



One well-known, and one less-known forest pioneer

This article offers an early look at some material being used to inform displays planned for the Pigeon River Country Discovery Center. The center's expected to open by fall of 2017.

The Pigeon has many people stories. Yours is one. Here are two among the others you may want to know about.

P.S. Lovejoy was an academic with mud on his boots. **Herman Lunden** was a lumber camp laborer who put on a tie and shared what he knew about the woods with the public far and wide.

Starting at different times and places, their paths intersected in Michigan. Lovejoy is celebrated for his essential role in Pigeon River Country history. It may come as a surprise that someone emerged from the logging industry itself, during those same years, to also play a key role in working to restore and conserve our natural northern lands.

Lovejoy, born in Illinois, studied forestry at the University of Michigan, went to work in national forests in Wyoming and Washington State, returned to the U of Michigan forestry faculty, learned and wrote about the land, discovered the Pigeon, and made it his special project to reserve it as a place that spoke its own language.

Lunden (pronounced Lun-deen) arrived a generation earlier from Sweden, worked in northern Michigan lumber camps, and being recognized for his gifts of generous disposition and leadership skills, became a lumber boss, a banker, a road administrator, and a member of Michigan's board of directors for natural resources administration, known then as the Conservation Commission.

Lovejoy and Lunden worked together on the problems of forest management as early as 1922, when the Department of Conservation was in its first year and had just begun to deal systematically with fire and reforestation.

Lovejoy organized the nation's pioneering survey of Michigan's natural lands that year, was then asked by the state to run it, and, walking the cutover and burned acres of northern lower Michigan was smitten by the potential of the area around the Pigeon and Sturgeon and Black Rivers to be "the big wild" of our forest system. An agency a few years before had designated some 6,000 acres there as Michigan's seventh state forest.

There is chance and occasion to provide something much wanted (needed) and not otherwise readily available to the public ... Don't we all want ... some considerable 'getting away' from the crowds and the lawn-mowers and the tulips? ... Isn't that [the] yen for the Big Wild feel and flavor? I claim it is.

P.S. Lovejoy

This Pigeon River State Forest was in the middle of scattered timber lands held by Lunden's lumber company. By 1922 Lunden was in his forty-first year as a Michigan lumberman. He had fought forest fire with dynamite, run a ladder up a tall tree and built a platform as the first fire tower for spotting new blazes.

... [The lumbermen] built the first fire tower in Michigan with the exception of one which was a ladder against a tall tree with a platform in the tree on which a man could stand, and with field glasses watch the surrounding country, and I am proud to say that I was the builder of this first tree tower. They did not have the money to equip themselves with telephones and of the number of towers and other modern equipment which we have today. The lumbermen went before the Legislature and asked them to give some assistance. They tried to show the necessity of fire prevention and after such pleading a small fund was appropriated and the state organized a fire department.

Herman Lunden
from an undated speech

As a community leader in Lewiston and Gaylord, Lunden was often invited to give speeches. He almost always talked about preventing fires in the woods and how essential it was to maintain forest regrowth.

Protection, maintenance, and improvement of cover, and especially forest cover, is of vastly more importance than the policing of game, fish and fur laws, and ... without adequate fire protection, no amount of policing can succeed in maintaining good supplies of wild life.

P.S. Lovejoy
1924 report for the Michigan
Academy of Science, Arts and Letters

Despite his speeches, Lunden was known not for his words, but his deeds. He worked to set aside land as a wildlife refuge. He applied his passion about fire and reforestation to a project called "Forest Fire Flier," a train equipped to educate the public about forest fires, one that took to the rails throughout northern Michigan, both below and above the straits, in 1926.

He supported Lovejoy when the state hired the professor away from the university, casting one of the four unanimous votes on the Conservation Commission on March 11, 1926, that "P.S. Lovejoy of Ann Arbor be employed at a salary of \$3,500 per year and that he be placed in charge of Game Refuge Development."

They both talked *conservation* when it was still emerging as a new idea, what Lovejoy called in his writing "cons."

