

# Shanagolden

An Industrial Romance



Ashland County history by  
**Dave Engel**

With the personal account of  
**Judge Herbert A. Bunde**

# Shanagolden



Winter camp

Loretta Jehn

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Cover: Nash Lumber Co. sawmill at Shanagolden, c. 1903

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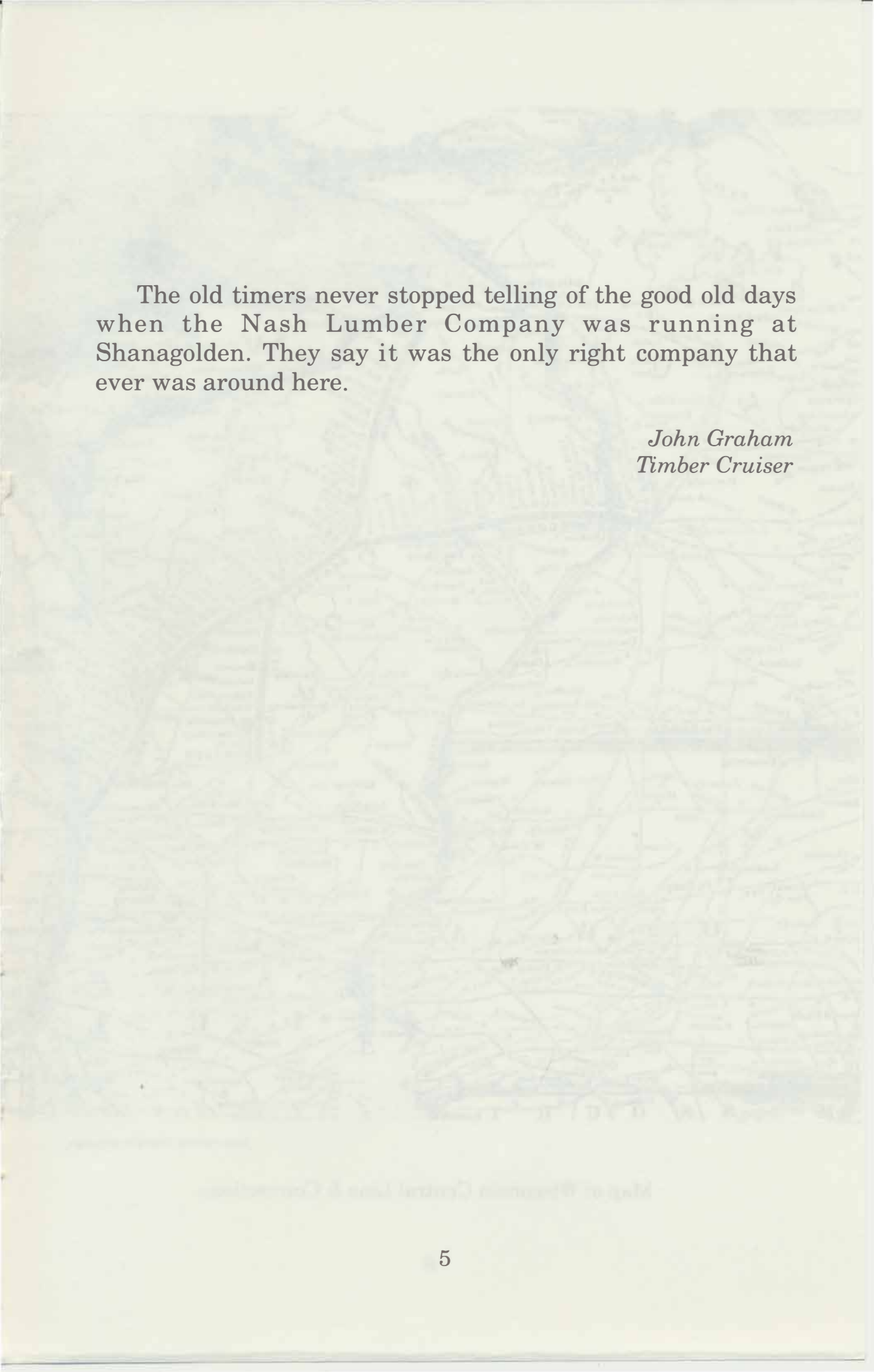
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Daily Tribune.



The old timers never stopped telling of the good old days when the Nash Lumber Company was running at Shanagolden. They say it was the only right company that ever was around here.

*John Graham  
Timber Cruiser*



State Historical Society of Wisconsin

Map of Wisconsin Central Line & Connections

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SHSW

Abandoned Nash Lumber Co. camp, c. 1910



Dave Engel

Kunsch house in Shanagolden, 1987

# The Abandoned Place

On a clear August morning early in this century, Guy Nash stopped at the Shanagolden office of the Nekoosa-Edwards Paper Company. After attending to some last details, he locked up and rode alone through the village: past the empty store and boarding house, down the winding road, across the bridge and off to the right through the woods.

There, he found a place at which he liked to pause. In a small clearing, rested an old log cabin, crumbling with decay. When first built, he figured, the same rustic cottage had secured to its owner title to the homestead.

Guy knew that these clearings and cabins were scattered all through northern Wisconsin. Many were taken up at the behest of a lumberman or as a private speculation with no other intent than to sell the land for its timber as soon as the homesteader had "proved up."

"I like to think this one had been intended for a home, maybe for a pioneering American, maybe for some land hungry peasant," Guy wrote later, "for remains of a rude fence enclosed a space in front of the low door that still showed traces of flower beds, while in one corner a large barberry bush grew untended and alone."

In the case of the "homestead" and village Guy helped build at Shanagolden, we don't have to invent our romance. It has already been invented by others.

After Guy completed his last tour of Shanagolden, the village he and his family had built, he went home to Wisconsin Rapids, then named Grand Rapids. With him went his cache of letter files, kept in his Oak Street house well past his 1946 death.

In 1987, when both his daughter, Jean, and son, Philleo, died, the house was sold and Guy's papers were made available by Edith Nash, Philleo's wife. Among the records in file cabinets and dusty attic boxes was the story of Shanagolden. Guy's more personal writing suggests some of what he was feeling when he lived "ever with the sights and the sounds and the scents of the North in eye and ear and nostril, and ever with the keen air of the North in lung

and throat."

Others commented as lyrically. On June 10, 1904, when expectations for the community on the Chippewa were brightest, A.J. Boyles of Shanagolden wrote, in the Glidden Enterprise: "Where, two years ago the forest and river alone claimed sway over all and the wilderness was still unclaimed, is the site to-day of what bids fair to be one of the most thriving and beautiful little towns in northern Wisconsin."

Not quite as rapidly as it rose, that little town, like much of the cleared land of the North, is being reclaimed by the forest and river. John Graham, a friend and former associate of Guy's, wrote to him in 1943: "Shanagolden doesn't look as it did in our time, but there is something very pleasing to just go and look the ground over. I do love the location and how it does look today."

John Graham doesn't stop by anymore. The builders of his day have departed: the housekeepers, bookkeepers and husbandmen have come and gone along with Guy Nash and his family.

In its season, the village on the East Fork bloomed industrious and beautiful; after a remarkably brief time, the strength of the North prevailed; the forest, the cold and the rock reclaimed the site. Visiting Shanagolden now is like a walk in the afterlife.

For the moment, we seem more permanent than they ever were but, when we cut our last tree, when our mill burns, when shopping centers clear their counters, when schools close their books and the post office is canceled and the streets go to grass, when our windowless habitations linger like log huts into the new age, others will rummage through our junk and perhaps we, like the former inhabitants of Shanagolden, shall at last appear as mysterious beings.



Nash Collection

The House in the Woods, c. 1905



Thomas, Thomas E. and Guy Nash at Shanagolden, 1905

Nash



William F. Vilas and Thomas Nash

Jean Nash



Nash

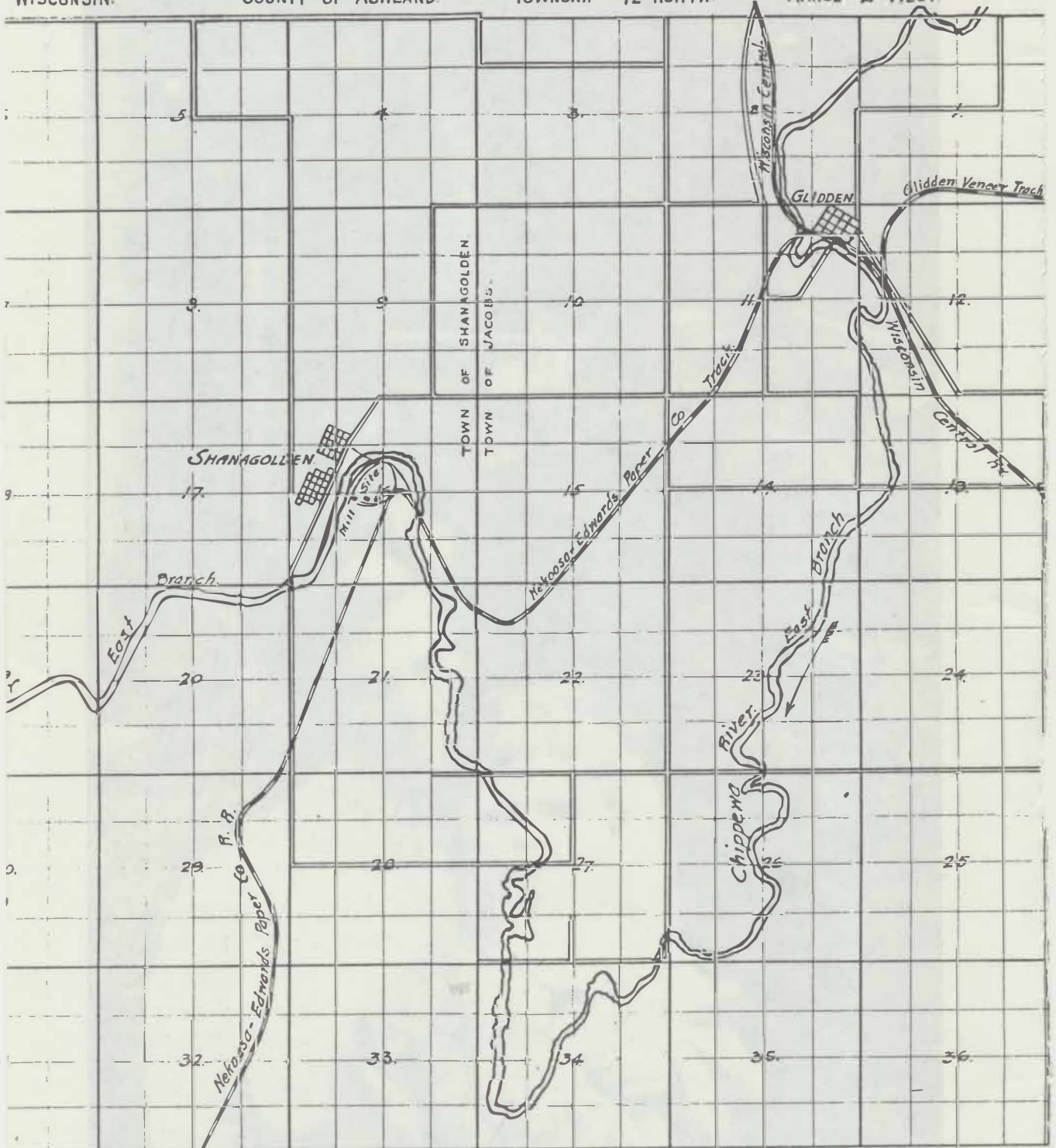
Thomas and Floy Nash, c. 1907

WISCONSIN.

