TIME AND THE RIVER:

A History of the Saint Croix

A Historic Resource Study of the Saint Croix National Scenic Riverway

By Eileen M. McMahon and
Theodore J. Karamanski

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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By

Eileen M. McMahon and Theodore J. Karamanski

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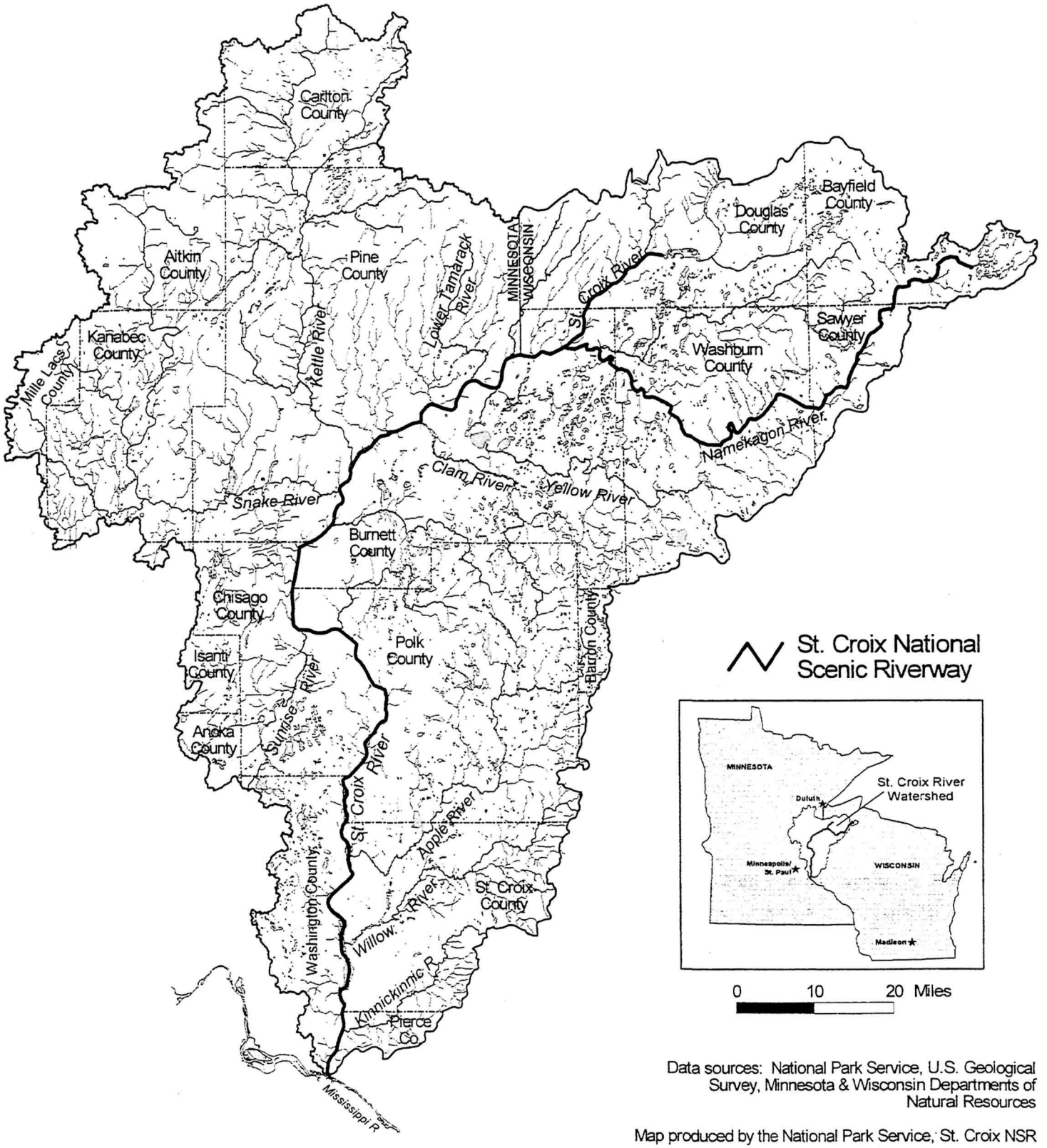
17 July 02
Recommended: **Date**
Chief, Cultural Resources, Midwest Region

Tom Bradley 8/2/02
Concurred: **Date**
Superintendent, Saint Croix National
Scenic Riverway

David N Cro 8/6/02
Approved: **Date**
Acting **Regional Director, Midwest Region**



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River, take me along in your sunshine,
Sing me your song ever moving, and winding and free,
You rolling old river, you changing old river.

Bill Stains, 1978

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Introduction

The St. Croix: River of Paradox

Rivers are symbols of hope and agents of change. The steady flow of bright water means renewed life for an entire valley. The constant current flowing of its course is a model of restless motion and ceaseless change. From Mark Twain to Norman MacClean rivers have served in American literature as an outlet for adventure and a place of retreat, symbols of the opportunities of an expanding nation and oasis of individual renewal. "Eventually," MacClean wrote, "all things merge into one, and a river runs through it." Paradoxically rivers represent both flux and continuity. As the ancient Greeks observed in the fifth century B.C. it is not possible to step into the same stream twice, for no sooner has one entered a stream than that water is swept on by the current. Yet, while rivers constantly change they are themselves ancient. For more than 10,000 years the St. Croix River has added its cold clear northwoods waters to the flow of the Mississippi River. For the people of its valley the St. Croix has been a source of hope and renewal, as well as a vehicle of transformation.

Rivers are highways that bring together people from distant places. Rivers also serve as barriers and boundaries. In the seventeenth century the St. Croix River brought the Chippewa invaders who, after a century of bloodshed, drove the Sioux from the land of their fathers. In more recent times the river has brought, thanks to United States Army Corps of Engineers lock and dam projects, invaders from the Baltic Sea, in the form of zebra mussels. For this exotic species, like human immigrants from Europe before them, the St. Croix has been a river of opportunity as new colonies flourish and indigenous populations are vanquished from a transformed ecosystem. As a highway of change the St. Croix has consistently exerted its stiffest penalties on those populations, human, animal, and plant that reside closest to the river. During the nineteenth century logging dams transformed shoreline habitats; floods, such as in 1965, have deluged the homes and businesses along the banks of the river; and it was the property owners along the upper St. Croix who lost their homes when the federal government declared it a Wild and Scenic River.

The St. Croix has been the vehicle by which a significant portion of the north woods has been transformed; yet the river has also served as a barrier to travel, people, and change. It has not been as bloody or decisive a boundary as Europe's Rhine River or even America's Potomac, still the St. Croix has been a border river. Where nature created one valley and one watershed, politicians saw the St. Croix as a logical dividing line between the states of Wisconsin and Minnesota. Rivers are natural barriers, better at impeding the spread of wildfires than preventing the migration of plant or animal species. For human populations the St. Croix sped the movement of people and goods along its north-south access, while at the same time the river was an obstacle to east-west movement, necessitating bridges and ferries. These improvements were unknown before the nineteenth century and rare before the twentieth century, making possible the river's function as a frontier, first between the Chippewa and the Sioux, and later between two

states. The political boundary hardened the natural division of the valley between east and west bank. School districts, local governments and road commissions defied the logic of propinquity and excluded people living on the other side of the river. A river valley shared in common by two Indian peoples and then two states too often became a resource for both to exploit and neither to protect.

In his 1965 contribution to the *Rivers of America* series James Taylor Dunn dubbed the St. Croix as a "Midwest Border River." The theme of border river embraces more than the political division between Minnesota and Wisconsin. The St. Croix Valley is also divided between ten different counties whose jurisdictions overlap with eleven different municipalities. Hundreds of township and thousands of individual property lines further subdivide the valley. Quite accurately one of the earliest European-American settlers in the region described the establishment of the first county as beginning the "dismemberment of the St. Croix valley." [1] The National Wild and Scenic Rivers Act of 1968 and the Lower Saint Croix National Scenic Riverway Act in 1972 created a new set of boundaries along the river. Upriver from Stillwater, Minnesota the St. Croix River was divided between a zone of federal management to the north and a zone of state cooperative management along the lower river. This division reflected the historic difference between the narrow wild waters of the Upper St. Croix and the broad, lake-like reaches of the Lower St. Croix. The former was a north woods river, evocative of Hiawatha or Hemingway, its valley dominated by wilderness, timber extraction, cutover farms, and more recently tourism. The lower river is marked by farms rooted in deep black soil, prosperous river ports, the scene, a century ago, of belching smokestacks from mills and steamboats. The upper river has been the hinterland, the resource rich frontier, of the more heavily populated and urbanized lower river.

The upper river is a remote, isolated corner of the American Midwest. In contrast the lower river is on the border of the dynamic Minneapolis—St. Paul metropolitan area. Originally the St. Croix towns such as a Stillwater and Prescott, Wisconsin vied with the Twin Cities on the Mississippi for metropolitan status. Having decisively lost that competition the Lower St. Croix gradually fell under the ever-lengthening suburban shadow of the Twin Cities. During the early twentieth century the metropolis sought hydroelectric power and summer homes along the St. Croix. By the last half of the century, urban sprawl, industrial pollution, and metropolitan traffic flows became realities for the Lower St. Croix Valley.

In recent years the St. Croix's location on the fringe of a growing urban center has overshadowed the crucial historical position of the river valley on the border between the two great inland waterways in North America, the Great Lakes and the Mississippi River. Before there was a Minneapolis or a St. Paul, before the sources of the Mississippi were known, the headwaters of the St. Croix were accessed via portage trail by Indians and fur traders on the move from Lake Superior to the Mississippi. The portage between Lake Superior waters and the St. Croix was crucial to making the region the cockpit of the conflict between the Chippewa and Sioux and the scene of intense fur trade rivalry between the Northwest Company, the XY Company, and later the American Fur

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[1] W.H.C. Folsom, *Fifty-Years in the Northwest* (St. Paul: Pioneer Publishing Company, 1888), 34.

Company. The unsuitability of the rapid, rock strewn Upper St. Croix to offer navigation to more than birch bark canoes brought an end to the river's strategic role as a regional link, although the desire to maintain and later revive the waterway through the building of a modern canal was sustained throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In spite of the fact that the upper river itself was bypassed by commerce, the valley corridor of the St. Croix continued to link the Upper Mississippi with Lake Superior through railroads and later highways.

The St. Croix is not a large river in terms of its size, nor a great river in terms of its impact on the development of the United States. It flows for 165 miles from its source, a long narrow finger of water known as Upper Lake St. Croix, to the Mississippi River at Point Douglas, where the river, once again placid and lake-like ends its journey. Between the river's mouth and its source the St. Croix drains 7,760 square miles.[2] Much smaller rivers, the Chicago River and Buffalo Creek, have given rise to great cities. Other, larger rivers became crucial pathways to the interior, such as the Columbia or the Hudson Rivers. The St. Croix was selected in 1968 to be one of the first wild and scenic rivers within the National Park System, yet for most of its history the significance of the St. Croix has been within the framework of the Upper Midwest region. If the St. Croix's story is not of national significance, it is crucial to understanding the north woods history of Wisconsin and Minnesota.

The St. Croix valley encapsulates the history of the Upper Midwest, from its role as a voyageurs highway to its Bunyanesque contribution to the logging frontier. Its painful transition from a countryside patchwork of the ethnically diverse cutover farms, to a thinly inhabited tourist haven in the "land of sky-blue waters," mirrors a transformation forced upon much of the region. The Upper Midwest, the area bordering the Upper Great Lakes of Huron, Michigan, and Superior and the Upper Mississippi River, does not have a firm place in the regional history of the United States. The South or the Great Plains, and certainly New England, have more clearly established regional identities, in part because their place in national history is well known. The people of much of Michigan, Wisconsin, and Minnesota share a common experience of land, labor, and cultural heritage, but that experience must be understood before it can be used to bind separate states into a self-conscious region. The St. Croix River valley, on the frontier between the Mississippi and Lake Superior drainage, on the border between Wisconsin and Minnesota, with its rich lower valley and more rugged up country, has a story that reflects the experience of a region and illuminates the nature of a nation. As writer James Grey observed a half century ago, "The Upper Midwest contains within itself the memory of everything that America has been and the knowledge of what it may become."[3]

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[2] James Taylor Dunn, *The St. Croix: Midwest Border River* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society, 1979), 5.

[3] Walter A. Rowlands, "The Great Lakes Cutover Region," *Regionalism In America*, edited by Merrill Jensen (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1965), 334.

This study is an environmental and a social history. It seeks to explore the interactions between the land and waters of the St. Croix and the people who have called the valley home. It is a history of the land, how that land was perceived, altered, and how people adjusted to the reconfigured environment. "The valley was considered too far north and the soil too sterile for cultivation," recalled W.H.C. Folsom, one of the first European-American settlers in Taylors Falls, Minnesota. Soil quality and climate are immutable factors in regional history and examples of the way environment shapes historical development. Environmental history is the story of how the natural landscape interacts with social and cultural forces. Just a few years after the St. Croix was dismissed as an agricultural region it became the seat of hundreds of new frontier farms. Folsom noted, "Many of those who came here in 1838 found out their mistake and made choice of the valley for their permanent home." What had changed was not the length of the growing season or the quality of the soil, but the settler's perception of the valley. Environmental imagination, the interplay between land and culture, is a critical ingredient to this north woods story. The St. Croix valley offered opportunities and imposed constraints on all of the plant and animal communities within its corridor. But just as important to determining the history of the valley were the ideas and institutions of the people who came to live there, what anthropologists refer to as a people's "cultural script." The stories about the St. Croix that follow are about the dialectic between a natural blueprint and a cultural script.[4]

[4] Folsom, *Fifty-Years in the Northwest*, 34. For other examples of environmental history approaches to regional studies see: William Cronon, *Changes on the Land, Indians, Colonists, and the Ecology of New England* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1983); James J. Miller, *An Environmental History of Northeast Florida* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1998); and Robert Bunting, *The Pacific Raincoast: Environment and Culture in an American Eden, 1778-1900* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1997).

Chapter 1

Valley of Plenty, River of Conflict.

Moving almost silently through the forest Little Crow approached the place where he had set one of his steel beaver traps. Through the morning mist the Mdewakanton Sioux leader saw that someone had preceded him to the site. The stranger lifted the trap, heavy with a fine, fresh beaver carcass, and was about to remove the valuable catch when he suddenly looked up to see Little Crow. With "a loaded rifle in his hands" Little Crow "stood maturely surveying him." The stranger was not a Sioux, or as Little Crow himself would have referred to his people, a Dakota. The man was dressed in the manner of the Chippewa. For two generations the Dakota and the Chippewa had been at war for control of the Upper Mississippi and St. Croix River valleys. This Chippewa had been caught not only deep in Dakota Territory, but also in the act of committing the worst type of thievery, robbing another hunter's trap. As an act of war and self-defense, Little Crow "would have been justified in killing him on the spot, and the thief looked for nothing else, on finding himself detected."[1]

"Take no alarm at my approach," said Little Crow. Instead of raising his rifle, the Dakota chief spoke gently. "I only come to present to you the trap of which I see you stand in need. You are entirely welcome to it." The wary Chippewa was further taken back when Little Crow held out his rifle. "Take my gun also, as I perceive you have none of your own." The chief capped this unlikely encounter by offering the stunned Chippewa a healthy piece of advice, "depart...to the land of your countrymen, but linger not here, lest some of my young men who are panting for the blood of their enemies, should discover your foot steps in our country, and fall on you." With that, Little Crow turned his back on the rearmed enemy and traced his steps back to his village.

The story of Little Crow's gesture was recorded by the United States Indian Agent Henry Rowe Schoolcraft in his narrative of an 1820 journey to the Upper Mississippi country. Schoolcraft included the story because it illustrated the contradictory perception held by European Americans of the Dakota people. Lieutenant Zebulon M. Pike who had visited Little Crow's village in 1805 had described the Dakota

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[1] Throughout the book we use the terms Dakota and Chippewa to describe the two principal Indian groups who lived in the St. Croix valley. The Dakota are perhaps better known by the name Sioux. This is derived from an Algonquin Indian word "Naudoweissious," which means enemy. The name these people used to describe themselves was Dakota, which roughly translated means "ally." The Dakota were composed of several allied groups, united by language, tradition, and geography. The Dakota group most consistently involved in the history of the St. Croix were the Mdewakanton. During the nineteenth century they were the only Dakota group reported living or hunting along the river. Their Algonquin enemies are here referred to as the Chippewa, a word that means "puckered up," in reference to a distinctive style of moccasin. The name Ojibwa has a similar meaning and is more commonly used to describe related groups of people in Canada. The Chippewa would refer to themselves as Anishnabeg, "the people." The name Chippewa, however, has dominated official and anthropological literature, which is why it is used throughout this book.

as "the most warlike and independent nation of Indians within the boundaries of the United States, their every passion being subservient to that of war." Yet Schoolcraft also noted that they were "a brave, spirited, and generous people." Little Crow's gesture was magnanimous, but it also was an exercise of supreme self-confidence by a warrior whose mastery over his opponent did not depend upon his ownership of a mere firearm. Through his exaggerated generosity, Little Crow counted a notable coup. Through Little Crow's action the Chippewa thief was reduced in status from that of an invader, to that of a mere beggar. The encounter also underscores an important historical point. For the Dakota and the Chippewa, the most important event on the St. Croix between the mid-eighteenth century and mid-nineteenth century, was not the expansion of the fur trade nor the arrival of European-American settlers, but a terrible and persistent intertribal war. It was the interests and actions of the Indians, not those of a handful of fur traders or Indian agents that shaped the early history of the valley. [2]

The Dakota and Their Neighbors

Dakota's ability as warriors, their generosity, and their pride as a nation were all defining characteristics of the first historic inhabitants of the St. Croix valley. The Dakota could afford to be generous because they occupied one of the largest and richest regions of the North American interior. The early French fur trader Nicholas Perrot called it "a happy land, on account of the great numbers of animals of all kinds that they have about them, and the grains, fruits, and roots which the soil there produces in abundance." The St. Croix was the northeastern border of a Dakota homeland that extended along the Mississippi River and its tributaries, from the mouth of the Wisconsin River on the south to the headwater lakes in the north, and along the Minnesota River westward to the Great Plains. Not just its vast extent made this homeland rich. The diversity of landscape at the disposal of the Dakota offered a cornucopia of resources to the nation's hunters and gatherers. The Dakota lands straddled the northern woodlands and transitional prairie ecosystems and were united by rich riverine corridors and pockmarked by countless lacustrine clusters. Only the long hard winters of north central America tempered the possibilities of an otherwise lavish and diverse environment.[3]

"Places are defined," observed historian Elliott West, "in part when people infuse them with imagination." The Upper Mississippi landscape found by European American explorers such as Pike and Schoolcraft was shaped by the choices made by its Dakota inhabitants. Other Indian peoples, such as the Shawnee or the Huron, would have looked upon the rich bottom lands along the Mississippi and envisioned fields of maize, or later white settlers saw commercial lumber in white pine thickly arrayed in ranks along the margins of the northern lakes. The Dakota, however, arranged their homeland as a grand hunting preserve. Like most Native American people's of the Upper Midwest the Sioux

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[2] Henry Rowe Schoolcraft, *Narrative Journal of Travels Through the Great Chain of American Lakes to the Sources of the Mississippi River in the Year 1820* (Albany: E. & F. Hosford, 1821), 309-12; Zebulon M. Pike, *An Account of Expeditions to the Sources of the Mississippi and Through Parts of Louisiana, to the Sources of the Arkansaw, Kans, La Platte, Pierre Jaun, Rivers* (Philadelphia: C. & A. Conrad, 1810), 94-5.
[3] Nicholas Perrot, "Memoir on the Manners, Customs, and Religion of the Savages of North America," *The Indian Tribes of the Upper Mississippi Valley and the Region of the Great Lakes*, ed. Emma Helen Blair (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1996), 119.

structured their lives around a seasonal subsistence cycle. In the case of the Mdewakantonwan this cycle was based on hunting, not the gardening of maize or beans that played an important role in the lives of the Algonkian Indians who dominated the Great Lakes region. Dakota men were hunters and warriors. Fittingly they approached hunting as they approached war, cooperating with other Dakota to overwhelm their prey yet always alert to the possibilities of individual recognition.[4]

The Dakota began their year amid the thousand lakes of northern Minnesota and Wisconsin. Large lakes of the St. Croix valley, such as Chisago, Pokegama, and Upper St. Croix became the sites of villages of one hundred or more deerskin lodges. Men were active throughout the winter hunting white-tailed deer. Generally able to structure their hunts to suit their palates, the Dakota hunters would alternate the taking of deer with the hunting of winter bears. In winter deer and elk were a bit too lean and therefore dry when cooked to suit the taste of the Dakota. Bear on the other hand were heavy with fat in the winter and when taken and rendered added savor to other meat. Women prepared meals and treated hides. During the late February and March days, when the winter sun formed a crust of ice upon the deep snowdrifts of the forest, the Dakota hunters stalked herds of elk. These graceful grazing animals favored the open prairies during most of the year but retreated to the fringes of the forest when winter was at its worst. Moving swiftly over the frozen snow with their snowshoes the Dakota could take large numbers of elk, as they broke through the surface snow and struggled in the drifts.[5]

The proud hunters were greeted with the cry "Kous! Kous!" as young boys saw the men return to the village burdened with heavy loads of meat. Soon every lodge was empty as the entire community, young and old, rushed out to honor the hunters. The shouts continued to rent the evening air until the men laid down the meat at the door of their lodges. A successful late winter elk hunt became the occasion for a great round of feasting among the Dakota lodges. A hunter established his status in part by forcing upon his guests more food than could be consumed. Eating to the point of nausea was the mark of a true Dakota. When elk hunting failed, as it occasionally did because of a lack of snow, the Dakota relied on fish taken in the adjacent lakes. Like true hunters the Dakota favored spearing fish to the use of nets or hooks, and if their efforts failed or yielded meager results, they accepted a shortage of food as a natural part of the season. Wild plants helped to bridge the rare seasons of want and the more common seasons of plenty. In 1767 Jonathan Carver witnessed the Dakota chewing the soft, inner fibers of "a shrub," perhaps the red willow, which he said tasted "not unlike the turnip."[6]

When the sap of the maple tree began to run, in March or April, the specter of a season of want disappeared. Women took the lead organizing the work of tapping maple

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[4] Elliott West, *The Contested Plains: Indians, Goldseekers, and the Rush to Colorado* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1998), 17; Ruth Landes, *The Mystic Lake Sioux: Sociology of the Mdewakantonwan Santee* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1968), 28.

[5] Perrot, "Memoir," *Indian Tribes of the Upper Mississippi*, 130-1.

[6] *Ibid*; Gary Clayton Anderson, *Kinsmen of Another Kind: Dakota-White Relations in the Upper Mississippi Valley, 1650-1862* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society, 1997), 6-7; Louis Hennepin, *A Description of Louisiana*, ed. John Gilmary Shea (New York: John G. Shea, 1880), 227-39; Jonathan Carver, *Travels Through North America in the Years 1766, 1767, and 1768* (London: J. Walter and S. Crowder, 1778), 264.

trees, gathering sap, and boiling the liquid into sugar. Besides a few old men or boys who might help tend the fires, the sugar camps were composed entirely of women. Most of the men were off trapping or hunting waterfowl. Women united by kinship ties often came together to share the work and fun of making sugar. The sugar camp might be occupied for as long as a month and as many as one hundred trees could be tapped. The hardest part of the sugar making was the preparation of wooden troughs used for boiling. Although the bottoms of these hallowed logs were smeared with mud to retard their burning, exposure to the direct flames of the rendering fires meant that troughs had to be continuously replaced. Such work was well-rewarded when the finished sugar was gathered in birch bark containers and the women of the family held feasts in which bark pans of sugar were passed around for all to enjoy. Amid the laughter and stories that were shared, the women and children joined in jokes and dares. A frequent dare was to see who could drink the most of what one anthropologist called "a revolting concoction," liquid tallow. The tallow was used in small amounts to help process the sugar. Around the sugar campfire some women responded to their challengers by drinking cupfuls. Then everyone awaited the results on the winner, who often became sick or sleepy.[7]

In summer whole villages of Dakota took to their canoes and journeyed down the St. Croix to its junction with the Mississippi. Amid the hills and river terrace prairies just west of the great river roamed herds of buffalo. Before the Europeans came the buffalo ranged throughout the domain of the Dakota and more than any other reason accounted for the abundance that normally marked the life of the Mdewakantonwan Sioux. The Dakota held their summer buffalo hunts on both banks of the St. Croix. Bison ranged throughout western Wisconsin and small herds were even known to graze in the marshy pine barrens of the St. Croix's headwaters region. The most popular place to hunt the buffalo, however, was on the lower St. Croix and along the Upper Mississippi. In 1680, the missionary-explorer Father Louis Hennipen accompanied the members of a village of Mille Lacs Dakota on a buffalo hunt as far south as Lake Pepin, on the Mississippi. There they killed more than 120 bison.[8]

The summer buffalo hunt was a defining cultural experience for the Dakota of the St. Croix valley. The buffalo provide the means and the rationale for the Dakota community. In contrast to many of their Algonkian neighbors who lived much of the year in small groups of only several families, the Dakota lived in villages composed of hundreds of people. The village functioned as a unit, not as a congregation of individual hunters. This discipline was established by the requirements of the buffalo hunt. "They assemble at nightfall on the eve of their departure," the fur trader Nicholas Perrot observed, "and choose among their number the man whom they consider most capable of being the director of the expedition." This master of the hunt and his adjutants assigned each man his role in the coming endeavor, scout, shooter, or as a policeman enforcing tribal discipline. Unlike the popular image of a Sioux buffalo hunt, with hunters racing

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[7] Landes, *Mystic Lake Sioux*, 195-7.

[8] Daniel S. Wovcha, Barbara C. Delaney, Gerda E. Nordquist, *Minnesota's St. Croix River Valley and Anoka Sandplain* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995), 19; William W. Warren, *History of the Ojibway People* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1984), 97; Hennepin, *Description of Louisiana*, 322-3; Anderson, *Kinsmen of Another Kind*, 7.

over the plains on horseback, shooting their prey, the Dakota approached the hunting grounds via birch bark canoes. Upon the receipt of reports from the scouts the leader would quietly dispatch the hunters, sometimes with the use of smoke signals, who would drive the herd toward its destroyers. Hennepin witnessed two hundred men converge on a buffalo herd from opposite slopes of a large hill. The two groups of hunters "shut in the buffalo whom they killed in great confusion." Sometimes the bison could be driven by means of prairie fires over a high riverbank and dispatched in that way. The traditional technique of the Dakota buffalo hunt was a group effort leading to a massive slaughter of game. The aftermath of such a hunt, the ground packed with bleeding animals in their death throes, might strike modern readers, as it did the nineteenth century artist Paul Kane as "more painful than pleasing," but such a sentiment would have been foreign to a hunting people like the Dakota.[9]

The excitement of the hunt slowly gave way to the drudgery of processing the harvest of meat and hides. In the disciplined structure of the Dakota buffalo camp much of this work fell to the women. Some were given the task of quartering and butchering the bison. Others may have been regarded as specialists preparing hides that would become blankets, clothing, and crucial to the Dakota's mobility -- tents. The most laborious task of the women was the drying of thousands of pounds of meat. This was done over slow burning fires with heat, smoke and sun joining to preserve thin strips of buffalo for up to a year. So important was this task that the prudent hunt leader never selected a kill site far removed from a large supply of firewood. It often took weeks to properly dry and store the meat of a single large kill.[10]

A successful buffalo hunt provided the Dakota with security from want for the remainder of the year. Hunters continued to pursue game throughout the year, including buffalo. But the July hunt was purposely designed to produce not fresh meat for the moment, but an insurance policy for the rest of the year. The Mille Lacs Dakota with whom Hennepin lived in 1680 were particularly scrupulous to husband their harvest for the future. The Frenchman observed that "The women buucanned [dried] the meat in the sun, eating only the poorest, in order to carry the best to their villages, more than two hundred leagues from this great butchery." " So fundamental was this hunt to the prosperity of the Dakota that hunt leaders were given extraordinary powers to ensure that nothing or no one endangered the community endeavor. Hennepin encountered one group of Dakota celebrating an early buffalo hunt. They arrived ahead of the rest of the village and rather than wait, made a large killing on their own. The hunters of the main party were furious and destroyed the early arrival's lodges and took all of their meat. One of them explained to the priest "having gone to the buffalo-hunt before the rest, contrary to the maxims of the country, any one had the right to plunder them, because they put the buffaloes to flight before the arrival of the mass of the nation."[11]

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[9] Landes, *Mystic Lake Sioux*, 28-29; Perrot, "Memoir," *Indian Tribes of the Upper Mississippi*, 120-1;Hennepin, *Description of Louisiana*, 322-3; Shepard Krech III, *The Ecological Indian, Myth and Reality* (New York: Norton, 1999), 131.

[10] Landes, *Mystic Lake Sioux*, 162-70; Hennepin, *Description of Louisiana*, 323.

[11] Hennepin, *Description of Louisiana*, 323, 244-5.

In late summer the Dakota would return to the northern lakes. Men would hunt waterfowl and deer, while the women prepared for the vital harvest of wild rice. The rice harvest was second in importance to the buffalo for the prosperity of the Dakota. The Upper St. Croix country excelled as a habitat for the tall aquatic grass known as wild rice. Early French explorers, such as Nicholas Perrot, described the plant as "wild oats," which was actually more accurate because it is not a rice at all but an annual cereal grass. In later years the European-American fur traders labeled the St. Croix valley as the "Folle Avoine country," using the French words for wild rice to characterize the region. The dam on the St. Croix River at Gordon, Wisconsin destroyed one of the finest wild rice habitats in the region when it flooded the marshy shores of the natural river to create a large recreational lake known as the St. Croix Flowage. For generations before the dam Indian women relied on this rich stretch of river. Dakota women would sometimes seed lake or stream shores to increase their future harvests, but the majority of the wild rice crop grew naturally. Harvesting the crop so as to ensure its return the next year and processing it as a food source required considerable ingenuity and long hours of work. Women gathered the rice in a canoe in which they carefully shook the grain from the tops of the grass, often by means of a wooden stick, so as not to damage the plant. Once a canoe load was brought ashore. "The rice was then separated from the chaff by scorching it in a kettle," recalled an early Minnesota settler, "and then beating it in a mortar made by digging a circular hole in the ground and lining it with deer skin."[12]

Prior to the eighteenth century agriculture seems to have played a very small part in Dakota life. The amount of wild rice available in the homeland of the Mdewakanton Sioux assured a steady source of natural cereal. Small plots of corn were sometimes planted near village sites, but the amount was never enough for maize to serve as a sustaining element in their diet. Its role seems to have been as a source of diet variety. Similarly they would establish plots of tobacco near their villages. Most of what the Dakota desired was obtained by hunting or through the gathering of wild plants.

The final stage of the Dakota's annual subsistence cycle began in October or November, "the moon of the deer." For one or two moons the large villages would break up into smaller bands that would then cooperate in a communal hunt of white-tailed deer and occasionally elk or woodland caribou. Often they would employ tactics reminiscent of the buffalo hunt, coordinating the movement of large numbers of hunters to drive the deer toward designated shooters. Before the hunt ended in January, with a return to their large semi-permanent lakeside villages, the deer hunters often succeeded in bagging large numbers of deer. Samuel Pond, an early settler who knew the Sioux well, estimated that two Dakota bands combined to kill two thousand deer during the year.[13]

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[12] Perrot, "Memoirs," *Indian Tribes of the Upper Mississippi*, 103; Henry Rowe Schoolcraft, *Schoolcraft's Expedition to Lake Itasca: The Discovery of the Source of the Mississippi*, edited by Philip P. Mason (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1958), 90; Joesph N. Nicolet, *The Journals of Joseph N. Nicolet: A Scientist on the Mississippi Headwaters With Notes on Indian Life, 1836-37*, edited by Martha Coleman Bray (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1970), 146; Samuel W. Pond, "The Dakotas or Sioux of Minnesota as They Were in 1834," *Minnesota Historical Society Collections*, 12, 345.

[13] Ibid.

The abundance of food resources that was a manifest part of Dakota life in the St. Croix valley could give the impression, as historian Gary Anderson has observed, that their lives were "rather idyllic." But the abundance came at a cost. The toll was levied, in part, by the Dakota's frequent movement across the Upper Mississippi landscape. "They have no fixed abode," declared Pierre de Charlevoix somewhat erroneously, "but travel in great companies like the Tartars, never stopping in any place longer than they are detained by the chase." Early French geographers referred to the Dakota as the "wandering Sioux." Andre Penigault, who lived with them in 1700, described the Dakota as "toujours errante," always wandering. The French did not see that the abundance of Dakota life was based on their movement, the ability to exploit each segment of their varied homeland at its peak for hunting and gathering. Their large, semi-permanent lakeside villages were an exception to this movement, and it was while in residence in these villages that the Dakota were susceptible to a shortage of resources. Because these sites were occupied repeatedly over the years they suffered from a shortage of firewood and reduced game populations in their vicinity. It was the very young and especially the very old who bore the burden of the seasonal cycle. Those who could not keep up with the group risked the health and well being of the other family members.[14]

"Hunting is the principal occupation of the Indians," declared Jonathan Carver who lived among the Dakota during the 1760s. Typical of European observers he sneered at what he perceived as the "indolence peculiar to their nature," but did not see the contradiction when he described Dakota hunters as "active, persevering, and indefatigable." The fact was that successful hunting cultures such as the Dakota required considerable energy and sacrifice from their hunters. Bringing down an enraged buffalo or elk at close quarters with a compound bow was fraught with risk, as was the pursuit of game across a frozen boreal landscape. Dakota women also bore a heavy burden. On the move the burden was not merely metaphorical but might entail a pack and tumpline of well-over one hundred pounds.

The abundance of the Dakota excited the envy of their Indian neighbors and attracted the notice of the French. Pierre Esprit Radisson and Medard Chouart, Sieur Des Groseillers, the first Europeans to penetrate the interior of northern Wisconsin, first encountered the Sioux during the winter of 1659. Unusual climatic conditions had ruined the winter hunts of the Menominee among whom the French were staying. After being forced to eat the dogs of the village starvation gradually consumed its inmates. As the horrible winter came to a close representatives of the Dakota arrived in the village. The eight well-fed Dakota men, each accompanied by two wives bearing baskets of wild rice, strongly impressed the haggard Europeans. Without hesitation they accepted the invitation of the Dakota to visit their lands.[15]

The Dakota demonstrated considerable forbearance, even generosity toward their Algonkian neighbors to the east. But like Little Crow's decision to spare the life of a

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[14] Gary Anderson, *Kinsmen of Another Kind*, 2-3,13; Pierre de Charlevoix, *Journal of a Voyage to North America*, Vol. I (London: R. and J. Dodsley, 1761), 280.

[15] Pierre Esprit Radisson, *Voyages of Peter Esprit Radisson*, edited by Gideon Scull, (New York: Peter Smith, 1943), 201-9.

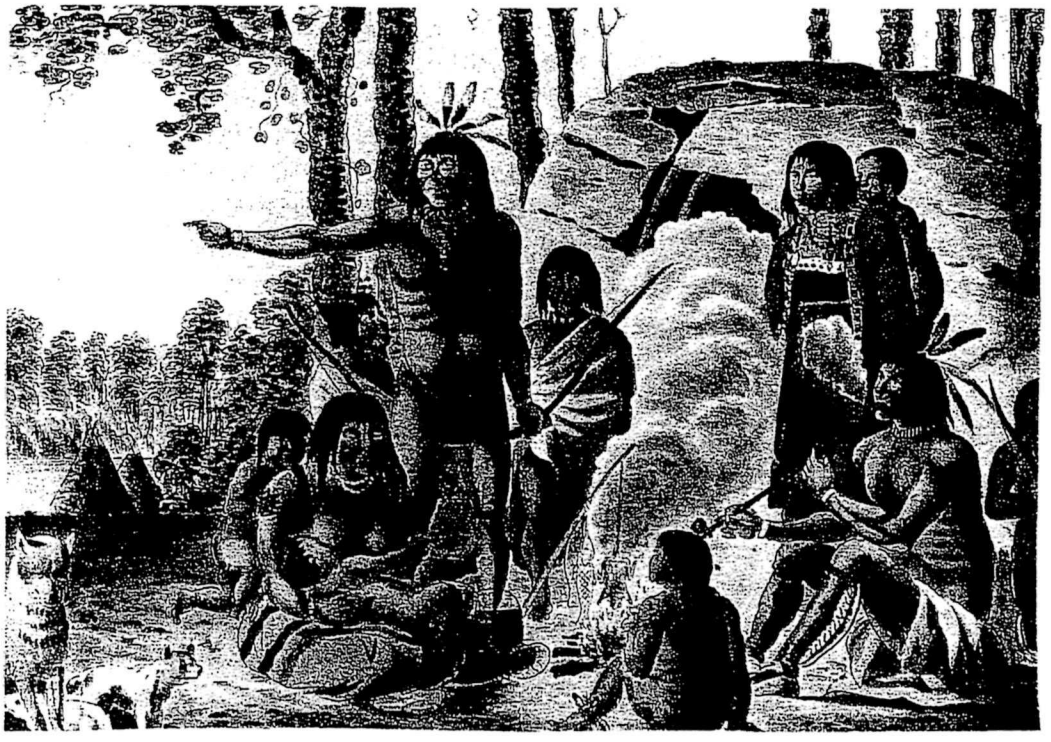


Figure 1. A Chippewa Family, c. 1821. Courtesy of the National Archives of Canada

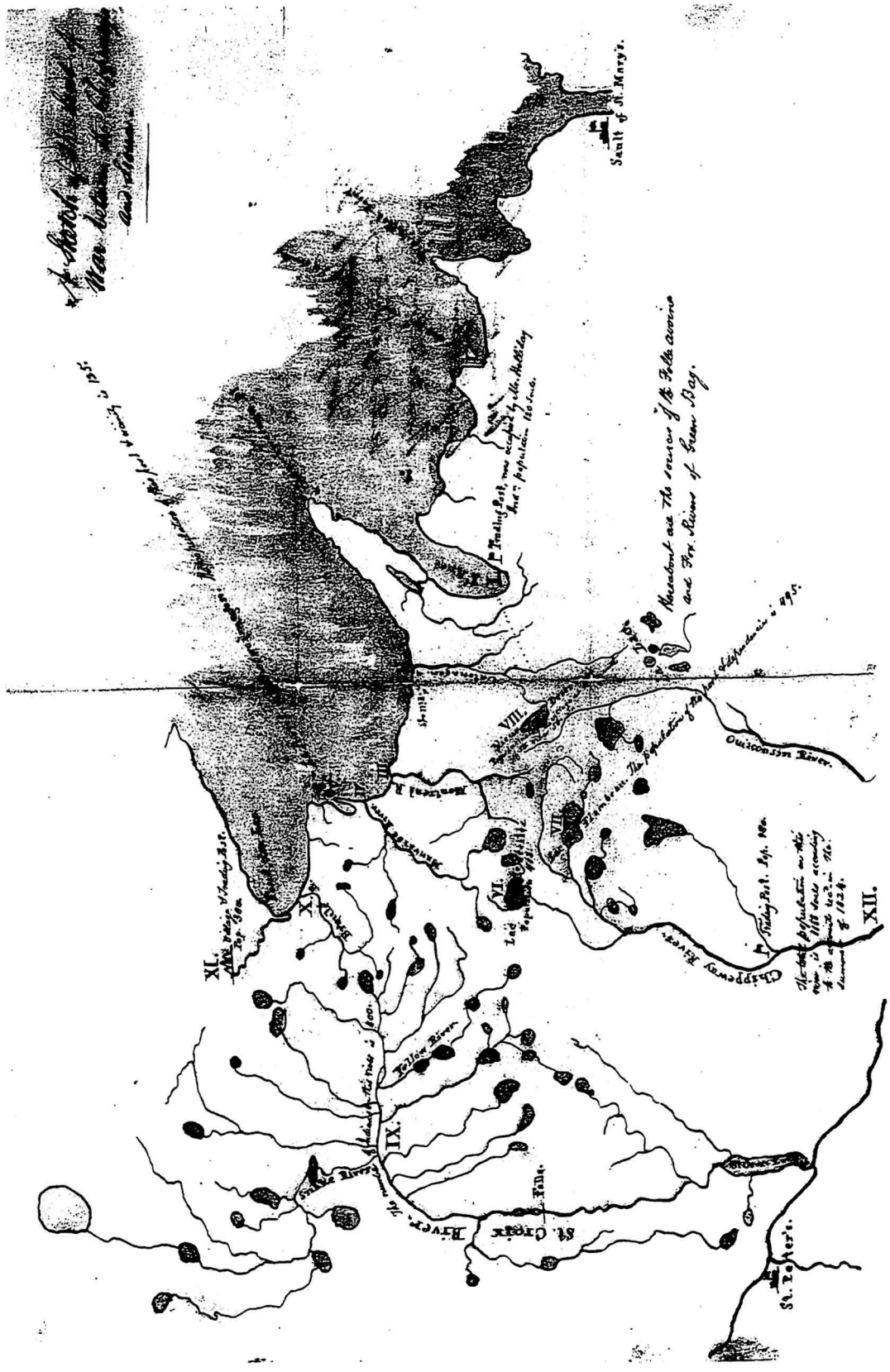


Figure 2. "A Sketch of the Seat of the War Between the Chippewa and Sioux," by Henry Rowe Schoolcraft, Courtesy of the Clements Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.

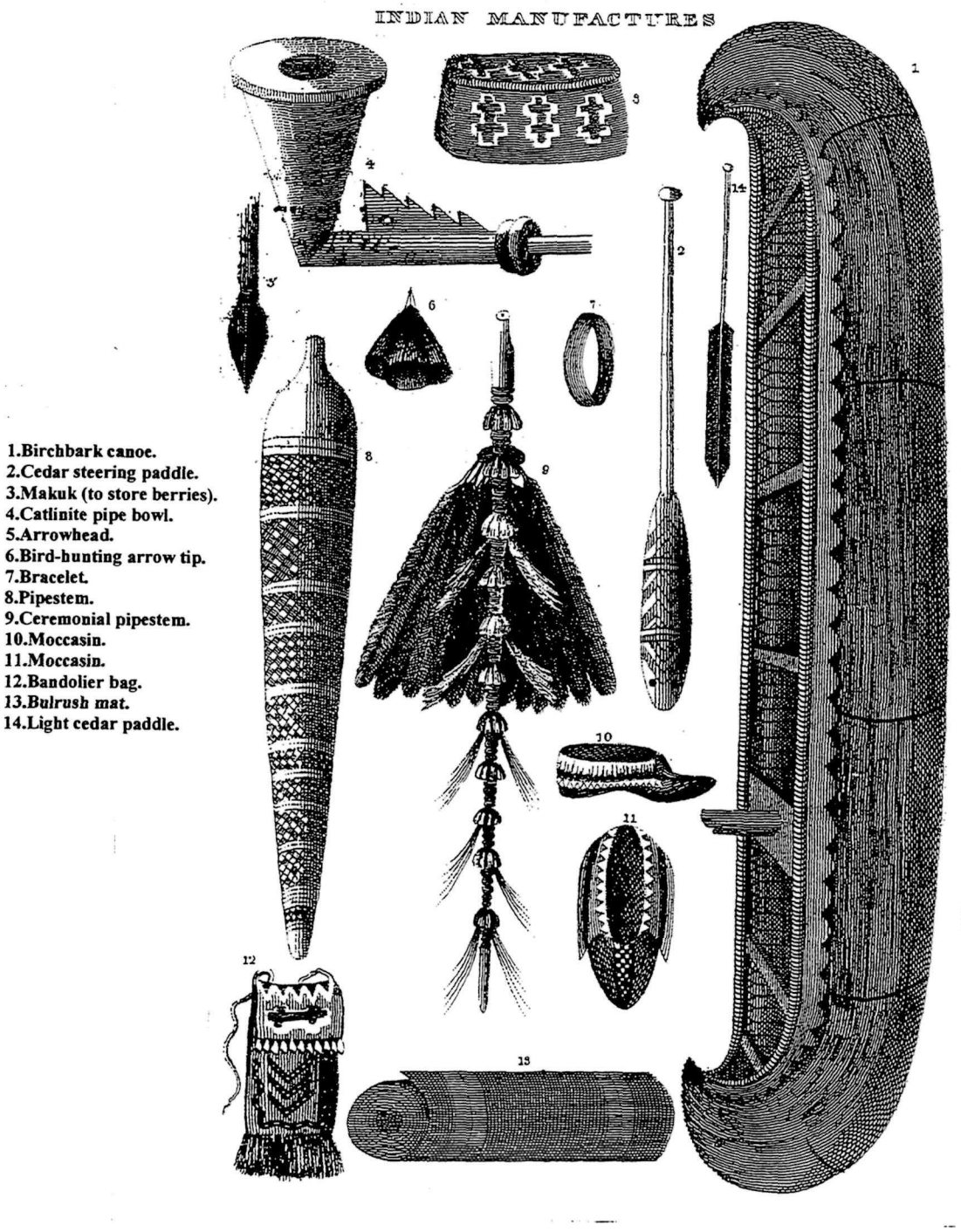


Figure 3. Items fashioned by Chippewa craftsmen from the northwoods environment. Neither the Chippewa nor the Dakota were dependent upon the fur trade for survival in the St. Croix valley. From Henry Rowe Schoolcraft's *Travel Through the Northwestern Regions of the United States*, 1821.

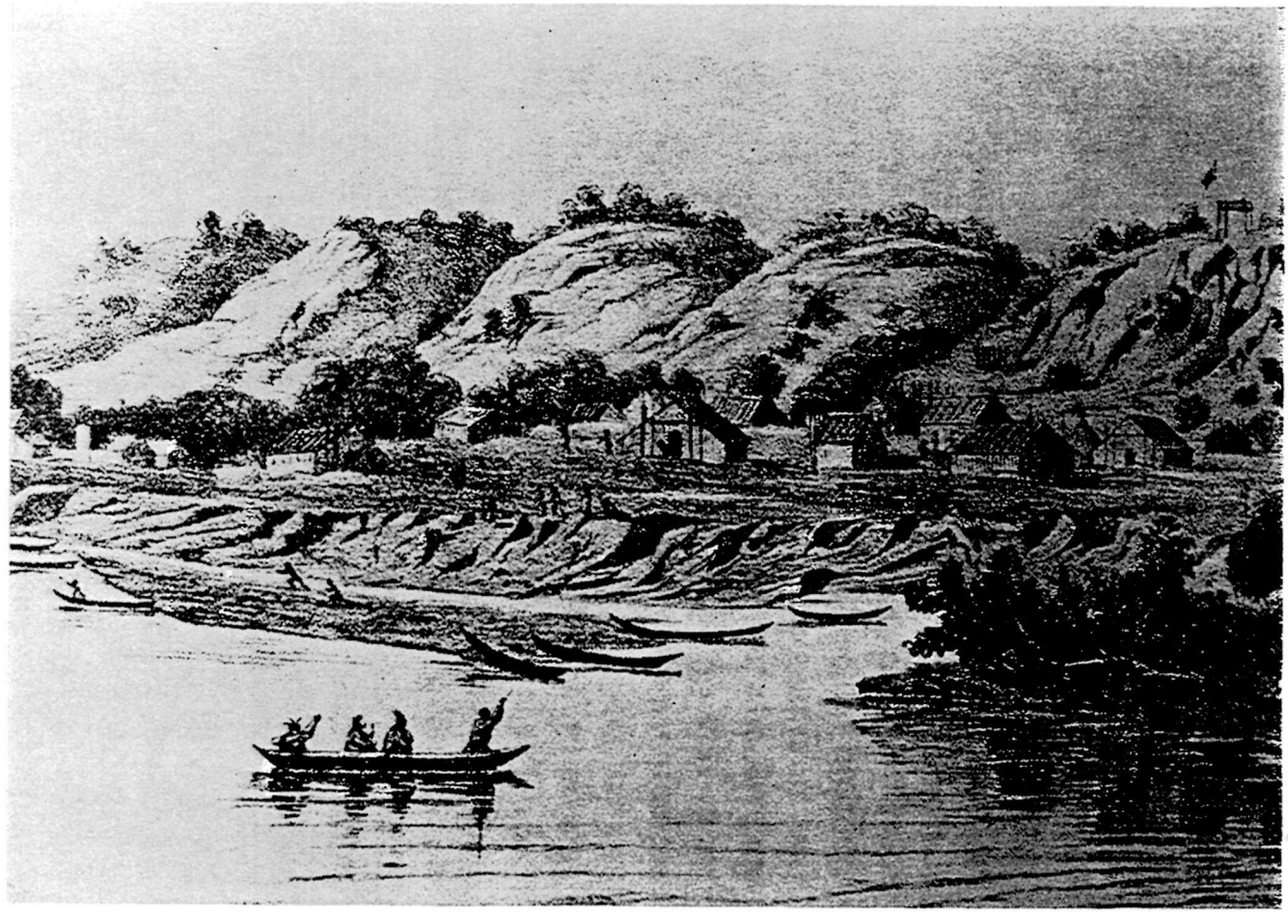


Figure 4. Little Crow's Village on the Mississippi near the mouth of the St. Croix. From Henry Lewis, *Das illustrirte Mississippithal* (1848).

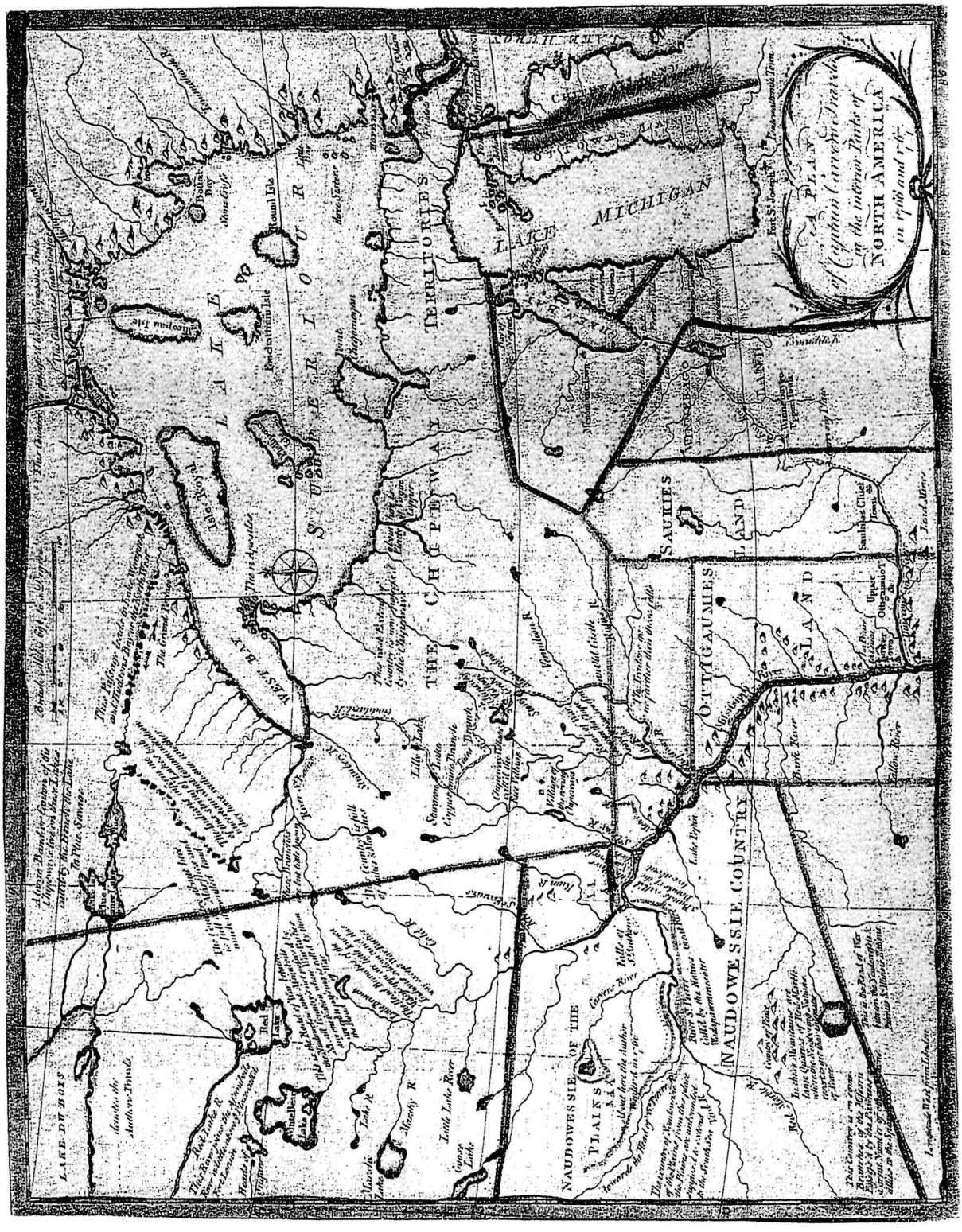


Figure 5. Jonathan Carver's Map of the Upper Midwest Region, published in 1778.

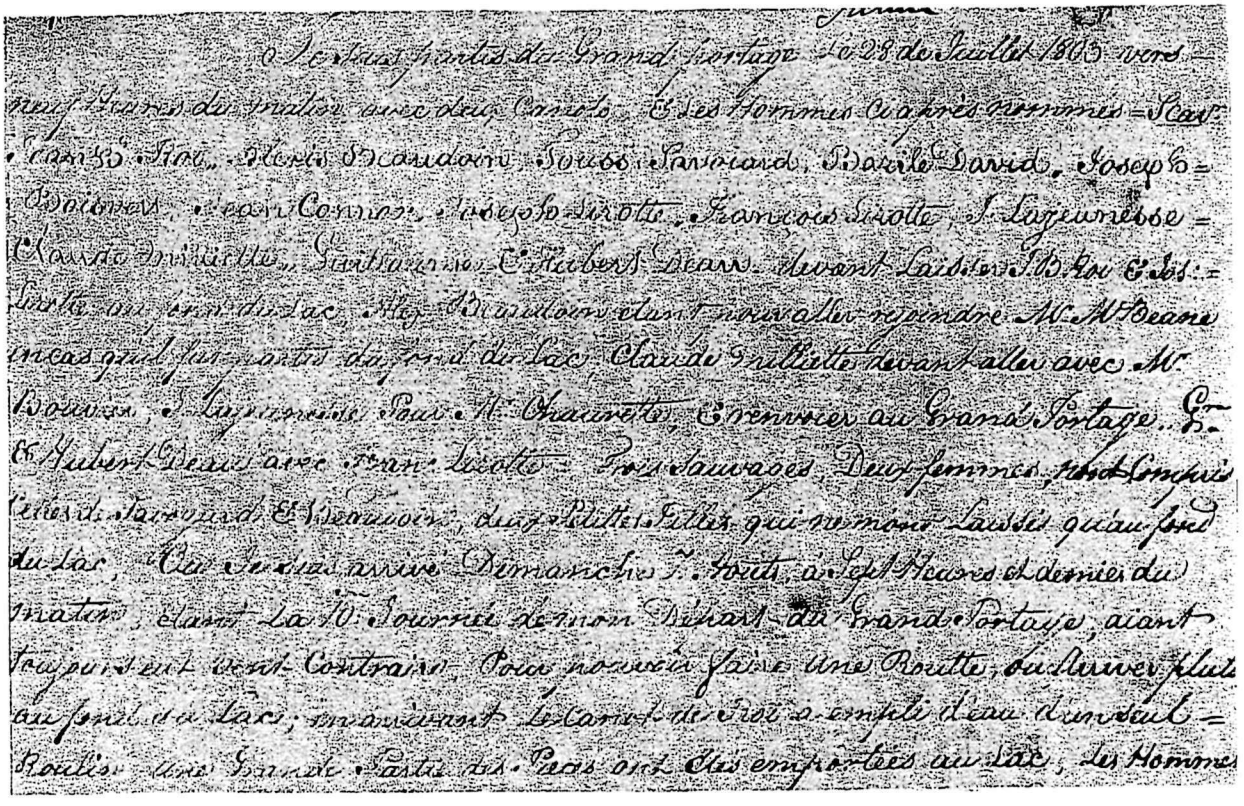
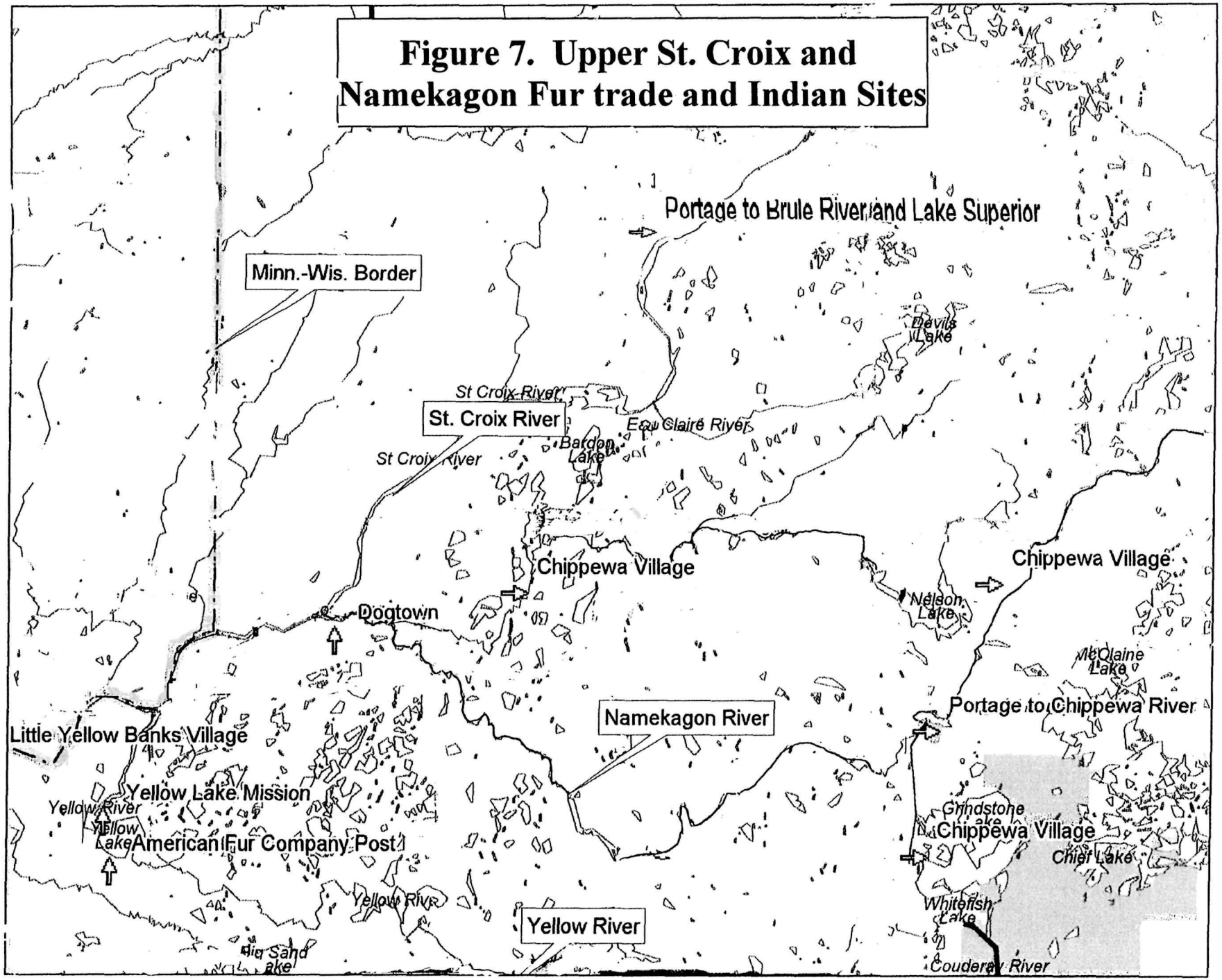


Figure 6. The opening page of Michel Curot's 1803-1804 journal of his year as a fur trader in the St. Croix Valley. The original is in the National Archives of Canada.

Figure 7. Upper St. Croix and Namekagon Fur trade and Indian Sites



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Scale: 1 : 450,000 Zoom Level: 8-0 Datum: WGS84 Map Rotation: 0° Magnetic Declination: 0.3°E

Figure 8. Chippewa women gathering wild rice, painting by Seth Eastman, c.1857. During the late 18th and early 19th centuries fur traders were dependent upon the Chippewa or Dakota to supply the bulk of their winter provisions.

Figure 9. William A. Warren the *Metis* historian whose *History of the Ojibway People* remains the single best source for the study of the Dakota-Chippewa conflict.

Figure 10. Lawrence Talliaferro, the proud intelligent Virginian who served as the long-time United States Indian Agent on the Upper Mississippi. He tried to mediate the Dakota-Chippewa conflict on the St. Croix.

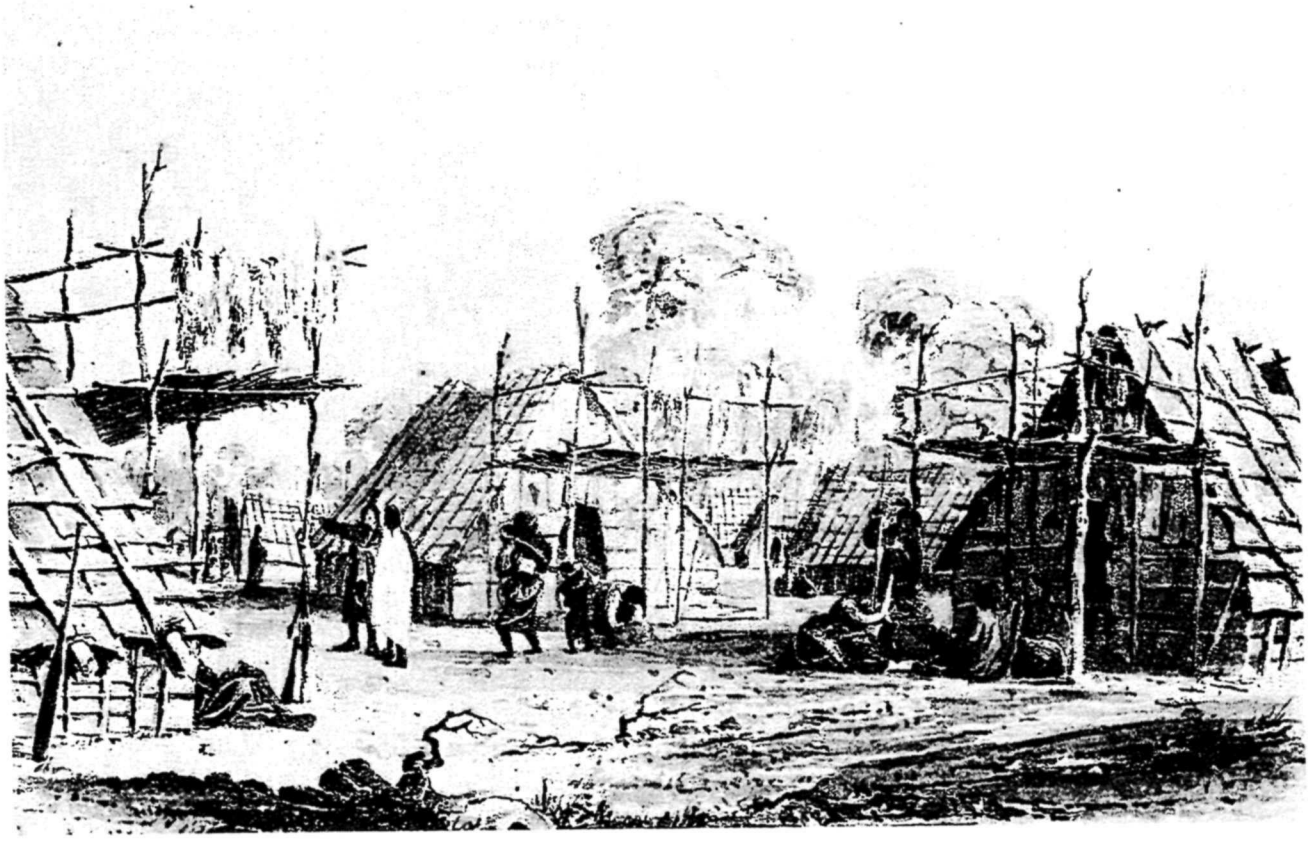
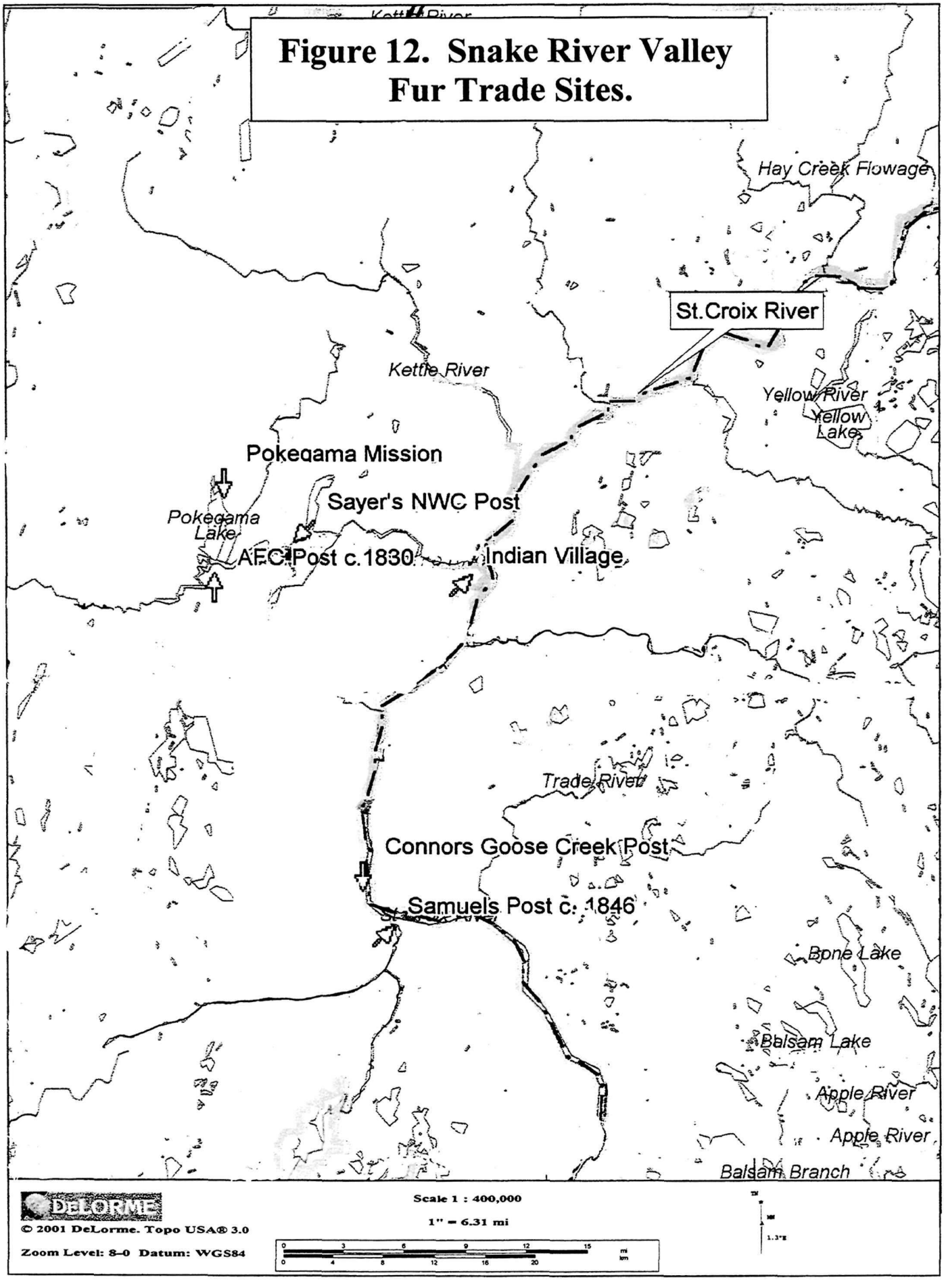


Figure 11. Dakota Village.

Figure 12. Snake River Valley Fur Trade Sites.



Chippewa robbing his trap, the Dakota peoples' generosity was calculated. As early as 1650 the Dakota allowed remnants of the Huron, who had been driven from their homelands near Georgian Bay by Iroquois invaders, and a small group of their Ottawa allies to settle in Dakota Territory near Lake Pepin. The Dakota were at least in part motivated by the desire to obtain French trade goods from the two tribes that had been the backbone of the early western fur trade. But Sioux generosity seems to have been misinterpreted as a sign of weakness by the Huron and Ottawa who tried to drive the Dakota away from the Mississippi. This major miscalculation of Dakota capability and intent, led to the complete expulsion of the Huron and Ottawa from Dakota lands. For the next hundred years the Dakota were intermittently at war with eastern Algonquin the Iroquois had driven tribes, many of whom, like the Huron west. Traditional enemies such as the Cree to the north and the Illinois to the south continued to be the focus of annual Dakota war parties, but warfare with the Huron, Ottawa, and especially the Fox also became common. The Fox arrived in Wisconsin in the seventeenth century, driven from the Michigan peninsula by the Chippewa. Their arrival in what is now Wisconsin brought them into collision with the Eastern Sioux. Chippewa oral tradition holds that for a brief time the Fox actually occupied the upper Saint Croix valley and the region around Rice Lake, Wisconsin. The Dakota and the Chippewa began their relationship, which would later stain the waters of the Saint Croix with much blood, as allies against the Fox. In 1680, a joint Dakota-Chippewa war party, perhaps as many as eight hundred men, fell upon the Fox villages in east central Wisconsin. Only after suffering severe losses were the Fox able to repulse the attack.[16]

As the enemy of the Dakota's enemy, the Chippewa became neighbors with whom the Eastern Sioux shared hunting grounds, trade, and brides. The Chippewa originally entered the river and lake country of the Wisconsin border as Dakota guests, not as invaders. As allies the Chippewa were allowed to hunt and trap in the St. Croix and Chippewa River valleys. It was an alliance of two of the most numerous and expansionistic native peoples of the North American interior sealed with Fox blood and sustained by substantial and mutual benefits. The Dakota shared in the Chippewa's regular access to French trading goods. The Chippewa won access to lands rich in white-tailed deer, beaver, and wild rice. The Dakota secured metal tools and firearms to improve subsistence activities and their military efficiency. According to Chippewa oral tradition, the Dakota first encountered firearms when a Chippewa peace delegation arrived in a Sioux encampment on the St. Croix River. The incident ended badly when a proud Dakota warrior denied the power of a musket and dared the Chippewa to shoot at him. One fearful crack of the gun led to the death of the Dakota. This incident damaged the alliance. Nonetheless, relations were patched and early in the eighteenth century the Chippewa were allowed to establish a village in Dakota Territory, just south of the current national riverway, near Spooner, Wisconsin.[17]

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[16] Perrot, "Memoir,"*Indian Tribes of the Upper Mississippi*, 159-65; R. David Edmunds and Joseph L. Peyser, *The Fox Wars: The Mesquakie Challenge to New France* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1993), 16-7; William W. Warren, *History of the Ojibway People* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society, 1984), 129-30.

[17] William W. Warren, *A History of the Ojibway People* (St.Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1984), 120; David L. Fritz, *Historic Resource Study: St. Croix National Scenic Riverway,* Unpublished draft. (Omaha: National Park Service, 1989), 14.

French Fur Traders on the St. Croix

By the beginning of the eighteenth century regular access to firearms had become vital to the Dakota. French fur traders pushing up the Mississippi River had armed their traditional enemies in the Illinois country, while the *coureurs de bois* of the Great Lakes region had provided enemies to the east, such as the Fox, with muskets and powder. Those enemies and the remoteness of the Dakota lands frustrated the efforts of early French traders to establish themselves among the Eastern Sioux. The first European to enter the Dakota lands along the St. Croix was Daniel Greysolon, Sieur du Luth. In 1679 the explorer claimed the region for France, offered gifts to the eager Dakota. At the mouth of the St. Croix he secured the release of Father Louis Hennepin, a Recollet missionary whom they had taken prisoner on the Mississippi. Duluth made the first recorded passage of the Bois Brule—Saint Croix portage that allowed passage from Lake Superior to the Mississippi valley, a route he likely learned about from the Chippewa at La Pointe.

The name of the St. Croix River dates from this early period of French activity in the Upper Mississippi region. Hennepin tried to fix on it the name Riviere du Tombeau, or River of the Grave, after the Dakota buried a snakebite victim on its bank. That name did not take, nor did one that appeared on several early maps, Riviere de la Madeleine. Many stories concerning the name St. Croix link it to the early missionaries. One story of its evolution credits the name to French priests, who saw the shape of a holy cross in the river's right angle junction with the Mississippi. Another version attributed the name to a rock formation on the bank of the river in the Dalles that appeared to have the shape of a cross. Other than Hennepin, who tried to put a morbid name on the river, the only other early missionary to see the river was the Jesuit Gabriel Marest. He was a missionary to the Dakota and witness to Nicholas Perrot's vainglorious ceremony of "taking possession" of the region in 1689. In that ceremony Perrot claimed "in his Majesty's name" a vast track of land stretching westward from Green Bay, including "the rivers St. Croix and St. Peter, and other places more remote." The use of the name St. Croix at so early a date suggests the river may indeed have been named, like the St. Peter's River, by missionaries. The more widely accepted story of the origin of the name credits it to a French fur trader named St. Croix or Croix who allegedly was wrecked or drowned at the mouth of the river. This story dates from Benard de la Harpe's 1700 account of Pierre Charles Le Suer's journey a year earlier up the Mississippi to the Minnesota River valley. "He left on the east of the Mississippi, a great river," La Harpe wrote, "called St. Croix, because of Frenchman of that name was wrecked at its mouth." While the exact origin will never be known for sure, the name St. Croix is one of the earliest European places names in the upper Midwest region.[18]

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[18] "Geographical Names in Wisconsin," *Wisconsin Historical Collections* I (1849) 113; Benard de la Harpe, "Le Suer's Voyage up the Mississippi," *Wisconsin Historical Collections* XVI (1902) 185-6; Dunn, *The St. Croix*, 28-9; *Stillwater Messenger*, 25 July 1917; *Stillwater Messenger* clipping in the Hjalmar Otto Peterson Papers, Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul.

Other missionaries and traders followed and a series of trading posts were temporarily established in the late 1600s and early 1700s along the Upper Mississippi or lower Minnesota rivers. Each venture, however, failed due to distance and the opposition of the Fox, who attacked posts and hindered resupply efforts. In 1695, Tiyoskate, a Dakota emissary to the Governor General of New France, with carefully staged tears in his eyes, implored, "All the nations had a father who afforded them protection; all of them have iron." He concluded by describing himself as a "bastard in quest of a father." Although the Governor was stirred to grandiloquently promise Tiyoskate the "iron" tools and weapons, Dakota trade contacts remained intermittent. All of which served to make the alliance with the Chippewa more important to the Dakota.[19]

The Sioux made French efforts to extend trade to them more difficult by refusing to forgo their wide-ranging military campaigns. With the firearms they were able to obtain the Dakota ravaged the Illinois country. In 1700, French officials encountered Piankashaw Indians in Illinois who were attacked by recent Dakota raids. They had been so devastated by this event that they were unwilling to risk retaliation. This aggressive approach to their southern frontier even extended to French traders moving north from Illinois, whom the Dakota routinely robbed, as they were regarded as allies of the Illini, Miami, or Piankashaw. This vigorous approach to war, together with the large number of warriors the Sioux were traditionally able to marshal for war inclined the French to refer to the Dakota as the "Iroquois of the West.[20]

But the power of the Dakota began to ebb in the early eighteenth century. As early as the seventeenth century the Sioux were divided into two distinct groups. In 1680, Father Louis Hennepin described one subdivision of the Sioux as the "Tinthonha (which means prairie-men)." Pierre Charles Le Sueur, who attempted to establish a trading post (just below the mouth of the St. Croix) among the Sioux in 1694, distinguished between the "Sioux of the West," who resided along the Minnesota River and the "Sioux of the East," who dwelled along the Upper Mississippi. During the late 1600s the western Sioux began to expand from the Upper Minnesota River, over the plains to the Upper Missouri River country. This historic migration would in the course of the next century bring the bulk of the Sioux from the forest to the grasslands. The birchbark canoe was gradually forsaken in favor of the horse, which the Sioux began obtaining by trade around 1707. Buffalo hunting went from being one part of the annual seasonal cycle, dictated by the arrival of bison herds along the Upper Mississippi, to the sustaining food source available year-round to hunting villages made mobile by the horse.[21]

Like all movements of peoples this one resulted from both a perception of opportunity and the dictates of necessity. As warriors the Sioux were engaged in conflict on all of their frontiers. Opponents to the north, south, and east were all as well or better armed than the Sioux. To the west, however, were Indian peoples whose trade contacts

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[19] Meyer, *History of the Santee Sioux*, 11-3; Anderson, *Kinsmen of Another Kind*, 36-7.
[20] Anderson, *Kinsmen of Another Kind*, 36.
[21] Meyer, *History of the Santee Sioux*, 10-1; Hennepin, *A Description of Louisiana*, 202-3; Richard White, "The Winning of the West: The Expansion of the Western Sioux in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries," *Journal of American History* 65:12 (1978), 319-43.

with European fur traders were inferior to those of the Sioux. Nor was the population size of the Upper Missouri peoples as formidable as Wisconsin, which became densely populated with Indians fleeing the Iroquois. Although the Sioux appear to have been largely successful in defending their large rich homeland in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, the soft frontier to the west drew aggressive Sioux warriors out on to the plains. Another factor was the opportunity to secure buffalo seemingly at will. The buffalo hunt was a defining cultural element among all the Sioux, their grand group experience. To build a lifestyle around it must have been alluring. Particularly because, hunting options in Minnesota may have declined at the critical time of the move on to the plains. In 1717 and 1718, French traders noted that animal populations south and west of Lake Superior declined due to an unknown disease. "All the elk were attacked by a sort of plague, and were found dead," according to one report. Indians who ate the flesh of the infected animals also died. There is evidence that by the 1730s even the eastern most Dakota, the Mdewakantons, were forced to substantially increase their reliance on buffalo hunting, perhaps due to a decline in the elk herds. If buffalo was becoming the dietary backbone of many Sioux, the movement on to the plains made economic sense.[22]

The Origins of the Dakota-Chippewa War

As the Sioux nation as a whole expanded westward, the Dakota, manning as it were the eastern gateway to their lands, were placed in an untenable position. The Sioux in the west were no longer available for, nor interested in fighting battles against traditional enemies on the eastern border. As the Sioux frontier expanded dramatically to the west, the ability of the nation to maintain its control over the large and rich hunting grounds along the Upper Mississippi was necessarily compromised. For all their military prowess and impressive numbers the Sioux could not dominate both the northern plains and the Upper Mississippi valley, as the western bands moved to accomplish the former, the eastern Dakota were thrown into a desperate attempt to maintain the land of their fathers. New diseases introduced by the Europeans, especially smallpox and malaria, together with the accelerated pace of intertribal warfare also contributed to the decline of the eastern Dakota. Between 1680 and 1805 the number of Dakota in the Mississippi valley may have declined by as much as one-third. These factors, together with the migration of their western kinsmen made the Dakota vulnerable to the equally expansionistic Chippewa.[23]

The Chippewa pursued their own manifest destiny in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In the ancient traditions of the tribe the Chippewa once inhabited lands near the Atlantic Ocean. Upon migrating to the Great Lakes region they split into three groups, the modern Ottawa, Potawatomi, and Chippewa. The latter group occupied a vast arc of lands stretching from the shores of Lake Erie to rivers and lakes west of Lake Superior. This vast homeland was much larger than even the domain of the Dakota, but it was much less diverse in its landforms and, therefore, less abundant in resources, notably lacking the sustaining herds of elk and buffalo. Fish from the Great Lakes filled the protein gap for the Chippewa, but they did not produce the residuals of leather and

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[22] Anderson, *Kinsmen of Another Kind*, 27.
[23] *Ibid*, 22-3.

robes. Together with their Potawatomi and Ottawa cousins the Chippewa had been among the earliest interior tribes to become engaged with the fur trade. As traders and trappers they were always on the lookout for new peoples with which to exchange or new lands to trap. Through the seventeenth century the Dakota both provided the Chippewa with furs and made their hinterland available to pioneer Chippewa bands. This economic alliance became frayed when the Dakota were gradually able to obtain European weapons and goods directly from the French. In turn, the Dakota came to resent the Chippewa's middleman commerce with the Cree and Assiniboin, hereditary enemies of the Sioux.[24]

Violence between the Chippewa and the Dakota began slowly in the 1720s and escalated to a full, prolonged war in 1736. Conflict between the tribes forced the Dakota to abandon traditional wintering villages at Leech Lake and Mille Lacs, sites that were soon colonized by the Chippewa. In the oral tradition of the latter this process was rendered heroic by tales of an epic battle of three days that left the former Dakota villages littered with the bodies of the slain Dakota. More plausible was a calculated withdrawal closer to the increasingly more important buffalo herds along the Mississippi and away from regions exposed to both Chippewa and Cree attack. Far from being completely routed from the region, the Dakota continued to occupy a village on the Rum River (which drains Mille Lacs) for another generation. The bulk of the eastern Dakota, however, concentrated along the mainstream of the Mississippi River and the lower St. Croix. During the seventeenth century the Dakota did not use the St. Croix as intensively as they did the large headwaters lakes in north-central Minnesota. As a result it was in the 1700s a much more reliable source of game. Not surprisingly, control of the hunting grounds and rice marshes of the St. Croix were hotly contested by both sides in the war.[25]

The Dakota-Chippewa war was a tragedy for both peoples and a source of frustration to the Europeans who, during the 1700s, began to influence events in the Upper Mississippi region. Conflict made the already precarious existence of a frontier fur trader downright dangerous. Men supplying weapons to one side were naturally regarded as enemies by the other and were often dealt with violently. In 1741, following Chippewa attacks on two Dakota camps; the latter retaliated against French traders in Wisconsin. Warfare also hurt trapping, as Indian hunters were reluctant to stray far from their family's winter camps. In the more than a century and a quarter that the Chippewa and the Dakota were locked in warfare, European traders repeatedly tried to arrange truces. This desire for parlays on the part of the Europeans should not obscure the fact that fur traders sometimes, often unknowingly, encouraged hostilities between the Dakota and Chippewa. Traders based on the Upper Mississippi and dwelling with the Dakota naturally supported Sioux claims to the St. Croix while those based on Lake Superior and in Chippewa territory naturally desired their hunters to dominate as large an area as possible. Most of all traders wanted fur trapping to be pursued aggressively. During the early 1730s, when the conflict between the two tribes began to simmer, French fur traders exasperated the situation by encouraging Chippewa and Winnebagos to expand their trapping grounds along the Upper Mississippi. The fur traders did not think the Dakota

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[24] William W. Warren, *History of the Ojibway People* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1984), 80-6.

[25] *Ibid*, 155-62; Anderson, *Kinsmen of Another Kind*, 46-9.

were tapping anywhere near the full potential of their rich trapping grounds and impatiently encouraged interlopers to fill the perceived void. The entire history of the fur trade in the St. Croix valley took place under the cloud of a bloody, often internecine, war.[26]

The experience of Paul and Joseph Marin, French fur traders in the region from 1750 to 1754, reveals the relationship between war, peace, and trade. By bringing the Governor General of New France into partnership, Paul Marin, a veteran fur trader, was granted a lease to the fur trade of the Upper Mississippi. Marin's political connection initially assured that the vital access points to the region, Green Bay, which controlled the Fox-Wisconsin water route to the Mississippi, and La Pointe, which was critical to the Bois Brule-St. Croix route, were controlled by his friends. In fact his son Joseph was granted command of the La Pointe garrison. The elder Marin astutely cultivated Dakota leaders. Canoe loads of gifts were lavished on them and in turn they acted as trading liaisons, collecting furs from all of the hunters who had received goods in advance from Marin. The French extended their trade presence to most of the villages of the eastern Dakota and were rewarded with annual returns of 150,000 francs. Meanwhile, young Joseph Marin, based in Chippewa territory, worked to ease tensions between his trading partners and the Dakota. Eventually the father and son managed to work out a division of the disputed territory. On the St. Croix this led to the Dakota recognizing Chippewa rights to the valley from its headwaters to the mouth of the Snake River. When the Chippewa expressed a desire to trap along the Crow Wing River, a substantial tributary of the Mississippi roughly midway between Leech Lake and modern St. Paul, Joseph Marin negotiated a lease between the rival Indian nations.[27]

The tenure of the Marins demonstrates that properly managed the fur trade could have been a means to control the level of violence between the Chippewa and the Dakota. Yet the corrupt French colonial administration in Quebec had different priorities and would not long manage its western affairs in a consistent manner. Paul Marin's appointment to the Upper Mississippi had been made with the assurance he share the profits with the Marquis de la Jonquiere. That venal administrator assured that New France's western posts were under the direction of administrators friendly to Marin and sympathetic to the Dakota. A new governor general, however, would find profit in other arrangements. Therefore, in 1752 when the Marquis de la Duquesne succeeded to the Governor General's palace Paul and Joseph Marin lost their official protection. The command of the critical French post of La Pointe on Lake Superior passed to Louis-Joseph La Verendryes. This very capable frontier leader was in no mood to cooperate with the Marins. While they had been profiting mightily from the Dakota trade, La Verendrye and his equally talented father and brother had been denied any position in the western trade by Governor General Jonquiere. Far from being sympathetic to the Dakota, La Verendrye had every reason to resent them as a Sioux war party attacked and killed his brother and twenty-three other men at Lake-of-the-Woods in 1736. The La

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[26] *Ibid*, 44-9.

[27] *Ibid*, 51-4; Kenneth P. Bailey, ed. And trans. *Journal of Joseph Marin, French Colonial Explorer and Military Commander in the Wisconsin Country, August 7, 1753—June 20, 1754* (n.p.: privately printed, 1975), 93-4.

Verendryes were dedicated to expanding French influence west of the Great Lakes, which made them dependent upon a close relationship with the Chippewa and the Cree. The result of La Verendrye's appointment was a quick erosion of the truce and trust the Marins had succeeded in building.[28]

The first sign of trouble was when La Verendrye notified Joseph Marin that the former's La Pointe post trading area included the entire St. Croix River valley. La Verendrye intended to have complete control of the upper Mississippi region. In 1753, he dispatched several of his traders to establish a wintering post on the St. Croix near the Sunrise River. La Verendrye then intercepted and turned back agents Marin had sent up the Mississippi to Leach Lake to negotiate a peace between the Dakota and the Cree. This latter action spread panic among the Dakota, who saw it as a repudiation of French friendship and the prelude of new attacks by the Cree and the Chippewa. Bracing for war the Dakota abandoned their hunts and suffered through the winter of 1753, bereft of game for their lodges or furs for Marin. Dakota women and children "lived on nothing but roots all winter long," they complained to Joseph Marin. "That is why today we are worthy of pity." The Dakota further complained that the Chippewa were violating their earlier agreement to hunt along the Crow Wing River for a single year, even though "they know those territories belong to us." As a result of these outrages the Dakota chiefs told Marin "we cannot keep from you the fact that our young men are all beginning to mutter at seeing the Sauteux [Chippewa] so unreasonably trying to steal territories belonging to us." The young Dakota were wise to mutter because La Verendrye clearly had the upper hand over Marin. After 1754 Joseph Marin left the Upper Mississippi country and French commanders at La Pointe tilted their policy in favor of Chippewa expansion.[29]

For close to a decade the French and Indian War (1754-1760) and Pontiac's Rebellion (1763) interrupted the flow of trade goods into the St. Croix valley, and temporarily reduced the importance of the fur trade in lives of the area's embattled inhabitants. The Dakota-Chippewa conflict, however, continued. A large battle was fought near what may have been the headwaters of the St. Croix. The Chippewa suffered heavy losses in the engagement but the Dakota were forced to yield the field. The Dakota seem to have more than held their own throughout the 1750s and 1760s. When the first British observers entered the Upper Mississippi region in 1766 they found the Dakota disdainful of their enemies, whom they referred to as "slaves or dogs." Their lodges were well supplied with meat and feasting continued through the winter. On the other hand the Chippewa, still lacking access to buffalo and Elk, seem to have suffered from the temporary cessation of the fur trade. Alexander Henry, the first British merchant to reach them after the fall of New France, found famine stalking the Lake Superior Chippewa. "These people were almost naked, their trade having been interrupted, " he noted in his memoir.[30]

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[28] Arthur S. Morton, *A History of the Canadian West To 1870-71* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1973), 231-5; Grace Lee Nute, "Marin Versus La Verndrye," *Minnesota History* 32:4 (Dec. 1951), 226-238; Francis Parkman, *Montcalm and Wolfe* (Boston: Little Brown, 1908), 85-6.