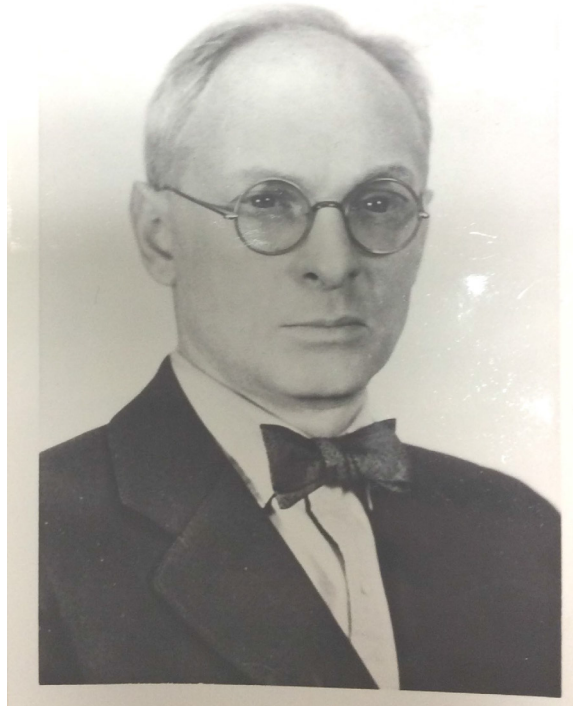
... they [some early lumbermen] would wait until a dry day and touch a match to the slashing. They did not care what the fire burned, sometimes they wished to burn to clear land and sometimes to make better pastures for the stock ... burning kills the young timber, burns the humus in the soil, the limbs and tops that give protection to the young timber and increases rather than decreases the fire hazard.

Herman Lunden

When the 6,468 acres of scattered, abandoned northern land in state hands were designated Pigeon River State Forest in 1919, there was no department of conservation—either lower case or capitalized. What the state later described as the “first fledgling agencies to manage and protect our resources” were not combined into a Conservation Department until 1921.

“When the present form of the department was created,” Lovejoy recalled later, “the State Geologist and the State Forester were practically the only technically trained men in the organization.” Before the 1920s, he said, the department “was first of all a political machine—up to this time, ‘cons’ [conservation] was not generally regarded as an important matter in Michigan. It was rather the hobby of a few. In 1920, for the first time cons affairs became a major issue in the campaign for the governorship and since then the growth of the Dept and its recognized importance has been fast.”

Lovejoy was a man of words. He developed a style of finding the essence of the situation and getting right to it, sometimes using a vernacular imitating a larger-than-life, fictional lumberman, Paul Bunyan. He got the message across, while other academics often couldn't.



P.S. Lovejoy

File photo

“The trouble with all the (other ...) compilations,” Lovejoy said, “is that they do not handle it in the vernacular and do not present it in the ordained manner of the Bunyan code – which is a peculiar but well defined minstrel-end-man thing, with the chief bard getting assistance from his end man for the (real or ostensible) benefit of a greenhorn.”

Behind the humor were some hard lessons for Lovejoy that benefited his public. He once submitted one of his long, thoughtful, and thorough articles for publication by the Michigan Academy of Science, Arts and Letters, but was turned down twice. First, the editors complained he lacked footnotes; later, that his discussion “was of current interest only”-- “(and not a Contribution to Science)”, as Lovejoy put it himself.

In 1920, he began writing for Curtis Publications, mainly for its “Country Gentleman” magazine, where his use of terms like “dope” for “official information” and “get soaked in” for “absorb” was well received.

Lovejoy described the mission of his Michigan Land Economic Survey in the 1920s as a sort of corporation to gather the best information about the whole range of acreage, then figure out how to preserve the best parts. “Our hypothetical corporation would,” he said, “recognize the goose and save it for its golden eggs.”

Herman Lunden’s words reflected the practical man who came of age outdoors. In one speech, he opined: “It has been suggested ... that our colleges give a short course in forest fire fighting. ... I would suggest ... [sending] the young men out to the fire zone during the fire season, where they can get first-hand knowledge of the work, and where they can be tutored by men who have had actual experience ... where quick action, courage and strength count more than book learning. Fire lanes, towers and trucks equipped with fire fighting apparatus, backed up by a few men who are picked for their knowledge of the work, rather than by political preferment, are the things that will count in the scheme of reforestation, and until we get those things and those conditions we can expect just the kind of progress we have been getting, and no more.”