COUNTY OF ASHLAND.

TOWNSHIP 42 NORTH.

RANGE 2 WEST.



Shanagolden Investment Co. map, 1915

# An Industrial Romance

The round leather box he held, thought Guy Nash, had been made to hold men's celluloid collars. "I've an inkling that it may be one my father had when he was in Washington and that was in Cleveland's first administration," he wrote to a friend. "From the contents, I must have used it in Shanagolden."

Among other items, Guy found a Lufkin timber gauge initialed "GN," a sterling silver pencil eraser engraved, "Guy Nash Feb 17, 1901" (his 24th birthday) and a photograph Guy believed had been taken at the "House in the Woods."

"Shanagolden," Guy explained elsewhere, "was my project as nothing since has been. Perceptions were keen, and it was all a work of love, while so many interesting things happened, so many quaint situations and interesting characters were encountered, and such a fine spirit was manifested by all those associated with it."

Guy's wife, Floy, described their northwoods home in a children's story written about 1910. "We had the wilderness out of our back door and a road leading to civilization at the front door. On the far side of the road was a clearing, then the winding river, the old farm house and the saw mill." The house had hemlock boards on the outside, hemlock beams in the ceiling and a big red-brick fireplace on the wall. Windows on three sides framed living landscapes of gnarled cedars, luxuriant undergrowth and wreaths of mushrooms.

Early one August morning "about the time the gnomes and fairies scamper back under those great hemlock roots," she wrote, a bear tried to break in through the back door. Not having a rifle available, her husband seized a shotgun and blasted birdshot through the screen. The bear retreated into the timber. That's the sort of northwoods adventure Shanagolden seemed to carry with it.

A later-born son of Guy and Floy, former Wisconsin Lt. Governor and U.S. Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Philleo Nash, often remarked, with regard to his family's intimate folklore, "All the good things happened at Shanagolden before I was born."

There was plenty of potential for "good things" at the storied

hamlet. The setting was saturated with beauty and wilderness aura. It was also charged with the potential industry of a water-power site.

The main characters were attractive, articulate and newly-wed. The eldest son of Thomas E. and Ella Hussey Nash, Guy was a young man on the rise. Guy had intelligence but more important, he had, on his side, the opportunities of privilege that came with being a wealthy industrialist's son. He had graduated in 1897 from the University of Wisconsin, with academic honors in chemistry. After a year as superintendent of his father's Nekoosa Paper Co. sulphite mill, he left to manage the Northern Paper Company, a buyer of pulpwood for four Grand Rapids-area paper mills.

"During his five years in that capacity he has gained an enviable reputation as a business man of energy and ability," wrote the Wood County Reporter. Though he was a thoughtful and literate writer, Guy was also at home tramping the riverbanks with a gun or a fishing rod in his hand. Always public-spirited and something of a naturalist, he once contributed a pileated woodpecker from northern Wisconsin to the Milwaukee Public Museum.

The romance centering on Guy and Floy was supported by strong characters, including 50-year-old Guy's father, and 62-year-old Col. William F. Vilas of Madison, both of whom could be counted on to contribute heroically of their resources, personal or financial, in any extremity.

Even the name, Shanagolden, borrowed from the Nash ancestral home in County Limerick, Ireland, seemed to be imbued with some kind of magic.

## **Pulp & Paper**

Despite the ancillary lyricism, the actual reason for existence of the Shanagolden enterprise, by which it would live and die, was about as far from poetic as Glidden is from Glengarriff. The first purpose of Shanagolden was to produce logs for pulp to make paper. Secondarily, logs would be sawn into lumber for sale. And hopefully, as far as the founder, Thomas E. Nash, was concerned, the major development of the site would soon be a mill to make wood pulp for paper by the sulphite process. And, above all, these ends had to be accomplished profitably.

The paper industry was ascendent in Wood County, the home of

the Nashes, where, since the 1880s, ground-wood pulp mills and paper mills had replaced virtually every major white pine sawmill.

In the early days of wood pulp production, softwood such as spruce and pine could be ground by stone. The method, however, wasn't suitable for hardwood and hemlock, which became more readily available as the pine supply diminished. In 1896, Tom Nash had installed a sulphite pulp mill at his Nekoosa paper mill. Because it could use hemlock as a raw material, it was the Nekoosa sulphite mill that called Shanagolden into being.

Tom was also a founder of the Port Edwards, Centralia and Northern railroad, and, in 1894, of Consolidated Water Power & Paper Company of Grand Rapids. After a Jarndyce litigation, Tom sold his Consolidated property and water rights in 1902 for \$33,750. Released from his Consolidated obligation, Tom built an impressive mansion on the west bank of the Wisconsin River in Grand Rapids and looked 150 miles north to Ashland county for opportunity in raw materials. In this venture, Tom was not alone. He had his very good friend, former U.S. senator Col. William F. Vilas.

Tom and Col. Vilas had met as Democratic seatmates in the 1885 state assembly. Later, Vilas as postmaster general in the first Cleveland administration brought Tom to Washington and made him superintendent of the national railway mail service. As secretary of the interior he favored cutting of timber to provide building materials and to clear the land for agricultural purposes, according to his biographer, Horace Merrill. In Wood county, Tom and the Colonel joined in cranberry growing, in the Nekoosa Paper Company, the Wood County National Bank and other ventures. Vilas also bought \$10,000 worth of stock in the John Edwards Manufacturing Company in 1896. By 1900, Vilas had already invested heavily in the Superior Lumber Company of Ashland was a director of the Wisconsin Central Railroad.

In northwest Wisconsin, white pine logging had peaked in the 1890s and was pretty much over by 1900. Those lumbermen who stayed turned to second-growth white pine, Norway pine, spruce, white oak and other hardwoods. Hemlock, most abundant near the site chosen, was a versatile, if not choice, leftover. Its bark could be sold to tanneries and logs made into lumber and sulphite pulp.

Had Tom been able to convince Vilas to finance the effort, he would have immediately built a Nekoosa-style sulphite mill at Shanagolden.

## **The Nash Lumber Company**

In April, 1901, and continuing for several years, Guy, Tom and Vilas secured options on timber lands in the Ashland and Sawyer county towns of Jacobs and Butternut. The principal tracts, according to Guy's later account, had been owned by Sage Land and Improvement, Geo. Cable and wife, "Munkwitz," "Swift," the brothers J.W. and D.W. Emerson, the Chippewa Lumber and Boom Company, the Wisconsin Central Railroad, the Mississippi River Logging Company and Cornell University.

More than 40,000 acres were purchased for \$103,745.09. Most of the financing was provided by Vilas, who incurred debts of \$26,000 each from Guy and his brother James.

An agreement drawn August 31, 1901, between the Wisconsin Central Railway Company and the Vilas/Nash interests describes the planned project:

The second party is interested in manufacturing paper, sulphite and pulp at points reached by the railway of the CENTRAL COMPANY and desire to acquire a large body of timber on contiguous lands lying westerly of Butternut station on the Wisconsin Central Railway, and having acquired the same propose to construct a saw mill for the purpose of manufacturing saw timber and to cut and ship to market all the forest product from lands so acquired by them, including pulpwood proposed to be used in manufacturing said paper and pulp.

Incorporation papers for the the Nash Lumber Company were signed October 11, 1902, by T.E. Nash, Guy and James Nash. Capital stock was set at \$25,000. Headquarters would be in the Ashland County town of Jacobs on the East Fork of the Chippewa River at what was considered the best manufacturing site between Park Falls and Glidden.

Work began that fall, supervised by Jim Nash. In December, three men from Grand Rapids arrived to build a store and boarding house. Charles Bundy, also from Rapids, was placed in charge of building a railroad from Glidden to the sawmill site.

## **Prospective Operations**

In January, 1902, with his sons, Jim and Guy, Tom Nash looked over the work in progress. A railroad track had been laid to the Chippewa River and a bridge was expected to be built within two

weeks, so track could be laid to the mill site.

"It is too much for one man to look after," wrote Tom to Vilas, "and while Jim gets along very well, he couldn't when business really commences to hum as it is going to there."

Tom said he and his wife took a ride through the woods near the construction site. The interlude proved to be the most enjoyable in years, said Tom, adding that, "I would like to go up there and live myself."

By August 22, 1902, although he was not yet married, Guy had picked a home site on land bought from Chester T. Kennan. Tom said he thought Guy would be happy at that place and thanked Vilas for suggesting a house "somewhat better than the ordinary frontier one," promising to "urge this upon him. His tastes are quite plain, but we'll want to have him comfortable."

A sawmill, the center of industrial activity until such time as a pulp mill was arranged, was to be built on the East Branch of the Chippewa River in Section 16, Township 42 North, Range 2 West, Ashland County – 3 1/2 miles from the Wisconsin Central main line at Glidden Station. The mill was built inside the toe of a horseshoe curve of the river and the village outside the bend to the west.

On all sides of the town, the virgin timber was left standing, for aesthetic reasons.

As the scenic bend of the East Fork was being developed, Guy wrote from Glidden to his sister, Nell, on July 22, 1902. "This is from the scene of our prospective operations, and is written from a private car set off on a siding near the city's heart. Colonel Vilas, Father, Jim, Leo and myself, are the party, and President Whitcomb [of the Wisconsin Central] has furnished the colonel the car. The *raison d'être* of the trip is to inspect the proposed mill site about three miles from here. The mill site is already purchased or optioned as the result of the examination by father and myself a month ago. Soon I will be drawing up this way and by another six months will be a fragrant memory in G.R. [Grand Rapids] except to the people who dislike me."

Headquarters for the as yet unnamed 1902 development were in "The Farmhouse," an existing structure near the mill site. As the "Glidden and Southwestern Railway" became more than a fancy name, the Nash company laid the grade, built bridges and sold ties to the Wisconsin Central as their part of the bargain. The railroad in turn furnished the rails. A strict accounting was kept of

the costs of building and of shipping, toward eventual ownership of the G&S by the Wisconsin Central.

Vilas wrote from Madison to Tom in Grand Rapids on January 10, 1903, that he hoped to get the mill in by March 1 and commented in his customary avuncular manner. "Mrs. Nash was pretty plucky to go up, and I am glad you enjoyed such a pleasant ride to compensate her. I presume she wanted to see what sort of a place her boys were planning to live in, and trust she is contented with it. Things will take on a pleasanter outlook when store and boarding house and Guy's residence are built, the mill going and summer's growths lend their adornment. If I were a young fellow with a new wife, I wouldn't want anything more enticing."

