



THE COBALT LODGE

Newsletter of the Cobalt Historical Society



Volume 23
No 2
March, 2014

P.O. Box 309
Cobalt, On P0J 1C0

The Amazing Ski-trek



"We Should Do Something Spectacular To Put Cobalt Back On The Map"

***Part II
(see pages 2 and 3)***

March Memories 1947

Here is a memory of the snowstorm of March 1947



Easter Vacation was over for the week; it was time to return to school. So off we went, came home, got ready for the Girl Guide Meeting, always on Monday night after dinner and held upstairs in the Cobalt Community Hall. Perhaps it had been snowing over the weekend but that night it really snowed. Tuesday morning we could see that there would be no school for the rest of the week. Roads were impassable so my cousin and I donned our skis and made our way down-town. What a sight- the Cobalt

Square leading down to the railway station was a much deeper bowl than it is today- it was filled with snow to a depth of six feet or more.

Men were out with shovels and eventually two tunnels were dug so that people could climb up the stairs to the Imperial Bank of Canada building and another one into the Post Office which was then located in the Hunter Block at a right-angle to the Bank.

The photograph shows a snowplow being dug out with shovels. People still talk about the snowstorm of 1947. V. Hylands.

The Amazing Ski-trek - Part II

From "The Melted Years" by Maude Groom, 1967 - Temiskaming Printing



News of their impending departure was sent out over Cobalt Radio Station C.K.M.C on Sunday afternoon and citizens of the towns of Cobalt, Latchford, Goward and Temagami came out to watch the boys go through the towns and cheer them along the way with words of encouragement and good wishes.

The weather was fair and mild as they started out and continued so until they reached Temagami, the end of their first lap — a distance of 38 miles. They put up for the night at a road camp.

Early Tuesday morning, they started out from Temagami. The road was now sparsely inhabited, with tall dark pines hugging both sides of the road. At times nothing could be heard but the swish - swish of their single long pair of hardwood ash skis slipping easily along and the distant howl of a timber wolf, no doubt catching their scent in the crisp air. Every ten miles or so, the boys unstrapped their skis and sat down on their packs for a short rest and a smoke.

"We'll be in a bad way if those damn wolves take a notion to attack us," Jimmy said once - the hair rising

on the back of his neck at the mournful, eerie sound.

"We should have brought a rifle along I guess," agreed Dub.

"It would have made the going a lot heavier though," Kenny objected, rubbing his aching leg muscles. "my left leg is starting to give way on me some," he added with some misgiving. Ken Kearney had taken the lead the first day, and it was starting to take its toll. Thereafter the boys agreed to take turns leading, making the changeover with every ten-mile stop — the trip was obviously harder on the man up front.

The trip covered forty miles that day, reaching Tilden Lake near Martin River just as darkness fell. The warm lamp-light glow from Martin Ivannuck's camp was an excruciatingly welcome sight to the three leg-weary skiers. Martin treated the young men like kings. He had catered to the girl-snowshoers the previous year and he knew just how these travellers felt. The lads had eaten at road camps along the way but still they downed a big hearty supper that Martin Ivannuck placed before them. After a good night's sleep, they were fresh and eager for the next day's pull.

The third lap of their hike from Martin River to North Bay, a distance of 37 miles, took them from 7 a.m. to 9:30 p.m. Wednesday. It was the worst so far. Dense snow storms clogged the road and the going was heavy and slow. The weight of their packs made the sweat glands flow, and soaked them with perspiration every step of the way. At one place along the road, they came upon the still warm, mangled body of a deer, freshly slaughtered by one of the many wolf packs that inhabited the desolate area. The three boys gripped their ski poles more firmly; seeking reassurance in the sharp-pointed ends — their only protection, if attacked by the marauding hordes.

Dub, Jim and Ken were met just outside North Bay city limits by several members of the Laurentian Ski Club, and given a lively welcome by its president, David Reed. That night, a dance was held in their honour by the club — the three boys made a short appearance

but were too foot-sore to dance. They soon sought a hot bath and warm sheets at the home of H. Hall, an uncle of Jimmy McAuley.