He knew firsthand about conditions in the woods, including unseasonal weather. Back on Jan. 3, 1912, Lunden’s lumber company had three million logs on skids waiting for

it to be cold enough to start hauling. Wolverine and Lewiston had “only about four inches of snow ... with not the least bit of frost in the ground yet.” In this in-between time they could use neither wheels or sleighs.



Herman Lunden

File photo

Likewise, he wrote in November 1926 that after a nasty storm the ground was still so wet from mild temperatures it was “not enough to hold up yet” as men moved 19 cars of logs out in one day. He said it “simply is terrible to see the men wet to their wallet in mud. Men look like they were coming out of sewers instead of out of the woods.”

On the other hand, he reported on April 20, 1926, that people “cannot get out over a half mile either East or West out of Gaylord. The snow drifts are still three to four feet deep in the roads and it is practically all solid ice.” That week his loggers could not move teams of horses or equipment between camps.

Nonetheless, Lunden displayed rare and apparently infectious energy about his enthusiasms for the outdoors. The Otsego County Herald Times declared at his passing

that he “had the faculty to an unusual degree of communicating his enthusiasm to others.”

When Lunden left the Conservation Commission, he wrote to Lovejoy on Jan. 19, 1927: “I am glad to see that you are still on the Staff, as I know that you can do a great deal of good for the up-building of this territory and for the good of the people ... I was interested in Conservation for fifteen years before Conservation was considered by the State, and I hope to be able to continue this the remainder of my days.”

Toward the end of Herman Lunden’s life, he held a parcel of land along the river just south of Webb Road in Pigeon River Country. He described it on Sept. 23, 1926: “this is river property and some of the best that we have.” He said simply on July 13, 1927: “As to the land we have in the NE 1/2 of 8, I would be glad to hold for myself and some of the boys in the office.”



Herman Lunden about 1926. He recognized that the vegetation around him was essential to continued healthy regrowth of the forest.

@Lunden family photo

His grandson Herman Miller in a thoroughly-researched biography said, “Lunden died [in 1929] owning a mile of frontage except for six or eight lots sold previously. At the time, he was planning to build on the Pigeon River property that he had bought from KB [one of his lumber companies] and had logs there to build with. He wrote about how beautiful the Pigeon River country was.”

Lunden in his letter to Lovejoy Jan. 19, 1927, had asked, “Has anything been done relative to the River Property that we talked over? I have had an opportunity to dispose of the Company’s property for double what I offered it to the State for, but I think it would be an injustice to take that particular place away from the State and put it into private hands.”

He negotiated selling to the state six 40-acre properties about 10 miles west of Pigeon River Country in June 1927 and told Lovejoy that it could have sold for “a little better than three times the amount we are getting from the State, but with the rest of the surrounding belonging to the State I was very much in favor of the State having it, or it would have never been sold at that price.”

In February 1928 Lunden wrote: “The more we could built up the State with game the more revenue the state would get from the Sportsmen or from their hunting licenses. In fact I believe that if this was made a general policy and the game resources were built up that there would be enough revenue coming in from the licenses to take care of all taxation on wild lands. I have studied this problem for a long time and I believe that this would be one of our greatest solution for taking care of our waste land.”

Lunden’s biographer wrote that “Lunden played a great part in getting people to deed land for the Pigeon River State Forest. He wrote a whole sheaf of letters asking people who owned land within the proposed Forest to donate or sell it at nominal price to the State.”

By mid-1928 the 6,000-acre Pigeon River state forest had grown to 19,200 acres. Lovejoy on July 22, 1927, wrote to Lunden about a sale to the state just concluded of land along the Sturgeon River west of the Pigeon:

“You and I will know that something really worthwhile has been accomplished, and we will know who did it, and how and why it was done. Others, and a lot of them through many years, will get the benefit but without knowing or caring how it happened.

“Since you did more of it than I did, by rights you ought to get more satisfaction out of it, and I hope you do.

