



Georgian Trail
since 1989

Staying on Track!

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An Apple Storage Building Spawns The Georgian Trail

The Georgian Trail has an interesting connection to local apple growers in Thornbury. We recently heard from one of them, Gary Shaw, who shared the following story:

The Georgian Trail was originally constructed in 1872 as part of the Northern Railway Line. The line ran from Toronto to Collingwood and on to Meaford with twice daily service

delivering passengers and goods (and later, skiers) to the Georgian Triangle. Service was discontinued in the 1960's and by 1984 CN Rail, which had acquired ownership of the line, was ready to sell.

Gary Shaw and Tom Kritsch, partners in several apple orchards, had bought as a storage facility the yellow brick building (now Tigs)

beside the rail line in Thornbury. They later discovered the building came with only ten feet of property, which was insufficient for their needs. They looked to an adjacent property owned by CN Rail. Gary recounts "...We went to Toronto to meet with them and they said they wanted that parcel to be sold with the railway corridor. The tracks had been lifted at that time. They wanted to sell for about \$25,000.00. The whole thing from Collingwood to Meaford."

According to Shiela Metras, "...A lot of landowners adjacent to the rail line wanted to buy the land abutting their properties, but CNR didn't want the hassle of having some buy and some not, so they were only willing to sell it as a piece, which meant the municipalities were the only real buyers." Shiela was Executive Director of the Georgian Triangle Tourist Association at the time.

Gary and Tom reached out to Anne Bennett who had a vision to transform the rail line into a 32-kilometer recreational trail. Together with Shiela, they formed a

group and set out to convince the municipalities to assume ownership. Gary remembers "...That was not easy. They worried about liability. The farmers and orchard people said walkers would enter their properties etc. The apple guys said people would steal their apples. They said people would sue them for spraying their trees, etc."



The yellow brick building that is now Tigs, in Thornbury. Built in 1911, it was the first storage building. A spur line ran along the back where they loaded apple barrels into rail cars. (Courtesy Verdella Boone collection)

Shiela chaired a lot of the public meetings and wrote the applications and briefs to CNR and various provincial ministries. She convinced Dave McNichol, Reeve of Collingwood Township, that the trail would be a good thing. Shiela: "He was hard to convince, but once he realized it was a good investment for the Township he got on board." St. Vincent

Township was the last holdout, angering Anne and her trail committee who were so passionate about their vision. It was Carman Morrison, CAO for the Town of Collingwood who went to St. Vincent Council and made a successful case for the trail. "That broke the impasse and finally made the trail possible." All the municipalities were finally on board together. Shiela credits Anne Bennett for the group's success. "It was Anne's commitment to the project which kept everyone motivated to see it through."

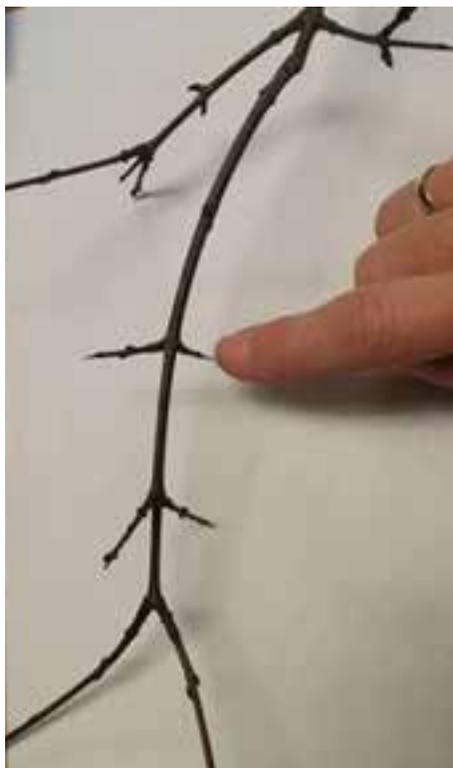
And what about Gary Shaw and Tom Kritsch? Says Gary "CNR asked the price of \$25,000 for the rail corridor and the land at the storage building. That seemed like a lot of money to Tom and I at the time. We made an offer of \$15,000 and they accepted. If you think of it now, that was a steal... all that land with bridges etc. for that price." Whether they were repaid, neither Gary nor Tom can remember. What was rewarding to them was that they acquired the land they needed for the apple storage building, and that the Georgian Trail was launched.