It was there that the 'Press' found them, snugly tucked up in bed, smoking a most satisfying cigarette and talking over the highlights of their trip to date.

Heading into a blinding blizzard the following day, the boys were only three miles out, when Dub's ear started to tingle, and turn white. Ken and Jimmy quickly grabbed him and threw him into the snow, rubbing his frozen ear with snow, until the colour returned. They had left North Bay at noon, and reached Powassan for a well-earned rest.

On Saturday, January 31st, the three North Cobalt boys were pushing their mammoth skis out of Trout Creek at 8 o'clock in the morning. They had 200 more miles to cover before they would reach Toronto. The weather reports predicted snow in Toronto by the time they would reach their destination.

On February 3rd, three tired young men plodded with heavy rhythm into the Town of Orillia. They had covered 245 miles in seven days. Their 30 pound skis now felt like a ton and the going was very hard — at least between Severn Bridge and Orillia.

They had come into Severn in great style! There decided to light a fire and 'tar' their skis. They soon found, to their sorrow, that grease doesn't always make the going easier. Their skis felt like logs and they made only about two miles in two hours — surrounded by laughing villagers who followed them out of Severn.

"We'll make it now, guys," Jimmy told the others as they settled down for the night, "Toronto is only a little over a hundred miles away and we have three more days to go — the day we were held up by the storm doesn't count, because we weren't travelling," he murmured with sleepy satisfaction.

"If we get a bit of frost tonight, the going will be good tomorrow," Dub Stoughton said, rubbing his frost-peeled ear pensively.

"We've stuck to our schedule pretty good," Ken Kearney added, as he snuggled blissfully into the warm blankets. It was good to get off that painful left leg.

The rest of the trip was child's play compared with what they had been through. It was open country and mild weather all the way; their every move followed closely by admiring throngs. Soon they were passing through Aurora on their last day and their last lap. Their arrival in Toronto was eagerly awaited by all true sportsmen.

The three gallant young men reached the outskirts of Toronto about noon on February 5th, 1931. They were met there by clamoring members of the press, who begged them to halt for pictures, at every other step. The going was real bad now, Toronto streets were bare; in spite of this, the dauntless trekers pressed on, down Yonge Street to the Toronto Daily Star Building — cheering crowds hailed them all the way.

Dub Stoughton, Jimmy McAuley and Ken Kearney could relax now; their great marathon was over — their "impossible" goal attained. They had covered the 350 miles from North Cobalt to Toronto in ten days, on a single pair of skis, eighteen feet long, and weighing 30 pounds. Basking in the luxury of fame, the three lads told their story over and over, as the City of Toronto and all Canada lionized them for their tremendous fete of daring and endurance. Their marvelous skis were placed on display, for people to view with amazement. Numerous companies sought them out to sponsor their various products with foot-long advertisements showing the now renowned skiers drinking pop or smoking cigarettes, smiling and happy, in numberless poses on their famous skis.

Back home in the Township of Bucke, the citizens rejoiced for them and the whole tri-town area was overwhelmed with pride. Although they could ill-afford it, many sent telegrams of good will and congratulations.

For a few months they could talk of nothing else but the triumphant success attained by their undaunted home-town boys; for the moment at least, the depression was forgotten.

It would be nice to say that the valiant venture of those three North Cobalt boys turned the tide of depression and caused a new rush of eager investment in the North but this did not take place. Sterile stagnation was world-wide and growing. The vicious chain-reaction of "cause and effect" sank ever deeper into the debit side of the ledger of life.

Does anyone know what has happened to the skis?

Silver Miller was Cobalt's First New Mill In Almost 40 years (1949)



SILVER MILLER-LAROSE MILL, COBALT, ONT.

The M. Lavigne Mining History Collection

The M. Lavigne History Collection is now available to be used at the Cobalt Library on Lang Street in Cobalt.

The material has been arranged in the following categories:

Cobalt Mining Camp; Northeastern Ontario; Ontario; British Columbia; Canada.

Michigan; Minnesota; Western States- Arizona, California, Colorado, Idaho, Nevada, Oregon; Eastern States.

Copper; Gold; Diamonds; Oil; Geology; Mineralogy; Mining.