[29] Bailey, *Journal of Mr. Marin, Junior, 1753 and 1754,* 72-5, 93-7.

[30] Anderson, *Kinsmen of Another Kind,* 59; Alexander Henry, *Travels and Adventures in Canada and the Indian Territories Between the Years 1760 and 1776* Edmonton, Alberta: M.G. Hurtig, 1969), 187-8, 194-200.

The late 1760s and early 1770s saw an intensification of the fighting between the Dakota and the Chippewa. Traders operating from La Pointe on Lake Superior likely encouraged the Chippewa to increase their fur returns by expanding their hunting in Dakota Territory. Sometime about 1770 one of the greatest battles of the long war was fought at the Dalles of the St. Croix. The best account of what occurred comes from Chippewa oral tradition recorded in 1885 by William Warren a *Metis* historian of Chippewa ancestry. According to his sources the campaign began at the instigation of the Fox Indians who ascended the Mississippi desirous of settling the score with the Chippewa, their hereditary enemies. The Dakota, former enemies of the Fox, were enlisted to make a joint attack. The combined war parties made their way by canoe up the St. Croix. On the portage trail around St. Croix Falls, the Dakota and Fox encountered a large Chippewa war party intent on raiding the Dakota villages along the lower river. The Chippewa had been smarting from numerous successful Dakota raids on isolated hunting camps along the St. Croix and Namekagon. Waubojeeg, a renown Lake Superior leader had gathered warriors from across northern Michigan, Wisconsin, and Minnesota. He led his large war party up a branch of the Bad River portaging eight miles west to the sources of the Namekagon River. Waubojeeg directed the advance down stream cautiously, so when they reached St. Croix Falls his scouts informed him of the large enemy force ahead. Just before the fighting commenced the veteran Chippewa fighters pushed those going into battle for the first time into the river. There the novices washed off the black paint that had stigmatized them and they were allowed to join the warriors as equals.[31]

The two forces met in combat on the portage trail. Fighting between the Fox and the Chippewa marked the first phase of the battle. Allegedly the Fox had boasted that they would make short work of their enemies and requested the Dakota to remain aloof from the fighting. Confined by the ravines and rock outcroppings of the portage the fighting was heated and at close quarters. About midday the Chippewa gained the advantage and forced the Fox to flee. At the point of driving the latter into the raging river, the Chippewa were staggered by the sudden entrance of the Dakota into the battle. After several more hours of combat the Chippewa, most of their ammunition exhausted, broke and ran from the Dakota. Victory was at hand for the Sioux when a war party of Sandy Lake Chippewa suddenly made their appearance on the field. They had missed their rendezvous with Waubojeeg's main force and had hurried downriver, arriving at a crucial point in the contest. This reinforcement turned the tide of battle for the final time. The Dakota attack was broken and their warriors were sent into a headlong retreat. "Many were driven over the rocks into the boiling floods below, there to find a watery grave," Warren recounted. "Others, in attempting to jump into their narrow wooden canoes, were capsized into the rapids." The Chippewa and Dakota both suffered heavy losses, but it was the proud Fox who left the most dead amid the rocks and cervices of the battlefield. The victory secured for the Chippewa the control of the Upper St. Croix valley. An informal boundary was fixed between the Dakota and the Chippewa around the mouth of the Snake River.[32]

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[31] Warren, *History of the Ojibway People*, 243-4.
[32] *Ibid*, 244-9.

English Fur Traders on the St. Croix

The first English fur trader to penetrate the Lake Superior country was Alexander Henry. Henry's access to the remote frontier was made possible by his astute alliance with Jean Baptiste Cadotte. The latter was a key figure in bridging the end of the French regime and the era of British domination. Cadotte's family had long been involved in the western fur trade. He grew up in the Lake Superior country and married the daughter of a notable Chippewa chief. Cadotte had served as the last French governor of the fort at Sault Ste. Marie and earned the trust of the English conquerors by being one of the first French traders to embrace the new regime. When Jean Baptiste Cadotte retired from the trade, his son of the same name took his place. The latter played a lead role in reopening the fur trade of the Upper Mississippi valley. A second son, Michel Cadotte was active on the St. Croix and Chippewa rivers. In 1784 he operated a post on the Namekagon River, near the head of the portage to Lac Court Oreilles. Latter he established trading posts at Yellow Lake, Snake River, and Pokegama Lake. The key to the success of the Cadottes was their family relationship with notable Chippewa leaders. They consciously identified themselves with the expansion of the Chippewa into the St. Croix and Upper Mississippi valleys, advancing hand in hand with bands of hunters to exploit the bounty of Dakota hunting grounds.[33]

Archeologists have long puzzled over the identification of Michel Cadotte's 1784 trading post on the Namekagon River. In the early 1960s local historian Tony Wise conducted an archeological study of a site he thought was the trading post. Among the items found that supported that conclusion were the sideplate of a trade gun and a number of gunflints. Further study by National Park Service archeologists, however, revealed that the overwhelming majority of artifacts at the site date from the mid to late nineteenth century. It is possible that trappers or loggers reoccupied the Cadotte post site in the 1870s. The structural depressions at the site are mostly the remains of that latter occupancy and not remains that date to the British era of the fur trade frontier.[34]

While Alexander Henry did not venture far south of Lake Superior, Jonathon Carver, another young Englishman on the make, explored the Upper Mississippi frontier. Ostensibly Carver was a mapmaker sent with explorer James Tute, a Captain in the famed Roger's Rangers, to discover an inland route to the fabled Northwest Passage. Carver journeyed from Mackinac across Wisconsin and wintered among the Dakota villages of the Minnesota River valley. He was fascinated with the Dakota whom he described as "a very merry sociable people, full of mirth and good humor." He explored the Upper St. Croix valley by portaging from Lac Courte Oreilles to the Namekagon River near present day Hayward, Wisconsin. Carver descended the Namekagon, which he named "Tutes branch" to its junction with the main stream. James Goddard, the official secretary of the expedition, described the Namekagon as "a very pleasant country, and plenty of deer in it." Above the junction of the Namekagon and St. Croix Carver tried

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[33] Warren, *History of the Ojibway People*, 10, 220, 279-97, 337; Henry, *Travels and Adventures*, 153.
[34] Connor, *et al, Archeological Investigations Along the St. Croix 1983*, 320-340.

his hand at sturgeon fishing. "The manner of taking them is by watching them as they lie under the banks in a clear stream, and darting at them with a fish-spear; for they will not take a bait." Carver dubbed the St. Croix from the Namekagon to its source the "Coppermine Branch," due to the "abundance of copper" found along its banks. The region of the headwaters he laconically noted was known to the Chippewa as "the Moschettoe [mosquito] country, and I thought it most justly named; for, it being then their season, I never saw or felt so many of those insects in my life." More significantly for the future of the fur trade he noted that along the Upper St. Croix "rice grows in great plenty." Carver then followed the portage trail from Upper Lake St. Croix to the Bois Brule River and Lake Superior.[35]

Although his time in the St. Croix valley was brief Carver's legacy lingered longer in the form of a narrative *Travels Through North America in the Years 1766, 1767 and 1768*. This widely read and frequently translated account of the Upper Mississippi region provided generations of readers with their first exposure to the region. Like so many would be explorers before and after, Carver mixed genuine observations with heavy doses of romantic fancy and self-promotion. Captain James Tute who actually directed the expedition goes all but unmentioned in the published narrative, creating the impression that Carver was the man in charge. His enthusiasm for the region was effusive. The Upper Mississippi region was "abounding with all the necessaries of life, that grow spontaneously; and with a little cultivation it might be made to produce even the luxuries of life." He did not simply note stands of maple trees but went on to predict that the "delightful groves" were present in "such amazing quantities" that they "would produce sugar sufficient for any number of inhabitants." If the principle purpose of Captain James Tute had been to evaluate the fur trade prospects of the region, the purpose of Carver's book, which he did not publish until 1778, was to promote Carver by giving the impression that he had single handedly opened up a utopia for future settlers. He went so far as to produce a map in which he divided the Upper Midwest into a series of "plantations or subordinate colonies" so that "future adventurers may readily, by referring to the map, chose a commodious and advantageous situation." With this map Carver also established symbolic mastery over the region, inviting his numerous readers in the decades that followed to project their dreams on to this open and free land.[36]

Carver included the bulk of the St. Croix valley in his "plantation No. 1," which included a great triangle of territory that reached as far northwest as Rainey Lake and to Sault Ste, Marie on the east. "The country within these lines," he observed, "from its situation is colder that any of the others; yet I am convinced that the air is much more temperate than those in provinces that lie in the same degree of latitude to the east of it." With this claim Carver anticipated the logic of virtually every land promoter to follow. Don't let the far northern position of the Saint Croix valley daunt settler's dreams of an agricultural future. Not only was the climate more temperate than what people knew in

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[35] Jonathan Carver, *Travels Through North America in the Years 1766, 1767 and 1768* (London: J. Walters and S. Crowder, 1778), 104-6, 476-7; James Stanley Goddard, "Journal of a Voyage, 1766-67," edited by Carolyn Gilman, *The Journals of Jonathan Carver and Related Documents*, edited by John Parker, (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1976), 190.

[36] Carver, *Travels Through North America*, 100, 104-6.

the east "the soil is excellent, and there is a great deal of land that is free from woods in the parts adjoining the Mississippi." Of course, if the settler preferred trees, Carver allowed that the "north-eastern borders" of the region were "well wooded." In addition to abundant rice and copper, settlers were also blessed with the presence of the "River Saint Croix, which runs through a great part of the southern side of it, enters the Mississippi just below the falls, and flows with so gentle a current, that it affords convenient navigation for boats." Carver was so impressed with the prospects for the region that he passed to his heirs a fraudulent document, which claimed the cession of a large tract of land. Allegedly the Dakota granted him twelve million acres of land, including a sizable portion of the St. Croix valley. Neither the British crown, the Eastern Sioux, nor latter the United States Congress saw fit to recognize the Carver Grant as valid. In 1817 two of the explorer's grandsons actually journeyed back to the Upper Mississippi wilderness to have Chippewa and Dakota elders substantiate the alleged grant. Not surprisingly they went home with no more land than when they set out.[37]

While the Tute-Carver expedition was supposed to be directed to discover the Northwest Passage a large part of its real orientation was to probe the commercial opportunities of the Upper Mississippi frontier. In the 1760s only a geographic idiot would have spent weeks ascending the Chippewa River and the Upper St. Croix in search of the fabled water route to China. The fur trade was on the mind of many of the British who went west after the French and Indian War. One of those who left a record of their efforts was a cantankerous Connecticut Yankee named Peter Pond. He did not leave a description of the fur trade on the St. Croix itself, although he was active with the Dakota in the Upper Mississippi valley. Pond did describe the process by which merchants of English origin began to dominate the trade of the region because of their superior ability to obtain credit and merchandise as well as their ability to act in concert with British military forces and thereby pose as power brokers between tribes. Both Carver and Peter Pond attempted to negotiate a peace treaty between the Dakota and the Chippewa. Each was more successful in arranging a parlay, than a lasting peace. In 1775 Pond escorted a group of Dakota and Chippewa chiefs to Mackinac where an agreement was struck by which the Dakota agreed "Not Cross the Missacipey to the East Side, to Hunt on thare Nighbers Ground." That the Dakota would agree to recognize the Chippewa as masters of the area east of the Mississippi would have been a major concession and was likely the result of Pond's failure to obtain a delegation of the eastern most Dakota tribe, the Mdewakanton Sioux. A British military inspection of the region in 1778 led by Charles Gautier de Verville reported a large Mdewakanton village on the Upper St. Croix River. The village included a number of lodges of Winnebagoes, a people who shared the Dakota's antipathy of the Chippewa. Clearly the Mdewakanton had not abandoned the east bank of the Mississippi to the Chippewa.[38]

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[37] Carver, *Travels Through North America*, 476-7, 533; William E. Lass, *Minnesota: A History* (New York: Norton, 1998), 67-9; Stephen H. Long, *The Northern Expeditions of Stephen H. Long: The Journals of 1817 and 1823 and Related Documents* edited by Lucile M. Kane, June Holmquist, and Carolyn Gilman (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society, 1978), 50, 96.

[38] Peter Pond, "Narrative of Peter Pond," *Five Fur Traders of the Northwest*, edited by Charles M. Gates (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society, 1965), 39-66; Charles Gautier de Verville, "Gautier's Journal of a Visit to the Mississippi, 1777-1778," *Wisconsin Historical Collections*, 11 (1888), 102-5.

The arrival of the British regime along the Saint Croix signaled a change in the way the fur trade would be administered. The French system of leasing the right to control the trade in a large geographic area, while never able to keep all illegal *Coureurs de bois* out of business, did tend to greatly restrict the number of traders operating in any one area. Under the British and even more so under American administrations there was much less regulation of the fur trade and an ever-growing number of participants made their way west. More participants meant more competition and less concern on the part of many traders for the long term good of both the fur trade itself and the Indian trappers in particular. One of the early innovations of the British regime was the establishment of companies that pooled the resources and special skills of a group of fur traders. The Northwest Company, founded in 1779 was an attempt by Peter Pond and other fur traders to establish greater control over competition in their business. The Northwest Company, based in Montreal, exerted a considerable influence over the fur trade of the St. Croix River during the years between its creation and 1816. United under its control were many of the traders who had expanded the trade since the fall of New France, including Alexander Henry and Jean Baptiste Cadotte and his brother Michel Cadotte.

Independent fur traders operating out of Green Bay also wintered on the St. Croix during the last years of the eighteenth century. Augustin Grignon, a member of the fur trading clan that dominated the "La Baye" fur trade, operated a post in the valley in 1792. A year latter his operations there were directed by Jacques Porlier, who was beginning a long career in the fur trade. A Mackinac trader, Laurent Barth, also operated a trading post on the river that winter, building close enough to Porlier to allow frequent visits between the two. A lack of specific locational information in the historical record has frustrated the identification of these posts as historic sites. The Green Bay traders entered the valley accompanied by Menominee hunters. The Menominee had long hunted along the headwaters of the Chippewa River, taking advantage of beaver country less heavily trapped than their own homelands along Lake Michigan, but it was rare for them to venture into the St. Croix valley. These hunting expeditions included family groups and were usually undertaken only with the permission of the Dakota.[39]

A Social History of the Fur Trade in the St. Croix Valley

One of the enduring historical myths of the Upper Midwest is the heroic image of the fur trade explorer and his hardy voyageur companions. The myth rests on the very real role these men played establishing the first white businesses and settlements in the region and the romantic impulse of those who latter read the trader's memoirs and journals to try and imagine just what the Midwest looked like when all was wilderness. Fur traders did act as wilderness explorers but many aspects of their business were anything but heroic. It is vital to balance the picture of the fur trader as an explorer and pioneer with the less flattering portrait of the fur trader as a pusher of dangerous and addictive substances, a fomenter of intertribal and intratribal conflict, and as a participant in environmental degradation. Nor is it historically valid to dismiss their Indian trading

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[39] Augustin Grignon, "Seventy-two Years Recollections of Wisconsin," *Wisconsin Historical Collections* 3 (1857) 244-7, 288; Harold Hickerson, *Ethnohistory of the Chippewa in Central Minnesota* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1974), 153-6.

partners as innocent victims. The fur trade brought the Indians products vital to life in the forests of the Upper Midwest: copper kettles, steel knives, firearms, and wool blankets. The fur trade was neither a European creation nor an Indian innovation but a social and economic process forged out of desire for a better life and all too human weaknesses. Fur traders, the Chippewa, and the Dakota of the St. Croix were joined together in a commerce that was at once alluring, enriching, dispiriting, and destructive.

Documenting the exact nature of the fur trade in the Wisconsin and Minnesota is complicated by the spotty nature of the surviving historical sources. While little can be said about the French era along the St. Croix, for example, there are other periods when the historical record opens up a window on the fur trade. One such time is the period between 1802 and 1805. George Nelson, a veteran Nor'Wester, produced a memoir of his first year as a fur trader, which he spent in the St. Croix Valley from 1802 to 1803. Michel Curot left a journal of his year as a fur trader in the region during the winter of 1803-1804. Finally, the much-studied journal of John Sayer documents the 1804-1805 trading season. All three men established posts in different parts of the St. Croix Valley: Nelson at Yellow Lake, Curot on the Yellow River, and Sayer on the Snake River near modern day Pine City, Minnesota. The period from 1803 to 1805 was a tense time for the fur traders because of a split in the ranks of the Nor'Westers. One of the most prominent members of the Northwest Company, Sir Alexander Mackenzie, along with several other partners, split with the established firm and formed the rival New Northwest Company. Known on the frontier as the X Y Company, the upstarts went head to head in competition with the Northwest Company, greatly expanding the demand for the fur and food produced by Indian hunters.[40]

Easily the most striking feature that emerges from a close reading of the 1802-1805 period is the importance of alcohol in the fur trade. The Northwest and XY companies hauled vast amounts of liquor over the portage between the Brule River and Upper Lake St. Croix. In 1803, Michel Curot reported to his superiors that the rival Northwest Company had brought in fifty-six kegs of high wine. This highly potent distilled beverage was akin to today's grain alcohol and like the latter had to be diluted before being consumed. Yet, even when broken down several times it remained very intoxicating. Archeologist Douglas Birk estimated that fifty kegs of high wine could be diluted into over one thousand gallons of liquor for trade. Added to this massive amount of alcohol was the much smaller volume of rum and high wine imported by Curot and the XY Company. Operating on a much smaller scale Curot had at least seven kegs of high wine at the start of the trading season and received an additional one in the spring. It is there for not unlikely that between them the fur traders had close to thirteen hundred

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[40] George Nelson, *A Winter in the St. Croix Valley: George Nelson's Reminiscences, 1802-03*, edited by Richard Bardon and Grace Lee Nute (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society, 1948); Michel Curot, "A Wisconsin Fur-Trader's Journal, 1803-04," edited by Reuben Gold Thwaites *Collections of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin*, XX, (1911), 396-471; Thomas Connor [John Sayer], "The Diary of Thomas Connor," edited by Charles M. Gates and Grace Lee Nute, *Five Fur Traders of the Northwest* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society, 1965), 243-78. The alleged Thomas Connor journal is unsigned and has since been generally accepted to be the work of John Sayer, a veteran partner in the Northwest Company. For more details see: Douglas A. Birk, *John Sayer's Snake River Journal, 1804-1805: A Fur Trade Diary from East Central Minnesota* (St. Paul: Institute for Minnesota Archaeology, 1989).

gallons of liquor for the trading year. Fur Trader George Nelson estimated the Chippewa population of the area to be "not above fifty families" with "about 60, or 65 warriors." Even if one assumes a generous estimate of a two-to-one adult male-female relationship and a two-to-one children-adult ratio, the Chippewa in the region did not number more than four hundred people. This figure is consistent with the size of the St. Croix band in 1851 when American authorities proposed to move them west of the Mississippi River. In other words the fur traders in 1803 were stocked with enough alcohol to provide every adult Indian with more than seven gallons of high wine.[41]

While the years 1802-1805 may have been the high-water mark of the use of alcohol in the fur trade there is little doubt that spirits occupied a critical role in the trader's inventory both before and certainly afterward. Some Chippewa used alcohol in the same manner as most people today. The traders document tastings being offered to trappers coming to trade as a social prelude prior to conducting business or high wine being requested by Indians upon the death of a child as a consolation. But the ugly face of what may very well have been addiction also appears in the trader's journals. When sixteen-year-old fur trader George Nelson landed at the junction of the St. Croix and Yellow Rivers in 1802 he was greeted by a mob of young Indian men:

> The Indians, the moment they saw us gave the whoop. They were all drunk, the N.W. Co. had a little before given liquor. They came rushing upon us like devils, dragged our Canoe to land, threw the lading ashore, ripped up the bale cloths, cut the cords & Sprinkled the goods about at a fine rate. Such noise, yelling & chattering! "Rum, Rum, what are you come to do here without rum?"

Only a year before on that very spot the Yellow Lake band and members of the Snake River band had suffered five dead, and six wounded when a drunken party led to a vicious knife fight. Nonetheless, the Chippewa refused to let the traders proceed until they assented to "make our presents of liquor also." The result was, according to Nelson, "singing, dancing & yelling, & fighting too." On January 4, 1804 John Sayer noted rather causally in his journal, "Indians still Drunk & Quarrelsome amongest themselves. 2 got Stabbd but not dangerous." Just over a week later he noted "this forenoon 2 Young Lads arrived from the Drunkards Lodge & report that the Indians were near Killing each other, at the same time requested a Small Keg of Rum which I refused them." [42]

As Nelson and Sayer's experience indicates the alcohol trade brutalized the Indians who then turned that behavior on the traders. A Chippewa he knew by the name of Le Grand Male frequently intimidated Michel Curot. On November 1, 1803 Le Grand Male arrived at Curot's door drunk from drink he had already procured at the nearby Northwest post and demanding more. Curot refused but Le Grand Male would not take "no" for an answer. "All The night it was the same Demand and the same reply," Curot

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[41] Curot, "Fur Trader's Journal,"465; Birk, *Sayer's Snake River Journal*, 7; Nelson, *Winter in the St. Croix*, 43; Bruce M. White, "The Regional Context of the Removal Order of 1850," *Fish in the Lakes, Wild Rice, and Game in Abundance: Testimony on Behalf of Mille Lacs Ojibwe Hunting and Fishing Rights*, edited by James M. McClurken (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2000), 203.

[42] Nelson, *Winter in the St. Croix Valley*, 21; Sayer, "Diary of Thomas Connors [sic]," 266-7.

reported. "I had much trouble with this savage. I received several Blows of his fist, one especially that made my upper Lip swell up." Two weeks earlier a group of Chippewa intent on a binge entered the Northwest Company post on the Snake River. They threatened to kill Joseph Reaume, the trader, tapped a barrel of pure rum, and "pillaged" the post for "ten days and ten nights." In January Curot again had problems when one of his assistants, Bazile David, refused to give rum to three Chippewa hunters who were spending the night at the post. Curot had already given them a small keg of undiluted high wine and the hunters were drunk. "A moment afterwards Le Jeune Razeur Like an enraged creature Struck David, saying to him, 'Dog, thou sayest that hast no Rum.'" The hunters then angrily left the post. They returned the next morning with a nine-gallon keg obtained from the Northwest Company and they demanded what rum remained at Curot's post. The trader anxious to match his competition and be rid of his troublesome guests acceded to the request. The abuse drunken hunters inflicted upon their own families went largely unrecorded. Although George Nelson noted one incident near the Brule Portage that provided an insight into what may have been all too common behavior. The traders had given rum to an Indian family with whom they had passed the night. The Indians drank through the night "very quietly & comfortably." Trouble came in the morning "when words ensued" and the son, a boy of sixteen or so years "fell upon this mother & beat her, striking with his fists & Kiicking her in the face & body!!!" Nelson's experienced companions dissuaded him from intervening, saying: "for if you do they will all three get upon you; besides it is among themselves—we dare not interfere." Shaken the young fur trader thought "Surely the curse of God will fall on these people." Little did he appreciate that he was that curse.[43]

How the St. Croix Chippewa viewed the traders and the impact of the fur trade on their lives and families can only be glimpsed at through the journals of the fur traders. Traders who came to establish posts along the St. Croix River did so at the sufferance of the Indians. While the posts were a convenience to the Chippewa, they seem to have adapted a proprietary attitude toward the goods the traders brought each fall. The Chippewa men who tore apart George Nelson's canoe's to find rum in 1802 were not humble supplicants awaiting a gift from the fur trader, rather they were men taking what they felt was their due. A year later when Michel Curot and his men came to blows with a group of hunters determined to have a keg of rum one of the Indians said "that it [the rum] all belonged to them, that in the Spring they would have some plus [beaver pelt]." George Nelson recorded in his reminiscences that Indians "would often...burst open the Shop door & take out what rum they pleased & compelled the people to mingle it to their taste." What traders regarded as begging or badgering by the Indians for something to drink was regarded by the Chippewa as merely giving them access to those things that were meant for them to begin with. [44]

Not all Chippewa embraced the fur trade with the same vigor nor did all become enamoured of high wines. George Nelson reported that one Chippewa leader admonished the traders "If you will persist to trade here, trade fairly as men & not wait till you think us too far drunk to perceive how you steal from us & insult our females."

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[43] Curot, "Fur Trader's Journal," 416, 420, 438; Nelson, *Winter in the St. Croix Valley*, 20.
[44] Nelson, *Winter in the St. Croix Valley*, 21; Curot, "Fur Trader's Journal," 439.

Others blamed the fur traders for the negative impact of alcohol on their lives. "You are the cause of this blood being shed by bringing *poisoned* rum to us," retorted one Indian after a drunken brawl.[45]

The drinking of the Chippewa must be viewed from the perspective of the high level of alcohol use in general on the frontier. The fur traders, although they seldom admitted it in their journals, which might be read by their superiors, often indulged in heavy drinking. Michel Curot noted in his journal that his rival John Sayer had an escalating drinking problem. "Since I have come into the fort I have noticed that Mr. Sayer is Very fond of Drink," wrote Curot, "there has been Scarcely a night, that he has not gone to bed Drunk." More scandalous to Curot than Sayer's habit of hiding pots of alcohol for himself about the post was the latter's willingness to drink the high wine prepared for Indian use. "I should Never have Believed that he would be fond enough thereof To Drink the Savage's Rum." Nor was Sayer selfish about sharing his drink with others. While his men labored to build the Northwest Company's Snake River post in 1804 Sayer noted in his journal that he "gave each a Dram morning & Evening & promised to do the same till our Buildings are Compleated provided the[y] exert themselves." Providing men engaged in heavy labor with alcoholic stimulants was standard practice in early nineteenth century business and in the armed forces. Nonetheless, Sayer was later dismissed from the Northwest Company, a decision that in part reflected his heavy use of alcohol. [46]

The presence of the fur traders in Chippewa territory, the heavy use of alcohol in their commerce, exasperated tensions that were already building among the St. Croix River bands. Compared with their Dakota rivals the Chippewa were highly individualistic. They lacked many of the rituals and shared experiences, such as the annual buffalo hunt, that made the Dakota a much more communal society. One of the reasons the Chippewa adapted much more readily to the new fur trade economy than the Dakota was their more fluid, independent social structure. Bands, even families, that simply acted for themselves with no restraints were able to adjust to the need to change geographic location or lifestyle much more rapidly than larger groups constrained by the need to form a consensus among many extended families. This flexibility and individualism were traits that had served the Chippewa well in the century and a half since the fur trade had begun. In fact these were traits that the Chippewa shared, although nowhere near to the same extent, with the growing number of Anglo-American settlers on the frontier. Nonetheless, as fur traders established more and more posts among the Chippewa and became a larger year round presence in their lives the bands became open to the interference and manipulation of the traders.[47]

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[45] Nelson, *Winter in the St. Croix Valley*, 44, 46.

[46] Curot, "Fur Trader's Journal," 451; Sayer, "Diary of Thomas Connor[sic]," 255; Birk, *John Sayer's Snake River Journal*, 32.

[47] Harold Hickerson, *The Chippewa and Their Neighbors: A Study in Ethnohistory* (New York: Holt, Rhinehart, 1970), 44-50; Robert E. Bieder, *Native American Communities in Wisconsin, 1600-1960: A Study of Tradition and Change* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1995), 97-9.

One of the most divisive practices of the fur traders was the creation of chiefs. Traders attempted to elevate individual hunters status by giving them dress coats, flags, and other presents. They flattered themselves that if they treated this hunter as special he would be so regarded by other Indians in the community. Francious V. Malhiot, a Northwest Company trader in the Lac du Flambeau area made the following speech when he created a new chief:

> Kinsman—The coat I have put on thee is sent by the Great Trader; by such coats he distinguishes the most highly considered persons of a tribe. The Flag is a true symbol of a Chief and thou must deem thyself honored by it...love the French as thou dost, watch over their preservation and enable them to make up packs of furs...As first chief of the place, thou must make every effort so that all the Savages may come and trade here in the Spring...

As Malhiot indicated the goal was to have this chief influence others to honor their debts at the trading post and not go to the competition. But far from picking the most admirable hunters (both from a Chippewa and a trader's perspective) men of the worst character were often selected by intimidated traders who hoped to end abusive behavior. In his memoir George Nelson described a group of frustrated traders who decided, "that by making a chief of the greatest scoundrel among them would perhaps have a good tendency." That was Malhiot's strategy in 1804 but it did not work. Similarly Le Grand Razeur, the Chippewa who attacked one of Michel Curot's men had earlier been made a chief. Worst of all chief making caused fissures among the Chippewa. Curot reported a stabbing among the Yellow Lake band during the winter of 1804. The "chief" refused to do anything to resolve the problem, "fearful on his own account." This caused Curot to reflect, "I believe that Band although Partly nephews and Brother in law [are] Jealous of whomever is made chief giving Preferment to any of them, Since each of them separately believes himself as Great a Man as an Other."[48]

The Chippewa often resented the practice of making phony chiefs. When John Sayer offered the coat and flag to the hunter Pichiquequi the latter responded angrily, even after Sayer tried to sweeten the offer with free rum. Pichiquequi "replied that he was not a chief and that Since he was thirsty he would go hunting either for a [fur] or a deer that he could trade for Rum, that he did not command any savages, that they were all Equal and [he and his people] would go where they liked to trade and that he himself would do the same."

A Chippewa hunter described in Nelson's memoir manifested this same spirit of independence. Following the formal presentation of the chief's uniform and flag the hunter turned to the fur traders with a look of "utmost contempt":

> No doubt, you Frenchmen, you think yourselves wonderfully cunning: --no doubt you were very certain.... that my eyes would be blinded by the Dazzling stuff you

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[48] Francois Victor Malhoit, "A Wisconsin Fur Trader's Journal, 1804-05," *Collections of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin*, edited by Reuben Gold Thwaites, XIX, (1910), 196-6; Curot, "Wisconsin Fur Trader's Journal," 433, 464.

> have been Displaying here with so much ceremony before us? Undeceive yourselves. I am born free & independent. I despise those tokens of Slavery. I am not a Slave to wear oth[ers] clothing (livery). My old clothes satisfy me; & when they are worn out I know how to procure others.

Nelson was not present at the council when the traders attempted to elevate hunter to chief so the exact words he recorded must be regarded as narrative license. Nonetheless, the hunter's eloquent statement of autonomy and personal independence reflected sentiments that Nelson must have seen manifested many times in his long career of trading with the Chippewa.[49]

Another way in which the fur traders created fractures in Chippewa society was the practice of taking Indian women as brides. These liaisons created a family connection between a trader and the Indian trappers. The traders further benefited from a women's companionship and the help of someone skilled in contending with the north woods wilderness and fluent in the local language. In return her family received the assurance of the trader's material help, at least as long as he was stationed in their area. Most of these relationships were formed *a la facon du pays*, without legal contract according to the customs of the country. As a trader's wife an Indian women entered into a more pleasant, if more socially precarious, world. The amount of work expected of her, particularly the heavy work of portaging or moving camps, greatly decreased. On the other hand there was the prospect that her husband might abandon her after a few years. "She will not do for me or any Indian," complained a Chippewa who hoped to be rid of a lazy second wife, "[the] best way is to give her to the whites. With them she will have only snow-Shoes and maggacins to make, & with them she will have as much men as she desires...they take women, not for wives—but use them as Sluts—to satisfy the animal lust, & when they are satiated, they cast them off." This harsh statement taken from George Nelson's memoir reflected a bitter reality. Fur trader John Sayer spent the winter of 1804-1805 at the Snake River post with Obemau-unoqua, his Chippewa wife. They were married for at least ten years and she bore him two sons, yet there is only a single reference to her in Sayer's diary: "my Squaw brot about 4lbs [maple] Sugar." The daughter of a notable Chippewa leader, Obemau-unoqua was abandoned by her husband in 1805 when he retired to Canada and took a white wife.[50]

Some fur traders formed loving and stable relationships with their Indian wives. Joseph Duchene, usually known by the name "La Prairie," spent more than a half-century in the Saint Croix Valley with Pimeegee-shigo-qua, his Chippewa wife. Many of the employees of the Northwest Company and the X Y Company in the region also had Chippewa wives. Bazile David, who already had one spouse, tried to take "a Young girl 9 or 10 years old For his wife." His superior, Michel Curot, however intervened and "sent her back." David was instructed to "take another one, who is Larger." Gardant Smith, another of Curot's *engages* had a very independent minded Chippewa wife who took the

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[49] *Ibid*, 423; Nelson, *Winter in the St. Croix Valley*, 46.

[50] Sylvia Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties: Women in Fur-Trade Society, 1670-1870* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1980), 91-2; Birk, *Sayer's Snake River Journal*, 24-5; Sayer, "Diary of Thomas Connor[sic]," 270.

position that since a man could have two wives she chose to have two husbands. She regularly left Smith for weeks or months at a time, returning with furs or meat she traded for on her own account. In the end two husbands were not enough for her. Two Chippewa men contending for her favors came to blows, leading to the fatal stabbing of one. The wives of the traders were fed from the rations of the post and although they received no pay, they performed significant work preparing food and tending to fires. They could also significantly increase their husband's salary by snaring small animals and dressing the skins. Indian women often assisted traders contrary to the wishes of Chippewa men. When a group of carousing Chippewa men plotted to kill George Nelson and his three companions it was two Indian widows, living in a tent nearby who warned the traders of the danger.[51]

The product of fur trade marriages, the Metis, or mixed-blooded offspring significantly influenced Chippewa society. The *Metis* were a significant portion of the population of the Upper Midwest. Historian Jacqueline Peterson estimated that by the late 1820s the *Metis* south and west of the Great Lakes numbered between 10,000 and 15,000. Some of the *Metis* were formally educated in the east, dressed and behaved like whites, and entered into fur trade society as clerks, or in the case of the women as wives of white traders. Those denied the opportunity for education worked in the lower levels of the fur trade or simply joined their mother's people, where most were accepted as equals. John Sayer seems to have devoted little attention to promoting the prospects of his mixed-blood sons Henry and John. It is possible that Henry was attached to the Snake River post in an informal manner. At one point Sayer, in his usual delicate style, refers to "Henries Squaw." Joseph Duchene, "La Prairie," was much more supportive of his *Metis* children and they played a significant role in his trading operations. One of the most successful trappers among the Snake River Band of Chippewa was an Indian known as "Chief Marin," who may have been the son of Joseph Marin, who was active in the fur trade during the French regime. The *Metis* were a people capable of moving in either the white or the Indian world. They frequently participated in the councils of the Chippewa, but their outlook was not always the same as their kinsmen and their interests could be quite different. In latter years this often played an important role in treaty negotiations with the United States government.[52]

Chippewa society remained dynamic and creative throughout the period of the fur trade. The new economic conditions fostered by the European-American traders within their society caused substantial material and cultural changes. Indian women, both Chippewa and Dakota, played a new and vital role in the fur trade economy. As men focused more of their attention on trapping fur bearing animals the women's work of preparing pelts became more important to the family economy. The critical role of this women's work to the fur trade may have been reflected in the rise of polygamous marriages, although the evidence on this point is only suggestive. Only very successful hunters were able to take more than one wife. Ethnologists have contended that

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[51] Birk, *Sayer's Snake River Journal*, 29; Curot, "Wisconsin Fur Trader's Journal," 412, 418, 421-2.

[52] Jacqueline Peterson and Jennifer S. H. Brown, *The New Peoples: Being and Becoming Metis in North America* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1985), 63;Curot, "Wisconsin Fur Trader's Journal," 447; Birk, *Sayer's Snake River Journal*, 24-5, 31.

polygamy was an example of boasting or conspicuous consumption. Yet the amount of work required to properly prepare hides was considerable and industrious hunters could not expand their trapping without having additional assistance preparing the furs. Domestic harmony was facilitated among polygamous households by the practice of taking the first wife's sister as a second, and on rare occasions, third spouse. Close contact with the fur traders made the lives of all Chippewa women more complex. Traditional tasks such as gathering wild rice became more important as trading posts required large amounts of rice to subsist through the winter. During the eighteenth century the amount of rice previously gathered for simple domestic use had to be augmented by rice gathered for commercial purposes. To meet this need it is likely that Chippewa women seeded large areas of lakeshore with rice to meet the growing demand. Indian women also took on new horticultural responsibilities. By the nineteenth century potato patches, raised from seeds obtained from the traders, became a fixture at village sites. Together with maize from traditional cornfields, potatoes became an important means of subsistence. Even the Dakota of the lower St. Croix, constricted by their war with the Chippewa from ranging as far as they had in the past, began to rely more on the farming of the Indian women.[53]

As the value of furs, even deer hides, increased the use of these materials in Chippewa and Dakota domestic life declined. Buckskin which had been the principle material for both men's and women's outer garments was replaced by broadcloth, augmented in the winter by capotes and leggings made of woolen blankets. Indian women adapted to the new materials artfully, and by the late eighteenth century were producing warmer and more durable clothing than had been traditionally available. Long proud of their weaving skills, which produced mats made of cedarbark and swamp rushes, Chippewa women adapted to the availability of glass trade beads to produce new bolder embroidery. While the use of beads was new, the designs followed traditional floral patterns blending old and new. Older crafts such as the original dental pictograph art, which Chippewa women produced by biting on thin sheets of birchbark, continued in spite of the new products available and the new demands on women's time.[54]

The creative blending of old and new also marked the rise of the Midewiwin rites. The Midewiwin was a set of ceremonies performed by an organized hierarchy of priests to protect tribal traditions, cure the sick, and slay the evil. Some form of the Midewiwin evolved among most of the Indian tribes of the Upper Midwest. For the Chippewa the Midewiwin had both a nationalistic and religious function. Its ceremonies brought together Chippewa from all across the Great Lakes and Upper Mississippi regions. William Warren, the part-Chippewa historian of the 1880s, described the Midewiwin as the occasion for an annual "a national gathering" when "the bonds which united one member to another were stronger." Although the evidence is by no means clear, the Midewiwin appears to have originated some time after the Chippewa first became

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[53] Johann Georg Kohl, *Kitchi-Gami, Life Among the Lake Superior Ojibway* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1985), 111; Ruth Landes, *The Ojibway Women* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1938), 66; Warren, *History of the Ojibway People*, 299.

[54] Robert E. Ritzenthaler, "Southwestern Chippewa," *Handbook of North American Indians: Volume 15, Northeast*, edited by Bruce G. Trigger, (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1978), 747-9.

involved in the fur trade and it may have been a cultural adaptation to the rise of individual wealth among Chippewa hunters. The community strains brought by geographic expansion were a further factor stimulating the growth of the medicine society. The Jesuit relations that provide such a thorough look at Algonquian society between 1640 and 1700 make no mention of the Midewiwin, which supports the thesis the society was of historic origin. Membership in the Mide society was selective and could be obtained only after long periods of instruction. After initiation a member then advanced through eight degrees or rankings, at each level learning more of tribal lore, healing remedies, and conjuring power. Midewiwin rituals were secret and instruction was only possible after a considerable exchange of material wealth, from the novice to the priest. The Midewiwin, which continues to this day, was a creative means of redistributing the new wealth created by the fur trade and warding off the threat posed by Christianity.[55]

The Ecological Impact of the Fur Trade

The landscape of the Upper St. Croix River was changed in subtle ways by the growth of the fur trade among the Chippewa and the Dakota. The presence of herds of elk and buffalo in the region declined dramatically as more hunters sought these large game animals with more effective weapons. There is evidence that in the seventeenth century buffalo roamed as far north as the Pine Barrens between the St. Croix and the Brule rivers. By 1820 elk and buffalo were both rare in the St. Croix valley. Schoolcraft claimed that the last time buffalo crossed to the east bank of the Mississippi was in 1820. Twelve years later traders reported that Dakota hunters in the Trempleleau River valley killed the last bison in Wisconsin. The elk, their numbers greatly reduced by hunting, survived longer. In 1854, when white settlers reported seeing several elk along the Sunrise River in Chisago County, Minnesota it was the cause of some excitement. The Dakota, when they were sole masters of the St. Croix valley, had regularly set wild fires to enhance elk and bison habitats. The small prairie openings thus created helped to sustain the grazing animals. The Chippewa were less aggressive in the use of fire as a tool of game management. As the fur trade grew and the Chippewa presence in the valley increased the herds of grazers disappeared and the prairie openings yielded to vegetation succession. Maple-basswood forests replaced many of these openings along the river.[56]

As elsewhere in the region beaver were the most relentlessly hunted species in the St. Croix country. While beaver existed throughout the watershed, the upper portions of the valley, especially the upper Namekagon and tributaries such as the Clam, Snake, Yellow, and Totogatic Rivers, were superb habitat. Nonetheless, the beaver population of the region was likely in severe decline as early as the beginning of the nineteenth century. A drastic reduction in the beaver population of this stretch of the St. Croix and

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[55] *Ibid*, 754-5; Warren, *History of the Ojibway People*, 100-101; Hickerson, *Chippewa and Their Neighbors*, 52-63.

[56] Jeanne Kay, *The Land of La Baye: The Ecological Impact of the Green Bay Fur Trade, 1634-1836* (Ph.D. diss., University of Wisconsin, Madison, 1977), 31, 264; Wovcha, Delaney, *et al*, *Minnesota's St. Croix River Valley*, 19-20.

Namekagon valleys would have had a significant impact on the landscape. The beaver, more than any other creature save man, has the ability to consciously alter its environment. The industrious rodent does this in two ways, by impounding water to create beaver ponds and by felling trees for food.

The beaver builds dams across streams to create ponds that provide the beaver with a watery moat that keeps predators, such as the gray wolf or the wolverine, at bay. Beaver ponds render swift flowing streams into quiet, calm impoundments of water often an acre or more in size. In a northern hardwood forest like the St. Croix it would not be unusual to have numerous beaver dams on one very small forest stream. A study of beaver in Voyageurs National Park identified 2.5 beaver dams per kilometer of stream, with the result that well over half of the length of all streams was transformed into beaver ponds. The wetlands created by the beaver formed habitat for other important fur bearing animals as well. Muskrats and otters made their homes within the ponds. Mink and raccoons hunted frogs, turtles, and snakes around the margins of the pond. The edge effect of the wetland-forest interface fostered a diverse array of other animals as well, from waterfowl to deer and moose. The hydrologic effect of thousands of beaver ponds within the valley was to slow the flow of the tributary streams and moderate flooding along the entire valley. Ponds trapped sediment carried by streams, keeping nutrients in the forest, and filtering the water that was eventually discharged into the St. Croix.[57]

A beaver population of thousands within the St. Croix valley affected the forest as well as the river. The beaver is one of the most voracious browsing animals. Although moose, deer, and elk are normally seen as the major browsing species in the forests of the Upper Midwest, the beaver has much greater impact on forest vegetation. The difference with the beaver is that unlike the other grazing animals, its impact is restricted to areas within a hundred meters of water. Beaver tried to extend their range slightly by building canals, a foot or two wide, leading away from streams and into the woods. But this amazing behavior reinforces the fact of the beaver's aquatic nature. Yet, in spite of this limitation the beaver still manages to consume a vast amount of wood, leaf, and roots. A study of beaver at a single northeastern Minnesota pond revealed that each beaver felled 1,400 kilograms of woody biomass per year, substantially more than moose grazing in the same area. In fact the study concluded that the beaver colony harvested twice as much biomass as a herd of Serengeti ungulates. Not only was the beaver colony an intensive grazer it also was very selective, favoring certain tree species such as aspen and turning its nose up at alder or conifers. After several decades of beaver activity forests near their ponds were greatly changed, moving from aspen or paper birch dominated stands to a more diverse patchwork of shrubs and trees.[58]

Multiplied throughout the valley by the thousands of lodges and dams, the mini-environments created by the beaver encouraged diversity between both flora and fauna.

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[57] Alice Outwater, *Water: A Natural History* (New York: Basic Books, 1996), 19-31; C.A. Johnson, J. Pastor, and R.J. Naiman, "Effects of Beaver and Moose on Boreal Forest Landscapes," *Landscape Ecology and Geographic Information Systems*, edited by S.H. Cousins, B. Haines-Konng, and D. Green (London: Dyler & Francis, 1994), 237-9.

[58] *Ibid*, 246-8.

Because of the beaver the St. Croix was clearer and less prone to flooding. The water table was higher and throughout the valley springs were more abundant. Trappers wrought havoc on the beaver landscape. Between 1800 and 1820 the beaver was all but wiped out along the St. Croix and other streams in the region. In 1800 fur traders reported a harvest of eight thousand beaver skins for the entire Dakota trading area, of which the St. Croix was only a small part. Yet by 1820 the beaver harvest for that same area was a paltry 760 pelts.[59]

The dramatically sudden over-trapping of the beaver brought changes to the valley, but only gradually. Beaver ponds endured long after the industrious rodents had been eliminated. It would have not been until the period after 1840 that the impact of the decline of the beaver would have been fully felt, but by this time a new group of dam builders was busy on the upper river. Loggers manipulated the water levels on the St. Croix and its tributaries in ways that would have impressed *Castor canadensis*, thus obscuring from the historical record the impact of the fur trade on the flow of the river. What is clear, however, is that the loss of beaver meant an end to unique pond habitats and the elimination of the forest's most voracious herbivore. "The features of the country have undergone a change," an early settler wrote of Burnett County. "The towering pines have decayed or been leveled by the woodsman's axe. Some small lakes have receded, and tall grasses wave and willows grow where once the 'kego' [fish] sported in the clear blue waters." Some early settlers contended that the "sun drew the waters up into the heavens," and did not see the loss of the beaver a generation earlier as the cause. All they saw was the result, dry fields ringed by the bleached shells of freshwater mussels "and by the ineffaceable mark of the water breaking upon the beach and undermining the rocky ledges." [60]

The American Fur Company Era

During first half of the nineteenth century competition between more and more fur traders for fewer and fewer furs threatened to make the figure of the fur trader an endangered species. This competition gave the Chippewa and the Dakota higher prices for their furs and a greater choice of goods for which to trade. It also reduced to the lowest common denominator of behavior an exchange that had persisted for well over one hundred years as a middle ground between Indians and Europeans. Family alliances between traders and hunters became less common as both sides operated with an eye for immediate returns, the trader in the form of quick profits, the Indians in form of alcohol. The rivalry between the Northwest Company and the X Y Company had been ruinous to both parties. To try preventing another outbreak of that type of trade war the Canadian based fur traders pooled their resources in the form of a new concern, which would have a monopoly on the fur trade south of the Great Lakes. First the Michilimackinac Company and later the Southwest Company were organized to control the fur trade of the Upper Midwest. The latter company is known to have operated a post on the St. Croix. Neither company succeeded long because increasingly the main competition came not from Canada but from the United States. In 1808 the American Fur Company was

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[59] Anderson, *Kinsmen of Another Kind*, 109.
[60] Folsom, *Fifty Years in the Northwest*, 233.

charted by the state of New York. Its founder, John Jacob Astor sought to dominate the fur trade in American territory the way the Northwest Company controlled the Canadian trade. After the War of 1812, when the authority of the United States government was firmly established in the region, Astor got his chance.[61]

As the Americans moved to assume the fur trade of the St. Croix they adopted the same tactic as the British a generation before. British traders like Alexander Henry formed partnerships with experienced French traders, such as Jean Baptiste Cadotte, Sr., to benefit from their superior connections with the Indians. Astor's American Fur Company followed the same pattern. Their choice to head the St. Croix trading area was Joseph Duchene, known to everyone in the region by his nickname, "La Prairie." He had been the Northwest Company's most experienced trader in the Folle Avoine. His son of the same name who became an interpreter joined him in the American Fur Company. William Morrison who had come to the region as a boy and had matured into an experienced trader, also left the Northwest Company and was rewarded by Astor with overall control of the Fond du Lac Department, a vast area that included the St. Croix, Chippewa, and Upper Mississippi valleys. The Cadotte family, long an aristocracy in the Lake Superior trade was among the first to make the move toward the Americans. In 1818 Michel Cadotte employed two young Americans to act as front men for his operations in the northwestern Wisconsin. Truman and Lyman Warren, the sons of a revolutionary war soldier, eventually married Cadotte's daughters. They gradually earned the trust and support of not only Cadotte, but of the family's Chippewa kinsmen. In 1822, Cadotte and the Warrens entered the American Fur Company as traders in the Fond du Lac Department. Also entering the firm were another generation of the Cadotte clan, Michel, Jr. who signed on as an interpreter, and Jean Baptiste the III, who joined as a boatman assigned to the St. Croix outfit.[62]

By winning the cooperation of the most experienced traders in the region the American Fur Company secured the bulk of the trade of the St. Croix valley. The principle trading posts within the valley continued to be among the Chippewa of the Snake River and in the Yellow Lake region. Under Astor's company the Chippewa in the valley continued to be supplied and directed from Lake Superior, which mandated a continuation of the virtual alliance between fur traders and the Chippewa bands of the Upper St. Croix. The Dakota villages along the lower river had no contact with those fur traders and they directed their furs toward merchants operating on the Minnesota or Upper Mississippi rivers. Among the traders to winter on the lower St. Croix and trade with the Dakota was Jean Baptiste Mayrand, a fur trader based in Prairie du Chien. Mayrand operated a St. Croix post during the winter of 1819-1820 and probably for a longer period. Mayrand, like Cadotte and Warren on the upper river, was attached to the American Fur Company. Between the efforts of these men the American Fur Company was in a position to secure the bulk of the furs from the St. Croix.[63]

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[61] Harold A. Innis, *The Fur Trade in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1956), 186-8.
[62] Warren, *History of the Ojibway People*, 9-10; Bruce White, *The Fur Trade in Minnesota: An Introductory Guide to Manuscript Sources* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1977), 36, 41, 57.
[63] Louis Grignon to John Lawe, 10 January 1820, *Wisconsin Historical Collections* XX (1911) 146-7.

Dakota-Chippewa Relations During the American Era

While the fur trade continued unaffected by political change among the European-Americans, the conflict between the Indians likewise continued on its bloody course. The boundary between the Dakota and the Chippewa, which had gradually settled on the areas between the Snake River and St. Croix Falls, divided the valley into a northern zone oriented to Lake Superior and a southern zone looking to the Mississippi. This division, which first occurred during the fur trade, would long mark the history of the St. Croix and would effect the development of transportation, agriculture, and the tourist industry along the river. The division endured in part because the warring parties' territories were separated along an environmental fault line, a vegetative transitional zone between the rich soils and prairie openings to the south and the mixed coniferous forests to the north. Within the transition zone deciduous forests dominated, although the landscape was a mosaic of marshes, savannahs, and forests, all in all a fine range in which to stalk deer or gather wild rice, berries, and maple sugar. Indeed it was the attractiveness of the region from a subsistence point-of-view that kept both the Dakota and Chippewa in abrasive contact within the zone.[64]

While the bountiful landscape of the St. Croix tended to draw the Dakota and Chippewa into conflict, Indian political structure did little to moderate conflict. The highly individualistic Chippewa lacked formal mechanisms to broker and enforce adherence to a boundary line. Bands acted in the manner they saw fit. Dakota leaders, while exercising somewhat more centralized authority, also had a problem achieving individual compliance. Warfare was an established feature of each society. It was a vital theater of action in which individual young men could establish status in their community. Recognition as a successful hunter or a brave warrior was all the more important because for both the Chippewa and the Dakota, unlike European-American society, it was not accumulated wealth or inherited position that conferred status but individual accomplishment. Young men looked forward to war and were always difficult for elders to control. The ominous warning of a Dakota chief to Joseph Marin in 1754 "we cannot keep from you the fact that our young men are all beginning to mutter" was a frequent prelude to war. George Nelson reported a fellow fur trader's complaint to the Chippewa: "it is the young men who are too ardent...they are afraid of being looked at as cowards if they have not a Scalp to shew & contrary to the advice of the old & experienced, & to the great injury of all, they make a descent upon their enemies & plunge both nations into war!" Peace for either community was often at the mercy of individual ambition or family obligation. One of the defining features of both Chippewa and Dakota life, tremendous individual autonomy balanced by community responsibility encouraged the continuation of the conflict. Family members, after a period of mourning, had the right, some would say obligation, to avenge the dead. This was not something that was subject to interference by political leaders. Revenge was the most persistent

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[64] Hickerson, *The Chippewa and Their Neighbors*, 74-5; Harold Hickerson, *Ethnohistory of the Chippewa in Central Minnesota* (New York: Garland, 1974), 201-2, 209; Birk, *Sayer's Snake River Journal*, 11.

reasons for war parties to embark on the river each spring. Every fallen family member that was avenged called forth a retaliatory raid by the enemy, a dreary, deadly cycle.[65]

For every epic battle, like that at St. Croix Falls, where warriors fought warriors in desperate battles, long remembered around winter campfires, there were hundreds of wretched ambushes leaving a child or elder murdered in the brush. Brief periods of peace, brokered by hunters anxious to utilize the rich borderland region, sometimes resulted in Dakota-Chippewa intermarriages. More so than at any other point of contact between the Dakota and the Chippewa a considerable exchange of kinsmen occurred along the St. Croix. To live in the lodges of the enemy was to occupy a precarious position, yet custom dictated that men live with their wives' family. William Warren related the fate of one St. Croix Chippewa dwelling with the Dakota. At a war dance an over-excited Dakota warrior fired an arrow into the Chippewa, who previously had been accepted as a member of the tribe, so as to "let out the hated Ojibway blood which flowed in his veins." This recklessly act led the wounded Chippewa to later seek vengeance by leading a war party against the village in which he had formerly lived. Over time the number of people in the St. Croix valley that were of mixed Dakota and Chippewa ancestry became quite large. This sometimes led to poignant encounters. One of the leaders of the Rice Lake Chippewa during the early nineteenth century was Omigaundib, whose father had lived for a time among the Dakota. When he later returned to the Chippewa and became chief of his band he left behind a Dakota family. His Dakota sons latter became leaders of their village. For his lifetime there was peace between the Rice Lake Chippewa and the chief's Dakota kinsmen. Even after the peace eroded the sons of a common father avoided participating in raids against each other. Omigaundib, nonetheless, was drawn into the war. A Dakota war party proceeded to Rice Lake and killed three children playing on the shore. One of the dead was Omigaundib's daughter. Rather than call for a war party and vengeance, Omigaundib placed his slain child in a canoe, covered her body in the black paint of mourning and proceeded down the St. Croix to the Dakota villages at Point Douglas. His arrival there cut short the celebration of a successful war party. His arrival, quiet and dignified, made clear he had come not as an enemy chief but as a kinsman. The scalp of the little girl, proudly being paraded among the lodges was suddenly transformed from a trophy to a cause of lamentation. With tears in their eyes the Dakota pressed Omigaundib to accept gifts to cover his tragic loss. "I have not come amongst you, my relatives to be treated with so much honor and deference," he said. "I have come that you may treat me as you have treated my child, that I may follow him [her] to the land of the spirits." In the end a young Dakota girl was presented to Omigaundib to return with him to Rice Lake.[66]

While those of mixed Dakota and Chippewa heritage were the most vulnerable when fighting broke out, their kinship ties allowed them to function, as Omigaundib did, as conciliators. "The occasional short terms of peace which have occurred between the two tribes," William Warren noted "have generally been first brought about by the mixed

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[65] Frances Densmore, *Chippewa Customs* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1929), 132-5; Warren, *History of the Ojibway*, 26, 129, 139, 355; Marin, *Journal of Joseph Marin*, 95; Nelson, *A Winter in the St. Croix Valley*, 45.

[66] Warren, *History of the Ojibway People*, 163-74.

bloods of either tribe who could approach one another with greater confidence than those entirely unconnected by blood." Because of these ties the St. Croix Chippewa were much less active in organizing war parties against the Dakota than their tribesmen who lived along the Chippewa River. In 1818 the United States Indian agent in the region reported that eight Chippewa from the upper St. Croix actually went so far as to warn the Dakota downstream of the approach of a large Chippewa war party. Armed with this information the Dakota "were preparing to give them a warm reception," the agent concluded. Such incidents were rare. On most occasions the St. Croix Chippewa were powerless to stop war parties directed downstream, even though such attacks opened them up to retaliation. The Dakota, particularly the Mdewakanton chief Little Crow, also were open to peace overtures. During the winter of 1801-1802 a Dakota war party captured the Northwest Company trader known as La Prairie. They treated him well and presented him with a "Pipe of Peace" and a tomahawk to give to the Yellow Lake Chippewa. "Let them chuse, & decide whether they will accept the Pipe & Smoke with us as friends, or take the tomahawk," the Dakota leader told La Prairie. "We are ready for either, but we would rather have them be our friends." Unfortunately, La Prairie, who clearly should have known better, repeated the Dakota message verbatim but kept the peace pipe for himself. With only the tomahawk before them the Chippewa decide the Dakota message was intended as an insult and answered it with a war party.[67]

The Dakota made frequent forays into the Chippewa lands along the St. Croix. In addition to the hunting the Mdewakanton often entered the valley in the fall to harvest the region's abundant wild rice. Perhaps in appreciation of how precarious an undertaking this was Chief Little Crow's band often demonstrated restraint against enemies who fell into their hands. While death or capture was the usual punishment for a warrior caught alone in the forest by his enemies, Little Crow's people sometimes contented themselves with merely breaking the guns of the Chippewa. But the Mdwewakanton also were determined to maintain access to their traditional lands and often-made demonstrations of their ability to project war parties throughout the St. Croix valley. These ventures did not always end in violence. Often when they discovered Chippewa trap lines they merely broke the traps, thereby providing a warning that the hunter risked the wrath of the Dakota.[68]

Like all wars difficult to bring to a conclusion the conflict continued not merely because of blood feud and misunderstanding, but because the Chippewa and the Dakota were locked in a territorial struggle more closely linked to each side's survival as a people than most wars in recorded history. Little Crow, the Dakota chief who had participated in numerous peace conferences and was the author of numerous personal attempts to conciliate, nonetheless understood that war made rational sense. "He observed that a peace could easily be made," American Indian agent Thomas Forsyth reported in 1819, "but said it is better for us [Dakota] to carry on the war in the way we do than to make peace, because, he added, we lose a man or two in the course of a year, and we kill as many of the enemy during the same time; and if we were to make peace,

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[67] *Ibid*, 174; Hickerson, *Ethnohistory of the Chippewa in Central Minnesota*, 101-7; Nelson, *A Winter in the St. Croix Valley*, 33-4.

[68] Harold Hickerson, *Mdewakanton Bands of Sioux Indians* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1974), 169-71.

the Chippewas would over-run all the country lying between the Mississippi and Lake Superior." Little Crow and the Dakota basically faced the question "should we give up such an extensive country to another nation to save the lives of a man or two annually." The Dakota response was similar to that taken by the United States throughout its history, land is worth blood. Thomas Forsyth ended his report by noting, "I found the Indian's reason so good that I said no more on the subject to him."[69]

While the Chippewa and the Dakota were locked in "a war for land," the United States government gradually established its political hegemony over the Upper Midwest region. The American flag first flew over St. Croix waters in 1805 when Lieutenant Zebulon M. Pike led an expedition of twenty soldiers into the Upper Mississippi region. His purpose was to make it clear to British fur traders that the region was under American control. The Dakota drew a different conclusion from Pike's visit. At a time when the number of Dakota's available to continue the war against the Chippewa was becoming lower due to western migration, it is probable that Little Crow viewed the Americans as potential allies. Anxious to secure regular access to American trade goods, something the Northwest Company provided to the Chippewa, Little Crow agreed to the cession of two tracts of land for future American forts. One tract, at the mouth of the Minnesota River became Fort Snelling, the principle United States military base in the region. The second tract Pike deemed strategic was the mouth of the St. Croix. In exchange for this territory the Dakota received a mere two hundred dollars worth of trade goods and a small amount of liquor. It is likely that Little Crow viewed this transaction as down payment on future military help from the Americans. He scarcely anticipated that the negotiation with Pike had set in motion a chain of events that would lead to the defeat of his grandson and namesake in 1862 by the very soldiers Little Crow the elder viewed as allies.[70]

Pike also attempted to mediate the conflict between the Dakota and the Chippewa. Although he reported boastfully to President Thomas Jefferson that he had brought about peace, the best he was able to do was halt the progress of a single Dakota war party, and receive Little Crow's promise to try and restrain his young men. When the Americans strengthened their hold over the region after the War of 1812, they intruded themselves more aggressively into the long simmering war. In 1820, Lewis Cass, the governor of the Michigan Territory, which then included Wisconsin and part of Minnesota, attempted to broker a peace between the Dakota and the Chippewa. Unfortunately Cass managed to bring with him only 150 Chippewa, and these mostly from Sandy Lake. The small number of Dakota present was described as manifesting "indifference" to the prospect of a treaty. Cass managed to have the few chiefs present assent to a peace as "lasting as the sun," but Henry Rowe Schoolcraft, the future Indian agent, who was a member of the Cass expedition, remained justly skeptical. He recognized that the conflict was based on "a dispute respecting the limits of their territories, and favorite hunting grounds, but if so, nothing was agreed upon in the present instance to obviate the original causes of enmity."

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[69] Thomas Forsyth, "Journal of a Voyage, 1819," *Collections of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin*, 6, (1908) 213.

[70] Anderson, *Kinsmen of Another Kind*, 82-3; Zebulon Montgomery Pike, *Sources of the Mississippi and the Western Louisiana Territory* (Baltimore: Fielding Lucas, 1810), 24-6.

Schoolcraft concluded, "Whether the peace will prove a permanent one, may be doubted."[71]

The Cass expedition set in motion a series of virtually annual convocations between the Chippewa and the Dakota organized by the Americans at Fort Snelling. Established in 1820, Fort Snelling was the northern most military establishment in the United States. The fort served as neutral ground where the Chippewa and Dakota could usually meet in security under the supervision of the United States Indian Agent, Lawrence Talliaferro. A proud, intelligent Virginian, Talliaferro worked tirelessly to reduce the intertribal warfare. He also established strong ties with the Dakota by taking as his wife the daughter of the war chief, Mahiyawicasta. An 1821 council held by Talliaferro brought together more than eight hundred Dakota and Chippewa, but was followed by a year of severe fighting that resulted in nearly a hundred casualties. Talliaferro followed this up with a formal peace treaty in 1823. The following year he sought to impress upon the Dakota the extent of American power by taking a delegation to Washington, D.C. In 1825, he helped to arrange a major meeting of Mississippi valley Indians at Prairie du Chien. Unlike earlier efforts to bring peace that had been based on engendering goodwill, the Americans finally tried to solve the root of the problem—the territorial conflict between the Dakota and Chippewa. The Dakota delegate protested bitterly when the Chippewa presented their claims to all lands east of the Mississippi. Little Crow had no intention of granting to the Chippewa the lower St. Croix homeland of his people. Finally after badgering by the Americans the Chippewa's recognized the Dakota claims to the lower river. The St. Croix boundary between the two peoples was ruled to be at "a place called the standing cedar, about a day's paddle in a canoe, above the Lake at the mouth of that river; thence passing between two lakes called by the Chippewas 'Green Lakes,' and by the Sioux 'the lakes they bury the Eagles in.'" In modern terms the line ran from a point on the river known as Cedar Bend, near the Chisago-Washington county boundary, northwest past Lindstrom, Minnesota to the upper reaches of the Rum River. Little Crow signed for his people while Peeseeker, known as Buffalo and Naudin, The Wind, signed for the St. Croix Chippewa.[72]

Within a year violence again flared and in 1826 the peace was shattered when the several Dakota warriors shot and killed two Chippewas trading within the shadow of Fort Snelling. By 1830 even Little Crow's Dakota were sending war parties across the boundary against the Chippewa. Some American leaders took the pragmatic, if somewhat cynical view, that while the Chippewa and Dakota were determined to fight each other "they will not feel a disposition to disturb the peace and tranquility of our exposed frontier settlements on the St. Croix and Chippewa rivers." Those officials who worked to stop the violence learned to adopt more modest goals and after 1826 they focused on simply trying to keep the warring parties apart. The Sioux Agency remained at the mouth of the Minnesota while the Chippewa of the Upper Mississippi were removed from Taliaferro's responsibility. Instead of being required to go to Fort Snelling

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[71] Henry Rowe Schoolcraft, *Travels Through the Northwestern Regions of the United States* (Albany: E & F. Hosford, 1821), 304-7.

[72] "Treaty With The Sioux, etc., 1825," *Indian Treaties, 1778-1883*, edited by Charles J. Kappler (New York: Interland Publishing, 1972), 250-5.

they were directed northward to Lake Superior and the Indian Superintendency of Henry Rowe Schoolcraft. Government agents were so anxious to reduce the chance of conflict that in 1832 Schoolcraft burned the temporarily abandoned trading post of Joseph R. Brown because it was located "at a point where the Sioux and Chippewas" were "improperly brought into contact."[73]

In spite of Schoolcraft's punitive action, Joseph Renshaw Brown was destined to have a long and important involvement with the St. Croix River valley. He had lived on the Minnesota frontier since he was fourteen years old, when he came west as a drummer boy in the army. In 1825, he put away his uniform and entered the fur trade. There was an unsavory taint to Brown's fur trade career. This may simply be because he was imprudent enough to have gotten on the wrong side of Indian agents Talliaferro and Schoolcraft; whose voluminous writings greatly influence the historical record. But even with that bias taken into account Brown's callous treatment of Indian women, is disturbing. During the late 1820s when Brown was engaged in trade with the Dakota, he took as his bride a *Metis* woman of Dakota ancestry. She may not have been the most faithful wife, but Brown nonetheless ended the marriage after only five years. While trading on the St. Croix with the Chippewa, Brown took, first as his mistress and latter as his wife, Margaret McCoy -- a Chippewa-French Canadian *Metis.* After a little more than a year he abandoned Margaret, even though she was pregnant, when he decided to recross the Indian boundary and trade again with the Dakota. While trading at Lake Traverse on the Minnesota River, he enjoyed the favors of Winona Renville, the "second" wife of a fellow fur trader, Joseph Renville. At the same time Brown courted Winona's seventeen-year-old daughter by a previous marriage, the Dakota *Metis* Susan Freniere. Winona, Susan, and Brown all resided together in a small cabin at the trading post, which must have made for some interesting domestic arrangements. Although Brown was by now known among the American's as, in the words of one traveler, "a gay deceiver amongst the Indian fair," Susan Freniere agreed to become his wife. As he had never bothered to divorce Margaret McCoy this left Brown with two wives, a circumstance he did not legally fix for five years.[74]

Brown's initial post on the St. Croix was located about four miles upstream from St. Croix Falls, on the Minnesota side of the river. The spot was then known as "Granite Rocks" in reference to the boulders in the stream there that would in future cause great log jams in the river. Brown was in competition with the American Fur Company's St. Croix traders, Lyman Warren and Thomas Connor. He had a distinct advantage over his rivals. By the early 1830s United States Indian agents such as Schoolcraft and Taliaferro had forced the American Fur Company to reduce the amount of alcohol used in the trade. After 1832 Congress supported this policy by making it illegal to use alcohol in the Indian trade. Some sprits were still smuggled into Indian country, but the volume

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[73] Anderson, *Kinsmen of Another Kind,* 135-7; Henry Rowe Schoolcraft, *Schoolcraft's Expedition to Lake Itasca: The Discovery of the Source of the Mississippi,* edited by Philip P. Mason (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1958), 84; Charles E. Cleland, "Preliminary Report of the Ethnohistory Basis of the Hunting, Fishing, and Gathering Rights of the Mille Lacs Chippewa,"*Fish in the Lakes, Wild Rice and Game in Abundance,* 24.

[74] Nancy and Robert Goodman, *Joseph R. Brown: Adventurer on the Minnesota Frontier, 1820-1849* (n.p.: Lone Oak Press, 1996), 128-30.

necessarily declined. Brown was one of those smugglers. Brown's partner in his venture, Joseph Bailly had purchased twenty-seven kegs of alcohol for the trading season. St. Croix Chippewa abandoned the American Fur Company post at the south end of Lake Pokegama and flocked to Brown at Granite Rocks and his branch trading post on the Snake River. The American Fur Company formally complained to territorial officials that Brown had "large quantities of whiskey and the consequence is a heavy loss to our people who had none."[75]

Brown was also an irritation to the Dakota. Although his Granite Rocks post was well within the Chippewa side of the border, it was considerably closer to Dakota country than any previously established Chippewa trading post. The Dakota leader Little Crow was concerned that the post would encourage the Chippewa to hunt and trap on Sioux lands. The fact that Brown encouraged the Chippewa to settle around his post sites, helped them to plant large fields of corn, and encouraged them to reside there during the summer, made Little Crow's fears seem all the more real. Eventually more than one hundred acres of corn was planted around Brown's post. When Schoolcraft encountered Brown on the St. Croix River in 1832, he ordered a careful search of his canoes for alcohol. Frustrated in this search Schoolcraft revoked Brown's license to trade at Granite Rocks. Neither this action nor Schoolcraft's burning of his buildings at Granite Rocks much perturbed Brown. He had already resolved to close that post and confine his Chippewa trading activities to the Snake River outpost and perhaps a small outpost on the St. Croix opposite the mouth of Wolf Creek. By 1833, Brown opened a new post dedicated to the Dakota trade near the mouth of the St. Croix at a place called Oliver's Grove, near the present site of Hastings, Minnesota.[76]

No description survives of the trading posts established by Brown. However, a detailed picture of the interior of a trading post from this period is found in the correspondence of William Johnson. The brother-in-law of Indian Agent Henry Rowe Schoolcraft, Johnson traded furs at Leech Lake in 1833. In a letter to his sister, Jane Schoolcraft he left a pen picture of the interior of a trader's cabin:

> I shall attempt to give you a description of a trader's house, humble as it appears, It is a palace to us; The building is thirty feet by twenty; built of hewed logs—and middling well finished outside. It is divided into two apartments, one of which serves as our Store House; and the other we occupy which is small being twenty feet each way.
>
> On opening the door the first thing that attracts the eye is the chimnie [sic]; on each side of which are beds. The front and gable end of the house have each a window. Leather serving in place of Glass. Fawn shins are used, which are put on when wet; when dry and oiled give very good light. And they answered the purpose also of a drum. Under one of the windows, is our table nailed fast to the wall. Above it and the window is a Coffee Mill; and in line, there is a drawing

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[75] *Ibid*, 105-6; Schoolcraft, *Schoolcraft's Expedition to Lake Itasca*, 84; Anderson, *Kinsmen of Another Kind*, 138.

[76] Schoolcraft, *Schoolcraft's Expedition to Lake Itasca*, 84; Goodman, *Joseph R. Brown*, 109.

> knife, Tobacco pouch, a dirty Candlestick; which has not enjoyed the friction of a cloth, since we left the Sault [St. Marie]. Further on in the corner is a Cupboard, formed of two boards roughly hewed—in which is contained, all our articles of cooking utensils etc. added to which are many other articles—such as Augers, crooked knives, Candle Moles [molds], etc.
>
> A little further on, near the other window between which and the cupboard, hangs a Coffee Pot, Table Cloth etc. Under the window, are the water buckets, kettles, Wash bowl—And upon the window, a piece of soap two or three nails—a pair of creepers[?], a dirty shaving brush. And in addition to the above ornaments, is a dirty fine tooth comb, which from appearance must have performed many a labourious [sic]task in its day, and is now cast aside, as useless, for any future adventure in trapping such animals as will now bring no price in market; either body or pelt as our oppositions tell the Indians.
>
> Now comes the Door; next to which and hanging up, is a frock Coat, Then comes other articles in regular rotation; a portage collar one or two pairs of Mockesins [sic], an old straw Hat, a violin with all its appendages; a small shelf upon which are the few books we possess; one or two Cossetts [small boxes], an ax, a spade, Tobacco pouch etc. etc.

Johnson kept his weapons, a fowling piece, a brace of pistols, and a dirk, near his bed.[77] Joseph Brown should have been as careful to be prepared for action in a dangerous borderland like the St. Croix valley.

Brown's new trading post caused dissention among the Mdewakanton Dakota. The aging and increasingly less energetic chief Little Crow had his village located on the Mississippi River not far from Fort Snelling. Brown's new post offered a convenient trading site closer to the band's traditional St. Croix hunting grounds and two of the rising young leaders of the village defected from Little Crow and moved to the area near the mouth of the St. Croix. This greatly nettled Little Crow. First Brown had encouraged the Chippewa to live and hunt on the very edge of the boundary, now he was drawing the Dakota into closer proximity to the area of contention. Little Crow protested bitterly to Schoolcraft. Although the danger was real, Little Crow may have complained about Brown in order to enlist the Indian agent in bolstering his sagging prestige among his people. The fur trader, who by now had had both Dakota and Chippewa wives, clearly knew the risks of his actions but in quest of short-term profits, he was heedless of the consequences. Brown continued to trade on the St. Croix in 1833 and 1834, after which time Little Crow and Indian Agent Lawrence Taliaferro were able to force him to temporarily remove himself from the seat of conflict to the Minnesota River valley.[78]

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[77] William Johnson to Jane Schoolcraft, 23 October 1833, *Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collections*, XXXVII (1909), 198-9.
[78] *Ibid*, 115-7.

The Treaties of 1837

Land cession treaties made it impossible to maintain even modest controls on fur traders. The Dakota and Chippewa reluctantly accepted the treaties because of the growing environmental degradation of their embattled homelands. The elimination of beaver, during the 1820s had been one warning sign of the change. The high value beaver allowed Indian hunters to obtain their annual wants with a very limited effort. Much more hunting time was required and less food was obtained when the smaller less valuable muskrat was trapped as a replacement. The same was true of the increased difficulty encountered and energy required when subsistence hunters were forced to rely more on white-tailed deer than a herding animal like elk. The Dakota were particularly affected by these changes because the Chippewa had steadily encroached upon their territories along the St. Croix and Mississippi. The Dakota no longer had the broad sweep of territory over which they had traditionally ranged during their annual subsistence cycle. As early as 1812 the Dakota were forced to adapt to these changes. Agriculture, which was unimportant to the Dakota at the height of their power in the 1600s, became increasingly significant as a way to bridge the nutritional gaps in their seasonal subsistence cycle. When the Cass expedition in 1820 visited the Dakota villages on the St. Croix one of its members, Charles Trowbridge observed that corn was "almost their only food." While this was an exaggeration, to be sure, based on a misunderstanding of the Dakota's seasonal movements, it nonetheless reflected a profound change. Trowbridge further noted that Dakota hunters did not even try to hunt in the vicinity of Little Crow's village near the mouth of the St. Croix, a clear sign that game in the region had been seriously depleted. Buffalo, which were once abundant along the Upper Mississippi, in 1820, could not be found short of a two days journey beyond the river. Over time buffalo were found only after increasingly farther journeys to the west. Lawrence Taliaferro, a very careful observer of Dakota life, frequently noted that they suffered from starvation, not merely in the winter but even during the summer. In August of 1835, he noted that they were completely without wild rice and that "to go out to hunt is for them to go off to starve." A year latter he reported that the St. Croix Dakota had completed their summer hunt without killing a single deer. Requests for government supplies from the Indian agent became more frequent as did complaints of Chippewa intrusions on Dakota lands.[79]

The Chippewa who were accustomed to operating within a smaller territorial range than the Dakota suffered less than the their rivals. Even so adjustments were forced upon them. In 1832, hunters along the Upper St. Croix still found deer near the river but moose, which had been abundant, were eliminated from the area and could only be found along the remote headwaters of the Brule River. The Chippewa, who in the early 1800s had provided fur traders with most of their provisions from hunting deer and gathering wild rice, also became more dependent on agriculture. Joseph Brown, making no mention of his large supply of illegal whiskey, claimed that the way he won the Snake

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[79] Anderson, *Kinsmen of Another Kind*, 107-8; Schoolcraft, *Travels through the Northwestern Regions*, 311-3, 323; Hickerson, *Mdewakanton Band of Sioux Indians*, 172-3.

River Chippewa to his posts was by showing the Indians how to plant fields of corn. "The failure of the [wild] rice crop in the fall made the corn, potatoes, pumpkins and turnips very valuable to the Indians and probably saved many from starvation during the winter," he claimed in a letter to a missionary. When Schoolcraft visited a Chippewa village near Big Fish Trap Rapids in 1832 he found "Corn and potato fields." Not only were such fields new to that generation of St. Croix Chippewa but Schoolcraft also noted that the fur trade had also brought "a considerable change of habits, and of the mode of subsistence; and may be considered as having paved the way for further changes in the mode of living and dress." By 1832 as much as half of the trade goods brought from Mackinac for the Chippewa trade were foodstuffs and clothing. A gradual but nonetheless decisive change in the fortunes of the St. Croix's Indian peoples was the transition, made apparent by the 1830s, from being providers of subsistence to the whites to becoming dependent upon fur traders for their subsistence.[80]

The dependency of both the Dakota and the Chippewa on the European-Americans for alcohol, trade goods, and increasingly for food, was the knife's point used to push them into treaty negotiations that led to the loss of the territory over which they had fought for so long. In July of 1837, Henry Dodge, Governor of the Wisconsin Territory negotiated the cession of Chippewa lands along the Upper Mississippi and St. Croix rivers. In return for these hard won lands the Chippewa received annual access for the next twenty years to a paltry $19,000 worth of trade goods, and a mere $9,500 in cash payments, and government supported blacksmith shops and model farms. They retained the use of their old lands for hunting, fishing, and gathering, but only at "the pleasure of the President of the United States," which in effect meant as long as they did not get in the way of European-American settlement and industry. Of greatest immediate importance, however, was the provision that paid $70,000 to fur traders who had claims against the Chippewa. The decline in stocks of fur bearing animals on their lands and their growing need for European-American manufactured goods had gradually put the Chippewa in the position of annually accepting more goods in advance than they could pay for at the end of the trapping season. The accumulated debt was substantial, although the payment of $25,000 to Lyman M. Warren, the principle trader on the St. Croix, seems excessively high. Settlement of this debt was an important matter, in part because of the presence of traders like Warren at the negotiation. But the Chippewa themselves were well aware that they needed the treaty to keep open their source of credit. Chief Shagobi, of the Snake River band, bluntly admitted that he and the other leaders were "afraid to return home if their traders are not paid. They fear they should not survive the winter without their aid."[81]

Even considering their dire necessity the St. Croix Chippewa made a poor bargain when they agreed to the 1837 Treaty. The payment received for their very extensive and valuable lands was too small to make a significant difference in the band's quality of life. Indian Agent Henry Rowe Schoolcraft, who did not participate in the treaty negotiation,

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[80] Schoolcraft, *Schoolcraft's Expedition to Lake Itasca*, 51,88; Goodman, *Joseph R. Brown*, 107; Edmund Danziger, *The Chippewas of Lake Superior* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1979), 71.

[81] "Treaty with the Chippewa, 1837," *Indian Treaties, 1778-1883*, 491-2; Cleland, "Preliminary Report of the Ethnohistorical Basis of Hunting Rights," *Fish in the Lakes, Wild Rice and Game in Abundance*, 30.

complained, with some exaggeration, that the payment "would not exceed a breech cloth and a pair of leggings apiece." Fur trader Lyman Warren blamed the bad deal on bribes paid by Lawrence Taliaferro to the leaders of the Pillager Chippewa, who lived at Leech Lake. The Pillagers then used their influence to encourage the St. Croix and Chippewa River bands to accept a hasty settlement. Schoolcraft, who was strongly biased against Taliaferro, found this tale convincing. "The pillagers certainly do not," Schoolcraft wrote in his memoirs, "as a band own or occupy a foot of the soil east of the Mississippi...but their warlike character has a sensible influence on those tribes quite down to the St. Croix and Chippewa Rivers." Even the location of the treaty payment sites favored the Pillagers, not the eastern bands. The St. Croix people were forced to travel several hundred miles to the Crow Wing River to receive their meager payments.[82]

The Dakota were also forced to part with title to their share of the bloody St. Croix in 1837. The American Fur Company clamored for the treaty, claiming in excess of $50,000 in Dakota debts. The Dakota were loath to sell their St. Croix lands, but there also was a strong feeling that they could not go on as before. Little Crow, the son, namesake, and successor to the leadership of the St. Croix Dakota, found it harder and harder to locate game within their old hunting grounds. In the fall of 1835, after nearly dying of exposure in a snowstorm, he staggered into Taliaferro's agency in desperate need of food. Wearily Little Crow agreed to the necessity of taking up the plough. A smallpox epidemic in 1836 further demoralized the Dakota, leading one chief to say to Taliaferro, "the land is bad...and your advice is this day asked for my people." Taliaferro's advice was to go to Washington, D.C. and negotiate the secession of some of their lands. By advocating the journey it may have been the Indian agent's intention to overawe the Dakota with American power. If so the strategy worked, for after a week of negotiations the Sioux representatives were forced to accept the government's price of one million dollars for all tribal lands east of the Mississippi, more than $600,000 less than the Dakota asked for. Unlike the Chippewa treaty, the 1837 Treaty of Washington did not grant the Dakota a limited right to hunt and fish on the ceded lands. From the government's point-of-view the Dakota's tenure on the banks of the St. Croix was at an end.[83]

In agreeing to the 1837 land cessions the Chippewa and Dakota people embraced an unavoidable contradiction. Their lifestyle and culture was based upon their occupation of the land. Yet, to maintain that lifestyle they had to give up their ownership of the land. Far from being dupes of the government negotiators the Indians knew the Americans were anxious to exploit the pine forests of the St. Croix and Rum River. Chippewa chiefs very sagely had proposed ceding the territory for sixty years, the amount of time they estimated for its forest resources to be exhausted. Flat Mouth, chief of the Pillager Chippewa, observed, "it is hard to give up the lands. They will remain and cannot be destroyed but you may cut down the trees and others will grow up." Governor Dodge, however, rejected that proposal and insisted on a traditional cession. What the

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[82] Henry Rowe Schoolcraft, *Personal Memoirs of a Residence of Thirty Years With the Indian Tribes On the American Frontier* (Philadelphia: Lippencot, Grambow & Co., 1851 reprinted 1975), 29-30.

[83] Anderson, *Kinsmen of Another Kind*, 146, 148, 153-5; "Treaty with the Sioux, 1837," *Indian Treaties, 1778-1883*, 493-4.

Dakota and the Chippewa received in return were treaty annuities that allowed the Indians for twenty years the opportunity to continue the pattern of living they had adopted since the beginning of the fur trade. The Chippewa retained a limited right to use the forests and the waters of the St. Croix. A Leech Lake Chippewa captured this sentiment when he told the treaty council "we wish to hold on to a tree where we get our living and to reserve the streams where we drink the waters that give us life." In that sense the treaty was a conservative solution to a looming crisis. Life would go on as before. But for how long? The President of the United States could order them off the lands at any time and the annuity payments, that kept the flow of trade goods coming were due to last only twenty years. The treaty was a blend of trying to protect a fading old way of life and tentative embrace of a new, scarcely imagined way of living. Annual payments for farm implements, seed, and the assistance of experienced farmers and the less specific provision for the establishment of schools, clearly demonstrated that Dakota and Chippewa leaders understood that the they were fast approaching a threshold of change, and that they would need help to cross to the other side.[84]

Strangers on the Land: The St. Croix Indians in the Settlement Era

In the wake of the treaties several new kinds of European-Americans came into the St. Croix country. Lumbermen were the largest group, followed by farmers and merchants. Of most direct interest to the Chippewa were the missionaries. Showing much less scruple for the division between church and state than modern public officials, the United States Commissioner of Indian Affairs relied upon missionaries to carryout the transformation of the St. Croix bands from hunters and gatherers, to sedentary agriculturists. The work had actually begun four years before the treaty, in 1833, when Reverend Frederick Ayer established a mission school at Yellow Lake, about a mile from the trading post. Ayer was a Presbyterian sent west by the American Board of Foreign Missions. After two years of difficult work trying to win the support of the Yellow Lake band, Ayer moved the mission to Pokegama Lake. The soil there was much more conducive to agricultural experiments and the supplies of wild rice and fish were reputed to be more reliable. These factors made the Snake River band more sedentary than the Yellow Lake Chippewa. Best of all Ayer received an invitation from the Snake River people to bring his school to their band. In time Pokegama became the most successful mission in the region. In 1838, the Presbyterian missionaries working among the Chippewa agreed to consolidate their efforts at that site. Ayer was joined at various times by William Boutwell, Edmund Ely, and Sherman Hall. The government lent support to their effort by locating one of the official Indian model farms at the south end of Pokegama Lake. Jeremiah Russell, of the Indian bureau, sought to carve a farm out of the wilderness. He hoped that in time it could be a nursery for Chippewas schooled in European-American agriculture.[85]

As agents of change the missionaries caused tension and division among the ranks of the Chippewa. No two Chippewa responded to the presence of these new strangers in

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[84] "Treaty with the Chippewa, 1837," *Indian Treaties, 1778-1883*, 492; Cleland, "Preliminary Report," *Fish in the Lakes, Wild Rice and Game in Abundance*, 31.

[85] Folsom, *Fifty Years in the Northwest*, 235-7, 263-6.

the same way. The leaders of the Snake River band saw the mission school as a positive development that would give their children the means to learn the white man's letters. Others may have accepted the missionaries out of regard for their farming efforts, which after all provided a backup source of support during times of famine. The Yellow Lake band was deeply divided by Frederic Ayer's initial mission. At a council soon after his arrival Ayer was told in no uncertain terms he was not wanted there. "The Indians are troubled in mind about your staying here," said one speaker, "and you must go—you shall go." But a second faction in the tribe felt contrary, and the next day told Ayer that they were grateful for what he had done, "you have clothed and provided for us. Why should we send you away?" Ayer was invited to stay, but in the months that followed he was constantly unsure of his position, "things were not as they should be." The band chief remained constantly, in Ayer's words "on the fence," as he tried to maintain a consensus among his badly divided people. When the missionary left Yellow Lake the chief must have been greatly relieved. Reverend Boutwell had an even more difficult time with the Leech Lake Chippewa. After receiving several warnings they poisoned the missionary's daughter. Fortunately the girl recovered and Boutwell quickly left for the friendly clime of Pokegama Lake.[86]

The modest success enjoyed by Ayer and Boutwell was partially based on the care each took to cultivate the fur trade elite that had long influenced life along the St. Croix. Ayer became a friend of Lyman Warren. The veteran fur trader was a devout Presbyterian who used his money and influence to help Ayer build his base among the Snake River band. Boutwell earned entry into any trading post in the region by marrying the daughter of Ramsay Crooks, the managing partner of the American Fur Company. This Chippewa *Metis* woman was described by one contemporary as "a commanding figure" who did much to win her husband a hearing among her mother's people. Even so the missionaries often skirmished with their Indian neighbors across a cultural divide. Frederic Ayer, at great trouble and expense, brought farm animals to the lake mission. His effort to have a proper American farm were sometimes frustrated by Indian hunters, who when hungry did not differentiate between wild game and domesticated animals. "At Fond du Lac and Pokegama," wrote the Reverend Sherman Hall, "they have been much tried this summer with the Indians. They have killed several cattle at the latter place for the mission, and one at Fond du Lac. Some have appeared otherwise hostile." Nonetheless, the missionary was convinced he and his colleagues would "preserve in efforts to save these wretched heathen." On another occasion Ayer lost considerable face when he accused an Indian women of stealing several shirts left out in the sun. He went so far as searching, and none to gently, her lodge, only to find out that Mrs. Ayer had simply misplaced the items. The Indian women felt disgraced by the affair, although she never took action against the missionary. "Some of the Indians laughed heartily," at the crestfallen man of God, "others made remarks rather sarcastic."[87]

It was not, however, the cultural barriers that separated the Chippewa from the evangelical Christians that led to the demise of the mission in the St. Croix valley. In the

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[86] *Ibid*, 270-1; J. N. Davidson, *In Unnamed Wisconsin: Studies in the History of the Region Between Lake Michigan and the Mississippi* (Milwaukee: Silas Chapman, 1895), 160-1.
[87] *Ibid*, 268; Davidson, *In Unnamed Wisconsin*, 161; Warren, *History of the Ojibway People*, 11-2.

end it was the rekindling of the ugly war between Dakota and Chippewa that broke up the mission and its agricultural experiment. With the withdrawal of the Dakota to the west side of the Mississippi with the 1837 treaty, there was hope that European-American commerce could expand in the region and the chronic wars might be brought to an end. This hope was shattered in 1839 when four Leech Lake Chippewa killed a Mdewakanton leader at Lake Harriet, the site of a successful Protestant mission to the Dakota. The attack was the action of a few rogue warriors. The bulk of the Chippewa wanted to maintain peaceful relations. Two large delegations of Chippewa, one from Mille Lacs the other from the St. Croix had just met with Dakota leaders at Fort Snelling where they smoked tobacco and pledged amity. When news of the murder reached the Dakota, they vowed to reward treachery with treachery. Dakota war parties fell on the Chippewa returning unsuspectingly from the Fort Snelling conference. The St. Croix people were surprised at the present site of Stillwater, Minnesota and twenty-three Chippewa, mostly women and children, were killed. "I was on the battle-field of Lake St. Croix soon after the conflict, " recalled a missionary, "and saw the remains of the slaughtered Chippeways scattered in all directions. The marks of bullets were upon the trees, and the shrubbery was all trodden down. Some of the dead were suspended upon the branches of the trees." A new round of vengeance raids followed. One ambush led to the deaths of two of Little Crow's sons in the forest between the Snake River and St. Croix Falls. The scalping knife fell on the Lake Pokegama settlement in 1841.[88]

The mission was located on east side of Lake Pokegama, although the majority of the Snake River band lived on an island in the lake. The island village gave the Chippewa extra protection from Dakota raiding parties. A few of the Snake band, however, trusting the protection of the mission had settled in cabins on the mainland. The evening before the attack a large Dakota war party secreted themselves in the brush adjacent to the mission. Their plan was to wait for the Chippewa to commence work in their fields and then fall upon them. This ambush, like so many others, was spoiled by several overly anxious warriors. That morning the Chippewa were late in canoeing from the island to the mission and those on the mainland did not go to the fields. When a solitary canoe of two men and two young girls approached the shore, it was fired upon. The Chippewa were thus alerted to the danger. Those on the mainland barricaded themselves in several cabins while those on the island took up arms. The Dakota laid siege to the cabins for several hours before giving up in frustration. At least one Dakota was killed in the fighting as well as two young Chippewa girls. The Missionary E.F. Ely found the little corpses on the shore. "The heads cut off and scalped, with a tomahawk buried in the brains of each, were set up on the sand near the bodies," he latter recalled. "The bodies were pierced in the breast, and the right arm of one was taken away."[89]

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[88] Philander Prescott, *The Recollections of Philander Prescott: Frontiersman of the Old Northwest, 1819-1862*, edited by Donald Dean Parker (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1866), 171-2; Cleland, "Preliminary Report," *Fish in the Lakes, Wild Rice, and Game in Abundance*, 23-4; Anderson, *Kinsmen of Another Kind*, 173-3; Samuel Pond, "Indian Warfare in Minnesota," *Minnesota Historical Society Collections* 3 (1880), 131-3; George Copway, *The Traditional History and Characteristic Sketches of the Ojiway Nation* (London: Charles Gilpin, 1850), 58-9.

