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## A FEW TIPS TO HELP YOU ENJOY YOUR VISIT

*Safety Officer Sharon Walker*

- Wear sturdy footwear when walking on Monument trails. Please stay on the trails. Watch closely for roots and uneven ground to avoid tripping.
  - Do not drink water from streams or lakes unless you first boil or treat it.
  - Never hike alone. Always tell a friend/relative where you are going, and when you plan to return.
  - When hiking in the backcountry during summer months, the use of insect repellent and/or head nets is strongly recommended.
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## REMINDERS AND HELPFUL INFORMATION

- Notify a park employee if you encounter any situation you feel is unsafe.
  - All plants and animals within Monument boundaries are protected. Please help us protect them by not feeding animals or picking plants.
  - Pets and smoking are not permitted inside the stockade walls or inside buildings.
  - Please keep bicycles out of the stockade and secured to the bike rack provided at the Heritage Center. Do not lock bicycles to sign posts or trees.
  - A picnic area is located east of the palisade across Grand Portage Creek, and may be reached by walking the path between the creek and the palisade and crossing the footbridge.
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## VISITING ISLE ROYALE NATIONAL PARK

For information about ferry service to Isle Royale National Park please ask park staff.

**For more information about Grand Portage National Monument, contact:**

**Superintendent, Grand Portage National Monument**

**P.O. Box 426, 170 Mile Creek Road, Grand Portage, Minnesota, 55605.**

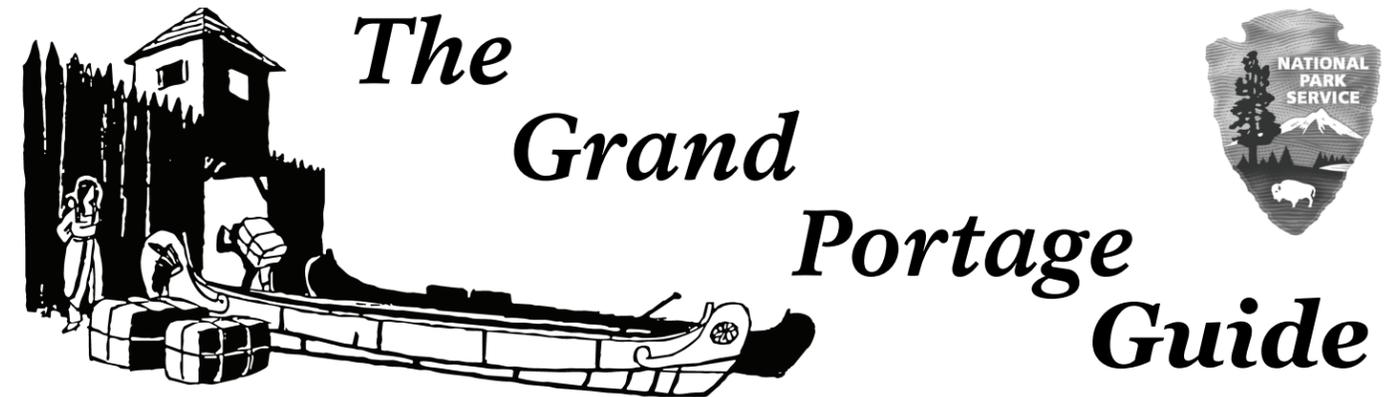
**Voice/TDD: 218-475-0123**

**Visit our website at [www.nps.gov/grpo](http://www.nps.gov/grpo),**

**or contact us by e-mail at: [grpo\\_interpretation@nps.gov](mailto:grpo_interpretation@nps.gov)**

*This document can be obtained in alternate formats.*

*Please contact the park's accessibility coordinator to make a request.*



## Changes and “Secrets from the River”

*Superintendent Tim Cochrane*

Welcome to Grand Portage. We are pleased that you are joining us during 2011. Last year we tried an experiment of dropping entrance fees to the national monument and a record number of folks came to visit Grand Portage. Since that experiment worked so well, we will remain a free tourist destination.

Other noteworthy changes are on-going. By October of 2011 we plan to debut our first ever park movie. Told from the perspective of a Grand Portage Ojibwe man, the movie will tell of the middle ground struck between the historic fur trade men and the Ojibwe living here – for mutually beneficial purposes. For many decades, Ojibwe and fur traders worked together here, forming a trading partnership that brought

valuable goods and technology to both parties. After many years the fur trade became unprofitable but the Ojibwe stayed on and this is their community today as it was two hundred years ago. The movie ends with a contemporary snapshot of Grand Portage. Adam Beach, an Ojibwe actor who has been quite a success in Hollywood, is our narrator.

Another welcome change for us is the completion of an energy efficient dormitory for our seasonal employees – those staff you are more likely to meet and converse with. There is a housing shortage in Grand Portage making it necessary to provide housing for park employees. The dormitory is designed and built using strategies which improve performance such as energy savings, water efficiency, CO<sub>2</sub> emissions reduction, improved indoor environmental quality, stewardship of resources and sensitivity to their impacts. The dorm is designed and constructed using sustainable practices that are environmentally healthier for occupants and is constructed to be more durable. Thus it should require less maintenance and use less energy than a typical home built today. For example, it is very well insulated, including insulation underneath its cement slab to minimize heat loss into the ground. We also are producing electricity through a photovoltaic system.

The dormitory is the result of a fundamental

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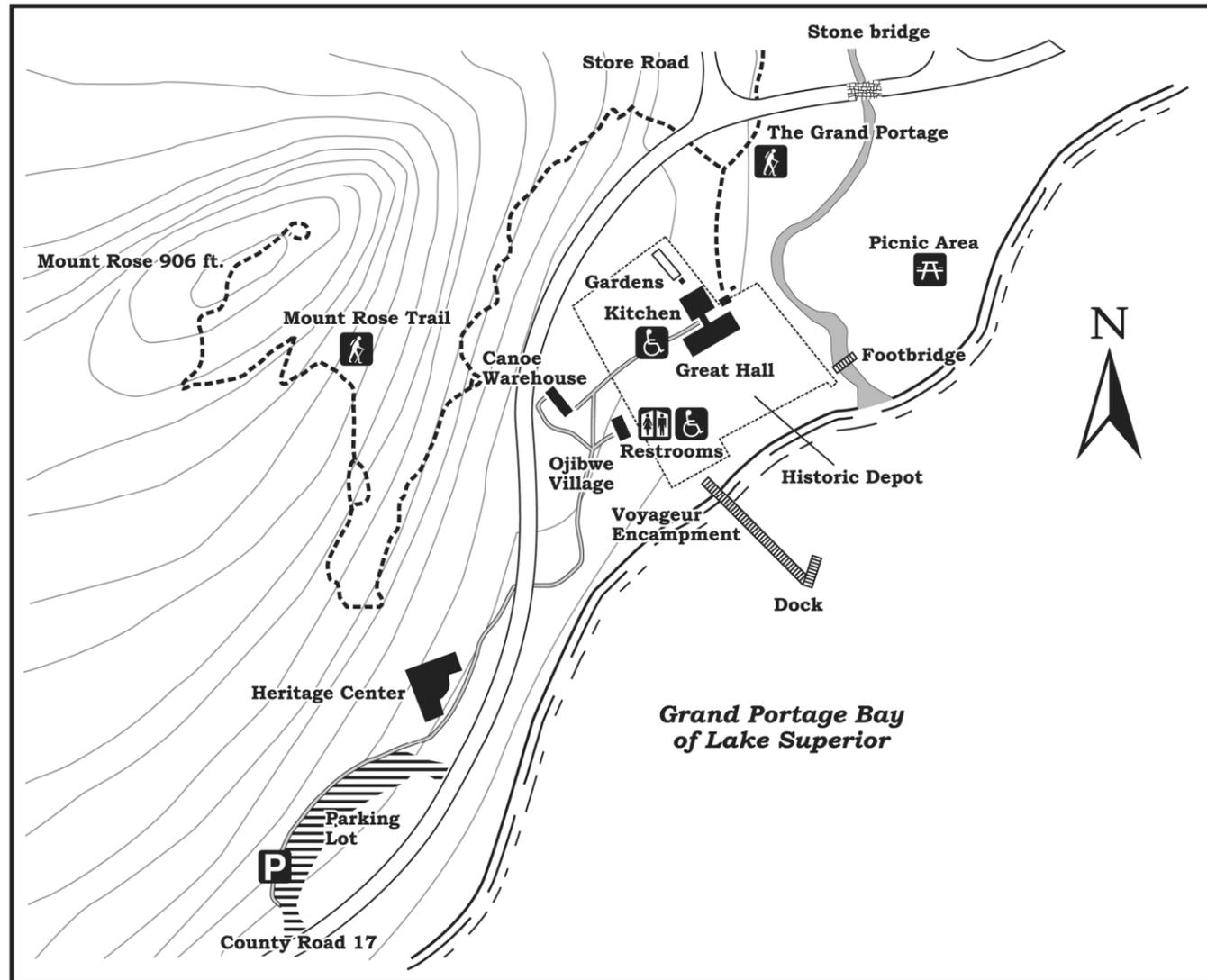
*Boozhoo Bonjour*  
**Welcome**

