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GUS GAMBS 1868-1958

Gus Gambs was born less than three years after Whymper's ascent of the Matterhorn and lived until five years after the Hillary ascent of Everest. Of all this time he spent as much as he could in the mountains. His wife says that as a youth he would wander off into the Vosages Mountains of his Native Alsace. This hold that high places had on him seemed to only increase with time. Week ends were for the woods and nearby hills; vacations were for the high mountains, - the Alps, the Pyrenees, the Caucasus; in Norway, in Greece, Central America, Mexico, United States, and, most of all, in the Canadian Rockies.

As he was drawn to the mountains so did he also feel a kinship with other climbers. He was always willing to teach a bit of mountaineering to any who showed an interest. To him, teaching meant climbing for it is by doing that one learns. More than his seniority it was his teaching that entitled him the father of the local climbing group.

Such a figure of speech does not deny that a group of climbers would have evolved had there been no Gus Gambs. Elsewhere groups started without him. They had other "fathers"; but all fathers are not alike nor are all climbing groups. Perhaps an appraisal of the traits of our group inherited from Gus is in order.

One trait is that of climbing strenuously as opposed to the casual climbing of some groups. True, Gus did not climb strenuously himself but he certainly knew how to get others to do so. It was not just his interest and suggestions. His premature shouts of triumph just as the climber was about to collapse could drive the last erg of energy into service better than a black snake whip.

Another trait is freedom from regimentation. Such is by no means universal. Gus was by nature a rebel and to him the mountains meant freedom. Loving freedom he never imposed a restraint on another. When he saw an exhibitionist he ignored him for they come and go. If someone seemed accident prone, it only gave his other students practice in assisting or rescuing.