“Very truly yours, P.S. Lovejoy,
In Charge Game Preserves.”

Lunden wrote back, on July 25, 1927, “I assure you that if there was ever one that was pleased over getting those lands it was me. I may have done a little un-justice to our own Company; first giving the lands away, and second one of the most beautiful spawning and game Reserves that I know of anywhere, but I believe that it is for the good of the future and for the up-building of Michigan game and fish ...

“You can always rely on me to do my best to promote anything that is for the good of our country, and especially so in Michigan. I don’t care particularly about any praise of what I have done ...”

Lovejoy wrote to Lunden in November 1928 about getting from the Richardson Lumber Company “the balance of their lands lying to the north of the Pigeon River Forest.” He noted that “this is a chance to help the Department to get a really fine piece of country, good enough and big enough to make us the finest unit of its sort in all the state.”

“You will realize better than almost anybody else,” Lovejoy told Lunden, “how many things come up to make it hard for us to get good land and blocked up [contiguous] so we can use it to good advantage.”

Lunden was able to reply that a private party’s previous option on the land had expired. It has become part of the Pigeon River Country.

The Mio Telegram newspaper reported on Feb. 3, 1927, about the Conservation Commission members, who were replaced by the newly elected governor: “In particular we commend the work of Herman Lunden. Thru his intimate

knowledge of this section he was instrumental in securing for the State, and for the public, valuable water frontage, saving it from the hands of speculators.”

During that governor’s election, the Atlanta Tribune wrote, and the Otsego County Herald Times reprinted in June 1926: “Five years ago there were no laws that would enable the state conservation department to go ahead and do what some of the members knew should be done, and it was proposed that a commission be appointed to formulate an act to present to the legislature along the forestry lines.

“Mr. Lunden was asked to pick two members of that commission ... and [one] ... was Mr. Lovejoy who was formerly a government forestry expert ... [Lunden] does know that he picked good men for the position, men who performed the duties ... well, as anyone who knows what the forestry act has done and is doing and will do for the state can testify.”

In January 1927 the Atlanta paper reported: “Mr. Lunden has been a practical woodsman for [close to] fifty years. He has gained knowledge of the woods and wildernesses through practical work as a woodsman, cruiser and logger ... He knows the lakes, the streams, the vales and dells of every county in that part of the state, and ... is in a position to know the wants and what must be done to keep its attractiveness for the tourist and its needs to bring back the timber if such can be done.

Mr. Lunden is not a swivel chair man. He is not a theorist. He does not simply imagine things can be done but he does them and does them right.”

Upon Herman Lunden’s death in 1929, regional newspapers displayed large headlines and articles. And in the Detroit News, Albert Stoll, Jr., wrote in his column Campfire Chats, “Here we had a man that stood head and shoulders above the average individual rated as a conservationist. Of the qualities that endeared him to his host of friends not among the least will be found his unswerving honesty, his loyalty, his sincerity, his kindness and intense devotion to the cause of conservation ... His life was one dedicated to the better use and enjoyment of our natural resources through wise usage, protection and perpetuation ...

Never in the history of Michigan has the northeast section of the State produced a man whose passing will so keenly be felt in conservation circles as that of Mr. Lunden.”

When P.S. Lovejoy died in 1942, his friend Aldo Leopold wrote a lengthy obituary for the *Journal of Wildlife Management*, in which he said: “I believe that P.S. Lovejoy sired more ideas about men and land than any contemporary in the conservation field.”

There is much more to their stories. For Lunden, see *Biography of Herman Lunden, Lumberman and Conservationist* by Herman Lunden Miller, available online at the Otsego County Historical Society website, www.otsego.org

See the Lovejoy chapter in *Pigeon River Country* by Dale Clarke Franz, available from Pigeon River Country Association and bookstores.

Membership renewal reminder

Membership dues help provide a scholarship to a student intern who assists the forest manager in the summer, and help us protect the wild character of the PRC. Your membership expiration date is on your mailing label or email sending this newsletter. Please keep your membership current.

Thank you!

Visit our website at www.pigeonriver.org.