Welcome to Grand Portage. We are pleased you are here and exploring "Portage" with us. There is much to see and do. Please join our interpreters and participate in the past. Please ask us about the fur trade and its ingenious technology, or its novel customs. Or come and learn about the intrinsic links between the fur traders and the nearby residents, the Grand Portage Ojibwe.

*The Staff of Grand Portage National Monument*

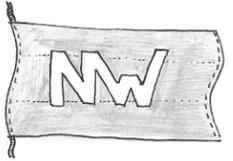
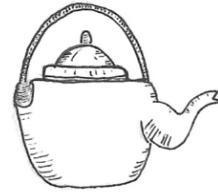
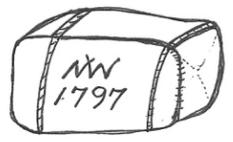
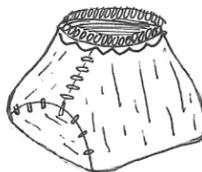
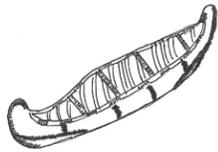
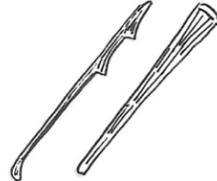
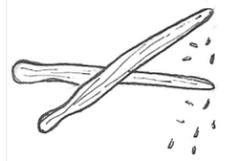
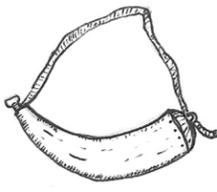
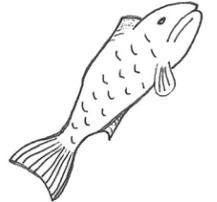
A GUIDE TO HELP  
 YOU FIND YOUR WAY AT  
 GRAND PORTAGE NATIONAL MONUMENT

More than 200 years ago, the North West Company concentrated its business activities in and around the stockade. Four of the most important structures have been reconstructed on their original foundations: The Great Hall, kitchen, warehouse, and gatehouse. National Park Service employees and Volunteers-In-Parks (VIPs) staff these buildings. You will find rangers and VIPs wearing dress appropriate to the period, or in the NPS uniform.



**KIDS PAGE: FUR TRADE BINGO**

Circle objects you see in the Heritage Center, Ojibwe Village, Voyageur's Encampment, Warehouse, Kitchen and Great Hall as you tour Grand Portage National Monument. Find five objects in a row vertically, horizontally or diagonally and you win!

<b>B</b>	<b>I</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>G</b>	<b>O</b>
				
				
				
				
				

## AREA INFORMATION:

There are a few places nearby to purchase light meals, snacks, gas, and other necessities. *The food and lodging information provided here is for the convenience of our visitors, and is not an endorsement by the National Park Service.*

### SERVICES:

**Grand Portage Trading Post, & Rendezvous Grill, Post Office & SPUR Gas** – Drive about 1/2 mile west (a right hand turn out of Heritage Center parking lot) on Mile Creek Road. The Trading Post, Post Office and SPUR gas station are on the right between Mile Creek Road and Highway 61. Phone: 218-475-2282

**Grand Portage Lodge/Gift Shop/ Island View Dining Room** – Drive about 1/2 mile west on Mile Creek Road. The Grand Portage Lodge 100-room facility is on the left at the stop sign. Phone: 218-475-2401

**Ryden's Border Store, Cafe Hotel & Phillips 66 Gas** – Located 3 miles north of Grand Portage National Monument on Highway 61. At any junction to Highway 61 in Grand Portage, turn right (east) on Highway 61. Follow Highway 61 to Ryden's on your left. Phone: 218-475-2330

**Voyageurs Marina** – Located about 1 1/2 miles from the monument. Follow Mile Creek Road east over stone bridge. Follow County Road 17 to your left, up over the hill and past the church and school. Continue to follow County Road 17 1 1/2 miles, to the east side of the bay. The marina will be on your right. Under new management. Phone 218-475-2476

### CAMPGROUNDS:

**Grand Portage Marina & Campground** – Marina Rd. (adjacent to Grand Portage Lodge & Casino), Grand Portage, MN, 55605. Phone 218-475-2476

**Judge Magney State Park** – 4051 E Hwy 61, Grand Marais, MN, 55604. Phone: 218-387-3039

**Grand Marais Recreation Area** – Highway 61, Grand Marais, MN, 55604. Phone: 218-387-1712

### LOCAL STATE PARKS:

**Grand Portage State Park** – 9393 E Hwy 61, 5 miles east of Grand Portage. Offers a scenic trail to the spectacular Pigeon Falls. The park has a visitor contact station and sales area. There are no camping facilities. Phone: 218-475-2360

**Judge C.R. Magney State Park** – 4051 E Hwy 61, 14 miles west of Grand Portage. Offers trout fishing and white-water kayaking on the Brule River. There are 6 miles of summer hiking trails and 5 miles of winter ski trails. A well-maintained trail winds along the river to the Upper and Lower Falls and the Devil's Kettle, a large pothole into which half of the river disappears. Phone: 218-387-3039

**Cascade River State Park** – 3481 W Hwy 61, 45 miles west of Grand Portage. Offers spectacular waterfalls along the Cascade River. There are also scenic overlooks of Lake Superior. There are 18 miles of trails through a birch and spruce forest. The park has a 40-site campground, picnic facilities, and plenty of lake and river fishing. Phone: 218-387-3053

### *Need Special Assistance?*

*For help or questions concerning accessibility at the park, please contact any park ranger, or Chief of Interpretation, Pam Neil.*

*218-475-0123 Voice/TDD*

*GRPO\_interpretation@nps.gov*

## ACTIVITIES & RANGER-CONDUCTED PROGRAMS

### LIVING HISTORY DEMONSTRATIONS

Come to the Voyageur Encampment and Ojibwe Village, where you will see demonstrations of Ojibwe and voyageur life in the late 1700s. While there, see our American Indian Three Sisters garden, and view a North West Company trade gun.