Invasive Buckthorn to be removed at Black Ash Creek, Collingwood

The GCSTA has agreed to provide a one-time grant of \$5000 to the Nottawasaga Valley Conservation Authority (NVCA) for a project to remove the Common (European) Buckthorn vegetation on the east side of the Georgian Trail at the Black Ash Creek floodway (behind Canadian Tire) in Collingwood. Common Buckthorn is an extremely invasive species that affects soil quality by changing its nitrogen composition, making it difficult for other native species to survive.

Controlling Buckthorn before it becomes well established is essential to reducing its negative impact as its berries are very popular with some birds who can quickly spread the seeds. Common Buckthorn is also a very thorny bush and not a desirable vegetation to have growing right next to the trail.

The GCSTA grant will be supplemented by \$7000 of in-kind contribution from the NVCA to plant 200 new trees along the west side of the trail at this same location plus harvest and install 400 willow and dogwood live stakes. Work will begin this Spring and will be monitored through 2017 for its effectiveness.



Buckthorn grows two to three metres tall and is usually the first shrub to leaf out in the spring. It has smooth, dark green leaves arranged in opposing pairs along the stem, and produces clusters of berry-like black fruit. Its branches end in a short, sharp thorn.



Buckthorn bushes have invaded the east side of Georgian Trail along Black Ash Creek in Collingwood and will be removed this Spring and the area replanted with financial assistance from the GCSTA.

Georgian Trail Board of Management

The Board had a productive year in 2016. Some \$130,000 of the Board's capital fund was contributed to the rehabilitation of the Thornbury Trestle Bridge super-structure.

The Town of The Blue Mountains and the federal government also contributed to the project, allowing the Trestle Bridge to provide Trail users some 20 more years of enjoyment.

The balance of its funds (\$109,000) was remitted to the Municipality of Meaford to undertake certain capital projects along the Trail which had previously been identified. The monies were sent to Meaford on the condition they only be used for Georgian Trail capital projects and that all amounts expended would be reported back to The Blue Mountains and Collingwood.

As previously agreed, the inter-municipal Georgian Trail Board of Management has now wound up its operations. The final meeting this past February was somewhat bittersweet, as since the Trail's inception in 1989 the Board had provided a centralized body to oversee the policies and standards that applied to the Trail.

This has now been replaced by an agreed-upon set of standards for the Trail which all participating municipalities have signed. At the end of each year each municipality will receive a joint staff report outlining the year's operations, and evaluating the agreed standards. We will be reviewing that report to ensure any deficiencies are noted with the appropriate Council.

The Trail is a unique and well-loved asset of our region and as such your Association Board is confident that the standards we are accustomed to will be continued by the municipalities involved.

Donations

Donations are welcomed and needed to help underwrite the costs of maintaining the Georgian Trail. Donors will receive the *Staying on Track!* newsletter by email. You can donate on line at [www. GeorgianTrail.ca](http://www.GeorgianTrail.ca) or send a cheque and mail with the form from the back page. As always, we would love to hear from you info@georgiantrail.ca

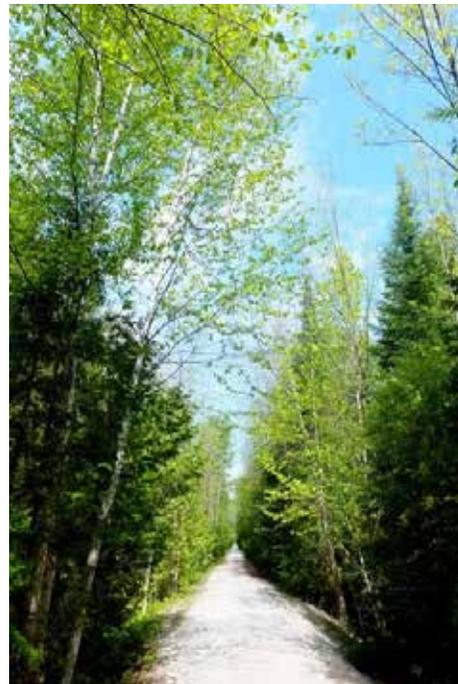
Georgian Trail Crossings - A Continued Concern