In the same letter, Vilas, the pragmatic businessman, had his turn. "As to the money required. We shall need, of course, for mill, for buildings, for stocking store, for logging & current operations, quite a sum; perhaps \$40,000 to \$50,000. Three-fourths of this falls to you and the boys." Vilas knew that Tom and "the boys," Guy and Jim, didn't have that kind of cash. He advised the Nashes to borrow from him what they needed (as he had borrowed elsewhere – mostly from his brother Dr. Charles H. Vilas) and pay the notes off from time to time.

Tom pressed Vilas for the building of a sulphite mill at Shanagolden, which would utilize the hemlock timber that made up most of the Nash Lumber Company holdings. It would be the nearest such mill to Minnesota and northern Wisconsin paper mills which were without sulphite plants of their own; and it would be convenient to other paper mills further south that could also be expected to purchase the stock, such as those at Stevens Point, Grand Rapids, Port Edwards and Menasha. "The timber supply we have is better than any mill in this state has ever had back of it and should we live to exhaust our own we could ship in the same as the others must do now." Tom figured the sulphite mill would cost \$130,000. With a projected income of \$100,000 per year, it wouldn't take long to recoup the investment.

Vilas did not agree. He said a sulphite mill would cost too much to build and would be useless when the local timber was gone.

### **The House in the Woods**

A steam-driven sawmill and planing mill, but not a sulphite mill, were built during the spring and summer of 1903 by the D.J.

Murray company of Wausau, with timbers furnished by Foster-Latimer of Mellen. When Guy reported on the construction to his father, he dwelt particularly on a problem with stone and brick work. The foundation in some sections did not seem to be sound nor were all the materials well chosen.

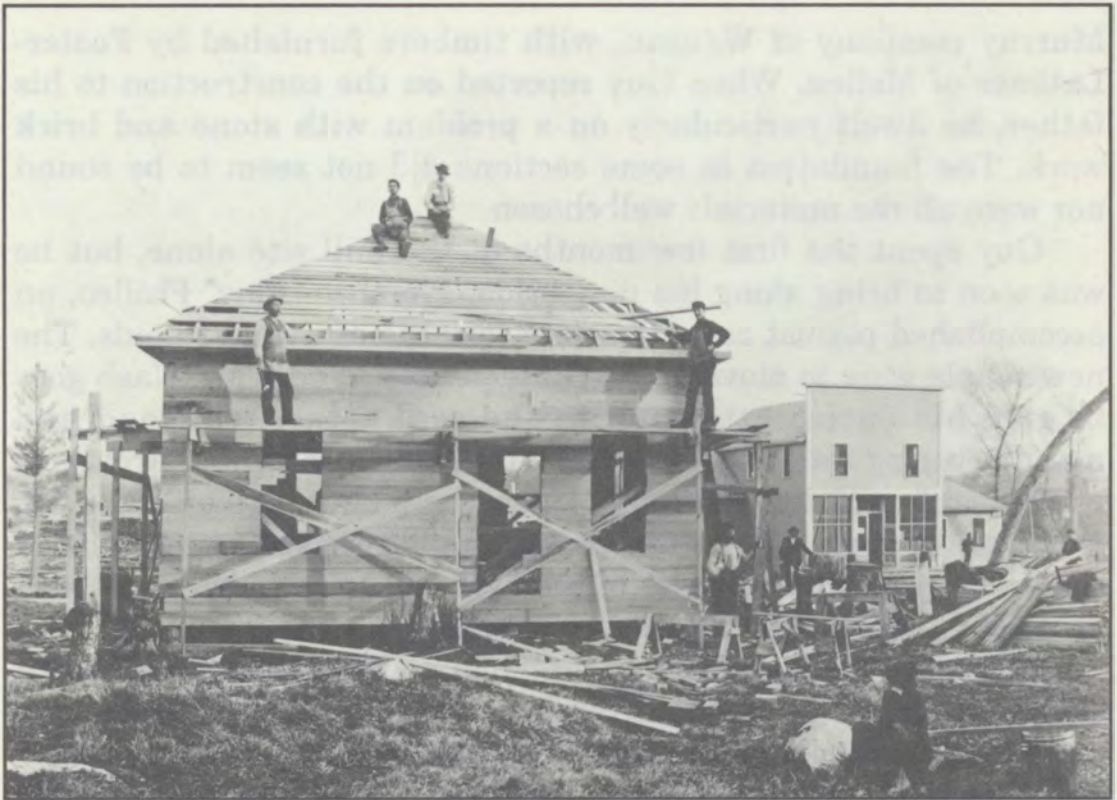
Guy spent the first few months at the mill site alone, but he was soon to bring along his new bride, Florence "Floy" Philleo, an accomplished pianist and attractive socialite of Grand Rapids. The new couple were to move to the Glidden area "where Mr. Nash goes to give his entire attention to the real estate, railroad and manufacturing interest of the Nash Lumber Co. of which firm he is a member," said the Reporter. Upon their marriage on June 30, 1903, one of the presents the young couple received was that they could be prince and princess of the mill and town-to-be for as long as it lived (or failed to make a profit, whichever came sooner).

Guy and Floy did not come to Ashland County "for keeps" until early August, when they started housekeeping in the Farmhouse, prior to the completion of their own home. A college friend, Oliver Zimmerman, wrote to Guy in July, 1903: "Do I imagine correctly when I see in far off Glidden a happy couple busy day and evenings with new business and new life?"

"I enjoy thinking of you in that forest home," wrote Floy's aunt from Detroit. "I even hear the sound of the saw mill – and the sounds in the woods and I can smell the woodsey odors – Do you find the boarding house pleasant, and are there any women there?" In fact, there was only one other woman at first, the wife of the boarding house keeper.

Guy's "residence" was to be built on the scale Vilas had recommended and named, "The House in the Woods." Guy asked architect Alexander C. Eschweiler, Milwaukee, for plans that would "not greatly exceed \$3,500," much more than the average jack could afford but modest compared to Tom's \$30,000 mansion in Rapids. "The house will stand where privacy is easily attained by the distance from the road and shrubbery, and up there, a feeling of being out of doors is the great charm for a large part of the year," wrote Guy. Nevertheless, he realized, this was east of Eden; the open porch needed screens against the mosquitoes.

Eschweiler's suggestion of open beams and unsurfaced, stained siding was readily adopted. "That rough effect is what will harmonize with the surroundings, and the simple effects will not only be in keeping but will be restful after the high finish we see



SHSW

Shanagolden store and office, rear right, 1903



Nash

Boarding house crew, 1905



Nash Lumber Co. camp, 1905

Nash



Glidden & Southwestern logging RR, 1903

SHSW

everywhere," wrote Guy. "In the living room, we will use ash. My fiancée has trouble in making up our mind about the enamel in the dining room, but we will let you know as to that soon."

Not surprisingly to others who had engaged in similar exploits, the mill and the house were costing more than estimated. Ominously, overdrafts were beginning to surface at the Wood County National Bank in Grand Rapids.

## Nashville

Getting the mill going, while building the house, presented a hectic round of activity and more difficulties, according to Guy's diary. "Sawyer Menier finds friction on carriage set just wrong so as to throw blocks forward instead of back. Piano on trimmer at wrong end. Dump cart and haul off wagons, and chain for cars arrive. Two cars lumber from Mellen for my house here, foreman house and carpenter from Grand Rapids here this P.M. Rain all day." On September 16, 1903, another rainy day, while Guy suffered from chills and fever, the mill started up for the first time.

The next day, the mill was down for repairs.

Guy wrote to Eschweiler on September 19 that his reply regarding the house-building had been delayed by the start-up of the mill. "Although only a small mill the band is a double cutter and makes a board with the carriage going each way and the mill has most of the late improvements."

A month later, Tom was wondering about an area that had already shown more weakness than any construction flaws. What had Guy done about getting a bookkeeper? "Will be glad when everything is straightened out so you and Jim can keep more after the land, logs and lumber for there is where the profit lies."

About this time, a somewhat exaggerated article in the Ashland Daily Press of October 14, 1903, announced that a promising new village had sprung up in the town of Jacobs. "Parties from Grand Rapids, Ex-President Cleveland and Wisconsin Senator Vilas, from Grand Rapids, are investing money four miles from Glidden, where they are putting in a hardwood mill and furniture factory at a place which they have named Nashville. The mill is running now, but the factory is incompleted. There is also some talk of a pulp mill, a boarding house and store is being built at this place, and trains run from Glidden right to the mill."

The name "Nashville" was not actually used and it was not

Cleveland but Vilas who was most interested in the new Glidden suburb, although the former president likely knew about it. The Nash Lumber Company had just begun making lumber when the Madison dignitary began to show impatience with bill-paying. He wrote Tom on November 21, 1903, that he had sent Guy \$5,000, the balance of the latest loan. "I presume no very great amount more is likely to be wanted for some time. I hope so, for it is becoming tighter in the money world."

Guy had not yet completed his house when Tom came up with a plan to combine the Nash Lumber Company and the Nekoosa Paper Company, a move that would render an uncertain future for Guy. The Nash Lumber Company would provide to Nekoosa the raw materials of paper manufacturing: timber, hemlock, bark and timber – and the facilities just erected at "Nashville:" saw mill, store, boarding house and camp outfits. The value of the Nash properties was set at \$600,000.

As with the pulp mill idea, the internal sale concept was bumped up one level of authority, where it was similarly squelched. Vilas said the sale might be possible but he doubted it would be desirable, although he had no reluctance in accepting an offer to purchase from some other party. Vilas had bought the Ashland county mill once; he wasn't about to buy it again, this time from himself. After a dragging time of a year or so, the lumber market would revive, assured Vilas, and there would be plenty of customers for the Nash property at a good price.

"We don't need to be impatient. All we have to do is to move prudently, make no needless outlays and keep on 'sawing wood.'"

## Overdraft

Guy had to plead for more money again on December 12, 1903. There had been, he explained, good enough reasons: a railroad car shortage and delivery problems with bark. More bills were coming up to be paid – for machinery, logging and payroll. The startup had been unfortunate because hemlock proved impossible to get to and "hardwood" had to be sawed instead. At the time of the writing, the "good" hemlock was covered by green hemlock and the hardwood wasn't in shipping condition. By the way, Guy needed \$15,000 the next week and the same by Christmas. And there was an overdraft of \$10,300.

Although against his better judgment, Vilas answered the call

as usual, with adequate funds. The personal intimacy he felt for the Nashes was enhanced by his sorrow over the recent deaths of so many long-time friends and he could not say no. On Sept. 26, 1903, he wrote to Tom, "I have no such friend left now, but you. It has been a dreadful death-harvest. I cannot bear to think of it."