Visit the Great Hall, historically furnished circa 1790s. Also in the Great Hall, there is a Try-It-On historic clothing exhibit where *you* can fit into history!

Follow your nose to the kitchen, where you can see period cooking and baking demonstrations from mid-June through early September. Don't miss our historic heirloom garden and outdoor bake oven located just behind the kitchen.



*Arrival of a canoe brigade from Montreal.*

### RANGER-CONDUCTED INTERPRETIVE PROGRAMS

History comes alive when you take part in an interpretive program here at Grand Portage. Park rangers will transport you back in time, where you can become part of the story that unfolds before you!

These programs range in length from 20 minutes to 60 minutes. Be sure and check the "Program" sign in the Heritage Center or ask information desk staff for program topics, locations, and starting times. *Please note: Our program schedule is subject to change without notice due to staffing or weather conditions.*

### VIDEO PRESENTATIONS

Video programs are offered regularly in the Heritage Center classroom. There are several to choose from. *Please see "Notes" below - Schedule subject to change.*

- Northwest Passage: The Story of Grand Portage – Running time is 10 minutes. - *Note: Shown on the hour.*
- The Voyageur – Running time is 20 minutes. - *Note: Shown on the half-hour, except 10:30 & 2:30.*
- The Birch Bark Canoe Builder – Running time is 30 minutes. - *Note: Shown at 10:30 & 2:30.*

## SELF-GUIDED ACTIVITIES

### HIKING TRAILS

**The Grand Portage:** The 8½-mile *Grand Portage* is open for hiking. Two campsites are available for primitive camping at Fort Charlotte. A free permit is required, and can be obtained at the Heritage Center or at one of three registration boxes located along the Grand Portage.

**Mt. Rose Trail:** The Mt. Rose trail, located across from the historic depot, is a paved ½-mile-long nature trail which climbs 300 feet for a spectacular vista of the depot and Lake Superior. Approximate hiking time is 1 hour. A self-guiding trail brochure is available at the trail head.

### BROCHURES AVAILABLE

We offer several brochures for your use and enjoyment:

- NPS Grand Portage Official Map and Guide
- Ojibwe Lifeways
- Historic Garden
- Bird Checklist
- Mt. Rose Trail

## JUNIOR RANGER PROGRAM

Become a Grand Portage Junior Ranger! This program, for kids ages 7 to 13, is free. Activity guides can be picked up at the Heritage Center and Great Hall. You should allow at least 1½ hours to complete this activity. When finished, kids are awarded a Junior Ranger badge and a voyageur's contract. This is a family activity and we encourage parents to get involved and enjoy the program with their kids! Children under the age of 7, or those with special needs, will require the assistance of an adult.

## BOOKS WORTH BROWSING

To help alleviate the isolation of winter posts, the North West Company provided reading materials. Daniel Harmon, a North West Company clerk wrote,

*“Most of our leisure moments (and which is nearly nine tenths of our time) will be spent reading, and conversing on what we have read.”*



The following titles may be found in *your* local library:

“Native American Clothing: An Illustrated History” by Theodore Brassler, 2009. Firefly Books, Buffalo, New York, 368 pg.

“Gathering Places: Aboriginal and Fur Trade Histories” edited by Carolyn Podruchny & Laura Peers, 2010. University of British Columbia Press, Vancouver, B.C., 324 pg.

“Ojibwe In Minnesota (People of Minnesota)” by Anton Treuer, 2010. Minnesota Historical Society Press, St. Paul, MN, 112 pg.

“The Boundary Waters Wilderness Ecosystem” by Miron Heinselman, 1996. University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, MN, 334 pg.

“Roadside Geology of Minnesota” by Richard W. Ojakangas, 2009. Mountain Press Publishing Company, Missoula, MT, 370 pg.

“Ojibwe *Waasa Inaabidaa*: We Look In All Directions” by Thomas Peacock & Marlene Wisuri, 2002. Afton Historical Society Press, Afton, MN, 159 pg.

“Birchbark Brigade: A Fur Trade History” by Cris Peterson, 2009. Calkins Creek, Honesdale, PA, 136 pg.

“The Four Hills of Life” by Thomas Peacock & Marlene Wisuri, 2006. Minnesota Historical Society Press, St. Paul, MN, 119 pg.

“Ogimaag: Anshinaabeg Leadership, 1760-1845” by Cary Miller, 2010. University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln, NE, 328 pg.

These books are also available at the Eastern National bookstore in the Grand Portage National Monument Heritage Center.

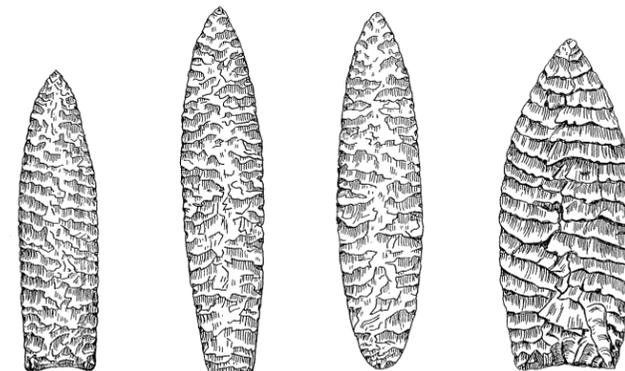
ago.

For all groups of Paleoindians throughout the North American continent, a highly mobile, seasonally organized, lifestyle was the rule, not the exception. Everything from shelter to stone tool technology had to be expedient, lightweight or portable enough to carry for immense distances. This meant a high degree of organization and an eye toward planning, precision and quality of production. As far as the archaeological record, nothing else represents this level of craft more so than the exquisitely fashioned projectile points found in Paleoindian sites throughout the country. Long thought to be used as spear or dart points thrust from atlatls or spear throwers, highly distinctive Paleoindian points were delicately manufactured from beautiful but sharp, edge-holding flints and cherts, or strong and coarse quartzites and mud rocks such as siltstone, quarried from sites with exposed outcrops or cobbles found in glacially deposited sediments, eventually scheduled into the seasonal hunting strategies of individual bands. Paleoindian “points” were “knapped” into long, thin shapes with graceful curved edges originating from a thinned out “basal” edge and terminating to a rather deadly, flesh-splitting, apex. Early Paleoindian workers usually concluded the knapping process by removing a long delicate flake forming a “flute” on at least one face of the finished point, for whatever purpose archaeologists can only guess at, since no complete spear is known to have survived the chemical ravages of extreme long-term burial.

canoes in the summer; and they used the Native American style snowshoes and toboggan in the winter. The addition of dogs meant more cargo could be carried, and thus traded for a profit. The North West Company was the most profitable fur trading company in the world during its heyday. The company's success could be contributed to adopting the native technologies of the birch bark canoe and toboggan.

### References :

Innis, Harold A. The Fur Trade in Canada: An Intro-



Late stage Paleoindian lanceolate points (from Wormington, 1957)

Regardless, the strong, but aesthetically pleasing Paleoindian point is the archaeological hallmark of an ingenious people.

No matter what stage or date-range, the Paleoindians of the Upper Country existed in a world long vanished and far different from our own. Within extremely dynamic ecosystems, ranging from post-glacial tundra formed in the wake of the melting ice sheet, to huge, oceanic, post-glacial lakes formed within ice-bounded and moraine-plugged basins, all Paleoindian populations had to meet the challenges of hunting and foraging in fluctuating environments without the benefit of fore-knowledge passed on from pioneering groups. They were the pioneers. And that means a high degree of resiliency, adaptability and a detailed predictive knowledge of the natural world. These people were the only people to witness a pristine Upper Country, and they adapted well to it, all while leaving their faint traces within the fragile soils of the modern landscape we cherish today.