As new development proceeds in our region, there is increased pressure to provide road crossings over our Trail. This is a concern to the Association, as the Georgian Trail is a major cycling and pedestrian thoroughfare in the South Georgian Bay area. Both Simcoe and Grey Counties are actively promoting cycling tourism with the goal of making the South Georgian Bay area a destination of choice for cycling activities. Since Highway 26 is not a suitable road for safe cycling due to traffic volume and speed, the Georgian Trail represents the only safe direct cycling link connecting Collingwood with Thornbury and Meaford. It is also a key component of the signature Georgian Bay Cycle Route, a 1000-kilometre route connecting the communities around Georgian Bay.

The explosion of cycling popularity, coupled with these local cycling initiatives and other outdoor activities, has significantly increased traffic on the Georgian Trail. This trend can only continue. In order to ensure a safe cycling and pedestrian environment along the Trail, the Georgian Cycle & Ski Trail Association strongly objects to any construction work that creates additional road crossings across the Trail.

The Association recently supported the objection of residents along Highway 26 at Woodland Park Road who had been advised by the Town of The Blue Mountains that their access to Highway 26 is to be removed and their vehicular

access redirected across the Georgian Trail to another entrance on County Road 40. Writes Andrea Macecek, spokesperson for the Shore Acres Property Owners' Association, "...The road closures propose to transfer risk from the Highway to the Trail where the users are more vulnerable. The Trail is a local treasure that years of hard work, investment and volunteer efforts have transformed into a critical component of our local cycling infrastructure."



The trail west of Grey Road 40 heading towards Thornbury.

The GCSTA has always been particularly concerned about the safety of trail users where the Georgian Trail intersects Highway 26 just east of Thornbury. The approaches to this crossing are well marked, however the GCSTA is planning to do more and has funded the placement of bollard gating at the crossing on both sides of the highway.

These bollards will more clearly mark the approaching hazard while forcing cyclists to slow right down as they approach the highway. They will be shaped similar to the ones in the picture, but will be signed and staggered across the trail to force cyclists to slow down in order to navigate through them. These bollards should be in place before the summer season and are considered an interim solution until such time as the crossing is relocated to the intersection of County Road 2.



The GCSTA is funding bollards such as the one shown here for the location where the Trail intersects Highway 26 just east of Thornbury.

E-Bikes on Collingwood Trails

Shown here are several examples of an e-bike, also referred to as a pedelec bike.

Pedelec stands for Pedal Electric Cycle. The Town of Collingwood passed a by-law in 2015 permitting the use of pedelecs on their trails where bicycles are permitted.

There is no similar by-law allowing pedelecs on trails in The Blue Mountains or Meaford.



A pedelec is a type of e-bike or power-assisted bicycle that has working pedals and a small electric motor that is triggered while the rider is pedalling, reaching a maximum speed of 25km/h during assisted pedalling and weighing less than 40 kilograms.



**Thank you,
Georgian Trail Supporters!**

We have discontinued collecting membership dues but are always grateful for donations, for which we offer a tax receipt (for amounts of \$20 or more).

Our Trail Map and Staying on Track! newsletters are being dropped at various locations around town, however, supporters now receive a digital copy of their newsletter by email. Of course, we are always glad to hear your comments or concerns at info@GeorgianTrail.ca



Cascading ferns along the Trail in Meaford



Our Trail Map dispensers kindly made by George Christie, have been improved to withstand better those wet days along the Trail.



Trail east of the Craigleith Heritage Depot

Staying on Track!

has been produced by the
**Georgian Cycle & Ski Trail
Association**

Board of Directors 2016-2017

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and Alan Ward

Your comments and ideas are welcome!

Please send them to:
info@georgiantrail.ca



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