there are few topographical changes, none of which are significant. There are however many additions and name changes, all of which, we hope, are in general use or based upon historical or political fact.

On the original maps, place and feature names were mostly applied in default since we did not have the time to research the question. Today we are somewhat better acquainted with the history of the land and those with whom we share it. We hope that the names on the current map more accurately reflect the influence and activities of the many people who did in the past and still do travel and work in the lands around Gibson River. We also hope that anybody reading these pages and finding themselves in disagreement with the author over any point will not hesitate to instruct us accordingly.

Sandy Gray, a lumberman was drowned in the rapids named after him on the Musquash River in the early part of the century. His remains were cremated and interred on the north side of Flatrock Lake. We thought it appropriate to indicate the location. The sign (+) should have been shown as a cross (†).

South of Muskoka Road 32 a small and previously unnamed body of water familiar to Five Winds orienteers, has been named David Lake. The area around this tarn originally belonged to David Swan, a member of the Gibson Band which knew the lake by his name. On NTS maps the name Swan was

given to the lake to the north of Muskoka Road 32, and is now in general usage. A change would not have been within our competence, and we hope that the use of David Swan's first name in this case will be supported by the Gibson Band with whom we consulted before making the change.

In the area around McCrae Narrows several island and other names have been added including that of Ganyon Bay – shown due to printers error as Canyon Bay. Pig and Frank's islands in Gibson Lake are new as are Joe Frank, Lonesome, and Montour lakes in the reservation.

At the eastern end of Gibson Lake a little way up the river the bridge across the narrows has been named after Charlie Lovering. In the days when Charlie was lumbering boss on the Gibson, a dam was erected at this point – the beavers having failed to oblige – to raise the water level so that logs could be floated downstream. It was known as Lovering Dam which is no longer there and it seemed appropriate to name the bridge accordingly.

In the dim distant past – we are not sure how dim – two of the three ponds draining into the Gibson by the Pole Line were well silted and grew a luxuriant crop of grass which was regularly harvested by the Gibson Band to feed their livestock. They were known as the Upper and Lower Haymarshes which names now appear on our map.

Anyone paddling along the river between Portage Bend and Art D'Angio's hunt camp will pass a rather pretty bay on the north side. We used to know it as Brunner's Bay, but that was before we found out about the horse drawn sleigh and its driver that went through the ice many years ago and was never found again. That was back in the lumbering days, and the name Dead Man's Bay will come as no surprise. Unfortunately the poor old horse, *der alte Schimmel*, as they used to know him, rests unremembered.

For a long time we were not able to uncover individual names for the each of the Twin Lakes, and the temptation to name them unilaterally was stoutly resisted. Fortunately the hiatus was finally overcome. Charlie's aunt Johanna Lovering

married Charles James Ripley around 1860, and their eight children, five of whom were boys, were cousins to Charlie. There is little doubt that some of them were involved in the lumbering operation, and the fact that one of the Twin Lakes was named after the family is not surprising. Brotherson, whose name appears twice on our map was a bit of a mystery. His family name still appears in Bracebridge though no connection has yet been established. It appears that he was drowned in Ripley Bay, and the body washed downstream where it was found in the bay that was named after him. It seems likely that he was a lumberman working with Charlie.

Just below Brotherson's Bay is Double Decker rapids. Originally this was a two level dam holding up the water in Twin Lakes and the two long creeks on either side – Shaws and Wolf Creek. Wolf Creek is a name that has been in use by trappers and others in the area for many years, but it is new to our map, as is High Falls just above Ripley Bay.

About a kilometer along Shaw Creek from Brotherson's Bay is the longest beaver dam I have ever seen. Together with the CPR bridge about two kilometers farther south, it provides the only crossings of a five mile long cleft cut many thousands of years ago by the scouring glaciers. Around 1960, Clarence Marshall who had trapped the area for longer than I care to remember, was instrumental in getting the dam started. According to Art D'Angio who was watching from the east side of the creek, Clarence was rolling rocks down the hill and had constructed an abutment which stuck out into the creek for about ten feet. The idea apparently was to tell the beavers where to start building a dam! I think I might have scoffed at the idea myself, and I know others did. The fact remains that that is where the beavers built their dam, and where it still is. So maybe we could all learn a thing or two from Clarence and those like him who have spent a while in the bush! We needed a name for that remarkable structure, and what could be more appropriate than "Marshall's Dam"?