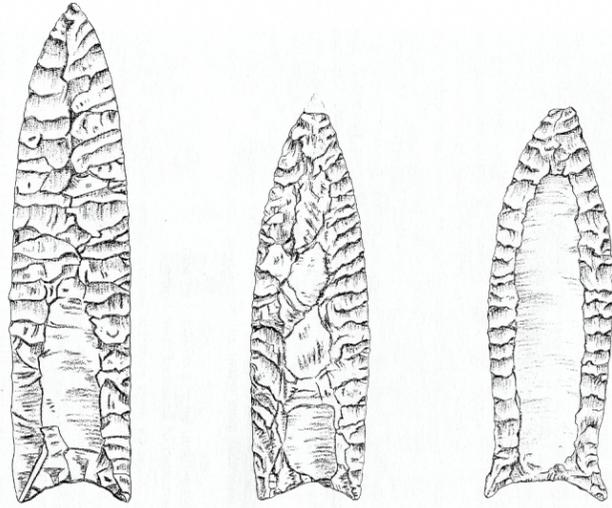
duction to Canadian Economic History. University of Toronto Press, Toronto and Buffalo. 1970.

Harmon, Daniel Williams. A Journal of Voyages and Travels in the Interior of North America. Flag and Gould, Andover. 1820.

Henry the Younger, Alexander. Manuscript Journals of Alexander Henry the Younger, Ross and Haines, INC., Minneapolis, MN 1965.

(Continued from page 5)

Like paleontologists, and other scientists who routinely engage in the study of complex historical processes, archaeologists are constantly analyzing and comparing fragmentary data gleaned from artifacts like stone tools, features like abandoned fire hearths, and “ecofacts” (i.e. preserved seeds, bones, etc.) systematically excavated from archaeological sites. From these data, researchers incessantly build or refine rough models of how ancient societies were organized and changed through time. Models often include descriptions of local environments; population size or density; or the kinds of plants that were gathered or game that was hunted and at what time of year; or the techniques employed in the manufacture of stone tools; or even how daily life tasks were organized. Often archaeological data provides researchers with incomplete glimpses into historic events like population movements, ancient trade routes, or responses to climatic change, as well as the evolution of hunting/gathering technologies like the design and production of hunting weapons. It is a kind of “first principle” that our knowledge of any natural or cultural past variably fades the further back in time we look. The common analogy employed, is a beam of light from a flashlight which intuitively appears to fade the farther it gets from its source. With this metaphor in mind, it’s not hard to see that our knowledge of the earliest explorers into the Upper Country is woefully incomplete.



Early stage Paleoindian fluted points (from Wormington, 1957)

Commonly divided into two sequential or “chronological” stages based on datable changes in archaeological site distribution, as well as changes in stone tool shapes and manufacture techniques, the archaeological classification term “Paleoindian Tradition,” consists of the Early, or Fluted Point Stage and the Late or Lanceolate Point Stage. Current age estimates for Early Stage sites in the Upper Country are at best provisional, and inferred from both radiocarbon dates of deglaciated landforms left over from the end of the last Ice Age, and “hard” radiocarbon dates for similar Paleoindian sites throughout North America. Our best guess for early sites in the Upper Country immediately west and north of Lake Superior, is somewhere within 10,000 to 12,000 years ago until at least 9,000 years ago. Sites from the Late Stage period may range from 9,000 to 7,000 years

munication and travel. Winter traveling, trapping, and communicating were all made possible with the use of the toboggan. The toboggan made it possible; dogs made it easier. From the northern interior of North America to Montreal, ambitious traders encountered thick forests, windy plains, icy rivers, and much more. Men and dogs alike endured harsh conditions. By adopting the technologies of the native people, the North West Company delivered furs to the European market for profit. They used birch bark

(Continued from page 15)

am, unharnessed my dogs, and put my sledge, &c., into a safe place. She was then proceeding to give food to my dogs... Notwithstanding it was near midnight when I arrived.” (Harmon 114-115) Dog sled travel made winters a little easier because they could find company and friendship by visiting other people or posts. Without a reliable method to travel the winters could be very lonely.

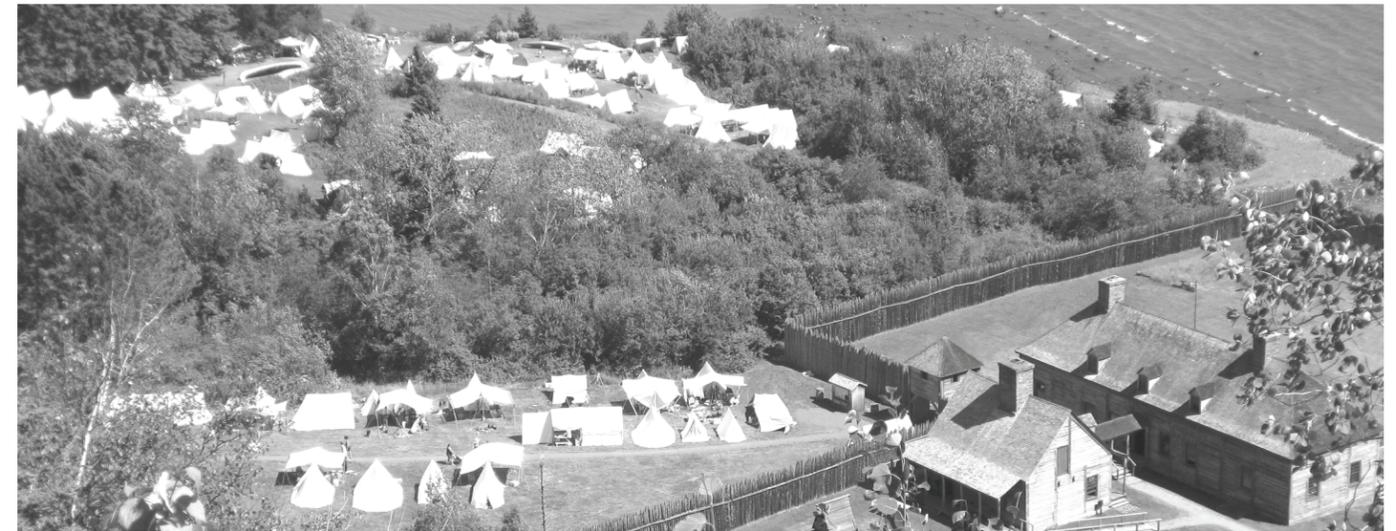
The fur trade in North America depended on com-

## The Grand Rendezvous

Ranger Karl Koster

The hustle and bustle of summer activity peaked with the North West Company Rendezvous held here at Grand Portage. This was the time when furs from wintering posts, which reached into Canada, were delivered down the historic *Grand Portage*. The annual Rendezvous is still celebrated here during the second full weekend of August. The event is held in conjunction with the Rendezvous Days and Powwow, sponsored by the Grand Portage Band of

Lake Superior Chippewa. The annual gathering is our biggest and grandest celebration of the year, a time when Grand Portage comes alive and reflects on its rich heritage. Re-enactors from across the country and Canada gather to camp and challenge each other. This is one event you do not want to miss! Music, dancing, craft demonstrations, and hands-on workshops ensure an exciting weekend at the national monument.