[89] Folsom, *Fifty Years in the Northwest*, 265-7; E. D. Neill, "Battle of Lake Pokeguma," *Minnesota Historical Society Collections* 1, (1872), 141-4.

Although the Snake River band had successfully defended their village, they feared a return by the Dakota. The band broke up into family groups and retreated into the wilderness. The mission was abandoned by its acolytes. "The Indians were scattered," recalled Elizabeth Ayer, "and dared not return." For a time Reverend Ayer tried to visit the scattered members of the band in their isolated camps, but when it became clear they did not intend to return to Pokegama the Presbyterians had no choice but to abandon their mission. In 1842 the mission was removed to La Pointe. Not until the spring of 1843 did the Chippewa return in force to Pokegama Lake. The mission was briefly reestablished. But the rapid increase in the number of European-American lumbermen and a handful settlers in the region made the missionaries lose faith in the location as an effective base from which to convert the Chippewa to the white man's God and a farming lifestyle. The Reverend William Boutwell, who also served as a field agent for the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, encouraged the Snake River Chippewa to abandon Pokegama Lake and locate at Mille Lacs, where wild rice and fish were abundant and contact with whites less frequent. The mission in the St. Croix valley was abandoned in 1845.[90]

The missionaries also soured on their prospects along the St. Croix, Rum River, and other areas ceded in the 1837 Treaty because of the pervasive presence of whiskey traders. While the St. Croix had been Indian territory, the agents of the Office of Indian Affairs had the power to regulate who traded there, where they traded, and with what wares. After 1837 the valley was simply another part of the Wisconsin Territory, a vast region with large opportunities and little in the way of civil administration. Alcohol, which in times of competition between fur traders had always greased the wheels of commerce, now became the principle article of trade for men intent on separating the Chippewa from their annuity payments. By 1844 William Boutwell complained to a fellow missionary that the ceded lands were "inundated with whiskey."[91]

Among the unsavory traders who entered the St. Croix at this time was Joe Covillion. He was a *Metis* who took over the former mission school at Yellow Lake and used it for his post. Located on the Yellow River just where it leaves Little Yellow Lake, the trading house was the scene of many drunken reveries and a key location in the first murder mystery in the St. Croix valley. In 1845 Albert McEwen hired Covillion to guide him to timberlands in the Yellow Lake region. McEwen had a large amount of gold coin he hoped to use to secure title to lands upon which a profitable speculation might be made. McEwen never returned from the trip. Covillion explained that he had actually not been with McEwen and he cast suspicion on a Chippewa who was alleged to have actually served as guide. Not long afterwards McEwen's body was found stuffed in a hallow tree about ten miles from Covilion's post. Preliminary investigation revealed that Covillion had in his possession a large amount of gold coins, McEwen's watch, and a fist full of land warrants. Calmly the trader explained that he obtained these from the Chippewa in trade. Later that winter the Indian whom Covillion had claimed guided

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[90] Davidson, *Unnamed Wisconsin*, 162; Cleland, "Preliminary Report," *Fish in the Lakes, Wild Rice and Game in Abundance*, 43.
[91] *Ibid*, 43.

McEwen was found dead in his camp. Covillion, the owner of "considerable property" retired to Taylor's Falls, where he died in 1877.[92]

Another less than worthy trader of this period was Maurice Mordecai Samuels. In 1846 he had a trading post at the mouth of the Sunrise River. In time honored fashion he established himself with the Chippewa by taking one of their women as his wife. Latter he relocated to St. Croix Falls where he operated a "ball alley" and trading post. Samuels was described by fellow pioneer W.H.C. Folsom as "a shrewd man and an inveterate dealer in Indian whisky." No friend of the fur trader, Folsom accused Samuels of being "unprincipled" and "repellant" to the "moral sense of the community." There can be little doubt about how repellant was the type of whiskey sold by Samuels. He did not trouble to import the product from the Ohio Valley where it was abundant and cheap, for less expensive still was to use grain alcohol and then attempt to impart the right flavor and color by artificial means. Samuel's recipe included boiled roots and tobacco, which according the Folsom poisoned many whites and Indians. One consumer of the concoction went insane and leapt from a high point of the Dalles to the falls below. Samuels profited handsomely from his trade with the Chippewa and in time became a leader of the community of St. Croix Falls.[93]

National Park Service archeologists have explored the site of Samuel's 1846 trading post at the confluence of the Sunrise and the St. Croix River. The post consisted of a main building where Samuels lived and conducted his trade and a second flimsy outbuilding that served as a barn or other shelter for animals. The diet of the traders who lived there at this time was somewhat different than that of the Northwest Company traders a generation earlier. In addition to local meat products such as fish and rabbit, Samuels consumed a large amount of pork. Whether this pork was slaughtered on the site from his herd of livestock or sent up river salted in barrels, Samuels was in a much less isolated position than earlier traders. An historic site within the Riverway from this period can be found where Goose Creek enters the St. Croix River. In 1846, Thomas Connor, an old veteran of the Northwest Company, operated a trading post at that location. William Folsom, who visited the post in 1846, described it as a "bark shanty, divided into rooms by handsome mats."[94] The location has been tested for archeological remains on many separate occasions and has also been much visited by collectors of antique bottles and metal detector enthusiasts. Archeological explorations by the National Park Service's Midwest Archeological Center revealed the foundations of a structure from the mid-nineteenth century. The site, however, was not confirmed as Connor's post because the remains of a chimney seemed to clash with Folsom's description of the post as a portable bark shanty. Artifacts found at the site, such as gunflints, glass beads, and kaolin pipes suggested the occupation of the site by temporary traders or Indian hunters in contact with traders.[95] Trading posts like Connors or those

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[92] O. M. Thatcher, The Mission in Folle Avoine, Yellow Lake Pamphlet File, Burnett County Historical Society, Danbury, Wisc., .3; *Stillwater Messenger*, 26 January 1877.
[93] Folsom, *Fifty Years in the Northwest*, 87-8.
[94] Folsom, *Fifty Years in the Northwest*, 47.
[95] Melissa A. Connor, *et al, Archeological Investigations Along the St. Croix National Scenic Riverway, 1983* (Lincoln, Neb.: National Park Service, 1985), 85-8, 180-2.

of whiskey traders were seldom occupied for long periods of time. The whiskey traders were particularly active in the wake of an annuity payment.

Whiskey was an important commodity at all trading posts but the whiskey shops of men like Samuels and Covillion in particular were the scenes of many degrading and deadly spectacles. Bad liquor sold with no restraint led to trouble at Alexander Livingston's grog shop on the St. Croix at the mouth of Wolf Creek. Livingston, who may have operated in cooperation with the veteran fur trader and whiskey dealer Joseph R. Brown, was gunned down in 1849 after a "drunken melee in his own store." Livingston died of his wound, while his killer, a *Metis* named Robido, escaped prosecution. Another whiskey dealer to die as a result of his own greed was Miles Tornell, a Norwegian operating near Balsam Lake. Tornell refused to back down in the face of competition from a German-American whiskey dealer, a man identified only as Miller, who operated a post on the lake. The German resolved the competition by hiring a Chippewa to murder Tornell. When the crime was detected, the Indian was executed, while Miller was merely flogged. In 1847, one of Samuels' subordinates, Henry Rust, was killed in a brawl with a drunken Chippewa, Notin. Unlike most such cases this one came to trial. The verdict reflected the outrage many early settlers felt toward the whiskey traders. Notin was found not guilty and a criminal complaint was issued against Jake Drake, the Samuels employee who sold Rust his stock of booze. Drake himself fell victim to foul play shortly thereafter, an inebriated *Metis* slew him near his Wood Lake post.[96]

The presence of the whiskey dealers and the availability of treaty money accelerated the abuse of alcohol among the Indians of the valley. James Hayes, Indian agent to the Chippewa, complained of the "cupidity and heartlessness of the whiskey dealer," which he blamed for the "accounts of outrages and crime" that washed over the St. Croix frontier in the wake of the treaties. Among the Dakota, who had formerly lorded over the St. Croix, the impact was even more pathetic. "They *would* have whisky," wrote missionary Gideon Pond. "They would give guns, blankets, pork, lard, flour, corn, coffee, sugar, horses, furs, traps, any thing for whisky." As a result "They killed one another...they fell into the fire and water and were burned to death, and drowned; they froze to death, and committed suicide so frequently, that for a time, the death of an Indian in some of the ways mentioned was but little thought of by themselves or others."[97]

Between the rapacity of the whiskey dealers and the incompetence of federal authorities the St. Croix Chippewa benefited little from the financial terms of the 1837 land cession. In 1838 the Office of Indian Affairs bungled the first payment due them. The Chippewa had been told to gather on Lake St. Croix, near the future site of Stillwater, Minnesota, to receive their payment in goods and supplies. The Chippewa began to gather there in July. Every steamboat ascending the river was besieged by anxious Indians who sought their due from white immigrants, not appreciating that they

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[96] *Ibid*, 123, 232-3; Goodman, *Joseph R. Brown*, 260-1.

[97] Cleland, "Preliminary Report," *Fish in the Lakes, Wild Rice, and Game in Abundance*, 44; Folwell, *History of Minnesota*, I, 209.

"had nothing to due with payments." All summer and most of the fall the Chippewa waited, faithful and famished. The large congregation of Indians stripped the surrounding area of both firewood and game. Only in November with the Indians starving and freezing did the promised goods finally arrive. One hundred barrels of flour, twenty-five of pork, bales of blankets, boxes of guns and ammunition, even casks of gold dollars were all unloaded while thick flakes of snow covered the ground. Desperately hungry the Chippewa tore into the food. Many ate too much too soon, and suffered agonizing cramps for their trouble. According to one witness, "many of the old as well as the young died from overeating." In the meantime ice formed on the St. Croix rendering useless more than a thousand canoes the Chippewas had brought to transport their goods. They were forced to destroy the craft, rather than let them fall into the hands of the Dakota. Only that which they could carry on their backs could be taken north to their winter camps. Much of the food, money, and goods had to be left behind. During the long agonizing march up river and during the harsh winter that followed many Chippewa perished. As pioneer chronicler William Folsom noted, "their first payment became a curse rather than a blessing to them."[98]

In this manner the thousands of dollars of federal assistance to the Chippewa that the chiefs had seen as the means to maintain their fur trade lifestyle only further impoverished the Indians. J. F. Schafer, who distributed supplies to the Chippewa in 1851 complained of "the introduction of liquor among the Indians immediately after issuing provisions." When Schafer saw the Chippewa trading "their Blankets &c. for liquor," he tried to suspend the distribution of goods until the whiskey dealers left the payment site at the mouth of the Snake River. Indian agents frequently referred to the St. Croix Chippewa as "exceedingly poor, and naked and needy." William Warren, who had spent his life living amongst the Chippewa, advised the Governor of Minnesota "there is not under the sun a more wretched people than they are & will continue to be so as long as they remain in close proximity to a bad white population." Governor Alexander Ramsay himself described the St. Croix band as "the most miserable and degenerate of their tribe."[99]

The condition of the Indians excited more fear than pity among the European American settlers and lumbermen who were quickly moving into the ceded lands along the St. Croix. There was little attempt on settler's part to understand the customs and traditions of the Indians they found living in the valley. Typical of these cultural clashes were the numerous stories of Indian men barging into the cabins of white settlers and demanding food. Chippewa etiquette required visitors, however uninvited, to be fed. That kindness, of course, required some reciprocation, but not immediately. Whites regarded these visits as intimidation and complained to Wisconsin and Minnesota officials of "marauding Indians." Whenever something went missing, Indians were the first suspects. When early settlers in St. Croix Falls were missing a pig of lead, they accused the Chippewa of the theft. The Indians denied the crime, although the whites later noticed, "that all their war clubs, pipes and gun stocks had been lately and

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[98] Folsom, *Fifty Years in the Northwest*, 98.

[99] Bruce White, "The Regional Context of the Removal Order of 1850," *Fish in the Lakes, Wild Rice, and Game in Abundance*, 165, 188, 214, 269.

elaborately ornamented with molten lead." These types of actions, and encounters with lumbermen, inclined federal officials to revoke the provision of the 1837 treaty that allowed the Chippewa to remain on the ceded lands. [100]

On February 6, 1850 President Zachary Taylor issued an executive order ending the Chippewa's right to hunt and fish on the ceded lands. Local Indian agents were given the responsibility of determining which Chippewa were to be removed and where they would be relocated. The news caused considerable consternation among the Chippewa of Lake Superior, but among the St. Croix bands there was some interest in removing to another area. Only a month before the President's order the Snake River Chippewa had petitioned their agent for removal to the Crow Wing River in the Minnesota Territory. Portions of the band had already left the valley and crossed over the divide to Mille Lacs. Plans were made to remove all of the Chippewa from the valley, but typical of the slipshod manner in which Indian removals were managed federal authorities were unable to gather together the majority of the Indians in the region. After working all summer to make the move work Indian Agent John Watrous was able to effect the removal of 288 St. Croix residents to the Crow Wing River. Few of these remained long; nearly half were gone in a month. No concerted effort was again made to remove the St. Croix bands, nor were they awarded reservation lands in subsequent federal treaties. In the wake of President Taylor's order and the botched removal program, the St. Croix Chippewa were left in a legal limbo. They were not recognized as having rights in the St. Croix valley, yet there they resided for the next eighty years on lands unused or abused and abandoned by European American settlers. This precarious, furtive lifestyle led to the St. Croix band of the Chippewa being dubbed "the lost tribe." While the government may have lost sight of where they were, the Chippewa themselves were never "lost," or even in hiding. All they lost was the opportunity to live on at the Lac Court Oreilles Reservation. Instead they simply continued to live in small, band communities within the valley, where they live today. [101]

With no remaining legal claim to the St. Croix than the Chippewa, farmers of the lower St. Croix had no tolerance of the Dakota. In 1855, a large band of Dakota established a winter camp in the valley near Marine Mills. At first residents regarded the Dakota as interesting exotics. "They were really a curiosity to many of our citizens; they having not seen since their settlement here so large a party of Indians before," reported one townsman. In seeing the Dakota "dressed in pure Indian winter style" the people of Marine shared with each other "not a few half supressed, half frightened remarks at [of] ridicule." The merchant in charge of the local general store brought out a large barrel of crackers that the Indians "devoured" with the noise of "a flock of hungry geese." But it was not long before the Dakota ceased to be interesting and were regarded by most people in the area as a nuisance. One farmer complained the Dakota were, "frightening our wives and children, plundering our premises, laying vicious hands on every thing their savage eyes crave, and not leaving unmolested the domestic sanctity of our potato

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[100] Bruce M. White, "Indian Visit Stereotypes of Minnesota's Native People," *Minnesota History*, 53 (fall, 1992): 103-5; Folsom, *Fifty Years in the Northwest*, 99.

[101] White, "Regional Context of the Removal Order," *Fish in the Lakes, Wild Rice, and Game in Abundance*, 171, 202-4, 302-3.

hoes." Without the least irony the settlers complained "and what is worse they are killing all our deer, --this last offense amounts to an unpardonable crime." [102]

The opportunity to hunt in the under utilized forests of the St. Croix is what lured the Dakota back across the Mississippi River. What recently arrived farmers regarded as "our deer" were, of course, a resource the Dakota had relied upon for generations as part of their seasonal subsistence cycle. Changes in the population and ecology of the Upper Mississippi country made their old hunting grounds on the St. Croix more attractive than ever. The growth of settlements such as Red Wing, Hastings, and St. Paul, and their adjacent agricultural districts, where by 1850 more than five thousand European Americans resided, taxed the game populations along the Mississippi. Development along the St. Croix was focused more on logging, with Swedish immigrants only just beginning to establish farmsteads north of Stillwater. The presence of these whites was not yet enough to deplete the game resources of the long contested region. The Dakota may also have felt somewhat shielded from Chippewa attack by the small population of newcomers. Every January or February in the 1850s the Dakota undertook hunts in the valley. These were male dominated hunting parties, with only a handful of women and children in the company. In addition to helping to prepare the deer hides the women made moccasins that they sold for bread in Stillwater. The Apple River was a particularly rich hunting preserve. "They were heavily laden with skins, game, &c., and seemed to be well pleased," recorded the *St. Croix Union* in January of 1857, at the conclusion of that year's hunt. The amount of game brought down by these hunting parties was indeed prodigious. "How many deer did you kill?" asked a reporter who visited a Dakota camp in 1855. In answer one of the hunters "held up both hands, and motioned with them quite deliberately, ten times—indicating, as we interpreted it, One Hundred." A year later when the Dakota left their hunting camps near Marine the local populace estimated, with perhaps some exaggeration that between eight and twelve hundred deer had been taken.[103]

The hunting success of the Dakota perturbed the European American settlers because they counted on game as a source of food and barter during the first years of farming. "It is hard for the industrious and poor white settler to have his wood and stacks of hay burnt up," the *St. Croix Union* editorialized, "his traps and their booty stolen, and his game shot down, and much of it wasted." The settlers formed committees, signed petitions, and lobbied the territorial governor, but to no avail. The new white residents of the St. Croix complained the Dakota had not become sedentary and blamed the government who "allowed a set of scheming rouges with a pittance of whiskey to cheat them out of their annuities." But nothing was done to stop the Dakota visits, which continued till the 1860s, when their villages were pushed far up the Minnesota River valley and the St. Croix ceased to be a lucrative hunting ground.[104]

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[102] *St. Croix Union* (Stillwater, Minn.), 16 February 1855.
[103] Anderson, *Kinsmen of Another Kind*, 177; *St. Croix Union* (Stillwater, Minn.), 3 March 1855, 31 January 1856, 18 February 1856, 9 January 1857.
[104] *St. Croix Union* (Stillwater, Minn.), 2 February 1855, 19 December 1856.

Tragically throughout the painful twilight of Indian tenure, while English and Swedish voices replaced those of the Chippewa and Dakota along the St. Croix, the vicious intertribal war continued. The conflict was no longer really about territory, as treaties with the United States had awarded the valley to others. Vengeance, however, continued to exert a powerful spell. Remembering the wrongs of the past helped to obscure the problems of the present. Just as important was the need of young men to find a way to assert their manhood in a traditional way. Economic decline narrowed their range of opportunities to win distinction, so the feud continued.

In March of 1850, a war party from the village of Little Crow, the son of the Dakota leader who had first negotiated with the Americans, surprised a Chippewa camp on the Apple River. The ambush was a complete success. Eleven Chippewa women and children, and three men, were killed as they made maple sugar. One boy was captured. The next day the jubilant Dakota passed through Stillwater on their way west. They "went through the scalp dance, in celebration of their victory—forming a circle round the Chippeway boy—their prisoner—and occasionally striking him on the face with their reeking trophies," recorded the *Minnesota Chronicle*. The encounter was no different than hundreds that had come before and others that would follow. But the times and the river were different. With hope, boldness, and perfidy new people and new ways were dominating the valley. What once was seen as the way of wilderness war now, with the passage of the frontier and the disinheritance of a people, was deplored as simple, tragic, murder.[105]

The wretched attack at Apple River was one of the concluding scenes in the long history of Dakota dominance of the St. Croix Valley. After the tragic Sioux Uprising of 1862 the Dakota were removed far from the border river. Indian voices continued to be heard along the waterway but after 1862, those people were the Chippewa. They outlasted their ancient enemies by sheer persistence and they endured in the valley after the 1837 cession of their lands to the United States by practicing that same virtue.

The majority of the old Snake River band of Chippewa abandoned the valley during the 1850s, relocating to Mille Lacs. The bands at Yellow Lake and along the headwaters of the St. Croix, however, remained where they had always lived. Lacking land tenure they lived as squatters on government or lumber company lands. Wild rice and cranberry harvests remained vital to their subsistence and were supplemented with the yields of hunting and fishing. Furs continued to be traded, although the exchange now took place with small town merchants at a general store and not with red-sashed voyageurs at a trading post. During the late 1860s the United States government began to move Chippewa on to designated reservations. Most of the St. Croix Chippewa were related to tribal members living at the Lac Courte Oreille Reservation. A smaller number had family connections to the Chippewa of the Bad River Reservation. In time the reservations were subdivided into individual family allotments. The St. Croix Chippewa were not based at any reservation and most received no allotments and little in the way of educational or health services. While Bad River and Lac Courte Oreille were recognized Indian communities the St. Croix Chippewa pursued an independent existence largely

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[105] Copway, *Traditional History and Characteristic Sketches of the Ojibway Nation*, 65-7.

unknown to the government. People in northern Wisconsin began to refer to the St. Croix band as "the lost tribe."[106]

Of course, the Chippewa were the last people in the valley to be "lost." They adapted to the rise of the logging industry by utilizing it as a source of wage labor. Chippewa frequently worked as lumberjacks and river drivers. In the latter task they excelled. In 1902, the loggers Gear & Stinson employed an entire crew of Chippewa to bring their drive down the Clam River.[107] A resident of Shell Lake later recalled "the young men, many of them, are our best drivers on the river; quick, sprightly, active."[108] Edward St. John, a *Metis* logger employed a large number of his Chippewa kinsmen in his forest operations. One of his logging campsites, located in Pine County, Minnesota, exists within the Riverway. The camp was operated by St. John for the Marine-on-St. Croix lumber company of Walker, Judd, and Veazie. During the last years of the nineteenth century between 150 and 175 Chippewa continued to reside along the St. Croix.[109] Trouble for them came when the pine forest was cut and there no longer were log drives on the river. This period coincided with the rise of fish and game regulations that made it difficult for Indians to live off the land on a full-time basis. Private ownership of land was also at its peak during the first years at the end of the nineteenth century restricting their ability to gather wild foods. Cranberry marshes that had been utilized for generations, for example, were increasingly drained to grow hay for dairy cows. White farmers, often from foreign lands, sometimes nursed fears about the native people who lived around them. In 1878, several Swedish settlers started a panic that spread like wildfire through Burnett County, Wisconsin. A large gathering of Chippewa was exaggerated into the beginnings of a concerted attack by both the Chippewa and the Dakota on all settlers. Scores of farms were abandoned in anticipation of an attack the Governor called upon General Philip Sheridan to dispatch federal troops to restore order. The army exposed the entire affair to be a misunderstanding, although it did recommend to Wisconsin that the Chippewa not be allowed to "roam about in bands."[110] As squatting on private lands became problematic some of the Chippewa bought parcels of land where families erected wooden shanties and invited friends and kinsmen to settle as well. One such collection of wigwams and houses was located about a mile up the Namekagon River from the St. Croix. Called Dogtown or Ducktown it was home to as many as fourteen families and was occupied as late as 1938. John Medoweosh, a band leader, owned a tract of land at the junction of the Yellow and St. Croix rivers. He lived there for many years with an extended, multi-generational family. Augustus Lagrew, a *Metis* with a full-blooded Chippewa wife, owned land a few miles from Shell Lake, Wisconsin, that also served as place of congregation for the Chippewa. Gifts of food or small loans by

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[106] "St. Croix Indians of Wisconsin," Hearing on House Resolution 2264, Committee on Indian Affairs, July 23, 1919 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1919), 3-8.

[107] Photograph of the Clam River Drive Crew, 1902, Album 20.34a., Archives and Manuscripts Division, State Historical Society of Wisconsin.

[108] L.H. Mead, "Condition of Indian Affairs in Wisconsin," Hearings on Senate Resolution 263, Committee on Indian Affairs, United States Senate, (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1910), 31.

[109] James Fitting, *et al, An Archeological Survey of the St. Croix National Scenic Riverway, Phase I* (Jackson, Mich.: Gilbert/Commonwealth, 1977), 68-69.

[110] Ronald N. Satz, *Chippewa Treaty Rights: The Reserved Rights of Wisconsin's Chippewa Indians in Historical Perspective* (Madison: Wisconsin Academy of Sciences, 1991), 72-3.

white neighbors helped the Chippewa get through hard winters, although rarely did the Indians beg for handouts or apply for formal aid through the county poor fund.[111]

There are scores of historic sites associated with the post-treaty occupation of the valley by the Chippewa. One such site was the Pacwawong Lake village site that was occupied from the mid-nineteenth century until about 1910. It was located about where there is now a boat launch, which destroyed the historical integrity of the site. Another village site from this period was at Little Yellow Banks on the St. Croix River in Pine County, Minnesota. The area had been utilized as a camping site by the Dakota and before them by prehistoric Native Americans. Several Chippewa families lived there until the 1930s when, according to oral tradition, they were displaced to make way for a Boy Scout camp. There are also many sites of historic and prehistoric Indian burials in the valley.[112]

The United States Government rediscovered the St. Croix Chippewa in 1910 when Senator Robert M. La Follette held a Senate hearing on the condition of Indians in Wisconsin. The fact that the St. Croix Chippewa had in the past received little in the way of annuities prompted several congressional efforts to provide them with federal relief. But the St. Croix Chippewa were not given what they needed most, a guaranteed land base within their homeland. Not until 1934, with the passage of the Wheeler-Howard Act (Indian Reorganization Act), did the St. Croix Chippewa receive a federally recognized reservation. After eighty landless years the St. Croix people could not be brought together at a single location. Instead the new 3000-acre reservation was spread out over eleven separate Burnett County locations.

In the years that followed the Chippewa grew more and more like their neighbors whose ancestors hailed from Europe. Most of the St. Croix band became practicing Christians. One of their numbers, Philip B. Gordon, became the first Indian priest in the United States. He served not only his own people, but for many years was the beloved pastor to a largely white parish in the St. Croix valley.[113] Chippewa children participated in the same rural schools as the sons and daughters of farmers. Yet, in spite of these marks of assimilation the Chippewa remained anchored in their Indian identity. This identity became more important in the 1970s when the "Red Power" movement sparked greater political assertiveness. One result of this was the so-called "Walleye War" that was triggered in 1983 when the federal court established the rights of the Chippewa to fish outside of state regulations. The decline of both agriculture and forest products in the region had forced both whites and Indians to rely more on jobs in the tourism and recreation fields. Whites feared that the Chippewa's exercise of treaty rights would degrade stocks of fish that were critical to maintaining tourism. These tensions, which

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[111] "Condition of Indian Affairs in Wisconsin," 16-27.

[112] Fitting, *et al, an Archeological Survey of the St. Croix National Scenic Riverway, Phase I* (Jackson, Mich.: Gilbert/Commonwealth, 1977), 35,65-66.

[113] Paula Delfeld, *The Indian Priest: Father Philip B. Gordon, 1885-1948* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1977).

became violent in some parts of the North Country, were largely restrained in the St. Croix Valley.[114]

A more important assertion of Native American status came with the establishment of casino gambling. In 1974, President Richard Nixon approved changes in federal Indian policy that sparked a general move toward greater independent control of reservation lands by the tribal community. Although unanticipated at the time this led to a gradual expansion of restricted enterprises, from garbage dumps to gambling, on Indian reservations. The St. Croix Band of Lake Superior Chippewa took advantage of this change to establish two casinos, at Turtle Lake and Danbury. In a stunning turnaround, the St. Croix Tribal Enterprises became the largest private employer in Burnett County. Hundreds of white as well as Indian people found jobs in the gaming rooms and hotel complex. Profits from gambling led to the growth of a series of family, housing, and health services for the tribe.

At the 1837 council that resulted in the cession of their St. Croix lands the Chippewa chief Maghegabo tried to explain to Governor Henry Dodge that his people would endure in the valley. "Of all the country that we grant you we wish to hold on to a tree where we get our living & to reserve the stream where we drink the waters that give us life." The chief then placed an oak sprig, the germ of new life, on the council table. "Every time the leaves fall from it, we will count it as one winter past." After more than one hundred and fifty leaves have fallen from that symbolic tree the St. Croix Chippewa are more numerous and more economically successful than at any point in their history. Through exercise of the same patience and persistence that had served them so well in the long twilight struggle with the Dakota, the Chippewa survived the wave of white emigration that broke over the valley in the mid-nineteenth century. For them the St. Croix and the Namekagon remain "the waters that give us life."[115]

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[114] Satz, *Chippewa Treaty Rights*, 98-100.
[115] Proceedings of 1837 Chippewa Treaty in, *Chippewa Treaty Rights*, 142.

Chapter Two

River of Pine

For nearly 150 years European and American merchants had passed through the St. Croix Valley, attentive to the number and location of Indians within the valley, mindful of the presence of wild game, sometimes observing its agricultural prospects, but largely unconcerned about the timber resources of the region. The bright and articulate George Nelson, who first entered the river valley in the fall of 1802, was an exception. The "beautifully wooded" islands and hills of the valley struck him, and with a merchant's eye he predicted they could be as commercially important as the timberlands of the St. Lawrence valley. The St.Croix's "splendid groves of pine" he wrote "could as easily be floated down the Mississipy as from Chambly to Sorel." More typical, however, was the U.S. Army Lieutenant James Allen's terse dismissal of the upper Saint Croix landscape as "poor, and pine; none of it fit for cultivation."[1]

Interest in the region's forest resources dramatically increased during the 1830s. The French scientist Joseph N. Nicollet, who journeyed up the valley in August of 1837, reflected this new interest in the valley's forests. In passing the mouth of the Sunrise River he noted "The banks of the St. Croix are still covered with black alder, sumac five or six feet tall, white and red oak, soft maple and some walnut or oil nut or shagnut trees. White pines are mixed with deciduous trees, and there are wild plum trees on the ridges." Above the mouth of the Snake River he noted that the patches of tall dark pine became more abundant. "They crown the peaks of hills and mix with other species which border the St. Croix." Nicollet's heightened appreciation of the region's forest cover may simply reflect his educated eye, but it is likely that he understood that during the 1830s trees replaced furs as the most coveted commodity within the valley.[2]

Nicollet's journey up the St. Croix came at a critical time in the region's history, as federal agents were negotiating to clear Indian title to the valley. The impetus for this change was a rising chorus of voices demanding access to the pine forests of the St. Croix. Forests hardly worth noting a generation before had been rendered into promising assets by the growth of towns and farms in the valley of the Mississippi. The St. Croix, Chippewa, Red Cedar, and Rum Rivers, all tributaries of the Mississippi that boasted vast forests of pine became the wooded hinterland that helped to build downriver towns such as Winona, Rock Island, Davenport, and St. Louis. In the post-Civil War era the demand became even more insistent and the market more lucrative as the treeless plains were surveyed into 160-acre homesteads. The exchange of a sod house for a frame home built

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[1] Nelson, *Winter in the St. Croix Valley*, 41; James Allen, "Journal and letters of Lieutenant James Allen," *Schoolcraft's Expedition to Lake Itasca: The Discovery of the Sources of the Mississippi*, edited by Philip P. Mason (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1958), 221-2.

[2] Joseph N. Nicollet, *The Journals of Joseph N. Nicollet: A Scientist on the Mississippi Headwaters With Notes on Indian Life, 1836-37* edited by Martha Bray (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society, 1970), 143.

of Wisconsin or Minnesota pine was a badge of success for the homesteader and the basis of many a lumber baron's fortune.[3]

The fur trade had divided the St. Croix valley between a upper river dominated by the Chippewa and economically tied to Lake Superior, and a lower river, home to the Dakota and linked to St. Louis based traders. In terms of transportation geography the logging frontier would restore the unity of the valley. The entire river system would be harnessed to bring the winter's harvest of logs to the collecting booms along the lower river. Like a funnel the St. Croix River was used to concentrate the wealth of the entire valley at its mouth. The forests of the upper river played a large role in building towns and the industry along Lake St. Croix, as well as the nearby cities of St. Paul and Minneapolis. The logging frontier first made manifest the dichotomy of a thinly inhabited upper river resource frontier and the prosperous urbanized lower river. In the course of doing so it wrought a massive transformation of the valley's landscape and severely, in some cases irrevocably, altered its ecosystem. Through its involvement in the lumber industry the St. Croix played its most important role in American history, but at a cost still being exacted today.

Lumbermen attempted to transform the free flowing wild river into a disciplined industrial waterway. Never before and never again would the river be used so intensely. Mill operators began each day by studiously noting its fluctuations in level. Around blazing campfires log drivers endlessly debated the ebb and flow of its current. By building dams as assiduously as the all but eliminated beaver, by blasting boulders and constructing booms the lumber men made each mile of the St. Croix's 165 mile length serve the purpose of delivering logs to mill and market. Like the tentacles of some great industrial monster the lumber industry probed, damned and controlled even the remotest of the river's tributaries, bending their wild reaches to its commercial purpose. The early lumbermen more than doubled the natural transportation capacity of the St. Croix watershed to 330 miles of water capable of carrying logs to market. When the industry expanded further in the wake of the Civil War more splash dams and stream improvements brought the size of the St. Croix system to a staggering 820 miles of useable waterway. The St. Croix was more than a logging river. For better than a half century, when the ice went out each spring, from its headwaters to Stillwater, it became a river of pine.[4]

From Fur Trade to Fir Trade

Fur traders, as businessmen familiar with the region and its resources, seemed to be in an excellent position to profit from the rising market for lumber in the 1830s and 1840s. But turning the opportunity into an actuality proved frustratingly difficult. Some traders like Joseph Duchene, or as he was known to all, La Prairie, who had come to the valley as a young man to work for the Northwest Company, were too old by the 1830s to

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[3] John N. Vogel, *Great Lakes Lumber on the Great Plains: The Liard, Norton Lumber Company in South Dakota* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1992), vii-xiii.

[4] William G. Rector, *Log Transportation in the Lake States Lumber Industry, 1840-1918* (Glendale, Calf.: Arthur H. Clarke Co., 1953) 90-4.

take up a new line of trade. After working for many years for the American Fur Company in the St. Croix valley, Duchene lived his last days near Pokegama Lake. He suffered from poor eyesight and was known to the Chippewa as Mushkdewinini, "the old blind prairie man." Duchene was cared for in those last years by his son-in-law, Thomas Connor, another Nor'Wester who was disinclined to pursue the opportunities offered by the logging boom. Connor operated a trading post on the St. Croix River, at the mouth of Goose Creek; content to continue trading with the Chippewa, and watching the pine float past his door. The Warren and Cadotte families that had so long controlled the trade of the valley from Lake Superior struggled to make the transition to logging. Lyman Warren saw the handwriting on the wall in 1838 when he left the American Fur Company. Leaving the Lake Superior country he settled on the Chippewa River, near the falls and established a sawmill. He was, however, struck with illness in 1847 and he died before becoming deeply involved with logging. His son William W. Warren was the best educated of the new generation. He was a young man with a scholarly disposition and weak health. He died in 1853 at the age of twenty-eight, after completing his manuscript history of the Chippewa people. [5]

Those fur traders who were in a position to profit from logging were men with trade contacts with the downriver towns that comprised the market for St. Croix pine. Logs unlike furs could not be carried over the Brule portage to Lake Superior. The bulky commodity had to follow the dictates of gravity and go south with the river's flow. Fur traders tied to Mackinac like the Cadottes lacked the market and supply contacts to make the transition from furs to logs. Joseph Renville Brown, the less than scrupulous trader who had lived among both the Dakota and Chippewa of the St. Croix had the necessary downriver contacts. He was a classic frontier man on the make, anxious to make his fortune, be it by furs, land, or timber. As early as 1833 Brown had been cutting pine on the upper St. Croix, most of it seems to have been for developing his trading posts and farm, but some may have been sent down to the Mississippi. Certainly by 1836 Brown had begun to log commercially. Located at the current site of Taylor's Falls, Minnesota, Brown had a crew of loggers strip the river flat of timber. He likely had additional logs cut upstream and floated down to the falls. Brown continued to trade with the Chippewa, which may have distracted him from pursuing the logging venture with vigor. Upwards of two hundred thousand feet of pine were cut by his men, but before the bulk of it could be floated down river they were burned in a forest fire. The remainder of the logs was simply abandoned on the riverbank when Brown, with a characteristic sudden change of direction, decided to quit the St. Croix and resume fur trading on the Minnesota River.[6]

Brown's early logging on the St. Croix had been an illegal intrusion on Chippewa land. Indian Agent Lawrence Taliaferro tried to ward off European-Americans cutting pine on Dakota or Chippewa land. But with pine boards selling for sixty dollars per thousand feet in towns like Galena, Illinois, the center of the lead-mining region, the number of people willing to violate the law was great. In 1836, Brown's sometime partner in the fur trade, Joseph Bailly, complained to Congress. "A few years back the labor of a few Lumbering parties operating with whip saws was sufficient to supply the

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[5] Folsom, *Fifty Years in the Northwest*, 262-3; Warren, *History of the Ojibway People*, 18-20.
[6] Folsom, *Fifty Years in the Northwest*, 81-2, 92-3, 303; Goodman, *Joseph R. Brown*, 140-1.

wants of that market, but now that the country is settling with a rapidity unexampled in the history of our country it requires greater supplies." Was it the government's intention, Bailly asked, to let the whole population of the Mississippi valley "suffer for want of Lumber because a few miserable Indians hold the country?"[7]

Even without government sanction fur traders and others attempted to make their own agreements with the Chippewa to secure access to the pinelands of the upper St. Croix. In March 1837, three of the American Fur Company's former lions in the region, William Aitkin, Henry Hastings Sibley, and Lyman Warren brought together a conference of St. Croix and Snake River Chippewa for the purpose of securing a ten year lease on the forests of the upper river. William Dickson tried the same tactic and like the above-mentioned traders, agent Taliaferro foiled him. Men with more modest expectations simply discretely made their way up river with a handful of laborers and after offering gifts to the local Chippewa band, began to cut pine. One Joseph Pitt led one such party to the falls in 1836. He obtained the consent of the Chippewa only to be run off by the Indian agent Lawrence Taliaferro. [8]

Failure to come to terms with the Indians could be quite costly, as John Boyce of St. Louis discovered in 1837. He led eleven men past the falls in the autumn of that year. With logging equipment, six oxen, and a mackinaw boat he pushed up the St. Croix to the vicinity of the Snake River, where he established a logging camp. The Snake River band, which well understood the great value the white man placed on pine lumber, protested Boyce's activities. "Go back where you came from," ordered Little Six, a bandleader backed by more than one hundred of his people. Boyce sought the mediation of the Presbyterian missionaries at Lake Pokegama. They advised him to leave and the Chippewa threatened to prevent Boyce from removing any of the pine. "We have no money for logs; we have no money for land. Logs cannot go," was their firm policy. Boyce persisted in spite of all threats and harassments, although his efforts came to naught in any event. In May, after a winter of logging, Boyce tried to raft his harvest downstream. The Chippewa, in a manner Boyce regarded as menacing, followed the drive. High water and hungry, unpaid, thoroughly dispirited men led to the loss of most of the logs. With the Chippewa looking on Boyce also lost most of his logging equipment when the mackinac boat upset while being lined down the falls. The boat itself was saved when the shrill whistle of the steamboat *Palmyra* "broke the silence of the Dalles." Aboard were other lumbermen who rendered Boyce assistance saving his boat and recovering some of the logs. Perhaps most important, the steamboat bore the news that the United States Senate had radified the 1837 treaty of session, appeasing the Snake River Chippewa. It was too late, however, for Boyce. The few logs that were recovered and sold did not come close to meeting the expenses of the venture. Pioneer chronicler William Folsom recorded that "Boyce was disgusted and left the country."[9]

The Treaty of 1837 opened the St. Croix valley to European-American occupation and loggers surged into the valley to exploit the new frontier. John Boyce had paid a high

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[7] *Ibid*, 142.
[8] *Ibid*, 140.
[9] Folsom, *Fifty Years in the Northwest*, 99.

penalty for beginning operations prematurely. As did a number of the other lumbermen who were on the river immediately in the wake of the treaty. In September 1837, Franklin Steele and several partners ascended the river in a bark canoe and a scow loaded with supplies and men. They built several cabins at the falls, filed land claims on the best mill sites, and scouted good timberlands up river. Four other groups of lumbermen arrived that fall. Steele's group organized themselves as the St. Croix Falls Lumber Company and construction was begun on a twenty thousand dollar sawmill. They controlled an important waterpower site, but retained inexperienced millwrights and lumbermen. Their mill was not completed until 1842, in part because the site posed considerable construction challenges. Franklin Steele soon sold his share of the company, and the firm fell under the control of absentee owners and men more interested in land speculation than logging. The most important of the former was Caleb Cushing, a prominent Democratic politician in Massachusetts and a veteran United States diplomat. As logging expanded on the St. Croix it became clear that the head of the Dalles was not the best place to locate a mill and subsequent lumbermen elected to drive their logs farther downstream to lower Lake St. Croix. This did not deter Cushing from continuing to make sizable investments in the site and in timberlands upriver, as well as wrangling with his partners in costly lawsuits. The latter worked their way up to the United States Supreme Court. Cushing was not able to establish his control over the company until 1857. By that time the bloom had long since left the bright promise of the falls site. Other towns had been platted and emerged as logging centers. The *Polk County Press* mocked St. Croix Falls's hopes of being the industrial center of the river. "The ruthless hand of time has made sad ravages, and though the industrious relic hunters might find there a dam by a mill site, they would not find a mill by a dam site."[10]

The ill-fated St. Croix Falls Lumber Company did succeed in making history in its career of failure and misfortune. Quite unintentionally the company caused the first rafts of lumber to be sent down river to St. Louis. In 1843, the company's boom below the falls gave way before high water. The entire corporate stock of logs was borne away on the flood. While this meant the newly completed mill could not cut the lumber, the company could still salvage something if the logs could be caught downstream. John McKusick a young logger just arrived from New England collected about two million feet of logs. These were assembled into rafts of five hundred thousand feet each and floated down the Mississippi to St. Louis. In the years that followed literally thousands of rafts of logs would follow in their wake. John McKusick used the proceeds from his share of that log sale to purchase the machinery for a water-powered mill. That mill was established at Stillwater where it played a major role in making that site, as opposed to St. Croix Falls, the lumber center of the river.[11]

The surest way to making money in this early stage of the logging boom was to keep things simple -- get a crew of men to the upper St. Croix, cut several hundred thousand board feet of trees, drive them over the falls, assemble them into a raft and float them to growing river towns, preferably one not too far south. In May of 1838 Lawrence

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[10] *Ibid*, 82-3; Edward W. Durant, "Lumbering and Steamboating on the St. Croix River," *Minnesota Historical Collections* 10, 2 (1905), 648-9; Dunn, *St. Croix*, 90-4.

[11] Durant, "Lumbering on the St. Croix," *Minnesota Historical Collections*, 649.

Figure 13. Oxen haul a big pine log to the river landing. From *Harper's Magazine*, March, 1860.

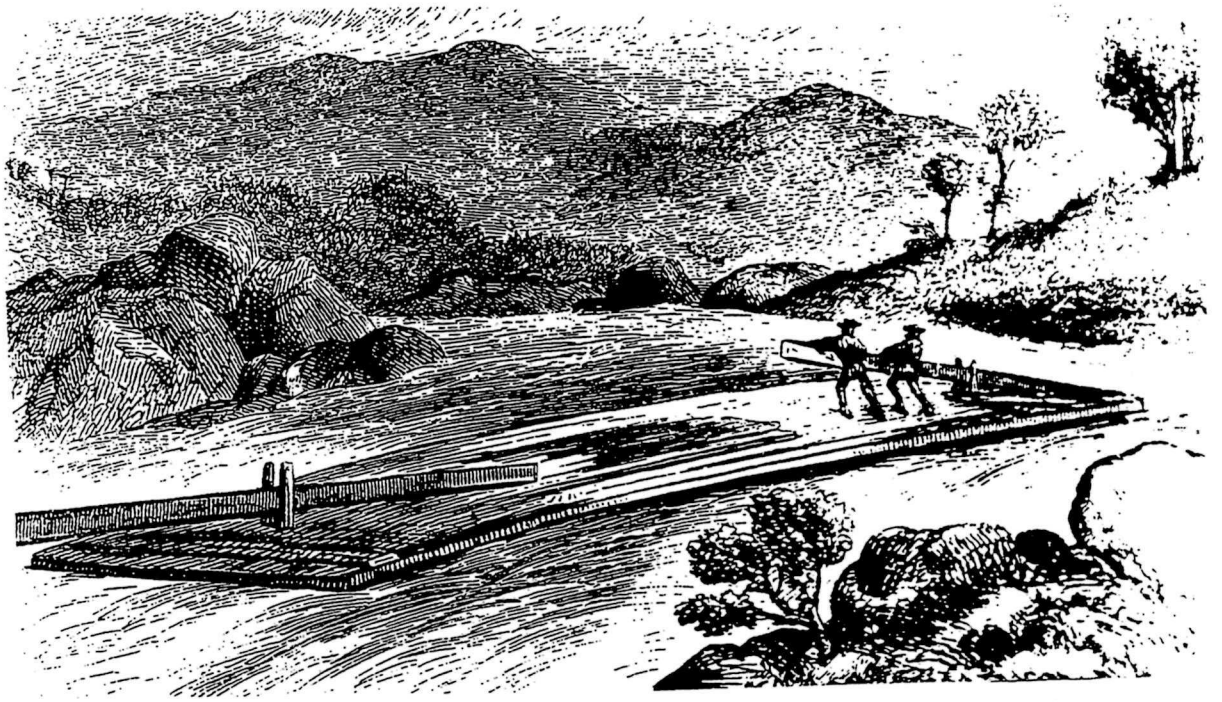


Figure 14. A lumber raft from *Harper's Magazine*, March, 1860. Rafts assembled on the St. Croix for transport down the Mississippi were often much larger.

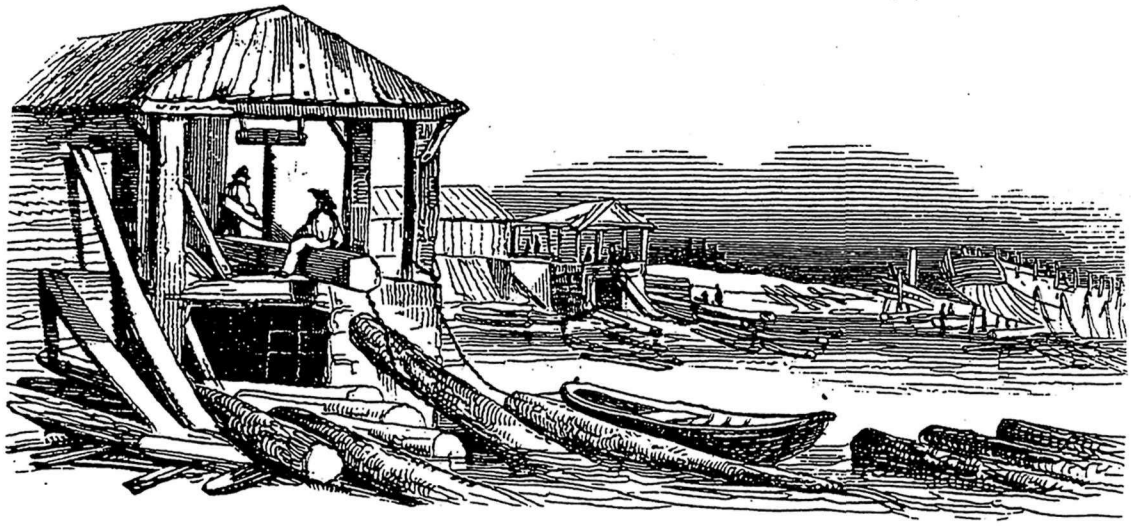


Figure 15. A primitive water powered sawmill. During the 1850s and 1860s these single sash saws were replaced by multiple cutting surfaces known as gang saws. As gang saws became more popular steam power replaced water power.

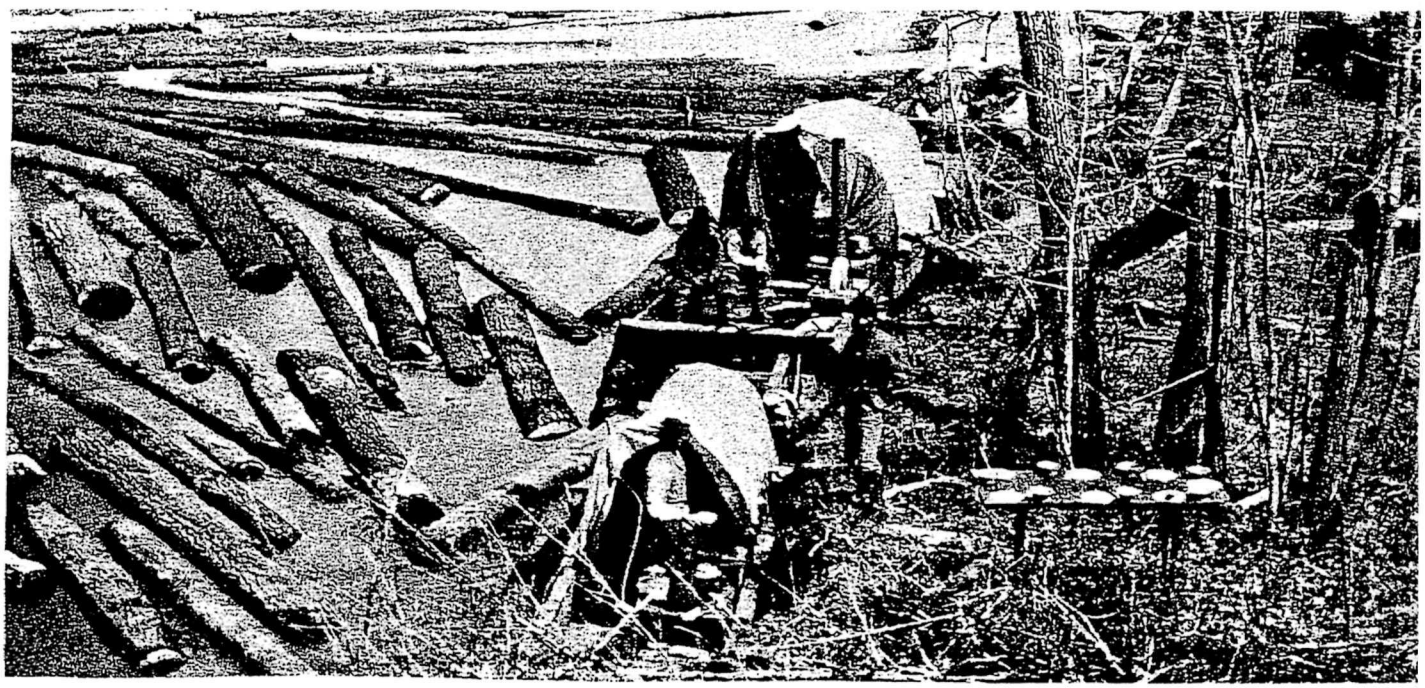


Figure 16. A wanigan, the cook boat used on log drives, tied up at the bank of a log filled stream. From *Harper's Magazine,* March, 1860.

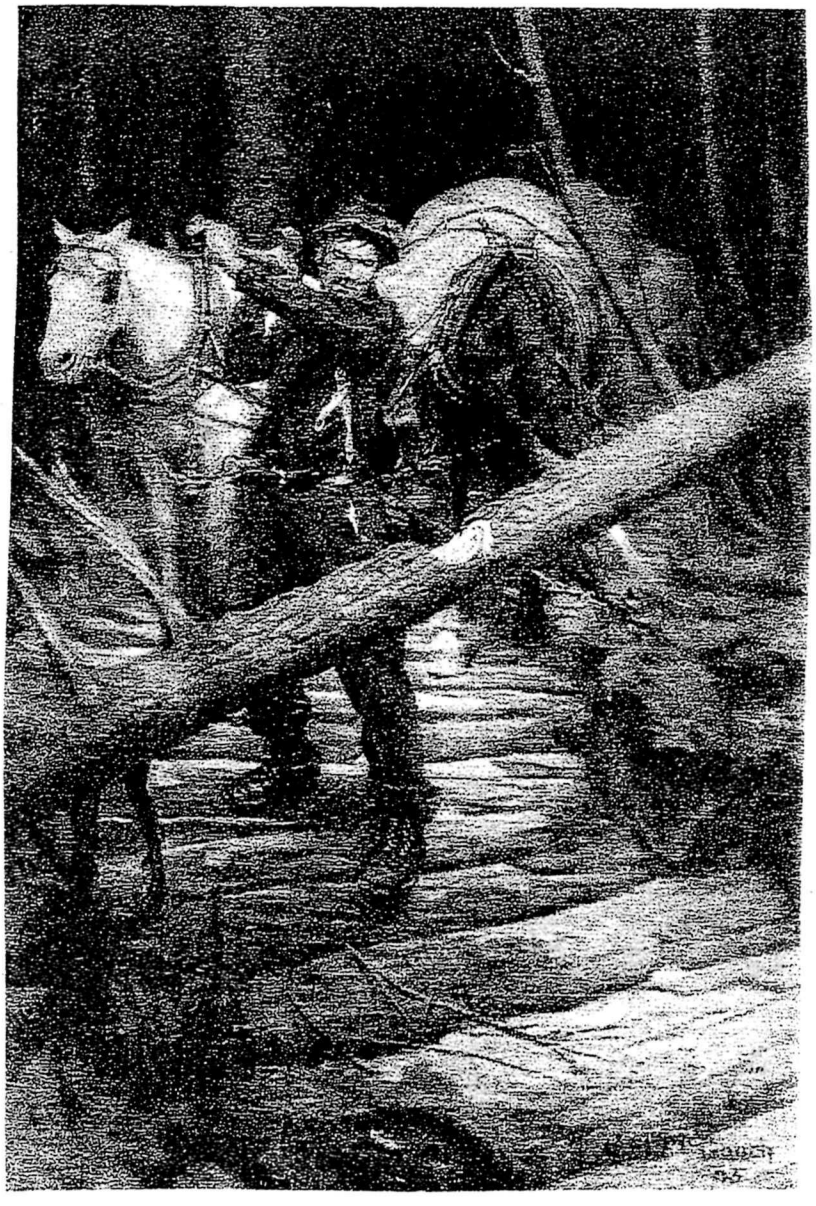


Figure 17. A logger removes a tree from a tote road. In the late nineteenth century hundreds of crudely made tote roads were cut through the forest in order to bring supply wagons to logging camps. From *Outing Magazine*, April, 1907.

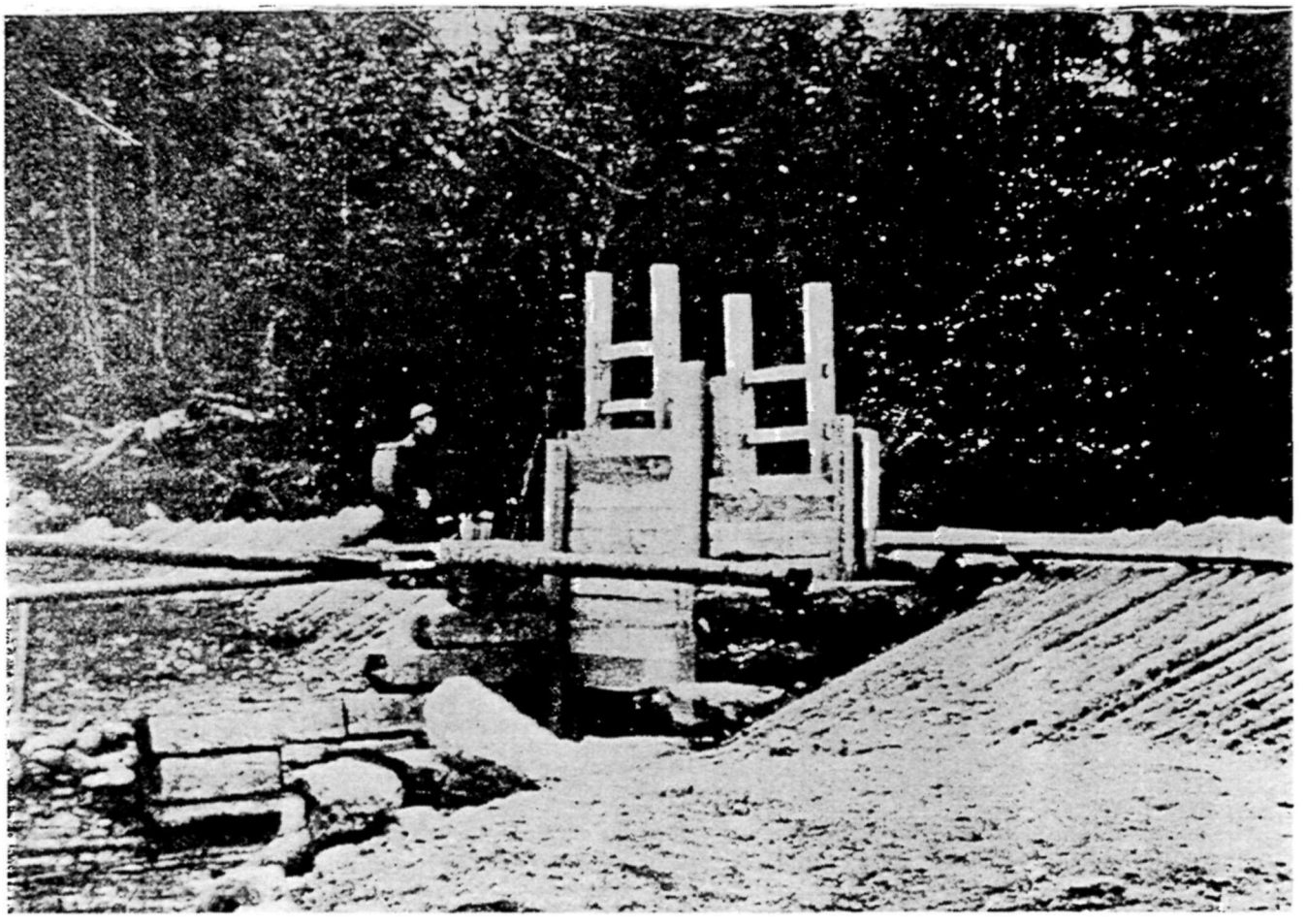


Figure 18. The upstream face of a small rafter dam. This style of dam was very common within the St. Croix and Namekagon valleys, including the lift gate. From Ralph Clement Bryant, *Logging* (1914).

Figure 19. During the heyday of logging in the valley in the 1880s *Harper's Magazine* saluted the lumberjacks and rivermen with this illustration titled: "Wisconsin—On the Lumber Drive in the St. Croix."

Figure 20. An imaginative depiction of the dangerous job of the river driver, from *Outing Magazine*, April, 1907.

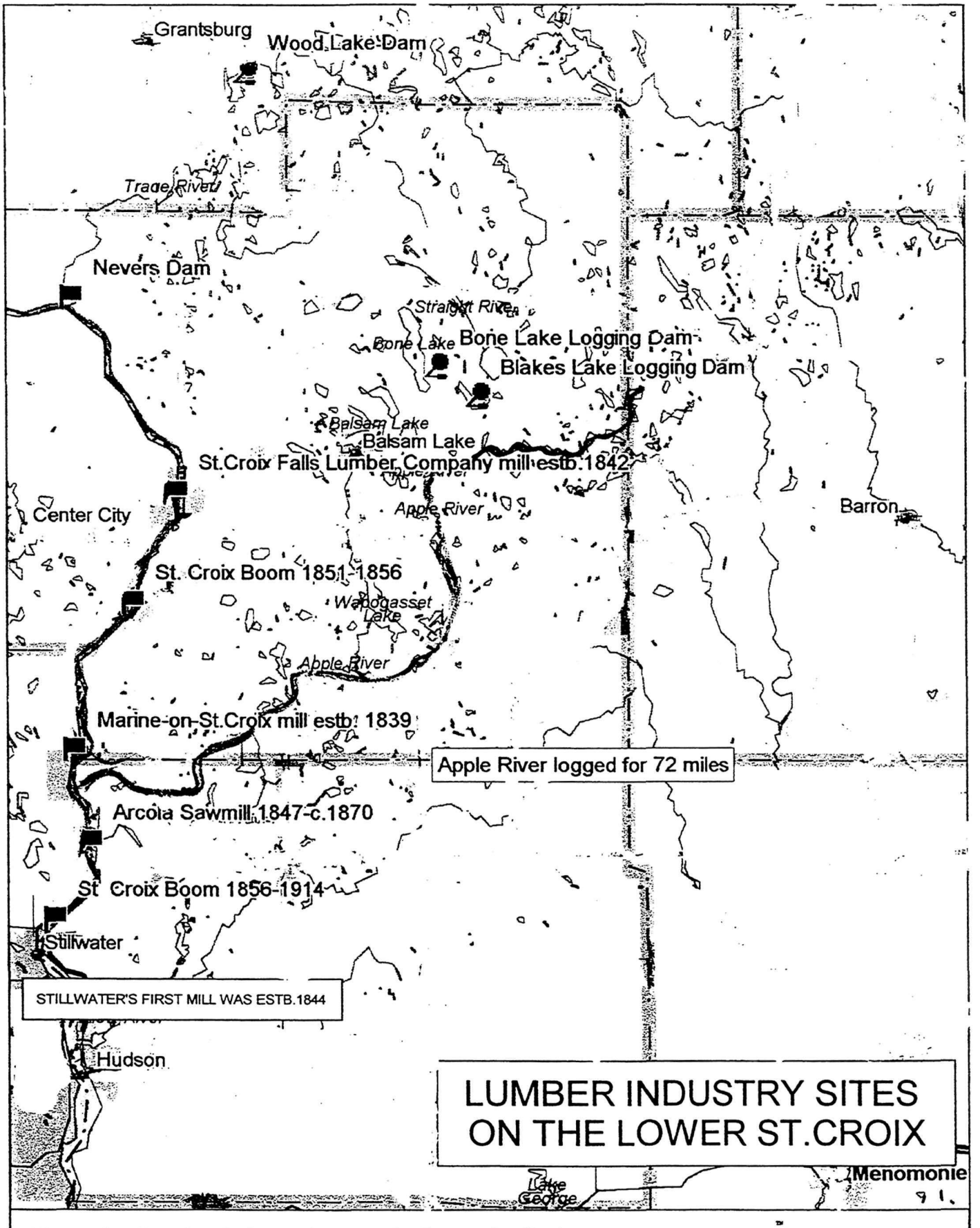
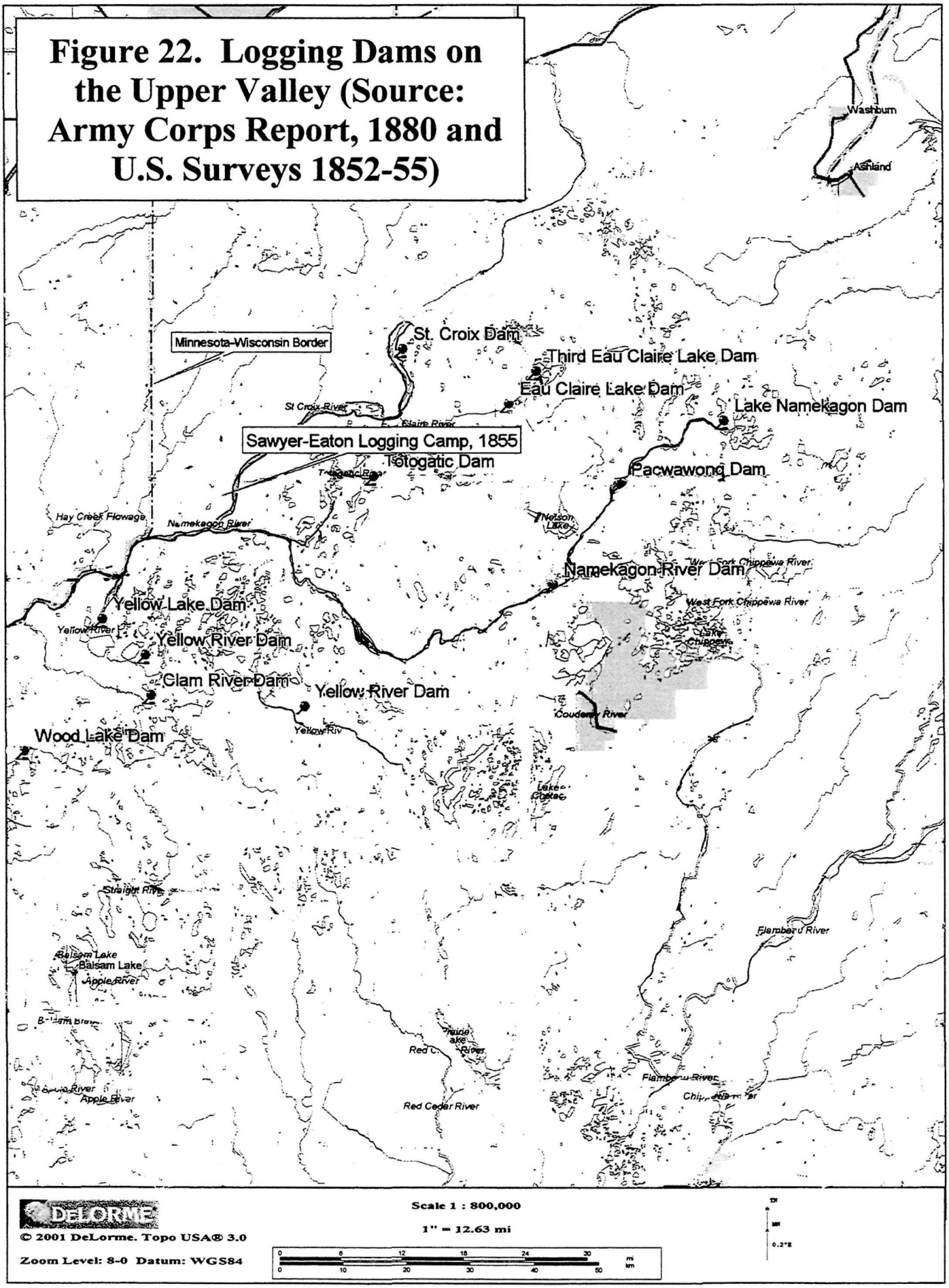


Figure 21. Lumber Industry Sites on the Lower St. Croix.

Figure 22. Logging Dams on the Upper Valley (Source: Army Corps Report, 1880 and U.S. Surveys 1852-55)



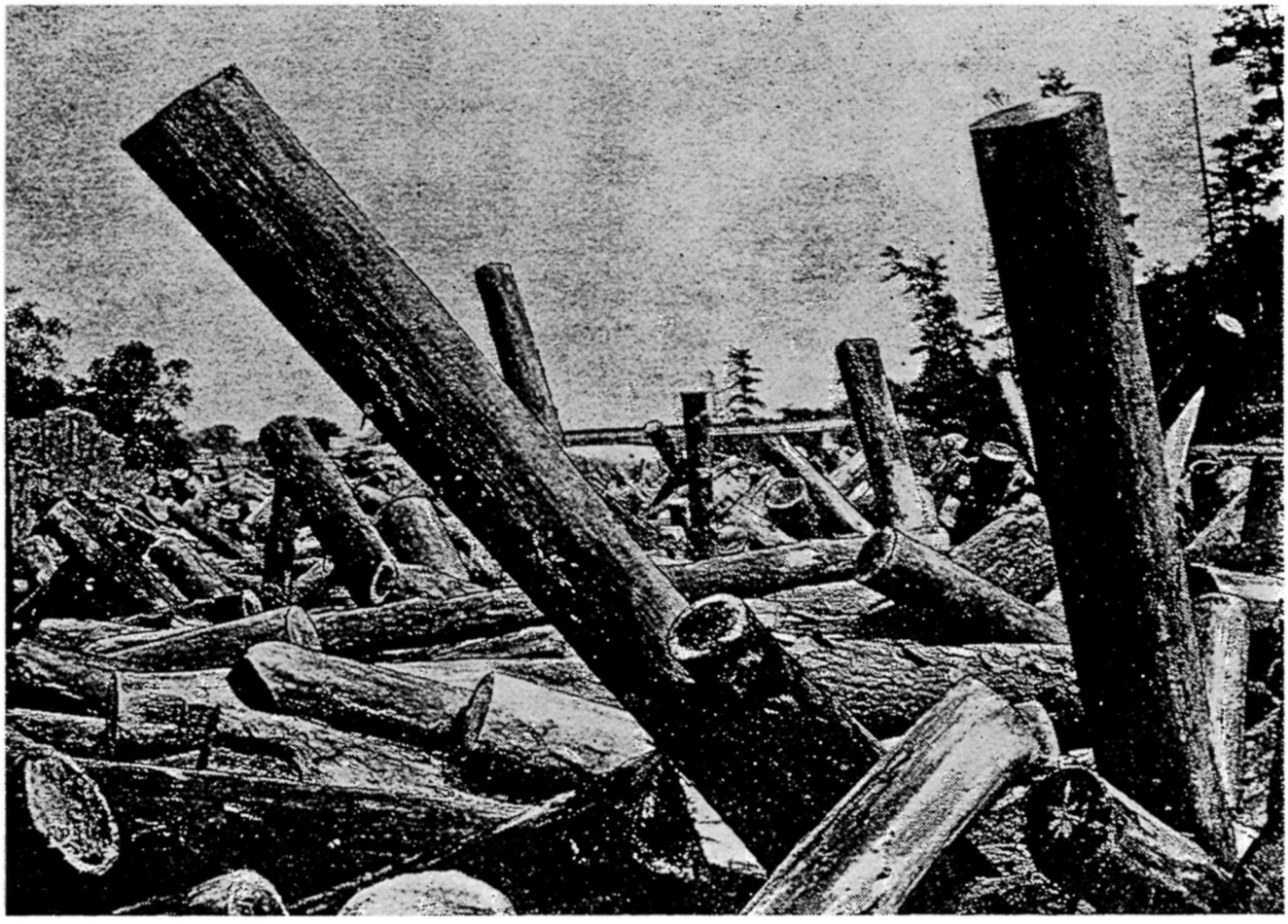


Figure 23. The chaos of the almost annual log jam at the Dalles of the St. Croix. From *Outing Magazine*, March, 1890.

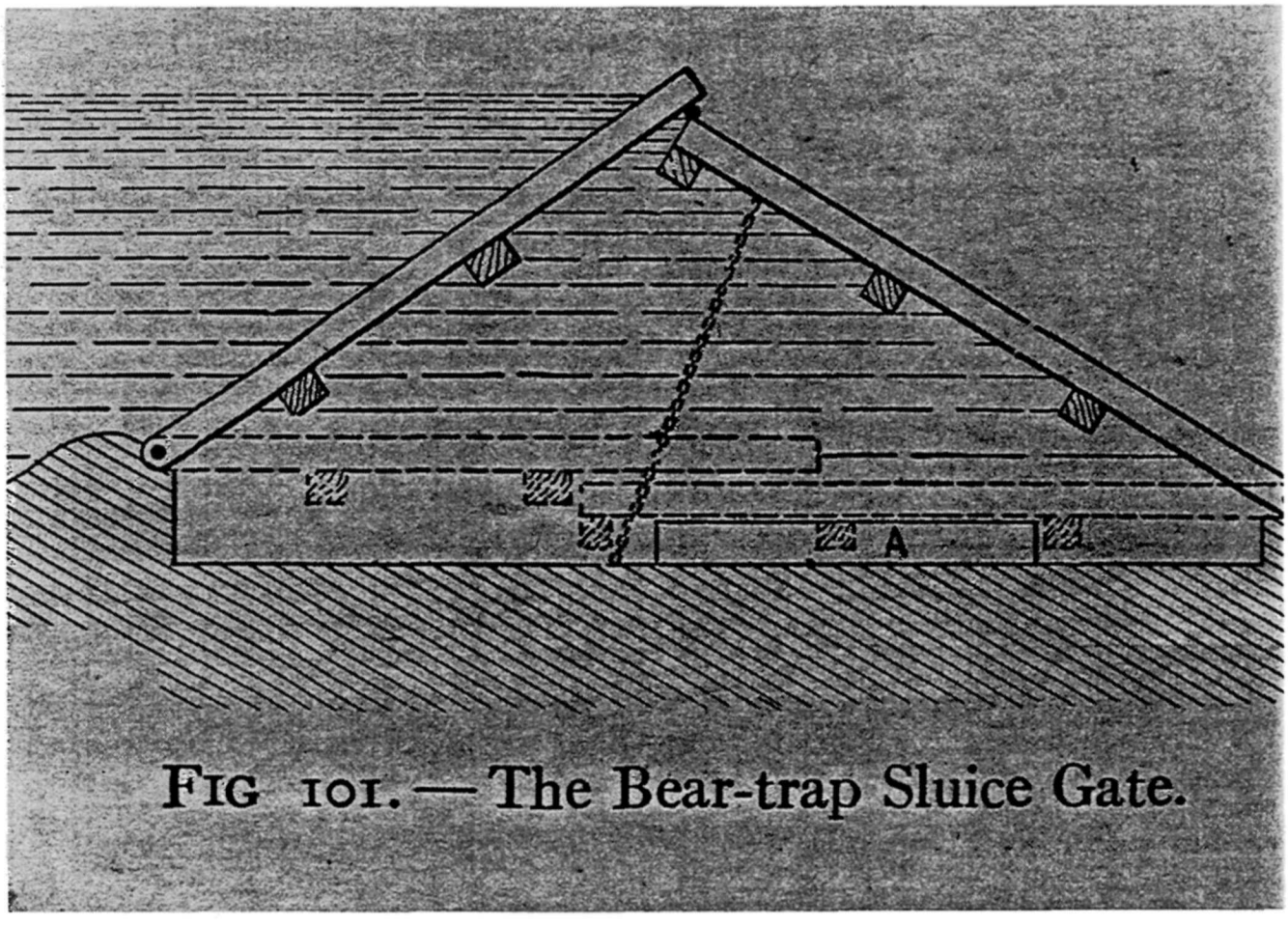


Figure 24. A profile of the Bear-trap sluice gate used on the Nevers Dam. This type of gate was developed in Pennsylvania although Nevers Dam was the largest dam structure for which it was ever used. From Ralph Bryant Clement, *Logging* (1914).

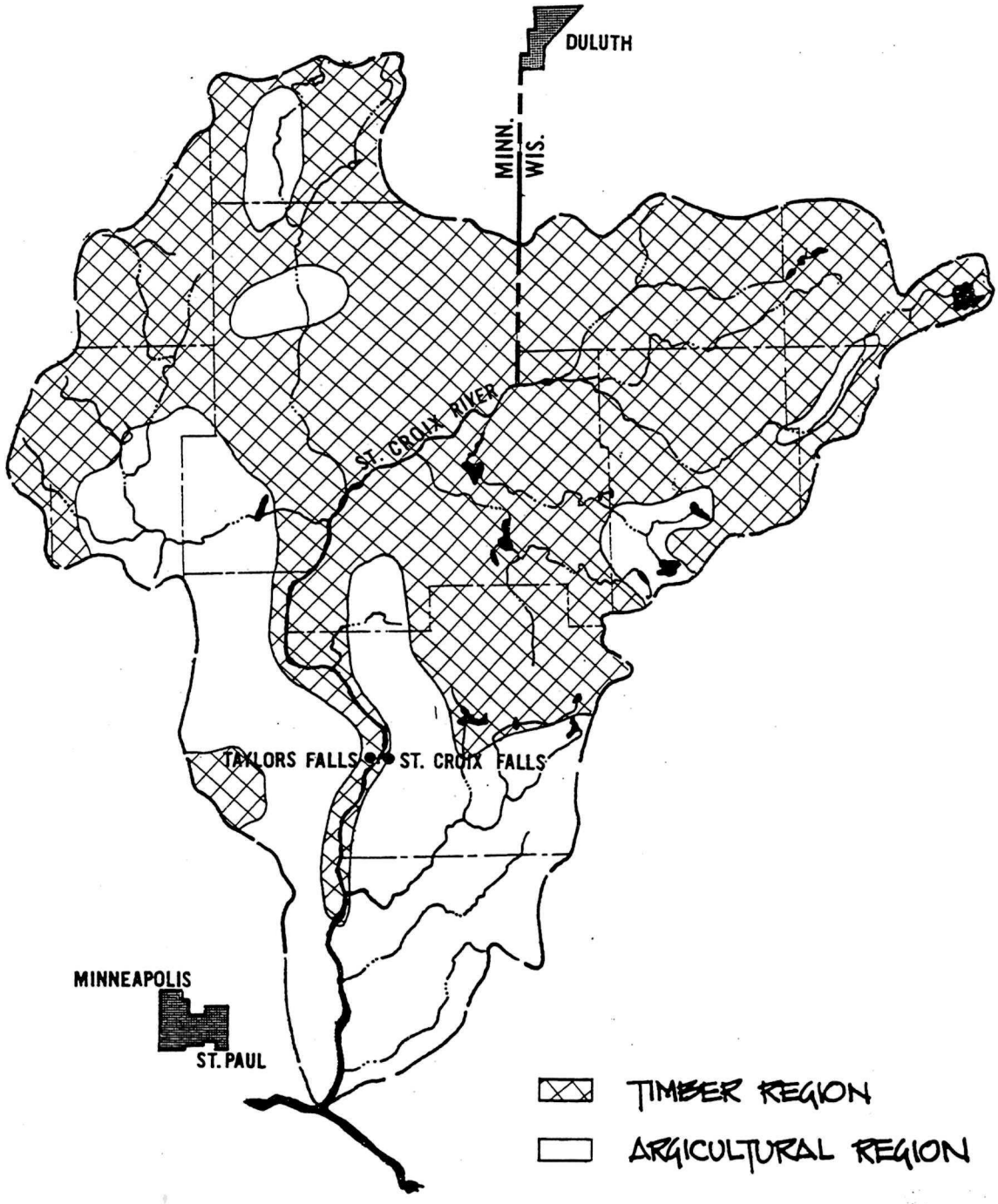


Figure 25. This map of the natural division of the St. Croix watershed into farming and forest regions is based upon soil types. In the late nineteenth and twentieth century farmers coming into the valley had no idea that the St. Croix's agricultural potential was so restricted.

Taliaferro reported that two hundred men were at work in the pineries of the St. Croix and the Chippewa, by October the number had grown to five hundred. These small-scale operators benefited from what amounted to a free resource. The patchy pine lands of the lower river were not surveyed by the General Land Office until 1847 while the tall timber of the upper river was not mapped until the 1850s, so even if an individual wanted to purchase the land he was logging it would have been impossible. Even preemption claims were not possible on unsurveyed lands in Minnesota until Congress extended that privilege in 1854. With federal land policy making legal purchase impossible and the market clamoring for more lumber, the pioneers of the pineries responded in the best, unscrupulous tradition of the frontier — they took what they needed and damned the consequences. The era of free timber on the lower St. Croix lasted at least a decade, from 1838 to 1848, and on the upper river private fortunes were made off public lands well into the 1850s.[12]

Frontier Logging: Life in the Forest

Logging on the St. Croix during the 1840s and 1850s was a primitive, small-scale, frontier enterprise. The size of a logging crew was small -- between ten and fifteen men. Typical was the eleven man team deployed by the ill-fated John Boyce in 1837. That year there were at least five crews operating on the St. Croix. By 1854 this number had swelled to eighty-two crews, twenty-two of whom were established along the Snake River where some of the finest white pine was to be found. Each of the crews included several oxen. In 1837 Boyce had six of the beasts of burden. They were used to drag felled pine from where they were cut to the river landing where they were stacked for transportation in the spring. The early loggers had the advantage of being able to work stands of pine adjacent to the river. Since the logs were only dragged a short distance, a simple wooden travois, called a "go-devil," attached to a single oxen, was the only equipment needed to transport logs. The crews were divided into a few specialized tasks. Most valuable were the choppers, men skilled with using an axe and in making a tree fall where they wanted. They were usually the best-paid men in the crew. Once a pine was felled, the swamper came in and cut off any branches. Another man called the barker peeled off the bark on the underside of the tree, to create a smooth surface for dragging on the snow. Next the chainer connected the oxen to the log and guided it through the drifts to the landing. What may be the location of one of these river landings can be found on the Upper Namekagon River above Hayward, Wisconsin (T40N, R11W, Sec. 14, NE1/4, NE1/4). At the site a ramp was clearly excavated into the bank of the river to allow for the easy sliding of logs into the river. During this early period of logging axes and handspikes were the only tools used. Brute strength and teamwork made up for the lack of technology. After a long day of working in the woods in sub-freezing temperature the men were bone-weary and cold. One contemporary remarked that the "boys" had

[12] Goodman, *Joseph R. Brown*, 142; Agnes M. Larson, *History of the White Pine Industry in Minnesota* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1949), 53-4.

been "transformed into men like unto Abraham of old" -- the black whiskers of youth having been made "white as the driven snow" by the frost.[13]

Logging camps from this primary, primitive period of the logging frontier are the type most likely to be found within the narrow boundary of the National Scenic Riverway. Camps from this era were built near the banks of the St. Croix and its tributaries although they seldom consisted of more than one or two structures. The men lived and ate in a single shanty constructed of rough logs cut on the site. "Took a look around to see what a camp was," wrote a journalist who visited a logging site on Wood Lake in 1855. "Found it to be about 25 feet square with a roof running almost to the ground. The gables were built up with logs, and no windows. A door opened into the domicile and was secured with a wooden latch." The bunks were aligned under the low hanging eves of the shanty, with the deacon's seat at the foot of each bed. "This is a seat running on both sides of the fire from one end of the camp to the other." In the center of the camp was a great open hearth while "on the roof was a chimney, and the smoke receded from the center to the cavity above without the aid of a back wall." Some of these camps were built without the aid of a single nail, from the materials available on the site. There was no illusion of building for the future, after a winter, or at most two, the buildings were abandoned. Remarkably, only a handful of actual logging camps sites have been identified within the Riverway. In many places archeologists have discovered the outlines of buildings from the mid to late nineteenth century but positive identification is difficult. One possible logging camp sites was identified on the Wisconsin side of the river near the site of Nevers Dam. Until further studies are made it will remain unclear if this site was actually a camp where lumberjacks cut timber or if it was associated with driving logs on the St. Croix. The physical remains found on the southeast bank of the Namekagon River in Sawyer County (T42N, R8W, Sec. 21) are more clearly associated with an early lumber camp. The site consists of the outline of four structures and a depression that likely was the site of a root cellar. Artifacts found at the site included clay pipes and portions of kerosene lamps. Archeologists dated the site as from 1850-1900. According to local tradition the site was known as Doran's Crossing and Lumber Camp.[14]

The biggest challenge to the early lumbermen was supplying their camps. An advance party would be sent up river in the late autumn, usually via a bateau or some other river craft. They would build the shanty and bring in a store of preliminary supplies. Later after the snow fell overland transportation to the camps became possible. Lumbermen maintained a large warehouse in Taylor's Falls that would be stocked by steamboat deliveries during the fall and would serve as the starting place for winter supply sleds. Platted in 1851, the village of Taylors Falls was an important supply center for the logging camps because it stood at the head of steam navigation on the St. Croix. The town's merchants had to literally carve their town out of the trap rock at the foot of the falls of the St. Croix River. Taylors Falls was also a useful supply center because of

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[13] *Ibid*, 71-8; Folsom, *Fifty Years in the Northwest*, 82-3, 92-3; James Fitting, *et* al, *An Archeological Survey of the St. Croix National Scenic Riverway, Phase II* (Jackson, Mich.: Gilbert/Commonweath, 1978), 69; St. *Croix Union* (Stillwater, Minn.) 6 March 1855.

[14] *St. Croix Union* (Stillwater, Minn.), 6 March 1855; Larson, *White Pine Industry*, 79.

its locations on the Point Douglas-Superior Military Road. Completed in 1858, this road served loggers by providing partial access to the pineries along the Snake River with tote roads blazed by the lumberjacks branching out from it and leading deep into the forest to the camps. Crude shelters for man and beast were set-up at several spots along the road to provide a safe overnight site for the supply sleds.[15]

An important stopping place on the Namekagon River was the hamlet of Veazie. Beginning in the 1860s it was a depot for camp supplies and a shelter for teamsters. Located on the river between Trego and Earl, Wisconsin, Veazie was given the name Trout Brook when a post office was established there in 1881. That name did not stick. Everyone called the place Veazie, after William Veazie, the Marine lumberman who built the first structures there. But after the logging camps exhausted the good pine near the Namekagon, they had to be established deeper in the interior and Veazie ceased to be a convenient stopping place and the depot was abandoned. In 1886, William Veazie himself left the St. Croix valley for the thicker forests of Washington State.[16]

Because of the rough track over which the supply sleds had to traverse, the goods they brought were only the bare necessities. These were purchased at a very dear price. The lack of agricultural development along the river in the 1840s and 1850s meant that most of the food had to come from downriver, often from as far away as Illinois or St. Louis. During his first year on the St. Croix, Franklin Steele had to pay four dollars for a barrel of beans, two dollars for a gallon of molasses, eleven dollars for a barrel of flour, and a whopping forty dollars for a single barrel of pork. Those lumbermen who did not send buyers downstream for supplies found it difficult to secure edibles at any price. In 1846 Stephen B. Hanks, a cousin of Abraham Lincoln, purchased supplies for a Stillwater lumberman. In St. Louis he bought several tons of beans, hominy, eggs, and dried apples. On his way up river he stopped in Bellevue, Illinois and secured fifty barrels of flour and several more of whiskey. This still left him short of a critical item—pork.[17]

Pork and beans was fuel that powered the pioneer logger. "Pork and beans are all the go," recorded the visitor to a 1850s camp in the valley. The cook would prepare these in a dutch oven over an open fire in the shanty. "He baked his beans thus wise: a hole made in the earth floor near the fire, was partly filled with live coals and the oven set upon them. In time the lid would be removed and beans would be nicely baked." Stick-to-your-ribs staples such as pork and beans and potatoes, washed down with black tea dominated the menu at breakfast, lunch, and supper. A crew of fourteen men had no trouble devouring ten bushels of beans and six barrels of pork over a season. One lumberjack later joked that when the men awoke they would "tremble and start from the land of dreams to the land of pork and beans."[18]

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[15] *St. Croix Union* (Stillwater, Minn.), 6 March 1855.
[16] *Burnett County Sentinel* (Grantsburg, Wisc.) 25 March 1881, 29 April 1881, 16 July 1886.
[17] *St. Croix Union* (Stillwater, Minn.), 24 April 1855; S.B. Hanks, Memoir of Captain S.B. Hanks, vol. iii, Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul, Minn.; Larson, *White Pine Industry*, 72-3.
[18] *Ibid*, 195; *St. Croix Union* (Stillwater, Minn.), 6 March 1855.