Thinking about Art D'Angio and his tractor trail from Lost

Channel reminds me that we were looking for a name for that horrendous creek that runs north for close to seven kilometers out of Ripley Bay. We were not able to find any history on it so we paraphrased Art D'Angio's name and called it Angels Creek.

The lonely little tarn in the middle of the Empty Quarter has been christened Hermit's Pool. To me the name fits well with the surroundings and I hope it sticks.

Some confusion may arise between Brotherson Lake and the bay referred to earlier. The Geographic Names Board is working on an answer to this duplication, but in the meantime one should use the names carefully. Turver Lake between Brotherson and Turtle is a new name, and some readers may recall that Charlie Lovering's middle name was Turver.

A number of names that have been in general use in the Nine Mile Lake area for some years have been added. Em's Bay, German Bay, and Moon Bay and also Thompson's Marsh which lies to the east of Nine Mile near Otter Lake. We never did find out who Thompson was, and the marsh is now a rather pretty, rock girt little lake that is well hidden from the eyes of man, unless he knows where to look.

## Appendix C

### *Some Thoughts About the Origin of Trail Names.*

The purpose of a name, topographically speaking, is as we all know to enable people to identify and refer to features and places; such names may appear on a map, or may only be used by small groups or individuals. Gibson River, for example, is a name approved by the Geographical Names Board, and as such appears on NTS and other official maps, and is well known to, and in common use by all those whose interests and activities take them to that part of the country.

"The Place where the Dog died" on the other hand is somewhere to the north of McCrae Lake and is known only to a select group of Gibson Indians and maybe a trapper or two.

The name is the important thing, the all important thing in

the identification and location of topographical features. The origin of the name, though of no real value, is of interest to people who travel regularly in the area. I hope that readers will find some interest and humour in the origin of our trail names and places.

Back in the early days of the club I went into the Coldgray area to the east of Go Home Bay with two ladies, one from Friesland to the north of the Netherlands, and the other of Scottish origin. At Lunnen Lake we decided to cut two trails, one rather flat and the other somewhat more difficult. Since Friesland is a very flat country, and the nature of Scotland tends to generate spartan habits, the choice of trail names called for no discussion. The original Spartan trail, I should mention, was such that parachutes and dive brakes were mandatory equipment for all, though following subsequent improvements such ancillaries are no longer necessary!

Until a few years ago there used to be a hunt camp at the south east corner of Lunnen Lake. The camp was put up by Charlie Urquhart after whom the access trail was named. Unfortunately some sub humans whom a lot of us would like to meet got into the place and turned it into a pig sty that was fit only for themselves. The building and the filth that was left behind was removed by the MNR.

When the twinning of Highway 69 in that area starts, the Urquarts Trail will be abandoned, and a new access from the beginning of the Spartan Trail will be cut to Lunnen Lake and the Friesian Trail.

Doug and Sue Davison, now transferred to Calgary, cut the first part of Duggans Loop, and Mike Dandy finished it later in the year. The origin of the names of the loop and of the lake associated with it should not, therefore, involve too much mental exercise. There were to the best of my knowledge, never any monks in this area. However, when standing at the top of what we know as “Monk’s Drop” and looking at the subsequent rise on the other side, the motto of the Benedictine Monks may come to the mind of the observer:

“LET US DESCEND, THAT WE MAY ASCEND.!”

And as a natural sequence of thought, the cloistered appearance of the trail leading to the south therefrom conjured up visions of hooded members of the Holy Order wending their way to vespers along the Monk's Path.

Mel Vautier, originally from the Channel Islands, came to our club in the early seventies, and among other things did much good work on what was then known as Go Home Trail. After the unfortunate accident in which he and two companions were swept off their boat and drowned in Lake Ontario we thought it appropriate that the trail that bears his stamp should also bear his name. The Vautier trail is one of the most popular in the system, and any time those of us who knew Mel travel that way, I am sure we all spare a moment's reflection for an old friend.