## Before “Pristine”: The First Peoples of the Upper Country

Chief of Resource Management Bill Clayton

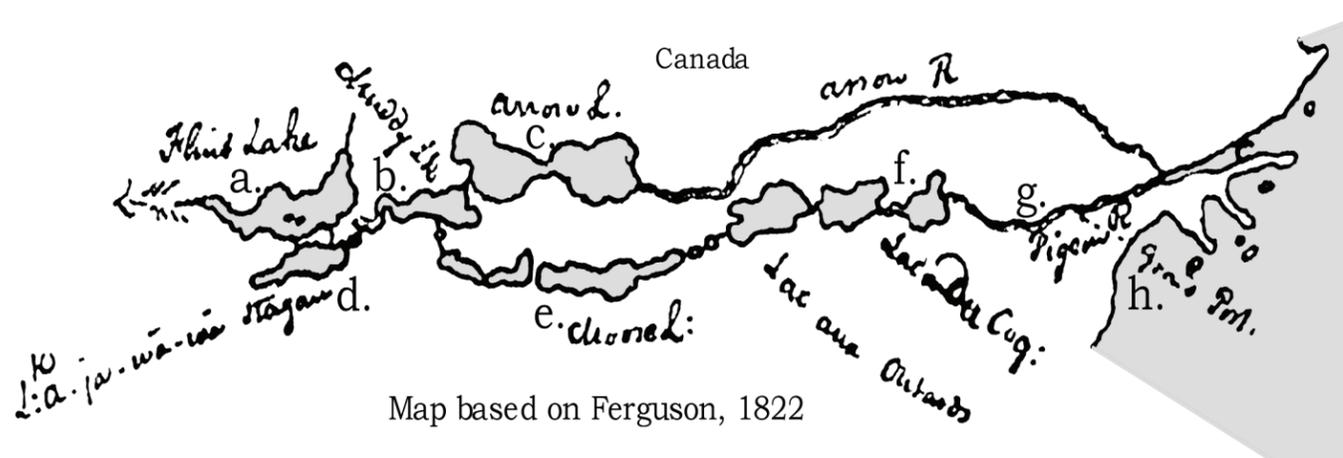
Many generations before the elusory *coureurs de bois* ever set foot into the Upper Country beyond the *Grand Portage*, the region had already been thoroughly explored and settled by indigenous groups referred to by archaeologists as the First Americans or Paleoindians. Indeed, it is not a pristine country by any means, not after at least 12,000 years ago, when small, mobile and extremely tenacious groups of people, practicing a seasonally-bound, hunting and foraging way of life, first ventured into it. And not long after the retreat of the colossal, mile-plus thick, Laurentide ice sheet that once flowed from the lands around present day Hudson’s Bay. Knowledge

of how these ancestors of today’s First Nations once viewed the world around them, the languages they spoke, or how they viewed neighboring groups is probably forever unknown to us. However, through the slow and cumulative analysis of relict campsites, artifacts, or partially preserved plant and animal remains, systematically excavated from the soils and sediments of the Upper Country, we have some idea of how they created and organized their technologies and made a successful living within what seems to have been a very dynamic and challenging ecosystem.

(Continued on page 16)

# Drawing The Line: The U.S.-Canada Boundary

Ranger Linda Morrison



- |                  |                       |                               |                  |
|------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------------|------------------|
| a. Gunflint Lake | c. Arrow Lake         | e. Moose Lake                 | g. Pigeon River  |
| b. Rose Lake     | d. Height o'Land Lake | f. North and South Fowl Lakes | h. Grand Portage |

James Ferguson, chief surveyor for the American contingent of the international boundary commission, probably drew this map freehand in a tent at night. The sketch map was included in a letter to his boss, U.S. Commissioner [General] Peter Porter. It is not the official map designating the U.S.-British territory boundary. The actual survey work was more precise and accurate than is represented by this rendition. Imagine what a map would look like if we were to draw it on a napkin at the dinner table tonight with mosquitoes hovering nearby looking for a blood meal.

The American colonies won their independence from England with the Treaty of Paris in 1783, but it took nearly 60 years of exploration and physical hardship, surveying and mapping, conflict and arbitration, negotiation and diplomacy to finally draw the boundary between the new United States and the British Territory that became Canada. It's a great story rarely told in North American history classes.

The Grand Portage trail itself was a major sticking point in the negotiations, and was also the last section agreed upon when the border issue was finally settled by an international treaty in 1842.

In the late 1700s, the British-chartered North West Company operated their western distribution center at Grand Portage. The 8 1/2 mile portage trail that connected Lake Superior with the inland network of rivers and lakes made it possible to paddle as far as the Arctic and Pacific Oceans in search of prime beaver and other furs. For centuries, the portage trail had been used by the Native People, French explorers and fur traders, and others. In the days when there were no roads, the water network and its many portage trails were like a super-

highway.

The Treaty of Paris recognized the importance of the fur trade and attempted to split the water highway down the middle, allowing both British and American people to continue to use it. But the area between Lake Superior and Lake of the Woods was the most remote of the disputed border and least geographically understood. While both parties acted in good faith, their maps were totally inadequate and the resulting written descriptions useless.

An uncertain border meant neighbor sometimes trespassed on a neighbor, conflict, and the Native people were often caught in the middle. The British North West Company operated posts on U.S. soil such as at Duluth and along the Upper Mississippi River. As both British and American fur traders continued their commerce along these waterways, and more European settlers moved into the border regions, tension escalated until it appeared that Great Britain and the United States were headed for another war. Something had to be done.

The two countries did not trust each other, but

fastened together at one end, at the other spread about eight feet apart. Where the poles are lashed together, several folds of dressed buffalo skins... are fastened and laid directly on the dog's shoulders; a strip of leather attached to this is brought round the dog's neck and made fast again to the meeting of the poles" (516). The travois is best suited for the plains for two reasons: first, on the plains trees are harder to find so the natives kept their lodge poles with them when they moved; second, there was no need to maneuver between trees on the plains so the dragging travois would be adequate. Each of the methods of sled dog transport described is specific to a region, available material, and environment. The natives lived from the land; they used what the land gave them. The Nor'Westers were successful in their business because they realized that in order to survive and thrive in the harsh north they had to adopt the technologies of the natives.

Communication was vital to the operation of the North West Company. The "Winter Express" carried information, mail, and news or gossip from the far northern fur posts in the northern Athabasca region to Montreal, and everywhere in between by dogsled. It delivered, "every kind of general information and remarks regarding the state of the country" to the Montreal partners. The Express teams carried letters on promotions, wages, laws and regulations for the trade, and details which affected agents and partners. (Innis 244-245) The rival Hudson's Bay Company's winter mail team was called the "Winter Packet," which also carried news, gossip, and business letters. These dog trains, as they were called, could travel over the frozen rivers and lakes, through deep snow and dense forests; the men walked on snowshoes and the dogs hauled the toboggan. "This conveyance of intelligence, extending to the distance of nearly three thousand miles, is attended with but a trifling expense to the Company," wrote Harmon of the Winter Express. (68) The invaluable information carried on the Express would be used to conduct the company's business at the

summer Rendezvous in Grand Portage.

These mail carrying sled dog teams could travel sixty miles in a day. The men usually walked in front of or behind the toboggan; they would get cold quickly if they stopped walking to sit on the sled. To keep the train moving, a new team of four or five dogs would be hooked up for another leg of the journey. The four or five drivers who drove the teams were usually wintering voyageurs who in the summer transported furs to Grand Portage. The journal entries of the recipients of the Express letters conveyed excitement and even anxiety of the coming news and the opportunity to send letters to others. The arrival of an Express team would be the highlight of the fur post activities in mid-winter. Some of the teams were even decorated with bright colored harnesses and the lines had jingling bells that signaled the team's arrival and scared off hungry wolves.