The demand for local produce by the logging camps on the upper St. Croix provided an opportunity for the Chippewa. With the decline of the fur trade the St. Croix bands had expanded their involvement in agriculture and looked to hunting and gathering to provide new products with which to procure European-American goods. Camp cooks sometimes exchanged maple sugar; wild rice, cranberries, and venison for salted beef, pork, and flour. Yet, these exchanges did not take place on the St. Croix with the same frequency as in the nearby Rum River valley. An early lumberman on the Rum River reported, "I must say that the Indians are very friendly and accommodating in various ways." The eagerness of the Mille Lacs band to trade with lumbermen made that area, in the opinion of the *St. Paul Minnesotan*, "the most desirable point for lumbering that has yet been discovered in Minnesota." [19]

On the St. Croix relations between the Chippewa and the lumbermen were more strained. This may in part be the result of the persistence of unsavory whiskey traders among the Snake River and St. Croix bands. The St. Croix Chippewa appear to have had fewer surpluses to sell and there were occasional incidents where hungry Indians broke into storehouses or slaughtered lumbermen's oxen. Such disputes led to an 1855 encounter that left two loggers wounded following "outrages perpetrated by the Indians." In March of 1847, loggers turned out enmasse when Henry Rust, who operated a whiskey shack on the lower Snake River, was found shot to death. They buried him, then destroyed his whiskey and burned his trading post. The lumbermen resolved to prevent further such incidents by destroying the whiskey of three other traders in the area. Two Chippewa were charged with the murder and in one of the valley's first trials were found not guilty. The court blamed Rust for his own death since he facilitated the drunkenness that led to his shooting. [20]

A more serious clash occurred in 1864 when two Chippewa shot and killed Oliver Grove and Harry Knight near Pipe Lake, in Polk County, Wisconsin. The incident was a crime of opportunity motivated by a desire to rob the two lumbermen, who had been cruising for timberlands. The bodies of the murdered men were cut into pieces, weighed with rocks, and sunk to the bottom of the lake. After they went missing as many as three hundred loggers participated in a search of the forest. After several months a rumor circulated among the Chippewa that soldiers were on their way to investigate, if necessary, and punish the perpetrators. This led to an unofficial confirmation of the identity of the principle perpetrator. Lumberman James Bracklin, supported by his loggers, took it upon himself to seize the suspect. A tense standoff followed in which Bracklin tried to prevent several hundred Chippewa from retaking the man. Fortunately, there was no further violence. The incident ended when the accused Chippewa shot himself, "fearing the vengeance of the white man." Several hundred dollars and the personal effects of the victims were recovered.[21]

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[19] Cleland, "Preliminary Report," *Fish in the Lakes, Wild Rice, and Game in Abundance*, 15-6.
[20] *St. Croix Union* (Stillwater, Minn.), 15 September 1855; Folsom, *Fifty Years in the Northwest*, 46-7, 99-100.
[21] *Ibid*, 127-8; James Bracklin, "A Tragedy of the Wisconsin Pinery," *Wisconsin Magazine of History* 3, 1 (September, 1919), 43-51.

While whites emphasized the murder and robbery aspects of this case, there were other reasons for tension between the lumbermen and the Chippewa. The dams built by loggers to ensure the transport of their winter's cut played havoc with the Indian's use of the river. Large amounts of logs sent down stream on a head of water damaged canoes, swept away fish weirs, and made river travel hazardous. In 1851, Indian Agent John S. Watrous experienced this first hand when a dam at the foot of Cross Lake was opened and his canoe was wrecked and all of his supplies were lost. The prolonged standoff over the fate of the Indian suspected of murder in 1864 was in stark contrast to the 1848 murder of Henry Rust where the two Chippewa suspects turned themselves in for trial. The 1864 standoff occurred at a time when the Chippewa were protesting a dam built on Rice Lake that had raised the water level and drowned the all important wild rice crop. Not only did lumberman James Bracklin refuse to do anything to modify the Rice Lake dam, he set to work that summer on a second dam at Chetek Lake knowing full well this would destroy more Chippewa rice beds. It required considerable restraint on the Chippewa's part for the incident to conclude with only the death of the one suspect.[22]

The potential for conflict with loggers and the abuses of the whiskey traders inclined the United States government to remove the St. Croix bands from their homeland. The Chippewa objected citing the provision of the 1837 Treaty that allowed them to hunt and gather upon the sold lands until they were needed for settlement. "We agreed to sell on the condition that we should not be disturbed for many years," they petitioned the President. After a poorly coordinated attempt to remove the Chippewa in 1851 the government abandoned that policy. Lumbermen and the Chippewa continued to share the river. Unlike in the Mille Lacs region, where lumbermen provided financial compensation to the Chippewa for the flooding of their rice marshes, the St. Croix and its tributaries were manipulated to suit the lumbermen with little concern for the interest of the Chippewas.[23]

Most of the loggers operating in the valley during the mid-nineteenth century had little contact with the Chippewa. They did not journey into the upper river valley until late November or early December, a time when most of the Chippewa had repaired to their family hunting grounds. Men from Maine, with a sprinkling of Germans, Canadians, and Swedes dominated the crews. They were mostly young men, in their twenties or early thirties. "Boys they were," recalled one pioneer from that period, "willing to toil at the most strenuous labor if it brought but a reasonable promise of return." During this pioneer era in logging only a fine line separated the crew from the boss. "Most of the early lumbermen," another early settler recalled, "were young men of limited means who came to better their condition. A man with capital enough to buy a couple of yoke of oxen could get credit for supplies and hire a crew of men and cut a million feet of logs or more in a winter." The result of such opportunity was hundreds of small camps operating independent of one another. The small size of the crews often made them close-knit and very efficient. In 1855, the foreman of a crew on the Groundhouse River, a tributary of

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[22] *Ibid*; White, "Regional Context of the Removal Order," *Fish in the Lakes, Wild Rice, and Game in Abundance*, 204.

[23] White, "Regional Context of the Removal Order," *Fish in the Lakes, Wild Rice, and Game in Abundance*, 220, 284-7.

the Snake River, wrote back to his hometown newspaper in Maine boasting that his men had put up between two and three million logs in 117 days, a record he challenged any of the eastern crews to match. Men looked out for each other in the conduct of their highly dangerous work and socialized in the crowded quarters after dark.[24]

Card playing, pipe smoking, and occasionally signing were recreations common in the shanty house after meals. "Some sang songs," recorded a journalist visiting a camp in 1855, "and it is but justice to them to say that we were agreeably disappointed in finding some fine singers there. The songs are principally of a love nature and usually to the better feelings of mankind and sympathy." Nils Haugen, a Norwegian immigrant, recalled the camp in which he worked during the winter of 1866-67 as "primitive" but the crew was "clean, and not a cootie or other bug was discovered all winter." He spent his winter evenings reading from the boss's collection of Sir Walter Scott novels. The linkage of lumberjacks and literature was not entirely exceptional. James Johnston, a Canadian immigrant who spent the winter of 1856-57 logging on a branch of the Snake River, was delighted to find in camp a copy of *Ivanhoe* and a collection of Captain Maryatt novels. Later he "made it a custom to have some book in camp and sometimes at the request of the boys would read aloud while the crew would listen." On one improbable occasion he was reading *Jane Eyre* to the men who sat in rapt attention as the young orphan Jane was humiliated by one of her teachers. One of the men, who regarded Jane Eyre as "one of God's little lambs," shouted out a curse "from the very bottom on his soul" at the insult to the heroine. The rest of the crew then "broke out in cheers and laughter."[25]

Frontier Logging: The Importance of Waterpower

The scale of logging on the St. Croix increased steadily through the 1840s and 1850s. The eight million feet produced by the valley in 1843 was typical of output during the 1840s. By 1855, production had greatly increased to 160 million feet. Less than ten years latter the amount of logs floated down the St. Croix topped two hundred million feet. Logging operations became both larger and more complex. To increase the harvest double camps, with crews of twenty-five to thirty men, became the rule. To move an ever-increasing amount of logs more men were required as river drivers and more and better dams were needed to increase the flow. By 1864, more than $600,000 was invested in forest operations along the St. Croix. The number of men employed in the woods swelled to fourteen hundred loggers, more people than had ever before lived in

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[24] George B. Engberg, *Labor in the Lakes States Lumber Industry, 1830-1930*, (Ph.D. diss., University of Minnesota, 1949), 64-9; newspaper clipping dated 2 January 1930, Hjalmar Otto Peterson Papers, Minnesota Historical Society; Larson, *White Pine Industry in Minnesota*, 74-5; William M. Blanding, "The Upper St. Croix Valley & its Early Settlers," unpublished manuscript, c.1890, William H. Blanding Papers, State Historical Society of Wisconsin, River Falls, Wisconsin.

[25] *St. Croix Union* (Stillwater, Minn.) 3 March 1855; Nils P. Haugen, "Pioneer and Political Reminiscences," *Wisconsin Magazine of History* 11(2) (December 1927), 148-9; James Johnston, Memoir, State Historical Society of Wisconsin, River Falls Area Research Center, 61, 72-3.

the valley. Little wonder the Chippewa were forced to yield before the advance of this axe wielding army.[26]

While hundreds of European-Americans flocked to the St. Croix to participate in the logging boom the bulk of the land in the valley was falling into the hands of a small number of men with access to capital. Typical of these was the partnership of veteran Maine lumbermen Isaac Staples and Samuel F. Hersey. Staples was the resident partner who oversaw operations from their Stillwater, Minnesota mill site, while Hersey was the out-of-state investor who used his profits from the Maine woods and capital connections in Massachusetts to purchase extensive pine lands along the St. Croix. Between 1853 and 1864 Hersey, Staples, and Company purchased forty thousand acres of timberland. They were too experienced in the ways of the industry to make all of these purchases for the government minimum of $1.25 per acre. Rather three quarters of their empire was secured much more cheaply through the use of land warrants. These were notes redeemable in public domain land. The federal government offered these to veterans of the Mexican-American War. Of course most veterans did not want to begin life anew on the frontier. Historians have estimated that only one in five hundred veterans cashed in their warrants for land. More commonly the warrants were sold at discount, on an average seventy-five per cent of the value, to real estate speculators. During the early 1850s land sales via warrants outpaced cash sales. By a combination of warrants and cash Hersey, Staples, and Company was able to secure vast tracts of contiguous land. When Knife Lake Township, in Kanabec County was offered for sale in 1859 the firm was able to secure twenty-one of its thirty-six sections. These block purchases were important to economical logging. Access roads and dams, and sometimes even camps, could be reused season after season because of the firm's long-term involvement in the area.[27]

While Hersey, Staples, and Company became the largest single owners of timberland in the valley; there were numerous other eastern born men who established themselves in the industry. The first sawmill at Stillwater was erected in 1844 by a partnership made up of John McKusick from Maine, Elam Greeley of New Hampshire, and Elias McKean of Pennsylvania. Socrates Nelson, another early mill operator in Stillwater, came to the town from Massachusetts as a merchant but soon joined the lumber rush. Daniel Mears another Bay State native followed the same progression from merchant to lumberman, first in St. Croix Falls and later at Hudson, Wisconsin. In 1839, Illinoisan George B. Judd partnered with Walker Orange of Vermont to establish the first mill in the valley at Marine-on-the-St. Croix. William Folsom, who came from Maine to the St. Croix valley in 1845, was also a typical frontier lumberman. In less than a year he went from being a hired hand to part owner of a small mill. Typical of the opportunity that existed in the valley, Folsom was able to establish himself in business simply by filing a preemption claim on a waterpower site on the west bank of the river a few miles above Stillwater. Three other partners provided the capital, while Folsom contributed the

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[26] Robert F. Fries, *Empire in Pine: The Story of Lumbering in Wisconsin, 1830-1900* (Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1951), 21.
[27] Larson, *White Pine Industry in Minnesota*, 19-23, 55-6, 63-4.

site and his labor. After a year working to establish the mill, Folsom sold out to his partners for a cash profit.[28]

In the minds of these first lumbermen waterpower sites were of paramount importance in determining were to locate their mills. Waterpower had historically been the principal forcing driving America's early industry. United States surveyors carrying out the job of locating section lines in the American wilderness were under orders to note all potential waterpower sites. Before the Civil War sawmills on the St. Croix were largely dependent upon a steady, fast flow of water to transform logs into lumber. For this reason St. Croix Falls was considered the prime location for industry in the entire valley and it became a bitter bone of legal contention. Another obviously good mill site was Marine and it, too, became the site of conflicting claims. Unlike St. Croix Falls, however, the partners who established the first mill at Marine quickly dispatched with their rivals. When Orange Walker and his Illinois partners arrived at the site with their milling and logging equipment they found two men camped on the site, ready to contest that had staked first claim to the site. Rather than squabble over the squatters assertion the Illinois partners paid three hundred dollars to establish their clear title to the waterpower site. It was a smart investment and within a few months they had built dwellings for themselves and their workers and erected the first sawmill on the river. An overshot mill with buckets attached to the wheel was built besides a small stream entering the St. Croix. The water wheel powered a heavy, slow-moving muley saw. It produced no more that five thousand feet of lumber per day, but it was the beginning of a revolution on the river.[29]

The lumber produced by the mills still was a bulky product and, therefore, expensive to move to markets located anywhere but downstream. St. Croix mill owners had their cut assembled into rafts that would then be floated to market towns along the Mississippi River. The rafts were carefully sectioned together through the use of large wooden stakes driven into holes augured into the boards. The holes damaged the wood and lessened its market value but they securely kept the raft together. Large oars, forty to fifty feet long at the bow and stern of the raft provided means to steer the makeshift craft. The completed raft might consist of a series of sections, together hundreds, sometimes thousands of feet in length. A steady river current was critical to successfully rafting boards to market. In this sense Lake St. Croix on the Lower River and Lake Pepin, a twenty-seven mile section of the Mississippi just downstream from the St. Croix, was the bane of the raftsman. Broad slack water was prone to heavy winds. When the breeze was in the raft's favor, sails could be put up and the craft could be easily advanced. Head winds could delay a raft for days, with the men helplessly hung up or struggling desperately with line along the muddy bank, trying to pull the raft to a point where the current resumed. The Mississippi's normal steady flow of a mile or two an hour was ideal for rafting, although fast places where a narrowing of the channel or obstructions in the river bed caused rapids to form could be as detrimental to rafting as slack water. The Upper Rapids on the Mississippi consisted of fourteen miles of fast rocky water ending at Rock Island, Illinois. The smaller Lower Rapids near Keokuk, Iowa were less of a

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[28] *Ibid*, 24; Folsom, *Fifty Years in the Northwest*, 43, 56-60.
[29] *Ibid*, 374-5; Larson, *White Pine Industry in Minnesota*, 14-5.

challenge but still consisted of twelve miles of dangerous water, very capable of drowning a careless crew and busting up a raft worth thousands of dollars and scattering its boards on hundreds of miles of banks and sloughs. While on smooth water the rafts were kept moving twenty-four hours a day. A trip from the St. Croix to St. Louis, the largest of the downriver markets, would take about three weeks.[30]

Rafts of logs were much more difficult to control than lumber. The logs were larger irregular in shape, and harder to secure into a manageable craft. Both rapids and slack water were more difficult to manage with log rafts, yet skilled pilots could bring the logs down to St. Louis. Log rafting expanded the possibilities for milling St. Croix lumber from sites within the valley to virtually any likely location downstream from the pineries. St. Croix logs were regularly rafted to sawmills in Winona, La Crosse, Rock Island, Keokuk, Quincy, as well as St. Louis. The St. Croix valley's proximity to the unparalleled transportation opportunities offered by the Mississippi River, a virtue shared by the Chippewa River, made these areas extremely attractive to lumbermen during the pioneer phase of logging in the region. Later, in the 1870s, as railroads began to expand in the area, and offer an alternative transportation system, access to the Mississippi became somewhat less important. But during the era before the Civil War, when logging was dominated by the use of waterpower, rafting was the sole means for moving logs and lumber to market.[31]

The reliance of lumbermen on rafting logs and lumber created a strong seasonal labor market for men willing to work on the river. In the early days of the industry an unlikely relationship grew up between the little Illinois town of Albany and the lumbermen of the St. Croix. Located on the Mississippi River across from Clinton, Iowa, the town of Albany produced many of the best pilots on the upper river. Rivermen from Albany took charge of many of the early raft flotillas sent from the valley. Stephen Hanks, who piloted the very first raft of logs from the St. Croix to St. Louis, was from Albany as were all the rivermen in that flotilla. That summer of 1846 Hanks piloted three rafts down to St. Louis, each round trip taking close to thirty days. While the pilots had to be men who knew the river, the crews who manned the sweeps merely needed to be strong and willing to work long hours under the open sky. Scandinavian and Canadian immigrants often took to the rafts when the spring rafting season began. A crew of as many as ten men would be necessary to take a raft south. In rapids at least two men were needed to handle the long oars through powerful current. Between manning the St. Croix boom and downriver rafts the lumber traffic at Stillwater alone gave employment to more than twenty-five hundred men in 1860.[32]

The most vital use of water power was not sawing the logs or shipping the lumber to market, but the transportation of logs from the forests of the upper river to the mills and boom on the lower river. The pine forests of the upper St. Croix would have remained wilderness had the river not been harnessed to drive the winter's cut

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[30] *Ibid*, 88-9; Malcolm Rosholt, *The Wisconsin Logging Book, 1839-1939* (Rosholt, Wisc.: Rosholt House, 1980), 190-5.
[31] Rector, *Log Transportation in the Lake States*, 18.
[32] Larson, *White Pine Industry in Minnesota*, 88-91.

downstream. Nonetheless log driving was the most expensive, the most difficult, and the most vexing aspect of logging in the St. Croix valley. The main river was blessed with a strong steady current but also with numerous rocky passages that proved to be troublesome chokepoints. Save for the Namekagon, the St. Croix's numerous tributaries were small, winding forest streams with limited flow. Success at moving a winter's cut from the pineries to the mill required a mix of appropriate weather conditions, skillful planning, and exhausting, cold, wet work.

Throughout the winter logging season the wool-clad lumberjacks stacked the pine logs in large piles at a streamside landing. When the ice went out in April, that tributary stream would be used to carry the logs to the main river. Some of these streams were so small that a logger could nearly straddle them with a foot on each bank. The ideal size for a logging stream was for it to be just slightly wider than the longest log at the landing. For streams of such size to move thousands of feet of logs, and even more so for those that were smaller, "improvements" were needed. This meant straightening several ox-bow bends and sometimes removing a few boulders. It was expensive, time-consuming work and the lumbermen always tried to get away with undertaking the most minimal improvements. Their goal was to remove logs from tract of land perhaps on a single occasion, at most for only a few years. They were not interested in investing in long-term commercial improvements. One expense that could seldom be avoided was the construction of dams to raise the water level of the stream in its narrow banks and increase the rate of flow enough to move the bulky logs. Ideally the dam could be a crude, hastily constructed splash dam that could quickly backup a head of water and then be chopped open to release its flow. Frequently, however, a formal dam with a lift gate that could be opened and closed would be required. The cost of a formal dam could be substantial -- from hundreds of dollars during the 1850s and thousands of dollars by the turn of the century. The outlet of a pond or small lake was the ideal site for such a dam, as the lake could be used as a reservoir for the backed up water. A couple of days of high water would usually be enough to clear a landing of its harvest of logs and send the mass down to the St. Croix or one of its major tributaries such as the Snake or the Kettle River. Where small watercourses had to be driven long distances, it was necessary to build an additional dam halfway downstream. When all the logs reached the second impoundment that dam would be opened and the logs surged on with the crest of the flood.[33]

During the early years of logging in the St. Croix valley, the value of even the best pineland was greatly influenced by the location and character of the area's watercourses. Hersey, Staples, and Company, the Stillwater logging giant, made large purchases in Kanabec County, Minnesota with the intention of using the Groundhouse River to carry the logs down to the Snake River. Some of the firm's partners were dubious of this plan. "I trust Genl Hersey before he consents to have any more land entered on the G House [Groundhouse river]," wrote Dudley C. Hall, "will be satisfied himself, as to the capacity of that river for driving logs." During the winter of 1855-56 the company set two teams of oxen and about fifteen men to work logging about halfway

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[33] Ralph Clement Bryant, *Logging: The Principles and General Methods of Operation in the United States* (New York: John Wiley & Son, 1914), 347-9.

up the Groundhouse. A dam was built near the camp, and when spring came, the company tried to drive the winter's cut to the Snake and from there down the St. Croix to Stillwater. But things did not go as planned. The head of water from the dam dissipated before the log drivers could get the bulk of the logs down the torturous stream. Precious weeks went by as the drivers struggled to refloat logs left stranded by the drop in the water level. Partners like Dudley Hall peppered the company's managers with requests for updates on the disastrous drive on the Groundhouse. The delayed drive, according to Hall, was "a thousand times more important than the mill...I trust you will...get them in if money can do it." Disgusted with the problems on the Groundhouse, Hall plainly stated, "I for one will never give my consent to cut any more logs on that river."[34]

The only thing that prevented the Groundhouse problems from ruining the entire season for Hersey, Staples, and Company was the fact that they had operated camps on other more manageable streams and that harvest gave the mill a modest supply of logs. That year they also operated a camp on the Beaver Brook and another on the Namekagon River. These camps successfully sent their logs down to the St. Croix. Once they reached the main river, however, their logs became mixed with the winter's cut of scores of other lumbermen operating camps on the Sunrise, Kettle, Clam, Tamarack, and Upper St. Croix Rivers. This was a problem that lumbermen in the eastern states had faced before and they transferred their solution to western waters. Every log put into the river was impressed with a distinctive mark hammered into the butt end. To sort out the logs lumbermen working along the river pooled their resources to fund a common retrieval system. Initially this was a simple association in which each lumberman reported how many logs he put into the river. When the mass of timber reached the lower river, it was assembled into rafts and counted. If a lumberman rafted more logs than he put into the river, as often happened, then he owed the others a debit to be paid in cash or logs. The system relied upon honesty and trust and could not survive the expansion of logging during the 1850s. [35]

The St. Croix Valley

The formation of the St. Croix Boom Company, chartered by the Minnesota Territory in January 1851 marked the beginning of a new, more sophisticated approach to the management of a common waterway as a conduit for thousands of individually owned logs. The boom company was given the right to capture all logs passing over the falls of the St. Croix, sort them according to the owner's mark, and then give them back to the rightful owners in return for a fee of forty cents per thousand board feet delivered. Initially men from Marine, Osceola, and Taylors Falls dominated the boom company, so they located the collecting pens near those towns. This site retarded the development of the boom company because it was too far upriver to effectively serve loggers on the Apple River. This stream that enters the St. Croix south of Marine drains a large area, reaching deep into the lake country of Polk County, Wisconsin. Loggers were operating along seventy-two miles of improved river and its output in the late 1840s and 1850s was

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[34] Rector, *Log Transportation in the Lake States Lumber Industry*, 40-1, 69, 110.
[35] *St. Croix Union* (Stillwater, Minn.), 2 December 1854; Rector, *Log Transportation in the Lake States Lumber Industry*, 116-7.

second among St. Croix tributaries only to the Snake River. An even bigger problem with the original site of the boom was that it was inconvenient to Stillwater, Minnesota, the town that emerged during the 1850s as the valley's lumber center. Stillwater mill owners had to pay twice to receive their logs -- once to the boom company for collecting and sorting their logs and then again to the rivermen who organized and floated their logs twenty-one miles downstream to the Stillwater mills. Isaac Staples, a partner in Stillwater's largest mill, was anxious to manage the river to his advantage. His opportunity came in 1856 when the original St. Croix Boom Company went bankrupt. Staples and a group of Stillwater based partners took over the boom for fifty cents on the dollar and relocated its main operations to a site just outside the limits of their town, at the head of Lake St. Croix. Until its demise in 1914 the boom company controlled the upper river, taking charge of every log, making every lumberman pay its fees, bending the St. Croix to its will.[36]

The inspiration for the St. Croix boom had been the efficient organization of log transportation by the citizen's of Oldtown, Maine. Isaac Staples, who had lived in Oldtown, had seen its boom in operation. With an experienced eye he selected a superb location for the new St. Croix boom, a narrow, high-banked stretch of river where the stream was divided into several channels by small islands. The boom itself was made up largely of logs chained end to end, anchored to piles driven into the streambed to form a floating fence. There were a series of these fences that acted as a conduit, leading logs to holding pens. Into these pens went the logs of a particular company. Collected there would be the logs splashed several weeks before into some remote tributary stream in the upper valley, minus those logs lost in back channels or sunk to the bottom of the river. Catwalks were built along the boom, allowing loggers to easily move from one part of the boom to the next.[37]

Very little of the St. Croix Boom has survived. The vast system of log and chain channels are, of course, long gone. What remains, located on the Minnesota shore, are a house used by men who managed and worked on the boom and a barn that was used for storage and animal care. The banks of the river are thickly forested with aspen and birch and suggest the appearance of the area at the time the boom was constructed. The site of the boom has been a National Historic Landmark since 1966. The boom house and barn are listed on the National Register.

The St. Croix boom was the most profitable in the Midwest region. This was partially because the State of Minnesota had written a generous fee into their charter. But just as important was the unique construction of the boom that allowed for the bulk of it to be closed off when the number of logs in the river was low. The boom could be expanded or contracted by opening or closing channels. This meant that during slack periods the boom could operate with only a skeleton crew, holding down labor costs, but maintaining a continuous service for lumbermen. The true measure of the boom's effectiveness, however, was its ability to handle a high volume of logs. In 1853, the river at the head of the boom constituted a solid packed mass for three of four miles. This was

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[36] *Ibid*, 121-5; *St. Croix Union*, 10 March 1855.
[37] *Ibid*, 134-5.

a common site during the 1850s and one year the owner of a particularly nimble horse offered "to cross the St. Croix River...on horseback, driving his horse over upon the floating saw logs that in some places absolutely covered the face of the stream." By the 1870s the mass of logs waiting sorting during mid-summer stretched for fifteen miles. Hundreds of men worked long hours to sort through the mass and send the logs downstream to waiting mills. But with two to three million feet of lumber to sort for some 150 to 200 different lumber companies the backlogs were inevitable.[38]

The highly profitable boom company in time became a hated, if powerful, influence on the St. Croix. Lumbermen anxious to start milling their winters cut fumed over delays at the boom and resented that they had to dig deep into their pockets to pay the boom for sorting their logs. More irate still were the steamboat men who often found the channel above Stillwater completely blocked with logs. Towns like Taylors Falls, Marine, and Franconia suffered economically as they were shut-off from down river trade. Farmers between Stillwater and Taylors Falls were upset to have a low cost means of shipping their crops to market endangered by the powerful boom company. Those located directly on the river suffered a further indignity when the mass of logs so blocked the river as to cause the stream to over flow its banks and flood their homes and fields. During the 1860s and 1870s, the boom company tried to moderate these problems by constructing a shipping canal on the Wisconsin side of the river that would by-pass the bulk of the boom works. At times the company would furnish teams and wagons so that cargoes could be portaged around the logs. It also made available to travelers its small steamboat positioned above the jam. This willingness to work with people and communities impacted by the scale of logs in the river went far to holding down the volume of discontent. In the end the townspeople and farmers inconvenienced by the boom were forced by the boom's economic importance and Stillwater's political muscle to accept that logs and lumber were crucial to the region's growth.[39]

In 1865, the editor of the *Taylors Falls Reporter* captured the dependence upon the lumber industry that was gradually settling over the towns, both below and above the boom.

> Merchants furnish men who go into the woods to cut the timber, with supplies, and wait the arrival of the logs in market for their pay. Laborers work in the pineries, and eagerly watch the coming of the logs to secure their wages, while their better halves wait until the logs come in, for the minor luxuries, which succeed such occasion. If the water is low business is dull, money is scarce, consequently, Lawyers, Doctors, Editors, Ministers, Office-Holders, &c. have to 'live on the interest of what they owe,' until better times are here.

Equally as interested in the success or failure of the lumber industry were the farmers of the valley. Providing food and fodder for the lumber camps was the critical local market that made pioneer agricultural activities viable within the valley. As long as the boom company expressed a willingness to try and moderate their interference with river

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[38] *Ibid*, 115-6; William G. Rector, "The Birth of the St. Croix Octopus," *Wisconsin Magazine of History* 40, 3 (Spring 1957), 171-8.
[39] *Ibid*, 177.

commerce the majority of people within the valley supported transforming the St. Croix into a river of logs.[40]

In latter years the St. Croix Boom Company would be referred to as the "Octopus" because of its power over the river. Yet, in actuality the St. Croix boom had much less power over the river than the boom companies organized by lumbermen in Michigan and Wisconsin. The St. Croix boom only handled logs that came over the falls and had no authority to operate on the upper river. In contrast the Menominee River Boom Company in Michigan not only sorted all logs to reach the boom but it took charge of driving all logs put into that river from its headwaters to the boom near Lake Michigan. The same was true of the famed Tittabawassee Boom Company and the Muskegon Boom Company. Eventually all log driving on the Chippewa River in northwestern Wisconsin was put under the control of a single company. But the St. Croix lumbermen remained determined to control the fate of their logs for as long as possible. An attempt in 1872 to form a company to drive all logs on the St. Croix came to naught when the loggers working in the upper valley could not agree on a fair price to pay. Special log driving companies did successfully operate on the Apple River and the Snake River, but on the upper St. Croix scores of independent loggers resisted the control of a single authority in charge of the river. Frequently lumber companies operating in proximity to one another might band together on a temporary basis to drive their logs to the boom, but these were just short-term alliances. Log driving was the most colorful and adventurous aspect of lumbering and on the St. Croix it remained in the hands of rugged individualists.[41]

Industrial River

The Civil War marked a significant benchmark in the development of the lumber industry in the St. Croix valley. From 1837 to 1865 a pioneer industry gradually took root in the valley and flourished. During this time the role of the various towns in the valley was determined. Marine and St. Croix Falls, which had been so promising during the 1840s, had been forced to take a secondary position as production centers to Stillwater and other towns on Lake St. Croix. Land that had belonged to the Chippewa and Dakota had been acquired by the United States and then hastily transferred to private hands, most of it for the minimum price. Under the Indians the valley had been shared, sometimes quite grudgingly, in common by whole communities, now it had been privatized with the will of a few industrialists shaping the future of the land and the river. The demand for St. Croix lumber grew during the Civil War, in spite of the massive disturbance of military operations on the life and economy of the lower Mississippi valley. Three major developments, each enhanced by Union victory in the war, helped to drive the St. Croix lumber industry in the years after 1865: 1) The settlement of the sparsely treed Great Plains; 2) The expansion of the national rail network which created

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[40] *Taylors Falls Reporter*, 29 April 1865.

[41] Fred C. Burke, *Logs on the Menominee: The History of the Menominee River Boom Company* (Marinette, Wisc.: privately printed, 1946), 21; Rector, *Log Transportation in the Lake States*, 251-3; *Stillwater Messenger*, 2,16, February 1872.

the conditions for a genuine national lumber market; 3) The industrialization of American life that created both the demand and the means to realize greater lumber production.

The expanded reach and inflated ambition of St. Croix lumbermen had a direct and immediate impact on the character of the river and its tributaries. Between 1849 and 1869, for example, the lumbermen greatly increased the amount of water they needed for log transportation. On the Snake River the river driving company charged with managing the flow of logs expanded the driveable length of the river from fifty miles to eighty miles. The Wood River was expanded from sixteen miles of useable stream to fifty miles. The main branch of the St. Croix itself was expanded from a mere eighty miles to well over one hundred. Just as important were the new tributaries that were damned and channelized to fulfill the needs of loggers. Within a few years of the close of the Civil War lumbermen were driving logs on seventy-five to eighty miles of the numerous side streams, lakes, and branches of the Kettle, Yellow, and Namekagon rivers. Simple forest streams such as the Tamarack and the Totogatic were made navigable for logging, the latter utilized for better than fifty miles of twisting streambed reaching through what is today Burnett, Douglas, Washburn, Sawyer, and Bayfield counties, Wisconsin. Dams and stream clearing teams ensured that no sooner did loggers open to use a small tributary of the St. Croix than they would begin to employ the tributary's tributaries for the same purpose. The main branch of the Kettle River, for example, was used for more than eighty-five miles, deep into the Minnesota wilderness, to within less than twenty-five miles of Lake Superior. Its principal tributaries, the Pine, Willow, and Moose Rivers, hardly capable of floating a canoe today, were used to reach even further into the interior.[42]

The experience of the lumberman Elam Greeley on the Clam River in 1875 is illustrative of the manner in which logging was expanded on the St. Croix's numerous tributaries. Greeley's lumberjacks had made a large cut that winter but by June, when most of the region's harvest had been passed through the boom at Stillwater, his logs were hung up on the Clam River. Greeley ordered his foreman, Andrew McGraw, to put the driving crew to work cutting out a canal eighteen feet wide, twenty-five feet deep and two hundred yards long between Beaver Lake and the river. An additional eighty-foot long canal connected Greeley Lake with the river. Controlling dams were put in where the canals reached the lakes. When the dams were opened and the canals were connected to the lakes the flow of the river was powerfully augmented. On this head of water the lumberjacks were able to drive all of the logs down to the St. Croix River. While the *Minneapolis Tribune* toasted Greeley as "a most enterprising lumberman," no one recorded what the Chippewa, who had harvested wild rice from the lakeshores for generations, thought of the sudden drop in water levels.[43]

What made this expansion of the log transportation in the valley possible was the increased number and sophistication of the dams constructed by loggers. By 1889, there

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[42] Rector, *Log Transportation in the Lake States*, 100; J. William Trygg, *Composite Map of United States Public Land Surveyor's Original Plats and Field Notes, Minnesota-Wisconsin Series 14* (Ely, Minn.: J. Wm. Trygg, 1966).

[43] *Stillwater Lumberman*, 18 June 1875.

were between sixty and seventy logging dams within the St. Croix watershed. Small headwaters dams, such as five located on the upper Snake River which cost only between five hundred to two thousand dollars, were typical of the majority of the river improvements. Dams located on the St. Croix or its principal tributaries, however, required considerable engineering skill and a formidable capital investment. In 1871, Isaac Staples invested ten thousand dollars to have a dam built on the St. Croix River just downstream from Upper Lake St. Croix. The dam facilitated the transportation of logs from the Moose River, an area highly prized for the superiority of its pine. Logs sluiced through the dam were assessed a fee to allow Staples to recoup his sizeable investment. Sometimes lumbermen would pool their resources to undertake such construction activities. The Namekagon Improvement Company, for example, was capitalized at twenty-five thousand dollars to operate a logging dam on the main branch of the Namekagon River (a few miles downstream of the current Hayward dam). Typical of the post-Civil War era dams used to control the St. Croix was the twelve foot high Namekagon and Totogatic Dam. It was a four hundred-foot earthen dam anchored by 326 wooden piles driven deep into the streambed. It took as long as eleven months to raise a six-foot head of water. During the time the dam gates were closed it was necessary to station a dam keeper on site to monitor the water level. When the driving season began the dam's three eight-foot sluicing gates would be opened to float the logs down to the Namekagon on the flood. Working under a charter from the state of Wisconsin the company went on to construct seventeen more dams along the tributaries of the upper St. Croix.[44]

The remains of old dams can be seen throughout the St. Croix National Scenic Riverway. The most common remains are those of wing dams or as they were more properly called pier dams, navigation aids built out from the bank into the river that were designed to concentrate the flow of the river and guide logs past potential obstructions. A good example of these works can be found on the Namekagon River near Cable, Wisconsin where the remains of five wing dams are found in the river. The dams are constructed of cobblestone and are ten feet by thirty-five feet in dimension. The Namekagon at this point is shallow and the riverbanks are low and flanked by swampy ground. The pier dams here prevented the logs from meandering into the near by swamps. Another set of pier dams can be found in the St. Croix River a mile north of the Burnett-Polk County line, on the Wisconsin side of the river. The wing dam here is 120 feet by five feet and prevented logs from being hung up against a small island in the river. The remains of larger control dams on the St. Croix and Namekgon have mostly been destroyed to allow for the passage of boats and canoes. This was the fate of a dam on the upper Namekagon just above Hayward, Wisconsin. For many years canoeists were forced to portage around the decaying wood and cribbed rock structure. In the early 1990s, the National Park Service removed most of the dam to allow for the free flow of the river. At the outlet of Pacwawong Lake canoeists pass remains of Pacwawong Dam. In 1990, at the request of the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, the National

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[44] *Polk County Press* (Osceloa, Wisc.), 4 March 1888; Rector, *Log Transportation in the Lake States*, 104-6; Namekagon River Improvement Company Articles of Organization, 15 November 1884, St. Croix County Register of Deeds Collection, States Historical Society of Wisconsin, River Falls, Wisconsin;*Taylors Falls Reporter*, 30 October 1869; Bryant, *Logging*, 350.

Park Service removed over forty feet of cut logs held together by square spikes that still remain in the river. The Coppermine Dam on the Upper St. Croix also boasts the remains of what was once a gated dam on the river, but here too most of the old logging structure has been removed.[45]

River improvements were not the largest single cost faced by lumbermen but they did represent a formidable portion of the price of doing business. Between 1879 and 1884 lumberman Edwin St. John logged on the Lower Tamarack River, a tributary of the upper St. Croix in Pine County, Minnesota. In order to bring out a total harvest of close to forty million feet of logs St. John had invested $3,000 in camp buildings, $3,000 in road building, $16,000 in horses, oxen and logging equipment, and $5,000 in getting the Lower Tamarack and its tributaries in shape to drive logs. In 1880, the *Burnett County Sentinel* estimated that to build the thirteen biggest dams in the St. Croix watershed loggers invested a total of $385,614. The most expensive was Big Dam on the upper St. Croix, a twenty-four foot high barrier that cost $94,319. Dam building was not a one-time expense. These works required annual maintenance and usually needed to be rebuilt every ten years. Therefore, a figure of more than one million dollars would be a conservative estimate of how much money lumbermen invested in St. Croix dams between the Civil War and the end of river driving.[46]

Of necessity dam building in the St. Croix watershed became more sophisticated because of environmental changes wrought by the first generation of loggers. Smaller dams beget larger dams in part because the volume of logging also accelerated greatly during the 1860s and 1870s. Another factor was the effect of repeated logging driving on rivers never intended by nature to carry large volumes of logs and a rapid flow of water. The surge of water flowing downstream from logging dams had the effect of eroding natural riverbanks. The Snake River and its tributaries such as the Anna and Knife Rivers, as well as the Upper St. Croix itself, became wider streams after a decade or so of log driving. Yet, while the streams became wider they also became shallower during the bulk of the year when log driving was not taking place. Logging also accelerated siltation. In 1875, for example, the drive on the Snake River was disrupted near Pokegama by sand blocking the channel. More of a problem was the disruption of the natural flow of water downstream by dams closed for long periods to build a head for log driving. The broader shallow rivers, deprived of the protective shade of large pine forests, lost more of their volume to evaporation. An increased investment in dam building was part of the legacy bequeathed by the pioneers to those businessmen who followed them into the pineries.[47]

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[45] James Fitting, *et al, An Archeological Survey of the St. Croix National Scenic Riverway, Phase II Report* (Jackson, Mich.: Gilbert/Commonwealth Associates, 1978), 51-3,80-81, 92-93; Bryant, *Logging*, 359-60; James Fitting *et al, An Archeological Survey of the St. Croix National Scenic Riverway, Phase I Report* (Jackson, Mich.: Gilbert/Comonwealth, 1977), 35-8.

[46] *Taylors Falls Reporter*, 1 January 1885; *Burnett County Sentinel* (Grantsburg, Wisc.), 12 March 1880, 29 April 1881.

[47] Folsom, "Lumbering in the St. Croix Valley," *Minnesota Historical Collections*, 297; *Stillwater Lumberman*, 25 June 1875.

The Log Drives

Dams made possible the most colorful, dangerous, and difficult phase of logging in the St. Croix valley—the annual spring log drive. In April of every year the best of the lumberjacks were engaged to escort the winter's cut down the small winding headwaters streams to the main branch of the St. Croix and from there to the head of the boom at Stillwater. It was a job where time was of the essence. The long drive had to be completed before the water level, swelled by melted snows, splash dams, and spring rains, fell, leaving valuable logs stranded in water too shallow to float the fallen monarchs of the forest. It was cold, wet work performed by rugged men clad in two or three red woolen shirts and fitted with caulked boots. The most experienced of the rivermen were outfitted with long pikes and they rode the slippery logs in the van of the drive. They were know as "river pigs," a title in which they took perverse pride, and their job was to keep the logs from snagging on sand bars, sharp river bends, or shoals. At obviously difficult spots on the river several men would be stationed throughout the drive to prevent logjams. These men together with those who floated majestically on their logs were known as the "jam crew." The least experienced men were given the coldest and meanest work on the drive, the "sacking crew." This entailed following in the wake of the drive and wading into the shallows to wrestle stranded logs back into the current. Several wooded boats, know as bateaux, sharply pointed at the bow and stern to ward off floating logs, were part of the drive and could be used to transport men to trouble spots as they developed. Even more important was the wanigan, a covered flat-bottomed boat that served as a mobile cook shack. The wanigan provided hot food each morning and evening, although many of the men in the jam crew took their midday meals with them in little back packs they knick-named "nose bags."[48]

The rivermen had to be exceptionally hardy fellows. In what sounds today like the perfect conditions for triggering hypothermia they labored in air temperatures of thirty to forty degrees while regularly plunging into snowmelt waters that were even colder. In 1867 Nils Haugen, a young Norwegian immigrant won a place in the jam crew. He prided himself on his ability to ride a log but on the second day of the drive received a "good wetting." He remembered the "water was icy cold," although his first thought was:

> Fortunately no one saw it, so I was saved from being guyed. It was always a matter of merriment to see one fall in. I had on three woolen shirts at the time; I took them off and wrung them out, put them on again, and wore them for the next three weeks, never suffered a cold or other inconvenience from the mishap.

How men coped with the sudden chill of a spill in the river was more important than finding river men who did not fall from their logs. A rookie river driver who had fallen into the Willow River came out of the water cold, badly frightened, and begragled. "I had lost my hat and hand spike and must have been a pitiable looking object." He was sent to warm up by a fire, but after his dunking "I was so scared that I was not much good on the drive." Some men felt that "whiskey helped them to stand the cold water, ice and

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[48] James Johnston, Memoir, 61-3; Nils P. Haugen, "Pioneer and Political Reminiscences," *Wisconsin Magazine of History* 11, 2, (December 1927): 150.

snow of the early spring," but few foreman allowed their men regular access to strong drink for fear of the consequences to work force discipline.[49]

At night the drive crews would establish a camp on the riverbank. The evening meals generally featured better fare than camp dinners, fried fresh pork was a favorite, although like camp meals the men received as much as they wanted. Nils Haugen recalled:

> We slept in tents. The blankets were sewed together so that we were practically under one blanket, the entire crew, the wet and the dry. Steam would rise when the blanket was thrown off.

The workday would begin for the rivermen about three in the morning. This allowed the lumbermen to take full advantage of the water conditions but exposed the crews to considerable danger working among the rolling, grinding logs in pitch-blackness.[50]

River men were paid substantially more than other forest workers because of the hardships and dangers they endured. Young James Johnston recalled his first day trying to ride logs on the Willow River. A branch hanging low over the stream swept him from his precarious perch and he fell "head first into the river." Before he could rise to the surface "some half dozen logs ran over me." Gasping for air he swam for a break in the mass of logs. "When I came up I grabbed the side of a log and, of course, my weight rolled the log toward me and I went down again and a few more logs rolled over me." Only the fact that the current took him to a shallow place in the river saved Johnston's life. An accident recounted in the *Stillwater Lumberman* in May of 1875 underscores the danger faced by the men working the drives:

> Last night Ed. Hurley was brought down from the drive on Clam River in a badly mangled condition. A log rolled on him and broken [sic] his right leg in several places. Dr. Hoyt, of Hudson, was examining him this morning in consultation with city physicians, and found it necessary to amputate his right leg close to the body, which was done this forenoon. It is thought he cannot survive this day. He is a married man and his folks reside here. He is a first class lumberman and will be sadly missed by the river men.

The prospect of earning as much as two dollars and fifty cents per day ensured that there were a steady stream of men willing to take their chances with the rolling, churning logs, and replace Ed Hurely and the other men who went down on the drive. Even the most skilled log riders fell at some point, most trusted their luck that it would not be where the logs could crush or drown them.[51]

The danger and difficulty of trying to harness the natural power of the St. Croix to move millions of feet of bulky, heavy logs encouraged lumbermen to work cooperatively

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[49] *Ibid*; James Johnston, Memoir, 60-4.
[50] Haugen, "Reminiscences," 151.
[51] Johnston, Memoir, 64; *Stillwater Lumberman*, 14 May 1875.

on the drive. Lumbermen who sought to pursue their success at the expense of others were a menace to the industry. On headwaters streams a logger with a heavy cut could ensure the success of his drive by getting all of his logs into the river ahead of his rivals. The result, however, might be that those rival's logs would be blocked from heading downstream and were in danger of missing the high-water and being stranded in the forest, far from the lumber market. To avoid this unpleasant prospect foreman were tempted to begin their drive at the first sign of the break of the ice. Premature drives forced the men to work harder in lower, colder water conditions, with misery and risk as the reward. Cooperation was much more desirable for the men who worked on the river and for the lumbermen anxious to get their harvest safely to the Stillwater boom. One method of cooperation was for all of the lumbermen working that winter on a certain stream to agree to pay one of the firms to take charge, for a certain per log fee, of all of the cut. In 1877, for example, the lumbermen working on the Knife River all contracted with Charles F. Bean to drive all logs on the river. Bean had operated his own camp that winter and in addition to all of the other logs had 1.7 million feet of pine stacked on his own rollaway. When loggers did operate their drives independently they would establish informal, ad hoc alliances with rival crews they encountered on their downstream journey. In 1875, P. Fox and A.P. Chisley cooperated with each other and jointly drove their logs down the Snake River. Once on the St. Croix they encountered Charles Bean and his crew of rivermen driving seven million feet of pine from the upper river. It was agreed to combine their crews and proceed down river with fifty drivers managing twelve million feet of pine. [52]

The goal of the rivermen was to bring most of the log cut down to the boom by the end of May. Much more skill and cooperation were necessary to bring a large amount of logs downriver in June and July. In 1877, some twenty million logs were brought down the Snake River in late June. It was necessary to boom the logs at the junction of that river and the St. Croix due to low water on the main river. There the logs waited several weeks until heavy rain brought a rise in the water level. As more and more dams were built throughout the river system lumbermen learned how to extend the log-driving season by coordinating the opening and closing of dams throughout the valley. In July 1875, a drive of eighteen million feet of logs from the upper St. Croix was hung up near Rush Creek in Chisago County, Minnesota. There simply was not enough water in the river to carry the logs farther. The foreman in charge of the drive arranged to have dams on the Snake, Yellow, Clam, Namekagon, and upper St. Croix opened in sequence, providing a head of water sufficient to bring in the valuable drive.[53]

The numerous large lakes connected to the tributaries of the St. Croix were critical to logging in the valley. The lakes were natural reservoirs for storing large amounts of water for logging purposes. The logging dam built in 1848 by Elam Greeley at the outlet of Cross Lake was one of the first important dams in the valley. Its ten-foot head of water was critical to logging on the Snake River. But the dam was also a bottleneck through which all logs cut in the Snake Valley had to be laboriously sluiced through the works of the dam. This operation greatly slowed the process of bringing

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[52] *Stillwater Lumberman*, 4 May 1877; 30 April 1875.
[53] *Stillwater Lumberman*, 29 June 1877; 9 July 1875.

Snake River logs down to Stillwater. In 1875, thirty-eight million feet of pine were hung up in the lake. The week required to sluice through these logs occupied a full one third of the time required to complete the entire drive. Another problem posed by large interior lakes such as Yellow Lake or Clam Lake or Balsam Lake was the task of moving a large volume of logs across their slack surface. Small steamboats operated on some of the lakes to pull hastily assembled rafts to the outlet. The lumber concern of Gore & Stinson, for example, had a marine boiler and engine hauled overland by teams of horses to Clam Lake. They installed the machinery on a sixteen-foot by sixty-four foot barge. They dubbed the resulting vessel a "steam wanagan," and utilized for as many as forty trips per season. Each of those trips entailed a load of a million or more logs.[54]

A River Jammed With Logs

Every spring the newspapers of towns along the lower St. Croix River and in the various trade journals of the lumber industry all fixated on a single question, "whether or not the logs will come out." Most lumbermen entered the months of May and June heavily mortgaged to pay for the costs of a winter of cutting and hauling logs and preparing their mills for sawing. All chance for profit was hostage to the delivery of the logs by the drive. All news concerning the status of the drives was eagerly grasped at and widely repeated. Lumbermen fretted when a low snow fall over the winter inhibited hauling to the river bank because it directly impacted the amount of logs harvested and indirectly made the task of driving all the more difficult due to less snow melt and lower water levels. Speculation concerning the status of the drive on a major river like the St. Croix or the Chippewa had a direct effect on the price of lumber in St. Louis and Chicago. Among the most discouraging and dismaying reports that could be received in Stillwater, Hudson, and other mill towns was the news that there was a logjam on the St. Croix.[55]

There were many locations throughout the St. Croix valley that were notorious among the river drivers as likely spots for a logjam. The Big Falls on the Apple River and the Kettle River Sloughs were regularly anticipated to hang up logs and men were stationed there to try and keep the pine moving. The most troublesome location in the valley, however, was on the St. Croix itself at its dramatic rock walled Dalles. Some of the most spectacular and untractable jams in logging history occurred in the St. Croix Dalles located below St. Croix Falls. The Dalles are a very narrow stretch of river where fast water confined by the sheer walls of trap rock created the conditions for a tremendous bottleneck. Frequently jams resulted at a spot known as Angle Rock -- a large promontory that juts out from the Minnesota shore into the channel and forces the river makes a sharp right angle turn. During high water years when the river pigs were able to quickly and with relative ease bring down the harvest from the upper river; jams were more likely to occur. Under such conditions the river was crowded with more logs and it pushed them with greater than usual power. Small jams could occur more quickly

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[54] "What do you know about the *Lady Bernice*, the logging queen,"Logging Clipping File, no date, Burnett County Historical Society, Grantsburg, Wisc.; *Stillwater Lumberman*, 14 May 1875.

[55] *Northwestern Lumberman*, 8 May 1875; *Stillwater Lumberman*, 14 May 1875; 26 May 1877.

and each had the potential to become a massive pile-up as millions of board feet of pine flowed relentlessly toward the blocked channel.[56]

The first great jam on the river occurred at Angle Rock in 1865. It was a high water year and the river below the promontory became clogged. The current kept trying to force sixteen-foot long pine logs forward. With the full force of the spring freshets pushing the pine, logs were sent shooting upward piling high atop the jam. Others were driven below the surface of the churning water, abutting the bottom of the streambed, and all but damming the river. Behind the tumult of Angle Rock millions of feet of logs accumulated. The Clam River Drive crashed into the Kettle River logs, while the Snake River Drive and all other logs on the river were borne relentlessly toward the jam, which with each day became larger and larger. The 1865 jam extended from Angle Rock to the falls of the St. Croix, a distance of one and a quarter miles. [57]

The 1865 jam attracted attention throughout the region. Excursion boats were run up the river from Hudson, Prescott, and St. Paul to allow town folk to gawk at the mighty river of logs frozen in suspended animation. Photographers set up their cumbersome box cameras on the shore and the more adventurous of the tourists clambered out to the middle of the river to have their pictures taken amid expanse of timber piled pall-mall. Unfortunately for the lumbermen of the Upper Mississippi the 1865 jam was not a freak occurrence. It was rather the warning of what would become an annual danger as more and more logs were forced into the narrow river and more and more dams, all opened at the same time, forced a greater flow down the stream. During the 1870s the St. Croix Lumbermen's Board of Trade pooled their resources and dispatched crews of lumberjacks to choke points like Angle Rock. These men usually broke up jams before they could blockade the entire river. Although in 1877 and 1883 two greater jams occurred, closing the St. Croix for several weeks and backing the river up to the falls.[58]

The mother of all jams occurred in 1886, after the lumbermen had nearly a half-century of experience driving the river. Angle Rock was again the culprit, although in 1886 more than 150 million feet of pine were pent-up behind the jam. The masses of logs extend all the way to falls and two miles beyond. The great clog in the lumbermen's main artery sent a panic through the valley. Apoplectic mill owners hurried to the scene and shouted themselves horse. A babble of instructions rained down on the rivermen desperately trying to break the jam, and echoed through the St. Croix country, repeated by every small-town newspaper. A journalist for the *Stillwater Gazette* described the mess as "the jammedest jam he had ever saw." From the humblest mill worker laid off by the dearth of pine to the banker holding lumbermen's past-due notes the entire valley fixated on the mammoth jam, their lives, like the river, held motionless by the impasse. This threat to the livelihood of most, however, was a boon for the village of Taylor's Falls. It had never been much of a mill town and during the 1880s its commercial significance as a local farm service center was rapidly eclipsed as new villages sprung up in the interior, along railroad lines. Jams like that in 1886 gave the village a foretaste of

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[56] *Stillwater Lumberman*, 8 December 1877; Folsom, *Fifty Years in the Northwest*, 706-7.
[57] *Ibid.*
[58] *Ibid*; *Burnett County Sentinel*, (Grantsburg, Wisc.) 21 June 1878.

what life could be like as a tourist destination. Special railroad excursion trains brought as many as a thousand people per day to view the site. "Give us each year our yearly jam," became an innkeeper's irreverent prayer. The boarding houses of the town were jammed with overnight guests and their dining rooms were crowded for three luncheon seatings.[59]

Sharing center stage with the miles of log-clogged river was the sight of hundreds of men laboring to break the jam. Six weeks of work went into the effort. No technology was spared to open the river. The head of the jam was repeatedly dynamited to no avail. Steamboats were brought up river to try and pull the logs free. Overhead wires were installed to lift logs up out of the chaos. Teams of horses as well as two steam donkey engines supplied the necessary power while large electric lights, the first many country people had ever seen, shined down from the overhanging rock ledges, allowing the men in the gorge to work in twenty-four hour shifts. All the while the weekend excursionists opined loftily on how the men where missing the mythical "key log," the single strategically located straw in the haystack that would release the jam. Few river pigs believed in the key log myth and it was doubtful that there were any believers among the weary crews who sought to break the 1886 jam. They cleared the river through the consistent application of ingenuity and determined labor, gradually pulling logs off of the pile at an accelerating rate until the mass once more began to move.[60]

Industrial Logging

Jams such as the 1886 disaster were a reminder that using the St. Croix to transport their logs left lumbermen at the mercy of natural forces. The acceptance of natural cycles and adaptation to their fluctuations had been an important part of life in the valley from the days of the Dakota. First fur traders and later farmers bowed to the seasons. The first generation of lumbermen also learned to adjust to the fluctuations of snowfall, water level, and river flow. But by the 1880s the patience and resignation that was necessary to work with nature had been replaced by a restless determination to bring an industrial efficiency to the business of logging on the St. Croix. The building of sixty or more dams in the valley was only one example of an application of technology to expand the logging industry's rate of output and margin of profit.

In forest operations the increased productivity was realized by the adaptation of the crosscut saw. During the mid-1870s the axe, long the symbol of the skilled logger was replaced as the principal tool for felling trees by a new type of saw. Loggers had used crosscut saws to "buck" or saw in half felled trees, but such saws were not used to topple great pine trees because the sawdust would be packed by the weight of the trees against the teeth of the saw. During the 1870s a new type of saw blade, six to seven feet long, with "cleaning teeth" was introduced. The teeth of the blade were made of alternating size and shape, some designed to cut others to rake away the sawdust. The

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[59] *Taylors Falls Journal*, 10,17,24 June 1886; *Minneapolis Tribune*, 20 June 1886; *Polk County Press*, **26** June 1886.

[60] *Polk County Press*, 10 July 1886; Rector, *Log Transportation in the Lake States*, 259-60; *Taylors Falls Journal*, 8 & 15 July 1886.

result was a major increase in productivity. J.C. Ryan, a veteran Minnesota logger, contended that two men with a crosscut saw could bring down one hundred white pine per day. Just as important as the fact that a team of sawyers could fell many more trees per day than a man with an axe was that they did so with less waste to the but end of the log, ensuring a small but appreciable portion of the log that had been lost could now be made into board lumber. [61]

Loggers were able to move the greater number of trees cut from the forest to the stream by the use of another improvement in forest operations, the ice road. Once the pine adjacent to rivers and streams had been cut, roads became essential to expanding into the remoter sections of the forest. Turning the harsh North Woods winters to their advantage loggers covered over the crudely grubbed and leveled rights-of-way with a coat of ice. Sleighs pulled by a four-horse team were capable of handing between 10,000 and fifteen thousand feet of logs. A full time road crew operating a water tank sleigh, for laying down a new coat of ice, and a rut-cutting sleigh, for grooming the roads, worked constantly to keep the ice roads in top condition. During the 1870s heavy draft horses, most of them Percherons weighing more than a thousand pounds, replaced oxen as the principal draft animals in the camps. After the fall harvest farmers from throughout the valley and from as far away as Illinois would ship their horses by barge and rail to the St. Croix to be leased by the logging camps.[62]

Logging camps became larger and the structures more specialized. In addition to the men actually engaged in cutting logs and crews maintaining the ice roads there were full-time filers keeping the crosscut saws sharp, teamsters, and blacksmiths. In February of 1877 the *St. Croix Lumberman* reported several logging camps containing as many as three hundred men. Camps such as these were a far cry from the simple one-shanty operations of the 1850s. During the later decades of the nineteenth century St. Croix logging camps were small settlements with numerous special purpose structures. One or two bunkhouses, depending on the size of the crew, were the center of the camp. A separate cookhouse was the domain of the bull cook and his chore-boys. All meals were prepared and consumed there. In keeping with the emphasis on efficiency many of the larger camps observed a rule of no talking at the dinner table. This lessened the opportunity for brawls and got the first shift of dinners out of the cookshack quicker. An office became a feature of the big camps. It was the headquarters for the foreman and the log scaler. This executive staff was sometimes expanded to include a camp clerk to take charge of all record keeping. Sometimes the clerk also operated a small store in the office, selling men tobacco, stamps, and clothing. One or two barns were necessary for the horses. These would be equipped with stalls and a storage area for hay and oats. Occasionally the barn might have a small bunkhouse attached to it for the special use of the teamsters or road crew. A blacksmith shop, maybe a filers shack, and of course the latrines, would round out the complement of camp buildings. All would be made of rough-cut timber.[63]

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[61] Rosholt, *Wisconsin Logging Book*, 41; J.C. Ryan, *Early Loggers in Minnesota* (Duluth: Minnesota Timber Producers Association, 1975), 13.
[62] *Ibid*, 22-3, 27-30.
[63] *Ibid*, 24-6; Rosholt, *Wisconsin Logging Book*, 95-102.

There are a handful of logging camp sites from that late nineteenth century within the Riverway. Big Brook Landing on the Namekagon River in Bayfield County (T43N, R8W, Sec. 26) is one such site. Here Ross-Owen Lumber Company maintained a cook house and a bunkhouse in the 1890s. A wannigan was kept moored in the river for use on the spring drive. There may have been other structures associated with this site but modern construction destroyed the historic integrity of the location. Another site, near the outlet of Pacwawong Lake (T42N, R8W, Sec. 2) shows minimal structural remains but a large number of logging artifacts have been found on the site, including logging chains, horseshoes, and files.[64]

A large camp of three hundred men operated on a grand scale. The camp would be situated to exploit a large area all around its central location. The *Stillwater Lumberman* noted that "three hundred men will cover and cut a section of about three miles square, taking off over 60,000 logs, which would measure about 10,000,000 feet, each season." Large camps with a considerable investment in buildings would be operated at the same location for several seasons before being disassembled and the logs shipped to the mill or reassembled at a new campsite. As the scale of logging increased so too did the emphasis upon efficiency. As efficiency became a virtue of management logging was increasingly mechanized. During the late 1880s and into the early twentieth century some logging operations augmented their use of horses on the ice roads with specially designed steam haulers. Essentially they were traction engines equipped with treads and used to haul a virtual train of sleighs over ice roads, from the cuttings to the river landing. Many of the early steam haulers were manufactured in Eau Claire, Wisconsin, although it has been speculated that the first ones were merely converted threshing machines. Around the same time steam power was also harnessed to operate jammers whose job it was to load or unload logs from sleighs to riverbank or railway car.[65]

Lumberman William Hanson employed one of the first steam haulers used in the valley. In 1888, he brought one to his camp near Lake Namekagon. A lumberjack with the colorful name of "Wild Bill" Metcalf was one of the men trained to operate the hauler. Metcalf was more than willing to take on the new technology because the responsibility carried with it a salary of twenty-five cents an hour, a big improvement over the dollar a day he had been making driving horse teams on the ice roads. The hauler would handle an average of eight sleighs per run and because the iron horse never became tired it was on the go during the peak period twenty-four hours a day. Metcalf counted his pay and tried to keep himself awake during the long days, taking naps while the hauler was being loaded or unloaded. As the season wore-on, however, he found it harder to keep up with the machines relentless schedule, particularly in the spring when the afternoon sun made him warm and drowsy. "I'd go to sleep steering the hauler," recalled Metcalf. "The engineer'd toot his whistle and I'd jump a foot."[66]

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[64] Fitting, *et al, Archeological Survey of the St. Croix*, 33-34.
[65] Ryan, *Early Loggers in Minnesota*, vol. III (Duluth: Minnesota Timber Producers Association, 1980), 41-3; Rosholt, *Wisconsin Logging Book*, 62-6.
[66] Robert W. Wells, *"Daylight in the Swamp!"* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1978) 222-3.

In numerous and often inventive ways lumbermen experimented with the "high tech" possibilities of mechanized transportation. Even river transportation was improved by the application of steam power. The large lakes of the valley had always been a challenge to river drivers. Steam donkey engines made it much easier to warp large booms of logs across the open surface of lakes. The puffing of the little stationary engines on the deck of a barge replaced a cumbersome string of ponies operating the windlass that pulled the boom across the lake. Small steamboats also became a common sight on headwater lakes. The *Katie R*'s shrill whistle was first heard on Cross Lake during the 1880s and it became a fixture of the Snake River drive through the end of the century. During the 1890s lumbermen used a small steamboat on the Upper St. Croix, speeding the movement of logs as far up river as Upper Lake St. Croix, more than one hundred and twenty-five miles above the pervious head of navigation on the river at St. Croix Falls. As early as 1876 Martin Mower, the iron-fisted power behind the St. Croix Boom Company, tried to develop a steam powered ice boat that he hoped to operate on the frozen river. Mower eventually built and operated a prototype, but its lack of success ensured no further experiments along those lines.[67]

The railroad was the most obvious application of steam technology to impact the St. Croix. In many parts of Michigan and Wisconsin railroads replaced rivers as the principle means of transporting logs to mill and market. This did not happen within the St. Croix valley. A few logging railroads were established in the valley. The Wisconsin Lumber & Manufacturing Company operated a network out of Cable, Wisconsin while the Drummond Southwestern operated an extensive network of standard gauge track along the headwaters of the Namekagon River.[68] Still, for all the problems with dams and jams the river was still the cheapest means of moving the great sixteen-foot white pine logs that were stacked at forest landings throughout the logging season. Yet, the iron horse was integrated into the forest operations of the St. Croix logging district in a variety of ways that fulfilled the lumbermen's growing passion for efficiency.

The first railroads completed in the St. Croix valley were the Lake Superior and Mississippi Railroad (1871), which linked Stillwater with Duluth, and on the Wisconsin side of the valley, the Northern Wisconsin Railroad (completed 1883), that ran from Hudson to the Lake Superior town of Bayfield. The right-of-way of each line was laid out well away from the river, creating rival transportation corridors and a string of new towns. The villages of Pine City and Hinkley soon boasted new steam powered sawmills, although their production did not come close to rivaling the volume produced by the Stillwater mills. As a class, nineteenth century lumbermen were not particularly distinguished for their foresight so it is not surprising to find that the majority of them opposed the expansion of railroads into the remote region of the upper valley. This was particularly true for men who owned extensive tracts of Wisconsin forestland and who feared the cost of county bond initiatives to encourage railroad construction. On the other hand, lumbermen were pragmatists and they began to make use of the Northern

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[67] Rector, *Log Transportation in the Lake States*, 164-5; *Taylors Falls Journal* (Taylors Falls, Minnesota), 19 January 1877, 30 November 1877, 17 August 1882.
[68] Rosholt, *Wisconsin Logging Book*, 79-80.

Wisconsin Railroad long before it was ever completed. During the long construction phase of the line lumbermen provided cordwood, poles, lock-downs, and thousands of railroad ties. Even with the line only partially completed it gave the lumbermen an inexpensive and timely means to supply their logging camps operating on remote headwaters and the upper Namekagon River. The Northern Pacific Railroad whose main terminus was at Duluth, ran a spur line to Grantsburg, Wisconsin. This now abandoned line crosses the St. Croix River in Burnett County (T37N, R20W, Sec. 8) the grade is clearly visible within the Riverway and the old pilings from the bridge can be seen by passing canoeists.[69]

While railroads did not supplant the river for log transportation, the train did augment the network of natural and improved waterways. The railroad could be pressed into service when there were problems with driving logs by water. In 1877 low water made driving on the Willow River problematic for large logs. The solution was to have 350,000 of the best logs pulled out of the river where it passed under the tracks of the North Wisconsin Railroad and shipped by rail to the mill. In a similar fashion Snake River loggers occasionally made use of the railroad when faced with difficult driving conditions. Lumbermen also used the railroad to provide a steel extension from the farthest reach of the waters to the untapped reserves of white pine in the interior. During the 1890s the Empire Lumber Company operated in Douglas County, Wisconsin, beyond the headwaters of the St. Croix. They built a short haul railroad between their camps and the river. Logs would be loaded on to this railroad and hauled to the river where they would be dumped into the stream and driven down to Stillwater. At the boom the logs would be formed into rafts and then floated down river to Winona, Minnesota, where the company built a new steam powered mill. While the railroad was used to bring logs to the St. Croix, it was also used to send them from the valley. The movement from rails to river by the Empire Lumber Company reflected the economic advantage of moving logs by water. The cost of shipping logs by rail was sixty percent greater than conducting a river drive.[70]

Yet, if railroads could be used to bring logs to the river, they could also be used to take them away from the St. Croix valley. As the value of St. Croix pine increased and mills in other parts of Wisconsin and Minnesota began to suffer from a shortage of logs, the economics of the lumber industry began to dictate new applications of the rail network. The rapid destruction of the vast forest of Pine County, Minnesota was greatly hastened by the opening of the Lake Superior and Mississippi Railroad. Only two years after the line was completed twenty-one million board feet were shipped out the valley to St. Paul. By the late 1880s several railroads bisected the St. Croix, including the Minneapolis, St. Paul & Sault Ste. Marie and the Chicago, St. Paul, Minneapolis & Omaha railroads. These and other lines created numerous small sawmill centers that could tap the flow of pine that previously had flowed uninterrupted to Stillwater. Forest products firms were established at Turtle Lake, Comstock, Shell Lake, and Hayward. Railroads spread the impact of the St. Croix pinery outward, like ripples on calm water. By 1895, those ripples had reached as far east as the northern Wisconsin town of

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[69] *Stillwater Lumberman*, 3 December 1875, 18 May 1877; Fitting, *et al, Archeological Survey*, 90.
[70] *Mississippi Valley Lumberman*, 13 April 1877; Rector, *Log Transportation in the Lake States*, 204, 232.

Rhinelander, where St. Croix logs kept the local mill humming through the use of Minneapolis, St. Paul & Sault Ste. Marie Railroad. Diversions such as this became increasingly common and eroded the link between the logging camps of the upper river and the mill towns downstream.[71]

By the end of the nineteenth century the towns along the lower St. Croix, from Prescott up river to Taylors Falls had made a substantial investment in large modern steam powered sawmills. The old reliance upon waterpower ended in the 1860s, a causality of the need for a more powerful and consistent energy source. With this change came a substantial increase in the scale of investment needed to compete in the lumber industry. In 1825, James Purinton built a sawmill and waterpower dam at Hudson, Wisconsin for $25,000. By the 1890s the cost of a new mill might exceed $300,000. For that price tag the lumberman bought a sophisticated industrial complex including mammoth steam engines and boilers, a network of specialized mill buildings, including facilities for making dimension lumber, shingles, and posts, kilns for drying lumber, and extensive yards for storing the finished product. The heart of such a complex was the giant band saws -- the last word in fast and efficient lumber production after 1880. Scores of mills such as these, from Stillwater, Winona, and Red Wing all the way down the Mississippi to Muscatine and St. Louis were dependent on St. Croix logs. The biggest mill complex were those along the river itself. Between 1860 and 1900 sixteen steam-powered mills were built on the St. Croix River. In addition to these large mills were scores of smaller ones built in interior sections of the county, some merely to provide lumber for settlers, others positioned to use the railroad to ship their product. Between the Civil War and the turn-of-the-century at least fifty-five such mills were established.[72]

Corporate Control of the St. Croix

Of all the lumber barons of the St. Croix the most powerful was the barrel-chested, bald-headed, Isaac Staples. A contemporary described him as "restless, alert, far-seeking, systematic, and persistent." No single man controlled more of the vast pine forest than he did. No single man logged as much timber each year. No single man milled as much lumber. He had virtually created the powerful St. Croix Boom Company and controlled its vital operations through his ownership of its stock. He was the valley's biggest and most successful farmer, and as President of the Lumberman's National Bank one of its most important bankers. Minnesota politicians anxious for advancement courted Staples favor while throughout the valley thousands of breadwinners traced their paychecks to his enterprises. He arrived a stranger in 1853 and remained to flourish as the presiding patriarch of St. Croix logging for the next generation.[73]

Isaac Staples came to the St. Croix as the representative of eastern investors. It was their financial resources that allowed him to build a firm foundation for his logging venture. His share of the profits, however, was substantial enough that over time he was

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[71] *Mississippi Valley Lumberman*, 25 March 1887, 1 February 1895; Larson, *White Pine Industry in Minnesota*, 153.
[72] Folsom, "Lumbering in the St. Croix Valley," *Minn. Hist. Coll.*, 300-21.
[73] Folsom, *Fifty Years in the Northwest*, 413-4.

able to purchase a controlling interest in Hersey, Staples & Company, in partnership with Maine businessman Samuel F. Hersey. With Hersey in Maine Staples had a free hand in handling the firm's business on the St. Croix, nonetheless, he eventually cut his ties with the Hersey family and by the 1880s operated his extensive business interests with complete independence. Of all the young Maine men who came to the valley in the wake of the 1837 Indian treaty, Isaac Staples had scrambled to the top of the sawdust mountain. This success and his overarching influence made him as resented as he was respected.

Yet, for all his success by 1885 Isaac Staples, perched in his Victorian mansion high on a bluff with the valley spread out before his feet, represented the past not the future of the St. Croix lumber industry. The sixty-nine year old magnet perceived issues from the older, frontier era perspective of individual ownership and influence. The patriarch did not appreciate that since steam power had welded the entire nation into a single market, the real opportunities in business would in future go to those who could combine small local producers into efficient and rational combinations. Most of his rivals made the same mistake. During the 1880s the parlors, restaurants, and exchanges where Stillwater lumbermen met were abuzz with speculation that Isaac Staples was vulnerable. In looking so intently for the patriarch's weak spots, the Stillwater men did not see their own vulnerability. When Staples allowed the erasable and eccentric Martin Mower to purchase a controlling interest in the St. Croix Boom Company, it seemed to confirm that the patriarch was losing his grip. In 1885, the Stillwater lumbermen fought a prolonged duel over who would hold the lucrative post of Surveyor General in the Stillwater District. The surveyor scaled all logs entering the St. Croix boom. Although it was a state position, the surveyor was paid by the lumber companies a hefty price for all logs scaled. The Lumberman's Board of Trade favored Judson McKusick, a member of a clan of mill operators and politicians involved in the city since its founding. Isaac Staples sought to demonstrate his suzerainty over his rivals by forcing the appointment of Adolphus Hospes, his son-in-law. When both men tried to carry out the office, the shipment of lumber downriver was disrupted by sheriff's actions, court orders, and law suits. The dispute ended with Staples imposing his will upon his rivals and forcing them to capitulate.[74]

While the Stillwater lumbermen wrangled amongst themselves, a new force began to assert itself on the St. Croix -- the Mississippi River Logging Company. Formed in 1870 by mill owners along the Mississippi between St. Louis and Winona, the company's goal was to guarantee a steady flow of logs from the forests of Wisconsin to their large steam powered mills on the great river. During the 1870s they had fought a bitter duel with lumbermen based in Eau Claire, Wisconsin for control over the Chippewa River. The Eau Claire men resented that the Mississippi River Logging Company intended to take the lion's share of Chippewa River pine to out of state mills. Wisconsin timber, they reasoned, should be used to provide Wisconsin jobs and build Wisconsin communities—and enrich Wisconsin businessmen. But after a decade of cold war on the river and all out opposition in the courts the Eau Claire lumbermen finally agreed to accept the Mississippi River Logging Company. The man behind this successful campaign was a German immigrant of true business genius, Frederick Weyerhaeuser. Not only did he

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[74] Rector, "Lumber Barons in Revolt," *Minnesota History* 31, 1 (March 1950): 33-9.

harmonize the diverse interests of the many Mississippi mill owners, Weyerhaeuser was able to convince the Eau Claire lumber companies of the advantages of bringing the entire Chippewa River valley under the control of one rational, systematic management. Under Weyerhaeuser's guidance Chippewa River logging was done in the usual independent manner. But once logs were put into the river, the jointly owned company that controlled all aspects of the river managed them. Mill owners were delivered a guaranteed percentage of the drive. Conflict was minimized and everybody made a healthy profit.[75]

Mills involved with the Weyerhaeuser combination had long purchased lumber from the St. Croix valley. Unlike the Chippewa River mill owners, the St. Croix lumbermen expressed no jealousy about logs being milled downstream, perhaps because by the time Mississippi rafts were being formed, valley businessmen had already derived a profit from cutting and driving the logs. But as the Chippewa River valley was transformed into a cutover wasteland the partners of the Mississippi River Logging Company began to look to the St. Croix as their principal source of supply.

One of the first steps taken by the Weyerhaeuser partners into the St. Croix involved the founding of the town of Hayward, Wisconsin. It was merely a railroad siding on the recently completed North Wisconsin Railroad until the flamboyant lumberman Anthony J. Hayward convinced the Weyerhaeuser associates Liard, Norton, & Company to help him form the North Wisconsin Lumber Company. Hayward's grand style and constant interest in new ventures led to him to be dubbed by his associates as "the Grand Duke." He was supposed to provide the practical experience necessary to get the operation up and going, but he was too often absent from Hayward or inattentive to important details. For example, in 1883 he was gone to Madison, Wisconsin for several weeks. During that time he successfully lobbied the legislature to create Sawyer County out of Ashland County, but failed to secure such necessities as an adequate cook and oxen for his logging camps. Hayward also secured the legislature's permission to build a dam across the Namekagon River, but then after selecting an appropriate site for the works allowed it to be carelessly constructed with brush and earth. The dam, which would later fail spectacularly in 1907, created Lake Hayward to serve as a millpond for a water-powered sawmill constructed at the site in 1882. It took years of constant effort to make the North Wisconsin venture successful. In 1885 Frederick Weyerhaeuser bought out "Grand Duke" Hayward's share of the venture, although it was not until 1891, ten years after they started, that the partners began to see a return on their investment.[76]

Weyerhaeuser and his associates became involved in St. Croix logging slowly and discreetly. In November 1883, Weyerhaeuser purchased from Isaac Staples ten thousand acres of forestlands on the Moose River, a branch of the Kettle River. The sale netted Staples the princely sum of $262,819. Purchases of stumpage were usually handled with little fanfare. This transaction did not arouse great curiosity in part because it was made

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[75] Mark Wyman, *The Wisconsin Frontier* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998), 268-9; Fries, *Empire in Pine*, 148-55.

[76] Eldon M. Marple, *The Visitor Writes Again* (Hayward, Wisc.: The County Print Shop, 1984), 69-73, 87-95.

not by the Mississippi River Logging Company itself but by two downriver partnerships, Weyerhaeuser & Denkmann and P. & P.M. Musser, in cooperation with a Stillwater business, Sauntry & Tozer. The local men, however, were just a front. David Tozer was a grizzled old veteran of St. Croix logging, successful enough but never one of the major figures in Stillwater. William Sauntry, although younger and less experienced, was the key figure. He was ambitious, able, and anxious to win Weyerhaeuser's trust. It was he who first acquired the option on Staples's land and although he seemed to be the lead figure in the purchase, he and Tozer put no capital into the purchase. Sauntry became, in effect, Weyerhaeuser's agent in Stillwater.[77]

The Moose River deal proved to be very profitable for all of the parties concerned. Sauntry & Tozer eventually delivered 9.8 million board feet of logs to their downriver investors. In 1886, Weyerhaeuser took another larger step into the St. Croix valley when he engineered the formation of the Musser-Sauntry Land, Logging, & Manufacturing Company. Capitalized at one million dollars the company began to make pineland purchases throughout the St. Croix valley. Once again the Mississippi mill men supplied the bulk of the money and Sauntry took charge of forest operations. Between 1888 and 1907 the company produced nearly eight million board feet of logs. Through these deals and numerous smaller ones he participated in with Weyerhaeuser, Sauntry had advanced to the front ranks of lumbermen in Stillwater. The opportunity for the biggest coup of all, however, came in the fall of 1887. Sauntry informed Weyerhaeuser that Isaac Staples was prepared to exit the field. If the right offer were made, he would liquidate his 50,400 acres of pineland, his river improvements, and his shares in the St. Croix Boom Company. Here was an opportunity to control the future of logging on the river and the downriver mill owners did not hesitate. With the Liard, Norton, & Company, one of Weyerhaeuser's staunchest associates, taking the lead Staples was bought out for the princely sum of $650,000.[78]

The Weyerhaeuser syndicate made its move into the St. Croix valley at a time of growing anxiety within the lumber industry concerning the future availability of timber. The old myth that the Lake States forest was inexhaustible had been belied by the speed with which trees fell during the decades after the Civil War. During the 1880s a scramble ensued within the industry. Prudent lumbermen realized that only by securing large tracts of forestland could they guarantee a future supply of logs. The speed and scale with which Frederick Weyerhaeuser and his associates moved into the St. Croix valley, securing a half dozen major tracts, surprised and dismayed their rivals in Minneapolis and Stillwater. Minnesota newspapers compared their arrival to a sudden "scourge of locusts."

Yet, when the downriver men inspected their St. Croix lands they found that some of the tracts had been subject to a scourge. A Liard, Norton, Company cruiser complained that the St. Croix lands were "poorly located, inferior, and picked over."

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[77] Ralph W. Hidy, Frank Ernest Hill, and Alan Nevins, *Timber and Man: The Weyerhaeuser Story* (New York: Macmillan, 1963), 96; Fred W. Kohlmeyer, *Timber Roots: The Liard, Norton Story, 1855-1905* (Winona, Minn.: Winona County Historical Society, 1972), 128.

[78] Hidy, Hill, and Nevins, *Timber and Men*, 96-7; Kohlmeyer, *Timber Roots*, 130.

Instead of finding tracts of fine, strait white pine, much of the land contained tamarack, balsam, and hardwood. The best of the pine was not white pine but its inferior cousin, red pine, or as it was known in Wisconsin, Norway pine. White pine was present on the lands but not in stands as dense as had been formerly sought by loggers. With the lower value of the timber on their lands the mill owners needed to be very efficient in their logging operations to turn a profit. Great jams such as occurred on the St. Croix in 1886 were an anathema to men with thousands of dollars invested in giant steam powered mills. They watched the spectacular jam of that year with a disbelief that turned to disgust when they heard the Stillwater lumbermen ruefully predict that a similar jam would likely occur again. Having secured control over a vast portion of the valley's forest resources the Weyerhaeuser syndicate turned their attention to seizing control over the river.[79]

Although it was a bigger and more complex river system, Weyerhaeuser wanted the St. Croix to be run with the efficiency and regularity of the Chippewa River. On that river Weyerhaeuser controlled the driving company that manipulated all 149 dams in the valley and took responsibility for the delivery of all logs put into the water. To prevent any disruption of the flow of logs during dry seasons Weyerhaeuser had a massive dam, the biggest logging dam in Wisconsin, built on the Chippewa River at Little Falls. The structure could send a fifteen-foot head of water into the river; enough water to refloat logs one hundred miles down stream. The dam cost the lumbermen $147,457, but Weyerhaeuser believed it was better to make the upfront investments necessary to ensure smooth operations, than suffer uncertainty and delay later. The problem with trying to bring a new emphasis on efficiency to the St. Croix was that the industry had been too long under the control of the same men. Weyerhaeuser had already shown old Isaac Staples the door, but to improve log driving on the St. Croix he had to get around Martin Mower.[80]

Even his friends and associates had to admit that Martin Mower was "somewhat eccentric." Erasable, "grouchy," and litigious were words that most outsiders found an accurate description of the veteran lumberman. Mower had come to the St. Croix with his brother back in 1842 and within five years he was the proprietor of a string of logging camps. For more than thirty years he had been intimately involved in the management of the St. Croix Boom Company, and after 1879 he was the controlling owner. In personal appearance he was a disheveled bachelor, "sot" in his ways. But woe to the rival who failed to appreciate that he was a "capable and shrewd" businessman. Mower ran the St. Croix Boom Company, not to facilitate logging or milling endeavors but with an eye to his personal prosperity. Since he controlled the funnel through which all logs cut in the valley had to pass, Mower sat atop a money making machine. Under his management the St. Croix boom, unlike most boom companies in Minnesota and Wisconsin during the 1870s, did not increase its investments in river improvements. While great jams regularly delayed for weeks the shipment of logs, Mower awarded generous dividends, often over thirty percent, to the boom's stockholders, of which he was the largest. For

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[79] *Ibid*, 127-8.

[80] Rosholt, *Wisconsin Logging Book*, 152-3; Rector, *Log Transportation in the Lake States*, 107; Wyman, *The Wisconsin Frontier*, 264.

several years Frederick Weyerhaeuser had tried to prod the gray-bearded old man of the river to improve and expand the boom company's operations. Throughout the 1880s the Weyerhaeuser syndicate tried to purchase Mower's stock, but he would not part with his guaranteed source of wealth. There is every reason to believe that he would never have sold to the downriver mill owners. But once more Weyerhaeuser's stealthy approach won the day. In 1889, Mower was approached by a group of young lumbermen, headed by William Sauntry, to "lease," not sell, control of the boom company for twenty years. In return for a generous annual fee Mower yielded to the younger generation, probably not knowing that in doing so he was giving way to Weyerhaeuser.[81]

Immediately upon securing Mower's exit the Weyerhaeuser syndicate met and authorized extensive river improvements on the St. Croix to prevent future jams. The plan was to build a large dam that could control the rate of flow in the river and regulate the passage of logs over the falls and through the narrow confines of the Dalles. Weyerhaeuser's model was the dam he had built at Little Rapids on the Chippewa River. But he would not be able to achieve his dream for the St. Croix without a legal battle. Weyerhaeuser's opponent was as unexpected as he was formidable, Isaac Staples.

Although it had appeared to all that Staples had retired from business when he sold off his forestlands to the syndicate, the old patriarch of the St. Croix had one last bolt to shoot. In 1887, Staples sunk fifty thousand dollars into the purchase of property and water rights at St. Croix Falls. It was the site of high expectations and grandiose dreams since the days of Caleb Cushing's failed investments. The hardheaded old lumberman had fallen under the spell of those dreams, but typically he dreamt with his eyes open. Staples planned to build a toll dam just above the falls. He would prevent logjams, but more importantly he would be in a position to collect substantial fees from every logger on the river. Even in his rocking chair Isaac Staples sought recognition that he was the "boss logger" on the river. It was a likely plan save for the one element in the equation that Staples had failed to reckon on, Weyerhaeuser. In the German immigrant turned "Robber Baron" Staples finally met someone who could out muscle and money him on the St. Croix. Weyerhaeuser insisted that if there was going to be a dam on the river, he would control it, and he used his established ties with the Wisconsin state legislature to secure a charter for his dam, then used that as leverage to prevail upon the Minnesota legislature for a similar charter. Then with construction crews already at work on his dam, Weyerhaeuser beat back Staples' last-ditch court challenges. Had Weyerhaeuser sought public notoriety he could have used the struggle to prove that he was now the "boss logger" on the river, instead he let William Sauntry take the credit while he merely drew contentment for being able to impose a more rationale, harmonious, and efficient order on the river.[82]

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[81] Folsom, *Fifty Years in the Northwest*, 60-1; Easton, *History of the Saint Croix Valley*, 23-4; Rector, *Log Transportation in the Lake States*, 118, 124, 134, 144, 270; Kohlmeyer, *Timber Roots*, 130; Hidy, Hill, and Nevins, *Timber and Men*, 97.

[82] *Ibid*, 96-7, 157; *Polk County Press* (Osceola, Wisc.) 26 February 1887, 2 March 1889; Rosemarie Vezina, *Nevers Dam: The Lumberman's Dam* (St. Croix Falls, Wisc.: Standard-Press, 1965), 18-22.

The new dam was a milestone in the lumber industry's campaign to transform the St. Croix. It was built eleven miles upriver from St. Croix Falls near Wolf Creek at the farm of homesteader Charlie Nevers. Joseph Brown, who operated a trading post near the site sixty years before, would have truly been shocked to see the massive works of the dam rise up twenty feet from the bed of the river. It stretched six hundred and fourteen feet across the St. Croix and backed up the river for between ten and fifteen miles. Although it was much larger than any other dam in the valley, it was constructed in a manner similar to other logging dams. It was secured by wood pilings and was controlled by a Bear Trap Gate.[83] But such was the scale of the structure that it was widely regarded as the largest wood-piling dam in the world and the eighty-foot gate was the largest in the world. Lumbermen had talked about such a dam for years. In fact, Seth Ayers a lumberman from the 1850s claimed to have erected a makeshift dam of rocks and tree stumps at the site. His purpose had been to build a head of water for his logging operations downstream at Osceola. What ever Ayers may have done it was nowhere near the scale of what Weyerhaeuser had ordered into existence. The Nevers dam cost close to $250,000 after the construction fees, legal expenses, and riparian rights were totaled. It was the most expensive logging dam ever built in the north woods.[84]

What the lumbermen got for this huge investment was a structure made of wood and stone that helped to manage the flow of logs from the upper St. Croix to the lower river. The broad waters impounded by the dam became a vast holding pen for all logs cut in the valley. When the men at the St. Croix Boom were ready for more logs word would be sent up to Nevers Dam and the lumberjacks there would open up several of the fifteen sluicing gates and pass the appropriate number of logs into the river. Similarly if the men on the boom experienced low water the great Bear Trap Gate could be lowered and within hours the level would rise on the lower river. In May of 1890 the *St. Croix Valley Standard* boasted about the impact of the new dam:

> The benefits of the Nevers Dam are already being felt...Only one day has the Boom (here at Stillwater) shut down this season so far, and today all the gaps will be at work again....The success of the mills this year is phenomenal, not a break to detain them...the cut will be large, several of the mills showing much better record at this date than for several years past.

Upon command the river drivers stationed at Nevers could send as many as four million feet of logs down to the boom each hour. Electric lights installed at the dam provided the option of operating the sluiceway twenty-four hours a day. With the completion of

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[83] In 1914 logging expert Ralph Clement described a Bear Trap Gate as composed of "two rectangular leaves each of which has a length equal to the width of the sluice. They are fastened to the bottom of the sluice by hinges on which they turn. The upstream leaf overlaps the downstream one when the leaves are down and the gate open." When the gate is open it lies flat on the bed of the dam with the water rushing over it. A hand-operated wheel raised or lowered the gate. The advantage of this design is that one person working the gate is able to release a large amount of water very quickly. For more see, Ralph Clement, *Logging: The Principles and General Methods of Operation in the United States* (New York: John Wiley, 1914), 355-7.

[84] *Ibid*, 12-3; Rector, *Log Transportation in the Lake States*, 108; *Burnett County Sentinel*, 27 September 1889, 4 October 1889.