In 1978 the Heather Path from Highway 69 to Crooked Bay Rd. was cut half way from both directions. Unfortunately the two ends of the trail, far from meeting, missed by several hundred yards, and actually ran parallel for a short distance. Heather Geary was called in and made a good job of joining up the loose ends while the writer, who was the guilty party, headed for the flesh pots of Europe – no doubt to make amends for his sins.

Many have looked for heather on that trail, without result it must be admitted. Others, substituting fauna for flora in their endeavours, were more successful.

Who were the two ladies who fell asleep in the August sunshine while the rest of the party – the writer, it must be said – was, with great resolution and fortitude, cutting his way through the impenetrable bush? Their names shall be inviolate, I shall never tell, but the occasion will be remembered and commemorated each time somebody skis the Sleepers Trail.

In Southern Arabia there is a vast desert area inhabited only by Bedouin nomads, though one or two notable English travelers have made their way through in the past.

Comparable to the Sahara it is known as the Rub al Khali, a free translation of which yields “The Empty Quarter”. Our own bit of terrain up by the Gibson, flat, featureless, and desolate seemed to share something with that land of desert Arabs, and hence the name.

Down at the bottom of Moon Bay off Nine Mile Lake there is a spur trail leading to the Connection between Cross Link and the Southwood bridge. The spur comes down to the water close to a cottage belonging to Dr. Ted Smith whose wife originally cut up her best tablecloth to make marking strips for the trail. We called it Krankspur, and I will leave the reader to figure out the association for himself. German scholars would have a fair advantage!

And that brings me, and no doubt the reader – in fact he is to be commended if he got this far – thankfully to the end.

And for these and all my other sins of omission and transgression, may I please be forgiven.

## Appendix D

### *History of the Lovering Family*

**I**n the country around Gibson River and south to Coldwater, much of its history has been shaped by the many descendants of W. D. Lovering (Sr.) who came to this country with his family in 1841.

Many of the names of features on our club map are associated with that family, Turner, Brotherson, Ripley, Shaw, Boileau and others. Many are the Shaws you will come upon if you take your time through the area, and of course always, just around the corner is another Lovering. Even our, until recently, District Manager of MNR Parry Sound was one Jack Lovering.

The family notes included in this Appendix were written up by Bernice Lovering of Barrie who produced an extensive family tree of all her many, many relatives. She has kindly given us permission to reproduce her notes here for which our grateful thanks and appreciation are offered.

### Extract from the Lovering family tree.

Charles Turver Lovering (Charlie), who was inimical to our trail area was nothing if not a family man. I thought it would be of interest to list his eleven children.

Samuel N.

Mary Evelyn m. George Silk

Charles "Noble" m. Katheline Gill

George Howard

Jenny May m. Claude Rawson

Charles Edmund m. Magge Doyle

Joseph Witney m. Hilda Kitchen

Minnie Jean m. Robert Brown

Daisy Helen m. Frank Simmons

Charlotte Turver m. Jimmy Thompson

Glen Lovering of the Lovering homestead referred to in this Appendix is the son of Charles "Noble". Harold Plue, long time member of Five Winds is the son-in-law of Charles Edmund.

### Notes on the Lovering Family by Bernice Lovering

*Voyage of W. D. Lovering (Sr.)*

OLDEST KNOWN ANCESTOR

William refused to pay tax on property in support of the Anglican Church - Parish of Enedor - and so he, his wife and eight children immigrated to Canada. They sailed from Padstow, Cornwall County, England, on the John and Mary in the early winter of 1841.

The crossing was particularly rough. William's wife became ill during the long voyage and died the day after they arrived in Montreal. It is believed she was buried in the Montreal Quarantine Cemetery; however, search efforts to date have failed to verify this fact.

A more detailed account of the hardships encountered by this family during the initial stages of life in Upper Canada is contained in the W. D. Lovering Jr. Memoirs - Generation II.