Dog Cariole

Peter Rindisbacher

The dog teams were not just for hauling goods and furs and delivering mail. Nor'Westers spending the winter in the interior didn't have many people to talk to and occasionally they got restless. People visited each other, both native and European. A native family traveling to a new hunting spot could stop over at the fur forts to trade their furs, visit, and rest before going back into the bush. When the traders went *enderouine*, or to the native villages to trade, they went by snowshoe or dogsled and were welcomed into the villages. One trader writes of his arrival at a Cree and Assiniboine village, "I meet, as usual, with a very hospitable reception. The mistress of the tent where I

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# Travel, Trading, and Dogs

Ranger Beth Drost



Ojibwe family traveling in winter

Perhaps the most recognizable object of the North American fur trade is the birch bark canoe. Think about the fur trade and voyageurs in canoes or portaging heavy packs come to mind; you may hear the songs voyageurs sang in rhythm to their paddles. Trade goods and fur pelts found their final destinations in the native and voyageur canoes. As it goes the season changes, the lakes freeze, and the canoe becomes useless. Soon, the winter inhabitants of the bush will have to tie on their snowshoes, prepare the toboggans, and gather up the dogs. They are getting ready for the prime trapping and hunting season. Winter cold makes the pelts thick and luxurious, perfect for a lady in Paris. Native families and European traders will employ dogs to move their supplies, furs, and families until the spring breakup when they will once again paddle birch bark canoes.

The traders of the North West Company, or Nor'Westers, used the birch bark canoe because it was efficient and easy to maneuver on land and water, it was relatively easy to care for, and it could handle the heavy burden of trade goods and furs. It was the best technology available. As the birch bark canoe is light and maneuverable in the thick forest and rivers, the toboggan is best suited for the thick woods or the boreal forests. Dogs pulled heavy toboggans loaded with the burden of the hunt or trap line many miles in a day. A reliable dog team allowed native

trappers and Nor'Westers to travel farther and carry more. The toboggan was readily adopted for winter travel by the Nor'Westers.

The North West Company used the toboggan because it followed easily along the narrow trails broken by snowshoes, it was a simple design that was easy to repair, and both dogs and men could move it. The toboggan is no wider than the path broken by snowshoes. Daniel Harmon, a wintering partner of the company describes the toboggan, "these sledges are made of two thin boards, turned up at the fore end, and joined closely together, so that this vehicle is twelve or fourteen inches broad, and seven or eight feet in length. The collar, by which the dogs draw, is much like that with which a horse is usually harnessed." (420-421) The toboggan is made of light and flexible wood, and it was pulled by one or two dogs in line one behind the other. This arrangement allowed the toboggan to be easily maneuvered through tight trails.

The toboggan hookup changed with the local environment. The native sledges of the Arctic were pulled by dogs each attached to a common point; this method is known as the fan hitch. The fan hitch was adapted to areas with few trees and wide open trails. On the plains, Alexander Henry, another Nor'Wester, observed the Assiniboine *travois*, "Dogs are tackled to two straight poles about 15 feet long,



Northeastern Superior National Forest, Grand Portage Indian Reservation and Canada. Map from Google with edits by Travis Novitsky.

they were both tired of fighting and decided to try something unheard of to settle their national boundary: diplomacy.

The Treaty of Ghent, which ended the War of 1812, created four boundary commissions, each to resolve a section of the border. Representatives of both countries served on each commission, and were charged with coming to a mutually agreeable decision. If negotiation failed, both sides would submit their reports to the sovereign of a neutral country for arbitration.

The two central sections were easily agreed upon, leaving in dispute the far eastern section between today's New Brunswick and Maine, and the far western section from Lake Superior to Lake of the Woods. The Treaty of Paris stated the border would extend from

*"...along the middle of said Lake [Lake Huron] to the Water Communication between that Lake and Lake Superior, thence through lake Superior Northward of the Isle Royal(e) & Phelipeaux to the Long Lake; Thence through the Middle of said Long Lake, and the Water Communication between it & the Lake of the Woods... and from Thence on a due West Course to the River Mississippi...."*

In concept, following the fur trade route seemed simple enough, but the geographic problems became apparent immediately. Isle Phelipeaux did not exist, nor was there any body of water known as Long Lake. Further, the headwaters of the Mississippi River were south of Lake of the Woods, not to the west. Early maps of this country had

fictional islands, mislabeled geographic features and had rivers flowing in opposite direction from what we know today.

The fur traders hired guides to direct canoe brigades through this "water communication" from Lake Superior to Lake of the Woods to collect furs. But an international border must be drawn precisely. An exact border must be mapped exactly in the channel of each river and lake, weaving around each island. Agreeing upon a real border in this lake and island studded country was difficult enough, but imaginary geography also had to be negotiated and resolved such as Isle Phelipeaux – was it Pie Island by Thunder Bay or a fictional island?

The survey and mapping began in 1822. The Americans sent out two young Army officers, and the British hired 52-year-old David Thompson who had already surveyed much of this territory in the late 1700s as a young clerk employed by the North West Company.

The general consensus on both sides was that the Pigeon River route was the "water communication" referred to in the Treaty, and the North West Company had already moved their summer headquarters from Grand Portage north to today's Thunder Bay anticipating the Americans would claim control of the Grand Portage Trail.

Both surveying parties encountered great physical hardship as they continued their separate mapping expeditions along the waterway. Supported by

(Continued on page 8)

supplies and services purchased from the North West Company, they charted each river, stream, small island, waterfall, rapids, and other landmarks.

When they reached Lake of the Woods, they were forced to explore each of the long bays and marshes around the shoreline, trying to identify the “northwestern tip” referred to in the Treaty. There their mission ended, overcome by events. The Louisiana Purchase in 1803 had established the northern border of the U.S. as extending from that illusive northwestern tip of Lake of the Woods along the 49<sup>th</sup> Parallel to the Rocky Mountains.

Both countries got a little greedy. There are two other waterways that, by a great stretch of imagination and creativity, might be interpreted to fit the ambiguous words of the Treaty. Both eventually connected with the fur trade water route that led to Lake of the Woods. The British asserted the St. Louis River route from Duluth was correct, and the Americans asserted the Kaministiquia route which begins near today’s Thunder Bay. Both wanted the rich land in between.

This posturing delayed the mapping efforts several years, and in 1827 negotiations broke down. The boundary commission was dissolved. Finally, after a delay of more than 10 years, the two reports (along with the reports on the boundary between Maine and New Brunswick) were referred to the King of the Netherlands for arbitration. This, too, failed to resolve the issue.

Time is a great healer, and by 1841 both countries had had a change of leadership. Newspapers and personal letters reported the people were “full of hope” as America’s great lawyer and orator Daniel Webster and Britain’s Alexander Baring, Lord Ashburton, met in the steamy Washington, D.C. summer of 1842 to reason their way to an agreement.

After reviewing the boundary commission documents, the two negotiators came to agreement on the Maine-New Brunswick border.

After all the years of disagreement and political posturing, it was anticlimactic when Lord Ashburton proposed that they accept the Pigeon River route, but to designate the Grand Portage Trail as the first 8 ½ miles of the border, since the Trail was

of such great commercial importance to both sides.

Daniel Webster quickly counter proposed that the Pigeon River itself be the border, but that both countries should have the full use of the Grand Portage Trail and all other usual portages along the water route. They agreed.