## The Village

A community that would amount to several hundred hopeful souls began to accumulate around the Nash Lumber Company mill on the East Fork of the Chippewa. The new citizens lived on neatly platted land provided by the company for rent or purchase and sometimes in company houses on the same basis. Records show that, purchasing lots between late 1903 and March of 1906, were: Jno. C. Bull, Guy Nash, L. Dingman, School District Town of Jacobs, Christian Hanson, Oliver O. Rondo, Nicholas Zewe, Anton Gabur, Val. Ballsch[m]neider, Jos. Tomauer, L. Mayville, R. Elliott, Julius. Lassa, Stanley Berlick, Jno. Johnson, L. Dingman, Wm. J. Nelson, Clarence B. Hanson, A.J. Boyles, Ed Dyborg, E. Sundquist, Jay Kimball, L. Valley, Jas. Bliss, Max Greenfield, Chas Bundy, Christ Hanson, John R. Graham, W.E. Jehn, Frank Staadt, Emil Kunsch, Jno. Monk, Jas. Peterson.

Many of these residents and others yet to arrive had ties to Grand Rapids, among them Mrs. Miller, Geo. L. Pickett, Gertrude Kuntz, Slattery, John Johnson, Frank Corcoran, Albert Sweeney, Joe Bodette, Milton Mosher, Stephen Love, Anton Gabur, Mrs. Frank Yetter, Paul Philleo, Mrs. Julius Lassa, Carl and Oscar Umholt, William Sibley and Carrie Behrens.

To connect the first settlers with the society at large, and more particularly, their relatives back home, a post office was established and named, by Tom Nash: "Shanagolden." The popular interpretation of the name is that of a "shana-golden," meaning either something shining gold; or a golden "shana." Actually, a book of Irish names tells us that "Shanagolden" or "Seangualann" is best translated as "old shoulder or hill." According to this etymology, it is a "shanag-olden" rather than a "shana-golden" that the Nashes dubbed along the Chippewa.

At first, Jim Nash rode his horse to Glidden to pick up the mail and on December 17, 1903, was appointed the first postmaster. Later, mail came twice daily by the Kline stage from Glidden.

Whatever the reverberations of the name, Shanagolden was

planned as a productive, industrial village, not as a resort or condominium of leprechauns. And it was to be a sober set of citizens, insofar as such a status could be mandated by management decree. Included in deeds for lots in the village, such as that of Nicholas Zewe, signed October 24, 1904, were stipulations that the property would never be used for to maintain a saloon or any place for keeping or selling "strong, spiritous, malt, ardent or intoxicating liquors."

## **Losing Jim**

As 1904 began, Vilas wondered if a large mistake hadn't been made somewhere. Calls to him for contributions to cover expenses had got so numerous that he thought suspending operations might be better than continuing to operate for no profit at all. Yet, he tried to encourage Guy personally, in February: "I think the Co. will be on its feet before many mos. I trust Shanagolden will justify the latter part of its name and authorize the first to be 'shining.'"

Guy's brother, Jim, decided he had enough of the kind of glitter he was experiencing as Guy's left hand man and wanted to go home to work at Nekoosa. Jim was not as happy, Guy wrote, as he had been when he was in entire charge of the operation; that is, before Guy came. "Men come to him kicking about things he has nothing to do with under the division of work, and I don't doubt take it up in a very different way than they do with me." Besides problems with "double authority," Jim found boarding house food more monotonous than having a cook of his own for six or eight men, said Guy. Add to that friction with "Burt" and Guy was unable to work out an arrangement that would keep Jim in Shanagolden.

## **Cost Sheets & Whiskey for the Boss**

Tom, characteristically optimistic, looked towards a more profitable future for the Nashes if not Shanagolden. He said in January, 1904, only six months or so after the mill was built, that he would be willing to sell the Nash land for \$4 per acre, meanwhile running the saw mill day and night to get the most possible profit out of the timber they owned before any possible sale. "If the land was sold our interest in paying taxes hoping for re-imbursement from increase in land values would be gone." Tom said he expected that land dealers anxious to get settlers in would

be helpful in raising the value of the land. "It may be better to manufacture a few months longer and get our cost sheets where they belong before passing any judgement."

On January 21, 1904, even as the sale of Shanagolden was being discussed, Guy purchased from the Nash Lumber Company, the land on which he built his house. About that time, a nasty letter came from Stevens Point.

Ed Woodworth, a former saw filer for the company, wrote, "I have always supposed you to be a man of honor but the deal I received through you and your lackeys proves to the contrary. I could not hope to win against such a combination as John Bull, Walter Burt and a helper and sawyer working against me all the time ... I suppose I would have been a better fellow if I had furnished whiskey for the boss and had a little drink in the store nights. I never did buy whiskey to hold a job. You keep your eyes open and you will be wiser in six months."

## **Money Does Go Hard**

Like Major Molineux's young kinsman, Guy would be enlightened soon enough. At least, efforts would be made in that direction. The "House in the Woods," which he and Floy moved into in February, 1904, had overrun the estimated \$4,000 cost. Guy needed more money to pay the final bills, he told his father. "We are very comfortable and happy and will have a fine house as long as Shanagolden runs, if I can run it to a success. I do not see any reason to question it, but so much money going out does go hard," he said.

The way it looked to the most objective party involved, Guy was not running the mill to anything that could be termed success. By March, Vilas could identify two specific problems: unprofitable winter sawing in the mill and inadequate accounting in the office. "I shall be glad when the bookkeeping reaches a point that will enable some use of it," he wrote. Defending Shanagolden, Tom and Guy continued to argue that the seeming deficit was only temporary, caused mainly by a hard winter and the extra expense of the start-up.

"The Nash Lbr Co is going to come out all right," Guy wrote on March 31. "We are just finding our legs and getting where we can go satisfactorily. So far we have gotten along rather as we could than as we wished. Now the little things which mean half the profits can

be looked after as has not been possible so far. Economies of manufacturing, logging savings, prompt realization on pulpwood bark etc. looking closer after feed, sacks and many more such things will help out a lot, and we are not doing all bad now."

In an uncommon reference to his personal life, Guy told Vilas that Floy had not been feeling too well lately; he did not mention that she was pregnant, though she was. "She is a plucky little woman to undergo the loneliness and trials of the winter in the woods," returned Vilas. "I hoped the completion of your house would be much comfort to her."

Meanwhile, Floy, in one of her several absences from Shanagolden, wrote her counsel to the manager of the big sawmill, this time from Grand Rapids: "It is too bad since you must send way to Milwaukee for a painter that you cant get the man you want. Guy, don't let him tramp all my green things down. ... So Vilas and your Father go up on Tuesday - For pity's sake take the broom and brush up the carpets in living and dining room. I know how it must look and to have Col Vilas see our pretty house in so dilapidated a condition is too bad."

While Guy was waiting to become a father for the first time, his father was experiencing considerable and increasing pain in his left arm. Vilas persuaded Tom to come down to Madison for medical attention. "Unless this be dealt with as it should be you are liable to be cut off from business altogether," wrote Vilas, believing that business worries were a major cause of Tom's physical problems at that time.

Despite more overdrafts as spring of 1904 approached, Guy and Tom attempted mutual reassurances that the Shanagolden situation would improve. Tom wrote to Guy, "Your statements indicate that the Nash Lbr Co. will soon be self sustaining and I hope this may be the case. There is no doubt in my mind but that property will bring independent riches to you and Jim and good profit to both Col V and I the way timber is climbing it may be realized as without your working so very many years."

Vilas noted, April 2, 1904, that he had now furnished to Tom and the boys, from his coffers and his brother's, over \$254,500. "But I reckon it a good promise and think the boys will get a fortune out of it of a fair size for young fellows," he said to Tom. Vilas wrote to Guy the same day that Tom had been touched emotionally by Guy's letters "and is justly proud of his good, capable and faithful son, tho he may not say so to you."

From Col. William F. Vilas, January 2, 1905

Dear Guy,

I duly rec'd yrs. or 23d ult's, and also the photographs of the camps and lumbering scenes, for which accepting thanks. They are interesting to me of course and ought to be attractive in some degree to anyone.



Jehn

Lumber storage, Nash Lumber Co., 1905



Nash

Nash Lumber Co. RR locomotive (Al McDonald, engineer; Jay Kimball, conductor; Bob Elliott, fireman), 1905



Nash

Log loader, 1905

## **A Brilliant Future**

However negative the cash-flow within the Nash company, the little industrial burg they had invented looked mighty good to many of those who lived and worked there. A June 10, 1904, correspondence from A.J. Boyles, a Nash employee, to the Glidden Enterprise, called Shanagolden "a thriving young town with a brilliant future." He estimated that the mill, which employed several hundred men, could run 15 or 20 years before exhausting the Nash Lumber Company timber.

In July, 1904, telephone lines were run from the company office to camps 1 and 2. The following March, the Glidden Telephone Company extended their line to Shanagolden. In September, 1904, the Shanagolden correspondent analyzed the possibilities for an industrial future.

"Should the much talked of pulp mill be put in at this village then watch us go. There is an abundant supply of good pulp wood near at hand and would keep a concern of the above type in operation for years to come. Then Shanagolden would have prospects of some day becoming one of the leading towns in Northern Wisconsin."

There was no reason for the average south-Ashland county sawdust savant to believe his home was a passing fancy.

## **The American Lumberman**

A generous multi-page spread on the subject of Shanagolden in the American Lumberman magazine was reprinted August 9, 1904, in the Wood County Reporter of Grand Rapids and couldn't help but reinforce the notion that things were going well up there. From the point of view of Vilas and Tom Nash, the illustrated description must have served as a complimentary real estate ad. "Shanagolden is new, but unlike most other new towns, it is not crude," said the Lumberman. "The east branch of the Chippewa river, in a very picturesque part of its course, here divides the saw and planing mill plant, lumber yards and roll-ways of the Nash Lumber Company from the office, merchandising, boarding house and residential portion of the village."

The mill was expected to operate at least 20 years. The lumber company railroad would be used even longer, said the Lumberman, as an adjunct to the Wisconsin Central to accommodate settlers

resulting from local lumbering activities in the cutover. "The secretary of the Nash Lumber Company and the active manager of the work is Guy Nash, oldest son of the president, who resides at Shanagolden in the picturesque cottage depicted in one of the engravings."

Timber holdings were estimated at 35,000 acres of virgin forest southwest of Shanagolden with standing timber "aggregating" at about 20 million feet. Hemlock "of a comparatively young, medium sized and thrifty character" comprised two-thirds. The remainder was birch, basswood, elm and white pine. Some small spruce and hemlock would be "reduced to pulp stock" and sold to the Nekoosa Paper Company.

The sawmill, said the Lumberman, had a capacity of 60,000 feet in 10 hours. Also supplied by the steam plant was a planing mill. A related mill made shingles from white cedar and lath from hemlock and basswood.

The home of manager Nash was described as unique for a lumber town: "a modern seaside cottage transferred to the fringe of the forest." In the house's interior, rough hemlock beams were stained a dull brown. Huge fireplaces, rug-covered hardwood floors, electric lighting and charming decorations pointed to "the comfort its occupancy" and "the good sense and excellent taste of its owner."

When Guy sent a copy of the article to Floy, she replied from Grand Rapids. "I thought the pictures very good also the article," she said. "I wish I had known when the house was to be taken for the curtains in our room look like sin and are most conspicuous in the picture."