William was born approximately 1800 in St. Colomb, Cornwall County, England.

The family first settled in Medonte Township at St. Colomb, now Eady, which is situated at the junction of the Avon and Coldwater Rivers. They resided at this location for approximately two years and then moved to a location near Martyr Shrine for the same period of time.

The third move was to Fesserton, Ontario where they lived for approximately ten years following which they located to the property now known as the “Lovering Homestead” situated on the North River in Coldwater.

Arrival in Canada for William was very traumatic. The loss of his wife, his disenchantment with the country and the difficult life style of the back woods caused him grief and it is believed he really did not adjust to his new life in Canada.

He lived with his son Thomas until his death, 26 September, 1863. He is buried in the Thomas Lovering Plot, Coldwater Cemetery.

### **John & Jane (Lynch) Lovering Family Group**

**D**uring the late 40's/early 50's, Judge Edgerton Lovering presented a pulpit chair in honour of their parents to the North River United Church. He made the following comments:

“Eighty-two years ago, on a cold Sunday in December, my parents were married in the old parsonage at Coldwater. The ice was hard on the river, and my father had made a sleigh on which to draw his bride, Jane, to the home he had built for her in the woods. Jane had just had her seventeenth birthday, and father knew that he would have to leave her alone sometimes,

while he went out for supplies, and that she must always remember to cover the windows before nightfall, so that the wolves would not see the light and come prowling around. But he knew too, that Jane was made of good stuff, and so they began life together in their forest home.”

Much has been written and told about the hardships of the Pioneers, but, whatever my parents may have thought, they never said they had had a hard life. They considered it a great privilege to have a part in the opening of this country, and they also considered it a privilege just to live, and had great joy in the living, and a pardonable pride in achievement.

Well, years passed, as years do pass, and my father thought that there should be a Sunday School for the children, so he obtained supplies from some source – probably from another Sunday School – and went around among the neighbours and told them that he was starting a Sunday School in his grainery, and would they please send their children. Mrs. Andrew Lovering told me that she remembers the pictures of the Disciples father had tacked on the walls. He would give them to the children when they had finished talking about them, and they wore them out looking at them. Pictures were precious in those days. Mrs. Joe Orton remembers those pictures too. And so, the North River Sunday School had its beginning.

The need of a Church had long been felt, and my parents, along with others who had the same urge, worked tirelessly, to this end. After surmounting almost impossible difficulties, they eventually saw a Church emerge – this Church in which we are worshipping today.

I am sure a book might be written about the early life of the North River Church, and I know my parents would have a part in this book. You will remember my father – he was a bit tempestuous at times, wasn't he? One of the ministers named him Peter – he was so impulsive, and hasty and repentant. And my mother – how sweet she was, always pouring oil on troubled waters. But, despite my father's fiery disposition, he was a man of strong convictions. He lived his life by these convic-

tions, and didn't care whose toes he stepped on when he had a principle to defend. If he thought all twigs should be bent in the same direction, he was to be pardoned for his sincerity.

My parents lived for many years at North River, and then moved to Coldwater. There they found a very happy Church home, which they served faithfully till the pattern of their lives was complete. But always their thoughts were with the old North River Church. It had been their first love. They had helped at its birth, had watched its growth, had seen its light flicker and grow a bit dim at times, but always it was burning.

There were fourteen children in our family – each child born out of great suffering, for there were no Doctors in those days, and no nurses – just Mrs. Buchanan, and a great trust in God.

### H. L. Lovering and Family Group

H. L. LOVERING a farmer, lumber merchant and philanthropist, played a vital role in the development of the economy and lumbering business in the Georgian Bay area.

His father, William Drue Lovering (Sr.) was disheartened by the difficult conditions encountered on arriving in this Country. However, his sons took root and flourished and in particular W. D. Lovering, eldest son, and “H. L.” gave much of the leadership to this family during the initial settlement stages in this Country.

“H. L.” can be described as a “self-made man” who's greatest success was in the forest and lumbering industry.