Nevers Dam the lumbermen took a large step away from being bound by the irregular patterns of nature and toward the industrial management of the St. Croix.[85]

The site of Nevers Dam might well have been the most important historic site from the logging era located within the Riverway. Unfortunately there is little that remains from the lumbermen's dam. In 1955, the Northern States Power Company dismantled most of the dam. What survived that process are the remains of several wing dams that can be seen protruding from the shore as well as several old log pilings and rock cribs farther upstream—hardly enough to meet the integrity provisions of the National Register of Historic Places. Nonetheless to the visitor with a sense of history the picturesque site can help conjure up visions of when the St. Croix was a river of pine.

When the great Bear Trap gate of Nevers Dam was closed, it was possible for lumbermen to reduce the flow of water in the St. Croix River to a mere trickle. Although this was rarely done, the lumbermen's new power over the river reignited their lingering feud with the steamboat men on the river. The feeling that the lumbermen had become overweening in their power had grown during the 1880s among residents of the villages upstream from the boom. Martin Mower's crabbed management of the boom company had made a bad situation worse. Unlike his predecessors he did nothing to try to ameliorate the inconvenience caused to river traffic by the mass of logs at the mouth of the boom. In April of 1891, the steamboat men won an important victory when the Wisconsin legislature amended the Nevers dam charter to provide some protection for steamboats on the river. Twenty-four hour notice was required before the dam could completely shut its gates. Steamboat men tried and failed to force the lumbermen to ensure a three-foot navigation channel in the river as far as St. Croix Falls. An attempt at more aggressive action to curb the logger's control of the St. Croix began in 1900 when steamboat men and their supporters in the villages above Stillwater tried to involve the United States Army Corps of Engineers. Major Frederic Abbott of the Corps proposed restricting the times when either boom or the dam might be able to limit other river users. The lumbermen, however, were once again a match for their opponents. They were able to document that thousands of mill and boom workers in Stillwater and numerous other towns throughout the Mississippi valley would lose their jobs if the flow of timber were interrupted. The attempted revolt against the lumbermen eventually led to the creation, in 1909, of the St. Croix River Improvement Association, an organization that would foster public concern for the well-being of the river. But at least till 1912 the needs of lumber continued to dominate the St. Croix.[86]

The clash over navigation on the St. Croix indicated that while logging remained very important to the St. Croix valley, it was by no means the only economic interest vying for control over resources. By the beginning of the twentieth century farmers,

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[85] Vezina, *Nevers Dam*, 17-8; *Polk County Press*, 21 September 1889; Nevers Dam, National Register of Historic Places Registration Form, n.d., State Historic Preservation Office, State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Madison.

[86] *Ibid*, 35-7; *Polk County Press*, 23 June 1883, 16 February 1884 16 November 1889; Frederic Abbot to George Seymour, 18 December 1899, William H.C. Folsom Papers, State Historical Society of Wisconsin, River Falls Areas Research Center, River Falls, Wisc.; Miscellaneous newspaper clippings, Folsom Papers, SHSW, River Falls.

steamboat men, a growing tourist industry, and sportsmen all began to challenge the lumber industry's hegemony over the valley. In 1886, an event occurred that would have been unthinkable a generation earlier. When Liard, Norton, & Company tried to drive their logs on the Clam River they were forced by legal action to suspend the drive. Local farmers claimed their lands were inundated by logging dams and demanded compensation. Although there was little farming activity apparent from the river, nearly twenty-five settlers claimed damages. With the high water level rapidly passing, the company had little choice but to satisfy the claims as quick as possible or face the prospect of having their winter's cut hung-up till next year. The "settlers" proved to be tough negotiators, with one securing a nine hundred dollar payment—much more than his land was even worth. Land speculators bedeviled loggers further by buying the rights to likely dam sites on tributary streams and then holding the land until their price was met.[87]

For lumbermen who chose not to negotiate with their litigious neighbors the cost could be high. In 1903, the Chengwatana Dam, at the outlet of Cross Lake, was mysteriously dynamited in the middle of the night. The dam was the most important on the Snake River. It was built in 1848 when the area was wilderness. But by the time the dam needed reconstruction in the 1870s the lumbermen had to share the area with farmers who complained that the annual log drives flooded their fields. Little was done to address these complaints in the years leading up to the explosion. The explosion hit the operations of lumberman James McGrath hard. He had forty-five million feet of logs ready to go down the Snake only to be suddenly left without the water to do the job. His costly solution was to take the logs by river as far as Pine City, pull them out of the water, and ship them by rail to Stillwater. There the logs were dumped into the St. Croix and rafted down the Mississippi to the waiting sawmills.[88]

The Failure of Government Regulation of the St. Croix Pinery

While disputes such as these became more common as the population of the North Country became denser, it is nonetheless striking how little legal and legislative action inhibited the activities of lumbermen. Legal issues were almost always restricted to local courts, even on a border river like the St. Croix. Legislative regulation by the States of Minnesota and Wisconsin was largely restricted to the granting of charters for dams or the passage of laws designed to facilitate the lumber business. The regulation of log marks or the establishment of inspection districts for the scaling of logs were both state regulations that provided a structure conducive to the expansion of the lumber industry. There was remarkably little interest on the part of either Minnesota or Wisconsin in conserving the forests of the St. Croix valley. The states used neither taxation policy nor their investigative authority to try to promote greater efficiency in forest operations. Instead tax policy actually promoted the "cut and get out" tactics of the loggers by presenting hefty tax bills to the owners of uncut forestlands. Two prevailing cultural assumptions inhibited a more creative role for government in forest management. The overwhelming majority of Americans believed that the appropriate disposition of land was private ownership and that the highest use of that land was for farming. Most

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[87] Kohlmeyer, *Timber Roots*, 175.
[88] *Mississippi Valley Lumberman*, 5 June 1903, 11 December 1903.

residents of the Upper Midwest believed that the lumber boom was only a temporary phase of settlement that would in time yield to new and greater opportunities.[89]

Aside from the occasional involvement of the United States Army Corps of Engineers in navigation issues, the federal government was even less of a factor in regulating St. Croix logging. As the largest landowner in the valley the United States government proved a poor steward of some of the finest forestlands in the nation. For at least a generation, from the 1837 Sioux Treaty to the Civil War, pine timber on federal lands was there for the taking. Large-scale operators like Isaac Staples purchased land to secure their long-term futures, but men without access to eastern capital had the option of stealing public timber as a means of establishing themselves in the industry. In hushed tones over steins of lager beer, loggers debated how extensive was the larceny, but no one doubted its existence. Finally in 1855, Thomas A. Hendricks, the United States Commissioner of Public Lands issued a circular directing public land offices to collect the value of all depredations brought to their attention. Typical of federal efforts of that era, Hendricks provided no means to investigate thefts. The result was that only trespassers who had been turned in were ever approached for compensation and the General Land Office often relied upon the trespassers themselves to report how much timber was taken. Typical was the July 1859 case of two Hudson, Wisconsin men arrested for timber stealing. The only reason they were brought to trial was that they had fallen out with a third accomplice who "out of pure maliciousness" turned informant on them. The Wisconsin legislature protested such prosecutions on the grounds that theirs was a frontier state and such logging should be allowed "in view of the necessities of the people." In twenty years only $150,000 was collected in all of the lumber districts in the country. Federal legal expenses required to collect that money topped $50,000.[90]

A more determined effort to deter timber thefts was launched by the General Land Office in 1877 at the behest of Carl Schurz, the independent reformer who served as Rutherford B. Hays's Secretary of the Interior. Schurz sent special agents to several of the most active logging regions with the power to investigate trespasses and to seize illegally cut logs. A wave of panic swept over the industry when Colonel E.A. Pratois arrived in Minnesota to begin his investigation. In May the federal agents were at the Taylors Falls land office "ascertaining the amount of trespassing on the St. Croix River and its tributaries." There was great fear that "a good many prominent lumbermen will be found to have their hands in the grand scheme of denuding the public domain of its valuable timber." The St. Croix lumbermen loudly proclaimed their innocence and complained that the real abuses had taken place on the Chippewa and Upper Mississippi rivers. "That any of the first families of Stillwater were engaged in this business is preposterous," complained the *Stillwater Lumberman*. "But Lord, how those Minneapolis

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[89] James Willard Hurst, *Law and Economic Growth: The Legal History of the Lumber Industry in Wisconsin, 1836-1915* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1964), 382, 462; James Willard Hurst, "The Institutional Environment of the Logging Era in Wisconsin," *The Great Lakes Forest: An Environmental and Social History*, edited by Susan L. Flader, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983), 151-5.

[90] *Stillwater Messenger*, 16 March 1858, 12 July 1859, 30 August 1859; Hurst, *Law and Economic Growth*, 130; *Stillwater Lumberman*, 3 August 1877.

and St. Cloud fellows did steal!" In the end the agents determined that 81.7 million feet of pine logs had been plundered from public lands, just between 1868 and 1876.[91]

One single case of trespass found thirty-five million board feet, with a dollar value of over $75,000, feet stolen. All told there were twenty-nine cases brought to trial in Minnesota because of Schurz's probe. Unfortunately, thanks to the United States Congress the prosecutions never lived up to the build up of the investigation. The House refused to increase the Department of the Interior's total investigatory budget above its paltry twelve thousand dollars. Which made it impossible to build cases for prosecution, even though the penalties from those cases would have returned hundreds of thousands of dollars to the federal government. Schurz tried to drum up public support for broad changes in United States public land policy. He called for an end to preemption rights and homestead privileges for forest lands on the grounds the lands were not suited for family farms and that current policy encouraged very valuable public lands to be privatized at next to no return to the public. He advocated managing forestlands for sustained yield by keeping them in public hands and leasing cutting rights. Such a policy would have created the equivalent of the national forest system in the 1870s. Unfortunately, neither Minnesota nor Wisconsin was ready for reform. "I found myself standing almost solitary and alone," Schurz complained. "Deaf was Congress, and deaf the people seemed to be." Actually, Congress was worse than deaf. The House, slavish to the interests of timber industry, passed the Timber Cutting Act that made it legal for homesteaders and mining companies to cut public domain timber. More importantly the act gave St. Croix lumbermen facing prosecution or investigation a giant loophole. Anyone who was found to have stolen timber from the public domain in the past, or accused of doing so in the future, simply was required to pay a fee of $1.25 per acre. The prospect of any future investigations of timber fraud vanished with this legal absolution for past sinners and the shameless invitation to "go and sin some more."[92]

The Schurz investigation was greatly resented not only by the lumbermen of the valley but also by the people of the St. Croix. As an earlier investigator had lamented "local sympathy sealed up sources of information." Yet, the image painted by the investigation of the lumber baron plundering public lands would linger. It would later resonate quite strongly in the valley when a lack of timber forced once busy mills to close. Then public ire would be directed against Weyerhaeuser and Liard, Norton. This is ironic because the big downriver timber companies did not become deeply involved in the valley until after the vast majority of the upper St. Croix forest was no longer in the public domain. In fact Liard, Norton, & Company was never involved in a single trespass case in Wisconsin, nor did it resort to filing fraudulent homestead claims. On the other hand the names of some of the richest of the original Stillwater lumbermen are listed on homestead applications in Burnett County, Wisconsin, including Isaac Staples and Frederick Schulenberg. By the 1880s the forest had been privatized by lumbermen, who controlled thousands of acres and railroads, due to the land grants offered by state and

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[91] *Stillwater Lumberman*, 11 May 1877, 3 August 1877, 28 September 1877, 5 October 1877; Hidy Hill, Nevins, *Timber and Men*, 126.

[92] *Ibid*, 127; Hurst, *Law and Economic Growth*, 130-1; Larson, *White Pine Industry in Minnesota*, 296-7; *Stillwater Lumberman*, 5 October 1877.

federal legislation, which owned hundreds of thousands of acres more. These large corporate owners tried to protect their holdings from the type of depredations that had previously been directed against public lands. Rather than being timber thieves the Weyerhaeuser syndicate were themselves victims of fraud. The job of protecting corporate lands from theft largely fell to men known as timber cruisers.[93]

The job of the timber cruiser was to estimate the amount of board feet of lumber that was present in a tract of standing timber. Many of the first cruisers were former government township surveyors. One of these was Albert C. Stuntz, who traveled all over the Upper St. Croix valley in the 1860s and 1870s. Sometimes he traveled alone, on other occasions he was assisted by Chippewa canoemen. He camped out in the woods in all seasons, although when he came across a logging camp he was grateful for its hospitality. In 1864 he visited a logging camp on the Namekagon River. "Laid over at Mackey Bros. Camp in Sec. 27," he wrote in his diary, "nothing to read or amuse myself about camp. Life is carried on as usual Some mending Boots and Fiddling Some reading Some Sleeping & Some Talking." A handful of large lumber companies maintained a salaried cruiser; the holders of railroad land grants usually required a staff of such men. There were, however, a number of experienced landlookers based in Stillwater who were available for assignment as needed by any lumberman. Accuracy and integrity were crucial requirements for timber cruisers. Upon their reports a company might base its entire winter logging program, or determine the price at which it would buy or sell land. Timber cruisers were most often the first to discover a timber trespass and their familiarity with what went on in the forest over many years, plus their knowledge of tract books made them the most effective investigators of the crime. During the 1880s William M. Croom, timber cruiser for Liard, Norton, & Company discovered numerous signs of "old cuttings" in what the company had thought was virgin St. Croix valley pine forest. Little could be done to seek redress for depredations committed in the indefinite past, but cruisers were kept busy accessing the value of ongoing trespasses. Yet, while these abuses were very common, by the 1880s they were generally the result of error not larceny. William Sauntry made a practice of firing foreman who "cut a round forty." He told one of his employees "a man who'll steal for you, will steal from you." Most trespass cases were the result of errors made in laying out boundaries or the result of deep snow obscuring the lines between tracts. Damage claims were generally settled promptly and amicably, short of court action.[94]

Fire in the Forest

On September 1, 1894 the acrid smell of smoke was heavy in the air about the sawmill town of Hinckley, Minnesota. That was nothing unusual for the town's twelve hundred residents. For more than a month the threat of fire hung over the town as the dry swamps and cutover lands of Pine County smoldered, unchecked by fire crews or precipitation. In fact no rain had fallen for more than a month. For weeks trains

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[93] Hurst, *Law and Economic Growth*, 94-5; Kohlmeyer, *Timber Roots*, 141; Sharon Tarr, *Spooner: A History to 1930* (Spooner, Wisc.: privately printed, 1976), 2.

[94] J.C. Ryan, *Early Loggers in Minnesota*, 6-7; Albert C. Stuntz, Diaries, 1858,1863-1865, 1867-1869, 1882, SHSW, River Falls; Kohlmeyer, *Timber Roots*, 140-2; Vezina, *Nevers Dam*, 13.

traveling between Minneapolis and Duluth had been delayed by the blankets of smoke that obscured the track. While the situation was worrisome to the people of the St. Croix Valley, it was not unique. August and September were the driest months of the year and fires often broke out amid the cuttings. In the course of logging swampers cutaway all branches from the logs. These slashings were left where they fell and over the course of a season would become dry and very combustible. Fires frequently broke out in such terrain, but rainfall usually put them out before they could cause much damage. As morning turned to afternoon in Hinkley the sky darkened and the air became still, as if before a thunderstorm. But there would be no rain that day.

Hinckley was a mill town on the northwestern edge of the St. Croix valley. It was located on a small tributary of the Kettle River known as Grindstone Creek. It was thanks to the Lake Superior and Mississippi Railroad that it owed its existence, however, not its meager creek, nor the Kettle River. The railroad had sped the rate of cutting all along the western fringe of the valley. Instead of loggers merely working their way up toward the headwaters of streams such as the Snake and Kettle from the St. Croix River, the harvesting of pine also proceeded from the railroad toward the river. This two pronged attack of pine plains of the region ensured that, in spite of density and quality of its timber, the area was striped of its trees faster than any other part of Minnesota. By 1894, the town of Hinckley was surrounded by vast stretches of combustible cutover land. As the summer fires spread unchecked from one field of slashings to the next they merged to form one great-unrestrained storm of flame, surging to the east then the west, directed only by the whims of the wind.

Incredibly, there were several Hinckley residents who had lived through the terrible Peshtigo Fire twenty-three years before in 1871. That blaze, caused by a similar set of circumstances, killed more than one thousand people in spite of the fact that the residents of Peshtigo had both a river and Lake Michigan available as a place of refuge. As they saw the smoke darken the sky these veterans, like those who knew no better, continued to work at their jobs, but surely they must have given some thought as to how they would save themselves if holocaust again stalked them.[95]

All thought of work was cast aside a little after noon when word came over the telegram that the town of Pokegama, just nine miles to the south, had been engulfed in flames. As word spread that most of Pokegama's inhabitants had been burned people at last awoke to their own danger. But it was too late. Almost as soon as they entered the street, they saw an ominous black cloud boil up on the horizon and quickly spread its shadow over Hinckley. The volunteer fire department barely had time to deploy to the edge of town when the monster fire struck. A wave of scorching, overwhelming, heat swept over the fire fighters as building after building broke out in flames. In an instant the town was lost and people fled to save themselves. The foolish sought valuables, the prudent gathered up loved ones and immediately fled to the train station. With Hinckley transformed into an island in a sea flames the steel rails were the only way out. Hastily a train was assembled from a collection of cars sidetracked at the village. By the time

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[95] Stewart Holbrook, *Holy Old Mackinaw: A Natural History of the American Lumberjack* (Saulsalito, Calf.: Comstock, 1938), 139; Robert W. Wells, *Fire at Peshtigo* (New York: Prentice Hall, 1968), 227-36.

several hundred panicked people filled the train, the heat was so great that the paint on the passenger cars was beginning to blister. The train sped through the blazing forest till it reached the town of Sandstone where it warned the inhabitants of the coming conflagration. The firestorm, however, was hard on their heels and within minutes of the train leaving Sandstone, that town was destroyed with the loss of forty-five people. When the train reached the trestle bridge over the Kettle River, they found it in flames. If the Hinckley refugees could be gotten across the river, they would be able to out run the fire, if not, they would be trapped and killed. The engineer opened the throttle and the train made it across just before the bridge collapsed into the inferno.[96]

For those in Hinckley who missed the train horror and death stalked them. Many fell dead in mid-flight, killed by the "suffocating choking gases" that preceded the flames. A contemporary reported that:

> Dogs, cats, chickens and stock were stricken instantly and died in their tracks without serious burns. In one instance a man was stricken down, but not burned enough to destroy his clothes, and in one of his pockets was found a small leather purse in which were four silver dollars welded together in one solid piece.

Those killed by the gas were said to have fallen "in the twinkling of an eye." Others suffered the ravages of fire. More than ninety discreet piles of gray ash, in human form, were later found along a railroad embankment. An equal number who had sought refuge in a partially flooded gravel pit near by survived. Another group of about two hundred people ran for their lives up the track of the Mississippi and Lake Superior Railroad. As the flames gained on them the slow of foot perished one by one. Most of them, however, managed to keep running until they met a train. The train was unable to outrun the flames and it caught fire, but not before unloading its terrified passengers near a bog, into which they sought refuge. [97]

The great forest fire of September 1894 became known as the Hinckley Fire. It wiped out the Minnesota towns of Hinckley, Sandstone, Pokegama, Mission Creek and Partridge and killed 413 people. But it was not restricted to Minnesota. The conditions that caused the fire, dry weather, combustible cutovers, and high winds, existed across the Upper St. Croix valley. On the Wisconsin side of the valley a wave of fires swept up the track of the North Wisconsin Railroad. Fires born by bad logging practice consumed little mill towns that had lived off the harvest of the forest. Phillips, Wisconsin was consumed in July 1894, while the town of Barronett was burned on the same day as the Hinckley disaster. At the time of the fire the manager of the Barronett mill was in Minneapolis holding forth before a group of lumbermen how his mill was in no danger because it was surrounded by cleared ground. He was brought up short by a telegram that informed him the fire had leaped cleared land and consumed the mill. The refugees of Barronett no sooner found shelter in Shell Lake than flames surrounded that town. Although more than fifty buildings burned, Shell Lake was able to save its mill and the

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[96] Robert W. Wells, *"Daylight in the Swamp!": Lumberjacking in the Late Nineteenth Century* (New York: Doubleday, 1978), 133-4.
[97] Easton, *History of the Saint Croix Valley*, 1247; Holbrook, *Holy Old Mackinaw*, 140-4.

lives of its citizens. Among the other mill towns devastated that fire season were Comstock, Benoit, Marengo, and Mason. An estimated 1.4 million acres of pinelands and cutover was consumed by the fire.[98]

Although the 1894 fires were the worst that swept over the St. Croix valley, they were neither the first nor the last. Forest and brush fires had been a regular feature of life in the valley from the time logging developed as a large-scale commercial enterprise. During the 1870s and 1880s virtually all residents of the valley understood that if there was a dry spring a bad fire season was likely to follow. In 1877, for example, a lack of snowmelt had hampered the spring log drive. Water was so low in the river that in Polk County boys were wading across to Minnesota. By July massive fires raged across the valley. The *Stillwater Lumberman* estimated that "fire on the upper St. Croix has destroyed more timber than was cut last winter." Nothing would be done to restrain such wild fires. In 1879 fires ranged all around Grantsburg, Wisconsin. Only when buildings in town were threatened did "all the men and boys" turn out to fight it. The fires in the hinterland were ignored until "the rains put most of them out."[99]

A common misconception of these massive fires was that they burned up thousands of acres of pine timber. This occasionally happened with very intense fires. The 1877 fire on the Upper St. Croix and Namekagon generated heat "so terrific" that it burned "out all traces of stumps." Usually what happened was that a forest fire passed through standing timber fast enough that it only badly singed the trees. A fire-ravaged forest was reduced in value but it still boasted most of its board feet. The trouble was that fire killed most of the trees. This meant that the charred timber had to be harvested within a year or be severely degraded by insect damage. Forest fires reduced an asset that was rapidly appreciating to one that had to be immediately liquidated. In this way forest fires increased the pace of logging and accelerated the diminishment of the valley's future as a lumbering region. Massive salvage logging ventures worked against time to get the damaged logs out of the forest and were necessarily more wasteful. An increased pace of logging in kind increased the likelihood of more fires as more of the forest was replaced by fields of slash. The risk of forest fires discouraged lumbermen from sitting too long on their standing timber assets. This cycle of destruction was the long-lasting damage wrought by forest fires.[100]

The Hinckley Fire was particularly devastating not just because of the loss of life and standing timber, but because it forced the big lumber companies that now dominated the valley to accelerate their logging activities. The construction of Nevers Dam indicated that they were building for the future when they moved into the St. Croix. The Weyerhaeuser syndicate had discussed cutting back on forest operations due to the fallout from the Panic of 1893. With the market for building materials depressed they had thought it best to keep their pine in the forest. The fire, however, forced their hand. "It is too bad to have such timber as that wasting," lamented the head of Liard, Norton, &

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[98] Eldon M. Marple, *A History of the Hayward Lakes Region* (Hayward, Wisc.: Chicago Bay Grafix, 1976), 25-6; Kohlmeyer, *Timber Roots*, 142-3.
[99] *Stillwater Lumberman*, 20 July, 17 August 1877; *Burnett County Sentinel*, 9 May 1879.
[100] *Stillwater Lumberman*, 20 July 1877.

Company, and he ordered a massive salvage operation. The 1894 fires may have destroyed five hundred million board feet of timber, but equally as damaging were the impact of scorched earth for future forest growth and the loss of pine seedlings and saplings.[101]

The loss of life that accompanied the Hinckley Fire necessitated some type of political response. The Wisconsin state legislature passed a bill designating township officials to organize fire fighting crews with compensation pegged at $1.50 per day, per man, but for no more than ten days a year. Minnesota appointed a statewide fire warden and gave him the impossible charge "to prevent and suppress forest and prairie fires." The man appointed to the task, Christopher Columbus Andrews, worked tirelessly to make something of the job. He appointed deputy fire wardens and surveyed the state's forest resources. He eventually convinced Minnesota to create a School of Forestry, although it was not until well into the next century that Andrews was able to lead the state to establish state forest reserves. By that time the St. Croix had been thoroughly logged over and annually bedeviled by fires.[102]

Fires continued throughout the 1890s and into the 1900s because of the reluctance of loggers to change their practices. The big downriver mill owners would have liked to have held their pinelands for better prices but they were unwilling to force changes on the way logging operations were conducted. Most of their timber was cut by contractors squeezed into operating at a low margin of profit. These small businessmen were not inclined to take on the extra cost of piling the branches and brush left behind after logging and conducting a controlled burn. Although a generation of experience taught them better, they left behind the fuel for future forest fires. Farmers who purchased logged over land were confronted with acres of slash that could be removed economically only one way -- by fire. A farmer working alone on his homestead lacked the ability to contain a blaze once it began. He merely doused his cabin with water and waited for the fire to stop of its own accord. Hundreds of fires set in this manner swept over the upper valley each year between 1890 and 1910.

The Last Days of the Lumber Frontier

Each logging season and each fire season took its toll on the forest resources of the St. Croix valley. In Burnett County, Wisconsin, for example, by the 1880s all of the white pine and most of the Norway pine was gone. "The cry went up," a local historian wrote in 1909, "and has been a by-word with lumbermen every winter since that 'this will be the last one for logging in the county.'" Reports of the logging industry's demise were greatly exaggerated throughout the last years of the nineteenth century. Year in and year out logging continued to dominate life along the St. Croix. While it was broadly recognized that the valley's timberlands were nearing exhaustion, there remained an immutable aura of permanence about the seasonal cycle of the industry. Life on the St. Croix was locked in a familiar, comfortable rhythm, a three-part harmony of the long

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[101] Kohlmeyer, *Timber Roots*, 143;Hidy, Hill, Nevins, *Timber and Men*, 148.
[102] Lass, *Minnesota: A History*, 244-5; Kohlmeyer, *Timber Roots*, 143.

winter logging season, the dramatic spring river drives, and the sawdust summers of mills humming at full capacity.

To be sure, the names and faces of the lumberjacks changed. The men from Maine and Ireland gave way to Swedes, Poles, and Finns. The name "shanty boys" also faded from the scene, replaced by the less jaunty "lumberjack." Although it is a name we associate today with colorful images of burly men in red woolen shirts, there was a more ambiguous understanding of a lumberjack at the time. On one hand, they were lauded as men of the frontier, tough enough to challenge nature in her own domain. Yet, in the minds of many valley residents a lumberjack was "a new sort of animal," crude, dirty, and potentially violent. At the turn of the century, with the frontier all but destroyed the lumberjack was often seen as the lowest form of migratory worker, a hobo without a home. There was little Paul Bunyan romance in the way woods workers were viewed.[103]

In reality, woods workers in the last days of pine logging on the St. Croix generally came from one of three broad categories, the immigrants, cutover farmers, and the hard-core, itinerant lumberjack. Immigrants were drawn to the Upper Midwest by seasonal labor opportunities as harvest hands, mill workers, or lumberjacks. Some settled into the life of a woodsman with a relish and stayed at it as long as there was work. For most, however, life in a logging camp was a way station on the road to Americanization and better paying jobs. Finnish lumberjacks expressed their distaste for life in a lumber camp with the following verse,

> A wretched home, this cheerless camp;
> And "finer people" sneer, make cracks:
> "You ruffians, bums,
> bearded lumberjacks!"
> Our wages are the rags we wear,
> Our scraps of food no one digests.
> Our beds are bunks
> And fleas our only guests.

Finnish lumberjacks sometimes brought old country experience with an axe or saw to their job; others such as Poles or Hungarians merely brought a strong back and an empty stomach.[104]

A second broad category included some of those immigrants who moved into agriculture and tried to make a living on a cutover farm. It was rare for a cutover farmer, American born or immigrant, not to resort to work as a lumberjack at some point in the process of establishing a homestead. Carl Kuhnly, who grew up on a Burnett County farm in the 1890s remembered, "The first three winters Dad worked in the logging camp. He would walk about ten miles to come home on Saturday evening, then back again on

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[103] James Johnston, Memoir, 60; Hidy, Hill, Nevins, *Timber and Men*, 150-1.

[104] John Ilmari Kolehmainen, "In Praise of the Finnish Backwoods Farmer," *Agricultural History* 24, 1 (January 1950), 2;Georeg Baker Engberg, "Labor in the Lake States Lumber Industry, 1830-1930," (Ph.D. diss., University of Minnesota, 1949), 208-9

Sunday evening." His mother had to care for both the farm and six kids during the long winter. Families who lived farther from the camp had an even more difficult time. One farm wife remembered her husband worked at a camp twenty miles away. "The Camp could just as well have been a thousand miles away. There were no roads, only snow-buried trails. I never saw my husband till spring." Late in life she bitterly asked the question, "Why was I left alone to carry the whole load while my husband was away destroying the forest for a big lumber company who never knew we existed?" Another "old timer" recalled that necessity drove the men into the woods. "The family owed bills at the store for winter groceries and some of the money was used to pay these bills."[105]

A hard core of lumberjacks were men who had spent most of their lives in the woods and intended to finish their days felling trees. They had initially taken work as lumberjacks for the same reasons of necessity as the immigrants or cutover farmers but had long since given up any dream of another life. They liked the freedom of having limited responsibility. While in a camp they slept where and when they were told. When it was time to eat, the food was put down in front of him. The comradeship of a lumber crew provided pleasant association with men of similar disposition without the demands of family. A hobo lumberjack cherished the freedom to quit a camp at any time, collect his pay and go—perhaps because the cook was bad, or his bunk mate snored too loud, or he did not like the foreman, or simply because he wanted to go to town for a drunk. Similar to sailors on a ship or soldiers in a barracks, the logging camp was a predictable, structured, male world governed by well-established, easily-discernable rules of behavior. The bulk of these lumberjacks for life were highly skilled men. They often were specialists, such as sawyers. In fact, it was not uncommon for sawyers who worked well together on a crosscut saw to team-up and work together for years at a time. There was, however, a number of this class of men who were simply malcontents, dissatisfied with any situation and unlikely to lay their head to rest in any place very long. A competent foreman took the measure of his crew fairly quickly and worked to keep in camp the skilled and hard-working jacks. Often men would become regulars, year after year, with a foreman. All lumberjacks shared in common, however, the ability to put up with ill-lit bunkhouses reeking of sweat, bunks with only a "snort pole" between occupants, and dirty clothes infected with lice.[106]

The hard life of the lumberjack, the misery of camp life, the labor day after day in below zero weather, all took place in the remote forests of the valley. Townsfolk had little direct interaction with the working woodsman, save when the logging season ended and the thirsty lumberjacks headed for town. Stillwater was a prime destination for woodsmen when spring came, and their arrival was viewed with a mixture of curiosity and dread. In 1856, the morning after a group of lumberjacks painted the town red, the editor of the *St. Croix Union* sought to lecture the woolen shirt brigade:

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[105] Carl Kuhnly, "Homesteading in Wisconsin, Up Hill—Down Hill All The Way," 1985, pamphlet file, Burnett County Historical Society, Grantsburg, Wisc.; Vince Pleska, Lumberjacks wife axes glory myth," *St. Paul Sunday Pioneer Press*, 30 November 1980; Local History of Joint District 5 Siren and Daniels, n.d., pamphlet file, Burnett County Historical Society.

[106] Engberg, *Labor in the Lake States*, 67-87; Ryan, *Early Loggers in Minnesota,* 3(Duluth: Minnesota Timber Producers Association, 1980), 4-7.

> Our town is now filling up with lumbermen. They have been cooped up all winter in the woods; and when they get down here they feel like having a sort of jollification. We would have them understand that we are their friend; we know how to sympathize with them; for at one period of our life we were engaged in a humbler calling than theirs...It is not the dress, or the occupation, that makes a man; but the motives and principles by which he is actuated. But while we are a friend to the lumbermen, we are also a friend to law and order. Gentlemen, take your fun, but let it be innocent and harmless.

Such condescending editorials had little impact on the young men with full pockets and high spirits. Besides, as a rival newsman lamented, the business community profited handsomely from the jacks, "there is always room and welcome for a new saloon or strychnine whisky depot." A resident of Marine later recalled that Stillwater was "a good place for a rough-and-ready lumberjack to spend his money" with "about 25 licensed saloons" and plenty of "Woman of easy virtue were also available." After a few five cent shots of whisky many lumberjacks were ready for a visit to "Red Nell," the leading madam of the lower river. Together with "Perry the Pimp," Nell operated one of several well-frequented bordellos across the river at Houlton, Wisconsin.[107]

As the lumber industry spread to the upper reaches of the valley new "whoopee-towns" were developed. Barron, Wisconsin, although one would hardly know it today, was reputed to be a rough town during the 1880s when lumberjacks frequented it each spring. In 1880 the small town of Chandler, Wisconsin boasted fourteen saloons and two gambling houses "hastily nailed together of rough boards or logs...giving evidence that few, if any, of its citizens went there to stay." Lumberjacks in Grantsburg were known to "a make quite a racket, quarreling and fighting among themselves and with the citizens, there being no one to interfere with their pleasures," until the town invested in a hard-fisted marshal. No such threat from the law existed at Hayward. A common saying in the north woods a century ago was that "the three roughest places in the world are Hayward, Hurley, and Hell." Certainly in the 1890s Hurley, a town on the Wisconsin-Michigan border, deserved its ill fame with the wall-to-wall saloons and flophouses along Silver Street. Hayward operated on a smaller scale. It was only a village of about one thousand residents and even in its roughest days never had more than seventeen saloons. In fact, the "good people" of the town voted on at least one occasion to make the town dry, although that prohibition did not last long. Hayward's worst blind pigs and brothels were located away from the main town, easy for lumberjacks to find but not flaunted in the face of decency. "No lie about it," recalled one former lumberjack, Hayward was "one of the wildest little towns in the state." Men who had too much to drink could be found on almost every corner "bucking up." For years after the lumber trade had slackened, the

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[107] *St. Croix Union* (Stillwater, Minn.), 28 March 1856; Sherman E. Johnson, *From The St. Croix To the Potomac—Reflections of a Bureaucrat* (Bozeman: Montana State University, 1974), 28; Dunn, *St. Croix: Midwest Border River*, 105-6.

proprietors of Hayward saloons delighted in pointing out to gullible tourists bullet holes and caulk marks, from loggers boots, on the floors of their rundown bars.[108]

While there may be considerable local color in tales of wild "timberbeasts" cavorting in saloons, modern readers need to remember that hundreds of lumberjacks, perhaps the majority, departed for home strait from the logging camps, or after having only a single drink with their winter's comrades. For men waiting for a train, a saloon was one of the few places in most towns a dirty lumberjack would be welcome. Most saloons put out "free lunches' for men who would buy a drink. Saloons were also a good place for a laborer to find out about new jobs. Certainly there were plenty of lumberjacks who lost their entire paycheck on one wild spring spree, but these tended to be the hobo lumberjacks -- men who lacked, or chose to neglect, family responsibilities and had few ambitions in life other than doing what they pleased, as long as the money lasted. These men took pride in their physical prowess in the woods and their capacity for alcohol in town. Their life followed a pattern of long periods of hard work and short periods of riotous living. Sherman Johnson, who grew up in the valley recalled a friend who went to work as a lumberjack at the age of fourteen. "He then made the logging and harvest field circuit for 14 successive seasons, each year spending his money for liquor and women." Only when he gave up logging was he able to turn his back on the bottle. More than a few who stayed on that path ended up as old men shaking through delirium tremens.[109]

Logging never really ended in the St. Croix valley. Just as white pine yielded to Norway pine, so to did jack pine and cedar forests become the focus of the lumberjacks. Hemlock, which was regarded by Isaac Staples as scrap, became a very important forest product during the 1890s. The editor of the *Bayfield Press* proved an accurate prognosticator when he wrote in 1883, "While laying no claim to being a possessor of the gift of prophesy the writer would, nevertheless, hazard the opinion that ten years or less hence will see this once despised timber take high rank in the markets of the land." Unlike the buoyant white pine, hemlock and hardwood would not long float and it could not be driven via the St. Croix to market. Logging railroads and steam haulers were the only way to transport the logs and bark from the forest.[110]

The harvesting of hardwoods and hemlocks in the region climaxed in the 1920s, after which time the few remaining sections of virgin forest were nothing but a handful of wood lots. The Edward Hines Lumber Company of Chicago was one of the few big lumber companies to operate in the valley in those later years. In 1902, they purchased remaining forestlands of the North Wisconsin Lumber Company, including the big mill at Hayward. The Hines Company operated a logging railroad that ran spurs all through the

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[108] *Burnett County Sentinel*, 13 August 1880, 13 April 1888; Lewis C. Reimann, *Hurley—Still No Angel* (Ann Arbor, Mich.: Northwoods Publishers, 1954), 1-5; Eldon Marple, *The Visitor Who Came to Stay: Legacy of the Hayward Area* (Hayward, Wisc.: Country Print Shop, 1971), 78-80; Fred Etcherson Interview, 30 July 1970, State Historical Society of Wisconsin, River Falls.

[109] Johnson, *From the St. Croix to the Potomac*, 28.

[110] *Burnett County Sentinel*, 19 January 1883.

upper Namekagon valley. Fred Etcherson, who worked as a lumberjack for the company, described the way they built their spur tracks:

> Didn't take them long to build a railroad anyway. Had their own crew and made their own ties right there; they had a tie maker with them and I made ties for them one summer. The timber stood right in the right of way, see, fall the timber and make the ties, down they lay, then they put the rails on.

Railroad logging operations generally harvested all trees within hauling distance of the track. By increasing the volume of timber cutting the company could compensate for the lower quality of timber available and the increased cost of logging that stemmed from building logging spurs. Pine, hemlocks, other hardwoods would be gathered for lumber. Poplar or scrub oak, that was useless for dimension lumber would be harvested for pulpwood. Hines operated out of Hayward until 1922 when a fire burned their mill.[111]

The final phase of logging in the St. Croix valley featured the rise of the rubber tire lumberjacks. It began in the 1930s and continues to this day and features small-scale logging on selected private wood lots or public forests. During the bleak depression years the backwoods townships of the valley were very hard hit. Many a cutover farmer kept food on the table only by harvesting cordwood from personal wood lots or by working for a logger cutting a tract of "weed trees"--second growth stands of poplar and balsam. Only after several decades of professional management of public forestlands did logging begin again in earnest through government timber sales. By this time logging camps were a thing of the past, as lumberjacks commuted to work in their automobiles. Heavy equipment operators replaced the physically demanding work of a sawyer or swamper. The term "rubber tire lumberjack" refers to the diesel powered skidders used to harvest wood as well as the impact of such equipment on the lumberjack's physique.

Through the long twilight of the logging industry in the St. Croix valley, from the days of river driving to railroads to truck trails, the one consistent feature was the lumberjack. As long as there was work to be done in the woods, there were men willing to take up what has always been one of the riskiest jobs, in terms of personal injury, in America. In 1970, Fred Etcherson, who cut pine at the turn-of the-century and scraped by through the depression hauling pulpwood, tried to explain what drew men to work in the forests. Although most lumberjacks just barely made enough to live on, he was confident that they were happy with their lives because they, "didn't care to get rich." When he tried to explain his personal motivation eighty years later, he said:

> I just love to be in the woods. I'd just love to go down there in these woods right now. Lay down and go to sleep, I love to be in the woods. Wonderful place to be.

Etcherson had spent his life trying to destroy that which he loved. Ironically, cutting trees gave him a chance to develop a love of the forest.[112]

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[111] Kohlmeyer, *Timber Roots*, 273; Etcherson Interview, 30 July 1970.
[112] *Ibid.*

The Impact of Logging on the St. Croix Valley

Like the fur traders before them the lumberjacks embrace of the St. Croix valley transformed it. They had turned the forest they all valued, many appreciated, and a handful loved, into lumber, a utilitarian if prosaic commodity. The volume of lumber produced by this single valley was staggering. During the peak year of 1890 the St. Croix valley, as either logs or lumber, had produced 450 million board feet. The total production between 1840 and 1912, if loaded on to standard log cars would have required 2.2 million rail cars. As a single train such a span of cars would be long enough to reach across the continent more than six times. The transfer of this wood from where nature intended it along the Upper Mississippi valley to the treeless region to the south and west made the agricultural settlement of the Great Plains possible. The majestic white pine of the St. Croix lived again—in some cases still lives—as homes, barns, corn cribs, fence posts, doors, from the support beams in great public buildings to lowly outhouse seats. While the establishment of grain farms on the plains was not in itself an unmixed ecological benefit, in the balance the loss of a vast forest for the gain of a breadbasket was a trade nineteenth century Americans would have been pleased to accept.[113]

Masked behind the balance between the Upper Midwest's loss and the Great Plain's gain is the enduring impact of the logging frontier on the St. Croix valley. The sudden, dramatic loss of the valley's forest was an ecological change unrivaled since the last descent of the glaciers. The vast plains of old-growth white pine, an area exceeding four thousand square miles and boasting trees two to three hundred years old, have never been replaced. White pine had dominated the presettlement forest because of its ability to adapt to a wide range of conditions. But the impact of intensive logging and forest fires was to destroy the natural reseeding mechanism of the forest. Well-meaning, but misguided efforts to reseed white pine led to the introduction of an Asian tree disease known as blister rust that devastated white pine seedlings and led to the elimination of most efforts to replant the forest's most valuable and beautiful tree. A generation of hardy immigrants broke their lives trying to follow the axe with the plow on the cutover lands. Only a persistent handful, blessed with a patch of rich soil, survived. The homesteads of the rest are today lost amid succession forests of poplar or plantations of jack and Norway pine. The myth of the upper river as a land of inexhaustible forest resources was quickly replaced by the myth of the region as future agricultural cornucopia — each myth burdened with tragic consequences. Much of the Upper St. Croix is again a forest, but it is not, nor can it ever again be, a wilderness. It is rather a curious mix of the failure of agriculture and the success of sylvaculture, as much a product of human design as a Kansas wheat field.[114]

Logging vastly changed the valley through urbanization. While logging took place at widely scattered, only temporarily occupied sites, milling and transportation

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[113] *Stillwater Messenger*, 4 July 1930; John N. Vogel, *Great Lakes Lumber on the Great Plains: The Liard, Norton Lumber Company in South Dakota* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1992), 13.

[114] Clifford E. Ahlgren and Isabel F. Ahlgren, "The Human Impact on the Northern Forest Ecosystems," *The Great Lakes Forest: An Environmental and Social History* edited by Susan L. Flader (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983), 33-9.

concentrated the harvest of wood on specific, reoccurring locations. Initially these were waterpower sites on the lower river such as Taylors Falls and Marine. Eventually most of the energy of the logging frontier focused upon Stillwater and it grew to a city of more than a dozen mills and thousands of inhabitants, the majority of whom were beholding to the forest for their livelihood. After the Civil War a new pattern of town development followed the blueprint of the steel rail. A string of new mill towns sprouted along the Lake Superior and Mississippi Railroad and along the North Wisconsin Railroad. Hinckley, Minnesota and Hayward, Wisconsin each came to symbolize the success and failure of the logging frontier. These hinterland towns did not displace Stillwater's importance as the principle funnel through which the bulk of the pine flowed. Pine remained largely oriented to the river, but when the softwoods had been cut, the railroad towns became the focus of hemlock and hardwood production. These towns and much of the cutover countryside turned their backs on the St. Croix River.[115]

The St. Croix River itself was left vastly changed by the logging frontier. What had been in 1837 a wild river, disturbed only by a handful of Chippewa fish weirs, had become one of the most controlled and manipulated river systems in America. There were between sixty and seventy gated dams in the St. Croix watershed and uncounted numbers of splash dams, hastily constructed of brush and earth. When combined with the loss of forest cover to logging and frequent brush fires, the dams left as their legacy a river that flowed much less clear and whose banks were more prone to erosion. The habitat of brook trout and other native fish that favored clear, cold waters was gradually destroyed. The strong current of the Upper St. Croix River, the flushing action of the multitude of dams, sent waves of turbid water to the lower river. Where the current slackened, the sand and earth suspended in the river settled into bars and shoals. Where steamboats easily navigated in the 1840s, commercial vessels repeatedly were grounded in the 1880s. Even when the loggers did not hold back water at Nevers Dam, dredging and wing dams were necessary for boats to effectively navigate between Stillwater and Taylors Falls. In addition to all of the silt and sand sent down river the lumbermen infringed on the St. Croix at Stillwater with extensive landfills. The mill owners had created more than ten acres of new waterfront land either by accidentally creating the conditions for mudslides or by consciously trying to increase their river frontage by dumping massive amounts of slabs and sawdust into the St. Croix. Such annual depositions further clouded the water.[116]

While logging as a business continues and will continue to linger in the valley in the twenty-first century, the logging frontier ended in 1914. In that year the boom at Stillwater, the great net of wood and chain that captured and sorted all of the pine driven on the St. Croix, handled its last log. It was a demise that had been long expected. More than a decade before William Folsom, one of the valley's first pioneers, who had lived and prospered long enough to become its first historian, observed:

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[115] Randall Rohe, "Lumbering, Wisconsin's Northern Urban Frontier," *Wisconsin Land and Life* edited by Robert C. Ostergren and Thomas R. Vale (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1997), 121-30.
[116] *Pine County Courier* (Sandstone, Minn.), 21 March 1900; *Polk County Press*, 20 February 1892; Dunn, *St. Croix: Midwest Border River*, 103.

> The business has been a wonderful one; it has enriched many; it has furnished and is still furnishing a means of livelihood for thousands but is going rapidly and like the sands in the hour glass that keeps running, ever running on, its day will soon come. And then what?

Most of the men of Folsom's generation, had come as young men from New England to make their fortunes in the woods. Reflecting on their lives before marble clad hearths, in the comfort of homes paneled with finely grained wood, they took satisfaction in their accomplishments. The white pine boom had lasted long enough to see them into plush retirement or honored internment as founders of prosperous communities.[117]

Younger men were left to ponder the question posed by Folsom, "then what?" Many men cast their lot with the business of logging not the valley of the St. Croix. From the boss logger of the river Frederick Weyerhaeuser to a modest lumberman like William Veazie, many a man who made his fortune on the St. Croix gambled he could make another in the rainforests of the Pacific Northwest. Some who stayed moved into farming, which by 1900 supported more people in the valley than logging. Others looked to tourist excursions, manufacturing, or mining to be the next boom for the valley.

The men who prospered in the lumber boom left behind ravaged forests and splendid Victorian homes. Visitors to Stillwater can today see the homes of Roscoe Hersey, the partner to Isaac Staples, and that of Captain Austin Jenks, who made his fortune rafting St. Croix timber down the Mississippi River. The lumber barons of Stillwater had the financial means to build in whatever style struck their fancy and they did so with the intention of erecting not only a comfortable home but a monument to all that they had accomplished in their lives on the frontier. John McKusick arrived from Illinois in 1840 and stayed on in Stillwater, eventually founding its first sawmill. His brothers Jonathon, Ivory, and Noah joined him in Minnesota all joining in the lumber business. Today the Ivory McKusick house in French Second Empire splendor stands in Stillwater as an example of how well the family did. Albert Lammers celebrated his success in the lumber industry by building elaborately with wood. In 1893, he chose the Queen Ann style, with its elaborate millwork and hand craftsmanship, for his new home, which still may be seen today at 1309 S. Third Street in Stillwater. Like the McKusick, Jenks, and Hersey houses, the Lammers mansion is on the National Register of Historic Places. William Sauntry was not one of the founding generation of St. Croix lumbermen, but he did so well through his association with Weyerhaeuser that he was able to join the elite in 1891 with his own fine residence. It was not, however, a place where Sauntry lived out a prosperous and contented retirement.

The young men of Stillwater could take little comfort from the fact that their fathers had done well. On the frontier social mobility moved in two directions and the challenge for those who stayed in the St. Croix valley was to find a path to profits that did not lead to the played out pineries. Among those who stumbled in pursuit of illusory new ventures was William Sauntry, the most successful and promising of the second-generation of St. Croix loggers. Although he lacked formal education and polished

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[117] *Stillwater Gazette*, n.d., clipping file, Folsom Papers, SHSW, River Falls.

manners, Sauntry had convinced Frederick Weyerhaeuser to trust him with management of some of the timber trust's biggest projects, from the boom company to Nevers Dam. In the years that followed those coups Sauntry demonstrated again and again his mastering of the business of logging. He directed the Ann River Logging Company, the large and multifaceted company that cut the bulk of the remaining pine on the St. Croix. There was a swagger and, what one historian called an *esprit de corps*, about the lumberjacks who worked for the Ann River Logging Company. In 1891, for example, they showed off their prowess by loading a sled with a mountainous 31,480 board feet of logs and then hauling it for their own ice-rut roads for one mile. Sauntry was the hardriving, tireless, and inspirational leader of the company. When the Ann River outfit cut its last log, Sauntry invested his sizeable fortune into a variety of mining ventures. But he was in a new field in which he lacked an intuitive grasp of what spelled success or failure. His energy and drive only plunged him deeper into losing investments. By 1914, he had lost all that he had won from the forest—money and reputation. His splendid house on Fourth Street in Stillwater became just another asset to be wagered on an increasingly bleak future. When even his old associates from the Ann River Logging Company turned their backs on him, William Sauntry purchased a revolver and put it to his head.[118]

That same year in Stillwater Frank McCray, the master of the St. Croix River Boom, hopped on to the last pine log to ever enter the boom. Workers watching from the cribs and log channels sent up a hallow cheer. More than thirteen billion board feet of logs before that, in 1856, a much more spry Frank McCray had guided the first log through the Stillwater boom. To mark the occasion the lumbermen invited all of their old employees to the boom company boarding house for a farewell feast on the banks of the river. The old timers slapped each other on the back and told again the stories of their youthful antics and the epic scenes of a river of logs. The St. Croix River had remained an important logging stream much longer than any of its Lake States rivals, longer than Michigan's fabled Tittabawassee or Muskegon, longer than Wisconsin's Chippewa River. Yet, the era opened and closed within the course of one man's working life. "It makes one sad to realize," a veteran of the logging era later wrote, "that a great industry has absolutely faded, like a mist before the sun, largely because of the greed and hurry and lack of foresight of the generation that is gone." [119]

Back in 1837, during negotiations with the United States Government, the Chippewa had proposed not to sell their lands, but to lease them to the Americans. The Chippewa were aware that the desire of lumbermen for access to St. Croix pine was pushing them off the land. "It is hard to give up the lands," lamented Chief Flat Mouth. "They will remain but you may cut down the trees and others will grow up." The Chippewa proposed a lease of sixty years. Although the American negotiators brushed their offer aside, the Chippewa had rather accurately predicted how long the lumber frontier would last. They missed the actual ending of logging by only seventeen years. But when the St. Croix Boom closed, it was not the native people of the valley that

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[118] Kohlmeyer, *Timber Roots*, 177-8.

[119] Hjalmar Otto Peterson, "Highlights From Stillwater History," 4 July 1930, clipping file, Hjalmar Otto Peterson Collection, Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul.

inherited the deforested lands. New people from old lands across the ocean were already reimagining the St. Croix as a cutover cornucopia, a North Star of opportunity.[120]

[120] Proceedings of a Council, July 20, 1837, National Archives and Records Service, RG 75, T494, Documents Relating to the Negotiation of Ratified and Unratified Treaties, Reel 3, p. 548-68.

Chapter 3

"The New Land": Settlement and the Development of Agriculture in the St. Croix Valley

The Upper Middle West of the United States has been blessed with an amazing waterway system. From the Great Lakes to the mighty Mississippi River and all its tributaries as well as numerous fresh water lakes and streams, there were ample water resources to whet the appetites of farmers and manufacturers. "In an earlier, more confident time," wrote economists Brian Page and Richard Walker, "the Midwest was commonly held up as an example to the modern world of the true path to capitalist growth: a potent mix of agricultural extension agent, railroads, and heavy industry." Agricultural settlement here went hand in hand with industrial development. While some settlers came with no greater expectation than to acquire a piece of land to farm for their families, the St. Croix Valley had already been connected to a national and even international market through the fur trade and logging industry. This connection to the larger world, in many ways, acted as the lure for potential pioneer settlers. Lumbering and business interests needed the products farmers produced. As the timber frontier pushed further up river lumber companies left vacant, unproductive, and often tax delinquent lands that needed to be disposed of. Businesses in the old lumber towns needed new customers to replace the retreating world of the lumberjack. Farmers eagerly filled this void.

Throughout the nineteenth century and into the twentieth, northern manufacturing centers exploited the region's raw materials and also created a demand for its agricultural products. The industrial revolution, in turn, made farming the great expanse of land in the Midwest and the St. Croix Valley more efficient and profitable. Farmers, businessmen, and financiers worked in mutual support to transform the St. Croix River Valley from a remote frontier into an accessible, settled land. The St. Croix Valley was an integral part of the Midwestern and national economy from its earliest days of settlement.[1]

Dividing the Valley

More than logging or the fur trade, the extension of agricultural settlement along the St. Croix necessitated a complete restructuring of the valley's natural landscape. When the Chippewa and Dakota Indians signed the Treaties of 1837, the valley was opened to a new system of land exploitation. The blueprint followed by the agriculturalists who came to the St. Croix flowed from the fertile brain of Thomas Jefferson. Although he never saw the landscape of the Upper Mississippi, Jefferson had played a hand in the creation of the Land Ordinance of 1785 and the Northwest Ordinance of 1787. The Northwest Ordinance provided the principles and guidelines for the establishment of democracy and government in the territories that were north of the

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[1] Brian Page and Richard Walker, "From Settlement to Fordism: The Agro-Industrial Revolution in the American Midwest," *Economic Geography* (October, 1991), 281-4.

Ohio River and extended west of Pennsylvania to the Mississippi River. It was an extraordinary piece of legislation with far-reaching consequences for the future development of this country. New states formed out of this territory were to be admitted as equals to the original thirteen and slavery was banned. This ensured a free labor system in the North and that all the rights of U.S. citizens in eastern states would be enjoyed in the West. This was no trivial consideration for westward migration.

While the Northwest Ordinance provided the means for the expansion of the Union, it was the Land Ordinance of 1785 that laid the basis for federal land sales and patterns of distribution. Because it claimed so much uncharted and unsettled territory, the federal government had to establish an orderly method to transfer remote lands to private ownership. The Ordinance stipulated that all government lands be surveyed and divided into townships of thirty-six square miles along meridian lines. Each township was to be cut into thirty-six sections of one square mile each. This land then could be divided into half-sections of 320 acres catering to the interest of speculators and quarter sections beginning at 160 acres and sub-divided down to 40 acre plots for the average homesteader. Townships and sections that bordered on major rivers or lakes simply had a square shape with a fractured edge rather than extending the boundary across the waterway.

The Land Ordinance profoundly shaped the physical landscape of America. French lands in North America traditionally were claimed and laid out with respect to drainage basins. The grid system established by the Ordinance and the Anglo-American tradition of using rivers as boundaries had enormous consequences for the St. Croix Valley. Dozens of townships used the river as their boundary. Their respective governments began the division of the river community long before statehood created the biggest divide. The Land Ordinance also altered cultural patterns of settlers in the valley. In many European farming communities, homes of agricultural workers were clustered in villages, and peasants hiked out to tend the fields. The French also had brought to North America, as can be seen in Prairie Du Chien the practice of using rectangular-shaped long lots with the narrow ends bordering a road or river respecting the natural shape of the land. Houses built along these thoroughfares formed small hamlets with all settlers having access to the road or river. However, the American rural landscape, marked out in square miles indifferent to the natural contours or quality of the land, placed settlers onto single farmsteads with solitary homes. Old Indian trails or paths that followed the natural lay of the land were abruptly severed by fenced-in private property. Immigrants had to adapt to the more individualistic and self-reliant American land system as well as the responsibilities of self-government.[2]

Federal surveying teams began penetrating into the Wisconsin frontier in the late1830s. They first began in the populous mining region of southwestern Wisconsin. From there land offices opened in the southeastern portion of the state and moved north and west. This in part reflected the Ordinance's logic to move east to west and south to north in order to the maintain regularity of the thirty-six-square mile township. It also

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[2] Hildegard Binder Johnson, "Towards a National Landscape," in *The Making of the American Landscape*, edited by Michael P. Conzen (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1990).

reflected the general pattern of population migration westward. As this land was made available the Wisconsin frontier gave way to farms with amazing speed. By 1845 federal land sale offices sold nearly three million acres in the territory. However, the natural transportation afforded by the Mississippi River and other water systems such as the Wisconsin and the St. Croix Rivers into the northwestern portion of the Wisconsin territory brought lumber barons and lumberjacks, provisioners, and farmers who supplied the lumber camps into the north woods ahead of the federal surveying teams. [3]

The St. Croix Valley was among the most remote regions of the Old Northwest Territory. Although mostly Indian Territory, legal jurisdiction for matters concerning soldiers, fur traders and the like fell under territorial governments' authority. Early on the St. Croix Valley came under the jurisdiction of the Indiana and then the Illinois territory. And between1819 to 1836, legal jurisdiction over the valley was across Lake Michigan in Crawford County, Michigan when it then became Crawford County of the Wisconsin Territory. However, only Indians, fur traders, and soldiers from Fort Snelling knew anything about the land's beauty and abundance. Outsiders considered this area too far north and the soil too poor for successful cultivation of marketable crops. Only loggers who hoped to exploit its vast timber resources ventured here and there with little thought of permanent settlement. Once in the St. Croix Valley logging entrepreneurs discovered to their surprise its relatively healthful climate free from the malarial fevers of the lower Mississippi and its rich black loamy soil, not to mention its physical charms. These loggers and their families joined former traders and soldiers and formed the first permanent settlements along the St. Croix River.[4]

It was not until 1848 that the first federal land office opened along the St. Croix in St. Croix Falls -- a good ten years after Chippewa and Dakota lands were ceded. By then many squatters had laid claim to some of the land in the valley. Squatters often had a disreputable reputation back East as unscrupulous individuals who settled on land whose title was in dispute with the aim of wresting control of it. However, in the Old Northwest Territory they were simply settlers who arrived before the land surveyors and began farming virgin land. By making their own marks on trees and planting a small plot of land these men and their families hoped to begin a new life. While Congress raged indignantly over the actions of these usurpers of federal lands, western politicians who were more familiar with frontier conditions defended the rights and actions of their constituents. Some accommodation had to be made between the Land Ordinance system and the realities of the frontier. In 1841, therefore, Congress passed the Pre-Emption Act. It granted squatters the first opportunity to purchase lands they had already settled for the minimum amount of $1.25 an acre. This Act was later replace by the 1862 Homestead Act that granted a free quarter section to any settler who farmed it for five years.[5]

The land under the jurisdiction of Crawford County, Wisconsin included the entire western portion of the Wisconsin Territory east of the Mississippi River and north to Canada. Its county seat was in Prairie Du Chien, the old French fur-trading town.

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[3] Mark Wyman, *The Wisconsin Frontier* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998), 173-6.
[4] W.H.C. Folsom, *Fifty Years in the Northwest* (St. Paul, Minn.: Pioneer Publishing, 1888), 33-4.
[5] Wyman, *The Wisconsin Frontier*, 176-8.

Anyone living east of the Mississippi in the Wisconsin Territory was required to travel to the town for any legal transactions. In the few years between 1838 when land was opened for settlement and 1840 when the U.S. Census was taken, 351 non-Indian people had settled in the "Lake St. Croix District" which ran from St. Croix Falls to the Chippewa Mission at Pokegama.[6]

The early history of the St. Croix Valley was inexorably tied to the founding of the Twin Cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul. One of the more colorful and influential characters to shape this history was Joseph R. Brown, the former soldier, fur trader, lumberman, farmer, storekeeper, and government official. In pursuit of his own interests, Brown played a key role in establishing St. Croix County. Unlike some of the early lumbermen, Brown's main interest in land claims along the rivers was in their potential to serve as ferry landings and town sites rather than their waterpower or timber resources. He knew once the Upper Mississippi River Valley was opened for settlement prospective homesteaders would flock to the area and they would need places to disembark, temporary accommodations, provisions, and access to interior lands. One available site was at present day Taylors Falls, but Brown felt it had no adequate landings for steamboats and the area was too hilly to build a large and profitable town. Instead, Brown banked on a claim near Fort Snelling. It seemed like a perfect location to build a northern Davenport, Galena, Dubuque, Peoria, or even a Chicago. It was at the northern reaches of navigation on the Upper Mississippi since narrow channels and sandbars limited access to the Falls of St. Anthony. It was also the only site available for settlement in that vicinity since Fort Snelling was on the northeastern shore of the Minnesota River at its mouth and the western shore of the Mississippi. The southern shore of the rivers was still in Indian hands. Since settlement was also heading up the St.Croix River, Brown hedged his bets by making three claims. One was at the mouth of the river near present day Prescott, another was at the head of Lake St. Croix where he had a warehouse to supply his upper river trading posts, and the third was on the lake at St. Mary's Point by the small voyageur and half breed settlement.[7]

In 1839, Brown made his first foray into politics when he sent a petition to the Wisconsin Territorial legislature for a permit to run a ferry from his claim across the Mississippi to the Fort Snelling reserve. The legislature's select committee proposed it as a bill, but for unknown reasons opposition to the bill arose and resulted in its indefinite postponement. Brown learned that the only way to promote his interests would be to immerse himself in the politics of the area. Thus, he began a venture into government work by winning a position as Justice of the Peace. Previous to his appointment all legal transaction in the region required a trip to Prairie Du Chien. Brown helped make legal matters more convenient for settlers in the St. Croix Valley as well as to make himself a key figure.

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[6] History Network of Washington County, *Minnesota Beginnings: Records of Saint Croix County, Wisconsin Territory, 1840-1849* (Stillwater, Minn.: Washington County Historical Society, 1999), 2.
[7] Nancy and Robert Goodman, *Joseph R. Brown: Adventurer on the Minnesota Frontier, 1820-1849* (Lone Oaks Press, Ltd., 1996), 152-6.

Brown also set up a whiskey depot on his claim across from Fort Snelling that quickly became a popular recreation site for lonesome soldiers short on entertainment. After a drunken spree that put nearly two-thirds of the men in the guardhouse, army commanders were determined to put an end to Brown's house of libation. It seems, however, that Brown's whiskey shop was only a pretext for claiming the best ferry landing between the Fort and the Falls at St. Anthony. St. Anthony Falls was obviously a choice spot for waterpower. Several officers from Fort Snelling, including the commanding officer, dabbled on the side in land speculation there when not occupied with military matters. If the Falls area was to flourish, these would-be entrepreneurs needed to eliminate competing commercial and settlement sites such as Brown's. They also laid claim to a prime landing spot at the mouth of the St. Croix River at present day Prescott. For military reasons the Fort commanders decided to extend its boundaries to oust the collection of old fur traders, refugees from the Red River colony in Winnipeg, and various French Canadian vagabonds. Besides their penchant for liquor at Brown's whiskey shop, Major Joseph Plympton felt they were using up more than their fair share of fuel wood near the Fort and their horses and cattle overgrazed public lands. He ordered Lieutenant James L. Thompson to mark out new boundaries for the fort that included what is now the Twin Cities. They reached from St. Anthony Falls east to Lake Calhoun to a line south of the Minnesota and Mississippi River and east nearly to St. Paul's Seven Corners. About 150 squatters not connected to the military installation were told to leave the area. In October 1839, in a show of support for Fort Snelling's actions, the Secretary of War sent an order to the U.S. Marshal for the Wisconsin Territory to remove the settlers immediately and use force if necessary. The order, however, was misdelivered and delayed for months.[8]

In the meantime, outraged settlers formed a citizens' group and selected Brown to present a petition against the military reserve extension to the Wisconsin Territorial Legislature in Madison. They hoped the civil government would stop the extension of the military holdings into land for civilian settlement. In November 1839, Brown accompanied Ira Brunson, the Representative for Crawford County as well as its deputy marshal, to Madison where Brunson submitted to the territorial government the citizens' petition against the military reserve's extension of its boundaries to the east side of the Mississippi. By December the Territorial government passed a resolution against the military reserve extension to the east bank of the Mississippi and notified the Secretary of War that the military was preempting land that was under the civilian control of the Wisconsin Territory without its consent. By March 1840 the dispute reached Congress. The War Department's influence in Washington led to the petition's death in committee. Fort Snelling lost no time and by May forced squatters from the newly extended military reserve.[9]

Fort Snelling's land grab had important consequences for settlement in the Upper Mississippi River Valley. Many of the evicted squatters moved up river to St. Anthony Falls to join a small group of settlers already there. They would make this site the

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[8] Goodman, *Joseph R. Brown*, 160-7; *Minnesota Beginnings*, 2; William E. Lass, *Minnesota: A History* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1998), 99.
[9] Goodman, *Joseph R. Brown*, 168-9.

region's center of immigration and business rather than the land occupied by the Fort at the confluence of the Mississippi and the St. Croix Rivers. St. Paul and Minneapolis, which emerged out of this settlement, would create a major metropolitan area further removed up river from the mouth of the St. Croix River.[10]

Still determined to advance his interests Brown pressed other business on the Wisconsin Territorial Legislature in the winter of 1839-40. Out of his "Black Betty," a type of satchel common on the frontier, he produced another citizens' petition requesting that a new county be formed out of northwestern Crawford County with a county seat at Chanwakan, which was south of the military reserve on the Mississippi not far from Prescott and the St. Croix River. The Wisconsin Territorial Legislature was aware of the growth of immigration to its northwest region and was ready to entertain the idea of a new county up there. However, loggers from the Marine and St. Croix lumbering companies had also recognized the need for more accessible local government along the St. Croix River and had submitted their petition to the legislature to create St. Croix County with the county seat at Prescott. Brown quickly recognized the greater viability of a proposed county centered along the St. Croix River rather than the Mississippi, especially when the military reserve issue had not yet been entirely settled. However, he was determined to prevent Prescott from becoming the seat of government since he knew that a syndicate of Fort Snelling officers controlled it as well. Instead of submitting his own petition, Brown focused on finding a compromise with the lumbering interests along the St. Croix.[11]

The lumbermen's goal was to have all the timberland on the St. Croix and Chippewa Rivers fall within the new county's boundaries. Brown, on the other hand, was more interested establishing the location of future ferry landings, town sites, and farmsteads for arriving immigrants. By January 1840, a compromise bill passed the legislature establishing St. Croix County. It excluded the Chippewa River drainage basin because inhabitants there still identified with Prairie Du Chien. St. Croix County's southern boundary, then, was fixed at the Porcupine River -- which is now Rush River -- on Lake Pepin. From its first fork its boundary went in a straight northeasterly direction to the Hay Fork of the Red Cedar River and then directly north along the Bois Brule River to Lake Superior, and westward along the lakeshore to the Canadian border. Its western boundary was the Mississippi River. Since the location of the county seat was disputed, the Wisconsin legislature wisely allowed the inhabitants to vote on where to place it. Since the land in the St. Croix Valley was not yet surveyed, county commissioners had to have the consent of the occupant of any land it wished to claim and that the occupant had to pay at least eight hundred dollars to the county treasury. If the occupant agreed to these terms, his claim as a squatter to 160 acres was secured as well as the value of his land increased. The fledgling county then would have cash to begin governmental responsibilities. Since the population base was so small, two

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[10] Goodman, *Joseph R. Brown,* 168-9.

[11] Goodman, *Joseph R. Brown,* 174; *Minnesota Beginnings,* 5; Alice E. Smith, *The History of Wisconsin: From Exploration to Statehood, Vol. I* (Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1973), 508.

representatives and one councilman were to be elected at large from St. Croix and Crawford Counties.[12]

On August 3, 1840 the first county elections were held to determine the county seat. Brown, in a concession to the upriver loggers, put forth as a potential government center his unsurveyed claim on the north end of Lake St. Croix where he had built a warehouse, or storage shed. While not an ideal location for a great commercial city, it had a steamboat landing and waterpower. "Joe Brown's Claim," as it was called, received forty-five votes to Prescott's thirteen. Brown had finally outmaneuvered his Fort Snelling rivals. He also managed to be elected treasurer, surveyor, and register of deeds. Brown paid the eight hundred dollars to the county thus securing his claim as well as future profits. However, the consequences of the Brown—Fort Snelling rivalry for the St. Croix River Valley was to disperse commercial and government activities along the river thus preventing the more logical development of a major urban center at the junction of the St. Croix and Mississippi Rivers near Prescott and Point Douglas.[13]

Territorial elections were held on September 28. Through deft political maneuvering Brown also managed to get himself elected as territorial representative by putting his name on the ballot in the St. Croix district as well as in Prairie Du Chien, thereby ensuring a plurality of votes in the bi-county election. Ever vigilant in his quest to attract farmers to the valley, Brown proposed a bill by December in the territorial legislature to build three roads in the new county. The routes were to extend from Marine Mills down along the river passing by Dacotah -- the new name for "Joe Brown's Claim" -- and veering westward through Prospect Grove (now Cottage Grove) to Grey Cloud Island on the Mississippi; one from Marine Mills up to St. Croix Falls; and another from Prescott's ferry to Grey Cloud Island. The bill was approved by February 1841.

A year later Brown proposed sending Congress a memorial for an appropriation for a survey of a new military road from Fort Howard on Green Bay to Fort Snelling via Plover Portage on the Wisconsin River and Dacotah on the St. Croix. This would cut the travel distance from five hundred to two hundred miles by avoiding the water route along the Fox and Wisconsin Rivers. Brown also put forth a resolution to have the public lands north of the Wisconsin River surveyed. Both measures passed without a hitch. Brown thereby enhanced the prospect of settlement for the north territory as well as increased the value of "Joe Brown's claim."[14]

The county seat at Dacotah began inauspiciously. The initial settlers were all Brown's relatives. While many people passed through the settlement on their way to the pineries, few chose Dacotah as a permanent settlement. With no finished lumber available the first "court house" was made from tamarack logs with mud plastered in the chinks to keep the wind and cold at bay. While the county commissioners met here, David Irwin, a judge from the Green Bay district court, was appalled on his first visit in June 1840 by its primitive conditions and lack of formalized proceedings. He was quoted

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[12] Goodman, *Joseph R. Brown*, 175-6; *Minnesota Beginnings*, 5.
[13] Goodman, *Joseph R. Brown*, 185-7; *Minnesota Beginnings*, 6.
[14] Goodman, *Joseph R. Brown*, 208.

as saying that he would never again go to that "God-forsaken spot." Even when he was accused of neglecting his duties, Irwin refused to go back to Dacotah. The Wisconsin Territorial Legislature was then forced to amend the St. Croix County bill and give Crawford County legal jurisdiction there. Commissioners were allowed for convenience sake to set up their offices at Red Stone Prairie on the Mississippi River, now Newport, Minnesota. Joseph Brown even abandoned Dacotah in 1843 for Grey Cloud on the Mississippi. By 1846 Dacotah was all but a ghost town.[15]

However, the beauty and resources of the St. Croix did not depend upon the likes of Joe Brown to attract settlers and prosper. By the 1840s the St. Croix River Valley as well as the Upper Mississippi River Valley had emerged from a mysterious country of wilderness and Indians to a well-known area mapped out and described by explorers. Eastern developers and potential settlers had already begun migrating here.[16] The first towns in the Old St. Croix County were, of course, lumber centers with suitable mill sites, such as Stillwater, Marine, St. Croix Falls, Osceola, Hudson, Arcola, and St. Anthony Falls. According to an 1842 census twenty-seven men and two women lived in Marine Mills. Seventy-one men and five women had taken up residence at St. Croix Falls. Other settlements appeared near fords in the St. Croix that were most conducive to shipping, such as Afton; or places that had been Indian trading centers, such as the Dakota mission which became the nucleus for Newport. The old trading post Crow Wing gained importance when the Winnebago/Chippewa agency was located across the Mississippi River from it. St. Paul had begun to take the lead as a commercial settlement thanks to the failure of the Fort Snelling land syndicate.[17]

These rudimentary settlements attracted tradesmen and entrepreneurs eager to make their mark or fortune on the frontier. The range of economic activities of early settlers, however, was limited to serving a local economy with traders often resorting to barter. Logs rather than agricultural products monopolized river transportation. The first farmers were initially loggers or mill workers who saved enough of their wages to claim land for a homestead. Wives and children then joined their men folk in the north woods. Raising livestock was the quickest entrée into farming since there was a ready local market among timber men for meat and dairy products. Once a flourmill was built in Afton, farmers turned to grain to supplement lumberjack diets with pancakes and biscuits. Seasoned wood from cleared land could also fetch a profit from the steamboats that plied the St. Croix. However, agricultural expansion was hindered by the lack of roads and the collapse of the county government.[18]

By 1841, St. Croix county business was back in Prairie du Chien. The county had no taxing system and owed Joe Brown back rent on the unfinished county "building" he had erected. By 1843 county commissioners stopped meeting entirely. County Clerk

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[15] *Minnesota Beginnings*, 6; Folsom, *Fifty Years in the Northwest*, 52. David L. Fritz's *Historic Resource Study* discuss the Military Road and where portions of it are still visible., 170.
[16] Dorothy Eaton Ahlgren and Mary Cotter Beeler, *A History of Prescott, Wisconsin: A River City and Farming Community on the St. Croix and Mississippi* (Prescott Area Historical Society, 1996), 14.
[17] *Minnesota Beginning*, 6, 9.
[18] *Minnesota Beginnings*, 6, 9.

William Holcombe, however, sought to resurrect the moribund county government. In 1843, he petitioned the Wisconsin legislature for a variance to permit the clerk to act as sheriff so legal elections could be held under his supervision. The office of Judge Probate was also revived. Yet, even with these changes most legal matters still had to be presented in Prairie du Chien. In 1845, Holcombe and other St. Croix citizens asked the legislature to relocate their county seat. They argued that since St. Croix County now had more people than Crawford County, it should not be subordinated to a government with a smaller population. The legislature agreed and granted St. Croix citizens the right to vote on a new county seat. The people of St. Croix County, however, never held an election.[19]

Apparently, the three former commissioners, Joseph Furber, William R. Brown, and Philip Aldrich, feared that St. Paul would dominate the selection process while their interests lay along the St. Croix River. However, the Wisconsin legislature, with its sights on statehood, was frustrated by the lack of governmental organization in the county. In 1846, it seized the initiative and selected Stillwater, the most important logging center on the Upper Mississippi, as the seat of county government. In that year Stillwater rivaled St. Paul with approximately the same number of permanent families, ten and twelve respectively, and three to five stores. It was not until the following year, 1847, when Franklin Steele built a dam and sawmill at St. Anthony Falls, that the embryo for St. Paul's twin city of Minneapolis was conceived putting these settlements on the trajectory for metropolitan dominance in the North Country. The territorial legislature also wasted no time in building the first road from Stillwater to St. Paul that year.[20]

With its northwestern county back on track, the Wisconsin legislature began its quest for statehood and applied to Congress in 1846. Since the Erie Canal had opened in 1825 connecting Lake Erie to Albany, New York and the Hudson River down to the Port of New York on the Atlantic Ocean, the Great Lakes and Mississippi Valley region became accessible to east coast entrepreneurs and pioneers. Settlers by the tens of thousands began migrating here with Wisconsin being a major beneficiary. Immigration into the territory was so swift that by 1845 Wisconsin counted 155,000 residents in a mid-decade census exceeding requirements for statehood. Wisconsinites proceeded to elect delegates for their December convention. Statehood seemed quickly assured.[21]

Wisconsin's northwestern boundary, however, became a hotly disputed issue that had profound consequences for the St. Croix Valley and its residents. The original border for the Wisconsin Territory designated by the Northwest Ordinance extended to the Mississippi River. Between the St. Croix River and the Mississippi was the growing city of St. Paul and approximately one-third of what is now the state of Minnesota. The Wisconsin territorial legislature intended to keep possession of its rich timberlands, prairies, rivers, and lakes. The settlers on the St. Croix, however, had other ideas. They saw their interests and identity as different from the farmers and miners in the south and eastern portions of the territory. St. Croix men were lumberjacks who came from Maine

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[19] *Minnesota Beginnings*, 9.
[20] *Minnesota Beginnings 9.*
[21] Mark Wyman, *The Wisconsin Frontier* (Bloomington, IN.: Indiana University Press, 1998), 178.

or other New England forested states. They by-passed most of Wisconsin and its typical path of settlement by heading directly up the Mississippi from Illinois to the St. Croix River Valley. Their acquaintances were old fur traders or soldiers who had transformed themselves into town-site speculators and lumber entrepreneurs. When St. Croix County was created, it encompassed the entire St. Croix Valley and encouraged its residents to think of the watershed much like the old French traders before them. The St. Croix's geographic remoteness and economic uniqueness created a culture apart from other settlers in the Wisconsin Territory. Settlers here realized that this far northern country had no chance to secure any major public institutions, such as a capitol city, a major university, or a penitentiary – Madison had a lock on these. St. Croix residents felt their best interests politically and economically would best be served by separating themselves from Wisconsin and forming a new territory and proposed a boundary near the Chippewa River.[22]

When the issue of Wisconsin statehood was brought before Congress, expansionists such as Senator Stephen Douglas of Illinois proposed a third view of where the territory's western boundary should be placed. They argued that a state with its boundary to the Mississippi would be too large to manage. In addition, by creating another state out of the Old Northwest Territory the North would gain an advantage in the growing sectional crisis with the South over expansion and slavery. They proposed setting Wisconsin's western boundary at the St. Croix River. When the enabling legislation passed Congress, the politically powerful expansionists won. Wisconsin's boundary was designated at the St. Croix River.[23]

Statehood enabling acts, however, were generally considered recommendations, not binding acts. Wisconsin's constitutional convention had the right to consider Congress's actions regarding their boundary proposal. Many Wisconsinites were appalled at the prospect that they would lose so much territory in the northwest. Nor were all St. Croix County residents happy that their river valley community might be divided; yet they were encouraged by Congress's willingness to create a new territory. Therefore, much was at stake on what would happen at the state constitutional convention. The citizens of St. Croix County faced the daunting task of convincing both Congress and most of Wisconsin that the boundary should run further south than either of them wanted. They had to choose their delegate to the convention carefully. That they did by electing William Holcombe, one of the original founders of St. Croix Falls Lumbering Company who also had interests in steam boating and land speculation.[24]

Holcombe skillfully made the case that Congressional expansionists were right that a state with its boundary to the Mississippi was too large, and that another state would work to the North's advantage in national politics. He also argued that Madison, nearly three hundred miles away, was too far and remote a location of government. Echoing the democratic philosophy of Thomas Jefferson, Holcombe added that St. Croix

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[22] Lass, *Minnesota*, 101; William E. Lass, "Minnesota's Separation from Wisconsin: Boundary Making on the Upper Mississippi Frontier," *Minnesota History* 50 (8)(Winter 1987), 310.
[23] Lass, *Minnesota*, 102;
[24] Folsom, *Fifty Years in the Northwest*, 34; Lass, *Minnesota, 102.*

County residents were self-reliant frontiersmen who needed and wanted a government that was close by and accessible in order to exercise their democratic rights effectively. The St. Croix River Valley with a boundary from present-day Winona to the western edge of Michigan's Upper Peninsula, he proposed, would form the nucleus of a new territory made up of people with common interests in lumbering and business. Stillwater, "the hotbed of St. Croix separatism," planned to be the capitol. A divided valley, he argued would "alienate the interests of society, perplex the trade and business of the river, and retard the growth of the settlement."

If Holcombe had made his case to Congress, he might have made some converts. By arguing before the Wisconsin constitutional convention that the state should give up more land than even Congress proposed as well as access to Lake Superior, his amendment was received coolly. However, Holcomb did win a compromise. The convention did agree that the valley should not be divided even at the cost of some territory for Wisconsin. It proposed a new boundary from Lake Superior south to the Mississippi, which ran approximately fifteen miles east of the St. Croix. Holcombe and his supporters seemed to have victory close at hand. If Wisconsin voters accepted the proposed constitution, the St. Croix Valley would not be part of the state. The only opposition in the state to the loss of territory came from Crawford County. Residents in Prairie du Chien feared they would be left on the fringe of Wisconsin and politically marginalized in a state dominated by eastern interests. The proposed constitution, however, foundered on other issues. There were provisions in it to ban bank chartering which reflected the typical western settlers' suspicions of outside moneyed interests controlling their destiny. The convention also had written a constitution that was fairly liberal for the time. Married women were to enjoy property rights, and Negroes were to be granted suffrage. Conservative Badgers, even some in St. Croix County, roundly rejected the document in an April 1847 election.[25]

Wisconsin's second constitutional convention in the spring of 1847 was smaller and more politically balanced and representative of the sentiments of the territory than the first had been. In the interim, political influence along the St. Croix shifted to the "Bostonians" – a group of eastern capitalists that included Caleb Cushing, Rufus Choate, and Robert Rantoul, Jr.. In 1845, these men formed the St. Croix and Lake Superior Mining Company. They planned to mine copper on the upper St. Croix and to develop timber resources and waterpower at St. Croix Falls as well as at the Falls of St. Anthony. This syndicate felt their economic interests were not compatible with the farmers, merchants, and lead miners in the southern half of the state. The inclusion of a ban on bank chartering in the first constitution convinced them that pioneers were in general suspicious of eastern investors. Controlling their own territory would give them the tax breaks they felt were needed to promote their economic goals. They *had* to get a boundary favorable to their interests. Some confidently predicted Cushing would be the first territorial governor with Stillwater the new capitol. The Bostonians and others in St. Croix County hoped the new body's more pragmatic members might be influenced to turn over more land to the valley than the compromise worked out in the previous

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[25] Lass, *Minnesota*, 102-3; Smith, *The History of Wisconsin*, 663;.Lass, "Minnesota's Separation from Wisconsin," 310-6.

convention. They selected a new delegate, George W. Brownell, to represent them. Brownell was a geologist and mineralogist who came to the St. Croix Valley in 1846 where he discovered lead and earned a living as a newspaper editor. He was also an agent of Cushing's. The Bostonians felt they found a representative who could advance their interests in a new constitutional convention.

The new delegate made a dramatic entrance into Madison by arriving on snowshoes after a three-week trek to demonstrate the remoteness of the St. Croix River Valley from Madison. Brownell reintroduced Holcombe's original proposal for the border and made the same Jeffersonian claims of the need for democracy to be close to the people. These Wisconsin convention delegates, however, were savvier than their predecessors. Perhaps because of the close ties between Brownell and Cushing, they did not buy the argument advanced that the St. Croix Valley was "worthless" to Wisconsin. They realized that the St. Croix Valley had singular natural resources in timber and waterpower. By simply accepting the boundary of the enabling act -- the St. Croix River -- they could claim at least some of these resources and shore up its statehood quest by assenting to Congress' original act. Other bolder delegates wanted to claim as much of the Old Northwest Territory as possible. They set a boundary from the first rapids of the St. Louis River near Lake Superior to the mouth of the Rum River down to the Mississippi thereby seizing the entire St. Croix Valley as well as the St. Paul area. Their proposal swept the convention by a vote of fifty-three to three.[26]

As long as the valley was not divided many St. Croix residents were resigned to their inclusion in Wisconsin. Others on the west side of the St. Croix River, however, wanted no part of the new state and schemed to create a new territory. Individuals such as Morgan Martin, Wisconsin's territorial delegate to Congress, envisioned a Minnesota Territory and future state that included not only land stretching from Holcombe's original border to the Mississippi, but also land further west into the Louisiana Purchase Territory. The Dakota Indians, however, would have to be approached to sell their land. Martin's fur-trading associates stood to benefit from the opening of land not yet depleted of fur-bearing animals. They also thought the St. Paul area would attract more settlers if the Indians were pushed further west. This faction took their case directly to Congress.

By the spring of 1848 the St. Croix River Valley found itself at the center of a heated national debate that threatened to jeopardize Wisconsin's admittance into the Union. The Minnesota faction found a supporter for their scheme in Robert Smith of Illinois. Smith argued Brownell's position that the St. Croix Valley was too remote from Madison and that it would be economically unfeasible to divide settlers on the river under two governments. If left intact and outside Wisconsin, the St. Croix settlers could form the nucleus of another state. Expansionist in Congress did not miss the implications of this proposal for creating another northern state. Other Congressmen, however, did not think Minnesota a viable territory because of its small population. Congress also had more pressing issues in the aftermath of the Mexican War and the acquisition of new territory in the Southwest that re-ignited sectional issues of the expansion of slavery west

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[26] Lass, *Minnesota*, 103-3; Lass, "Minnesota's Separation from Wisconsin," 317-8; Smith, *The History of Wisconsin*, 672-3; Folsom, *Fifty Years in the Northwest*, 104-5.

of Texas to spend much time reflecting on the remote northern country and potential Indians problems. For the most part, Congress was anxious to remove the Wisconsin-Minnesota issue from the national stage and create another northern state, so it sought a simple solution. It voted to admit Wisconsin to the Union on May 29, 1848 with its northwestern border as specified in the enabling act – the St. Croix River. The valley was separated because of political expediency, the Anglo-American tradition of using rivers for borders, and perhaps self-interested politicians in the St. Croix area scheming for another state prematurely.[27]

While the rest of Wisconsin celebrated its new status in the Union, St. Croix River Valley residents lamented their separation from each other. The river that had initially united them, now divided them. They found themselves under different governments and legal jurisdictions that would forever complicate life along the St. Croix. The most immediate problem was that St. Croix County, Wisconsin did not have a county seat since Stillwater was across the river. St. Croix County on the Minnesota side had a county seat but no legal authority under it. Wisconsin's elevation to statehood marked the end of the Old Northwest Territory leaving the area between the St. Croix and the Mississippi a rump territory with its legal status in limbo. Wisconsin quickly rectified this situation by choosing a new county seat for its portion of St. Croix County at the mouth of the Willow River initially called Buena Vista. In 1852, it changed its name to Hudson. While Congress declared that Wisconsin territorial laws were in force across the river, residents there found themselves with no courts, no law officers, no legislature, or representation in Congress. They had to politically mobilize themselves once again.[28]

Since it had been the county seat, Stillwater's residents took the lead in convincing Congress to grant territorial status to Minnesota. Word went out to settlers of the region to meet in Stillwater for a convention on August 26, 1848. They were encouraged by the likes of Joe Brown, who still schemed to make his land claim on the St. Croix the center of settlement. Among their concerns was that in their current state of political limbo, Congress might not appropriate money for internal improvements. The convention resolved to petition Congress and President James K. Polk for a more clearly defined territorial status. They unanimously elected Henry Sibley of Mendota, Iowa Territory (who volunteered to travel to Washington at his own expense) to present their case. At first Congress was reluctant to seat Sibley but relented when they decided he was a delegate of the remnant Wisconsin Territory. The expansionist Senator Stephen Douglas helped him steer through Congress a bill to create a new territory. Douglas's assistance, however, tinged the Minnesota cause with a Democratic Party hue that southerners quickly turned into a sectional issue. Although independent frontiersmen and believers in popular sovereignty, Stillwater politicians were decidedly uninterested in the national implications of Minnesota statehood. But the spirit of Manifest Destiny was on their side and on March 3, 1849 the Minnesota Territory was formed even though its

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[27] Lass, *Minnesota*, 103-4; Smith, *A History of Wisconsin*, 673-.9.
[28] Folsom, *Fifty Years in the Northwest*, 144-5; *Minnesota Beginnings*, 11.

population was not sufficient. Its boundaries matched those of today's state. St. Croix County was renamed Washington County after the first president October 27, 1849.[29]

Despite Minnesota's arrival as a territory, residents on both sides of the St. Croix River regretted their separation for years to come. Wisconsinites, whose north woods identity remained in tact, longed to be part of the new territory. Minnesotans, in turn, pitied their poor Wisconsin cousins for being so close to them but captive of another state.[30] In his visit to the region in the late 1840s, travel writer E.S. Seymour noticed the depressing effect of using the St. Croix as a boundary between the two territories. "Another circumstance detrimental to the prosperity of this place, at least temporarily, is the location of the boundary line," he wrote. "Several of the citizens [of Wisconsin], preferring to unite their fortunes with the new Territory of Minnesota, have removed from St. Croix to some of the thriving towns now springing up in that flourishing territory. The only business now prosecuted at the Falls is that of the sawmills, and incidental business connected with it."[31]

If the conflict of ambitions that marked the end of the Wisconsin Territory resulted in a divided valley, the Northwest Ordinance and the Land Ordinance at least established a common method of creating political order and organizing economic exploitation in the St. Croix Valley. Land, of course, would be the major attraction for prospective settlers. Still, it came with the considerable added attraction and guarantees of the American political system – freedom, individual rights, and the pursuit of happiness – as well as the political mechanisms to make these possible.[32] By the mid-1840s the federal land office was inundated with pleas that the land along the St. Croix be surveyed. Squatters logged trees they had no legitimate claim to. Speculators petitioned Congress and President John Tyler to do something about the theft of timber along the river for fear that any legitimate business enterprise would never take root in the region. Therefore, the General Land Office authorized the opening of a land office in St. Croix Falls in 1848 (It was moved to Stillwater in 1849), and Willow River (Hudson) in 1849. This signaled the opening of legal settlement.[33]

Farmers and the Repopulation of the Valley

In the 1850s, the St. Croix Valley boomed. Most of the prosperity came from logging. However, the lure of cheap land encouraged land speculators as well as simple farmers to seek their fortunes in the West. In this decade the entire country was on the move. It is estimated that in 1850 nearly one in four Americans moved from one state to another. And between 1847 and 1854 immigration to the United States from Europe hit its peak during the first major wave of immigration to this country before the Civil War.