## **You and I Will Be Rich**

Throughout the summer, Vilas implored Tom to take care of his health. "I want you to be in good condition to help my wife, as may be convenient, when I have 'passed in my checks,' and give the wisdom of your brains & experience to Nekoosa and Shanagolden for many years to come, and if you don't take the pressure off, you will be a grievous disappointment to me after I am dead and gone."

Repose in the face of the continued cash drain might have been difficult for Tom. On August 25, he wrote ambiguously to Guy about the latest loan: "Have arranged with Col. Vilas to provide money as needed for logging – twenty millions if necessary. I am sending him today \$30,000 Jackson Milling Co. stock as collateral."

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very happy expression – now, I am sure his face is a radiant sunbeam.”

From outward appearances, it was a time when many conceptions were coming to fruition.

Other newcomers were expected to arrive in Shanagolden soon – workmen and their families. Ground was cleared in October, 1904, for a modern two-story rooming house for 100 men, according to the *Enterprise*. Seven miles of railroad were laid into the heaviest of the Nash timber. Iron pipes were run from the engine room through the hot pond, to the pumping house and yard and across the river to the boarding house and store. That, with 2,000 feet of hose, was expected to give the villagers temporary protection from fire. In spring, the company intended to lay water mains the full length of the street. A volunteer fire department was organized, with John Heiser, chief, Earl Brennan, hook and ladder captain and Frank Staadt, bucket brigade, among others.

Apparently some further training was needed in the incendiary arena. It was reported that one of the members of the brigade got so excited when pressed into action that he threw three pails of water at a mirror.

Injuries around the mill and camps, while not an everyday occurrence, were common and sometimes fatal. When Alfred Panter and Carrie Bunde were married in October, 1905, they were treated to a charivari by mill employees. Their life in Shanagolden was to be short, Alfred in the next week breaking both legs in a mill yard accident that sent the two back to Grand Rapids.

Occasionally, mishaps came with elements of humor attached. The *Enterprise* of July 22, 1904, said of Geo. DeMars: “In a tussle with the nigger in the mill he got a bad blow in the ribs with a cant hook handle which will put him out of the ring for a few days.” The *Enterprise* described another close call during off-work hours when Ole Berg, a blacksmith at one of the camps, lay down drunk on the railroad track. From the woods came half-a-dozen hunters speeding along on a hand car that passed directly over the blacksmith. Berg was nearly stripped by a gearing that caught in his clothing but otherwise none the worse for the experience. He got up without help, excused himself for having stopped the car and went on to the camp.

In September, 1904, Bob Elliott’s son, George, was taken to Butternut to have his foot operated on. Dr. Violet removed a

porcupine quill that had been festereing for some six months.

The saw mill was shut down half a day in November to give the men an opportunity to vote. That the mill would be shut down permanently did not seem possible . It was all so lively.

## **Profit and Loss**

The Nash family agreed with the populace that there was a viable future for Shanagolden as a community, but it was clear that future did not rest on what they were doing at the time – making lumber from logs. To justify one of many requests for cash, Guy wrote to F.J. Wood of the Wood County National Bank that payments were coming in from Nekoosa for pulpwood but that he hesitated to fill the orders. “If we build a sulphite mill here next spring we will need this wood ourselves,” he wrote. Lumbering was never more than a sideline to the Nash Lumber Company. The Nash vision always rested on pulp and paper.

As 1904 ended, Tom wrote, after a visit to Shanagolden, that operations there were in good condition. The several logging camps in the area were functioning well, “and they can get good men this year for much less than poor men had to be taken on last year.” The mill was running night and day and the hot water pond working well. “Guy is working very hard and begins to feel that now his organization is good,” said Tom, “and he will get better results with less trying effort on his part.”

The situation and Guy’s “trying” role in it did not look so good to Vilas and he let Guy know about it. In reaction, Guy wrote to his father to confess Vilas suspected that Shanagolden as a business proposition wasn’t working out very well. “I don’t think we should blame him if he is getting inclined to question management. He has a lot of money in and more to go in and, of course, I’m pretty young and new to the lumber business. But he should not expect impossible results.”

As 1905 began, a frustrated Vilas continued to chide Guy as gently as he could manage. “I have not had a trial balance of Nash L. Co. for many months – Don’t your bookkeeper get them off monthly?” Vilas told Tom that he could not see a dollar being made at Shanagolden. “Judging from the balance sheets, our increase is principally in debts.” Any profit, said Vilas, was likely to result from the rising land values, rather than through timber production.

The Nash Lumber Company, according to Vilas, would have to stop cutting logs. Rather than laboring to clear a profit, they were foolishly reducing the value of the land by taking off the timber. "I have not been satisfied with the mill from the first, as I have more than once suggested," wrote Vilas. "Its power seems too limited for either its cost of construction or of operation." Despite a harvest of logs at three camps of almost 10 million board feet, Vilas found February figures "disquieting." He said logs cut by the Nash Lumber Company cost more than they would have if they had been bought from another lumber company, already cut.

Vilas told Guy he hoped summer sales would be considerable and implied that they had better be, so he could pay off his own debts. "Your father's unfortunate condition casts upon us the necessity for looking to the business in every aspect, and we must look it squarely in the face," he said.

In April, Vilas wrote to Tom that Guy needed assistance. "I get but a very unsatisfactory statement, showing receipts, after corrections, at \$153,663.66, and payments \$152,489.30, which he is overdrawn. And as a cash disbursement, there is given a charge to Profit and Loss, for loss, of \$6,541.97! No business can be safely conducted unless the accounts, both pecuniary and of operation, are prompt and accurate, almost or quite in daily exhibit."

Vilas told Tom a week later that he was prepared to sell the Ashland county land for \$4 per acre, "because I have got so much locked up here that I am deprived of much better uses of." Vilas thought he and Tom – without letting Guy know their purpose – ought to get up to Shanagolden and help get affairs in order .

### **The Haak Option**

The Haak Lumber Company of Haakwood, Mich., was interested in buying Shanagolden and the Nash Lumber Company wanted to sell. Guy wrote Haak on May 25, 1905, describing the components of the "all new" plant: double-cutter single-band mill, lath sawmill, shingle mill, planing mill, large sizer, matcher, moulder, siding saw, rip-saw, cut-off saw and Byrkite lath machine, dry lumber shed, boarding house with sleeping shanty, store, barns and two houses. Also for sale were a first-class locomotive, 15 standard flat cars, a McGiffert log loader and camp outfits. Guy estimated the Nash timber holdings at 200 million feet of hemlock, birch, basswood, elm, pine and tamarack saw timber. There were



Nash Lumber Co., 1903; sawmill at right (Nash)



Nash Lumber Co. camp, 1905 (Nash)



Big woods stack, 1905 (Nash)



Logging camp in winter (Nash)

also cedar, spruce and hemlock for pulp wood which the Nash Lumber Company would buy from the new owner for use in the Nekoosa paper mill.

"As to price, I think our people would accept \$600,000 for land and timber, or would hold the land, selling you the timber only for \$75,000 less; the mills, railroad, boarding house, store, rolling stock, my house, etc., to be sold to you at cost."

### **Distance Lends Enchantment**

When Guy described his Shanagolden adventure to his sister Nell on June 6, he wrote wryly of, "a chance to live close to Nature's heart and fight mosquitoes and incidentally, put in eight or ten hours a day in a lumber office but, when it rains all day and a board has hit you on the head and the humming produced convinces you it's hollow, why it becomes impress on me that I might be able to stand a little of the strenuousness of European travel of which you complain, in exchange for even Shanagolden. You see, I've been here pretty steady for two years in August, and doubtless that increases the attractiveness of some of those things as distance lends enchantment, etc."

### **The Hines Option**

Another potential buyer for Shanagolden, the Edward Hines Lumber Company of Chicago, emerged in October. Again, lands and timber were offered, this time by Vilas, for \$600,000. The remains of the Nash Lumber Company could be purchased "at cost." Vilas told Guy that about \$465,000 would be required to wipe out the debts he and the Nashes had incurred. "If this be true, you and Jim and I would have about \$240,000 – to pay what we put in and profit." Guy said he would be glad if the Hines deal went through. However, Hines decided not to purchase Shanagolden, apparently because of the poor quality hemlock offered.

### **The Latest Pulp Proposition**

The tenacious Tom Nash returned time and again to his original idea. "Was at Appleton yesterday and found a very decided change in favor of hemlock and also building a sulphite mill at Shanagolden. Mr. McNaughton [an investor in the Nekoosa Paper Co.] thought it would be a very good thing for PtEd [Port Edwards

paper mill] – So Cent [South Centralia paper mill] and Nekoosa [paper mill], and that we, too, would make money on it.” Nash tried to persuade Vilas to increase capital stock to \$500,000 and bond it for an equal amount, setting aside \$150,000 for a sulphite mill to be built the following spring.

Vilas’ friendship for Tom did not prevent him from vetoing the latest pulp proposition as quickly as he had those that had come earlier. “Your suggestion of enlarging capital and bonding for \$500,000 strikes me as neither feasible nor wise. I think we should go on just as we are and, some day, we will find a customer.”

A Nash Lumber Company record shows from Dec. 1, 1904, to Oct. 1, 1905, the company harvested 12,277,982 feet of hemlock, which was 53.9% of the total harvest, followed by birch (15%), basswood (14%), pine (7%), fir (7%), maple, ash and oak.

### **Port Edwards Fibre**

Two problems were about to be solved by a creative maneuver.

On the basis of a December, 1905, understanding, the “Port Edwards Fibre Co.” was formed, February 7, 1906, to both buy the Nash Lumber Company and build a sulphite mill that would use the timber products Nash had been producing and would be expected to continue producing. The sulphite facility would not be located near the raw materials of Shanagolden as Tom Nash had wished. It would be placed near the paper mill at Port Edwards though Shanagolden-area forests owned by Nash would provide the raw material.

Lewis M. Alexander, a resident of Milwaukee at the time, was a banker and president of the John Edwards Manufacturing Co. of Port Edwards, between Grand Rapids and Nekoosa, where he had built a paper mill in 1896. He also invested in the Centralia and Nekoosa paper mills and was secretary of the General Paper company of Milwaukee, a paper-marketing concern.

The fibre company was financed by 500 bonds of \$1,000 each. Of \$250,000 in capital stock, three-fifths went to the triumvirate of L.M. Alexander, president of J. Edwards Mfg.; G.F. Steele, manager of Edwards; and John McNaughton, an investor in Edwards, in the Nekoosa Paper Company and in Fox River Valley mills. That left a minority of two-fifths of the stock for the principal figures of the former Nash Lumber Company: Guy Nash, Tom Nash, Jim Nash and William F. Vilas.

Most likely in recognition of his status as senior partner, Tom Nash was named president; Steele, vice president; and Alexander, treasurer. Just recently prince of Shanagolden and heir apparent to the management of the Nekoosa Paper Company, Guy Nash was not named to the board of directors of Port Edwards Fibre, although he was named manager and secretary.

