

Historic Gibson Cabin along the St. Croix National Scenic Riverway presented by Jim Olmsted

The Gibson Cabin is a beautiful cedar log lodge, built on the river in 1915 by wealthy Duluth industrialists as a vacation retreat. It is one of the last examples of the vintage, rustic-style lodges that dotted the shoreline of the St. Croix River before most were removed as a result of the creation of the national riverway in 1968. Jim and his family have a long history with the Gibson cabin; they were friends of the Gibson family and used the cabin from 1986 through 1998. Jim has been a guardian and advocate for the cabin's preservation since it was turned over to the National Park Service in 1999. Subsequently, Jim has been the trail maintainer for the Gibson Cabin section of the North Country National Scenic Hiking Trail since 2012, when that section of the trail opened up. His family are avid outdoors people who have been vacationing in Douglas County for 38 years.

Jim is creating a comprehensive history of the Gibson cabin; his book includes the entire cabin's history through photos. Jim has a master's degree in history, and, after 25 years owning a landscaping company, returned to school to pursue a Ph.D. in history at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. For his doctoral research, Jim is examining the effects of the use of eminent domain to create the St. Croix National Scenic Riverway. Jim was recently awarded a 2024 Wisconsin Humanities Community Powered Fellowship. Through this program, the Wisconsin Humanities will be seed funding a local history project in the Gordon community.