The resulting 758-mile boundary was carefully marked and signed on one of David Thompson’s excellent maps, and the U.S.-Canadian border was at last resolved.

After 150 years, this 2,500 miles of undefended boundary still stands as a testimonial to what two nations can accomplish through goodwill and common sense, and a belief that peace and harmony are worth far more than a few square miles of land. It also established a foundation for the continuing friendship between the U.S., Canada, and Great Britain. The terms of the 1842 Treaty are still in effect today.

*Note: As you visit Grand Portage National Monument, be sure to walk a little along the Grand Portage Trail, and take some time to look over the copy of David Thompson’s map in the Great Hall. More information about the accomplishments of surveyor David Thompson is available in the Heritage Center book store. Research the Webster-Ashburton Treaty online or in dusty government archives in the U.S., Great Britain, and Canada.*

#### References:

A Good and Wise Measure: The Search for the Canadian-American Boundary, 1783-1842  
Francis M. Carroll, University of Toronto Press 2001, reprinted 2003.

The Unfortified Boundary, A Diary of the first survey of the Canadian Boundary Line from St. Regis to the Lake of the Woods by Major Joseph Delafield, American Agent under Articles VI and VII of the Treaty of Ghent (*From the original manuscript*)  
Edited by Robert McElroy and Thomas Riggs, Privately printed in New York, 1943.



*Seasonal/Research dormitory under construction by Grand Portage Band of Lake Superior Chippewa. Dark photovoltaic solar panels are visible on the roof, large roof overhangs provide summer shade to south-facing windows promoting interior cooling, however, low angle winter sunlight still provides warmth.*

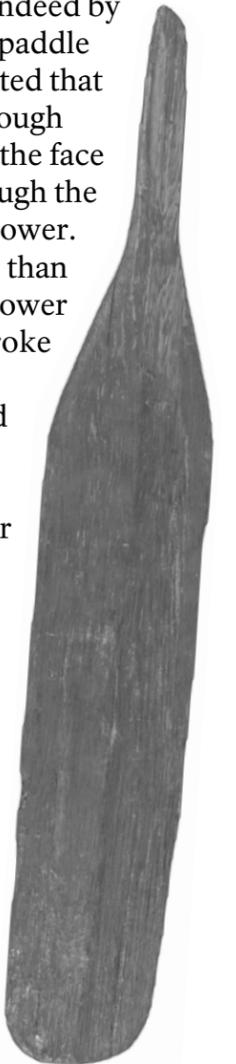
*(Continued from page 1)*

partnership between the National Park Service and the Grand Portage Band of the Minnesota Chippewa Tribe. The “Band” has provided a long term lease for the lands on which the building is constructed. And the Band is building the dormitory for the National Park Service. This positive partnership, based on working together to solve problems, is not unlike that historic partnership between the Ojibwe and the North West Company traders at Grand Portage.

Sometimes significant work done here is not immediately available and takes time to complete before it becomes useable information. For example, right now archeologist Doug Birk is working on a report that analyzes the 12,000 objects that were recovered from the Pigeon River, off of Fort Charlotte on the far end of the eight and one half mile *Grand Portage*. The many objects were recovered from the cool, anaerobic waters of the Pigeon River in the 1970s. The collection includes organic artifacts that would have rotted if buried in the ground or in oxygen-rich water. What is remarkable is the diversity of these “organic artifacts” including leather shoe parts, birch bark, and even 200 + year-old pine pitch used to patch leaky canoes. There are plenty of metal objects from hand-forged nails to button, gun parts, and curry combs conceivably for the oxen that were once tried on the Portage to bear heavy loads. Humans – the voyageurs – were

deemed better and cheaper draft animals. Other organic material that persisted in the Pigeon River waters is cedar wood, particularly canoe paddles made of cedar. Indeed by examining the two-century old paddle blades, archeologist Birk has noted that they appear to get narrower through time. Or, restated, the width of the face of the paddle that is pulled through the water appears to be getting narrower. Voyageurs paddled much faster than most canoeists today and a narrower paddle would permit a faster stroke because the effort to pull the paddle through the water would be decreased. So the Grand Portage National Monument collection from the Pigeon River may yet give up “Secrets from the River” as archeologist Birk terms it.

Please help us reveal some of these secrets and other information while you are here at Grand Portage. Ask us your questions and enjoy the incredible historical knowledge of our staff. Thank you for visiting Grand Portage.



*Cedar paddle from Pigeon River*

## Camping/Hiking and Skiing

The *Grand Portage* is open year round for hiking, cross country skiing and snowshoeing. You may access the *Portage* from the Heritage Center parking lot overlooking Lake Superior, MN Hwy 61, Co. Road 17 or from Fort Charlotte on the Pigeon River.

The *Grand Portage* climbs 630 feet between lake Superior and the Pigeon River. Round-trip hiking time from the depot is approximately 10 to 12 hours.

Co. Road 17 crosses the *Grand Portage* at its approximate mid-point and is about 11.5 miles from the Heritage Center parking lot. Take MN Hwy 61 south from Casino Road, travel about a quarter mile to the junction of Co. Road 17. Turn right on Co. Road 17 and follow it until it meets Old US Hwy 61. Co. Road 17 continues to the right, passes Mt. Maud road on the right, and Partridge Falls road on the left eventually crossing the well marked Grand Portage mid-point trailhead.

## Safety

The *Grand Portage* is often wet and muddy during late spring, summer and early fall. Terrain is uneven and there are exposed rock surfaces and tree roots. Boardwalks have been constructed over some of the wettest places, but large areas of standing water frequently remain throughout the year. Sturdy, waterproof footwear is recommended.

- Carry plenty of drinking water.
- Mosquitoes and black flies are abundant from late spring until mid-summer. Take repellent with you.
- Please stay on the *Portage*. Old logging roads and animal trails crisscross the *Grand Portage* and may lead you astray.
- Do not disturb wildlife or archeological remains.

## Primitive Camping

Two primitive campsites are located at Fort Charlotte. Each site will accommodate up to 10 persons. A group campsite is available by reservation of a free permit. A permit can be obtained at the information desk in the Heritage Center. A family campsite is available on a first come first served basis. Please inform a park ranger if you plan to leave your car overnight or longer in the parking lot.

Fire grates are located at each site, carrying a backpacking stove is recommended. Campfires are permitted only in fire grates. A pit toilet is located nearby. There is no safe drinking water at Fort Charlotte, so water must be filtered, chemically treated or boiled before drinking.



*Ojibwe people carrying at Kitchi Onigaming.*

Please pack out what you pack in. Do not bury trash or place it in the pit toilet.

Use only dead and downed wood for campfires.

Do not cut down trees near the campsites or peel bark from them.

## Prohibited on the Grand Portage:

- Motorized Vehicles
- Motorcycles
- ATVs (All-terrain vehicles)
- Snowmobiles
- Bicycles
- Horses

# Grand Portage

Grand Portage National Monument  
Grand Portage, Minnesota



## The Grand Portage: A Pullout Map and Guide



## History

Indian people have traveled this footpath between the Pigeon river and Lake Superior for centuries. The Ojibwe called the *Portage* “*Kitchi Onigaming*,” The Great Carrying Place. *Kitchi Onigaming* or the *Grand Portage*, to those from Montréal in the colony of New France, enabled Ojibwe and other Indian peoples to conduct trade with neighboring tribes and to access local hunting and gathering areas. Ojibwe people frequently traveled the *Portage* carrying birchbark canoes and baskets, fish from Lake Superior, garden seed, wild rice, copper ingots from Isle Royale and flint from Gunflint Lake.