Tom was happy, or at least relieved, to have the agreement, as he wrote to Guy: "Our affairs are now in safe and fairly good condition. I think enough bonds will soon be sold to put me beyond trouble ever from a general panic – and you and Jim are already there." He said he owed only \$96,000 to Vilas, most of which he would meet with \$94,000 worth of bonds.

A March 2, 1906, Enterprise listed the top tax payers of the town of Jacobs. Number one was Guy Nash, no doubt representing the Nash firm, paying \$2,293.27. A close second was the Wisconsin Central Railway at \$2,116.35, followed by the Mississippi River Log Company, \$1356.71.

That month, Guy sold to the Nash Lumber Company "the dwelling house and all appurtenances" that was known as the House in the Woods, seemingly preparing the way for his departure from the area.

An exchange of conferences regarding the future of Shanagolden took place in 1906 as Guy visited L.M. Alexander in Milwaukee and, in turn, Alexander, with banker F.J. Wood, came to Shanagolden in order to finalize the fibre company's organization. On March 15, Wood, of the Wood County National Bank, told Guy he had written his bank's largest draft ever, for \$247,740, "and I think the largest draft that any bank of the same capital [\$50,000] as ours has ever issued in this state."

## **The Artistic Temperament**

Floy, who had studied music in Detroit and owned one of the five pianos in Shanagolden, apparently found sylvan isolation less than ideal. Looking down the Chippewa valley at endless meanders of statuesque timber and winter snow, Floy was asked by an enthusiast of the north if she could think of any place on earth she would rather be.

"I certainly can," she is reported to have said. "Right on the corner of State Street and Madison in Chicago."

Floy, like Guy, was not restricted, however, to an Ashland

county existence. She returned often to Grand Rapids to help care for her ailing mother and to visit with Grand Rapids friends, such as Charlotte Witter and Ruth Mead. Her undated letters from Rapids to Guy tell of carriage drives, card-playing, dance parties and chronic nervous tension. There is also nostalgia for her northwoods abode. "I am afraid I am in for a headache about tomorrow," she wrote. "I will be so glad when you come down and take me home. Altogether I shall find Glidden very restful. What a time you have had washing dishes etc. Why didn't you let them accumulate? Then we could have had a great washing bee on my return."

Her good humor apparently could not survive the vicissitudes of country living. As was fairly commonplace for wives of privilege in those days, Floy suffered a breakdown that sent her off for a long vacation. In 1906, Floy left young Thomas with relatives in Tomahawk, Wisconsin, and entered the North Shore Health Resort of Winnetka, Illinois. Her problem had been diagnosed, she wrote to Guy, as "artistic nervous temperament" of which a major manifestation was debilitating headaches.

"Expect you are terribly lonesome," Floy added at the end of one letter to Guy and in another said, "I can imagine how desolate and cold the house is without fire or fresh air. Never mind. I'll be home soon."

At the same time, Guy's mother and father and Floy's mother also suffered from ill health. Guy himself seemed to be depressed during the summer of 1906. He wrote to his father, "I haven't felt quite up to the scratch and that has delayed some things. I haven't been ill but have had to be outside considerable to stave off headaches, and haven't had much ambition when I was in the office. I expect I got more run down last winter than I realized." The following winter, a severe cold developed into an abscess in his ear "which laid me up completely," he said then.

## Steele

With the increasing influence of Port Edwards offices on Shanagolden affairs, so rose G. Francis Steele. As the sulphite mill in Port Edwards was being completed, a Grand Rapids newspaper noted in November, 1906, that Steele, former general manager of the Combined Locks paper mill and former manager of the Centralia Pulp and Water Power Co. (more lately of International

Harvester), had come from Chicago to manage the Port Edwards paper and pulp mills.

Whereas previously it had been Vilas, a family friend, asking firmly but with fraternal concern, for accountability, now it was L.M. Alexander's manager, G.F. Steele, sharply demanding it. "The matter in question is the quality of hemlock timber, which we are getting from Shanagolden," said Steele. "This timber certainly is not fit to go into our [Port Edwards pulp] mill, for it is very rotten, and if put in will certainly have to be replaced in a very few years." Steele was even less likely than Vilas to approve cutting logs at a loss just to keep the Shanagolden sawmill running.

Steele did agree, however, that the hemlock standing in Ashland County would be a valuable asset and worth holding on to. He wrote on December 18, 1906: "We can get hemlock timber now, and I believe the day is coming when these mills will have to go on to a straight sulphite sheet, either book or fibre, made from hemlock wood." After the sulphite mill was built, hemlock was shipped as pulpwood to Port Edwards and Nekoosa. Only hardwood continued to be sawed at the Shanagolden mill and that was sent elsewhere.

In early 1907, Steele echoed Vilas' earlier remarks when he told Guy he should get some clerical help quickly. "We are not getting our reports as we should, and we ought to be so situated at Shanagolden that we can get monthly reports of trial balances, and you certainly ought not to attempt to do this work."

## **The Shanagolden Bill**

While the economic problems of sawing lumber at Shanagolden proved insurmountable, a political issue was resolved favorably. Since 1905, efforts had been made by the Nashes and by other residents to separate Shanagolden from the larger but also unincorporated village of Glidden, both a part of the township of Jacobs. The Shanagolden faction believed that Glidden was overtaxing the rest of the town for its benefit.

Objectors from Glidden prevented the first petition from being heard by employing what Guy called "shyster" lawyers. "A strong lobby on the other side was trying to convince them that we are nothing but a selfish corporation trying to form a town so as to eliminate taxes as far as possible," he said. With the considerable political influence of Tom Nash and Col. Vilas brought to bear on

legislators, the bill creating the town of Shanagolden passed the state senate and then the assembly in March, 1907.

## Fire

Despite the chronic failure to profit, Guy wrote the version of Shanagolden's end that would prevail. "Everything seemed set for years and years of manufacturing, when one day in 1907 the fire whistle blew." The June 4 event, while significant, has received too much blame for the demise of Shanagolden.

At 6 p.m., after the day's work, a shingle machine started a fire that in three minutes became a mass of flame. Within 25 minutes, the sawmill had been destroyed. Only the boiler house and boiler were "not much injured." A bucket brigade kept the flames from the lumber piles.

"I was very much shocked but glad to learn that you were fully covered by insurance," wrote banker Isaac Witter from Grand Rapids. The mill, "one of the finest and best equipped in this part of the country," according to the Enterprise, was valued at about \$50,000 of which insurance would reimburse \$41,000. By comparison, \$225,000 had just been spent on the new sulphite mill in Port Edwards. Inventories were counted as \$137,700 in lumber and \$86,800 in logs.

"It is yet unknown whether it will be rebuilt but, in view of the large timber holdings, tracks and other properties of the Nash Lumber Company centered around Shanagolden, they, in all probabilities will [rebuild]."

The Nash company in July posted placards around Ashland county that it needed 100 men to work. "They pay very high wages for the different kinds of work and provide the very best for their men in the way of camps and cooks," said the Enterprise. "No man need go without a job, for he may select between railroading, bark peeling and logging and will do well at any."

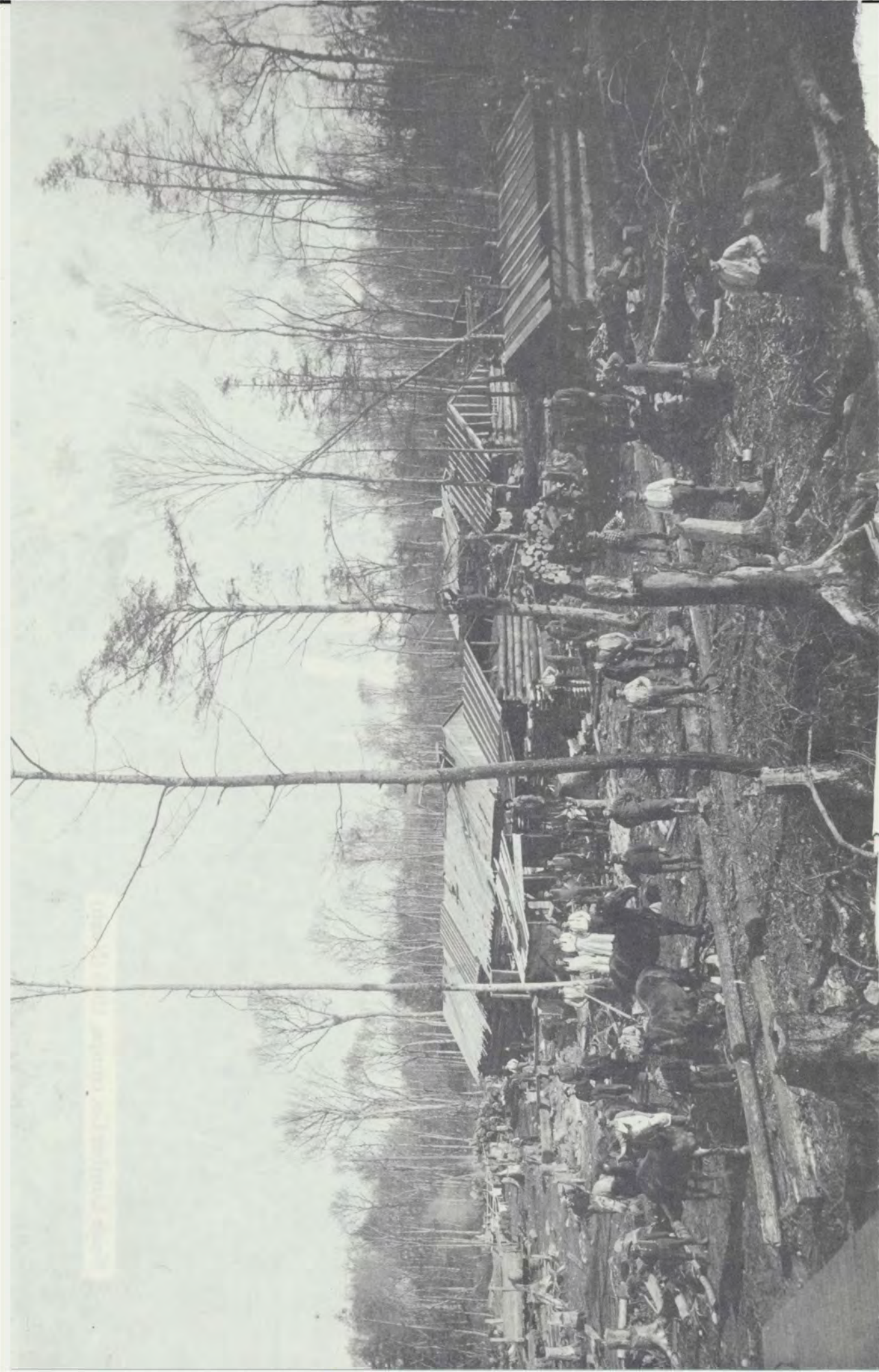
In a parallel operation just a few away, the Roddis Lumber & Veneer Company built a logging railroad from the Wisconsin Central at Park Falls northeast of Glidden, in 1903. The Park Falls sawmill and shingle mill used mainly hemlock and white cedar, shipping hardwood to its veneer mill at Marshfield. In the winter of 1907, the Marshfield and Park Falls plants both burned, but were quickly rebuilt that spring.