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[29] Willard E. Rosenfelt, *Washington: A History of the Minnesota County* (Stillwater, Minn.: The Croixside Press, 1977), 15, 93-7; *Minnesota Beginnings*, 11; Lass, *Minnesota,* 106-7.
[30] Lass, *Minnesota*, 107.
[31] E.S. Seymour, *Sketches of Minnesota: The New England of the West* (New York: Harper &Brothers, 1850), 207.
[32] Yi-Fu Tuan, "Wisconsin: Place, Time, Model," in Ostergren and Vale, *Wisconsin Land and Life*, 542.
[33] Wyman, *The Wisconsin Frontier*, 175-6; James Taylor Dunn, *The St. Croix: Midwest Border River* (Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1979), 50.

Once these migrants reached the Mississippi River, the St. Croix River's natural advantage as a major artery of transportation worked in its favor. Wisconsin was determined to steer as many of these people to the state as possible.[34] Part of the problem the valley had to dispel, however, was its image as a frozen, barren wasteland for permanent settlement and farming.[35]

Throughout the decade of the 1850s, St. Croix newspapers continuously bragged about the North Country's comparable advantages to the regions below it. These papers were distributed widely. A settler from Osceola wrote to the *St. Croix Union* of that areas advantages "knowing that it, as well as all other papers from this part of the State, have an extensive circulation, and that they are eagerly caught up and read by persons in different parts of the States who are interested, or have any idea of coming to the North Western country."[36] Local newspaper articles were reprinted in such prominent publications as the *New York Tribune*.

In an era before modern medicine and public health boards curbed epidemic diseases, before swamps and marshes that teamed with malarial mosquitoes were drained for cultivation and agricultural science gained control of other pests, and before modern technology, such as the air conditioner, could make warmer climes more comfortable and tolerable, Minnesota and Wisconsin argued that its cooler climate eliminated pests and health threats without sacrificing agricultural productivity. "Hundreds and hundreds of families," wrote the Stillwater *Messenger,* "are annually driven from other Western States to take up their residence in Minnesota to escape this offensive and troublesome foe [fever, ague, consumption] to the emigrant and his family."[37] Travel writer E. S. Seymour had interviewed residents of Marine Mills who confirmed the healthful benefits of Minnesota compared to Illinois. "I was impelled by curiosity...to inquiry of Mr. Lyman why he had left the fertile soil and sunny prairies of Illinois, and wandered off here in the woods, in the northern clime," Seymour related. "He stated, in reply, that he had been severely afflicted with the ague in southern Illinois; that his constitution had become nearly broken down by the disease. Many of the young men of his neighborhood came up to work at the Marine Mills, and he noticed that all returned with recruited health, although suffering with ague at the time of their departure." Mr. Lyman, therefore, decided to seek relief in the North Country. When he arrived, he was so weak he could scarcely walk from the landing to the boarding house. "He was immediately restored to the enjoyment of excellent health."[38]

"As to the Agricultural capabilities of Minnesota as compared with those of Illinois," wrote the *St. Croix Union*, "we have this to say: Minnesota is a far better country for the producing of some agricultural staples than Illinois." Among the region's

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[34] Richard N. Current, *The History of Wisconsin: The Civil War Era, 1848-1873, Vol. II* (Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1976), 59.

[35] Harold Weatherhead, *Westward to the St. Croix: The Story of St. Croix County, Wisconsin* (Hudson, Wis.: St. Croix County Historical Society, 1978, 27.

[36] *St. Croix Union* (Stillwater, Minn.), 24 April 1855.

[37] *Messenger* (Stillwater, Minn.), 12 June 1860.

[38] Seymour, *Sketches of Minnesota*, 193-4.

advantages was in the production of oats, wheat, Irish potatoes, and garden vegetables. While the paper admitted that the growing season was shorter up north, it argued that crops matured more quickly here due to its richer soil, nighttime rainfall, and warm sun. "The vegetable productions of a northern climate are generally superior to those produced in a lower latitude. For this reason Minnesota wheat, corn, potatoes, etc. will doubtless command a premium in the Southern markets." The north woods were also a hunter's paradise teaming with fish, fowl, and game.[39] The forests and marshes were also abundant in wild rice and cranberries that had been a staple of the Indians' diet. Whatever their feeling about Indians, white settlers quickly learned to appreciate their gastronomic delicacies and even used them as a selling point for the region. "We have used this kind of rice a number of times" wrote the *Hudson Star*, "and believe it to be richer and better than the southern rice, and equally wholesome."[40]

The Stillwater *Messenger* also engaged in the promotion of the Minnesota Territory for would-be emigrants. It claimed, "Minnesota is the healthiest State in the Union." Its soil was among the most fertile in the country. "It is rich with decayed vegetable matter, yet owing to the large proportion of silica which it contains it neither bakes in dry weather nor becomes very muddy in wet. Minnesota is almost entirely exempt from that intolerable nuisance – mud!" In an era before paved roads and when fields were manually plowed and sowed, mud produced by rain or melting snow was a major problem. New England states were particularly plagued by this problem. Minnesota's and northern Wisconsin's other advantages compared to the prairie states below them was that they were one of the best timbered and one of the best watered- and water-powered regions in the country. "Owing to the numerous navigable streams that traverse the territory, Minnesota has for seven months each year advantages unsurpassed for interior communications," the *Messenger* related. The *St. Croix Union* echoed its claim when it wrote, "The publication of these and other facts which characterize Minnesota as a competitor for Western Emigration...would do more good than all the newspapers combined...in the distribution of intelligence."[41]

Given the challenge of wintering in northern Wisconsin and Minnesota, North Country settlers could not ignore the reservations expressed about this region's weather. Many residents tried to minimize its harsher realities by emphasizing the positive side to winter snows. "Sometimes we have good sledding for 100 days in succession," the *St. Croix Union* bragged. "The farmer, or lumberman can make all his arrangements for hauling on the snow, with a perfect assurance that they can be consummated."[42] Humor, too, proved a useful coping mechanism. "It is an established fact," wrote the *St. Croix Union*, "that it (Minnesota) is not further north than the North Pole, and that men can winter here without becoming congealed like mercury when it is subjected to cold about 40o below zero."[43] And "Here we have snow, snow, snow everyday; it remains with us

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[39] *St. Croix Union* (Stillwater, Minn.), 2 June 1855 and 27 June 1856.
[40] *St. Croix Falls* (Stillwater, Minn.), *15 September 1855.*
[41] *Messenger* (Stillwater, Minn.), 31 May 1859; *St. Croix Union* (Stillwater, Minn.), 2 June 1855 and 24 November 1855.
[42] *St. Croix Union* (Stillwater, Minn.), 1 December 1855.
[43] *St. Croix Union* (Stillwater, Minn.), 23 January 1857.

like a true friend." Minnesotans argued that this was a great advantage to the damp chill and mud that marked eastern winters. The Stillwater *Messenger* could not help but gloat after eastern newspapers reported that frost had arrived in Connecticut by September 9th "—three weeks earlier than Minnesota." The tinkling of sleigh bells on a bright, brisk winter day prompted many to claim, "that the winters are the most delightful season of the year," and would make others "envy Minnesota life."[44]

Another advantage Minnesota boasted of to attract settlers was that it still had plenty of land that could be claimed under the pre-emption law. Although land offices had opened up in the late 1840s along the St. Croix River, surveying teams had yet to finish their work. A squatter could still claim choice land of up to160 acres without having to first purchase it. He could farm it, thus making an exclusive claim as well as have the opportunity to sell his crops and raise money to purchase the land at $1.25 per acre before it was put up for sale. Under this system the average settler was able to beat out land speculators who purchased large tracts of land and held on to them until values increased and a tidy profit could be made without any improvements made to the land.[45]

Land speculators, though, were not completely absent from this Minnesota frontier. Simeon P. Folsom, a land agent from St. Paul, advertised his three thousand acres near White Bear Lake in St. Croix Valley newspapers. He claimed his company aimed to sell its land to "actual farmers," and would provide them with "prices and terms that will make them the cheapest lands in that section." Tracts of land were not to be sold under one-hundred-and-sixty acres. Banks also tried to make a profit out of the popular preemption. If a squatter had not made the money necessary to purchase his land when it came up for sale, the Banking Office of C.H. Parker, and Co. in Stillwater gladly provided "reasonable terms."[46]

There was also a ready local market for farm products with the logging companies. "Those who desire to settle on lands where the pine lumber interest will furnish them a market for surplus produce," wrote *St. Croix Union*, "we would direct to the...rich valley of the St. Croix."[47] Throughout the 1850s many logging encampments still imported much of their food from states to the south, such as Iowa, Illinois, and parts of Wisconsin.[48] In 1850, E.S. Seymour verified these observations of the St. Croix Valley. "This portion of the country will always have a good market for agricultural products," he explained to prospective pioneers. "Surrounded as it is by a manufacturing district, and by populous towns springing into existence on the Mississippi and the St. Croix, it is not too much to predict that it will, ere long, be dotted with farmhouses, and enlivened with the songs of multitudes of cheerful and thriving husbandmen."[49]

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[44] *St. Croix Union* (Stillwater, Minn.), 1 December 1855 and 23 January 1857; Stillwater *Messenger*, 6 October 1857.
[45] *St. Croix Union*, (Stillwater, Minn.), 2 June 1855 and 11 August 1855.
[46] Folsom, *Fifty Years in the* Northwest, 563; St. *Croix Union* (Stillwater, Minn.), 26 Many 1855; *St. Croix Union*, 20 November 1854.
[47] *St. Croix Union* (Stillwater, Minn.) 12 May 1855.
[48] Dunn, *The St. Croix*, 55.
[49] Seymour, *Sketches of Minnesota, The New England of the West* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1850), 179.

While newspapers of the St. Croix Valley did their best to promote the North Country, Wisconsin's state legislature decided more aggressive tactics were needed to lure settlers. In 1852, it passed an act that established the position of Commissioner of Emigration with an office in New York. The following year it added a traveling agent to aid its recruiting efforts. The commissioner's office annually distributed approximately thirty thousand copies of a pamphlet that described Wisconsin's singular features. John Lathrop, the chancellor of the University of Wisconsin in Madison, authored the tract. Trying to dispel fears of a hostile, northern environment, Lathrop wrote that Wisconsin's climate and topography compared well with New York and New England. It was perhaps even milder and more beautiful. Its soil was richer. It was certainly more healthful than the east coast with its diseases and epidemics and free of the hot, stagnant, malarial-infested lands of Illinois and Indiana. It certainly had more timber than these prairie states. The commissioner's office sent half of these pamphlets to Europe. The other half was distributed to ships and hotels in the East. Traveling agents posted advertisements in more than nine hundred newspapers throughout the northeast and Canada. Once in Wisconsin, the office gave migrants personal assistance. It also worked with emigration societies, foreign consuls, shipping lines, railroad companies, and freight handlers. By 1854, the emigration office opened operations in Quebec.[50]

Competition between states for immigrant settlers was fierce. Although it was still a territory, Minnesota refused to be outdone by Wisconsin. In January 1855, the Governor of the territory requested that the Minnesota Territorial Legislature establish an emigration office. "We need not stop to inquire why it is that thousands of our fathers, brothers, and friends can content themselves to stick to the worn out and comparatively barren soil of the old States, rather than seek a home in this invigorating and healthy climate, and fertile soil," the governor asserted to the legislature. "They will soon find out our facilities for wealth and comfort, when we take steps to advertise them." Upon the governor's request the legislature opened an emigration office in New York City. Its purpose was to provide "correct information of our Territory, its soil, climate, population, productions, agricultural, manufacturing and educational facilities, and prospects." The governor complained that he received numerous inquiries from other states about Minnesota winters and whether it is so cold "stock freezes to death, and man hardly dare venture out of his domicile." The governor also asked the legislature to prepare "a brief well written pamphlet giving the facts."[51]

St. Croix newspapers heartily endorsed these efforts. "The emigrant whose purpose is to find a home in the west, on his arrival at our eastern ports," wrote the *St. Croix Union*, "must hail with heartfelt joy the man who can give him reliable information in regard to any portion of our unoccupied lands, and who can instruct him what route to take in order to reach these lands." The paper expressed approval at the selection of a native of Switzerland who was fluent in many languages to be the territory's emigration agent and that he took the trouble to visit the St. Croix Valley to survey the land before

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[50] Current, The *History of Wisconsin*, 45.
[51] *St. Croix Union* (Stillwater, Minn.), 23 January 1855.

he set out for the East.[52] "We understand he is much pleased with this section of our Territory," wrote the *St. Croix Union*. "The prospects for Stillwater and the beautiful Valley of the St. Croix are very flattering, and we may expect a large immigration the present season."[53]

The 1850s were exciting years for the St. Croix Valley. Its development and prosperity seemed assured and unlimited. Newcomers arrived regularly by steamboat. Once in the valley their movement up and down the river was facilitated by the construction of a military road that was completed in 1856 from the Point Douglas area northward to Sunrise, a distance of approximately sixty miles. Logging, was of course, the first booming enterprise, but the decade also marked the emergence of agriculture beyond a subsistence scale of garden vegetables, potatoes, and corn. The St. Croix River Valley encompassed an area from twenty to ninety miles wide and approximately 120 miles long. W.H.C. Folsom claimed that, "About eight-tenths of this entire valley is fitted by nature for agriculture."[54] Pioneers and speculators responded to all the advertisements. Between 1849 and 1863, Hudson did a "land office" business, especially in the middle years of the decade. In 1849, it sold 9,097 acres. From 1854 through 1856 over 500,000 acres of land went into private hands. By 1863, the peak was over as only 1700 acres were transacted.[55]

Ancient glaciers had shaped the St. Croix Valley's geological features and determined its potential for agriculture. When the Superior and Grantsburg ice lobes melted, large glacial lakes formed north of the St. Croix Valley. The remainder of the glacial melt-off drained through the St. Croix Valley. The first glacial river cut broad terraces into the sand and deposited gravel along the way. When the St. Croix's ancestral river formed, it cut deeply into the underlying bedrock and formed more terraces. Once the valley was deepened, streams that fed into the St. Croix also cut through the sand, gravel, and underlying bedrock making deep side ravines in what is now Washington and Chisago Counties. When the glacial lakes had finished draining, the river that ran through the St. Croix Valley became smaller and unable to carry all the sediment coming from the northern country and it began to fill up the valley. Washington County sits on approximately one hundred feet of sediment. Lake St. Croix was created when some of this sediment damned the river. Sand and decaying plants formed wetland, marshes, and peat bogs along the river way.[56]

The climate would also profoundly affect agriculture. The St. Croix Valley is in what is known as the Wisconsin tension zone that divides the state into two distinct floral and vegetation regions. In the northern zone, the climate is generally marked by cool, dry, continental arctic air masses from Canada. Its winters are longer, colder and snowier. In the southern zone, the climate is influenced by the interaction of Pacific air,

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[52] *St. Croix Union* (Stillwater, Minn.), 27 March 1855.
[53] *St. Croix Union* (Stillwater, Minn.), 20 March 1855.
[54] Folsom, *Fifty Years in the Northwest*, 85.
[55] Paul W. Gates, "Frontier Land Business in Wisconsin," 52(4) *Wisconsin Magazine of History* (Summer 1969), 322.
[56] Daniel S. Wovcha, Barbara C. Delaney, and Gerda E. Nordquist, *Minnesota's St. Croix River Valley and Anoka Sandplain: A Guide to Native Habitats* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995) 9-12.

warmed and dried from its passage over the Rocky Mountains, and warm, moist, tropical air from the Gulf of Mexico. Its summers are longer and warmer and snowfall varies. In this tension zone is a mixture of vegetation common in the southern part of the state, such as prairie, oak-savanna, and southern-hardwood forests as well as vegetation common in the northern zone, such as boreal forests, conifer-hardwood forest, and pine savanna.[57]

The first farmers in the St. Croix Valley faced the challenge of discerning the quality of the soil in this geologically and climatically varied landscape. Those who arrived first had the advantage of choosing prime prairie land along the lower St. Croix. Farmers who sought land further up river found woodlands of pine, tamarack, cedar, balsam as well as hardwoods with scatterings of wild meadows and marshes. Those who settled in these clearings began the slow, laborious task of felling one tree at a time to increase their farm acreage. Throughout the lower half of the river, farmers found that the rich, virgin soil produced bountiful harvests, and that the St. Croix provided easy access to southern markets.

The first strictly agricultural settlements in the St. Croix Valley had started in the Mississippi and St. Croix River delta, near Prescott, Red Rock, Cottage Grove, Lakeland, and Afton.[58] Much of this area was composed of prairie land.[59] Near present day Afton farming began quite early. French settlers had come here in 1837. By 1839, local desire for food beyond what could be scavenged in the countryside prompted the breaking of the first farmland. By the winter of 1845-46 Afton had a flourmill -- the first gristmill north of Prairie du Chien. The area was ideal for farming. W.H.C. Folsom described a good part of Afton as "rolling prairie." The rest of the land was a patchwork of woods and fields. "The soil is all productive," Folsom claimed, "and the streams afford good water powers."[60] However, Philander Prescott, who began farming in the early 1840s near his namesake town, complained there was no market for his goods thus discouraging more ambitious farming.[61] However, as pioneers began moving into the valley in the 1850s, the delta region was the first area they saw before heading up river. It did not take long for would-be farmers to recognize its potential. Many stopped for a look around. In 1853, one settler noted that the "steady tread of the immigrant land looker" wore down roads where none had been before.[62] In 1854, a guide pamphlet entitled, "Description of Pierce County," described the Prescott area as composed of terraces of limestone and sandstone deposits that created "a beautiful prairie." Decomposing limestone fertilized the fine sand and clay soil. By 1856, the wheat harvests were bountiful enough to

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[57] Duane Griffin, "Wisconsin's Vegetation History and the Balancing of Nature," in *Wisconsin Land and Life*, 98-100.
[58] Rosenfelt, *Washington*, 9.
[59] J. W. Trygg, *Composite Map of United States Land Surveyors' Original Plats and Fields Notes* (Ely, Minn., 1964), Minnesota Series, Sheet 7.
[60] Folsom, *Fifty Years in the Northwest*, 356-7.
[61] Ahlgren and Beeler, *A History of Prescott, Wisconsin*, 19.
[62] Oliver Gibbs and C.E. Young, *Sketch of Pierce County*, Collections of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Vol. III, Madison, Wis.: State Historical Society of Wisconsin. Draper, Lyman, Copeland, Ed. Originally published 1857, reprinted 1904.

encourage the town of Prescott to erect its first flourmill and begin exporting its agricultural surplus.[63]

Just north of the delta and on the Wisconsin side of the St. Croix River was another vast stretch of prairie land that began at what is now the town of Hudson and extended to the Willow River, up to the Apple River on the north and down to the Kinnickinnic River on the south.[64] Many early pioneers recognized its value and took advantage of the pre-emption law to squat on the land before it was surveyed. When the surveying work was completed and the land here was opened to the public on August 23, 1848, many squatters were ready to make their claim. On the first day of filing three men, Louis Massey, Peter Boucha, and Eleazer Steves, claimed nearly all the land fronting Lake St. Croix. These Yankee settlers were taken by the resemblance of the St. Croix to the Hudson River Valley in New York and had the new town christened "Hudson."

Despite its Yankee name, Hudson's steamboat landing became an immigrant port of entry for the St. Croix Valley. Newcomers from many different countries disembarked there for the rich prairie lands to the east of the town and made Hudson's population very ethnically and religiously diverse. In 1854, the *St. Croix Union* commented "It appears to contain a very intelligent, industrious, and enterprising population, whose principal aim appears to be, to make Hudson, *the* town of the St. Croix valley." The Stillwater paper, however, added, "with the exception of *Stillwater*, they will doubtless succeed." The Wisconsin legislature's chartering the St. Croix, Superior, and Bayfield Railway that year no doubt provoked the paper's defensiveness. Many people along the St. Croix had speculated that Hudson would become the "metropolis of the west." Stillwater's actions to keep itself out of Wisconsin had backfired on this issue. The Badger state's legislature could hardly be expected to promote a Minnesota town as the terminus for its railroad. By the end of the 1850s the booming town of Hudson boasted Methodist, Baptist, Congregational, Episcopal, Presbyterian, and Roman Catholic churches.[65]

Church and community played a role in the settlement of the backcountry prairie land as illustrated by the stories of a devote Episcopalian from New York state named Varnum Maxon and two brothers, Thomas and Trueworthy Jewell from Massachusetts. In 1846 Maxon claimed land near Cedar Lake for the Episcopal Church. He returned back to New York and recruited fourteen families who arrived by wagon train in 1856. The Jewell brothers came west in 1854 and were taken by the beauty of the countryside that reminded them of their old home in New England. They decided to stay and bought seven hundred acres of land near present day Star Prairie. This was the first contract of this type in the St. Croix Valley. They then offered free lots to anyone back home who would set up homesteads here.[66]

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[63] Ahlgren and Beeler, *A History of Prescott, Wisconsin*, 5, 40; Folsom, *Fifty Years in the Northwest*, 212.
[64] Trygg, *Composite Map of United States Land Surveyors' Original Plats and Field Notes*, Minnesota Series, Sheet 7.
[65] Genevieve Cline Day, *Hudson in the Early Days* (Hudson, Wis.: Star-Observer, 1963), 19, 47, 57; Folsom, *Fifty Years in the Northwest*, 154; *St. Croix Union* (Stillwater, Minn.), 18 November 1854.
[66] Weatherhead, *Westward to the St. Croix*, 36-8.

A few Irish immigrants made their way to this farming frontier in 1855. Unlike most migrants to the valley the first ones took the overland route and arrived by way of four covered wagons pulled by eight oxen. They chose to homestead along the east fork of the Kinnickinnic River, near present day Town of Pleasant Valley. Lawrence Hawkins led the party of eighteen who all began their journey back in County Galway, Ireland in 1852. They had stopped along the way in Connecticut and then in Madison before finding their way to the St. Croix Valley, a sort of "promised land" for them, and formed the nucleus of an Irish farming community.[67]

German immigrants also carved out a place for themselves in the St. Croix Valley. In 1851, Haley and Nicholas Schwalen disembarked in Hudson having come all the way from Hunsfeldt, Germany. They were looking for a large tract of land to support a small community of German farmers they planned to bring over. They selected a site approximately six miles southeast of Hudson, and then returned to Germany. The Schwalens organized their family and friends into an emigration party and set sail for America. At sea they battled cholera. By 1852, they landed in Racine, Wisconsin and then took the water route from Chicago to Galena and then up the Mississippi River, this time fighting off diphtheria. Once they reached Hudson, the entire group had no choice but to live in one building until individual families could file their claims and build their own homes. They survived in their first years by selling their products, particularly butter, to the townspeople in Hudson. The "German Settlement," as it became known, eventually prospered. "The soil is the best I have seen in America," wrote H.H Montman to his parents in Germany. "They have birch trees just like in Germany. The climate is very much as it is at home."[68]

The ethnic diversity of this prairie region was further enhanced by the arrival of Dutch immigrants to the area near present day Baldwin. The Dutch generally organized a whole community to emigrate together across the Atlantic. Many who came to Wisconsin settled in the southeastern portion of the state, but some pushed further on to the St. Croix Valley. The first Dutch pioneers reached the St. Croix in 1857 after a long, hard overland journey. Another Dutch group took trains to the Mississippi and then tried to make it the rest of the way to Hudson by river. Although technically spring when they arrived in April, the Mississippi north of Winona was still frozen over. The group continued by rail to St. Paul and then made their way by foot to the Baldwin area.[69]

French-Canadian settlers, or the Quebecois, added to the ethnic mix of the St. Croix Valley. Unlike their fur-trading forbearers, they came with the intention of farming. Their farms along the St. Lawrence River were too small to prosper much. In 1851, Joseph and Louis Parent chose a spot along the Apple River. Their enthusiasm for the location was communicated in their letters back home, and soon a stream of French-

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[67] As quoted in Weatherhead, *Westward to the St. Croix*, 40.
[68] Weatherhead, *Westward to the St. Croix*, 40-2; Letter from H. H. Montman to his parents, 1858, University of Wisconsin—River Falls.
[69] Weatherhead, *Westward to the St. Croix*, 42.

Canadians made their way to the St. Croix Valley. By 1890, nearly two hundred families of French-Canadian decent lived along the Apple River up to the town of Somerset.[70]

The land further up river from Stillwater began to display some of the variety common to the tension zone. Most of it was heavily wooded or marsh and swamp land with smaller patches of clearings.[71] The land was very rich and fertile with glacial sediment, but breaking ground for farming in this region was an even greater challenge since the land had to be cleared of trees first. One of the few areas that had stretches of prairie in this area was near Osceola on the Wisconsin side of the St. Croix. Its rich prairie land gently rolled to the bluffs along the river. "Osceola [has a]...beautiful situation, commanding a fine view of the river in both directions for miles," wrote the *St. Croix Union* in 1855, "there is no place that had such prospects to become ultimately a large and flourishing place of business."[72] The town became the county seat for Polk County, and also had a good stretch of river bottomland for an ideal steamboat landing. One resident wrote, "I can without any hesitation, pronounce it the best landing from Point Douglas to the Falls...The land within two miles of this place is all taken up in farms and under good cultivation, and had hitherto produced abundant crops."[73] Farmers were also lured to the area by the prospect of selling their products to local lumber companies. "Corn is worth $1, and at this time the loggers are offering seventy five cents for oats and cannot get them at that as they are scarce. For the want of farmers up here the loggers have to buy their corn, Oats, Flour and Pork, below."[74] These features attracted farmers as did access to Osceola and Close's Creeks. They created the nucleus of a prosperous farming community and Osceola became one of the first wheat producing areas in the St. Croix Valley. Osceola Creek provided an ideal site for a water-powered flourmill that was built in 1853. However, the settlement of Polk County was much slower than lower down river because of the difficulty of breaking ground in this more wooded area. The population did not take off until after 1866. It would then prosper as a farming country in the years to follow.[75]

During the 1850s wheat began to rival logging as a valley export. The St. Croix River gave settlers a transportation advantage not enjoyed by all farmers in Wisconsin. Until railroads penetrated into the hinterland of the frontier many farmers could not participate in commercial agriculture. While many farmers in more remote regions depended upon local markets and bartered goods, St. Croix farmers were able to engage in a national market almost from the time they broke ground. Wheat became their first commercial crop, and it was an ideal first crop for a pioneer farmer. Unlike other crops, which required careful cultivation or large start up costs like animal husbandry, wheat was easy to grow. Unlike corn, which required more refined breaking of the root-packed prairie sod to allow its own deep roots to grow, the soil for wheat only needed minimal preparation before sowing. Tree stumps did not even have to be removed. The wheat

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[70] Weatherhead, *Westward to the St. Croix*, 47.
[71] Trygg, *Composite Map of United States Land Surveyors' Original Plats and Fields Notes*, Minnesota Series, Sheet 8.
[72] *St. Croix Union* (Stillwater, Minn.), 24 April 1855.
[73] *St. Croix Union* (Stillwater, Minn.), 24 April 1855.
[74] *St. Croix Union* (Stillwater, Minn.), 24 April 1855.
[75] Folsom, *Fifty Years in the Northwest*, 87, 131-2.

then could be ignored until harvest. In the meantime, the farmer could spend the rest of his time clearing more land and fencing it in. When harvested, wheat had a ready market, and was considered as "good as money." Wheat was easily stored in private warehouses. Farmers were then issued wheat "receipts," "tickets," or "certificates," which they could then use in local stores. "As good as wheat" was a common expression on the frontier, which implied that it was often used in lieu of money. Farmers could then obtain other merchandise they needed. The *Prairie Farmer*, published in Chicago, celebrated the virtues of wheat production claiming "It pays debts, buys, groceries, clothing, lands, and answers more emphatically the purposes of trade than any other crop." St. Croix farmers could not help but concur with this observation.[76]

The Willow, Apple, and Kinnickinnic Rivers and their tributary creeks offered many prime locations for mills to turn wheat into its marketable form of flour. Gristmills usually ground grain for a local farmer's use, but it did not take long for the first commercial flour mills to appear. Caleb Greene and Charles Cox built the first mill in this area on the Willow River in 1853-4. They called it "Greene's Paradise Mill, and "Paradise" became its brand name. Local farmers often helped repair the sand road to the mill whenever it washed out. The Bowron brothers followed suit by building a second mill near the confluence of the Cedar Lake Creek and the Apple River. In 1855, Horace Greeley, the renowned editor of the *New York Tribune*, took a trip up the St. Croix River and proclaimed, "The cry is Wheat!! Wheat!!...Every steamboat goes down the river with all the wheat on board she will take, and a couple of wheat laden barges fat to her side." Many predicted that the farmer would follow the lumbermen as the forests receded and the entire North County would be turned into an agricultural paradise.[77]

Wheat was not the only export from the St. Croix Valley during these years. Cranberries, which were native to the area, grew wild in the abundant marshes lands scattered throughout the woodlands. It did not take long for settlers to realize the potential profit from harvesting what grew naturally and cultivating it to enhance their harvest. The first experiments with systematic cultivating began in the late 1840s near Stillwater. The travel writer E.S. Seymour noted "the soil and climate of this region are so well adapted to their culture...it is not unreasonable to presume that its culture may, hereafter, become so general as to render it a prominent article among the staples of Minnesota."[78] "We hear of [cranberries] selling at from $3 to $4 per bushel," wrote the *St. Croix Union* in 1855, "We believe that even at $1 per bushel they might be grown with a great profit." The paper explained how to cultivate cranberry vines and claimed; "One acre will yield from 200 to 400 bushels each season. This would be better than corn, or wheat or almost any other crop."[79] By 1859, the St. Croix cranberry trade exceeded ten thousand dollars with five thousand bushels of the fruit harvested netting two dollars per bushel.[80] Wild blackberries also had a ready market. "These berries are

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[76] Current, *The History of Wisconsin*, 90-1; As quoted in John Giffin Thompson, *The Rise and Decline of the Wheat Growing Industry in Wisconsin: The Use and Abuse of America's Natural Resources* (Ph.D. Dissert,. University of Wisconsin, Madison, 1909; New York: Arno Press, 1972), 24-5.
[77] As quoted in Weatherhead, *Westward to the St. Croix*, 66-7.
[78] Seymour, *Sketches of Minnesota*, 182-3.
[79] *St. Croix Union (Stillwater, Minn.)*, 17 November 1855.
[80] Stillwater *Messenger*, 25 January 1859.

found in great abundance in the valley above us," the Stillwater *Messenger* reported, "and are of a very fine quality."[81]

The Swedish Frontier

On the Minnesota side of the St. Croix opposite the Osceola area stood another forested region with a series of beautiful, pristine lakes to the west. The Chisago Lakes area, as it has been called, provides another example of settlement and the beginnings of agriculture along the St. Croix. When pioneers made it to Taylors Falls, they reached the head of navigation on the river. There they disembarked into the most splendid scenery along the river. The colorful Dalles rock formations soared from fifty to two hundred and fifty feet straight up. While land along the river was either bought up by speculators or under the control of logging interests, much of the inland lakes region could still be squatted on or bought at the government rate of $1.25 per acre. Within a decade the area attracted scores of Scandinavians that would eventually make this region the largest Swedish-speaking rural area outside of Sweden. This nearly exclusive dominance of one ethnic group was unusual not only for the St. Croix Valley but for the entire country. [82]

What made this concentration possible was that the Chisago Lakes was off-the-beaten path for westward migration. Most pioneers preferred the prairie and hardwood forests to the south along the river. The soil was rich and the timber supplied fuel and housing material. Coniferous forests to the north were known to have stony, acid soils with little organic materials that were not suitable for agriculture. The Chisago Lakes area, however, was in the transition zone between the hardwood forests in the south and the coniferous forests of the north in what is called the "mixed forest." Most settlers assumed the land was infertile. The Chisago area, however, was deceptive. Glacial sediment had enriched the soil. This fact only needed to be discovered, and it was a handful of Swedish immigrants who first realized this. Through letters to their homeland or to other Swedish-American communities, they began one of the most exclusive chain migrations to one area in the United States.[83]

Scandia became the first settlement of Swedes in Minnesota. In 1850, Carl Ferstrom, Oscar Roos, and August Sandahl claimed a forty acres site near Hay Lake. While they chose to move on the following year, they sold their farm to another Swedish immigrant, Daniel Nilson. His home formed the nucleus of the growing Swedish community. These pioneers grew corn, potatoes, and rye, their first year. Letters back home to Sweden brought more and more immigrants to the area. By 1855, there was a cohesive Swedish community in Scandia.[84]

Eric Norberg was one of the first Swedes to come to the Chisago Lake. He had been in America since 1842 and decided to explore the Minnesota Territory after the land

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[81] Stillwater *Messenger*, 30 August 1859.
[82] John G. Rice, "The Swedes," in June Drenning Holmquist, *They Chose Minnesota: A Survey of the State's Ethnic Groups* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1981), 250.
[83] Rice, "The Swedes," 250.
[84] Anna Engquist, *Scandia – Then and Now* (Stillwater, Minn.: The Croixside Press, 1974), 9-18

office was set up on the St. Croix. In his travels, Norberg had made the acquaintance of Gustaf Unonius, a bishop of the Swedish Episcopal St. Ansgarius Congregation in Chicago. Unonius was very devoted to assisting Swedish immigrants find a good life in America and was constantly on the lookout for better opportunities. When he heard Norberg was heading north, he asked him to send a report. In 1851, Norberg wrote to Unonius that Minnesota would make a better settlement for Swedes than Illinois. He wrote, "West of Taylors Falls...there are many lakes, streams, and rivers, and a better place for a large settlement I have hardly ever seen." He urged Unonius to send Swedish immigrants here. The first group of Swedish farmers arrived by steamboat in June 1851 and promptly cut a road from Taylors Falls through the woods to the lake region. In this more remote area they could take advantage of the pre-emption law and claim this uninhabited land for themselves. They also found the resemblance to their homeland appealing and comforting. Within five to six years nearly all of the government land in the Chisago Lakes area was claimed, almost entirely by Swedes.[85]

This Swedish community, however, remained fairly isolated for years because of its remoteness and lack of a main highway or railroad as well as its dependence upon the use of a common foreign language. The first farmers came with the simplest farming skills. "We were on the whole a poorly selected company as none of us was skilled in any trade," wrote Oscar Roos. "None of us could cut hay to feed our oxen."[86] Most did not have draft animals and lived at a subsistence level, living off the wild game and fish in the surrounding woods. They initially grew white and brown beans, hay, and rutabagas. Later on they began to grow potatoes, corn, and small grains, and garden vegetables. The men and older boys often hired themselves out to logging companies in the winter as a way to earn cash. Once they were able to acquire a cow, butter and cheese making became a means to barter for store bought products, such as sugar and coffee. Chickens and hogs were added later. Their first customers were the logging companies along the river. It would, however, take many years before they would join in exporting wheat or other products like the farmers down river.[87]

Despite their aloofness the Swedes were well regarded. "The Swedes are a moral class of people," wrote one observer. "They are very industrious and strictly honest. They attend to their own business, and let the balance of mankind attend to their own." While preferring to speak their own language amongst themselves, the Swedish community made English a priority for their children, which pleased the native Americans. "We learn with pleasure that English is taught to all the children...it behooves them to instruct their offspring so as to fit them for the community in which they live. A very good idea."[88]

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[85] Folsom, *Fifty Years in the Northwest*, 298, 310-11; Emeroy Johnson, *Early History of Chisago Lake Reexamined*, Minnesota Historical Society Collection, date ?, 215-6; *An Early Look at Chisago County* (North Branch, Minn.: The Chisago County Bicentennial Committee, 1976), 17, 19.
[86] Engquist, *Scandia – Then and Now*, 31.
[87] Engquist, *Scandia – Then and Now*, 5, 31-3.
[88] *St. Croix Union* (Stillwater, Minn.), 6 March 1855.

In the 1850s, settlements and the beginnings of agriculture penetrated as far north as Sunrise. "Its advantages in an agricultural point of view are first rate," wrote one settler. "It has an excellent range for cattle, and abundance of timber of every sort...excellent bottom, meadow and upland." The local pineries provided an eager and profitable market. "For doing business with the lumbering interest this point has a decided advantage on account of its proximity to the pineries." Farmers here could sell their goods at "Stillwater prices" and take the added advantage of the "transportation" markup without having to transport goods upriver and still have competitive prices.[89]

The St. Croix's Valley's prosperity was also supplemented by catering to migrants who disembarked at the steamboat landings along the river with plans to head further west. After the Sioux treaties were signed in 1853, Minnesota's southwest territory became open for settlement. Hopeful settlers crowded steamboats that plied the Mississippi, the Minnesota, and the St. Croix Rivers. In 1855, the *St. Croix Union* wrote, "The immigration to Minnesota the present season bids fair to be immensely large, exceeding by many thousands that of any preceding year...On Thursday evening last...Capt. Smith estimated the number of the emigrants that the packets had then taken up the river to be at least four thousand."[90] Towns along these waterways hustled to assist and provision these sojourners before they continued their westward trek on new government roads.[91] The Log House at Log House Landing in Otisville, Minnesota, which is twelve miles north of Stillwater was the site of a steamboat landing. Immigrants dispersed from here to their new found homesteads. The Franconia Historic District, two and a half miles south of Taylors Falls, also contains pioneer settlement homes, a flourmill, and a sawmill. The village of Taylor Falls has many historic buildings from this era as well.[92] The bustling activity of the Taylor Falls and St. Croix Falls area became so great that in 1854 prominent residents formed the St. Croix Bridge Company. By 1856, the bridge was built. It "has a span of 150 feet and is a light and graceful structure," wrote W.H.C. Folsom, and "was the first bridge that spanned the St. Croix and Mississippi rivers."[93]

The population along the St. Croix had grown at such a clip that in 1853 the Wisconsin legislature created two additional counties out of St. Croix County – Pierce to the south with Prescott as its county seat and Polk County to the north with St. Croix Falls its seat. On the Minnesota side of the river, the influx of settlers prompted a movement to create Chisago County north of Washington as early as the fall of 1851. By January 1852 the first county commissioners' meeting was held at Taylors Falls, the new

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[89] *St. Croix Union* (Stillwater, Minn.), 12 September 1856.
[90] *St. Croix Union* (Stillwater, Minn.), 12 May 1855.
[91] Rosenfelt, *Washington*, 11; Folsom, *Fifty Years in the Northwest*, 356.
[92] David L. Fritz, *Historic Resource Study*, St. Croix National Scenic Riverway, 169. The Log House and the Franconia Historic District are within the St. Croix National Scenic Riverway. Four of the 19 historical structures in Taylors Falls are on he National Register. One of these is the Angel's hill Historic District on the high ground in the villages southwest corner. It included W.H.C. Folsom's House and the First Methodist Church. Other significant buildings on the National Register are the John Daubney House, the Much-Roos House, and the Taylors Falls Public Library.
[93] Folsom, *Fifty Years in the Northwest*, 334.

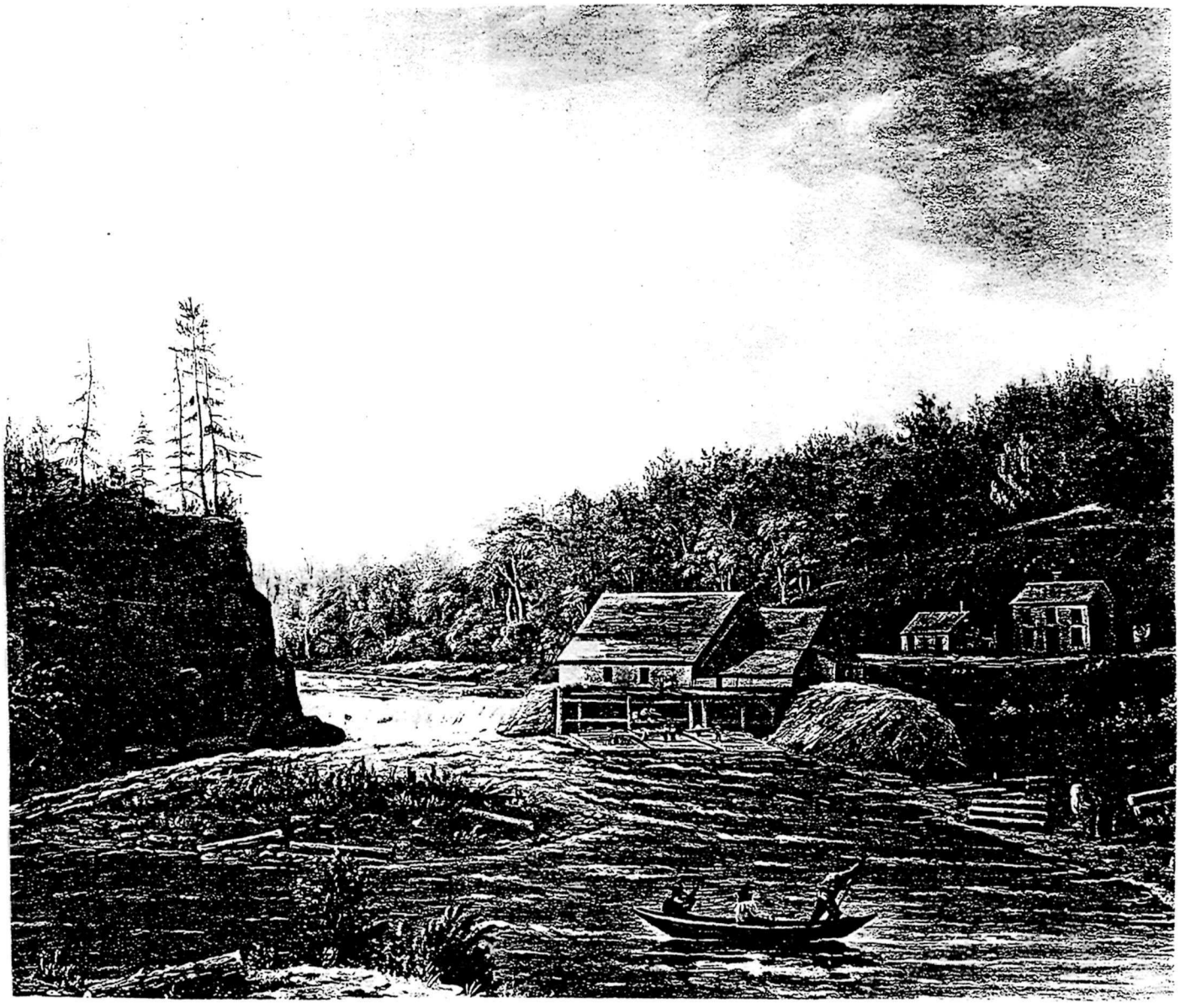

Figure 26. The disputed site of St. Croix Falls in 1848 from an oil painting by Henry Lewis. The dispute between William Hungerford and Caleb Cushing retarded the development of the site—which was probably a good thing.

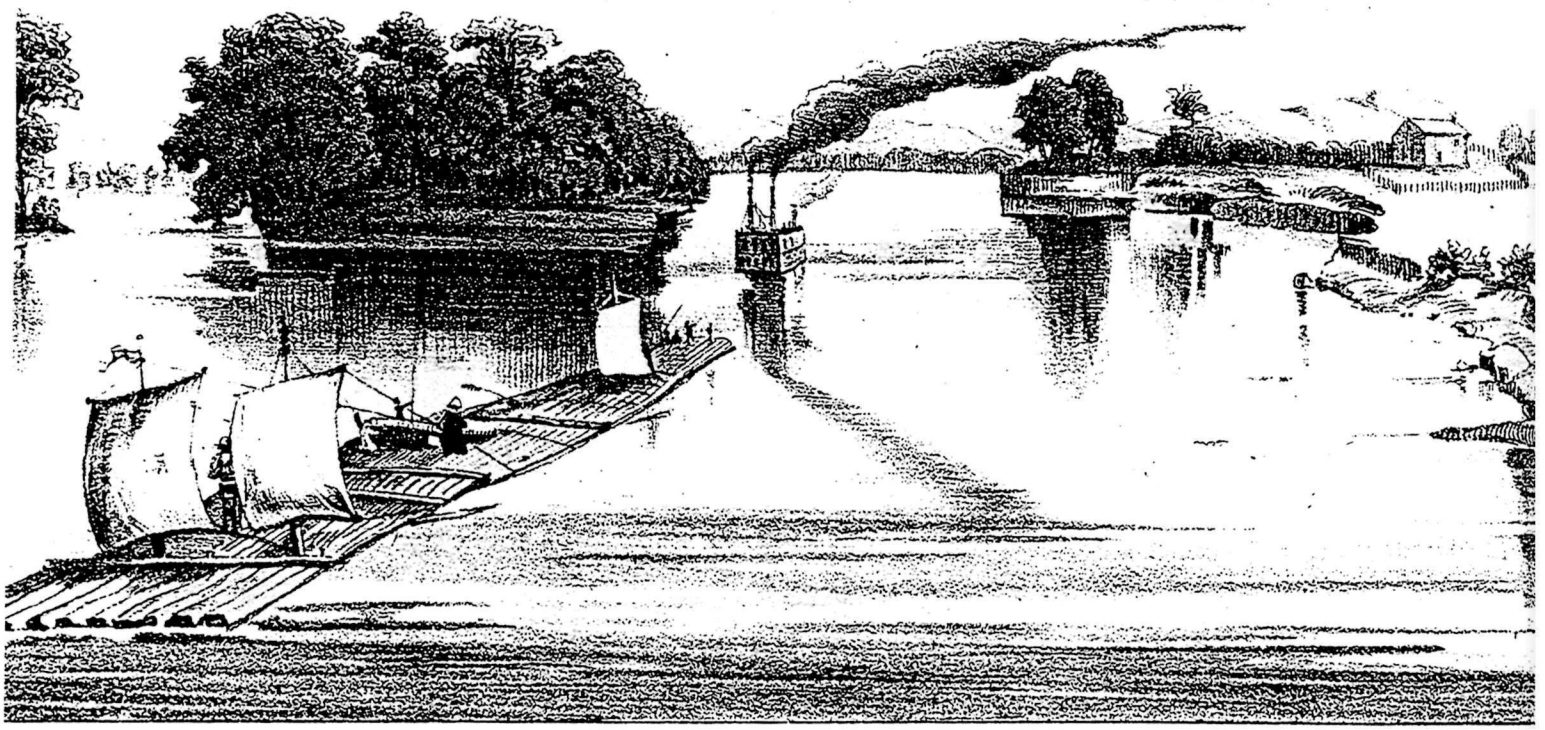

Figure 27. The mouth of the St. Croix River as it would have been seen by settlers arriving by steamboat. From an 1848 oil painting by Henry Lewis.

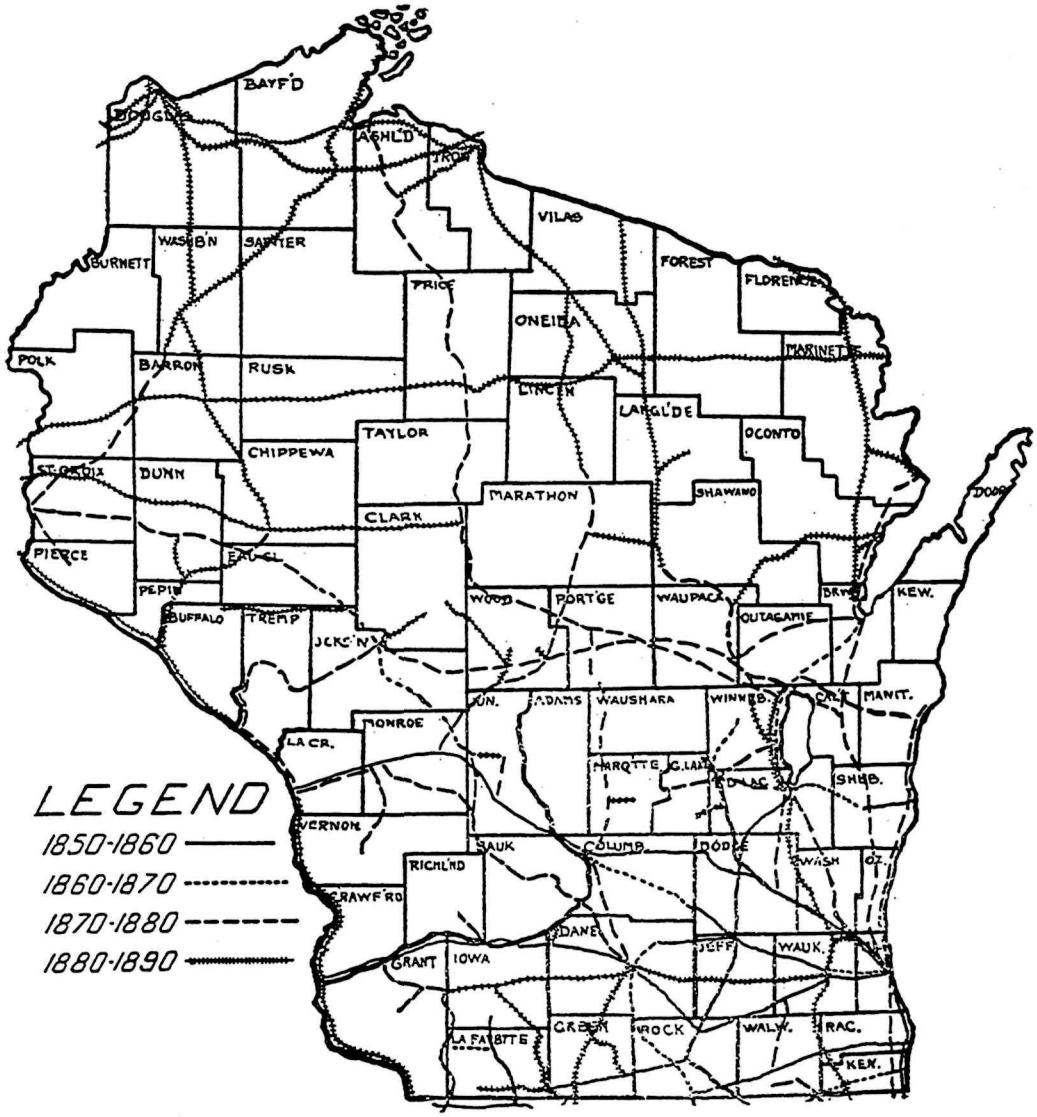

Figure 28. Map showing the construction of railroads in Wisconsin by decades, 1850-1890. From Thompson, *Wheat Growing in Wisconsin*.

seat of government for Chisago County.[94] Minnesota's white population swelled to 150,037. Easterners accounted for at least two-thirds of this number, while the other third was made up of Irish, Germans, English, and Canadians, with some Scandinavians. This was more than enough for Minnesota to enter the Union in 1858, less than a decade after it became a territory. .[95]

Land Speculation and Growing Pains

In 1856, John Bond expressed the optimism of the time when he wrote in his territorial guidebook, "The immigration to Minnesota is composed of men who come with the well-founded assurance that, in a land where Nature had lavished her choicest gifts – where sickness has no dwelling place – where the dreaded cholera has claimed no victims – their toil will be amply rewarded, while their persons and property are fully protected by the broad shield of law."[96] This rosy picture of the North Country led to a "real estate mania" in the valley. Yankee land speculators bought up land along the river gambling on its value increasing with the influx of newcomers. There were high expectations that the timber resources and waterpower would transform the region into a great manufacturing center. In 1855, the *St. Croix Union* wrote that from Taylors Fall began "A succession of falls and rapids six miles in length, creating one of the most extensive water powers in the North-west, and easily controlled. With the materials for manufacturing with which the St. Croix Valley abounds, there must spring up here manufacturing cities which may surpass Lowell, Nashua, or Lawrence [Massachusetts]."[97]

Land that had been claimed under pre-emption and bought for $1.25 per acre sold for $5.00 an acre after it had been "improved" with a small lean-to and a small tract of broken sod. Dozens of towns were platted, many before they were even surveyed and their exact location specified. But buyers both in the St. Croix Valley and in the East willingly bought them. Eastern capitalists also poured large sums of money into St. Paul banks that in turn made loans of three percent to land investors in the valley.[98] In some of the more settled towns, it was said that a parcel of land that sold for five hundred dollars in the morning could fetch a thousand dollars by evening. All it took was a fast-talking salesman who could convince an unwary buyer that he could hear a train whistle in the not-too-distant future. As a local commentator put it, "Every settler felt himself a prospective millionaire, and the public imagination soared high with greedy hope."[99] Even remote settlements like Sunrise encouraged speculators. "I shall not undertake to express an opinion," wrote a local resident in 1856, "as to the advantages of this point as a place for investments...The confidence of everyone owning property here...is its value, I will venture to say,' has increased, is increasing, and ought' *not* 'to be diminished."[100]

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[94] Folsom, *Fifty Years in the Northwest*, 306-7.
[95] Rosenfelt, *Washington*, 11-2; Folsom, *Fifty Years in the Northwest*, 356.
[96] Rosenfelt, *Washington*, 101.
[97] *St. Croix Union* (Stillwater, Minn.), 10 November 1855.
[98] Jim Cordes, *Reflections of Amador*, (North Branch, Minn.: Review Corporation, 1976), 5. Copy in Minnesota Historical Society Library.
[99] Rosenfelt, *Washington County*, 12.
[100] *St. Croix Union* (Stillwater, Minn.), 12 September 1856.

The one town that did not experience this rush of development was St. Croix Falls. It was situated in a picturesque setting near waterfalls that dropped fifty-five feet in a six-mile stretch. The turbulent falls never had the opportunity to freeze in the winter. This feature made it an ideal location for year-round water-powered manufacturing. Ironically, it was the early recognition of St. Croix Falls's assets that ignited the "greedy hope" that in turn arrested its development. The town's growth was put on hold through most of the 1850s due to the bitter lawsuit between Caleb Cushing and William Hungerford. When it was finally resolved in Cushing's favor in 1857, a financial panic hit the country, and Cushing, back east, lost touch with his Wisconsin interests. His lack of attention continued throughout the Civil War. Cushing and Hungerford "unitedly accomplished the ruin of their town," wrote Folsom. Other hindrances to pioneering in the St. Croix Falls area was of course, its dense forest land. It did not help matters to have the land office, which was opened in 1848, moved to Stillwater in the Minnesota Territory and to Willow River (Hudson) further down river in Wisconsin in 1849. No significant settlement took place in the area before the Civil War.[101]

There was only one other holdup to progress in areas near the pineries, one observer noted wistfully, "It is that there are but few women. We saw scores of old bachelors who have pined away their three and thirty without being consoled by the smiles of this fair portion of God's Creation." Local towns did not have any females to spare. A plea went out to the East "that their philanthropy be extended towards us and the goodly bach's of Taylor's Falls, and that they do send by their earliest possible convenience, a cargo of this valuable commodity...Minnesota's sons will welcome the first boat as the most valuable cargo that ever ascended the St. Croix."[102]

Although giddy with hope for the future prosperity of the St. Croix Valley, the communities here did not escape the growing pains experienced by the rest of the country as different groups from across the country and the Atlantic Ocean converged into small towns and farming hamlets. By the mid-1850s many "native" Americans, meaning Anglo-Protestants, became increasingly alarmed at the large number of foreigners, especially Catholics, swarming into the country. They felt the essential free and democratic character of the United States was in jeopardy. Protestants accused the highly centralized, authoritarian Roman Catholic Church of anti-democratic tendencies. Catholics had not been schooled in independent, democratic practices, they argued. Their church required slavish devotion, and their parochial school undermined the public school, which was the backbone of a democratic society. The American party, popularly known as the Know-Nothings, aimed to restrict immigration by limiting office holding to native-born Americans and to restrict citizenship to those who had lived in the United States for twenty-one years. This platform was aimed at states like Wisconsin that had generously offered the vote to foreign-born persons who lived in the state for one year – a first in the country. Many nativist politicians succeeded in gaining office throughout the country, and it looked like immigration and the rights of foreign-born people might be severely curtailed. By the end of the decade, however, the nativist movement foundered

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[101] Dunn, *The St. Croix*, 66-98; Folsom, *Fifty Years in the Northwest*, 104-5, 141-2.
[102] *St. Croix Union* (Stillwater, Minn.) 6 March 1855.

on the growing sectional crisis over slavery, and the Know-Nothing Party disappeared from the national stage. Some of its members were absorbed into the new Republican Party that muted nativism under its slogan of, "Free Soil, Free Men, Free Labor." However, the damage was done in Wisconsin. The state legislature was forced to disband its entire emigration agency. It was not revived until after the Civil War.[103]

The nativist movement's tentacles had reached even the raw frontier communities along the St. Croix River. Many Yankee New Englanders, who played a key role in felling the forests and developing the towns along the St. Croix River, harbored nativist sentiment. After an election in 1857, the Stillwater *Messenger,* a Republican paper, printed derisive comments about Irish voters. The paper complained that they voted as a "solid phalanx" in soiled, shabby clothing. The Democratic *St. Croix Union* angrily responded:

> The Messenger has unwittingly showed the cloven foot. The great majority of the black Republicans hate an Irishman much worse that they do the devil himself, and the Messenger...publicly proclaims what is privately taught by their leaders. They hate an Irishman, and some of them are determined that the Irish, and Dutch, and French, and all foreigners, shall be deprived of the right of suffrage...*Our* opinion is, that any foreigner, if he be naturalized, or has declared his intention to become naturalized, has as good a right to vote as a native born.[104]

The St. Croix Valley, however, could not do without immigrant labor. The *St. Croix Union* argued a more pragmatic approach to the immigrant issue. It claimed:

> Strike out what the Irishman has done for America, and the country would be set back fifty years in the path of progress. Corn would grow where the Erie canal bears the freight of millions of fertile acres; the lumbering coach would take the place of flying trains on ten thousand miles of railroad...Hundreds of millions of dollars could not purchase from the American people the property and advantages that have absolutely been bestowed upon them by Irish labor...it is an essential element in American thrift and progress and we could not lose it for a month without recurrence of chaos.[105]

By 1860, the Stillwater *Messenger* showed acceptance of Protestant immigrant groups. It described Scandinavians as "hardy, industrious, frugal and honest people" who were "succeeding well" in Minnesota. Of the Germans it wrote, "The enterprise of the German people who had come among us, and the success which has almost invariably rewarded their laborious and indefatigable efforts...have had the effect to induce a large emigration of that worthy class of people among us." But the Scandinavians and many

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[103] Current, *The History of Wisconsin,* 45, 47. For a more complete discussion of the American nativist movement see Ray Billington, *The Protestant Crusade, 1800-1860: A Study of the Origins of American Nativism*, (New York, 1938) and John Higham, *Strangers in the Land*, (New Brunswick, N.J., 1955).
[104] *St. Croix Union* (Stillwater, Minn.), 12 June 1857.
[105] *St. Croix Union* (Stillwater, Minn.), 13 November 1857.

Germans were Protestants, which perhaps made them easier to accept. Some bitterness towards Irish Catholics still lingered in the paper when it wrote that, "The emigrants expected from Ireland this season, are said to be of a superior class from those usually found among us, belonging mainly to the agricultural class, educated, and pretty generally Protestants, and possessed of some money and means."[106]

Wisconsin's emigration office, however, had been successful in laying the basis for the state to become one of the most ethnically diverse in the country. While recruitment of new immigrants was left now in private hands, it proved no less effective. "American letters" from friends and relatives who made it to Wisconsin enticed their European counterparts to make the journey themselves. Churches also played a critical role in this "chain migration," where letters, money, immigrant guide books, and even prepaid ship fares were sent to the old country to bring the next group over to start a new life on the Wisconsin frontier.[107]

Sectional issues and the collapse of the Know-Nothings were perhaps less important to the decline in nativism in the St. Croix Valley than economic issues. In 1857, a natural downturn in the national business cycle provoked a general panic as holders of banknotes rushed to their banks for redemption. Many banks temporarily suspended specie payment and others completely failed. An economic depression followed as businesses throughout the North folded. While most of Wisconsin's banks remained solvent, it was among the worst hit states by the economic downturn. For two to three years coins and reliable banknotes were extremely hard to come by. Wisconsin businessmen then could not pay their eastern creditors. Loans were impossible to obtain. In many areas the economy reverted to the primitive system of bartering goods and services. Federal land sales plummeted.[108]

The panic reached into the St. Croix frontier since logging companies and land speculators had financial ties to the East and saw its markets for lumber collapse. Cash and credit quickly evaporated. Land agencies folded. Several banks in the valley, such as the Hudson City Bank, the St. Croix Valley Bank, the Farmers and Mechanics Bank, and the Chisago County Bank were forced to close their doors. Wildcat currency was refused, and barter became the only means to exchange goods. In November 1857, the Stillwater *Messenger* made a plea for farmers to sell their wheat they had been holding on to in the hope of fetching higher prices later in order to keep the economy solvent. "There cannot be a greater mistake than for the farmers to hold on to their grain in hopes of higher prices, rather than sell at present prices and pay their indebtedness to country merchants and other creditors," the newspaper wrote. "For in the present unsettled state of the money market, capitalists will not invest money for wheat in store, except at very low rates...a considerable rise in the price of wheat is very dim, and it is more likely to go lower than higher." It argued that it was also a matter of "justice and common honesty...[to] sell their crop and pay their debts." "It is their neglect to do this, which is the main cause of the money pressure," the *Messenger* asserted. "The city merchant

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[106] *Messenger*, (Stillwater, Minn.), 5 June 1860.
[107] Current, *The History of Wisconsin*, 43-4.
[108] Current, *The History of Wisconsin*, 236-7.

cannot pay his debts in New York or Boston, because the country merchant cannot pay because the farmers...are indebted to him for one, two, and sometimes for even three years' purchases. And here is the root of the whole evil." One way settlers remained economically solvent was to harvest ginseng. Ginseng was a common wild plant that grew in shady places close to the ground. This aromatic root could be immediately sold to markets in China, where it was considered to have magical medicinal powers. Settlers along the Wisconsin River and the St. Croix were among the chief gatherers of this international export.[109]

The financial panic also brought the land speculation frenzy to an end. Antipathy towards speculators had been building for the last few years. Certainly the *Cushing vs. Hungerford* affair was the most glaring example of speculators single-handedly interfering with "progress."[110] Cushing became the embodiment of the evil non-resident speculator in the St. Croix Valley for years to come. Residents from Marine Mills complained as early as 1855 that speculators were responsible for the slow growth of the town. "The most pernicious of all, which has, perhaps, caused the sluggish growth of this town," wrote one settler, was "the grasping, griping propensity: 'Get all you can and hold on to all you get,'" of land speculators.[111] By 1857, these land hogs were blamed for holding up development throughout the St. Croix Valley. Land here was "principally owned by non-resident speculators," complained one resident, which "renders its agricultural development almost impossible. The evil effects of throwing large bodies of Government land into markets at one time, to be taken up by moneyed speculators to the exclusion of actual settlers, is terribly made manifest in the immediate vicinity of the St. Croix. This deplorable landed monopoly is the only barrier this portion of Minnesota meets in its onward progress."[112] Many of the towns that had been platted with high hopes and expectations never materialized. W.H.C. Folsom wryly noted that the "town" of Drontheim in Chisago County, which had been platted in 1856, was "still a brush and swamp plat" in the 1880s. The "town" of Chippewa in Chisago County, which was platted the same year, Folsom facetiously noted, "makes a fair farm."[113]

The financial panic also changed the course of agricultural settlement and development along the St. Croix. Land speculators in Marine Mills were forced to unload their monopoly on town lots "on very favorable terms."[114] And it spurred a farming boom. Hundreds of people, who had been reluctant to get into farming because of the insect pests, drought, and prairie fires that plagued the first farmers, abandoned towns for the land when money and employment evaporated. By the spring of 1858 the

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[109] Folsom, *Fifty Years in the Northwest*, 146, 155-6, 334; Ahlgren and Beeler, *A History of Prescott, Wisconsin*, 31; Rosenfelt, *Washington*, 12; Current, *The History of Wisconsin*, 238-9; *St. Croix Union* and *The Messenger* (Stillwater, Minn.) dates?; Stillwater *Messenger*, 3 November 1857; Lass, *Minnesota*, 154.
[110] *St. Croix Union* (Stillwater, Minn.), 8 May 1857.
[111] *St. Croix Union* (Stillwater, Minn.), 15 December 1855.
[112] *St. Croix Union* (Stillwater, Minn.), 8 May 1857.
[113] Folsom, *Fifty Years in the Northwest*, 329; David Fritz has identified Nashua a "paper" town from this period. It is in T36N R20W, section 32, at the mouth of the Sunrise River. It is within the Wild River State Park.
[114] Stillwater *Messenger*, 22 September 1857.

amount of land brought under cultivation in Minnesota had doubled.[115] In Marine Mills the change in the economy finally brought to the town the completion of a flourmill that it bragged was "superior to any other in Minnesota."[116]

The experience of Irish immigrants to the St. Croix provides a good example of how an economy that went bust pushed them into farming. Wisconsin's eagerness for internal improvements and economic development of its north country in the early 1850s had also acted as a recruiting agent for immigrants to the state and the St. Croix Valley. In 1854, the Wisconsin legislature chartered the St. Croix, Superior and Bayfield Railway to extend through Hudson. Congress soon after relinquished the land for the right-of-way, and the people of Hudson raised forty-seven thousand dollars in subscriptions for the railroad. When work began, a large colony of Irish railway workers came to Hudson. They joined their compatriots who had come to work on the river in the logging industry. When the financial panic struck, many Irish loggers and railroad workers lost their jobs. Many moved out onto "the prairie" and joined the small Irish farming community in Erin Prairie on the Willow River.[117] In 1860, nearly all the heads of families in Erin Township were born in Ireland. Erin Prairie became a prosperous farming community and dispelled the negative stereotypes of the Irish as "barroom loafers" and "ignorant."[118]

Throughout most of Wisconsin lumbering remained in a slump for nearly three years after the panic. National demand for lumber eventually helped the St. Croix Valley make some recovery from the panic, and by 1859 the business community was on the upswing. The growth of agriculture, however, played a significant role in the turn-around of the area economy. St. Croix farmers, anxious to make quick cash, indulged in wheat growing. Cheap land, good soil, and access to a national market made this possible. The St. Croix and Mississippi Rivers, of course, were the main highways for agricultural export, particularly to states south. By the late 1850s railroads enhanced their connections to eastern markets. In 1857, a railroad reached Prairie du Chien and another reached La Crosse in 1858. Wheat was then shipped to the Port of Milwaukee and east through the Great Lakes. The economic opportunities were obvious in the St. Croix. "A farmer can crop one hundred acres of wheat in Minnesota," wrote the Stillwater *Messenger* in the spring of 1859, "with no more expense than it would cost to crop thirty in any of the Middle States, provided he makes use of all the modern appliances." [119]

The St. Croix Valley's wheat boom was possible because its soil was still rich and fertile when the soil in the lower Midwest and Great Lakes region was exhausted and these areas were unable to meet the national demand. A contributor for the Ohio *Farmer* admitted to the Stillwater *Messenger*, "It is already shown that Ohio can produce crops that are better for her soil and climate than wheat; one good crop in three years is about

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[115] Rosenfelt, *Washington*, 12-3.
[116] Stillwater *Messenger*, 22 September 1857.
[117] Genevieve Cline Day, *Hudson in the Early Days* (Hudson, Wis.: Star-Observer, 1963), 47, 57; Weatherhead, *Westward to the St. Croix*, 39-40.
[118] Current, *The History of Wisconsin*, 79, 554.
[119] Current, *The History of Wisconsin*, 240-1; Stillwater *Messenger*, 1 March 1859.

all we can expect." In southern Michigan, southern Wisconsin, Indiana, and Illinois "the result is no better." The scientific thinking of the time argued that wheat grew better above forty-five degrees latitude and corn grew better below that. "When the country has had a few more years of cultivation," the Ohio *Farmer* advised Minnesotans, "there will appear in the New York market, flour barrels with Minnesota brands, and that it will be of superior quality." Railroads, the *Messenger*, argued were key to reaching eastern markets via Lake Superior. "That accomplished, the time will not be far distant when Minnesota flour will find European markets without the expense of a single trans-shipment."[120]

By May 1859, the *Messenger* could brag that, "The past season is the first season that Minnesota has been a produce-exporting State." Two thousand three hundred and seventy sacks of grain and potatoes had been load onto a steamboat at Hudson. Another packet shipped out thirty-five hundred sacks. "The change from an importing to an exporting community has been attend with visible and happy effects...we think we can see that 'goodtime coming' very near at had."[121] The bountiful harvest of 1860 "will long be remembered as a very propitious and fruitful season, " the *Messenger* boasted. While crop production was down further south in the state due to drought, the "one great feature of the soil and climate of our favored Minnesota, is the great certainty of producing a good crop every year. There has not been a general failure of any crop since the first settlement of the country."[122]

In many respects, however, wheat production was a symptom of the poverty of frontier life because of its ability to command cash with minimal investment in labor, time, and material. While older settlements in Wisconsin had already experienced the consequences of wheat specialization in soil exhaustion and lower yields, few people in the St. Croix Valley paid any heed. So many were recent immigrants with little means and who did not have the luxury to contemplate the future. They had to survive in the present, even if that meant compromising the fertility of the soil and their future profitability. Many migrants had left eastern states because of soil exhaustion and were, therefore, in the habit of moving on rather than learn to diversify.[123]

Some farmers in the central part of the state went from producing twenty to twenty-five bushels of wheat per acre to only five or six bushels just a few years later. In addition, in some years limited snowfall in the winter left soil moisture so low that it led to crop failures in the early 1850s. These crop failures prompted an agricultural reform movement in the state capitol of Madison. In 1851, legislators and interested citizens organized a state agricultural society and sponsored the first state fair and cattle show that fall in Janesville. The society also encouraged the formation of county level societies. Through state and county fairs, agricultural reformers hoped their exhibits and demonstrations would educate farmers to more scientific farming practices, such as crop rotation and diversification, use of fertilizers, stockbreeding, animal shelters, raising hogs

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[120] Stillwater *Messenger*, 1 March 1859.
[121] Stillwater *Messenger*, 24 May 1859.
[122] Stillwater *Messenger*, 19 February 1861.
[123] Thompson, *The Rise and Decline of the Wheat Growing Industry in Wisconsin, 27-9.*

and sheep, the best grasses for hay, and producing butter and cheese that was palatable and saleable.[124]

Several counties in the valley did recognize the need for agricultural societies to begin educating farmers in better farming practices. St. Croix County organized a society in 1857 and Pierce County followed suit in 1859. In 1855, the first annual fair of the Minnesota Territorial Agricultural Society met in Minneapolis. Washington County made a showing of their agricultural wealth at the fair.[125] Although it attempted to form a county agricultural society in 1856, it never succeeded. While farming had taken strong root in the delta region and Stillwater certainly had organizational experience, organized farming was not a priority before the panic of 1857. It was not until 1871 that Washington County finally formed an agricultural society.[126] Minnesota newspapers, however, tried to fill in the gap by printing reports of successful crops. "Onions are among the vegetables which luxuriate in our soil," proclaimed the *Messenger*, "Several specimens measured 13½ inches in circumference." As to potatoes, "Minnesota produces this vegetable in perfection." Tomatoes here grew "in greatest abundance," some even weighing "a trifle of two pounds."[127] The exorbitant price of fruit brought up from Illinois prompted the local newspapers to encourage farmers to take up fruit growing.[128] "That several excellent and healthy fruits can be raised here, we have not a particle of doubt," chided the *St. Croix Union*, "we do therefore trust that our farmers will set out more fruit trees upon their premises. It is a duty they owe, not only to themselves and family, but to posterity." The paper ran subsequent articles on how to plant an orchard properly.[129] By 1861, the Minnesota Commissioner of Statistics put out a circular asking farmers, threshers, and town and county officers to compile information on the yields of wheat, corn, oats, barley, and potatoes as well as any damage to crops by pests and weather conditions.[130]

The Civil War Years in the St. Croix Valley

Before the St. Croix Valley could enjoy the peace and prosperity of the wheat boom or consider its future consequences, sectional issues between North and South brought on the Civil War. Tensions between the Democratic and Republican parties pivoted around the issue of slavery. But many other issues, seemingly on the surface unrelated to slavery, were tied to sectional party concerns and affected this remote frontier. Southern Democrats feared that if slaves were not allowed in the territories and newly formed states in the West, slaves states would be outnumbered in Congress. Northern and western free states then would eventually outlaw the South's "peculiar institution." Wisconsin and the St. Croix Valley had undergone a political metamorphosis in the decade leading up to the Civil War. Many people who first settled in the state and in the valley were independent and self-reliant pioneers, who espoused the Democratic

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[124] Current, *The History of Wisconsin*, 92-3.
[125] *St. Croix Union* (Stillwater, Minn.), 3 November 1855.
[126] Folsom, *Fifty Years in the Northwest*, 148, 213, 410.
[127] Stillwater *Messenger*, 8 December 1857.
[128] *St. Croix Union* (Stillwater, Minn.), 22 September 1855.
[129] *St. Croix Union* (Stillwater, Minn.), 19 May 1855, 14 July 1855.
[130] Stillwater *Messenger*, 26 March 1861.

principles of Thomas Jefferson and Andrew Jackson of close, local government, and economic and cultural laissez-faire. The Democratic Party dominated the state when Wisconsin joined the Union in 1848. The Whigs, however, played an influential roll in the state. They generally represented New England transplants with connections to eastern capitalists interested in investments and internal improvements to develop the state's resources. In the presidential elections of 1848 and 1852, the Democrats carried the state with fifty-nine percent of the vote with sixty percent of St. Croix County voters supporting Democratic candidates. However, underneath the apparent strong support for the Democratic Party the political tides of the country, the state, and St. Croix County were shifting. The slavery issue gradually eroded Democrat support in the North as the party became identified with southern slaveholders.

The Whigs, too, faced competition from other political factions. It carried the stigma of being the party of the rich and it offended many immigrants and Catholics by its identifying Americanism with Anglo-Protestantism and by their temperance crusades. Both the Democrats and Whigs, however, lost supporters to the anti-slavery Liberty Party that aimed to keep slavery out of the western states and territories under the banner of "Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men." As a minority party the Whigs moved to form a coalition with the Free Soil party. In 1854, Senator Stephen Douglas of Illinois introduced in Congress a bill that would repeal the Missouri Compromise of 1820 that prohibited slavery in the old Louisiana Territory by allowing settlers there to determine whether slaves would be permitted or not. Douglas's objective was to win southern support for a railroad bill to go through Illinois westward. He assumed the environment would not be conducive to a slave-driven agriculture anyway so the bill should not threaten northerners. He was, however, wrong.

In response to this new political situation, Wisconsinites of all political stripes, who at one time simply dismissed slavery as a regional issue, met in Ripon, Wisconsin and formed the Republican Party. Although former Whigs dominated the party, they minimized their former anti-immigrant and temperance crusades. Enough disaffected Democrats and Free Soilers felt they found a viable alternative to the "conspiratorial slave-power" Democrats and joined the new party. As other sectional issues continued to threaten national politics, more and more Wisconsinites and residents of St. Croix County moved into the Republican camp. By the 1856 presidential election, most Wisconsin counties voted Republican, including Pierce, St. Croix, and Polk Counties. The only holdouts for the Democrats were Irish and German Catholics, and other non-English-speaking immigrants with the exception of Scandinavians. While Democratic James Buchanan won the presidency, the Republicans had assumed dominance in state politics.[131]

It was against this political backdrop that the Whig/Republican Stillwater *Messenger* and the Democratic *St. Croix Union* of Stillwater fought their respective local battles. These national issues also crystallized the values of St. Croix Valley residents. Since most had been originally Democrats, abolitionism was not a pressing issue. But when the free labor principles of the old Northwest Ordinance seemed to be in jeopardy

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[131] Current, *The History of Wisconsin*, 197-236.

from the Democratic Party, these rugged pioneers switched to the political party that promised to safeguard their homesteads and independent labor—the Republican Party. When war broke out between the North and the South in April 1861, however, there was not an enthusiastic response to the first call to arms in Wisconsin. Anglo-American Protestants were the first to heed the call. Foreign-born immigrants were reluctant to commit themselves to the cause of the North. German and Irish Catholics had trouble forgetting the nativist sentiment among many Republicans and would not put their lives on the line for a country whose host population disdained them. While many ethnic groups did not want to see slavery spread, few cared about the abolitionist cause. Given its high immigrant population, Wisconsin did not contribute as many men to the Union in proportion to its population as Illinois, Michigan, Indiana, Ohio, Minnesota, and Iowa.[132]

While statistics for the Wisconsin side of the St. Croix are not readily available, Washington County in Minnesota took great pride in its wartime contribution. "Every citizen of Washington county should feel proud of her war record," wrote the Republican *Messenger*. "Compared with other counties, she is not behind any in patriotism: while she distances nearly every other, in proportion to population, in the number of troops furnished for suppressing the rebellion." Of its total population of 6770, there were 980 men who fought for the Union. The *Messenger* pointed out that this figure did not include the number of men who were enticed into Wisconsin regiments where they could receive generous bounties. These bounties were attractive to pioneers as a means to get out of debt or purchase a farm.[133]

On the home front the war brought prosperity to the North. By 1863, Wisconsin farmers enjoyed a boom like they never had before. Wheat and other agricultural products were in great demand, and Wisconsin and Minnesota's rich, virgin soil allowed their farmers to cash in. Wartime profits and the shortage of men stimulated the mechanization of farming. A mechanical reaper could replace four to six men in the field. While reapers were fairly common throughout most of Wisconsin before the war, St. Croix pioneers could now afford them. Threshing machines had been rare in the state before 1860, but increasingly more and more farmers began using them.[134]

These labor saving devices, however, also had the effect of spreading the wheat growing mania. Since wheat was already easy to cultivate, labor saving machinery made it possible for one farmer to bring even more land under wheat cultivation, and labor scarcity diminished the possibility of turning to more labor-intensive crops that required more vigilant hoeing and tending. Proximity to the St. Croix River also kept farmers in the valley tilling wheat since this gave them access to national markets. While most farmers throughout the state were reluctant to give up on wheat, the 1860s witnessed the shift to cultivation of other crops and stock raising in some farming communities in Wisconsin because of problems of delivering the goods to market.[135]

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[132] Current, *The History of Wisconsin*, 296-335.
[133] Stillwater *Messenger*, 12 December 1865.
[134] Current, *The History of Wisconsin*, 374-81.
[135] Thompson, *Wheat Growing in Wisconsin*, 33, 68-70.

As early as August 1861 the *Messenger* was able to remark about the countryside, "four years ago, but one farm had been opened...Now scores of them, in a high state of cultivation, are to be seen, where then was either unbroken prairie or forest." The rattle and clatter of reapers made "merry music" as they harvested the "golden sheaves" of wheat. "The farmers of Minnesota have abundant reasons to rejoice," exclaimed the Stillwater newspaper. "Far removed from the desolating track of war, and with the granaries filled to overflowing, they have great cause for the most profound gratitude."[136] The wheat bonanza was added proof that farming in Minnesota was not only possible but also profitable. In 1861, wheat sold for about fifty cents a bushel. By 1866, it fetched more than $1.50. The *Messenger* published an example of wheat fields turning into gold. "In 1863, J.W. Treager purchased thirteen hundred acres of unimproved land in Washington County, Minn., for which he paid $10,000," the paper wrote. "In the summer of 1863 he broke seventy-acres, upon which he raised a crop in 1864. That crop was sold for sufficient to pay for the land upon which it was raised, for breaking and fencing it, and all the expense of raising, harvesting and marketing the crop, and $1,100 besides."[137] Farmers in Washington County who reported wheat yields of twenty-four bushels per acre abundantly demonstrated the richness of the soil in the St. Croix Valley for growing wheat.[138] The war itself, of course, stimulated this demand for wheat. American farmers also benefited from the misfortunes of Europe stemming from the Crimean War. However, war also brought about inflation and farmers' expenses for new machinery and other goods also rose. Many farmers took on heavy debts to expand their operations. Thus their dependence upon wheat continued at the expense of diversification.[139]

The Farming Frontier Moves Up the Valley

When the Civil War concluded in 1865, Wisconsin still had nearly ten to eleven million acres of unsold land, which amounted to approximately one-third of the entire state. Most of it was considered valuable for its timber rather than its suitability for farming.[140] In 1866 the federal land office opened up the last big tract of land in Wisconsin amounting to nearly 6.5 million acres. Most of it was located in the Chippewa pinery, but the upper St. Croix also went up for sale. When the land was put up for sale, 7.5 million acres in agricultural scrip had been sold. The holders of this scrip came from all over the country, and most buyers bought tracts of land of at least eight hundred acres. Caleb Cushing, the *persona non grata* of St. Croix Falls, made the largest purchase of 33,000 acres in Polk County. In 1868, Cushing had helped organize the Great European American Emigration Land Company and served as its president.[141] This company was incorporated in New York State with a million dollars of capital from investors in New York, Georgia, Wisconsin, and six other states. Its headquarters was in New York City

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[136] Stillwater *Messenger*, 13 August 1861.
[137] Stillwater *Messenger*, 27 February 1866.
[138] Stillwater *Messenger*, 30 August 1864.
[139] Blegen, *Minnesota*, 342.
[140] Current, *The History of Wisconsin*, 430.
[141] Current, *The History of Wisconsin*, 434.

with branch offices in Stockholm, Hamburg, and Liverpool. Its purpose was, of course, to recruit immigrants directly to *their* land, not state-held land.

Unfortunately, Cushing's big schemes did not always work out because he often selected incompetent or unscrupulous agents to execute his plans. The general manager of the Emigration Company, Henning A. Taube of Stockholm -- or Count Taube as he was known in the valley, was of the unscrupulous sort. The Stockholm office provided an elaborate prospectus on how to reach St. Croix Falls, the cost of getting there, employment prospects in logging, and the opportunity to buy good farm lands from the company. The first group of 125 Swedes reached the St. Croix in early summer 1869. However, land was not available for purchase until October. Taube then advised Cushing that it would be better to sell title to the land before the immigrants arrived. Count Taube, however, was extravagant and reckless in his use of company money and promises made to emigrants. When colonists found they could not exchange certificates they bought back in Sweden and Prussia for land in the St. Croix, Taube simply referred them to Cushing. Cushing honored the certificates and refunded the settlers' money. They all found land outside St. Croix Falls. Cushing, however, resigned as president and trustee of the Company. All the other trustees did as well and the Great Emigration Company became defunct.[142]

Cushing, however, still owned land in Polk County and, undaunted by his previous failures, continued to buy more. By 1875, he owned 45,000 acres in the county, and he finally found a reliable agent in J. Stannard Baker. Baker took control of the Cushing's Land Agency in 1874 and quickly turned the enterprise around. "His appearance," wrote Alice Smith, "marked the end of thirty years of mismanagement resulting from absentee landlordism, controversial claims, lack of policy, and negligence." Baker put an end to trespassing on Cushing's land for logging, wild hay harvesting, and cranberry picking, and kept Cushing's tax rate low. His agricultural lands, sold to both lumbermen and farmers, finally began to produce a return after thirty-three years of investment. Cushing eventually sold the rest of his land to William J. Star of Eau Claire. These heavily timbered lands were logged off and eventually became farms. [143]

Although Cushing's Emigration Company folded, newspaper articles in Madison lured a colony of Danes to his lands near the town of Luck. West Denmark, as the settlement was called, stretched over three townships. "These hardy Scandinavians were very thrifty and industrious," Harry Baker commented. Their only goal was "to get homes and [were] willing to go into the wilderness and cut down the heavy hardwood timber and build their log houses and clear small patches of land from which to raise crops for the necessities of life...They ...were a wonderful asset in the development of this heavy hardwood timbered country."[144] Like the pioneers of the Chisago Lakes area,

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[142] Alice E. Smith, "Caleb Cushing's Investments in the St. Croix Valley," *Wisconsin Magazine of History*, 28(1)(September 1944), 15-7.Oral History Transcript, "Harry D. Baker, St. Croix Falls, 1950, Baker Land and Title Company Records, 1879-1958, Wisconsin Historical Society Archives, River Falls

[143] Smith, "Caleb Cushing's Investments in the St. Croix Valley," 18.

[144] Harry D. Baker, Oral History Transcript.

Polk County settlers faced the arduous task of clearing the land if they did not buy it from a lumber company who had already logged it. They were far from the St. Croix River, which limited their opportunities to join in the export of agricultural products and isolated their communities until the railroads came through. The virgin soil had the characteristics of the northern end of the tension zone. It was mostly black loam with a subsoil of clay or gravel. While it produced good crops for small grain, vegetables, hay, and corn, farmers found it unreliable. They became dairy farmers much sooner than other settlers further south and claimed to have established the first cooperative creamery in the state of Wisconsin.[145]

In the post-war years the average settler to the frontier and the St. Croix Valley faced stiffer competition for land. While land was still available through the public land office under the Homestead Act or even pre-emption claims, most of the best land went into the hands of speculators. Farmers, however, had to pay more for this land up front. Homestead land not only had the ten-dollar fee and no title to it for five year, but it also might have wet lands that needed to be drained, poorer soil, or it might be off the beaten path with little access to markets before railroads and graded roads were built. If they were lucky, some newcomers were able to purchase farms that were already developed by a previous owner.

However they were able to obtain land, the St. Croix Valley continued to attract settlers and immigrants. Between 1865 and 1873, newcomers to Wisconsin arrived and followed the paths of settlement that were laid out by the first wave of settlers. Virtually the same ethnic groups continued to migrate to the state. The difference in settlement from the antebellum years was that large tracts of public lands were often bought up before anyone took up residence. These newcomers were also not solely dependent upon the waterways to reach their destinations. They were assisted by the growth of railroads that penetrated further north. By 1870, the population of Wisconsin increased to over a million inhabitants, and it kept its status of having one of the largest immigrant and foreign-born populations in the country.[146]

With the anti-immigrant, Know Nothing years behind it, Wisconsin renewed its efforts to recruit foreign emigrants. In 1867, Wisconsin established another board of immigration, this time, however, the commissioners received no pay. Its main strategy was to distribute a thirty two-page pamphlet written by Increase A. Lapham that described every facet of the state from its location, resources, educational institutions, churches, its system of government, the rights of citizens, the Homestead Law, and routes to the state. The cheapness of land in Wisconsin relative to other areas was particularly stressed. Besides its English version, this pamphlet was translated into German, French, Welsh, Swedish, Norwegian, and Dutch. The governor appointed a three-person committee in each county to compile a list of names of family and friends in the old country to mail the pamphlet to. The state of Wisconsin, thereby, institutionalized the pattern of chain migration that had begun in the 1850s. Pierce, St. Croix, and Polk

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[145] Harry D. Baker, Oral History Transcript; Nelson Lawson, Town Clerk, "Luck Township," in *Recollections of 1876: Polk County's First Written Histories* (Polk County Press, 1876-78).
[146] Current, *The History of Wisconsin*, 415-6.