In the late 17<sup>th</sup> century, as French trade with woodland peoples expanded, explorers such as Daniel Greysolon, *Sieur Du Lhut*, may have learned about the *Grand Portage* through contacts with Ojibwe, Cree or Assiniboine families. Explorers possibly traveled across the portage with Indian guides but no written account of such use has been uncovered.

The first documented travel along the *Grand Portage* was made in 1731. Explorer and trader Pierre Gaultier, *Sieur de la Vérendrye*, sent a son and nephew across the *portage* with instructions to establish a post on Rainy Lake. *La Vérendrye*'s account indicated that the *Portage* was well known by native people. He described it as being from three to three and a quarter

*lieues* (7.5-8.1 miles). He also noted, “*all our people, in dismay at the length of the portage... mutinied and loudly demanded that I should turn back.*”

After *La Vérendrye*, other explorers and traders traveled the Grand Portage to access the *pays d'en haut*, the vast unknown “up country” of the northwest. By 1763, after conclusion of the French and Indian War, the British had wrested control of the fur trade from the French, and trade with Ojibwe and other woodland and plains Indians continued to expand. The North West Company, in 1784, began building its summer headquarters at the eastern terminus of the *Portage*. For the next 25 years, voyageurs, clerks, guides, interpreters, wintering partners and agents of the NWC, the fractious XY Company and smaller firms routinely used the *Grand Portage*.



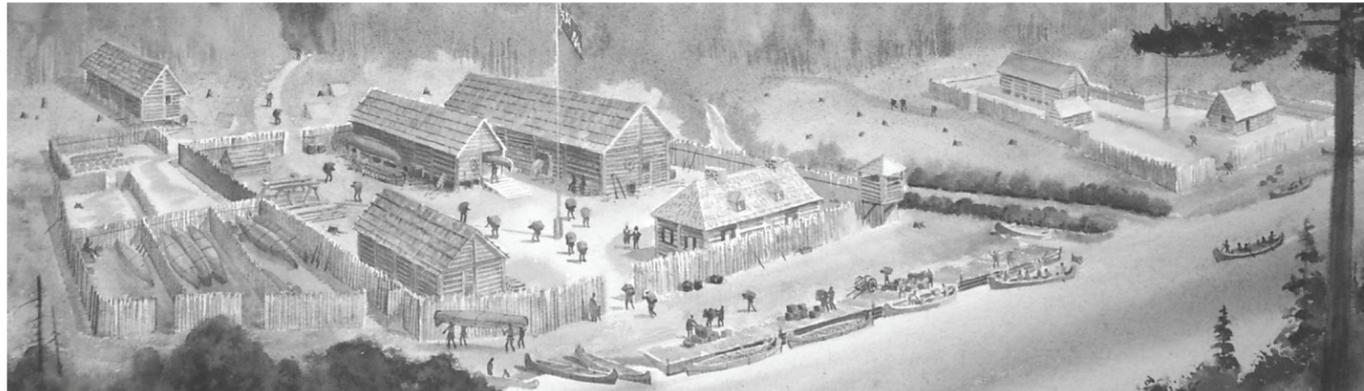
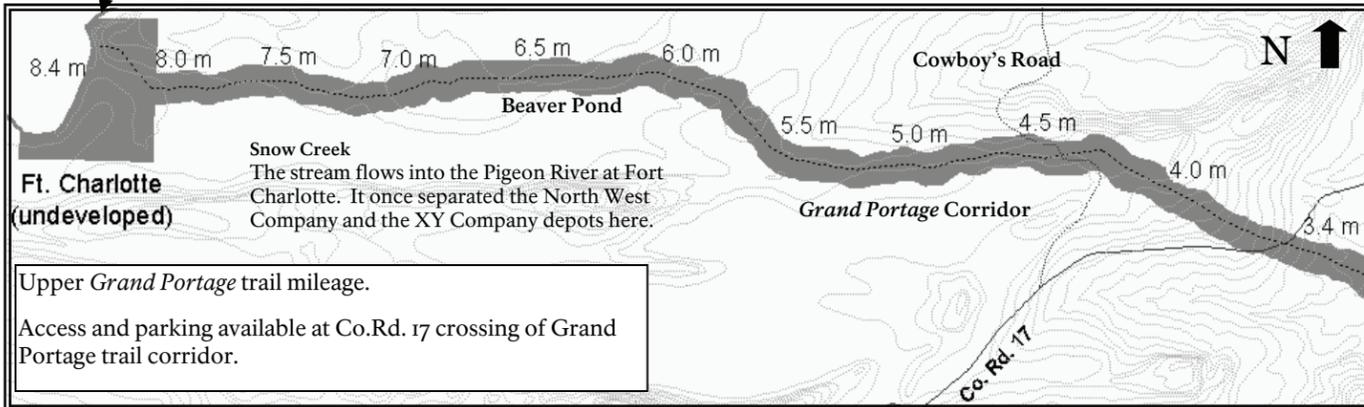
*The Grand Portage goes through a gap in the hills*

## Pigeon River

The Pigeon River is the western terminus of the *Grand Portage* and forms part of the international border between the United States and Canada. From Fort Charlotte the river flows 22 miles east over hazardous rapids, cascades and waterfalls finally emptying into Lake Superior. To avoid these obstacles, Indian people portaged their canoes across the *Grand Portage* between the river and Lake Superior long before Europeans arrived.

### Fort Charlotte

The North West Company and later the XY Company built stockade depots here. They enclosed warehouses and support buildings to temporarily store and secure trade items and furs being transported across the *Grand Portage*. Fort Charlotte was named after the wife of King George III.



During the 1790s, Fort Charlotte was such a busy depot that winterer Mr. Donald Ross was called "the governor," due to his long tenure there.  
*Fort Charlotte watercolor by Howard Sivertson (View original in Heritage Center at top of stairs)*

### Distances

Distances along the *Grand Portage* are indicated in miles by travel in both directions on the *Grand Portage* is shown below.

From Fort Charlotte to Lake Superior		From Lake Superior to Fort Charlotte
0	Fort Charlotte	8.5
2.5	Beaver Pond	6.5
4.4	Co. Rd 17	3.4
7.8	MN Hwy 61	.6
8.5	Lake Superior	0

### Parking

Portage users may park vehicles at the Heritage Center parking lot or at the County Road 17 crossing. If your plans include camping at Fort Charlotte, please obtain your free permit at the information desk in the Heritage Center. Please inform a park ranger if you intend to leave vehicle(s) overnight in the parking lot.

## What is a Portage?

A portage is an overland trail or pathway which permits the transport of materials such as canoes, supplies and cargo from one body of water to another.



Majestic old growth eastern white pine along the *Grand Portage*.

## Poses

During fur trade times the *Grand Portage* was divided between 16 to 18 *poses* or resting places. Such rest stops were usually located near a difficult section of a portage such as a hill or marshy area and frequently near sources of fresh water. Here voyageurs unloaded their heavy packs, waited for their strength to return and enjoyed a drink or brief smoke of their pipe before continuing.

*Poses* also served as temporary collection points for packs of valuable merchandise. All packs and materials being carried across a portage were assembled together before moving to the next *pose*. By moving the packs in this organized way, any loss was minimized.

The length of a portage was frequently defined by the number of *poses* it contained. They were generally one-third to one-half mile apart depending on the difficulty of the terrain. The location of a *pose* probably changed over time as the conditions in that particular area changed.