But to Steele and Alexander, the Shanagolden portion of the





Nash Lumber Co. camps, 1905 (Nash)





Port Edwards Fibre Company was a burden in the tight money situation "panic" of 1907. "There is one feature of the situation that has added to my worry over this matter, and that is the amount necessary to carry on operations in connection with the Nash Lumber Company," complained Steele on October 25.

On a more personal and perhaps happier note, Guy's daughter, Jean, had been born August 27, 1907. "Floy stood the trial beautifully," he wrote, although there is evidence that the infancy of Jean was difficult for her mother.

## **Improvement Club**

Hopeful changes continued to be made in Shanagolden. Existing streets were graded (no grass growing here!), new streets were added and board sidewalks built.

The ladies of the village organized an Aid Society to raise funds for a reading room and meeting hall. The effort was supported by the newspaper. "Gentlemen when you see the ladies come do not hide behind a tree nor fall into a dry goods box for your support of the good work is necessary," urged the Enterprise. In December, said that journal, the Ladies Aid, as part of their organizational effort, hosted their sisters from Glidden at "the beautiful home" of Floy Nash.

The meeting hall would be located on lots donated by the Nash Lumber Company. Plans were provided at no charge by Guy's architect, Eschweiler. The club raised \$1600 for materials. The structure was built by Nash employees who volunteered labor in their spare hours and the "reading and recreation room" opened, on October 10, 1907, with a grand ball.

Guy was wholeheartedly involved in the project, but others were not so enthusiastic, especially when they learned of a small loan made by the company, which Guy wanted dispensed with. Steele wrote to Guy on December 9, 1907, and quoted Col. Vilas. "In respect to the Shanagolden Improvement Club, I do not see that it makes much difference what you do," said Vilas. "Before the lumber company's money was invested in it, it might have been worthy of consideration. This is the first I have ever heard of it, and I was quite surprised to find myself enrolled as a contributor, although I was able to recall having sent a check to Mrs. Nash for what I supposed was a contribution to a very small and inconsiderable affair."

Partner McNaughton also seemed taken aback by news of the club's debt and told Steele, who wrote to Guy: "I hardly know what to say in regard to this expense at this time at that point."

For his part, Alexander suggested that the Nash Lumber Co. secure the money from some bank and carry it until payments of \$100 per year could be made by the club. Steele trusted Guy could "arrange the matter in accordance with Mr. Alexander's views."

## Shutdown

Steele gave the bad news to Guy on November 18, 1907. "It now looks probable to me that we shall have to shut all work off at Shanagolden for the winter and discharge our people, in line of what has been done elsewhere by other operators, on account of the money market." Steele elaborated further on November 23. "When I realize that we are only going to get out from nine to twelve thousand cords of pulpwood at Shanagolden this year, and when I realize the large amount we have been paying out each month, averaging about \$20,000 per month at Shanagolden, I don't see how we are going to come out without a loss, and we certainly have no right to shrink from facing the truth."

"Hog fuel" or waste product, sent to Steele for fuel, also proved to be too expensive to produce and shipment would be stopped.

Alexander and Steele were very "blue" over the money scarcity and over poor orders in the pulp business, said Tom in January, 1908. "I don't know where we can borrow to pay for wood." By the end of the month, the credit pinch eased and the fibre company borrowed \$85,000. Alexander was also anxious to remedy the financial situation of the company, if needed, at the expense of Shanagolden. He told Vilas on February 6, 1908: "I feel very much concerned about the proposition as a whole, as it is far more extensive and expensive than I ever dreamed it could be possible."

Alexander and Steele were now comparing the cost of wood at Shanagolden with that produced at Port Edwards and finding Shanagolden deficient. Quality control was also a problem. In December, January and February, 215 carloads were shipped from Shanagolden to Port Edwards by the Nash Lumber Company. Shipments contained 3,186 cords of which they were docked 1,016 cords for air and rot, according to a Nash accounting. But Steele calculated that matters were slightly worse. During January, of 2,509 total cords, 1,000 were docked as unfit.

Steele had made "an exhaustive series" of tests to see if the dockage was fair – to the extent of unloading five cars, cutting up the logs to four feet lengths and measuring them again.

## **A Change in Management**

Land owners in the village, noted in January, 1908, included the school house and Improvement Club. Nekoosa-Edwards retained 22 lots and two houses. Another 53 lots had owners named Jehn, Graham, Peterson, Bull, Greenfield, Bliss, Miller, Sell, Berlick, Carpenter, Lassa, Elliott, Zewe, Frick, Anderson, Dingman, Wilson, Kunsch, Staadt, Kretlaw, Hanson, Bundy, Treutel, Kimball, Cloud, Cormican, Tomaur, Johnson, Ballschmeider, Gabur, Sundquist, Dyborg, Wing, and Sand.

Among the populace, the illusion of permanence continued, to the extent that a drama club was founded and the Enterprise said anti-prophetically that the Shanagolden residents were determined to have a most beautiful town and would not allow the streets "of that pretty place" to become a pasture for anybody's stock.

It was apparent to Guy, however, that his own term at Shanagolden was severely limited. He wrote to his father on February 2, 1908, that the reason he didn't leave immediately was that he didn't want to give the impression he had been forced out. Reflecting on the change in his fortunes, Guy observed that a man is favored when in the good graces of others, "and so worthless when out of them." Whatever the cause of his return, Tom assured Guy he would be glad to see his son and son's family back with him in Grand Rapids again: "Its such an age since Floy and Thomas were down – and the little Jean I have never seen."

Guy wrote to Steele, "With pulpwood slowing down and lumber as slow as it well can be with every prospect of its continuing slow, it will be six or eight months and probably a year before the stocks are cleaned up. ...I do not see that I need to stay here longer than a few weeks, say the middle of May." The Enterprise announced on April 17 that Guy had given up the management of the Nash Lumber Company but would remain in charge for a month or six weeks when he was expected to move to Grand Rapids. He and Floy moved in the week of June 5, according to the Enterprise.

Guy, in retrospect, explained the end this way: "Inevitably the dwindling down process proceeded however; not being content with a strictly logging job, oppressed with the quiet of the village as

compared with the prior bustle, and with children growing up to school age – feeling moreover that my wife and myself were getting into a rut, I decided to get out, and did so in June of 1908.” Years after the mill closed, Guy simplified the explanation of the Shanagolden failure when he wrote, “It was not a large earner as had been expected; partly because most hemlock operations were not profitable, partly because the hemlock cut poor, there being too large a percent of #3.”

Before he left Shanagolden, Guy made a pitch that his successor, H.A.. Clark, be given a raise from \$100 to \$150 and use of a house, either Guy’s own or another vacant dwelling in the village. Guy resigned as postmaster of Shanagolden on May 19 and made plans to return to Grand Rapids.

When Guy left Shanagolden in June, 1908, after five years as prince of that place, a party was held in his honor at the Community Hall. It featured dancing from 9:30 until midnight when a grand march was conducted from the hall to the boarding house for supper. There, several speakers lauded Guy for building up the village and praised Floy as president of the Improvement Club. Gifts were presented. Guy, Floy, Thomas and Jean departed for Grand Rapids the following Monday.

What could be perceived as the abandonment of Guy Nash and Shanagolden by the Port Edwards Fibre Company no doubt contributed to a degree of alienation of Vilas from Alexander. In April, Vilas told Alexander he was displeased because he had not been taken into account on recent decisions involving the Port Edwards sulphite mill and under those circumstances would not invest any more money in it.

## **Nekoosa-Edwards**

Another major development took place in the structure of the firm that controlled Shanagolden, this time without Guy’s prior knowledge.

Tom Nash, Alexander, John McNaughton and Steele came to an agreement that created the “Nekoosa-Edwards Paper Co.” Capital stock stood at \$3,000,000 and a bonded indebtedness at 1 million, distributed proportionately by the value of properties that made up the new company: the Nekoosa Paper Company, owned chiefly by Nash, Vilas and McNaughton; the John Edwards Manufacturing Company of Port Edwards, owned chiefly by Alexander,



Jehn

Nash Lumber Co. sawmill, 1907



Jehn

Nash Lumber Co. sawmill, 1907



Jehn

Nash Lumber Co. sawmill, 1907

McNaughton and Vilas; and the Port Edwards Fibre Company.

When he heard about the merger, Guy wrote first to his brother, Jim. "You take my breath away with your announcement of the figures arrived at by the conference on consolidation when I didn't even know any suggestion of consolidation was in the air." Yet he averred, "anything that is good for the rest is good for me." Guy wrote to his father that the new arrangement could benefit the fibre company, but only if the Nash interests were able to maintain a strong voice in the management. He feared too much control by Alexander and Steele.

Major officers in Nekoosa-Edwards were T.E. Nash, president and forestry division manager; L.M. Alexander, vice-president and treasurer; John McNaughton, second vice-president; ; Lawrence E. Nash, manager of sales; J.B. Nash, assistant to manufacturing, Nekoosa mills; E.B. Garrison, assistant to manufacturing, Port Edwards mills; and A.U. Marving, supply purchasing agent; Geo. F. Steele, secretary and general manager of manufacturing and sales. There was no mention of Guy Nash.

When the new company was announced August 31, William F. Vilas was listed among members of the board of directors but his name had to be marked with an asterisk. Vilas had been stricken while he slept in the night of July 20 by a brain hemorrhage and died August 27 at age 68.

With Vilas gone, with Tom in ill health and Guy without important office, the influence of the Nashes in Nekoosa-Edwards was not considerable. Affairs at Shanagolden fell nominally under T.E. Nash's division of forestry with Guy as his assistant or "woodland" manager, his salary set at \$2,400. Accustomed to managing Shanagolden alone, Guy, now confined to a subordinate role in Grand Rapids, immediately clashed with Alexander over a timber purchase. Said Alexander, there was "no license to you however to delegate to yourself the consumation of such large deals or any deal that does not pass before the Executive Committee." Alexander claimed the company saved \$40,0000 by not accepting Guy's outgoing offer for timber.

The nuptials barely over, the Nekoosa-Edwards union was experiencing negative bliss.

## **I am Worth More**

In the winter of 1908-09, Guy moved into the Dr. Harvie house in Grand Rapids. Although he did not live in Shanagolden, Guy

worked on logging contracts with Foster & Latimer and visited Shanagolden often to check pulpwood inventories, traveling along the railroad tracks and logging roads by train, bicycle and on foot. In January 1909, he left for a European tour with his wife and parents but returned to Shanagolden in time to attend a dance on May 21, 1909.

During the summer of 1909, a logging contract was entered into with the Mellen Lumber Company to log the entire Shanagolden tract. Mellen would ship hemlock and other pulp logs to Nekoosa and Port Edwards and the saw timber to the Paine Lumber Company at Oshkosh. The House in the Woods was for sale.