Counties continued to attract the Irish, the Swedes and Norwegians, some Germans and English, and a few Danes, along with the native-born Americans from eastern states.[147]

When complaints arose that the immigration commission's budget and reach was too limited, the Wisconsin legislature passed an act in 1871 that created an elective commission with a full-time office in Milwaukee and a part-time agent in Chicago. The first elected commissioner, the Norwegian-born Ole C. Johnson, distributed the pamphlet more widely sending them directly to government and emigration agencies in Europe, such as England, Germany, Belgium, Denmark, and Norway. Johnson also provided the extra perk of free travel for women, children, and elderly men on the Milwaukee and St. Paul Railroad to their Wisconsin destinations if they were unable to continue once they arrived in Wisconsin.[148]

Minnesota did not stand idly by in the recruitment of immigrants. In 1867, the state established its own Board of Immigration. Its secretary was Hans Mattson, a Swedish immigrant and pioneer. He also served as a land agent for the St. Paul and Pacific Railroad. Mattson took a journey himself to his homeland to recruit prospective settlers for the Minnesota frontier. "He was a modern Marco Polo returning from fabulous lands beyond known horizons," wrote historian Theodore Blegen, "and he never ceased to describe his chosen state as a land of milk and honey." Minnesota's Immigration Board also sent out pamphlets in Norwegian, Swedish, German, Welsh, and English along with other recruiting agents back east and to Europe. Railroads, who stood to benefit from increased population, provided cheap fares for immigrant families, and provided temporary shelter for them when they arrived. Ever sensitive to its reputation for cold weather, Minnesota made more exaggerated claims of its health benefits for ailments such as ague and consumption than it had in the 1850s and minimized other sicknesses common on the frontier, such as diphtheria and typhus.[149] This strategy worked well. In 1879, the *Rush City Post* wrote, the night train brought in nearly "three-hundred Swedes who were on the way to locate in this and Burnett counties...Mr. [Charles] Anderson went over to Sweden sometime early in the spring for the purpose of bringing over a ship load and he succeeded well." These Swedish immigrants made an enthusiastic impression on the *Post*. "A better more healthy and well dressed lot of foreigners never landed in Rush City before...They make the best of citizens."[150]

By 1870, the wheat frontier began to shift further from eastern to western states with St. Croix farmers in the middle of this agricultural transition. In most of Wisconsin wheat production began to decline while Minnesota experienced its wheat boom. This shift occurred because of soil exhaustion and over-specialization in one crop also encouraged the proliferation of pests and blight. In the 1860s and 1870s, the southern half of Wisconsin battled cinch bugs and rust in addition to the usual cycles of drought that caused unpredictable yields of wheat. Railroad transportation moved into the central

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[147] Current, *The History of Wisconsin*, 416-23.
[148] Current, *The History of Wisconsin*, 417-8.
[149] Blegen, *Minnesota*, 304-5.
[150] *Rush City Post* (Rush City, Minn.), June 1879.

portion of the state that had hitherto been remote from water transportation and national and even international markets. Railroad building had also extended further west into the prairies and plains of Minnesota, the Dakotas, Iowa, Kansas, and Nebraska, which increased competition in agricultural production. While Wisconsin on the whole produced respectable crops of wheat, individual farmers could not match the yields per acre coming out of the fresh, virgin soils to the west. Many farmers in the southern and central sections of the state finally began to heed the advice coming from the University of Wisconsin's Agricultural School to diversify.[151]

The St. Croix Valley, however, continued to experience a wheat boom. In 1876, Stillwater boasted that it "ranks next to any market in the State – Minneapolis being first."[152] The town had a right to boast its importance to agriculture in the region. In 1875, its Seymour, Sabin Company began manufacturing a thresher called the "Minnesota Chief." [153]

Railroads: Regional Rivalry and Growth

In the post-Civil War period railroads became the main avenues for a vast expansion of opportunity for entrepreneurs, businessmen, and farmers. It was clear by the 1870s that the waterways had reached their limit for development. The Upper Mississippi River was not always navigable around the Rock Island rapids. Its tributaries in Wisconsin were also undependable. The Wisconsin River had constantly shifting shallows. Logs and lumber rafts choked the St. Croix and other rivers limiting navigation up or down river for others. In an era of horse or oxen drawn vehicles, public roads were not a viable access to a national or even international market. The railroads represented the most modern and efficient mode of transportation.[154]

Between 1868 and 1873, railroad construction in Wisconsin and Minnesota boomed. Before the war the main thrust of building rail lines was from Lake Michigan to the Mississippi River. In the postwar period the goal was to penetrate into the northern frontier. The coming of the railroad was the next critical development needed to advance settlement, logging, and agriculture along the river. The railroad released the St. Croix Valley from its dependency upon the river for its sole source of transportation. The log-choked river often times hindered access up and down the river, and when it froze in the winter, the valley was isolated for months from the outside world.[155]

In 1856 and 1864, Congress had set aside nearly four million acres of the public domain in Wisconsin for railroad construction. The railroad companies that were granted land under the 1856 act had abandoned projects after the Panic of 1857 and much of the land was forfeited. In the 1864 Railroad Act Congress renewed and enlarged the land

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[151] Thompson, *Wheat Growing in Wisconsin*, 71-3.
[152] Stillwater *Messenger* 1 December 1876.
[153] Blegen, *Minnesota*, 342.
[154] Robert C. Nesbit, *The History of Wisconsin: Urbanization and Industrialization, Vol. III* (Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1985), 87-9.
[155] Current, *The History of Wisconsin*, 437.

grants. One of the three grants was for a northwest route from the St. Croix River or St. Croix Lake to Bayfield on Lake Superior. Another route was to connect the St. Croix to Tomah approximately forty miles east of La Crosse. The third was to take a north central route. Congress had stipulated that the first two railroads must be completed in five years and the last within ten years. By 1869, however, the St. Croix and Lake Superior Railroad Company had not laid any track along its proposed route from Hudson to Bayfield. It, thereby, forfeited all of its claims. Congress proceeded to select the North Wisconsin Railway Company to build the line with the assumption that the same land would be granted to it. However, once the issue was reopened in Congress, Minnesota and Wisconsin citizens fought over the route to Lake Superior. Once again the old decision to divide the state of Wisconsin from Minnesota at the St. Croix turned the respective sides into competitors rather than cooperators.[156]

Citizens of Minnesota had envisioned a railroad route from St. Paul to Duluth that would give the Twin Cities access to Great Lakes shipping without having to pass through Wisconsin or Illinois. During the Civil War Minnesota Governor Alexander Ramsey argued the line was essential to national defense. A line to the North Country where the lumber industry was expanding was also no small incentive to Minnesota to get the line on their side of the St. Croix. In 1864, Congress had passed the Lake Superior and Mississippi Railroad grant, and the Minnesota legislature allocated the remaining land necessary. The line, however, was not immediately built. When the St. Croix and Lake Superior Railroad Company folded and the grant dispute reached Congress, Minnesotans rallied to defeat the plans for a rival railroad in Wisconsin. The people of Duluth were adamantly opposed to Bayfield becoming a rival port and railroad terminus. They argued before Congress that they had a better harbor than Bayfield, and the surrounding area around Duluth was better suited for a larger city. The Minnesota contingent also enlisted the support of Jay Cooke, the leading investment banker of Philadelphia. Cooke had an interest in the Minnesota line, but he also had some controlling influence over the North Wisconsin. Although he was supposed to represent both companies equally, he used his influence to favor the Minnesota line. The North Wisconsin Company had only been able to lay seventeen miles of track northeast of Hudson in four years before Congress discontinued its grant. By 1871, however, the Lake Superior and Mississippi Railroad opened for business. Duluth became the third largest city in Minnesota behind the Twin Cities and the reigning city on Lake Superior, not Bayfield, Wisconsin. The development of the Upper St. Croix north of St. Croix Falls was put on hold.[157]

As the Twin Cities became the dominant metropolis in the North Country, much of the thrust of national railroad building was to the west of the St. Croix. In 1867, Chicago and Milwaukee interests purchased the Minnesota Central and built a connecting line from McGregor, Iowa, linking St. Paul with Chicago. Another railroad line was constructed in 1871 on the Minnesota side of the Mississippi from St. Paul to Winona and then down to Hastings, which was across the river from La Crosse where there were connections to Milwaukee. With these connections northern Minnesota was the obvious

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[156] Current, *The History of Wisconsin*, 430-1.
[157] Current, *The History of Wisconsin*, 431-2; Blegen, *Minnesota*, 296-7.

starting point for the Northern Pacific route of the Transcontinental Railroad built in the 1870s.[158]

Stillwater, however, now a city of seven thousand, was not about to be bypassed by these transportation developments. In 1867, many prominent men of Stillwater, Taylors Falls, Marine, and Baytown organized the Stillwater and St. Paul Railroad. Within a few years they had raised enough capital to begin building. By December 1870, the line was completed. Stillwater's economy boomed as a result of this connection and settlers were lured to the area by the 63,850 acres of government land grants available for sale. By 1878 the Stillwater & St. Paul line became part of the Northern Pacific Transcontinental system.[159] Since it was at the head of deep-water navigation on the Mississippi and it had rail access to the Twin Cities, Stillwater fully expected to "be more than ever a prominent wheat market...This city is the only point favorable for the transshipment by rail to Lake Superior at Duluth, of the large quantities of wheat that are already coming from several hundred miles down the river to take this route to the East."[160]

Railroad building in northern Wisconsin suffered from Minnesota's transportation expansion and from its restrictive constitution that prohibited public funds for internal improvements. Investors in northern Wisconsin were only interested in timber. Most farmers preferred prairie land, or at least wooded areas with oak openings to the dense forests of the North Country – at least until they were cleared. Railroads had a tough time raising capital to build lines in northern Wisconsin. Land-grant railroad companies had to build the line first before they got title to the land. Therefore, financing for railroads in the north woods was difficult to obtain. In 1868 and 1869, railroad lobbyists tried to get a constitutional amendment passed that would allow the state to give financial support for railroad construction. However, the more populous southern counties who already had access to railroads defeated it. Local railroad promoters also had bad luck with eastern capitalists who preferred to invest in the less risky consolidation of railroads and the more profitable business of monopoly building than in new construction into Wisconsin's deep woods frontier.[161] Nonetheless, the West Wisconsin Railway reached Hudson by 1873, where a bridge was built across the St. Croix to the Minnesota side.[162] Mail delivery, however, could not depend upon railroads. In 1876, a mail route was established from Marine Mills across the St. Croix by ferry to Farmington, Wisconsin and then northward to Osceola and St. Croix Falls.[163]

It would take a great deal of maneuvering to get a railroad built in the St. Croix Valley north from Hudson to Lake Superior. Once railroad monopolies had solidified

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[158] Blegen, *Minnesota*, 296-9.
[159] Engquist et al, *Washington*, 184-5.
[160] Stillwater *Messenger*, 9 June 1871.
[161] Current, *The History of Wisconsin*, 440-3; Nesbit, *The History of Wisconsin*, 111; James Willard Hurst, *Law and Economic Growth: The Legal History of the Lumber Industry in Wisconsin, 1836-1915* (Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1964), 272.
[162] Dunn, *The St. Croix*, see Chapter Eleven, "The Battle of the Piles," for a complete account of the rivalry between Hudson and Stillwater for railroad access.
[163] Dunn, *The St. Croix*, 160.

their interests in the state, they showed little interest in penetrating into the densely wooded, sparsely populated northwest. While lumber companies in northwest Wisconsin began to show some interest in extending railroads further into the north woods by the late 1860s, they found they had little influence in Madison and on railroad companies. Since no money was forthcoming from the state, local counties were often forced to put up bonds to finance the venture. Since the northern St. Croix River Valley was so sparsely populated, timber and sawmill owners feared it would be their property pledged to finance the bonds. While railroad transport could facilitate timber extraction, the lumber companies were still able to make use of the superb waterways well into the 1870s and 1880s. Absentee timber owners and the more mobile lumbermen had a difficult time turning out enough votes to defeat railroad promoters and developers in the towns and villages who planned to finance their ventures at the expense of the lumber interests. Even if the lumber companies managed to defeat railroad bonds at the county level, railroad lobbyist generally found a sympathetic ear in Madison to outmaneuver the lumbermen. While the Wisconsin legislature could not grant money, it could carve out another county to eliminate the resisting timber factions on the frontier fringe. Northern Wisconsin's counties above an east-west line from Marinette on Lake Michigan to New Richmond on the west were all created with less than five thousand people by 1880. Burnett County had been set off from Polk County in 1856, but was not organized until 1865. Bayfield County was created in 1868.[164]

By 1873, the Northern Wisconsin Railroad Company won the right to build a line from Hudson to Lake Superior. The West Wisconsin line, however, also coveted the route and ensured that the legislature put so many conditions on it that Alexander Mitchell, the president of the Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul [which owned the NWR] and Milwaukee banker, rejected it. Before the West Wisconsin could celebrate its coup, the Panic of 1873 and the ensuing depression of the seventies put an end to the railroad boom. The St. Croix to Bayfield line, which started in Hudson and split at Spooner with a branch going to Superior and another headed to Bayfield, was not completed until 1883. Construction of this line to Superior, of course, required a bridge to cross the Namekagon River at Trego. The line was eventually brought into the Chicago and Northwestern system.[165]

Since the St. Croix railroad line skirted the eastern side of the valley, many towns along the river complained they were left out of the new prosperity that was developing in the railroad towns eastward. "We are shut out from the world of travel and business, by not being on the line of an important railroad," lamented the *Polk County Press*. "Our river is of great benefit to us, but that serves us not more than one half of the year, and some years not as much as that, -- especially when the logs blockade us for two months of the best part of the season."[166] The St. Croix River, which had been so essential to the development of the region, limited the development of the valley's full potential. The key to agricultural and related economic development was access to a railroad. So despite the linkage of the St. Croix River at Hudson to Lake Superior, many towns

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[164] Hurst, *Law and Economic Growth*, 272-3; Folsom, *Fifty Years in the Northwest*, 231, 253.
[165] Hurst, *Law and Economic Growth*, 273.
[166] *Polk County Press* (Osceola Mills, Wis.), 13 October 1883.

further up river were convinced more railroads were needed. In 1884, the *Polk County Press* asked, "Will a Railroad Pay?" Its answer was definitively "yes." The paper pointed out that two-thirds of the wheat produced in the county was hauled to Stillwater because farmers could get a better price there. "Why? Because in Stillwater there is a competition in the market, more buyers and a higher price is paid." The reason for more buyers was because "the town had the shipping facilities of three railroads, and will soon have a fourth or fifth. These facilities give that city mills to grind the wheat, and a demand for it...With a railroad there would be a demand for Osceola wheat in Stillwater, St. Paul and Minneapolis." Osceola's mills would expand and farmers could get the same price for it in town as they would in hauling it the nearly twenty miles to Stillwater.[167]

In the early 1880s a new era of cooperation in railroad building began between Minnesota and Wisconsin. The Lake Superior and Mississippi Railroad, which ran from St. Paul to Duluth and skirted the western edge of the St. Croix River Valley, did not fulfill all expectations. The Port of Duluth did not readily give the Twin Cities the access to national markets. In winter ice hampered lake traffic out of Duluth to eastern markets. There were also complaints that subsequent summer freight rates were too high, having to make up for winter losses. By the 1880s the Twin Cities had become a major milling center with enough economic and political clout to consider running a line from Minneapolis-St. Paul across northern Wisconsin and Michigan's Upper Peninsula to Sault Ste. Marie – the entrepot between Lake Superior and Lake Huron, as well as the proposed terminus for a Michigan railroad. "It is imperative to all our interests," wrote the *Minneapolis Journal*, "that a railroad system be constructed which will place us at least on an equality, both summer and winter, with all other shipping points in this vast region."[168]

This proposal created great excitement in the St. Croix Valley and was closely followed in the newspapers of the St. Croix. "It will be an entirely new road, crossing the river somewhere between Stillwater and St. Croix Falls," the *Polk County Press* enthusiastically exclaimed.[169] Wisconsin was, of course, eager to have the line built since it would travel through the heart of its hard and softwood northern forests, as well as penetrate into its iron regions. However, financing the road through Wisconsin was fraught with the usual fiscal problems and local aid was needed. The *Polk County Press* was undaunted by this prospect and encouraged its readers to support the project which was expected to come down the Apple River, then cross the St. Croix River, and proceed down to Stillwater. "This great public improvement presents itself in close relationship to the people of Polk County," the paper wrote. "It is proposed by its incorporators to cross the territory of this county, and our people, if they are true now to their *own interests*, will give the matter close and careful consideration...They propose to develop this section with a great trunk railroad: they will ask in return but a small amount of assistance from us, when compared to the benefits the road will bring to us."[170] The *Press* proved

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[167] *Polk County Press* (Osceola Mills, Wis.) 31 May 1884.
[168] *Polk County Press* (Osceola Mills, Wis.),15 September 1883.
[169] *Polk County Press* (Osceola Mills, Wis.), 15 September 1883.
[170] *Polk County Press* (Osceola Mills, Wis.), 29 September 1883; 16 May 1885.

prophetic as the line was determined to go from the head of Osceola prairie into Osceola itself with a branch line up to St. Croix Falls. From there it was to run down river to the mouth of the Apple River where it was to cross the St. Croix and proceed to Stillwater.[171]

By 1886, work began on the Soo Line as the Minneapolis—Sault Ste. Marie Line was known. By January of 1887, the line had reached Franconia bringing with it a real estate boom. By February it was Osceola's turn. "The coming of the railroad has nearly doubled the price of land," rejoiced the *Polk County Press*, "and those who wish to buy should do so soon, as property in Polk county will never be worth less than it is to-day."[172] By August Osceola rejoiced with the completion of the railroad. "We are in the world," proclaimed the *Polk County Press*. "Connected with business and commercial life." After thirty-five to forty years of waiting for a railroad, the people of Osceola were giddy with excitement. Their winter hibernations were over as was their exclusion from growing national market both as sellers and consumers. "Old men and old women leaped for joy; young men and maidens gaily tripped the streets," an observer noted when the track was completed. "Everybody was happy...even the sick smiled, and those who did not smile must have been nearly dead."[173] The arrival of the railroad to Osceola brought with it the building of a "fine new depot" and a thirty-foot high water tower as well as a new grain elevator and warehouse in anticipation of bountiful harvests of wheat grown on the prairies of Osceola.[174] With the arrival of the Soo Line, mail delivery shifted to the railroad and the mail route from Marine Mills via ferry to Wisconsin was discontinued in 1887. Residents were please by the greater dependability of mail delivery from the iron horse rather than boats on the river.[175]

From Wheat to Dairy

This transportation revolution stimulated the slow, costly, and difficult transition among Polk County farmers to join the rest of the state in its shift from wheat growing to dairying. Despite the assumption that wheat production would continue to expand with the arrival of the railroad, this quicker more efficient form of transportation made it possible for farmers to break their reliance on wheat. Astute farmers found they could now ship fresh dairy and animal products to urban areas. Dairy farming would eventually prove to be a more reliable source of income for farmers, and it would relieve the ecological problems associated with single-crop production. Farmers' lives were also transformed. Equipped with extra cash and cheaper transportation they had access to the growing consumer economy that had developed in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century through catalogues, cheaper, regular mail service, and the possibility of train trips to the city for shopping and entertainment.[176]

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[171] *Polk County Press* (Osceola Mills, Wis.), 12 February 1887.
[172] *Polk County Press* (Osceola Mills, Wis.), 26 February 1887.
[173] *Polk County Press* (Osceola Mills, Wis.), 27 August 1887.
[174] *Polk County Press* (Osceola Mills, Wis.), *29 October 1887.*
[175] Dunn, *The St. Croix*, 160.
[176] Nesbit, *The History of Wisconsin*, 147.

The switch to dairying, however, did not occur overnight. The arrival of the railroad throughout most of Wisconsin coincided with the growth of warning signs that wheat production was waning in southern Wisconsin. This was in part due to the declining fertility of the soil and to the plague of cinch bugs. The price of wheat had also declined after the Civil War with decreased demand and more land further west being brought into cultivation. While dairy farms began appearing in southern Wisconsin, counties further north and along the state's rivers showed no concern for what would be come their future.

In 1860, St. Croix County led the state in wheat yields, with Buffalo and Trempealeau Counties south on the Mississippi following closely behind. Pierce County had also emerged as a significant wheat-producing region. St. Croix County reported almost no livestock in the county save for draft horses. Oats were still cultivated, but even potato production was down, as were the number of swine along the St. Croix, all this to make way for wheat. While other river counties began showing some interest in raising sheep, St. Croix and Polk counties displayed no interest in these woolly creatures despite the cold winters. In 1868 the State Agricultural Society lamented in its *Transactions* that wheat was still the most highly valued crop in Wisconsin.[177]

The reluctance to give up on wheat along the St. Croix was in part because virgin land was still being brought into cultivation in the 1860s and 70s, and the decline in soil fertility was not rampant. Between 1870 and 1890, the ten-county stretch of land from La Crosse to St. Croix County gave the state a twenty-five percent increase in farm acreage in Wisconsin. Burnett County also joined the ranks of wheat producing counties in the state. The land values in this region went up with railroad service, but so too did taxes. Farmers, therefore, needed to make more money to pay their property rates. Hence, they relied on wheat as long as they could.[178]

The wheat-growing era in the St. Croix Valley, however, had its limits. Agricultural prices in general began to decline in the 1870s and into the 1880s. For farmers to keep up they had to expand their operations. While sowing wheat and watching it grow was relatively easy, harvesting it was a problem. Ripe wheat was easily damaged by heat, wind, hail, and pounding rain and had to be harvested quickly. Horse-drawn reapers and binders were essential. While mechanical farming equipment worked well in the prairie lands of the valley, the hillier terrain in the old forests was less accommodating to machines. In addition, the new roller-mills that began to dominate in the milling centers in the Twin Cities preferred hard spring wheat varieties rather than softer winter wheat. Spring wheat, however, was more susceptible to disease and forced many farmers to rethink their approach to farming [179]

By the 1880s, most of southern Wisconsin had converted to dairy farming. This transition was slow and halting and had taken over twenty years for most farmers to

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[177] John Giffin Thompson, *The Rise and Decline of the Wheat Growing Industry in Wisconsin* (New York: Arno Press, 1972), 357-9, 70-4.
[178] Nesbit, *The History of Wisconsin*, 10-2.
[179] Nesbit, *The History of Wisconsin*, 15.

admit that dairying was the best means of survival. They did not come to it directly from wheat growing either. Many had tried their hand at hops, flax, sugar beets, sorghum, and even tobacco, but these could be grown better and cheaper elsewhere. Sheep raising was a more viable alternative, and wool prices fetched a nice profit during the war. Wool prices dropped after the war and stayed low. However, many farmers whose soil was exhausted by wheat felt they had little choice but to stick with sheep. Sheep farming allowed them to restore their land with rich natural grasses and begin crop rotation while still offering some income to the farmer. Sheep herding was easy compared to taking care of dairy cows or other stock. Wool did not perish like the by-products of milk, and sheep required less winterfeed than cattle. Few Wisconsinites believed corn would flourish in their climate, which thereby restricted them from turning to more lucrative hog farming. Sheep-raising was the "first major adjustment toward a more *balanced* farm management," wrote historian Eric E. Lampard. "It was...the most economical retreat from wheat growing and the cheapest alternative to 'high farming.'"[180]

It was the knowledge, experience, and enthusiasm of migrant New Yorkers that ushered in the dairy industry in Wisconsin. Earlier in the century New York had undergone the same crisis in farming. When wheat farming had exhausted the soils in the Empire State, farmers were forced to search for alternative means of support. By 1860, New York dairy farmers had successfully made the transition to dairy products. To sell broadly farmers found they had to improve the quality and quantity of their cheese and butter. Traditionally, cheese and butter making had been in the province of the over-worked farm wife primarily for household consumption. Whatever surplus she may have produced, was sold locally. Some farm wives had better reputations than others for the quality of their final product. New York dairy associations began to insist on more sanitary processing, better salt, truth in fat content, and improved packaging. By 1851, the industrial revolution reached the dairy farm, and the domestic system was moved to the factory. Within a decade the commercial dairy industry arrived. Consistency in quality, improved packaging, and an increase in quantity created a national and even international market for New York dairy products.[181]

By the time Wisconsin's wheat era had played out in the 1870s, the New York dairy industry was a well-developed model for other regions in the country to emulate. Many a New York dairy farm boy migrated to Wisconsin, attracted by the relative cheapness of the land as well as lower feeding costs and cheaper farm labor. Many became leaders in transforming it into the "Dairy State." New Yorkers usually took the lead in local areas of Wisconsin in building cheese factories, in organizing breeder association, and in uniting the efforts of the state's dairy farmers. In 1872, they helped found the Wisconsin Dairymen's Association. Many of its presidents and executive officers hailed from the Empire State and contributed much needed expertise to the fledgling organization. Through dairy manuals, articles in local newspapers, and public meetings, farmers' apprehensions of the factory system were assuaged. It was hard to argue with the fact that factory produced cheese was of a consistently higher quality than

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[180] Eric E. Lampard, *The Rise of the Dairy Industry in Wisconsin: A Study In Agricultural Change: 1820-1920* (Madison: The State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1963), 47-55.
[181] Lampard, *The Rise of the Dairy Industry in Wisconsin*, 57-96.

any produced at home. Many a farm wife was no doubt eager to be emancipated from the time-consuming drudgery of home manufacturing of cheese and butter. Factories also could buy supplies in bulk at cheaper costs, and farmers happily turned over the marketing of their product to someone else. The main challenge was getting the milk to the factory before it spoiled. The neglected state and county road system and the vagaries of Wisconsin weather discouraged many farmers from participating in the factory system, but not necessarily in the viability of dairy farming. Farmers also wanted to retain rights to the whey produced from their milk for cattle and pig feed. Many issues needed to be resolved before dairying became widely accepted and practiced throughout the state.[182]

Wisconsinites were the fortunate beneficiaries of the Morrill Land Grant Law that helped establish the University of Wisconsin in Madison. Its College of Agriculture was created in 1866 after a farmers' convention, sponsored by the Wisconsin State Agricultural Society, put pressure on the state legislature to establish it in Madison. Scientific agriculture proved to be critical to the development of the dairy industry. Initially, it was difficult to find experienced faculty as well as to attract students out of the farming class. Therefore, in 1886, the College began short courses for farmers and in the following year began a winter Dairy School. It was the first of its kind in the country and trained and certified students in proper cheese and butter making. Within a few years it produced enough graduates to man the factories throughout the state. By working closely with farmers and factory workers, the faculty and researchers at the Wisconsin College of Agriculture were able to develop practical and scientifically sound knowledge for dairy farmers. Stephen Moulton Babcock, an agricultural chemist at the University of Wisconsin, devised a simple method for measuring the richness of milk. This produced experimentation with different feeding practices and the search for better milk producing cows. Other developments ranged from the inoculation of herds for diseases to the best pasteurizing methods. The College also initiated an extension division, published its research, and regularly hosted farmers' institutes. "Scientific men and practical farmers occupied the same platform," wrote historian Joseph Schafer, "with the result that science was more closely controlled by experience and experience definitely guided by science. No other feature in the history of agricultural advancement...had been so resultful (sic) in developing mutual respect and confidence between the farmer and the man of scientific learning."[183]

Minnesota also made its contribution to the field of dairy science. In 1878, the Minnesota Dairyman's Association was founded. The Minnesota Butter and Cheese Association followed in 1882. Oren C. Gregg, the superintendent of the University of Minnesota's Farmers' Institutes, is known as the "Father of Winter Dairying." He encouraged the breeding of cows that could calve in the fall. By having fall and spring births dairying could take place at a consistent year-round pace. In 1891, Theophilus L. Haecker joined the faculty at the University of Minnesota Agricultural School, and credited with nearly single-handedly placed Minnesota dairying on a scientific basis. He was responsible for determining the best diets for milk cows, developing judging

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[182] Lampard, *The Rise of the Dairy Industry in Wisconsin*, 59, 97-101.

[183] Joseph Schafer, *A History of Agriculture in Wisconsin* (Madison: The State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1922), 159-61.

standards for selection and breeding of cows, and he was the one who realized Holsteins were the most productive in this far north climate. Haecker was also responsible for promoting the idea of participant-owned businesses from creameries to elevator companies. The co-op movement succeeded beyond anyone's dreams. By 1921 the hundreds of co-ops that had developed joined together to form the Minnesota Cooperative Creameries Association. By 1924, they began marketing their products under the Land O Lakes label. Its immediate success prompted the company to use it as its official name in 1926.[184]

Throughout the 1870s the factory system gained more and more adherents in southern and southeastern Wisconsin. By following the New York model of the "associated dairy system," small farmers pooled their meager resources into viable milk production centers and got a higher return than they would have been able to do alone. By 1880, there were over four hundred cheese factories in the state, nearly a half million milk cows, and a growing number of creameries for butter making. The industrial revolution further advanced the dairy industry when mechanical refrigeration came into use in the 1890s. This made spoilage less of a problem. By the end of the century wheat growing had virtually disappeared in the southern half of the state, as dairy farming became the dominant form of agriculture.[185]

While this transformation was occurring in southern Wisconsin in the 1860s and 1870s, St. Croix River counties clung tenaciously to wheat. Even in 1885 Osceola bragged that its "wheat market is now as good as any in the valley."[186] However, by the 1880s, the valley could no longer avoid the problems associated with wheat farming. In 1879, St. Croix County held first place in wheat production in the state of Wisconsin. Ten years later it had dropped to forty-fifth place. Pierce County took tenth place – down from third, and Polk County fell to twenty-second place. This did not mean farmers immediately abandoned wheat growing. They instead sowed other grains, such as rye and barley, with their wheat. By 1899, St. Croix County had moved up to second place in wheat growing. Pierce and Polk counties held third and fifth place respectively. Most of the state had, however, shifted to dairy farming thereby reducing the competition. Yet, it demonstrates their reluctance to give up what was seen as an easy cash cow. St. Croix County even expanded its milling operations.[187]

Astute farmers, who realized wheat yields and profits would not continue, began to search for other alternatives. In the fall of 1883 State Senator James Hill, who represented Polk County, urged farmers who attended the Barron County Agricultural Fair to begin practicing crop rotation if they intend to continue raising wheat. Reliance on one crop was "ruinous to the success of any farmer, as it robs the soil of its plant food," Hill explained. "Worn out lands are brought into a higher state of cultivation by seeding to clover and ploughing it under." He also pointed out that the natural compliment of crop rotation was livestock farming. Cattle could graze in the clover fields

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[184] Lass, *Minnesota*, 166-7; Blegen, *Minnesota*, 393.
[185] Lampard, *The Rise of the Dairy Industry in Wisconsin*, 26, 109, 115, 337.
[186] *Polk County Press*, 14 November 1885.
[187] Thompson, *The Rise and Decline of the Wheat Growing Industry in Wisconsin*, 82-5.

and eat and rest in the hay as well as provide their own natural fertilizer to the fields. Root crops, such as turnips and potatoes, were also natural fertilizers in addition to providing nutritious slop for pigs. "The dairy business of the state has had a steady and rapid increase," Hill related, "and is fast taking its place among the leading agricultural products of the state...The profits of stock-raising and dairying are shown – first in the reclaiming worn-out grain farms to a productive and prosperous condition, -- second, substantial improvements made the [possible] advanced price of lands that follow dairy farming."[188]

The change to dairying in the St. Croix Valley was, however, a slow and difficult transition. It was expensive. It took time before clover thrived on exhausted soil. Since most farmers did not own stock, they had no manure. Therefore, many had to purchase commercial fertilizers before they could count on pasture grasses to do well and naturally fertilize the soil. Then they also had to buy milk cows. Gradually the number of cows increased through the 1890s, but there was no comparable increase in the growth of factories to process milk products.[189] The switch to dairying also affected the appearance of farms, particularly with the construction of silos. Feeding dairy cattle through the winter as well as extending lactation periods through good nutrition was another hurdle to overcome. European peasants had preserved food for animals by digging pits and burying it. From the mid-nineteenth century farmers in America began experimenting with constructed airtight storage containers, and it was discovered that winter frosts made above ground storage possible. By 1900, Wisconsin farmers had adopted four basic types of round silos constructed of wood, brick, stone, or cement. The foundation had to be strong and was usually dug four feet into the ground with a concrete floor with a two-foot deep stonewall reaching one to two feet above ground. Whatever materials they chose, farmers build the silo with two thicknesses of the chosen material with a dead air space in between. Hoops, rods, or iron bands surrounded the silo to give added strength against the considerable weight of grain pressing against its sides. An air vent topped the structure. A door to receive the silage was constructed on the outside, while a feeding vent opened into the barn.[190] Farmers also had to adapt the crops they did grow to meet the nutritional needs of their animals especially by growing hay and corn thus adding a new element to local farms and the visual landscape.

Those without the means to finance a dairy farm or who were unwilling to commit themselves to the intensive work it required migrated out of the St. Croix Valley. This began another trend that affected the ethnic composition of the region. Yankee farmers had been the most devoted to wheat and were more likely to move to the broader prairies of central and western Minnesota where they could use machines more effectively and where the soil was fresher. Their knowledge of the American political system also gave them confidence that public improvements in transportation would automatically follow them. Immigrants and their children, however, were more likely to remain where they originally settled. German farmers in particular were more attached to

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[188] *Polk County Press* (Osceola, Wis.) 20 October 1883.
[189] Lampard, *The Rise of the Dairy Industry in Wisconsin*, 115-6; Thompson, *The Rise and Decline of the Wheat Growing Industry in Wisconsin*, 101.
[190] Lampard, *The Rise of the Dairy Industry in Wisconsin*, 153-62.

the land they homesteaded and were willing to take over Yankee farms and make them work by turning to their traditional farming techniques.[191]

For those who stayed the "Wisconsin Idea of Dairying" served them well. This "idea" was the result of the University and public agencies willingness to work in concert to advance dairying in the state. From 1875 to 1885 the Dairymen's Association clearly defined the issues and problems facing Wisconsin farmers and proposed practical remedies for them. They spared the farmer no criticism of their practices, but they also good-naturedly accepted the criticism of the practitioners of their theories. In Wisconsin, then, farmer, scientist, and government agent forged a close partnership in which "the new dairying has made the average farmer something of a scientist, and a good deal of a business man." The Dairymen's Association, the College of Agriculture, and elements within the Republican Party in many ways foreshadowed Wisconsin's Progressive Movement where in twenty years the state "became a laboratory for scientific experiment, teaching, and legislation." This progressive approach to solving Wisconsin's farming problems also spared the state much of the political turmoil and class antagonisms of the Granger Movement in the 1870s and the Populists of the 1890s in which farmers pitted themselves against big corporations and monopolies. In later years Theodore Roosevelt called the "Wisconsin Idea" a lesson in scientific self-help. It made Wisconsin the Dairy State and worked well into the twentieth century until new farming and business practices were forged in the 1920s and 1930s.[192]

In 1885, Dean Henry of the Wisconsin College of Agriculture began his lecture circuit of the newly inaugurated Farmers' Institutes in the St. Croix Valley. He visited Luck, Milltown, and Osceola that winter. Henry urged farmers who attended his lectures to diversify their crops rather than relying upon just one, particularly wheat.[193] Osceola had in fact just started a cheese factory in the prior year. Professor Henry had commended them for their initiative, gave advice on how to increase milk production in their cows through better feeding, and expressed his hope that more farmers would patronize the factory in the next year. Henry also pointed out that wheat cultivation was expanding not only in the Dakotas but also in Canada. "With all this region just developing," he argued, "why should farmers on the high priced lands of the St. Croix valley, persist in ruining their lands with wheat exclusively? To attain to anything like success, we must follow mixed farming, and the more attention one gives to stock, the greater the success."[194]

By 1886, Polk County heeded the call for more intelligent farming and revived their agricultural society and held a county fair – the first since 1863. "It is a gratification to once more witness an agricultural display in Polk County," wrote the *Polk County Press*, "and carries one's memory back to the 50s and 60s when Polk county held as good

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[191] Nesbit, *The History of Wisconsin*, 14.
[192] Schafer, *A History of Agriculture in Wisconsin*, 164; Lampard, *The Rise of the Dairy Industry in Wisconsin*, 334-5, 337, 344-99.
[193] *Polk County Press* (Osceola Mills, Wis.), 31 January 1885.
[194] *Polk County Press* (Osceola Mills, Wis.), 7 February 1885.

a fair as any county in the valley."[195] The next Farmers' Institute in November 1887 held in Osceola was a bigger success than the last. More people came than were expected, filling the hall to capacity at every session. Lecture and discussion topics ranged from the "Silo and Ensilage," "Reproduction of Animals," "Dairying," "Swine Husbandry," "Horse Breeding," and "Butter-making." The interest and excitement of the Institute encouraged Polk County farmers to organize a Farmers' Club.[196]

At a Farmers' Institute in River Falls, Wisconsin farmers were made aware of how farming practices effected property values. Farmers learned how farmlands in dairy counties were worth forty-five to fifty-five dollars per unimproved acre. Farmland in St. Croix County was valued at thirty-four dollars per acre while farmland in Sheboygan County was valued at eighty-four dollars per acres. "In St. Croix, that produces more wheat than any other county of the state, the lands are valued less than one-half of that of the dairy counties," related the *Polk County Press*, "in Pierce county, engaged in the same business nearly as largely as St. Croix, the lands are of nearly the same value...Wheat raising has cost us largely in the most valuable elements of fertility of the soil."[197]

The Farmers' Institute directors strived to make their sessions as practical and as helpful to farmers as possible. For the 1887-1888 winter program, the leaders recruited dairy machine makers to bring their latest developments and demonstrate modern creaming techniques throughout the state. Various companies had the opportunity to display their machines, "raise cream, and make butter if they desire." Oil and butter tests were also done from different mixes of milk in order for farmers to be able to actually see the differences that resulted from various methods. [198]

Some farmers were dubious of these institute lecturers who they considered "theoretical, rather than practical farmers." The *Polk County Press*, however, whole-heartedly supported these educational opportunities and pointed out to their suspicious readers that, "No man is employed in institute work who is not himself a practical farmer, the owner and tiller of a farm, who is carving out success by the intelligent application of brain and muscle to his occupation – the cultivation of the soil and the production of a better and more profitable stock." The paper urged farmers to attend these institutes as much as possible arguing that, "No state in the union is progressing so rapidly in its agricultural industries as is Wisconsin, and the progress is largely the result of the teachings in these institutes." [199] "The conclusions at which they have arrived are the pure gold of intelligent effort," wrote the *Polk County Press*.[200]

Institute workers were tireless in their promotion of their knowledge and findings. "They travel from place to place, frequently reaching sections of country not traversed by

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[195] *Polk County Press* (Osceola Mills, Wis.), 16 October 1886.
[196] *Polk County Press* (Osceola Mills, Wis.), 12 November 1887.
[197] *Polk County Press* (Osceola Mills, Wis.), 2 March 1887.
[198] *Polk County Press* (Osceola Mills, Wis.), 29 October 1887.
[199] *Polk County Press* (Osceola Mills, Wis.), 29 October 1887.
[200] *Polk County Press* (Osceola Mills, Wis.), 23 November 1889.

railroads," lauded the *Polk County Press*, "carrying with them workers skilled in the theory and practice of agriculture...They scatter...information...they awaken enthusiasm: they incite farmers to discuss their business; to compare methods of work; to improve their homes and lift themselves out of the ruts into which they have fallen." The paper noted that even country social life took a turn for the better thanks to the institutes bringing farmers and their families together.[201]

Despite the enthusiasm of the press and the standing room only crowds at Institute session that continued through the 1890s, change took place slowly. Farmers who clung to raising grain were on their way to the poor house as far as Professor Dean Henry of the University of Wisconsin was concerned. Dairying had brought farmers in Sheboygan County riches. In one bank, he claimed, farmers had over a million dollars in deposits. The land along the St. Croix was better, he argued, and city and lake markets were easily accessible. "They can just as well make their land worth seventy-five dollars per acre, and salable at that price as to have it in its present condition." The *Polk County Press* concurred, "The fact that every farmer here who had tried it has succeeded, ought to satisfy everybody."[202] One family that did successfully make the transition from wheat farming to dairying was the John Nicholas Thelan family of Houlton, Wisconsin. John Thelan had emigrated from Germany to the St. Croix River town in 1863. Like many other farmers he cashed in on wheat, but in the early twentieth century upon his death his eldest daughter Lucy drew up a plan to turn the family farm into a dairying venture, which included a large dairy barn and silo. She was successful well into the 1920s, but with the economic hardships of the Great Depression she barely broke even and died at the age of seventy-seven in 1940. The Thelans also left their mark on the St. Croix as Lucy's younger brother Edward was a judge in Stillwater and helped raise the money to build the Soo Line bridge that is within sight of the Thelan farm. In 1968, the family sold the land, but the farmhouse remains.[203]

While the railroad was the key to the transformation of Wisconsin from wheat agriculture to dairying, road building became the next logical transportation revolution for the dairy industry. Railroads might be the key to getting finished product to urban markets, but first farmers had to get their milk from the farm to the factory. Bad weather made travel on rural roads arduous to impossible, especially in the winter and early spring. Oddly enough the Wisconsin Dairymen's Association and the Wisconsin State Agricultural Society did not agitate for roads. The University's Farmers' Institutes only began to raise the issue in the late 1880s. What accounted for this reluctance to push for better public roads was not disinterestedness, but farmers' fear that they would lose their ability to pay for roads through their labor. They also wished to maintain control over where the roads would be built. If they lost this privilege, they might find themselves with a heavy tax burden and few roads that served their needs. State and county officials, they believed, were more likely to build roads that linked cities and towns rather than farms and villages.[204]

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[201] *Polk County Press* (Osceola Mills, Wis.), 19 January 1889.
[202] *Polk County Press* (Osceola Mills, Wis.), 14 September 1995.
[203] "History in the Walls," *HGTV*, 24 March 2002.
[204] Nesbit, *The History of Wisconsin*, 143-5.

What stimulated farmers' enthusiasm for road building was the prospect of obtaining free mail service. In 1891, the U.S. Postmaster General proposed rural free delivery for all Americans. While this policy was not implemented until the 1930s with the New Deal, farmers realized Uncle Sam would not be able to show up at their doorstep if he had to travel along muddy, rutted, or washed-out roads. Within a few years a coalition of farm leaders, village merchants, people in the mail-order business, and recreational cyclists began to push for roads. In 1893, the Wisconsin legislature did away with the old local road districts and turned authority for road building to township boards. Folks in the St. Croix Valley were reassured that they would not be in danger of losing their property to tax delinquency since the law still allowed them the "opportunity to work out their road taxes."[205] While a modest beginning, road reform began in Wisconsin and the dairy industry was a chief beneficiary.[206]

Between 1890 and 1920, dairying became Wisconsin's single largest branch of manufacturing. By the beginning of the twentieth century Wisconsin became the number one producer of butter in the county, a position it held until 1950 when Minnesota and Iowa pulled ahead of it. By then Wisconsin had established itself as a leader in cheese production. Wisconsin's efforts were aided by developments along the St. Croix. By 1901, Polk County operated sixteen creameries and four cheese factories that also made butter. Pierce County was close behind with fifteen creameries. St. Croix County also showed gains in dairying.

By the early twentieth century the Wisconsin shore of the lower St. Croix Valley had successfully adapted to the sweeping changes that affected the U.S. economy since the Civil War. It met the challenges of the opening of lands in the West and the closing of the frontier, the growth of a network of railroads that created a national and international market with all of their resulting opportunities a well as problems. The people here became good custodians of this rich land. They restored its fertility and introduced a relatively stable and productive use of that land.[207]

The Minnesota side of the St. Croix, however, was much slower to adapt to dairying. The more self-contained Swedish communities in Chisago County and the northern part of Washington County were slower to respond to outside pressures for change whether economic or social. The Swedish Lutheran Church was diligent in "maintaining the Swedish language and culture," and "They insisted upon tight discipline among their parishioners." Swedish was spoken as a primary language even among immigrant children and grandchildren into the twentieth century. Farming was more of "a way of life" for many of these settlers. A farm "was a place to live and to raise a family," rather than a commercial venture. Many of the farms in the area around Marine began as part-time ventures. The farmers raised crops that the lumber camps wanted, and then they worked in the pineries during the winter to supplement their income. When winter jobs in the woods diminished, their style of farming would not support a family.

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[205] *Polk County Press*10 June 1893.
[206] Nesbit, *The History of Wisconsin*, 145-6.
[207] Lampard, *The Rise of the Dairy Industry in Wisconsin*, 272, 276.

With few resources to farm on a larger scale, many of these men drifted into the Twin Cities for wage work.[208]

Although the Chisago County Fair was organized in 1891 to encourage diversified farming, many farmers did not make the switch to dairying. Even in 1897 wheat was still a major crop in the area and a new milling company was opened in North Branch, Minnesota. During World War I the mill operated twenty-four hours a day in order to keep up with demand for its "Model Home" flour. The problems associated with wheat did not escape farmers here. A local saying went "Rye after rye, and you'll have bread 'til you die; but wheat after wheat, and you'll have nothing to eat." Rye and potatoes, therefore, became their cash crop. Center City farmers found the soil good for potatoes and harvested from 150 to 300 bushels an acre. The abundance of potatoes required six warehouses to store them. A starch factory made use of the surplus. North Branch claimed to be the "Hub of the Potato Belt." Harris, Minnesota, however, claimed to be the "Potato Capitol of Minnesota" since potato buyers from St. Louis and Chicago made that town their headquarters. Between August 1 and January 11, 1912 527 carloads of potatoes, at an estimated value of $300,000, were shipped from North Branch.

Potato growers were assisted by the inventions of a neighboring German immigrant named F. Splittstoser, who invented potato diggers, sprayers, and planters. Splittstoser established a factory in North Branch to manufacture his equipment. Before commercial fertilizers were available, however, potato farmers ran into the same problem wheat farmers did – soil exhaustion. More savvy farmers used their years of cashing in on potatoes to build up their dairy herds. Through the early twentieth century issues of the *Stillwater Weekly Gazette* and the *Minnesota Farmer* circulated among the interested farmers along the St. Croix River and encouraged better farming practices. Chisago farmers began to consider dairying more seriously. Creameries had begun to appear in the county in the 1890s, but unlike their Wisconsin counterparts, all failed. The Rush City Co-op, established in 1907, became the first successful dairy venture. By the 1920s, several cooperative creameries were in operation throughout the county.[209]

Washington County also had its wheat boom years in the second half of the nineteenth century. Flourmills sprung up in Stillwater in the 1870s, but soil exhaustion, competition from western lands, and Rocky Mountain locust, forced farmers here to find other alternative uses of the land. The county revived its agricultural society in the 1870s. Crop diversification, rotation, and scientific farming principles took root. While dairying was one avenue farmers took in Washington County, many farmers turned to growing oats, corn, barley, and potatoes.[210]

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[208] Sherman E. Johnson, *From the St. Croix to the Potomac – Reflections of a Bureaucrat* (Bozeman, Montana: Big Sky Books, 1974) in MHSL, 19, 33-6.
[209] *An Early Look at Chicago County*, 19-20, 25, 28, 33, 69, 121; Carl H. Sommer Papers, 1878-1968, History of Rush City, Chicago County, and the St. Croix River in MNHS.
[210] Folsom, *Fifty Years in the Northwest*, 404, 410; Rosenfelt, *Washington*, 146-9; Stillwater *Messenger*, 30 July 1875.

Mining Illusions

Farming, however, was not the only lure for settlement in the St. Croix Valley. The prospect of striking it rich piqued interest of many individuals in mining when valuable minerals were found locally. It had been known since the early days of settlement that there was some mineral deposits in the area. Caleb Cushing and the Boston Group hoped there was enough to create a base for the development of manufacturing. Mining prospects offered the illusion of fortunes hidden beneath the feet of hard-working farmers or loggers. Typical of its power to feed fantasy was the story of Thomas Dunn. After the Civil War, he built a dam on the Yellow River. When water levels were reduced, some of his men found coal near the dam. When the men showed it to Dunn, he figured he did not have the time to check it out then since he was too busy with the rich harvest of timber to concern himself with a coal mine in a sparsely populated area. However, Dunn later tried to buy the land, but a claim for the land had already been entered. When the land was deeded back to the county, Dunn bought it all. In 1883 he began to mine it. "If it proves to be as represented by the discoverers," wrote the *Burnett County Sentinel*, "it will be a bonanza for Mr. Dunn and is good as a gold mine."[211] The bonanza coal mine, however, proved as illusory as most of the mining excitements that followed.

Copper finds generated the most excitement in the St. Croix Valley.[212] "Excitement runs high on copper discoveries hereabouts," wrote the *Taylors Falls Journal*.[213] In 1879, copper was found on the farm of Richard Turnbull below St. Croix Falls. The ore was reputed to contain seventy-three percent copper and seven percent silver. "The shaft at Turnbull's is down about ten feet," reported the *Burnett County Sentinel* in October 1879. "The workmen are now working in a vein of quartz rock about 12 inches wide, which they claim to be rich in silver ore." The discovery prompted a company of Milwaukee capitalists to put up $300,000 toward the mining venture.[214] Lumber baron Isaac Staples was not one to miss out on an opportunity to strike it rich. In 1879, he spent several thousand dollars to develop his mining interests near St. Croix Lake in southern Douglas County. George R. Stuntz brought in a party of experienced Cornish miners to do the work.[215] Confidence was high that the mining prospects would pay. "Copper is being found in astonishing quantities on the other side of the river," proclaimed the *Burnett County Sentinel* in 1880.[216] The *Taylors Falls Journal* was fairly smitten by copper fever. "The mining boom hereabout is on the rampage," it wrote, "and it might be well in this connection to mention that all the lighter colored beds of trap rock in this neighborhood are permeated with copper ores and virgin copper. In many localities rich silver ore is lavishly distributed upon the surface...and the present season will doubtless prove one of unparalleled activity along the St. Croix mineral belt."[217] In

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[211] *Burnett County Sentinel* (Grantsburg, Wis.), 7 September 1883.
[212] *Burnett County Sentinel* (Grantsburg, Wis.), 22 October 1880.
[213] *Taylors Falls Journal* (Taylors Fall, Minn.), 20 June 1879.
[214] *Burnett County Sentinel* (Grantsburg, Wis.), 5 September 1879, 10 October 1879.
[215] *Burnett County Sentinel* (Grantsburg, Wis.), 4 April 1879.
[216] *Burnett County Sentinel* (Grantsburg, Wis.), 23 July 1880.
[217] As quoted in *Burnett County Sentinel* (Grantsburg, Wis.), 23 April 1880.

October 1880, D.A. Canady of Taylors Falls brought in a crew to open up a copper mine near the Kettle River rapids. "We hope he will strike it rich," wished the *Burnett County Sentinel*, "but we have our doubts." In 1881, the Berger brothers from Taylors Falls began work on a copper mineshaft on the Wisconsin side of the Dalles.[218]

The only serious copper prospecting on the Upper St. Croix River, however, occurred along Crotty Brook some time in the 1870s where three shafts were sunk. The site is located near the Coppermine Dam. However, this mining area did not bear much mineral results.[219]

In the 1890s, gold, silver, and iron were discovered on what some geologists called the St. Croix range near Knapp, Wisconsin in St. Croix and Dunn counties. Many mining companies formed with the expectation that they would find success. "Gold! Gold! At last we have it," proclaimed the *Burnett County Sentinel* in 1892. "P.E. Peterson has discovered that this village is built on a bed of gold." Mr. Peterson apparently noticed glittering metal in his water pump. He claimed that every pail full of water contained a teaspoon of gold. "Mr. Peterson says he will have it tested and should it prove to be of any value he will begin work at once and find out what amount there is."[220] "Verily this State is destined to become a second Pennsylvania," predicted the *Burnett County Sentinel*, "iron is being discovered all over the State."[221]

In the 1890s, genuine iron mining took place in Pierce County near Spring Valley, thirty miles east of the St. Croix River. These were open pits mined with picks and shovels. Nearby quarries south of Spring Valley provided the limestone necessary for smelting. From 1892 to 1900 the Eagle Iron and Ore smelter produced pig iron and formed the economic backbone for the area. At its height of operation it employed nearly one hundred men, mostly immigrants. In 1900, the operation was sold to a Chicago firm and named Spring Valley Iron and Ore Company. By 1910, the furnace was shut down due to the lack of demand for pig iron, as well as the difficulty of competing with larger and more highly mechanized iron mines in northern Minnesota and Michigan. The economy of Spring Valley declined until it became a small agricultural trading village rather than an industrial town. Interest in the iron mines reappeared during World War II. Although it was estimated that over a million tons of iron ore still existed, it was deemed an insufficient quantity to warrant the effort and expense to get at it.[222]

Another iron mine in the river valley was located near the town of Cable in Bayfield County near the Namekagon River. By World War I the mine had no longer

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[218] *Burnett County Sentinel* (Grantsburg, Wis.), 1 July 1881.
[219] Ulysses Sherman Grant, *Preliminary Report on the Copper-Bearing Rocks of Douglas County, Wisconsin* (Madison: The State of Wisconsin, 1901), 29.
[220] *Burnett County Sentinel* (Grantsburg, Wis.), 29 January 1892.
[221] *Burnett County Sentinel* (Grantsburg, Wis.), 18 March 1887.
[222] Allan C. Brown, "History of Pierce County and Spring Valley, Wisconsin," in Ursula Peterson, ed. *Pierce County's Heritage,* Vol. I. Student Research Papers, (University of Wisconsin – River Falls, 1971), 11-4.

been operational. Its open shaft was filled with water, and local children played in its trenches and pits.[223]

Overall, mining frontier riches did not come to fruition in the St. Croix River Valley. In a 1901 report written for the Wisconsin Geological and Natural History Survey Professor of Geology at Northwestern University, Ulysses Sherman Grant, explained that although the St. Croix copper range, particularly in the area around Taylors Falls and St. Croix Falls, had numerous exposed copper bearing rocks, most of the valley had been covered with heavy glacial drift sediments thus burying copper deposits that were estimated to be as productive as that of Keweenaw Point in Michigan's Upper Peninsula. While Grant did not deny the possibility of finding copper deposits here, he intimated that it would be difficult and costly. Thus despite some initial excitement in finding a few exposed outcrops, mining in the St. Croix never proved to be a serious industry. It, therefore, never served as an attraction for settlers to the valley. Farming remained the principle draw for settlement.[224]

Settlement Spreads to the Upper St. Croix Valley

The settlement and development of agriculture along the Upper St. Croix River had a much more torturous history than the lower river. The eighteen northern most counties in Wisconsin became known as the "cut over." These included Burnett, Washburn, Sawyer, Douglas, and Bayfield Counties along the St. Croix and Namekagon Rivers. The southern St. Croix River counties were technically not included in this designation, even though major portions of them had been "cutover." Stretching from the northwest corner of Polk County and running along the St. Croix and Namekagon Rivers up into Douglas and Bayfield Counties is a region called the Pine Barrens. It was composed of "coniferous forests and open expanses of sweet fern and grassy barrens...numerous pits interrupt the plain surface in some portions, their presence introducing sufficient unevenness locally to justify classification as hill country."[225] The first road up the Namekagon, named the "State Road," that ran from New Richmond to Ashland, was not cleared until 1877, which had precluded the possibility of settlers venturing here. These counties were also the most densely forested of the St. Croix Valley and did not have the rich soiled, oak openings or prairies of the lower river that might have lured the adventurous pioneer. Only gradually were more roads built into this part of the valley. The Hayward-Cable road was built near the railroad in 1892 and turned into a "county highway" the following year. Other logging and tote roads penetrated the forest. By the turn of the century, commercial logging firms had blazed their way through this region leaving in the wake of the lumbermen's ax stump fields,

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[223]U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, *An Archeological Survey of the St. Croix National Scenic Riverway,* Report No. 1897, (May 1978), 48. Site No. 03-151-1 is located in Bayfield County, Wisconsin, T43N, R7W, in Section 20, NE 1/4, NE 1/4, NE 1/4. The site is located approximately 350 feet south of the Namekagon River. According to this report it is considered eligible for nomination to the National Register. The researchers have no other information on this site.

[224]Grant, *Copper-Bearing Rocks,* 1-3, 77.

[225] Raymond E. Murphy, "The Geography of the Northwestern Pine Barrens of Wisconsin," *University of Wisconsin Papers in Geography,* 1(Madison, 1931), 69, 72.

brush, tree limbs, and discarded logs. This created a turning point in the history and settlement of the cutover.

By the 1890s, the American frontier was declared closed and the best western land had been taken. Many Wisconsinites, who had shunned the north woods in favor of lands in the West, began to return to the state. "There now remain only comparatively small areas suitable for settlement by pioneer farmers in this country," Dean Henry related to the *Polk County Press* in 1895, "and today Wisconsin offers the largest body of good agricultural land for such settlement possible to any state or territory in the Union...Where ten years ago we could not have stopped the migratory crowd intent on reaching the plains of the west, many are now ready to hear of what Wisconsin has to offer in an agricultural way, and the time is opportune for gaining a large number of desirable people if we can only convince them that our farming lands in the new North possess real agricultural merit."[226] Other observers also noted this trend. People from "Texas, Kansas, and the Dakotas and Minnesota,'" related one cutover resident, "'have come back and taken up their homes permanently here."[227]

The proximity to the path of settlement established by the St. Croix River, however, brought settlers into southern Burnett County earlier than the rest of the cutover. Back in 1850 St. Croix Falls was "regarded as the dividing line between savage and civilized life," wrote E.S. Seymour. "Beyond that point of the river, white traders and others have Indians wives; and the entire population, with few exceptions, is Indian or half-breed."[228] But the pressures of white settlement were felt within a decade. In 1856, the county was created out of Polk County, and the Homestead Act of 1862 brought in Norwegian and Swedish immigrants as well as some settlers from eastern states. Civil War veterans with homestead credits also made their way here. "A homestead of 160 acres of land can be taken inside of railroad limits," announced the *Burnett County Sentinel* in 1879, "any settler who has taken 80 acres before can take an additional 80 provided it lies adjacent to the first. He can also sign back to the government his 80 acres and take another 160 in another place, the time he lived on the first applying on time he must stay on the last entry."[229] Many pioneers eagerly responded to the offer. "There is quite a rush for homesteads in the vicinity of the last twenty miles location of the North Wisconsin railroad," wrote the *Taylors Falls Journal* in May 1879.[230] In 1880, the *Burnett County Sentinel* announced that, "Emigrants are coming thicker and faster. A load comes up almost everyday. Most of them are settling in towns Eureka, Luck and Sterling." [231] Some of these settlers were disenchanted

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[226]Robert Gough, *Farming the Cutover: A Social History of Northern Wisconsin, 1900-1940* (Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 1997), 10, 11, 19; *Polk County Press*, 21 September 1895; Eldon Maple, *The Visitor who Came to Stay: Legacy of the Hayward* Area, n.p.; Trygg, *Composite Map of United States Land Surveyor's Original Plats and Field Notes*, nos. 8, 9, 14, 15.

[227] James I. Clark, *Farming the Cutover: The Settlement of Northern Wisconsin* (Madison: The State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1956.

[228] Seymour, *Sketches of Minnesota*, 204.

[229] *Burnett County Sentinel* (Grantsburg, Wis.), 23 May 1879.

[230] *Taylors Falls Journal*, (Taylors Falls, Minn.), 9 May 1879.

[231] Folsom, *Fifty Years in the Northwest*, 230-1; *The Heritage Area of Burnett County* (Madison, Wis.: The Wisconsin Heritage Areas Program, 1978), 30; *Burnett County Sentinel* (Grantsburg, Wis.), 18 July 1880.

farmers from southern Minnesota. "Grasshoppers are the cause of their leaving," explained the *Burnett County Sentinel*. "Year after year their crops have been destroyed by these pests until they had become sick of the country and they concluded to leave."[232]

Optimism abounded that business and agriculture would thrive here. Those who settled in the southeastern section of the county joined in the wheat craze of the 1870s and 1880s. "The farmers are very busy harvesting," declared the *Burnett County Sentinel*. "Nearly all the wheat and oats in this section are ready to cut; and from what we have seen and heard, it will be fully up to the average yields of former years. Corn never was looking better."[233] Approximately 879 acres of wheat were cultivated in the county with an average wheat yield of fifteen bushels an acre, "which ought to keep the people of the county in flour, instead of importing as has been done before."[234] In 1879, the *Burnett County Sentinel* wrote about the "Flattering Prospects" that the county expected to enjoy with the building of a railroad from Grantsburg to Rush City on the Minnesota side of the St. Croix River through St. Cloud. "The road taps not only a region abounding in pine and other timber, but also traverses one of the finest agricultural regions of [Minnesota] and Wisconsin."[235]

There was, however, no escaping the problems associated with excessive wheat growing and the limitations on agriculture in the cutover. By 1883, it was reported that, "Wheat does not turn out as well on the barrens and away from the timber as expected, but in the hardwood it is fully up to the average."[236] By 1888, the *Burnett County Sentinel* lamented that "The cinch bugs will make harvesting and threshing of wheat unnecessary this fall. Wheat is turning yellow and looks dead throughout the county."[237] In the following spring Grantsburg voted to purchase a carload of seed wheat for farmers whose wheat crops had failed for the past two seasons. It was not, however, a hand out. Farmers were expected to sign a note agreeing to pay the town back the principal outlay with interest in their 1889 taxes. Some farmers simply gave up. In April 1889, the Dahl family moved to Chicago because, "Mr. Dahl thought farming did not pay in Burnett County."[238]

Wheat was not the only crop farmers grew in Burnett County. They had also cultivated livestock feed such as oats and corn as well as barley, rye, and potatoes. With the failure of wheat, farmers began to grow potatoes as their new staple crop. In 1890, plans for a starch factory were laid out, and by 1894 the *Burnett County Sentinel* reported that, "Potatoes [were] coming in quite lively," and the starch factory was receiving culls for grinding. By 1895, the *Rush City Post* reported that farmers shipped ninety cars of potatoes from that city. The *Burnett County Sentinel* complained that the Grantsburg area farmers then could only get five empty cars out of the fifty to seventy cars that they

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[232] *Burnett County Sentinel* (Grantsburg, Wis.), 23 May 1879.
[233] *Burnett County Sentinel* (Grantsburg, Wis.), 11 August 1876.
[234] Folsom, *Fifty Years in the Northwest*, 230-1; *Burnett County Sentinel* (Grantsburg, Wis.), 29 September 1876
[235] *Burnett County Sentinel* (Grantsburg, Wis.), 23 May 1879.
[236] *Burnett County Sentinel* (Grantsburg, Wis.), 28 September 1883.
[237] *Burnett County Sentinel* (Grantsburg, Wis.), 20 July 1888.
[238] *Burnett County Sentinel* (Grantsburg, Wis.), 5, 10 April 1889.

needed. Schools were closed for two weeks in October because most of the students were picking potatoes.[239]

Burnett County's abundant wetlands provided another cash crop – cranberries. Before 1870, scant attention was paid to cranberry marshes along the Upper St. Croix and Namekagon Rivers. Lumber, not cranberries, was what interested businessmen. Only Indians and frontier settlers realized their potential and brought them to market in their canoes or wagons. Cranberries were harvested with rakes, and ten to fifteen bushels a day was considered a good haul. State and federal governments, who owned these marshy lands, considered them as fair game for public plunder.[240]

In the summer of 1872, the lumberman, A.N. Badger of Oshkosh, Wisconsin was scouting out pinelands in the St. Croix Valley and discovered its marshlands, including the "Big Meadow" north of Grantsburg. He was familiar with the experiments of businessmen in Oshkosh with cranberry cultivation and hurried back there to organize cranberry companies. When these Oshkosh businessmen returned, they entered claims for 5,000 acres of what they considered the most valuable marshlands north of Grantsburg and near Fish Lake. The first two crops they gathered from nature's bounty netted them $10,000 in profit.[241] These cranberry harvesters, however, were not content to sit idly by and let nature take its course, and began to make improvements. Since it took about five years to get an acre of marsh into commercial production, cranberry growers had to have a good deal of initial capital for investment. "Men without capital can not engage in the business," warned the *Burnett County Sentinel*. These investors began to alter and "improve" the land to produce greater yields. Ditches were dug to drain the land when necessary, and then dams were built across these ditches to flood the marshes when more water was needed. Flooding the marshes killed off wild grasses and "other encumbrances" and allowed more cranberry vines to flourish. By 1875, forty miles of ditches and ten miles of dams were constructed. At harvest time these companies employed local farmers and their families, and even local Indians. This necessitated building sleeping and cooking accommodations for the pickers, and dry-houses, which were two-stories high and varied in size from 20 x 40 and 30 x 80. Badger's mill, of course supplied the lumber for the buildings and the crates and boxes to ship the berries to market. Large growers usually provided music and even a dance hall to attract pickers. Local newspapers cooperated by putting out the cry for pickers. "Cranberry picking will commence next week," announced the *Burnett County Sentinel*. "A good many persons will be employed as all the berries will be picked by hand, no rakes used. 75 cents per bushel will be paid for picking."[242]

Burnett County willingly facilitated the development of the cranberry trade. "The county has been quite liberal in expending money for roads and bridges," reported the

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[239] *Burnett County Sentinel* (Grantsburg, Wis.), 30 May 1890, 17 October 1895, 3 October 1895.
[240] *Messenger* (Stillwater, Minn.), 21 January 1875.
[241] *Messenger* (Stillwater, Minn.), 21 January 1875.
[242] *The Heritage Areas of Burnett County,* 30-1; *Messenger* (Stillwater, Minn.), 21 January 1875; *Burnett County Sentinel* (Grantsburg, Wis.), 31 August 1877, 10 October 1884; Peet, "Burnett County Wisconsin," 48; Nesbit, *The History of Wisconsin*, 38.

Brunet County Sentinel, "and the feasibility of constructing a bridge across the St. Croix River is now being talked up, and will, no doubt, be built within a few years." The purpose of the bridge would connect the cranberry farms to the Lake Superior & Mississippi Railroad in the Minnesota side of the St. Croix at Pine City. By 1875, Marshland, Minnesota became the headquarters for several companies owning marshes and cranberry farms in the area.[243]

"'How's cranberries,' is all the cry now!" wrote the *Burnett County Sentinel* in 1876. In that year the Buttrick and Gill harvesters expected "to get 1,000 barrels of cranberries from their marsh this season." In 1882, Burnett County shipped out ninety barrels of cranberries. This increased to eight hundred barrels two years later.[244] However, the manipulation of water levels and intensive cultivation of cranberries also presented environmental problems. Worms began to infest the cranberries marshes. The only way to kill off these pests was to flood the marshes, but if the area became short of water, only Mother Nature could solve the problem. "The farmers are feeling good over the storm last Sunday night," related the *Sentinel*. "It came just in time to save the cranberries, for the marshes were being overrun by worms." Manipulation of water levels also left the berries exposed to damage from freezing and thawing. In the fall of 1879 leaking dams and seasonal drought conditions left cranberry marshes uncovered for the winter. "These marshes need snow on them the whole winter to protect them from the frost...Half of the vines on the marshes...were winter killed."[245]

The forest fires that often ravaged cutover regions also threatened cranberry marshes. The first reported fire affecting them came in April 1877. "The cranberry marsh owned by Andrew Ahlstrom of this village, and the marsh of Albert Bugbee's, were burned over last week," reported the *Burnett County* Sentinel, "preventing them from bearing berries this year." The marshes did rebound somewhat despite this dismal prediction. "From all reports, the cranberry marshes are doing well considering the damage that was done last winter and by fires last spring," noted the *Sentinel*. "There will be no big crop gathered of course from any of the marshes, but it will be the largest crop that was ever gathered in this county." By 1887, Wisconsin produced 52,567 bushels of cranberries of which 18,000 came from Burnett County.[246]

In 1894, a major ecological forest fire disaster visited Burnett County. The Hinckley forest fire jumped the St. Croix River and burned approximately four thousand acres of cranberry land. After the fire an attempt was made to drain fifteen thousand acres of the marsh for small farms. When this failed Crex Carpet Company bought the land to make grass mats. It closed in 1914 when other native grasses of less use to the carpet company crowded out wiregrass.[247] Much of the land in the Big Meadows was

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[243] *Burnett County Sentinel* (Grantsburg, Wis.), January 1875. Information available suggests a bridge connecting Grantsburg and Marshland was constructed during this time stimulated in good part due to the cranberry trade.

[244] *Burnett County Sentinel* (Grantsburg, Wis.), 10 October 1884.

[245] *Burnett County Sentinel* (Grantsburg, Wis.), 18 April 1879.

[246] *Burnett County Sentinel* (Grantsburg, Wis.), April 1877 and 1887.

[247] Folsom, *Fifty Year in the Northwest*, 239-40; The *Heritage Areas of Burnett County*, 30-1; *Burnett County Sentinel* (Grantsburg, Wis.), 14, 21 July 1876, 20 April 1877, 4 November 1887.

eventually sold for taxes to prospective farmers.[248] Large-scale cranberry farming began again near Pokegama Lake by the turn of the century. S. H. Waterman & Sons invested heavily in the area expecting to put a hundred acres under cultivation. They carefully selected the best plants, and over the years produced "Jumbo Cranberries." By the 1920s, Andrew Searles and his son, C.D. Searles, natives of Wisconsin Rapids, continued the scientific cultivation of cranberries and turned the marshes of Burnett County into a thriving business.[249]

Blueberries also grew wild in the area. Although native to the region, blueberries thrived in cutover lands when its towering trees were gone and sunshine reached the brush and only jack pines and blueberries would grow. These berries were very susceptible to frost and drought, though, causing the crops to vary from year to year. Pickers eagerly awaited reports on the condition of the blueberry crop in the *North Wisconsin News* that was established in Hayward in the 1880s. Some years the pickings were so slim it did not "warrant any foreigners coming to pick, at any rate!" In July 1900 forest fires and frost wiped out the crop. However, in 1901, the blueberry crop in the Namekagon valley between Hayward and Spooner was reportedly worth $75,000. During good years "it was impossible to harvest even a small part of the berries available," recalled Eldon Marple, who picked berries in his youth before World War I. "They grew in such profusion and abundance and over such a vast area that only the berry-stuffing bear, deer and birds ever saw most of them."[250]

Blueberries were often so plentiful many families made money picking them through the summer months. Some pickers even camped out in the woods for the season. Buyers shipped the berries out by the carload. Local Indians also joined in the blueberry trade. "During the summer," wrote one settler, "Indians came from seemingly everywhere with wagons and ponies and some walking carrying packs on the backs, to pick blueberries...there were as many as 500 camping at Webb Creek." The Indians traded the berries for various groceries such as pork, salt brine, and bologna at the Webb Lake Store. At the end of the summer the Indians were reported to dress in feathers and beads, play their tom-toms, and dance their tribal dances "day and night for long periods. Settlers could hear their drums for miles."[251] The Chippewa were even reported to harvest blueberries at the mouth of Clam River, selling them in Rush City.[252]

Although blueberries were sometimes shipped to places like Kansas City, most of the crop from the north woods was shipped overnight to Chicago on the Soo Line, nicknamed "the Blueberry Line," "where the berries arrived on the morning market, still fresh and with the dew on them." Conductors on the train would sometimes select a choice spot in the Namekagon Valley and invite passengers to grab a hat or apron full.

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[248] Peet, "Burnett County Wisconsin," 46.
[249] Peet, "Burnett County Wisconsin," 48, 90, 97; *Burnett County Through the Years*, at Burnett County Historical Society.
[250] Marple, *Hayward Lakes Region*, n.p.
[251] Burnett County Homemakers Clubs, *Pioneer Tales of Burnett County*, (Danbury, Wis.: Dan-Web Printing Co., Bicentennial Edition), 11, 22, 101-2.
[252] *Burnett County Sentinel* (Grantsburg, Wis.), 1 August 1879.

"Passengers reported that the berries were in clusters as large and heavy as a bunch of grapes," reported Mr. Marple, "...a person could eat his fill while sitting in one spot."[253]

Although it had some trying times, Burnett County's future looked promising at the turn of the century. It had a gristmill, starch factory, and eight cooperative creameries and a cheese factory. In 1896, a refrigerated railroad car set off for New York City every Wednesday. By Monday morning folks in the East were enjoying Burnett County butter. Interest in settling this Upper St. Croix Valley began to grow. "We will boom as well as any of the places in this northern section of the country," boasted the *Burnett County Sentinel*.[254]

Although the cutover was often described as a decimated landscape, it was a truism of the nineteenth century that farming would follow lumbering as part of the onward march of civilization. The expectation was that blighted land would be turned into productive, verdant fields. This assumption prompted the Wisconsin state legislature in 1895 to authorized Dean Henry to research a book on the agricultural resources and opportunities in the state. A good part of the book focused on the more thinly populated areas of the North Country. In the past, lumbermen were the only ones interested in this heavily forested region. Once all the pine was logged, "the land which grew it received no more thought from the lumberman than the sawdust at his mill." The land's apparent lack of value prompted many lumber companies to forfeit their lands through tax delinquencies. Part of their reasoning was that if they recruited settlers and sold some of the land while there was still pine in the area, the lumber companies would pay the lion's share in taxes for roads, schools, and other improvements that did not interest them. If they hung on to their land until all the pine was gone, or until new growth could be harvested, they would be paying taxes for years on lands that had no present value to them. The initiative for settlement and development of Wisconsin's North Country, therefore, did not come from the lumberman, hence the state and other promoters had to take an active role.[255]

Besides its abundant timbered forests, Burnett County was amply endowed with lakes, swamps, marshes, bogs, and wet meadows. In 1850, the federal government passed the Swampland Grant Act that gave Wisconsin approximately three million acres of federal wetlands, a good part of which held valuable timber. These lands were then sold through public auction with the usual pre-emption rights. Because of the ubiquitous practice of loggers trespassing on state land and harvesting its valuable timber, the state felt compelled to dispose of its lands quickly and let private owners police their own lands. This land was desirable because it could eventually be drained and turned into productive farmland. The quick sale of land, however, often resulted in their being sold below market value or being bought up by land speculators. In 1871, Wisconsin Governor Lucius Fairchild asked that state lands be withdrawn from the market in order

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[253] Marple, *Hayward Lakes Region*, n.p.
[254] *Burnett County Sentinel* (Grantsburg, Wis.), 20 March 1891.
[255] *Polk County Press* (Osceola Mills, Wis.), 21 September 1895; Arlan Helgeson, "Nineteenth Century Land Colonization in Northern Wisconsin, " *Wisconsin Magazine of History* 36(2)(Winter 1952-1953), 119.

to appraise their value accurately. This suggestion went unheeded until the turn of the century. But at that time Burnett County still had thirty-five thousand acres of state-owned land that could still be sold, which was unusual for the cutover.[256]

Besides recruiting the ubiquitous Dean Henry to prepare a book on agricultural prospects of the cutover in 1895, the state re-established its Board of Immigration that year. The Board, originally started in 1879, was abolished in 1887 after most of southern and central Wisconsin had been settled. In 1907, it was reorganized and operated for the next twenty years. The board's main job was to attract settlers to the cutover by sending representatives to fairs, distributing promotional literature, and hooking up potential buyers with land dealers. The state distributed fifty thousand copies of Henry's book, *Northern Wisconsin: A Hand-Book for the Homeseeker.* Its reach extended into English, German, and Norwegian emigration pamphlets that used illustrations from the book. The Immigration Board also worked in conjunction with the Northern Wisconsin Development Association and the Northern Wisconsin Farmer's Association. The Farmer's Association dispatched "Grasslands Cars" through Wisconsin, Iowa, Illinois, Minnesota, and Nebraska. These converted passenger railroad cars were lit up by large electric signs boldly declaring, "Farm Products From the Best Region on Earth for the Homeseeker."

Railroad companies joined in these efforts. Because they needed to sell their land in the cutover, they offered to haul the cars free of charge. The railroads did this until 1906. The railroad cars were decorated with maps, pictures, and carried samples of farm products. The School of Agriculture also extended its Farmer Institutes into the cutover region. The state agency also encouraged the establishment of county immigration agencies. Beginning in 1895, Wisconsin also held immigration conventions throughout the state to excite interest in the cutover.[257] The state of Wisconsin's promotion and Dean Henry's scientific research in the cutover, historian Robert Gough argued, "conferred legitimacy on the idea of the cutover as a promising region for agricultural settlement."[258]

The twentieth century settlers of the cutover, however, faced different challenges than their eighteenth and nineteenth century pioneer counterparts. Northern Wisconsin was already a drastically altered landscape. The logging and mining era had left behind old company towns across the north. Railroads had penetrated into the far North Country to serve these industries and they built towns to support their needs. When logging firms moved on, town merchants, bankers, and newspaper editors were without a clientele. Railroads owned thousands of acres of land that had been granted to them by the federal government. They joined forces with the state's efforts to entice farmers into the area.[259]

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[256] Robert F. Fries, *Empire in Pine: The Story of Lumbering in Wisconsin 1830-1900* (Madison, Wis.: The State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1951), 169; Edward L. Peet, "Burnett County Wisconsin," (Grantsburg, Wis. The Burnett County Board of Immigration, 1902), 71.
[257] Gough, *Farming the Cutover*, 31-3; Clark, *Farming the Cutove*, 6, 11; Peet, "Burnett County Wisconsin," 101.
[258] Gough, *Farming the Cutover,* 33.
[259] Gough, *Farming the Cutover*, 26.

The agricultural prospects of the cutover also began to attract interest from the *Milwaukee Journal*. On March 12, 1900 the paper ran a special "Northern Wisconsin Edition." Articles discussed the present condition of the cutover, what role Milwaukee could play in its development, and its agricultural resources and prospects. The *Journal*'s editors enthusiastically claimed that northern Wisconsin's agricultural and livestock possibilities would make it the "'richest part of the state.'" The cutover even attracted the attention of the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture James Wilson who proclaimed to a Chicago audience in 1902 that northern Wisconsin would make a great agricultural region.[260]

Burnett County eagerly joined in the recruitment of settlers. By the turn of the century most of its forests had been logged over and the county needed to reappraise its future. The county had the good fortune of hosting a state immigration convention. It "attracted so much attention through the daily press that the county got a [lot of] good advertising." It soon formed its own Board of Immigration. Initially the county put its efforts simply into photographing its lands. It received a boost from the enthusiastic efforts of Edward L. Peet, a Burnett County newspaperman. Peet wrote articles and printed speeches and maps in the *Journal of Burnett County* in which he described the progress of settlements and of the great potential demand for agricultural products. In 1902, he furthered these efforts when he wrote a promotional pamphlet entitled, *Burnett County, Wisconsin* in which he extolled the unique virtues of Burnett County for prospective settlers.[261]

Peet had no particular love for the lumber barons of the county and was glad to see their days of dominance come to an end. "Up to a few years ago but little was done to attract the settlers to this county," Peet complained. "The interests of the lumbermen and others were in an opposite direction and more was done to keep settlers out than was done to bring them in...The day of lumbering is passing away and agriculturists are the ones who can in the future make money by locating in Burnett county...The scarcity of timber from the lumberman's standpoint and an over supply from the standpoint of the tiller of the soil are one and the same thing. It is just this condition that is now turning the attention of farmers to Burnett county as a place in which to make a home and is also letting much of the land out of the grip of lumbermen who have had no use for new settlers in the county."[262]

Burnett County's identity was still strongly associated with the St. Croix River, and Peet considered it a major asset for future settlers. It provided easy access to the headwaters of navigation on the Mississippi and the Twin Cities, and the northern part of the county was within thirty-five miles of Duluth and Superior, which were at the head of navigation on the Great Lakes. The railroad line that ran northward through the county, though, was critical for settlement. The man of science -- Dean Henry -- had been cautiously optimistic about farming prospects in the cutover, Peet -- the man of words was completely optimistic. Henry candidly wrote, "There is no royal road to farming in northern Wisconsin." Clearing a farm up here would be long, hard work. "The brush,

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[260] Gough, *Farming the Cutover*, 9.
[261] Peet, *Burnett County Wisconsin*, 69, 101-2; Clark, *Farming the Cutover*, 5.
[262] Peet, *Burnett County Wisconsin*, 69, 101.

stumps and undergrowth is often sufficient to make one's heart grow faint...before the ideal field can be secured," he warned. "No one should make the venture of home building in the new north before he has carefully counted the cost in the beginning and looked clear through to the end."[263] Ed Peet claimed Burnett County's farming prospects were as good as in southern Wisconsin. "A crop of timber is a sure index to the soil," Peet argued. "Hardwood land is the best agricultural land we have and runs largely to clay soil...White pine...is never found on poor land...People who are accustomed to a black soil and nothing else will have great difficulty in believing that crops will grow on any other color...Farm it well and farm fewer acres than you would of clay and you will make money." Peet admitted not all the soil in county was good, but claimed it could still be useful. "If you are coming to this county with plenty of money and want to engage in stock farming you are making a safe investment to buy clay land and go into the raising of clover and other tame grasses."[264]

Peet aimed to attract a particular type of homesteader and wrote, in no uncertain terms, whom he preferred. "The best advice the writer of this book can give anyone," he wrote, "is to not attempt to move a family to any place among strangers if the head of the family is unable to make a living where he now is. Cheap land is not the only thing needed to bring prosperity to the home seeker. There must be a disposition to hard work and physical ability to match the disposition. The 'ne'r do well' is not wanted in Burnett County...Those who can help themselves from the start are the folks who are wanted...The natural local conditions will do the rest for them."[265]

Besides the wholesale denuding of the northern forests, the other major ecological change that occurred in this region was the draining of swamp and marshlands. This was seen as a progressive development in the early twentieth century. "Man is at work now continuing this drying process and the county is undergoing many changes, " wrote Peet. "Within the memory of the present residents of the county, lakes have changed to marshes, marshes to meadow lands and meadow lands have become good dry plow lands...There are but few swamps in the county that will not at some time in the future be reclaimed and turned into profitable farm land."[266]

Like earlier homesteaders in the lower St. Croix, the weather was a major concern of prospective settlers. Promoters of the North County at the turn-of-the-century optimistically spoke of the healthy but bracing quality of the climate. The shear abundance of wood for fuel, it was argued, made the winters more tolerable here than in warmer but fuel deficient areas. "Our winter storms are sometimes bad but they are very mild affairs compared with the prairie blizzards," commented Ed Peet. "No person who has ever experienced a prairie blizzard had any fault to find with our winters. Hot, scorching winds are unknown and drought seldom causes even a partial crop failure." Peet, however, also expressed the naïve and even quack scientific thinking of the times

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[263] William A. Henry, *Northern Wisconsin, A Handbook for the Homeseeeker* (Madison, Wis., 1896), 162-4.
[264] Peet, *Burnett County Wisconsin*, 5-7, 58-9, 73-4.
[265] Peet, *Burnett County Wisconsin*, 57-8.
[266] Peet, "Burnett County Wisconsin," 26-7.

by claiming the climate was changing because of the denuding of the forests. "The climate is also changing," he wrote, "the winters are milder and not so long...and other unfavorable conditions will change." The expectation was that the climate would become more like that of southern Wisconsin.[267]

New settlers marveled at the fertility of the soil when new growth bloomed so quickly in areas loggers had cleared recently, especially if fires started in the left over brush had burned it. Popular, aspen, and white birch "seeded thick as grain in a field, and grew fast." Blueberry and raspberry bushes thrived, as did the deer that feasted on them. "The ground is just covered with blueberries," exclaimed the *Burnett County Sentinel.* Wild hay and pasture grasses, such as timothy, flourished. This new growth only encouraged the notion that the cutover would make a great dairy region. "The highest scientific agricultural authority says that in no place in the world is there any better grass for butter and cheese making than in Northern Wisconsin," proclaimed Ed Peet. "All over this region grasses and clover thrive...It seems to follow as naturally as a second growth of timber." Even Professor Henry predicted that northern Wisconsin would become one of the great cheese producing regions in the country.[268]

Farmers had not been unknown in the cutover. After all, lumbermen had to eat. Loggers, however, did not want homesteaders who would want the usual amenities of settlement, so they initially created corporate farms that supplied them with wheat, potatoes, vegetables, beef, and hay. An example is the Moore Farm. It was located in Burnett County (T42N, R14W). It supplied hay and potatoes for the Shell Lake Lumber Company until 1903. The first independent farmers in the area were lumberjacks. In winter they worked in the logging camps and in summer months they grew foodstuff to supply the camps. They were not self-sufficient or commercial farmers. However, their farm sites were chosen more for their closeness to winter employment than for their agricultural potential.[269] Burnett County had its share of winter lumberjacks and summer farmers. "They began [farming] when lumbering on the adjoining lands was the only industry thought worth following," wrote Ed Peet. "They have always had a good home market and have done well."[270]

Historic site surveys of the St. Croix National Scenic Riverway have identified few sites associated with this pioneer phase of cutover farming. One such site is the S.W. Slack farmstead (T36N, R20W, Sec. 30) in Chisago County, Minnesota. The site was originally within the subdivision of the town of Nashua. This "paper townsite" of the 1850s never attracted settlers and was later developed into what historian William Folsom described as "two fair farms." One of those farms was operated by S.W. Slack on an elevated stretch of ground that sloped gently down to the St. Croix. Slack occupied the site from at least 1888 and farmed it until the World War I era. In addition to crop

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[267] Gough, *Farming the Cutover*, 13; Peet, "Burnett County Wisconsin," 9.
[268] Gough, *Farming the Cutover*, 10, 20-2, 30; Peet, "Burnett County Wisconsin," 9, 11, 98; *Burnett County Sentinel* (Grantsburg, Wis.), 16 July 1880, 17 July 1885, 6 August 1886.
[269] Gough, *Farming the Cutover*, 26; Fitting et al, *An Archaeological Survey of the St. Croix National Scenic Riverway, Phase I*, 58-60.
[270] Peet, *Burnett County Wisconsin*, 48.

raising Slack kept cows, sheep, and horses. All that survives of his farmstead today are clearings on the ridge above the river and a depression in the ground where the farmhouse once stood. Test excavations conducted there in 1982 revealed the remains of the Slack's domestic life, including flat glass, ceramic serving vessels, shoe parts, buttons and medicinal bottles. More in depth study at this site might shed light on the everyday life of the men and women who pioneered the cutover.[271]

As the cutover region began to expand, "Later day settlers have now taken up the lands from which the pine was cut so long ago," reported Peet "...and within a few months the railroad company has closed out the greater part of its lands to prairie farmers who are moving in with more capital than any of the early settlers ever dreamed would be brought into the entire county."[272] Burnett County farmers benefited from the proximity to the agricultural changes happening in areas further south along the St. Croix. The Burnett County Agricultural Society began holding annual fairs in 1877, and enjoyed its connections with the Farmers' Institutes. "Our farmers who used to raise hay and oats for the logging camps, and many of them who used to be half farmer and half logger," wrote Ed Peet, "are now devoting all their energies to the farm and modern methods are being adopted. They are going into dairying and stock raising and a manure heap has now a value in it."[273] The county's late settlement and access to rail lines, from the short haul logging railroads that reached into the county in 1902 allowed it to bypass the typical agriculture of settlement of wheat.[274]

A legacy of the logging era to settlers in the cutover was that they would not be "homesteaders" in the strictest sense of the word. By 1900, nearly all land in the cutover was in private hands. The Homestead Act, therefore, could not be used in most of the cutover. Although the state took up the role of promotion of agricultural settlement in the cutover, it did not direct or regulate it. Instead, the state of Wisconsin relied on private enterprise to turn this apparent wasteland into productive use. Unlike their nineteenth century counterparts, most settlers purchased their land from private landowners rather than claim land from the government. Cornell University had a considerable amount of land in Sawyer County to dispose of. One of the most notable land dealers was the American Immigration Company (AIC). It was formed in 1906 when nine lumber companies, including Weyerhaeuser-Laird-Norton subsidiaries and the Northern Wisconsin Lumber Company located in the Hayward area, decided to form a consortium to unload their land.