He formed the H. L. Lovering Mill which was located on the Coldwater River in an area known as the Elm Grove. This Mill cut much of the material for building ocean ships such as the *Sardinia* and *Reindeer* in the mid-1850's. A more detailed account of this activity is contained in the section: Portrait of the Times.

The Lovering Mill was expanded when he joined forces with the Sheppards to form the Lovering and Sheppard Lumber Company.

During this period, lumber mills sprang up throughout the area. One of these was the mill at Waubaushene. This mill was purchased by W. E. Dodge of New York City for his son Anson in approximately 1859 and became known as the Dodge Mill. This operation expanded with mills in Collingwood, Port Severn (Christie Mill), Parry Sound and Byng Inlet and was renamed the Georgian Bay Lumber Company. The Company changed its name to the Georgian Bay Consolidated Lumber Company in 1883 following the death of W. E. Dodge.

In 1893 a group of seven men purchased the estate of W. E. Dodge and the Company reverted back to its original name of Georgian Bay Lumber Company. The group of seven were as follows:

*President* Wm. Sheppard, Coldwater  
*Vice President* M. J. Dodge, New York  
*Secretary/Treasurer* C. P. Shocking, Waubaushene

*Directors* A. M. Dodge  
 M. J. Dodge, New York  
 H. L. Lovering, Coldwater  
 W. H. L. Russell, Waubaushene

By 1900 many of the mills had ceased to operate. Some such as the Christie Mill, at Port Severn burned and was never rebuilt; others due to the fact the timber supply was virtually exhausted.

Following his father's footsteps, W. J. Lovering became a prominent wholesale lumber merchant. He began his career in the lumbering business by working in his father's saw mill and later succeeded him in the operation of the plant until the local timber supply was exhausted. He relocated to Toronto and started one of the oldest wholesale lumber firms in the city. During this time he was associated with the Lovering Lumber Company Ltd., which operated a sawmill at Wasa, British Columbia and was a large stockholder in the Georgian Bay Lumber Company.

H. L. could be called the “Lovering Pioneer” in the lumbering industry. Many members of the family were engaged or associated with this business which appears to be the foundation for the early economy in the area. Those family members through the generations who were known to be directly involved or associated with this industry are:

- H. L. Lovering      *owner of mills and was a large stockholder in the Georgian Bay Lumber Company*
- Tom Lovering      *specific involvement not known*
- W. D. Lovering      *grew substantial amount of hay which was shipped by barge from his Matchedash Township farm to the lumber camps to feed the horses*
- William J. Lovering *wholesale lumber merchant in Toronto*
- William Henry  
Lovering      *associated with the lumber industry in the United States*
- Melvin Victor  
Lovering      *logged in the lumber camps; became a buyer for the Elias Rodgers Company of Toronto and formed the M. V. Lumber Company with Alex Reid and Mr. Boadway as silent partners.*
- Allan MacDonald *one of the first scalers at the Christie Mill, Port Severn. His brother, John, ran one of the Christie Mill logging camps.*
- The Borrowes      *first lumbered in the Port Severn area prior to farming*





# Gibson River

## Past and Present

**A**N OVERVIEW OF THE geography and the recent history of the lands bordering on the Gibson River. Named after Sir John M. Gibson who was Lt. Governor of Ontario at the turn of the century, the watershed covers an area of some two hundred square miles between Georgian Bay and Gravenhurst.

Logged over from the latter part of the last century until the 1930's by descendants of the Lovering family, and settled in by the Mohawk Band of the Iroquois Confederation – now known as the Gibson Indians – the area became the subject of extensive ski trail development by the Five Winds Touring Club during the past twenty-five years.

Gibson River Past and Present is a vignette of its peoples and its lands, and of some of the hardships and suffering of the early settlers that dominated its history until this day. It is also a story of the experiences of Five Winds Touring Club, which is active in the area through all seasons of the year.

In retrospect, if the booklet seems to place greater emphasis on the activities and experiences of the club, we beg the reader's compliance. We will however, never forget the names and accomplishments of those, settlers and Indians alike, which will forever be engraved in the tortuous contours of a lovely and lonely unspoiled area of Canada's shield country.



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