Guy began looking for a new position. He wrote to paper-industry leader G.D. Jones in Wausau to discuss an opening for a manager at a new paper mill being constructed on the Wisconsin River. "At present I am in charge of timber lands and logging operations for the N-EPCo but do not believe they will operate much for a few years, pulpwood being in good supply, or purchase lands, having recently closed contract which affords a safe supply for a term of years; and believe I am worth more than the work they have for me warrants them in paying."

Jones replied on February 9 that his company had already hired 26-year-old D.C. Everest as manager. Jones said that to save embarrassment he hadn't even mentioned Guy's application to the hiring committee. "I knew that Everest was very highly recommended, and that among other recommendations were those of your folks at Nekoosa and Port Edwards."

### **Evils of Smoking**

The Nash influence declined further when, in early 1910, Tom's salary as president was eliminated, prior to Alexander assuming the office of president in 1911. Guy continued to chafe in his role and became embroiled in what should have, after Shanagolden, seemed a peripheral issue. He complained to Steele about the sanitary conditions in the main office of Nekoosa-Edwards and sounded a modern theme. "Smoking adds to the evils of the bad ventilation, but aside from that two out of four in the bookkeepers office and seven out of fourteen in the north office do not smoke, and their comfort ought to be considered as well as that of the smokers."

On December 1, Guy wrote to Steele that he had talked with

Alexander. "I asked frankly what he thought of my position with the Company and prospects for the future in it, telling him I felt as if I were in an eddy going around and around without much prospect of getting out into the current as long as I stay at Port Edwards. At the end he agreed with me that it would be better for me to get clear."

## **Wreck of Hopes**

In January, Guy left the Nekoosa-Edwards Paper Company to manage the Jackson Milling Company of Stevens Point and Amherst, of which his family owned more than half. After an unsuccessful attempt to revive the fortunes of the milling concern, Guy left it in 1916 and the Nash interest was sold to a partner and friend, Isaac Witter of Grand Rapids.

As always, Tom continued to think paper. In 1913, he tried to convince George Mead of Consolidated Water Power & Paper Company of Grand Rapids to build a tissue mill on the Jackson Milling Company water power site in Stevens Point. In 1917, as Guy was in the process of trying to sell his father's \$400,000 "par value" Nekoosa-Edwards stock, which he said was worth \$1,000,000, Tom, an invalid by then, died. Two years later, Consolidated built the Stevens Point paper mill on the Jackson site.

Returning home after two years as captain of field artillery in World War I, Guy founded, with a \$100,000 investment, the Biron Cranberry Company marsh near Wisconsin Rapids. When he, in a few years, lost most of his investment, Guy's brother, Roy, wrote, in 1924, that Guy stood bankrupt "with the wreck of your hopes about your feet" – and enough unpaid bills to send the marsh to the control of a Grand Rapids bank. Only years later and under a bank-imposed management, did the cranberry marsh become profitable.

As years passed and other problems intervened, including the sudden death of his son, Thomas, in a plane crash and bouts with his own skin cancer, Guy's nostalgia for Shanagolden increased.

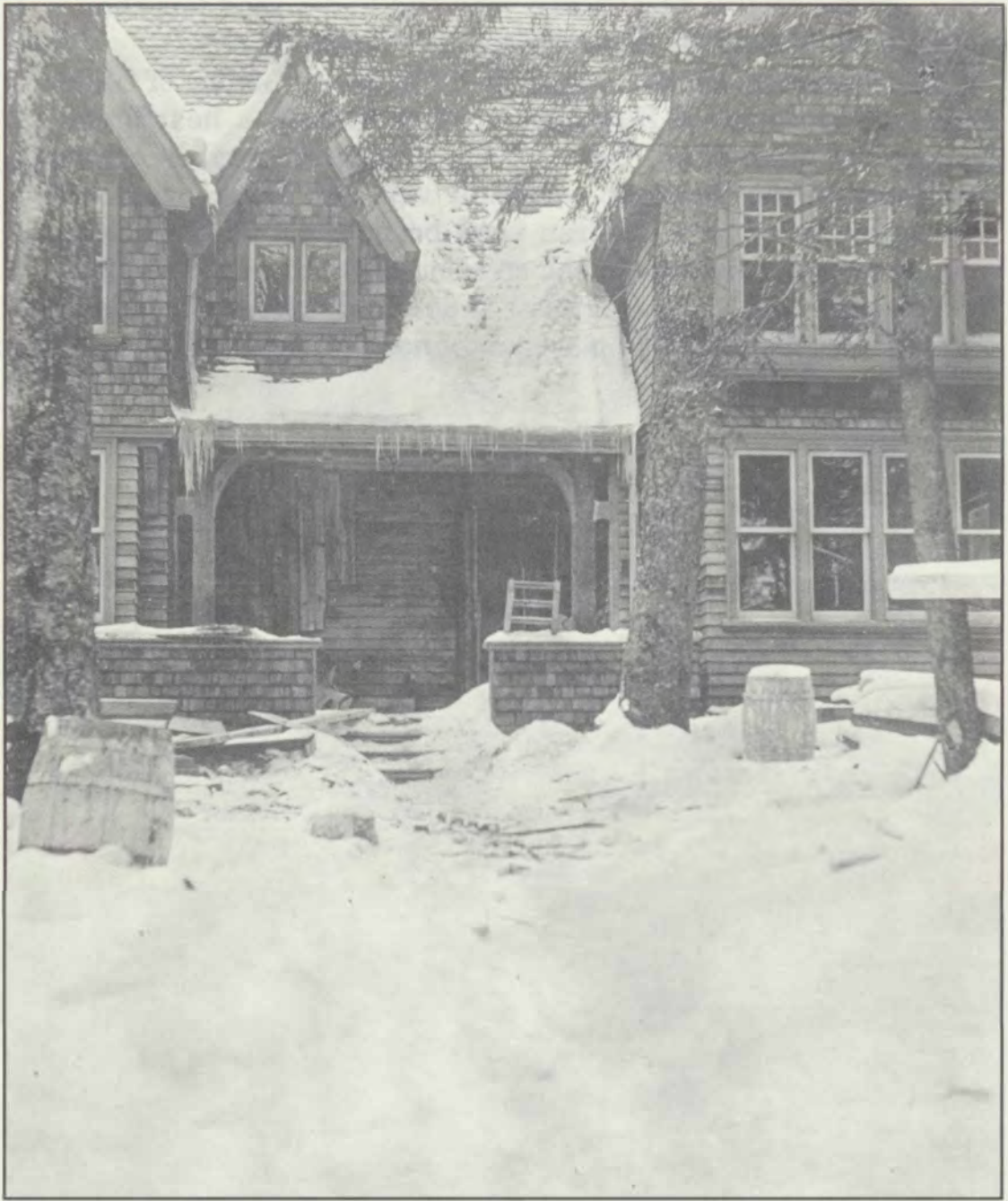
A former employee and constant friend, John R. Graham, wrote periodically to Guy and reminisced often. On June 9, 1943, Graham said, "Believe it or not, Shanagolden was the best home that I ever had. And you were the best boss I ever had in my life, now what is more we have never logged a log any place where I have been as cheap as what we logged for at Shanagolden, I ran a

camp for the Mellen Lbr Co one year and had a good fair chance. I did my best to beat the Shanagolden. I fell a bit short."

In a historical sketch written in 1928 to J.A. Moran of Glidden, Guy said he departed Shanagolden "not without a heartbreak at leaving the place I had been so largely instrumental in creating, the House in the Woods to which my wife and I were so attached and where two of my children were born, and the many faithful men who had helped me in the creation of the finest sawmill town that ever existed ... I could write indefinitely about Shanagolden, but a history is hardly the place, and I have no time for it."



The House in the Woods c. 1910



Nash

The House in the Woods, c. 1910

# Shanagolden Improvement

Even in the beginning, Shanagolden was not created as a permanent home for manager Guy Nash nor for the Nash Lumber Company loggers. As the sawmill ended only its second year in operation, a more enduring future was suggested for the Ashland county village.

On Oct. 23, 1905, Guy Nash wrote from Shanagolden to his father, Thomas E. Nash, at Grand Rapids, that the stock of dry goods and hardware at the company's store had to be increased because new customers, this time farm families, were moving into the area. With a little luck, Shanagolden would become a thriving agricultural community.

The industrial phase ended even sooner than expected when the sawmill burned in June, 1907, and was not rebuilt. Pulpwood and hardwood logs previously sawn into lumber by the Nash firm were shipped whole out of Ashland county to mills farther south.

## Mellen Lumber Company

In 1909, the Nekoosa-Edwards Paper Company, which had superseded the Nash Lumber Company as owner of Shanagolden, sold its logging rights to the Mellen Lumber Company of Mellen, a community somewhat larger than Glidden, 15 miles north on the Wisconsin Central. Nekoosa-Edwards also turned over to Mellen the following machinery: 31 logging sleighs, two snow plows, three rutters, four water tanks, one snow plow and rutter combined, one locomotive, one McGiffert log loader, two rapid loaders, one gasoline-powered hoisting engine, one Combs pulp loader, one supply car, one hand car, one Larry car and two railroad breaking-plows.

"The Mellen Lbr. Co. has added a steam-power car to its equipment and the trips from Glidden to Shanagolden and from the company's headquarters in that village to their numerous camps can now be made in a very short time," said the Glidden Enterprise of June 3, 1910. A man named Cummings built a shingle mill at Shanagolden to use some of the products of the Mellen logging.

With as many as 1,000 woodmen working in the new operations, the Mellen men, through logging, railroading and shingle-making, kept the glow going in Shanagolden hearths for a while. At the zenith of its tenure, the Mellen company shipped over two million feet of pulpwood every month, mostly to Nekoosa-Edwards.

## **An Industrial Location**

Having found someone to log off its land, Nekoosa-Edwards attempted to unload the town and what was left of the mill. The 1910 brochure, "Shanagolden: An Industrial Location," described empty buildings ready to accommodate large crews, a cluster of well-built and well-kept residences and a nucleus of labor in the village. It also portrayed good farming in the countryside.

There was only one disadvantage to the site, according to the promotion; Shanagolden was not situated on the main line of the Wisconsin Central; but then, neither was Nekoosa and that mill town on the Wisconsin river had become a great success.

Unfortunately, for Nekoosa-Edwards promotions, Shanagolden wasn't the only Ashland-area Shangri-La beckoning to prospective plowmen. One nearby competitor entered the field in 1911, when nearby Cayuga initiated a publicity campaign that claimed unexcelled resources in timber and stone, the finest drinking water in the world, the freshest air, the most healthful climate and good farming besides. A "party of capitalists" was interested, said the Glidden Enterprise, in rebuilding the saw mill.

It seemed, from the paeons of promoters, that other superannuated sawmill hamlets had the makings for commerce, industry and the fulfilment of dreams.

## **Attrition**

Shanagolden's modest population waxed to a high of about 300 in its prime and waned to about 100 following the close of the Nash mill only to wax and wane again with the Mellen company activities.

In 1910, the population of the township was about 240, that of the village being somewhat less. Among the 35 heads of households were locomotive engineers Stephen Love and Max Greenfield, locomotive fireman John W. Cloud, timber estimator John Graham,