By 1939, AIC sold 438,000 acres to settlers. The company had also made a half-hearted attempt at recruitment with their American Colonization Company that folded in 1907. Railroad companies also sponsored low-fare "home-seeker excursions." These allowed prospective settlers to survey land before they bought. However, many land agents who met these trains often put the hard-sell on unsuspecting homesteaders, who made the mistake of buying "sight-unseen." One homesteader remarked in 1919 that

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[271] Connor, *et al, ArcheologicalInvesitigations, 1983*, 121-151.
[272] Peet, *Burnett County Wisconsin*, 48.
[273] Peet, *Burnett County Wisconsin*" 7-9, 99.
[274] *The Heritage Area of Burnett County* ,9, 30.

land "'was being unloaded on unwary people.'" These agents often made a purchaser include inferior land along with the good. But land values in the cutover were relatively inexpensive and land agents offered reasonable down payments and repayment schedules. All parties expected land values to go up and those conventional mortgages could be obtained to pay the balance when it came due. This was true for the first two decades of the twentieth century when farm values in the cutover generally quadrupled and farm products fetched a good price during World War I. A lender in Polk County boasted there were no foreclosures there before 1920.[275]

Another ploy used to sell lands in the cutover, especially in Sawyer and Washburn Counties, was to claim they had mineral deposits. The U.S. Geological Survey had surveyed the Penokee-Gogebic Range in 1854 with the use of a simple compass that found magnetic attraction in the area. "'Mineral lands,' was the bait," recalled one pioneer, "iron and copper was everywhere! Any area that had magnetic rock formations could be hawked as mineral lands." Timber and railroad interests put pressure on the state of Wisconsin to do more prospecting. The American Immigration Company and the Loretta Mining Company, along with others, did some of their own surveying as well. By 1917 approximately one hundred holes had been drilled, mostly in Sawyer County. The results of all this drilling revealed no iron deposits but an underlay of Huronian rock that was laced in iron. The best that could be said of the results was that some of the holes provided great artesian wells of ice-cold water. Some copper deposits in the Minong Copper Range had been mined by Indians, but had little commercial interests. Mining in the cutover of the St. Croix Valley proved another elusive promise of wealth and opportunity.[276]

Unlike most of the cutover, Burnett County had a fair amount of government land that could be claimed. Because of its ample wetlands, a substantial amount of land was still owned by the state. At the time Peet's pamphlet was published, however, state land had been withdrawn from the market. "Vacant government lands are about a thing of the past in the northern portion of the county," he wrote. Prospective settlers had the choice to buy land from the Chicago, St. Paul, Minneapolis and Omaha Railway or from land speculators. Railroad land was, however, limited and many townships in the county did not have any railroad-owned land. The largest amount of land for sale was the "Baker Lands" of the Cushing Land Agency in St. Croix Falls. Most of the land available was in the sparsely settled northern portion of the county. The oldest settlers had only lived there for four or five years. "These settlers are men of thrift and industry," Peet claimed, "and have set about the task of transforming the wilderness into comfortable homes with indefatigable determination. Where a few years ago there was one unbroken stretch of forest there are now found innumerable fields of corn, oats, potatoes and all kinds of garden vegetables...the crops they have raised furnish ample proof that the soil is very productive." While Peet admitted the soil was mostly sandy with a mixture of about thirty percent clay, he claimed it had the benefit of moisture retention. He optimistically reported that the "settlers who do live there and give attention to their work meet with

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[275] Gough, *Farming the Cutover,* 27-8, 34-43; Marple, *The Visitor Who Came to Stay.*
[276] Marple, "Rocks, Minerals and Folly," in *From a Visitor Who Came to Stay.*

excellent success and at this writing it would be difficult to find finer gardens than those now to be seen on the "sand barrens."[277]

In 1901, an unusual group of settlers had come to Burnett County. Several women who had grown up in the sandiest part of Minnesota "and were not afraid of light soil came over to see what the county was like." They were interested in the lands along the St. Croix and Clam Rivers. Pleased with what they saw, they took advantage of the liberal Homestead Law that allowed single or widowed women the opportunity to claim land like a male head of household. These women made their filing for land, "went home, did missionary work and sent others to take up land in the same town." Within six months twenty widows and single schoolteachers bought land and started farming in Burnett County "and have already made a good showing."[278]

For the most part, however, the cutover was initially a man's world. Like earlier frontier eras in American history, in northern Wisconsin young adult males predominated. It took a young, strong back to clear these stump farms. Yet, most men found they could not get a farm going alone. Starting a farm in the cutover required the labor of the entire family. Father, mother, and children spent many springs clearing the land of rocks, removing brush and stumps, building basic shelter for the family and animals, and digging wells. In this early phase of development women's contribution was recognized and appreciated by their husbands. Men who could not find a wife usually gave up on farming.[279]

The slow, difficult process of turning the cutover into productive farms forced many heads of families to take up the lumberjack trade in the winter leaving their wives to care for the families and homestead during the long, lonely winter months. "The first three winters Dad worked in the logging camp," recalled Carl Kuhnly, whose family settled in Burnett County at the turn of the century. "He would walk about ten miles to come home on a Saturday evening, then back again on Sunday evening."[280] "Farmers in this country couldn't get any money excepting from the timber in pineries north of here," recalled Harry D. Baker, therefore "farming was very poorly developed with small clearings, log houses, little production, only a few cattle, and very meager living which was supplemented...by shooting deer for meat and by fishing and berry picking and making of maple syrup and maple sugar. Not until the development of the dairy industry in the nineties did farming become really at all profitable and the settlers...had a very bitter struggle."[281]

One way to avoid the difficult task of clearing land was to raise livestock. Some farmers turned to sheep. They thought these wooly creatures might do well among all the low brush. H.L. Russell, Henry's successor to the School of Agriculture in 1907, however, warned farmers that sheep were susceptible to parasites and would not do well

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[277] Peet, *Burnett County Wisconsin*, 33, 35-8, 53.
[278] Peet, *Burnett County Wisconsin*, 42.
[279] Gough, *Farming the Cutover*, 55-7, 63.
[280] Carl Kuhnly, Oral History Transcript, Burnett County Historical Society, 1985.
[281] Harry D. Baker, Oral History Transcript, 1950.

eating forest scrub. Farmers eventually found out Russell was right. Dairying was the most obvious choice for livestock farmers. The Wisconsin School of Agriculture did not abandon farmers once on the land. It threw itself into experimenting with fertilizers that would enrich cutover soil. It established a branch station at Spooner, hosted a series of winter meetings with farmers in Bayfield and Ashland Counties, and ran a demonstration farm near Superior. The School also assisted counties in organizing county agent programs. The ubiquitous problem of clearing stumps also prompted the Agricultural School to experiment with stump-pulling devices to make the job easier. Dean Harry Russell even managed to buy up surplus military dynamite after World War I to blast stumps out of the ground.[282]

By 1911, the most northern parts of Burnett County were settled. In that year the Soo Railroad line extended its trackage from Frederic to Lake Superior. The line crossed the St. Croix River near the Yellow River at a town called White City. The bridge constructed to cross the river at this point is now on the National Register. Shortly thereafter the railroad commission began offering its allotted lands at public auction. One of their first buyers was Ed Peet, the enthusiastic promoter of the county. He proceeded to build the first hotel, which he called Danbury House and re-christened the town by the same name.[283]

The Chicago, St. Paul, Minneapolis and Omaha (M.ST.P.) railroad brought "land-hungry [settlers] from the cities and overcrowded farming areas" to the "stump farms" of Washburn County in the early twentieth century. For the next twenty years "settlement and fires cleared land until it was hard to believe that this new landscape had once had great forests." Fires were not just started as the accidental aftermath of logging debris catching fire. Many of these pioneers used fire as an easy way to clear the scrub brush to provide pasture for their livestock. "These fires often went uncontrolled and sometimes did not burn out for weeks," recalled an old settler, "leaving little life in their path...Vast areas became prairie with blackened stumps and rampikes to show where the forest had been."[284]

Farms or Forests? The Cutover Debate

While promoters lured settlers to the cutover, a forestry movement had also been growing in the state following the national trend to protect the country's rapidly depleting forests. The State Horticultural Society had been promoting reforestation of Wisconsin's timberlands and conservation for some time, and in 1893 it helped found the Wisconsin Forestry Association. By 1897, the state legislature created a commission to draw up plans for conserving, protecting, and utilizing state forests. Among its findings, it reported that of the original seventeen million forested acres in Wisconsin, eight million were cutover lands and claimed that at least forty percent and probably more was unfit for farming. It speculated that about ten million acres was solely fit for trees, and that if the state ever expected to collect taxes on it, only timber products could supply the

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[282] Clark, *Farming the Cutover*, 11-2, 31, 60.
[283] *The "Far North" Community of Burnett County – Danbury,* 1966, Burnett County Historical Society.
[284] Marple, *The Visitor Who Came to Stay.*

income to pay any rates. By 1903, Wisconsin created its first State Forestry Commission. While it marked the beginning of state efforts at conservation, it inadvertently became a declaration of war to those promoting agricultural settlement in northern Wisconsin.[285]

Conservationists even found a few supporters among the homesteading pioneers. Soren J. Uhrenholdt is a good example of an individual who believed good farming practices and conservation were not mutually exclusive. In 1883, he and his wife Christine emigrated from Denmark, initially settling on a farm in Waupaca County. In 1899, the family came to the Seeley area to carve out a permanent homestead. By the spring of 1900 they had settled on 120 acres of cutover lands just north of the village. What distinguished Uhrenholdt was his dedication to his native values of planning and using every acre for what is was best suited for. He worked closely with the University of Wisconsin Agriculture School, attending its farmer's courses, and prospered by growing seed potatoes that he sold throughout the country. In one year he grossed six thousand dollars. In lean years he was tempted to sell off some of his timberlands, but felt in his heart that forestlands could be valuable in their own right. He, therefore, began to practice sustained-yield forestry and even began to reforest some of his own land. This caught the attention of the Agriculture School as well as 4-H Clubs, schools, and many others who sought out his advice. His old farmstead is off Highway 63 near Pacwawong Lake. When he settled here on cutover land in1900, Mr. Uhrenholdt began to reforest his land. In 1916, the College honored him for his outstanding cooperation. The original homestead is now the Uhrenholdt Memorial Forest and is now owned by the state of Wisconsin.[286]

Conservationist's hopes for the cutover, however, were dashed in 1915 when the Wisconsin Supreme Court declared state land purchases to create forests was unconstitutional. Public opinion was with the court on this decision. Governor Emmanuel Phillip had voiced his objections to removing so much land from the tax rolls, preferring productive farms. He also felt reforestation was a federal responsibility. In addition, the nineteenth century romantic notion of the rugged individual bringing the wilderness into productive use was still too strong and prevalent for a state mandated plan to return the cutover to its original pristine condition to challenge.

This anti-conservationist view was also fortified by the Country Life Movement of the early twentieth century, which tried to encourage the reversal of migration from rural to urban areas that had accelerated during this period. By the 1890s, the Director of the Census declared that the American frontier was closed. While scattered public lands were still available, there was no longer a frontier line between "civilization" and "wilderness" to keep alive the independent, pioneering spirit of the yeoman farmer. America was also undergoing rapid urbanization. This trend was noted as early as the 1870s census when farmers were no longer the majority of the nation's gainfully employed. By 1910, less than one-third of the United States' population was farmers. The causes for this historic shift were due to mechanization and greater efficiency of agriculture, the transportation revolution, and the expansion of industry. However, a

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[285] Clark, *Farming the Cutover*, 13-4.
[286] Marple, *Hayward Lakes Region*, n.p.

loosely organized movement sprang up among Progressive reformers in land grant colleges, state and federal departments of agriculture, and among urban, educated middle class Protestants, who were alarmed at the migration from rural farms to cities. They believed in the yeoman ideal as the moral and economic backbone of the country. Not fully realizing the causes behind this movement, these reformers tried to persuade farmers to stay on the land by helping them realize the virtues of rural life over the corrupting influences of city life. In this climate of public opinion, many intellectuals believed the Wisconsin cutover had to be "redeemed" by the yeoman farmer from logging depredations. Family farms and tight-knit rural communities could redeem the region. Agricultural promotion and settlement of the cutover accelerated, and land values rose.[287]

It was the yeoman farmer who epitomized the cutover settler. They were family farmers, many of recent immigrant stock, who came with the expectation that hard work, family cooperation, and assisting neighbors would bring them an independent, if not a prosperous, life in rural America. While some immigrants came directly from the old country, many had first found jobs in factories, mines, or railroad work. They were attracted to the cutover by the prospect of becoming an independent farmer and enjoying rural community life. Many settled in communities of "their own kind." Scandinavians and Germans continued to settle in the North Country, but were now joined by Poles, Finns, and Latvians, as well as "Americans" from other regions of the country. Fishing and hunting opportunities also attracted many farmers from southern Wisconsin.[288]

Historian Robert Gough has argued, "that farmers coming to the cutover at the beginning of the twentieth century inherited this legacy of an unregulated, ill-informed, short-sighted, and loosely managed system of land distribution."[289] When farms began to fail in the 1920s, farmers began to blame lumber companies for their financial woes for charging too much for their land and profiting unfairly. The facts, however, do not support the populist complaint. Companies did profit from the sale of cutover land, but no fortunes were made.[290]

Settlers to the cutover were lured to the region by confidence in the current scientific knowledge of the time and trust in the honesty of land dealers and future market opportunities. These pioneers, however, came with few resources, and since they did not enjoy the benefit of squatters' rights and homestead laws, they started off with more debt and smaller farms than farmers in the lower St. Croix Valley. Upper St. Croix Farmers in the cutover would have fewer cushions to ward off blows from the failure of their soil, the weather, or the market than their counterparts down river. But by 1920, many cutover farmers had made a good showing for themselves. The U.S. Census for that year showed that land values in the cutover had increased to forty-seven percent of Wisconsin's average and thirty-three percent of farm acreage here was improved. Burnett and Polk

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[287] Clark, *Farming the Cutover*, 12, 18-20; William L. Bowers, *The Country Life Movement in America, 1900-1920* (Port Washington, N.Y.; Kennikat Press, 1974), 3-6.
[288] Gough, *Farming the Cutover*, 2., 49, 51, 54.
[289] Gough, *Farming the Cutover*, 28.
[290] Gough, *Farming the Cutover*, 46.

Counties counted impressive gains in land brought under cultivation and improvements made.[291]

Despite these gains, however, the cutover was a comparatively poor region in 1920. "A land of plenty?" wrote one Burnett County pioneer. "For starters there were forest fires, poverty, horse flies, diphtheria, pregnancy, open air toilets, and 'blood, sweat, and tears.'"[292] These smaller farms produced crops worth one-third less than the rest of the state. Part of the reason was due to the fact that many farms were still in the frontier stage of development. Some settlers were part-time farmers either by choice or economic necessity. These men worked periodically in the woods or in sawmills leaving little time for farm expansion. Some farmers were simply not interested in participating in a commercial agricultural market. They instead preferred the enjoyment of the natural environment and the outdoor life of hunting and fishing and farmed to support this lifestyle. Families were able to supplement their income from harvesting cranberries and blueberries.[293]

The farmers who did apply themselves to agriculture and participated in the commercial market, gradually turned toward dairying in part because of the climate, limitations on the soil, and because it required less capital outlays. Although it was more labor intensive, dairy products paid well. Bayfield County Finns and Danes led the development of cooperative creameries and cheese factories. Between 1910 and 1930, these sprang up throughout the cutover, and hay became the principal crop.[294]

Farmers had also been encouraged by the Board of Immigration to turn to dairying. In 1911, B.G. Packer, a lawyer and former secretary for the Farmers' Institutes, became the Board's secretary. Packer was responsible for changing the direction of the Board's purpose from simple recruitment of settlers to an advisor role to farmers. The Progressive Movement, which championed scientific solutions to social and economic problems, had a significant influence on the Immigration Board and the Agricultural School. Outside experts became increasingly interested in cutover farmers, who they patronizingly assumed needed their professional guidance to be successful farmers. "In doing so," Gough claims, "it laid the foundation for the public policies which would later discourage agricultural settlement in northern Wisconsin."[295]

Perceptions of cutover immigrants were also influenced by the "One-hundred Percent American" movement that sprang up from ethnic conflicts over the United States's siding with the Allied Powers rather than the Central Powers in World War I. The subsequent rise of the Red Scare led to a revival of the nativist movement in the 1920s. The Board of Immigration increasingly came to view some settlers as more desirable than others and some as more in need of assistance than others. African-

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[291] Gough, *Farming the Cutover*, 58-60.
[292] Carl Kuhnly, "Homesteading in Wisconsin, Up Hill – Down Hill, All the Way," in Burnett County Historical Society File, 1985.
[293] Gough, *Farming the Cutover*, 59, 63-8.
[294] Ibid., 68-72, 85
[295] Ibid., 93-4.

Americans, who began their Great Migration to the North at the end of the nineteenth century and into the twentieth, were positively discouraged from settling in the cutover. Polish-Americans also came to be viewed as less than desirable by the state experts. They were described as drinkers and brawlers, infested with lice, and "helpless" when it came to farming. Immigrant churches, especially Catholic ones, were thought to hinder Americanization.

The Ku Klux Klan even spread its tentacles into the North Country. In 1924, the town of Luck in Polk County became host to a Klan den. Some people initially thought it was a social organization, – something the "dreary northern town" could use. They hoped the Klan might promote farm legislation or encourage its members to stop drinking or mistreating their wives. Its promotion of "American" standards and institutions, which meant Anglo-Protestant values, however, turned off many people in the area who were Catholic. Its white supremacy philosophy, hostility to bootlegging, and its fascist-like marches and salute also triggered public animosity. Hudson, River Falls, and Ellsworth became centers for anti-Klan resistance with support coming largely from the Catholic Knights of Columbus and bootleggers. The Klan's presence in the area was short-lived, but it managed to create "a great deal of trouble between what had been good friends, families and neighbors," reported an old-time resident. Many people of the next generation agreed that, "It is best forgotten."[296]

The eugenics movement of period also colored outsiders' perceptions of cutover residents. Eugenicists feared that isolated settlements of single ethnic groups would result in physically degenerate "hillbilly" people. These attitudes mingled with the growing perception that much of the land in the cutover was sub-marginal agricultural land. The Jeffersonian yeoman farmer ideal also took a beating in the first two decades of the twentieth century. Rural Americans began to be viewed as "backward, immoral, and increasingly dangerous." When an agricultural depression of the 1920s followed in the wake of the high-priced farm products of the World War I years, many farmers faced the prospect of failure. State and federal experts were ready to step in to prevent northern Wisconsin from turning into another Appalachia. [297]

In 1927, the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture began taking new inventories of county lands. Their conclusion for the state's northern counties was less sanguine than reports earlier in the century. Bayfield County went from having sixty to 70 percent of its lands deemed suitable for agriculture in 1916 to seventy-five percent assessed as submarginal for agriculture. Recommendations were made that at least twenty percent of the land be reforested. Reforestation advocates, thereby, gained support for their crusade.[298]

In the 1920s, Prohibition also gave the cutover an unsavory reputation. During Prohibition many areas around the country, of course, ignored or even flaunted the

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[296] Lucy B. Darr, "Ku Klux Klan Activity in Pierce, Polk, and St. Croix Counties, Wisconsin," Student Paper (University of Wisconsin-River Falls, 1959); Gough, *Farming the Cutover*, 93-114.
[297] Gough, *Farming the Cutover*, 93-114.
[298] Gough, *Farming the Cutover*, 164-5.

Nineteenth Amendment. Northern Wisconsin residents were generally "wet" on the issue. Economic hard times also encouraged the making of moonshine from potatoes. Some people in Luck in Polk County reputedly made this a "sideline." The cutover's remoteness and frontier-like environment along with its cross-roads position between the Twin Cities, Chicago, and Canada made it an ideal hideout for Chicago bootleggers. Al Capone allegedly spent $250,000 for a four-bedroom house equipped with machine-gun portals on Cranberry Lake in Sawyer County. In 1934, John Dillinger escaped to the cutover. His pursuit by the FBI and other law enforcement agents made national headlines, and helped create the image of northern Wisconsin as a lawless place.

The cutover's reputation was not helped either by stories published in Milwaukee newspapers that focused primarily on forest fires, hunting accidents, bear attacks, and any violent crime. The presence of unassimilated Native Americans along with the North Woods' reputation from the logging era as a haven for houses of prostitution also gave it an exotic and sinful place that needed reforming. However, the region unexpectedly got a reputation as an "upscale" vacation destination when Calvin Coolidge spent a ten-week summer vacation at Cedar Lake Lodge on the Brule River in Douglas County. Many elites became smittened by its "wilderness" ambience and thought it should become a resort location like New York's Adirondacks.[299]

For a variety of reasons then, settlers stopped coming to the cutover in the 1920s. The number of farms increased by less than three percent, and acreage only increased by a little more than four percent. When the Great Depression hit in the 1930s, farming in the cutover reached crisis proportions. While farm products declined throughout the state and even the nation, cutover farm products fetched a proportionally lower price for their goods. The sandy soil in the Pine Barrens produced grasses lacking in nutrition. Potato growing was also limited since the soil was too light and lacked the necessary plant foods. Dry summers turned into droughts for this sandy soiled region. Few farmers here practiced crop rotation or other means to improve pasturage. One observer described the cutover farms as, "Cropped fields...where a few cattle...find scanty grazing, are...These poorly fed and poorly cared for herds are the basis of a dairy industry...The industry is, however, small-scale in character, with poor barns and equipment and meager returns." Geographer Raymond E. Murphy admitted that the farms were too scattered for creamery trucks to collect milk profitably and farms were too far from the creameries to make a daily run. Farmers, however, began to find a summer market for their dairy products in the growing resort industry. To supplement their incomes many farmers turned to fur farming of beaver, silver fox, and chinchilla rabbits, as well as gray and white rabbits for meat. Many also turned to commercial cranberry growing in the marshy, acidic soil that ran through the Pine Barrens. Local Indians harvested wild rice by hand to supplement the tables of sportsmen.[300]

When the remaining land in the cutover went unclaimed, the old stumps and brush became an even worse fire hazard. Tens of thousands of acres burned in the 1930s

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[299] Gough, *Farming the Cutover*, 150-6.

[300] Raymond E. Murphy, "The Geography of the Northwestern Pine Barrens of Wisconsin," *University of* Wisconsin, 1(Madison, 1931), 70, 79, 84, 106.

convincing many experts in the state that farming had not "redeemed" the land in the cutover. To add insult to injury cutover residents were also more likely to need relief than their counterparts elsewhere in the state, and relief rates there matched other depressed regions of the country like Appalachia and the Dust Bowl area of the Great Plains. This put tremendous pressure on county agencies that required more in taxes but faced declining property values and a declining tax base. Since the 1920s tax delinquencies had become increasingly common in the cutover. This only increased during the Depression. Many farmers who could not pay their taxes simply gave up. "Almost as numerous as the occupied farms are the abandoned, tumbled-down farmhouses surrounded by fields going to waste," wrote Wisconsin geographer Raymond Murphy in 1931. "Sometimes only a few stones and a patch of quack grass remain to mark the site of a former home, and to give the impression of poor land and unsuccessful farming." The Pitted Sand Plain in northern Burnett, northwestern Washburn, and southeastern Douglas counties displayed characteristic features of farm abandonment. The first phase, Murphy noted, was that of "One little shack out in grassy barrens...occupied by an old man who formerly grew corn and a few other crops." Fire had destroyed much of the humus in the soil and many farmers neglected to build it back up. "After a year or two of use the corn field 'got away' and now is a bare expanse of ripple-marked sand." Near the shack a few vegetables are still grown, but they hardly repay the effort, and the old, paralytic settler barely manages to exist." In the second stage homes were abandoned, windows were broken, and cleared land was overgrown with quack grass. The third stage is marked by decayed, tumbled down homes, and the growth of scrub oak and jack pine. Murphy found few orchards in the Pine Barrens since frost often struck any time of the year. He was also critical of local farming practices. "Instead of the use of scientific farm practices to combat handicaps of soil and climate, the common practice seems to consist of meeting declining yields by cutting down acreage until returns are not enough to pay the taxes on the land, and the county must take possession."[301]

What was particularly depressing about the Pine Barrens and the cutover in the early 1930s was the lack of young people and children. "The region is characteristically one of people past middle age – weatherworn old Scandinavians who came here with their wives and children many years ago," wrote a contemporary observer. "The children have grown up and gone. The Barrens does not hold its younger generation. No new settlers are moving in, and one gets the impression that when the present hardy survivors pass on there will be none to take their places."[302]

Despite these problems northern Wisconsin did not experience a net population loss in the 1930s. When the urban industrial economy collapsed, rumors circulated that subsistence farming was possible in the North Country. Many unemployed city workers joined the "back-to-the-land movement" that sprang up in the decade. Between 1935 and 1940 the population increased in the cutover as did the number of farms. Most of these new settlers, however, "were not serious farmers. They saw themselves as temporarily

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[301] Gough, *Farming the Cutover*, 117, 123-9, 132-5; Murphy, "Northwestern Pine Barrens of Wisconsin," 70, 83, 88-9, 106.
[302] Murphy, "The Geography of the Northwestern Pine Barrens of Wisconsin," 70.

eking out a semi-subsistence existence, squatting on or renting cheap land, or perhaps living on part of a relative's farm." Gough claimed that these "farmers" had "a negative effect on agricultural development in the cutover." They did not clear new land or raise crops for market. "The properties they left behind when they moved on contributed to the image of the region as filled with abandoned farms."[303]

Despite these problems in the cut over, it was also the industrious yeoman farmer who managed to survive these economic hard times. By relying on family labor, the frugal household economy of the farm wife, off-farm work, and catering to the growing tourist industry, many farm families made it. Some even managed to redeem tax delinquent land before foreclosure. Gough found in his study that the majority of land that actually experienced foreclosure in 1930 belonged to individual speculators and land companies.[304]

However, New Deal agricultural programs were the last nails in the coffin for many family farmers in the cutover and across America. Large commercial farmers were more able to take advantage of these programs than subsistence and marginal farmers. The Agricultural Adjustment Act of 1933 aimed to raise farm prices through agreements to limit farm production. Farmers who had surplus acres and could still farm for the market as well as their families could participate in the program. The same held true for the Soil Conservation and Domestic Allotment Act of 1936. This act promoted conservation by encouraging farmers to remove land from cultivation. In sum, New Deal agricultural programs promoted the cash economy of commercial farming and undermined semi-subsistence farming. The Department of Agriculture also began to take the approach that lands that did not produce for the market were inefficient and unnecessary. These low-producing areas, it feared, would become another Appalachia if the surplus population not needed for commercial farming was not moved off the land. This view was reinforced by the migration of Kentuckians to northern Wisconsin. Through the 1930s Wisconsin underwent a series of relocation programs sponsored from federal, state, and county governments. This was a major reversal from the Jeffersonian ideal of the nineteenth century and the Country Life movement of the early part of the twentieth century.[305]

The Northern Wisconsin Settler Relocation Project, which began in 1934, specifically targeted the cutover. By 1940, when the Project ended $500,000 of federal funds had been used to purchase between four to five hundred farms in seven cutover counties. These included Sawyer and Bayfield Counties where the Namekagon River begins its meandering descent into the St. Croix River. W.A. Rowlands and Dean Christenson of the Wisconsin College of Agriculture requested the money from the U.S. Department of Agriculture then headed by Henry A. Wallace. L.G. Sorden, from the Agricultural Extension of the University of Wisconsin in Madison, headed the project. He was convinced this was the best course of action for both the farm families as well as for the future land use of the cutover. "All the settlers whose farms were purchased," he

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[303] Gough, *Farming the Cutover*, 136-9.
[304] Gough, *Farming the Cutover*, 146-9.
[305] Gough, *Farming the Cutover*, 179-81, 218, 225.

claimed, "were living on submarginal land, which was either too light and sandy, too stony and rough, or so isolated from markets that they were definitely uneconomic farm units." He felt the relocation was a great benefit since, "as many as 80% of the families whose farms were purchased received public aid." They clearly were not prospering in the cutover. "On the average, $2000 was paid per farm," Sorden reported. "These 'farms' ranged from a tar paper shack in the woods to a few quite well-developed farms."[306]

Of the families that relocated only 38 percent asked for new farms. They obtained financing from the Farm Security Administration. One-third decided to retire since they were too old to begin again elsewhere or take up a new line of work. The Wisconsin Rural Rehabilitation Corporation built "retirement homesteads" in northern Wisconsin for these people complete with modern conveniences, a large garden, and even a small barn for milk cows. The county maintained these homes for a nominal fee. Others chose new occupations ranging from woodworking, to general laborers, to resort work, to mercantile businesses. The title to the lands they vacated was transferred to federal, state, or county governments for forestry uses[307].

Sorden defended the relocation project in 1979 citing the fact that nearly all the families who were approached to relocate chose to do so. "When the project was explained and when the families were given time to think it over and talk it over with other people in whom they had confidence," explained Sorden, "98% of these families were willing to sell and relocate." Counties also benefited because "this isolated settler relocation project immediately made possible a saving in school costs of more than $15,000 per annum by closing rural schools." Sorden noted. "In addition, several thousand dollars worth of school transportation cost was eliminated. Road costs were reduced by the elimination of maintenance and snow plowing. Relief costs were cut materially by placing many of these families in a position to make their own living." Sorden took great satisfaction in the role he played in this project, and was confident that these people were given renewed hope "by their removal from isolated areas to established communities where they and their families [had] a chance to start over again with a more secure financial and social future."[308]

Historian Robert Gough, however, has taken a rather different perspective on outside intervention into the cutover. While farming did survive in the cutover after 1940, these farms either were worked part-time as a hobby or became much larger operations. In the 1930s, farmers with good land were encouraged by state experts to expand their holdings and turn to dairying. Those who did not have the capital or were not interested in the labor-intensive work of dairying farmed in a different way than the yeoman family farmer of yore. They grazed horses for recreational riders. They grew

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[306] L.G. Sorden, "Some Events in Wisconsin's Forest History." Paper delivered to the Forest History Association of Wisconsin, Inc., Wausau, Wis., 28-29, September 1979, 15, 17 in the Burnett County Historical Society.

[307] Sorden, "Some Events in Wisconsin's Forest History," 15-7; Gough, *Farming the Cutover*, 181-2 The researchers have been unable to find where these resettlement homes were. Archivists at the Wisconsin Historical Society in Madison were not able to locate any materials on this program.

[308] Sorden, "Some Events in Wisconsin's Forest History," 17.

Christmas trees, pumpkins, or ginseng, or became orchard farmers. Most depended upon income from off the farm, especially the "farm" wife. "The new economic plan for the cutover which deemphasized farming and stressed reforestation and tourism," Gough argues, "did not attract new residents to northern Wisconsin or enrich the ones who already lived there." In 1990, the Wisconsin counties with the lowest per capita income were all in the cutover. They included Burnett and Sawyer counties, as well as Forest, Iron, and Rusk.[309]

The reduction in farms and the changed nature of those that remained affected the social fabric of the cutover. "To those of us who helped clear a stump-farm from the cut-over, there is nostalgia for the events of those times," recalled one old-timer, "for the feeling of pride when another acre of clover was added, for the excitement of a burning pile of stumps, or for the alarm when a wild-fire swept across the nearest hill."[310] "No longer could the bonds of rural neighborhoods be fostered by school pageants and district business meetings in one-room schoolhouses," lamented Gough. "With school consolidation, the daily rhythm of life now centered more on urban places with schools...encouraging the expansion of urban and commercial attitudes into the countryside once dominated by the values of yeoman farming...For the people in the cutover committed to yeoman farming these were sad developments."[311]

Historians may be divided over the role played by the limitations of the cutover's environment in the region's failure to sustain family farms, but all agree that larger economic forces played an important role ending that dream. Settlers here began undercapitalized and with more debt that more "pure" homesteaders. They undertook the task of trying to transform the cutover into a farming community when new trends and economic realities were transforming America. Mechanized farming required fewer hands on the farm, but allowed for larger commercial farms. The agricultural slump of the 1920s and the Depression of the thirties made farming less viable for many family farms. The consequences were that by 1920 the majority of Americans lived in urban areas, and this trend would continue unabated for the rest of the century.[312]

In the 1920s and especially during the New Deal years of the 1930s conservation, the forestry movement, and the budding tourism industry had gained in strength and momentum. The yeoman farmer was no longer the icon of American society. Preserving the nation's forests and other natural resources and encouraging a variety of people to enjoy the outdoor life grew in importance. The Upper St. Croix and Namekagon Rivers were prime areas for recreational development and reforestation, both working in concert together. Although the Lower St. Croix was a more established and prosperous dairy land, it too faced the expanding needs for recreation as well as the spread of suburbia from the Twin Cities. As farming faded in the valley a new vision of how to order the

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[309] Gough, *Farming the Cutover*, 221-4

[310] Marple, *The Visitor Who Came to Stay*, n.p.

[311] Gough, *Farming the Cutover*, 221-3; James Kates, *Planning a Wilderness: Regenerating the Great Lakes Cutover Region* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), 15-31.

[312] Ibid., 232-3.

landscape was gradually winning acceptance. The myth of the yeoman farmer would yield to the myth of the "North Woods."

Chapter 4

Up North: The Development of Recreation in the St. Croix Valley

Written with Rachel Franklin Weekley

In 1936, the twenty counties of northwest Wisconsin cooperated in a tourist brochure that promoted the region as "Indian Head Country." The name was derived from the shape of Wisconsin's St. Croix borderland that appeared to the imaginative as the silhouette of a human profile. Pierce County was the chin, St. Croix County the mouth, and Burnett County formed a prominent "Roman" nose. For the tourist boosters the choice of "Indian Head" was obvious. Not only did the large nose suggest the Indian profile on the "Buffalo" nickel then in circulation, the Indian was the symbol of all that was uniquely American. The Indian was a symbol of wild, unrestrained nature. Never for a moment did the tourist promoters think of labeling the twenty county area "Swedish Head," or "Polish Head" country. Such a label was, of course, ludicrous even if it did call to mind some of the people who had devoted their lives to the unsuccessful effort to bring agriculture to the cutover. That history was to too recent, too painful, too prosaic. It would be as untrampled nature – a romantic, even ridiculous impossibility given the history of logging and farming – that the St. Croix region would be sold to the public.

As the St. Croix River began its emergence from wilderness to a developed and settled region, American attitudes towards nature and the wilderness were in a process of transformation. During the colonial era, America was seen, on the one hand, as a land of abundance and a refuge from Old World ills, but its primeval forests were also seen as a hostile wilderness filled with savage beasts and men. While it bestowed bounty on those able to meet its challenges, nature was a harsh taskmaster and it extracted a heavy price from those less fit. What enabled Americans in the first half of the nineteenth century to change their perspective on nature was the industrial revolution. Man became the master of nature instead of its victim. The industrial revolution, however, also scarred and even destroyed nature's beauty and exposed its fragility. At the hands of man nature was no longer to be feared, but cherished.[1]

This appreciation of nature had its roots in the eighteenth century Enlightenment when the natural world was held up as inspiration and a model for social organization. If human society followed the laws of nature instead of the dictates of the artificial, superstitious inequalities stemming from the medieval world of feudalism and traditional religion, it could find peace and harmony. These beliefs found expression through political, economic, social, and artistic channels. But whatever the ultimate aim, nature had to be experienced first hand. In eighteenth century England the term "picturesque"

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[1] Leo Marx, *The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America (London: Oxford University Press, 1964), 43-4.*

came to describe a natural scene that depicted the beautiful and evoked the sublime. This perspective on nature inspired the popular artistic genre of landscape painting. This glorification of nature continued into the early nineteenth century Romantic Movement with its reaction against the ugliness of the industrial revolution. Nature was not only beautiful, sublime and a guide to social order, but also a source of spiritual renewal for people severed from their rural roots in ugly urban cities.

In the United States the Romantic Movement developed its own unique perspective on nature. The English writer William Gilpin introduced to Americans the practice of rambling about the countryside in search of the beautiful and sublime and made "picturesque travel" a popular recreational pastime. It was trumpeted as a way to exercise both the mind and the body. Gilpin's tours of England's North and Lake Countries were used as models for American expeditions. The sparsely settled American landscape was ripe for "picturesque travel." The unspoiled vistas, mountains, valleys, lakes, and rivers came to be considered America's cathedrals and works of art that rivaled the manmade art treasures of the Old World, and certainly equaled or excelled any scenic wonders in Europe. Americans expanded the definition of the picturesque and applied it to their more rugged and unspoiled wilderness. The American wilderness came to be seen as part of the country's unique heritage and a national treasure, and became the subject matter for the paintings of the Hudson River School, the poetry of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, the prose of Ralph Waldo Emerson, and the philosophy of Henry David Thoreau.[2]

While the industrial revolution marred nature, it also ironically made nature more possible to enjoy. The invention of the steamboat and the railroad allowed people to experience natural wonders first-hand without forgoing many of the creature comforts of civilization. There they could experience spiritual renewal and regeneration from the more fast-paced and wearisome world of the city. While the wealthy had always been able to escape the city, their motivations had been chiefly to escape the heat, the smell, and the diseases that often plagued urban centers. Their country, mountain, or seashore retreats sought to duplicate the comforts of home, rather than lure them into the world of nature. But increasingly throughout the nineteenth century the wealthy were joined in these rural retreats by the expanding middle class who turned to the world of nature for health, recreation, and social activity.

This cultural context shaped the way late eighteenth and early nineteenth century white explorers and settlers perceived the St. Croix River Valley when they first ventured there. Its distinctive geographic formations, such as the "Old Man of the Dalles," provided explorers with navigation references, but also drew them into the unique splendors of the river valley. George Nelson, the Canadian fur trader who wintered in the valley in 1802-3, noted in his diary:

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[2] Roderick Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967); Hans Huth, *Nature and the American: Three Centuries of Changing Attitudes* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1990); Bart Christopher Richardson, *Picturesque Landscape Assessment: The Lower St. Croix* (Unpublished M.A., The University of Minnesota, 1993), 3, 27, 61, 78-9.

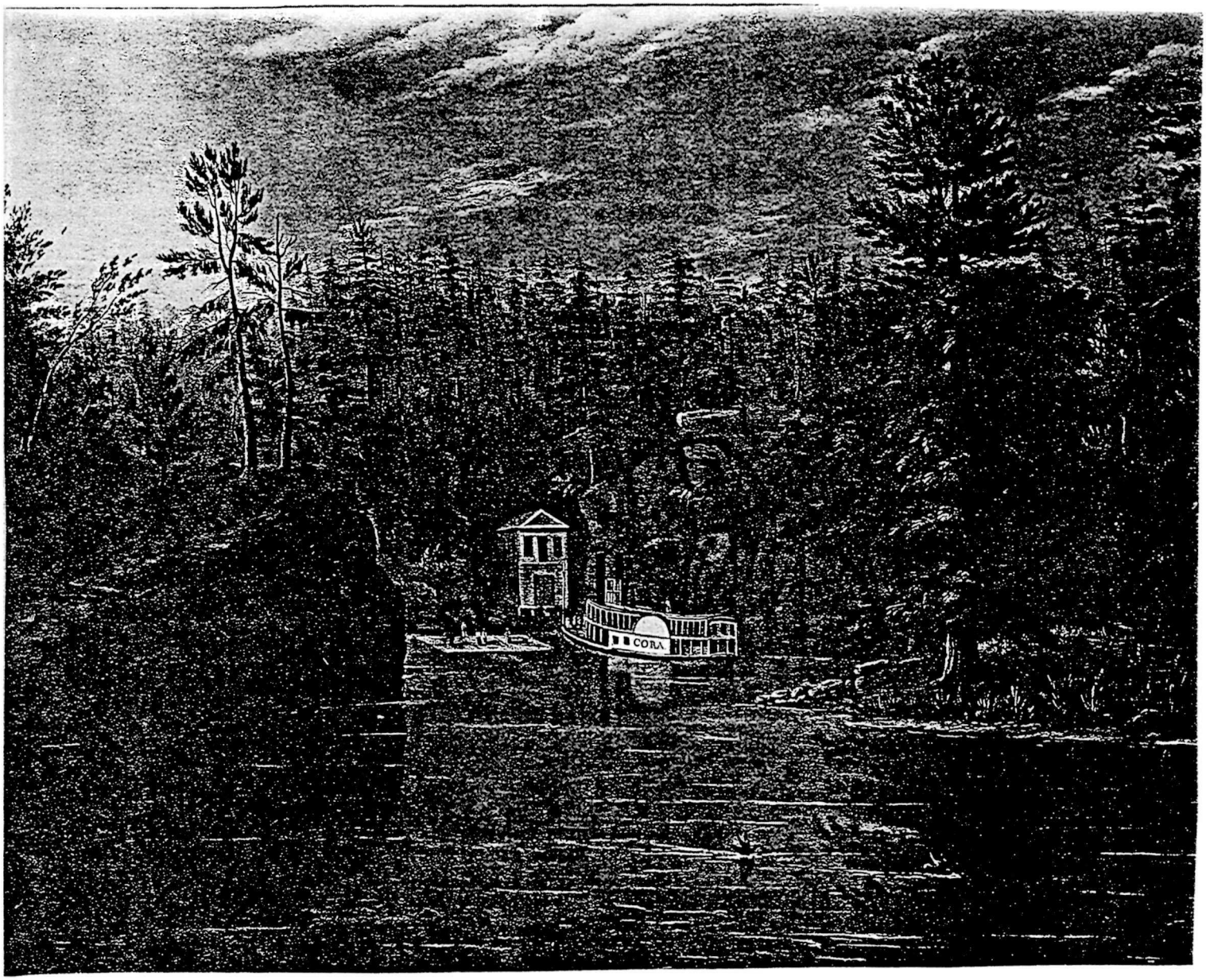


Figure 29. The "sublime" and romantic Dalles of the St. Croix was captured in this 1848 oil painting by Henry Lewis. Titled the "Gorge of the St. Croix" the painting helped to promote the St. Croix as an ante-bellum tourist destination.

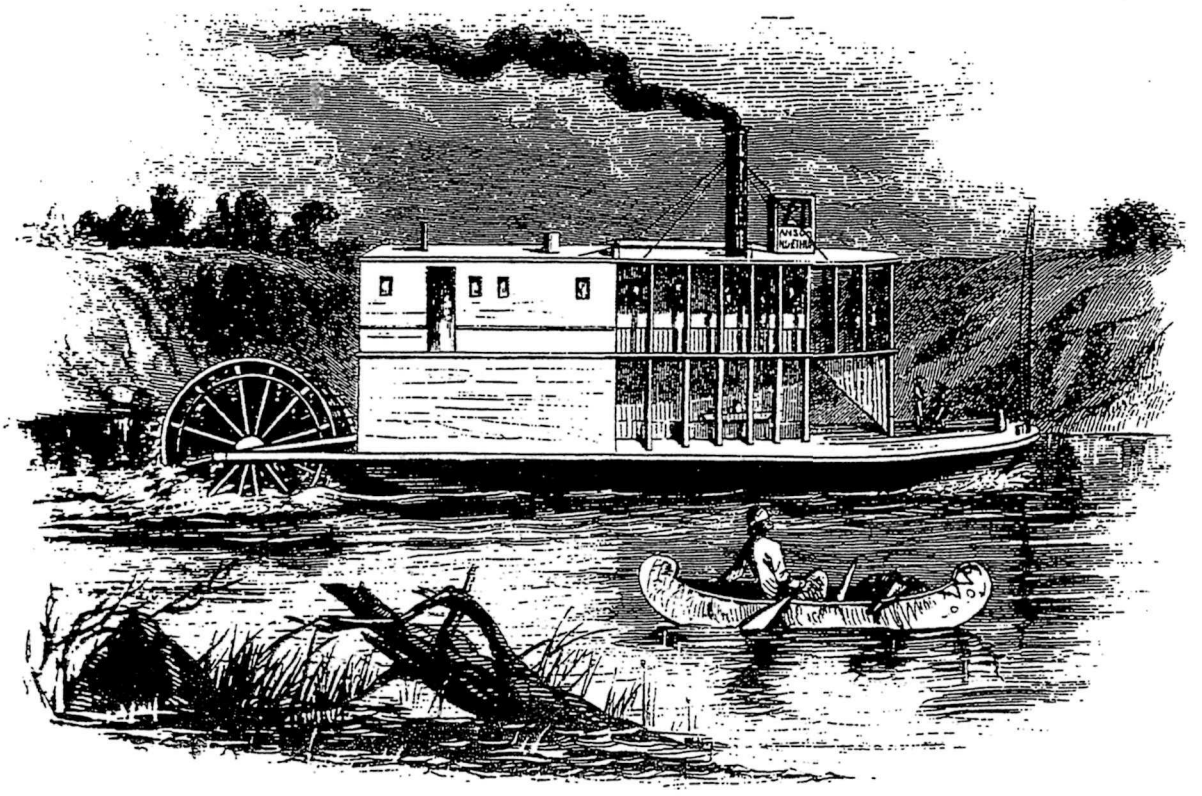


Figure 30. Steamboats provided tourists with easy access to the Upper Mississippi Valley and allowed tourism to begin as early as the 1830s and 1840s.

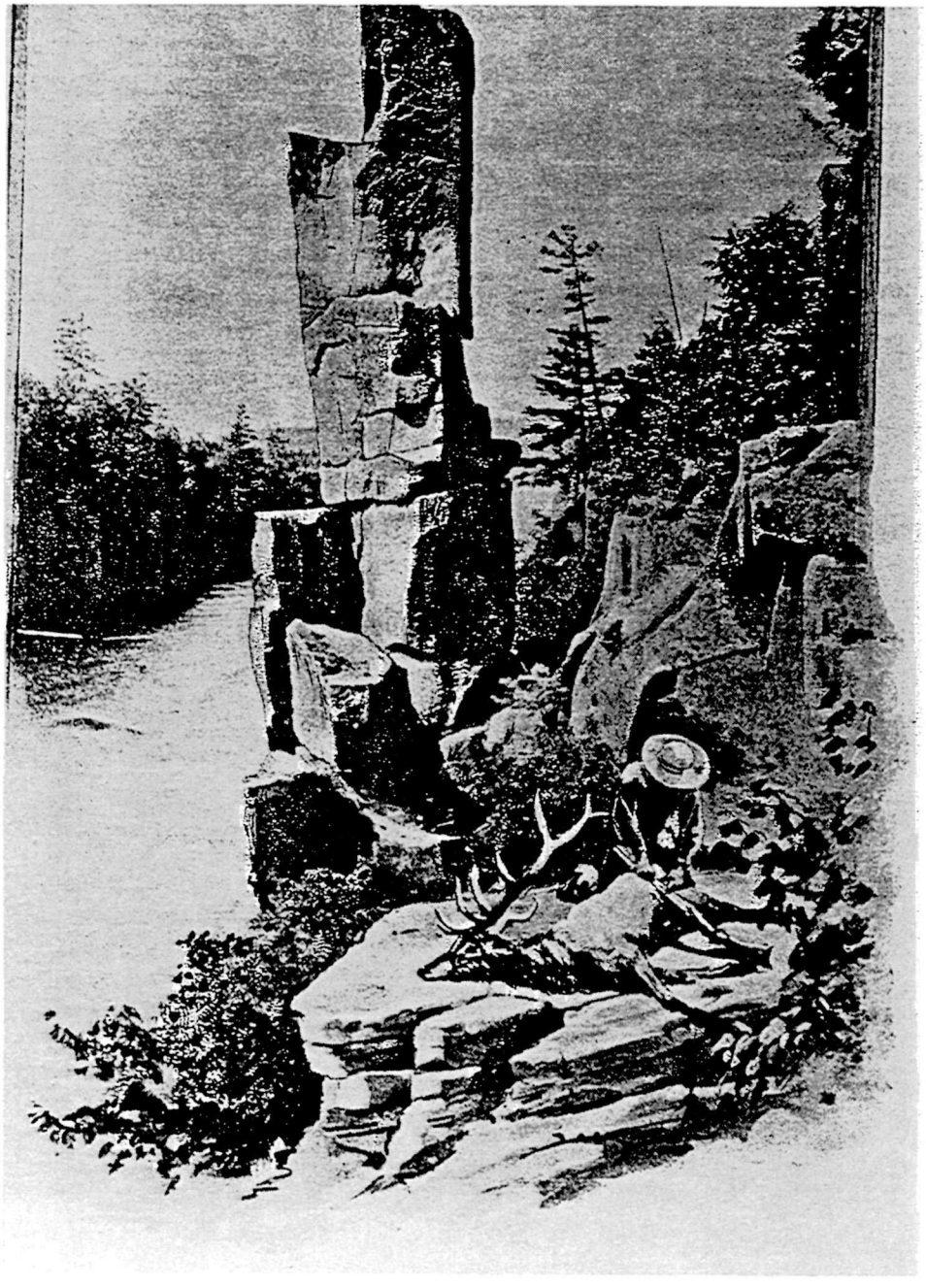


Figure 31. The Devils's Chair in the Dalles was just one of the picturesque sites that insured the establishment of the Interstate Park. From *Outing Magazine,* March, 1890.

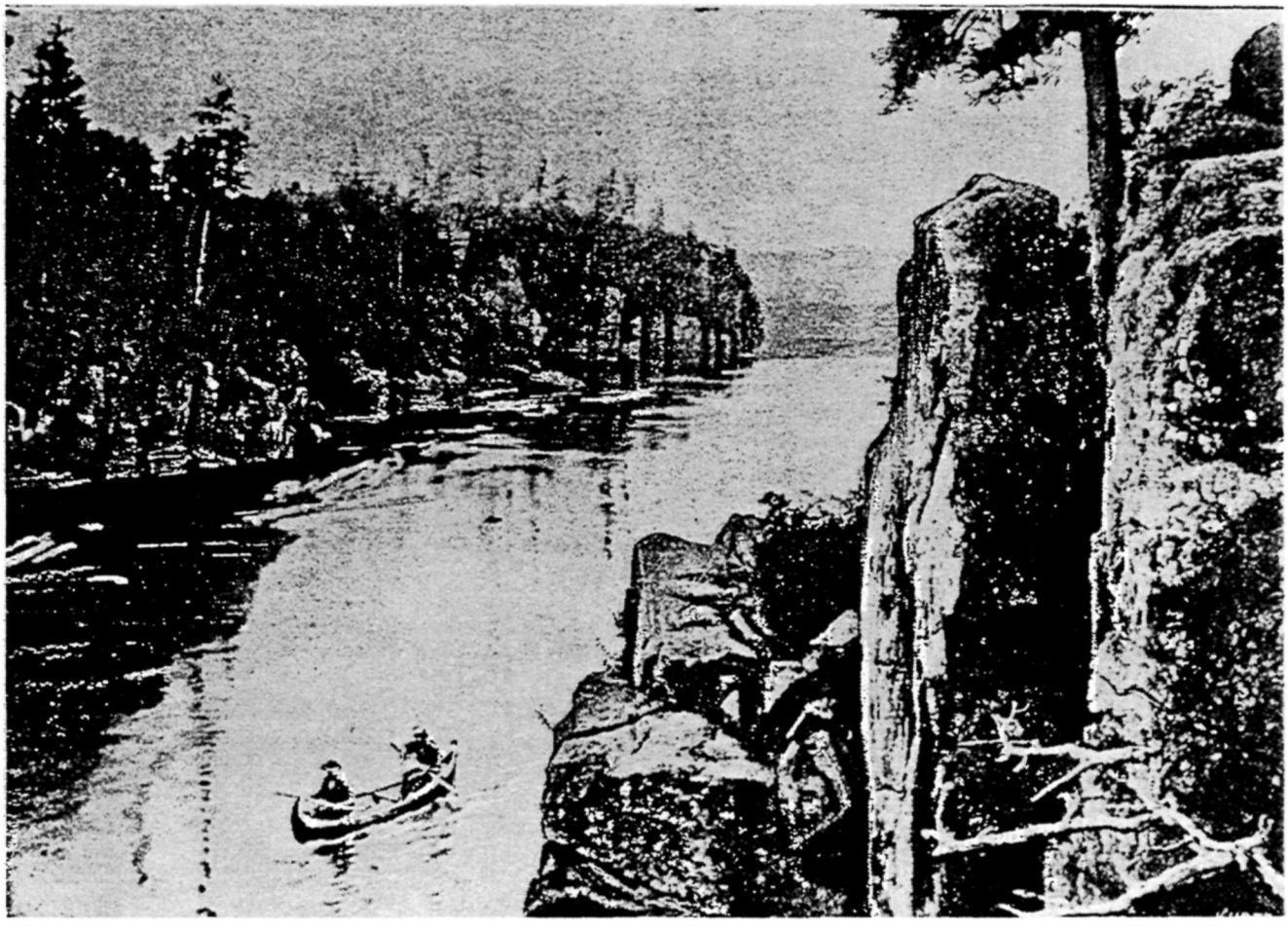


Figure 32. Canoeists pass Angle Rock on the St. Croix. From *Outing Magazine*, March, 1890.

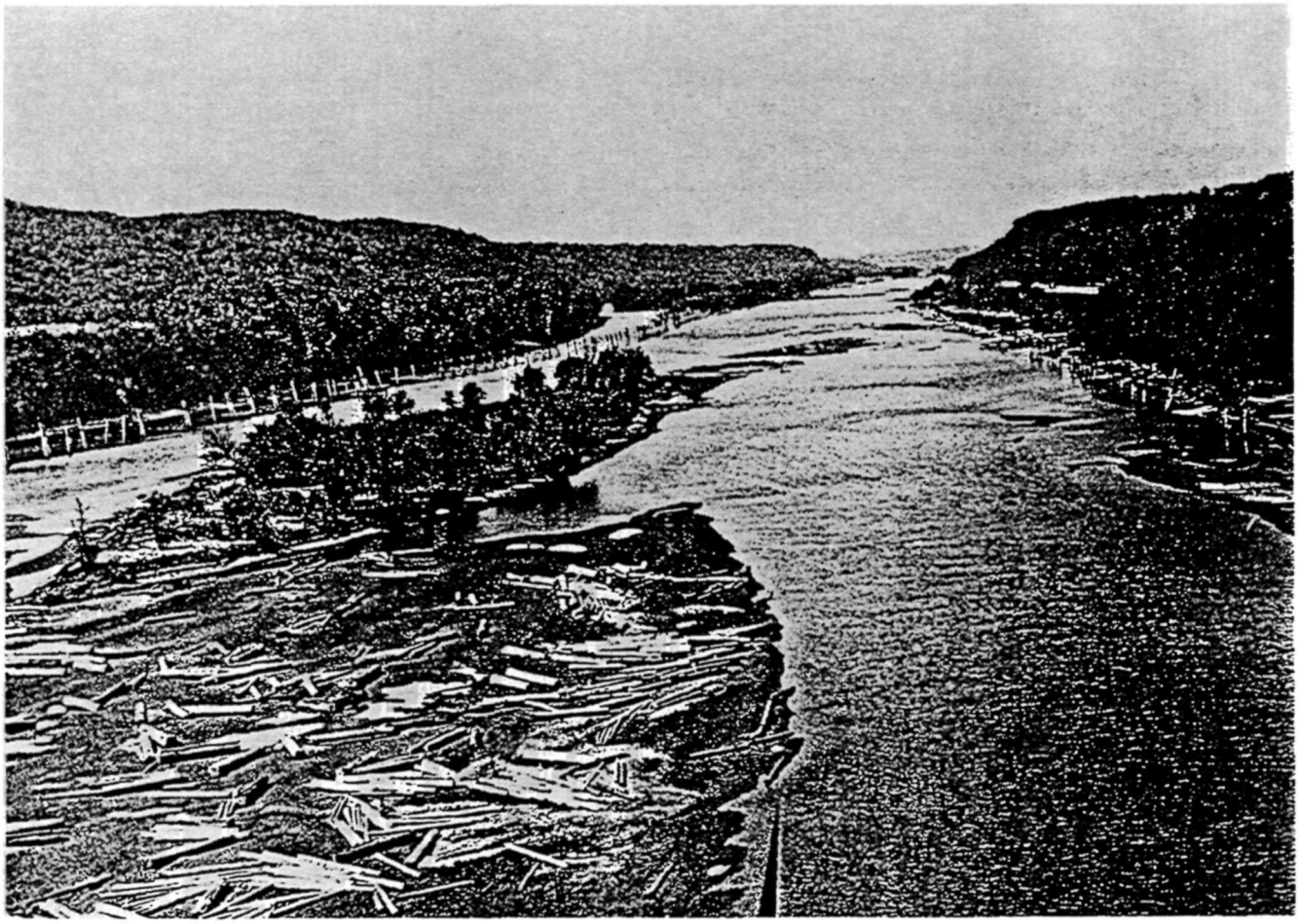
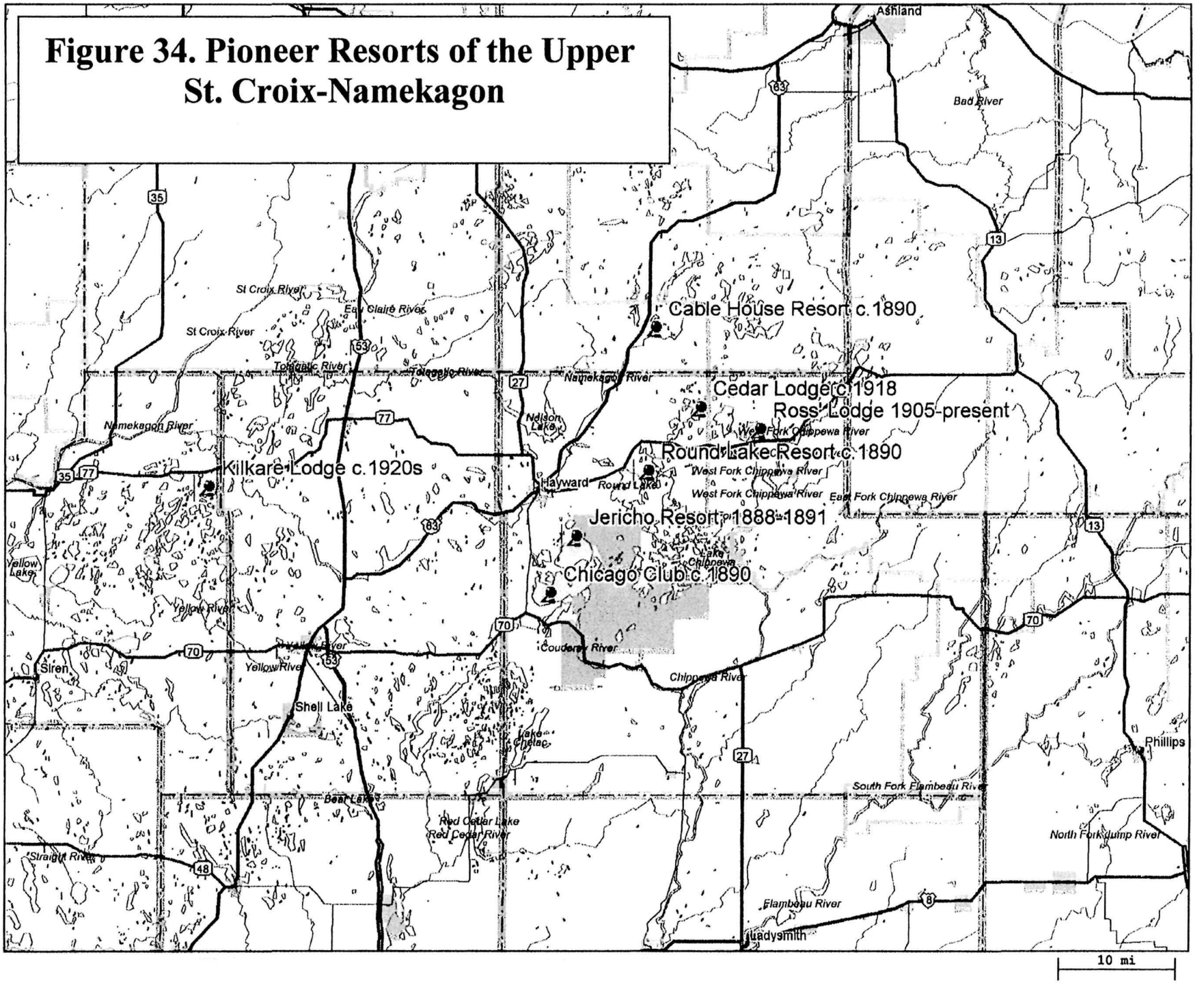


Figure 33. The lower St. Croix in the 1890s. Note the numerous logs washed up on sand bars. These logs posed a major hazard to recreational use of the river. From the State Historical Society of Wisconsin.

Figure 34. Pioneer Resorts of the Upper St. Croix-Namekagon



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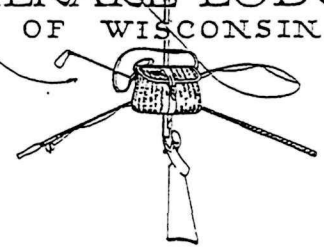

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Dear Sir:

How many times have you wished you could just drop the grim grind of business for a few days, and get away to some real, honest-to-goodness, next-to-Nature recreation? Without having to cross a dozen states or spent a mint of money to find it?

Hundred per cent relization of that sort--only a short train-trip or an average motor drive away, and at the same time really inexpensive--IS getting harder and harder to find every year. That's why, when we organized and announced KILKARE LODGE of Wisconsin, we practically closed out our entire membership quota the very first season.

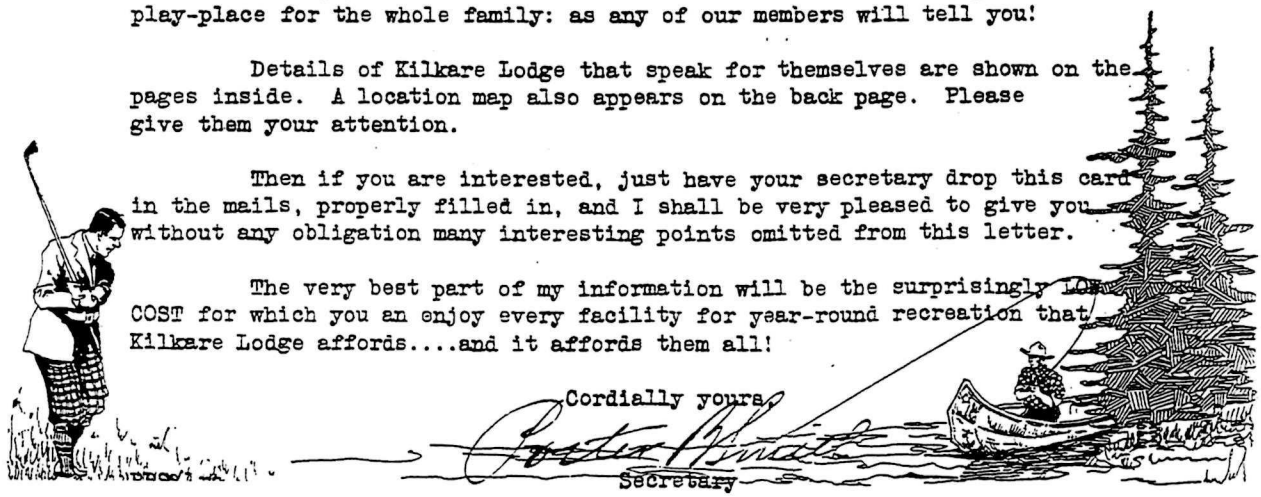
This letter, therefore (suggested by a mutual acquaintance who is already a "Kilkarian") is not in any sense part of the regulation "Membership drive." We do have open, however, a few more opportunities to join our congenial ranks--and I feel certain that once you know exactly what KILKARE LODGE has to offer, you will want to enjoy its advantages both for yourself and for your family. Soon!

Briefly....KILKARE is the city man's ideal set-up in a North Woods camp. Fully appointed Club House, our own farm, complete commissary, a chancy golf course, three lakes that are jewels, swimming, boating, trail-riding, shooting and trout-fishing. A hand-picked membership that you'll enjoy knowing. And just far enough away to give you picturesque solitude without cutting you off from civilization. Best of all, it's a perfect play-place for the whole family: as any of our members will tell you!

Details of Kilkare Lodge that speak for themselves are shown on the pages inside. A location map also appears on the back page. Please give them your attention.

Then if you are interested, just have your secretary drop this card in the mails, properly filled in, and I shall be very pleased to give you without any obligation many interesting points omitted from this letter.

The very best part of my information will be the surprisingly LOW COST for which you an enjoy every facility for year-round recreation that Kilkare Lodge affords....and it affords them all!



Cordially yours,

Porter B. Smith
Secretary

Figure 35. This Namekagon valley lodge was owned by Chicago sportsmen and highlighted for potential members its access via railroad or automobiles

Figure 36. Automobiles gave tourists of modest means an opportunity to explore the St. Croix valley. Here several cars await transportation across the river via the Soderbeck ferry. From St. Croix National Scenic Riverway files.

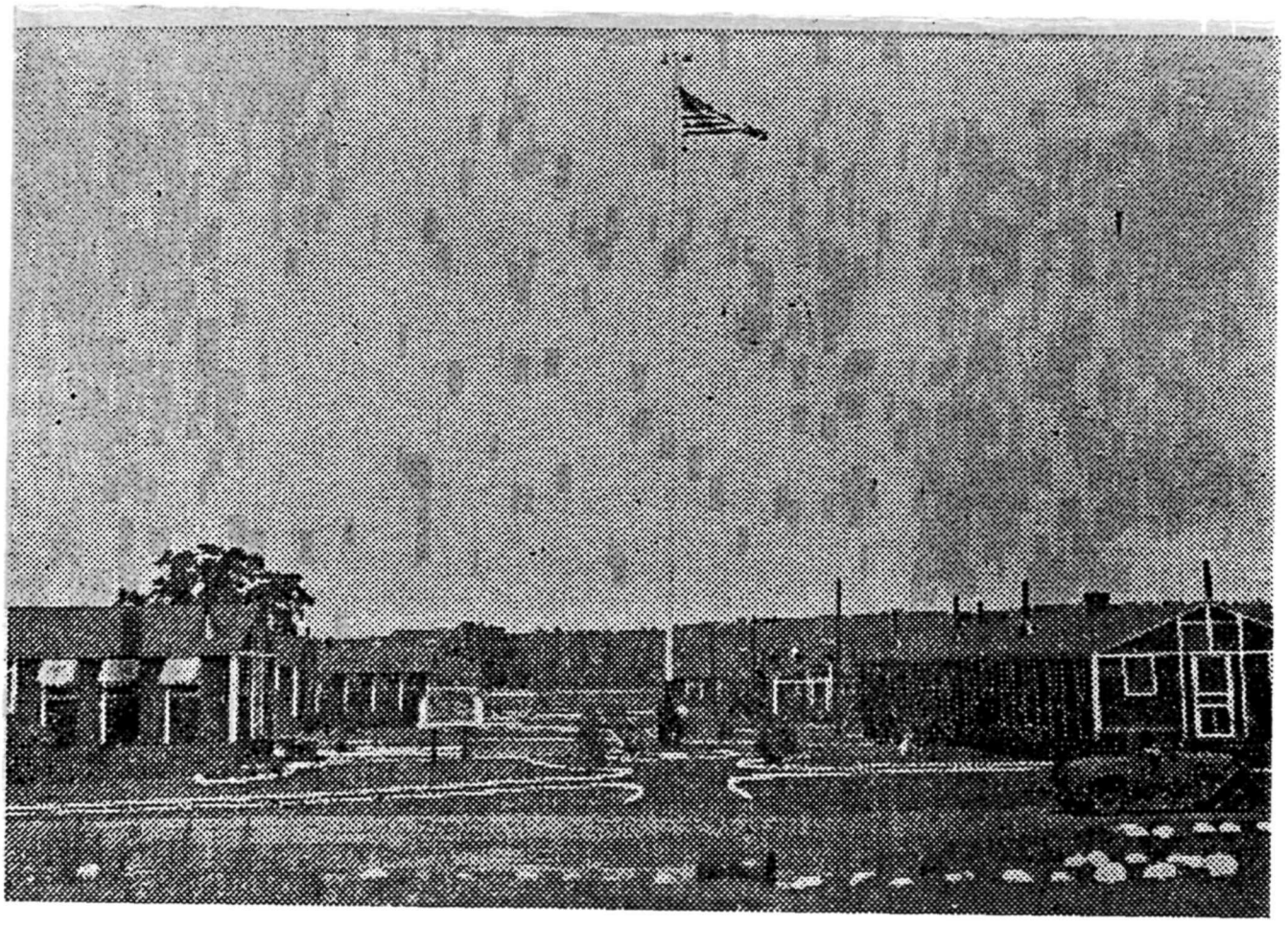


Figure 37. The Bayport Civilian Conservation Corps camp. The site is now occupied by an Anderson Windows warehouse. From the files of the St. Croix National Scenic Riverway.

> Whenever this country becomes settled how delightfully will the inhabitants pass their time. There is no place perhaps on this globe where nature has displayed & diversified lands & water as here. I have always felt as if invited to settle down & admire the beautiful views with a sort of joyful thankfulness for having been led to them. There is nothing romantic about them, frightful rock, & wild & dashing water falls. Nature is here calm, placid & serene, as if telling man, in language mute, indeed, -- not addressed to the *Ears*, but to heart & Soul: It is here man is to be happy: a genial & healthy climate – the rigour [sic] of winter scarcely three months, & in that time no very severe cold: I have diversified the land with hundreds of beautiful lakes all communicating with each other by equally beautiful streams, full of excellent fish, & ducks of twenty Species, Swans, & geese with abundance of rice for you & them. The borders well furnished with grapes, plums, thorn apples & butternut &c, &c. The Woods Swarming with Dears [sic] & bears & beavers: not one noxious or venomous animal insect or reptile: come my children, come & settle in this beautiful country I have prepared for you, & be happy.[3]

Nelson's paean to the Upper St. Croix Country was most likely added to his diary many years after his winter in the valley. It reflects the power of a picturesque landscape to overcome the realities of Nelson's last days on the river: cold, wet spring weather, rapids, portages, mosquitoes swarming, and king fear of a Dakota attack. Romanticism was necessary to transform a a truly wild landscape into a picturesque retreat and the mastery that came with technology and private property made possible the evolution of the Upper St. Croix from a battleground between the Chippewa and Dakota to the white man's "Indian Head" Country vacation destination.

Tourism in the Ante-bellum Years

Although it was the glowing accounts of the St. Croix's abundant natural resources that enticed the first permanent settlers to the region, tourists also began venturing into the St. Croix Valley to enjoy its natural splendors in the first half of the nineteenth century. "It was the Mississippi and its steamboats that inaugurated the trade and spread the fame of Minnesota as a vacation land," wrote historian Theodore C. Blegen, "promising to the enterprising tourist the adventure of a journey to a remote frontier coupled with the enjoyment of picturesque scenery and of good fishing and hunting." The first steamboat tourist to Minnesota was an Italian named Giacomo Beltrami who made the trip in 1823. He found the scenery and towering bluffs comparable to the beauty of the Rhine River.[4]

When Henry Schoolcraft documented the St. Croix River in 1832 for the U.S. Government, the river truly joined the ranks of the picturesque rivers of the world. "Its

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[3] Richard Bardon and Grace Lee Nute, eds. "A Winter in the St. Croix Valley, 1802-1803," *Minnesota History* 28(3)(September 1947): 149.

[4] Theodore C. Blegen, "'The Fashionable Tour' on the Upper Mississippi," M*innesota History* 20(4)(December 1939), 378.

banks are high and afford a series of picturesque views," he wrote. In 1837, Joseph N. Nicollet, a French expatriate, followed Schoolcraft's path exploring and mapping the Northwest Territories. He, too, was struck by Lake St. Croix's beauty. "The shores are rugged and steep, interrupted by lovely, sheltering coves," he related. "The shallows are plentiful. It is indeed a picturesque river."[5]

The first person, however, to recommend the Upper Mississippi Valley to tourists was George Catlin, a self-trained artist from Philadelphia. Catlin's ambition was to visually record North American Indians in their natural environment before they "vanished." In 1835 and 1836, he ventured into the Old Northwest Territory to record the Sioux Indians. Catlin was so enamored by the country that he encouraged a "Fashionable Tour" of a steamboat trip from St. Louis to the Falls of St. Anthony. He wrote:

> This Tour would comprehend but a small part of the great, "Far West;" but it will furnish to the traveler a fair sample, and being a part of it which is now made so easily accessible to the world, and the only part of it to which *ladies* can have access, I would recommend to all who have time and inclination to devote to the enjoyment of so splendid a Tour, to wait not, but make it while the subject is new, and capable of producing the greatest degree of pleasure.[6]

Many adventuresome travelers responded to Catlin's recommendation and began to take fashionable tours of the Upper Mississippi River. In 1837, the widow of Alexander Hamilton, Elizabeth Schuyler Hamilton, took the tour to Fort Snelling from the Falls of St. Anthony. She, of course, was given a royal welcome by the soldiers at the fort. When she returned to the East, she gave her stamp of approval for the "Fashionable Tour." It was, however, more the artists of the period who painted the Upper Mississippi Valley that enticed crowds to come here. In 1839, John Rowson Smith and John Risley painted a panorama of the Upper Valley, with which they then toured the country. The panorama was invented in England by Robert Barker in the latter half of the eighteenth century. There were several huge canvases done of landscapes. To transport them the canvases were rolled up into scrolls. These scrolls were then presented to the public by unrolling them in order one at a time or by displaying them in their entirety as a cyclorama. In the summer of 1848 Henry Lewis painted a panorama of the Mississippi between St. Louis and Fort Snelling that included scenes of the St. Croix. Lewis's painting "Gorge of the St. Croix," the first steamboat landing in the Dalles, and "Cheever's Mill," the beginnings of St. Croix Falls, were twelve feet high and twelve hundred yards long. His completed work of the Mississippi from the Falls of St. Anthony to New Orleans took up 45,000 square feet of canvas. Within a decade at least eight to ten panoramas of the Upper Mississippi toured the country.[7]

Honeymooning couples, small parties, and even groups of a hundred or more, soon made traveling the Upper Mississippi River a popular pastime. Some even

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[5] As quoted in Richardson, *Picturesque Landscape Assessment*, 100-1.
[6] George Catlin, *Letters and Notes on the Manners, Customs, and Condition of the North American Indians* (Philadelphia, 1857), 590-2.
[7] Blegen, "The Fashionable Tour," 381-2; Richardson, *Picturesque Landscape Assessment*, 83.

chartered their own boats to avoid the immigrant throngs and freight stops common on the usual steamboat runs up river. Tourists came from as far south as New Orleans, and when rail service reached the Mississippi from Chicago, Pittsburgh, New York, Boston, and even Europe. Artists and writers found the region inspiring and prominent politicians and journalists, such as Millard Fillmore and Thurlow Weed of New York, as well as other dignitaries made the Upper Mississippi an important stop on their travel itineraries. River towns made them feel like honored guests by welcoming them with gala receptions. It was the rare exception for a traveler up the Mississippi not to be struck by the beauty and grandeur of the scenery both by day and night, and to be fascinated by the first-hand glimpse of Indians in their traditional life.[8] "Indian Watching" was a unique attraction of a trip up the Upper Mississippi and St. Croix River and could be done in "safety." A Dubuque newspaper advertised the trip as a "convenient and certain" way to watch Indians living in their native world.[9]

During the summer of 1849, the travel writer Ephraim S. Seymour of New York State made his "Fashionable Steamboat Tour" of the Upper Mississippi River. He followed the usual path of tourists by starting in St. Louis. He made a stop in Galena and then traveled up river to Fort Snelling and the Falls of St. Anthony. Unlike other tourists who stayed on the Mississippi, Seymour ventured into the St. Croix Valley and set about collecting information on Indians and lumbering as well as describing in detail the scenery from the Willow River to St. Croix Falls. In 1850, he published *Sketches of Minnesota, the New England of the West*, which introduced the scenic splendor of St. Croix Valley to the American reading public. Seymour was also the first to promote the healthful benefits of the climate from ills such as ague, which plagued more southern climes, as well as consumption. In his book, Seymour related an encounter he had with an old friend from Galena whose health had been impaired by repeated attacks of cholera. The friend hoped a trip up river to Minnesota might restore his health. "A few days spent in sporting and fishing among the brooks, rivers, and lakes of this bracing climate," Seymour proclaimed, "had rendered him quite robust and healthy." And he advised that, "Such excursions might be recommended to many invalids, as far superior to quack medicines and expensive nostrums."[10]

During the 1840s northerners began to lure southerners away from the lower latitude resorts that they had patronized, such as the Virginia Springs and the Harrodsburg Springs of Kentucky. Some venturesome southern residents had also escaped from the oppressive heat of the South into the Hudson Valley and Niagara Falls. In 1842, Daniel Drake wrote *The Northern Lakes: A Summer Resort for Invalids of the South* that encouraged southerners to explore the Great Lakes region aboard ship. Drake claimed that by coming north of the 44 degree line of latitude one could escape "the region of miasms, musquitos (sic), congestive fevers, liver diseases, jaundice, cholera

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[8] Theodore C. Blegen, *Minnesota: A History of the State* (Minneapolis, Minn.: University of Minnesota Press, 1963), 118, 120, 156, 193; Blegen, "The Fashionable Tour," 382-8.

[9] William J. Petersen, *Steamboating on the Upper Mississippi* (Iowa City, Iowa: The State Historical Society of Iowa, 1968), 255.

[10] E.S. Seymour, *Sketches of Minnesota, The New England of the West* (New York; Harper & Brothers, 1850), 217.

morbus, dyspepsia, blue devil and duns!" The gentle rolling of the boat and cool lake breezes, he claimed, could cure hysteria and even hypochondraism. But before the era of widespread rail linkups, the Great Lakes were not easily accessible to those in the South. However, the Upper Mississippi River's "Fashionable Tour" was an attractive alternative with all the same healthful benefits.[11]

By the 1850s, the St. Croix attracted its share of travel writers and artists. In 1852, Edward Sullivan published *Rambles and Scrambles in North and South America* that described his adventurous canoe trip down the Brule and St. Croix Rivers. And in 1853, Elizabeth F. Ellet traveled up the St. Croix in the comfort of a side-wheeler steamboat with thirty staterooms to "explore" the frontier. Her explorations resulted in the travelogue, *Summer Rambles in the West,* which eloquently described in picturesque terminology the scenery of the Dalles and the Lower St. Croix Valley. She wrote of the Dalles:

> Within a short distance of the termination of our voyage, a scene presented itself which nothing on the Upper Mississippi can parallel. The stream enters a wild, narrow gorge, so deep and dark, that the declining sun is quite shut out; perpendicular walls of traprock, scarlet and chocolate-colored, and gray with the mass of centuries, rising from the water, are piled in savage grandeur on either side, to a height of from one hundred to two hundred feet above our heads, their craggy summits thinly covered with tall cedars and pines, which stand upright at intervals on their sides, adding to the wild and picturesque effect; the river hemmed in and overhung by the rocky masses, rushes impetuously downward, and roars in the caverns and its worn by the action of the chafed waters. These sheer and awful precipices, mirrored in the waters, are here broken into massive fragments, there stand in architectural regularity, like vast columns reared by art; or some gigantic buttress uplifts itself in front of the cliffs, like a ruined tower of primeval days.[12]

Through the 1850s and into the 1880s, the St. Croix attracted local artists well versed in the picturesque. Robert Sweeny was a St. Paul pharmacist turned artist. In 1858, the Minnesota Historical Society commissioned him to paint flowers, plants, and Indian artifacts. He then turned his attention to the St. Croix and painted in a documentary-like fashion the lumber mill sloughs at St. Croix Falls, the wood arch bridge over the river at Taylors Falls, and Indians coming ashore on Lake St. Croix, and the Dalles. His paintings and sketches depict the picturesque qualities of the wilderness. Augustus O. Moore followed Sweeny. His sketches aimed to show that in the St. Croix Valley man and nature could live harmoniously. Another artist of the St. Croix was Elijah E. Edwards who was principal of the Chisago Seminary, as well as clergyman, professor, and writer. Many of his painting and sketches were of the Dalles with an eye for light and romantic views, but they also included sketches of the other rivers and water falls in the valley. Many of these paintings and sketches can by found in the Minnesota

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[11] Daniel Drake, *The Northern Lakes: A Summer Resort for Invalids of the South* (1842; reprint, Cedar Rapids, Iowa: The Friends of the Torch Press, 1954), 19-20.

[12] Elizabeth Fries Ellet, *Summer Rambles in the West* (New York: Reiker, 1852), 143.

Historical Society collection.[13] While these artists recorded and interpreted the St. Croix River, their influence only extended to the local region in attracting visitors.

By the mid-nineteenth century many towns along the river, such as Prescott, Hudson, Stillwater, Osceola, and Taylors Falls provided hotel accommodations for both new settlers and some venturesome tourists. Tourism in the St. Croix Valley got a boost from the Twin Cities when John P. Owens, the editor of the St. Paul *Minnesotan*, took an excursion on the steamboat, *Humbolt*, in 1853. "The little Humbolt is a great accommodation to the people of the St. Croix," he wrote. "She stops anywhere along the river to do any and all kinds of business that may offer, and will give passengers a longer ride, so far as *time* is concerned, for a dollar, than any other craft we ever traveled upon." The boat graciously stopped at Marine Mills to allow its hungry travelers to lunch at the Marine House. Owen also stopped in Taylors Falls and made an assessment of this town's accommodations. "This Chisago House, is *better furnished*, and as well kept – barring the inconvenience of having no meat and vegetable market at hand – as any house in St. Paul, St. Anthony, or Stillwater," he wrote. "We never hated to leave a place so much in our life, when absent from home."[14]

By the mid-1850s, the St. Croix Valley had a good introduction to the traveling public. Minnesota, however, courted tourists more aggressively to its "Land of Ten Thousand Lakes" than did Wisconsin. Therefore, the valley remained off the beaten path for most tourists. As early as the 1850s Minnesota was determined to create recreational retreats that could rival eastern resorts, such as Saratoga Springs in New York State. Many hoped it would become the playground of the wealthy. Minnesota historian Theodore Blegen has written that tourism in Minnesota began with the establishment of journalism in the territory. "Every newspaper was a tourist bureau," he claimed. James M. Goodhue, the editor of the *Minnesota Pioneer*, was a leading booster of the recreational attractions of the territory. He made appeals to residents all along the Mississippi to escape the epidemics of cholera and malaria that plague southern climes for the healthy air and cool breezes of the North Country. "'Hurry along through the valley of the Mississippi, its shores studded with towns...flying by islands, prairies, woodlands, bluffs – an ever varied scene of beauty, away up into the land of the wild Dakota, and of cascades and pine forests, and cooling breezes.'"[15] John W. Bond, the premiere pamphlet promoter for Minnesota, wrote in 1853 "we have springs equal to any in the world." Rather than lure easterners, however, the ease of travel up the Mississippi made the target audience southerners. "Gentlemen residing in New Orleans can come here by a quick and delightful conveyance," Bond explained, "and bring all that is necessary to make their living comfortable in the summer months, and a trifling expense. For a small sum of money they can purchase a few acres of land on the river and build summer cottages." Bond intended to promote the Falls of St. Anthony, which he believed would "rank with Saratoga, Newport, and the White Mountains in New

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[13] Richardson, *Picturesque Landscape Assessment*, 110-2.

[14] Willoughby M. Babcock, "The St. Croix Valley as Viewed by Pioneer Editors," *Minnesota History: A Quarterly Magazine* Vol. XVII (1936): 280.

[15] Theodore C. Blegen, "The 'Fashionable Tour,' on the Upper Mississippi" *Minnesota History* 20(December 1939), 378-9, 386.

Hampshire.[16] In 1854, Earl S. Goodrich, the editor of the *St. Paul Pioneer,* beckoned southerners to the cooler, more refreshing northern retreats with biblical allusions. "Miserable sun-burned denizens of the torrid zone," he wrote, "come to Minnesota all ye that are roasting and heavy laden and we will give you rest."[17]

Travel writing, art, and real estate promotion all blended together in the effort to highlight Minnesota. By the late 1850s, Minnesota's beautiful lakes and streams were painted by Edwin Whitefield. Whitefield had also done landscapes and residences in the Hudson River Valley and the Mississippi River. By 1856, his travels brought him to St. Paul. As an artist and newly established land speculator, Whitefield captured the beauty and promoted Minnesota lakes and land through his paintings. Within the next few decades many tourists left the fashionable river tours and explored a Minnesota where ghosts of Indians and explorers still lingered.[18]

Despite its scenic beauty, however, the St. Croix was primarily a working river. The only means of travel was by steamboat, and what boats plied its waters were not luxury crafts, but packets and freight boats carrying supplies, livestock, export items, and pioneer settlers. The St. Croix Boom north of Stillwater also hindered the free flow of river traffic, as did the seemingly endless stream of logs floating down river. By summer's end the log run was finished, but the warmer, drier season lowered the water levels and exposed sandbars and narrower channels making excursions more difficult, but not impossible. In August 1859, an excursion steamer disembarked from Stillwater with thirty-five to forty citizens aboard. The *Kate* picked up more passengers at Marine and Osceola bringing its number to nearly a hundred. For the occasion, the boat was decorated with banners and evergreens. Although it left early in the day, the steamer did not reach the Dalles until the following morning due to "unavoidable detentions on account of the low stage of the water and heavy freight," and was hung up on bars. Apparently the passengers were not very put out by the long trip as the delay was "amply atoned for, in the privilege of passing through the "Dell' just as the sun was peeping over the mountains and dispelling the most beautiful mist and spray from that most beautiful and romantic spot."[19]

Despite the problems for travel on the St. Croix, the towns along the water still enthusiastically planned for and promoted their attractions, hoping to cash in on tourists venturing into the Old Northwest. In 1857, the four-story Sawyer House was built in Stillwater. It was considered the largest and finest hotel in the Minnesota Territory. Its "spacious rooms for social events made it one of the outstanding hostelries in the development of Minnesota."[20] Summer cottages were planned for the shores of Lake St. Croix. "The day is not far distant," claimed *The Messenger*, "when nice cottages...will reflect their white and dancing shadows from the bosom of Lake St. Croix." In June

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[16] As quoted in Paul Clifford Larson, *A Place at the Lake* (Afton, Minn.: Afton Historical Society Press, 1998.), 15.
[17] *St. Paul Pioneer* (St. Paul, Minn.), 1854
[18] Larson, *A Place at the Lake*, 11-3.
[19] *The Messenger* (Stillwater, Minn.), 9 August 1859.
[20] Rosenfelt, *Washington*, 300.

1857, the *St. Paul Advertiser* gave Marine a boost claiming, "to the invalid, the pleasure seeker, as well as the sportsman, no place affords more ample inducements for sojourn and recreation."[21] In 1859, Stillwater welcomed regional visitors to its Fourth of July festivities. The steamer *Itasca* brought visitors from St. Paul and other stops along the Mississippi. The passengers enjoyed the annual parade, a German Singing Society, and tumblers from the Turner Society. After a cold supper in the armory, the visitors enjoyed a ball at the Sawyer House until the whistle from the boat summoned them for their late night journey home.[22]

Slavery and the Civil War put a damper on tourism in the late 1850s and early 1860s. While outright abolitionism was not much of a force in Wisconsin or Minnesota, "Free Soil, Free Labor, and Free Men" was. In the summer of 1860, a Mississippi slave owner vacationing at the popular Winslow House in St. Anthony brought along a slave woman named Eliza Winston. Winston had apparently been promised her freedom, and once on free soil she gained the support of an abolitionist and petitioned the Minnesota court for her release from bondage. The court sided with her and granted her request with no challenge from her master. Anti-abolitionist sentiment, however, had been aroused whereby a mob proposed to send Winston back to her master and tar-and-feather the abolitionist who aided her. The Undergrounded Railroad whisked her to Canada and the matter was legally ended. Hotel owners, however, feared the loss of southern tourists' patronage if they risked losing their slaves if they brought them along. The *Stillwater Democrat* warned that the "'intermeddling propensities of Abolition fanatics' would keep nearly a hundred of wealthy Southerners and the Negro servants from spending the summer along the shores of Lake St. Croix." But by the next spring the war had started and southern visitors stopped coming.[23]

While the Civil War brought a halt to the tourist trade, the local population found the river a delightful break from their daily toils. For many pioneers, a steamboat trip along the St. Croix was their first opportunity to view the panorama of the valley. "This was our first visit to the Upper St. Croix," wrote a member of an excursion party in 1859, "and we must admit that all our pre-conceived ideas of the beauty and grandeur of the Valley, fell far below the reality. To those fond of the wild and beautiful in Nature, we know of no place, East or West, where such a taste can be more fully gratified than in the vicinity of Taylor's Falls."[24] In August 1856, the editor of the *Prescott Transcript* rounded up a party to take a steamboat excursion trip up to Taylors Falls. "The weather was delightful," he reported, "the boat [was] provided by Capt. Martin and his obliging assistants with every possible accommodation, and all were in fine spirits...The scenery along the lake and river was observed with a pleasant interest by the party, to the most of whom it was new." The group was also intrigued "by the antics of some forty or fifty thousand big sturgeon that gave us a grand fancy dance around the boat as we passed

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[21] As quoted in Dunne, *The St. Croix*, 204.
[22] Anita Albrecht Buck, *Steamboats on the St. Croix* (St. Cloud, Minn.: North Star Press of St. Cloud, Inc., 1990), 119-20.
[23] Dunn, *The St. Croix*, 205; Blegen, *Minnesota*, 237.
[24] *The Messenger* (Stillwater, Minn.), 9 August 1859.

along...They present one of the most interesting piscatory sights imaginable."[25] The abundance of game along the river not only provided sustenance for the first pioneers, but also supplied the sportsman with a wide variety of birds, animals, and fish. From its earliest days of settlement sportsmen were also attracted to the St. Croix Valley. In his 1849 book, *Sketches of Minnesota,* Seymour wrote to his nationwide audience that the lower St. Croix Valley was "a fine country for sportsmen...Deer are killed here in great numbers...The bear and the large gray wolf are often seen. Wild geese and ducks resort here in great numbers...The best trout fishing in the northwest is said to be on the Rush River. They are caught in immense quantities, not only with hooks, but also with scoop-nets." Seymour also noted that the St. Croix had groves of trees "alive with pigeons, which were constantly rising from the ground in large flocks." The birds he referred to are the now extinct passenger pigeons that once crowded midwestern skies in the nineteenth century.[26] "The country surrounding our city is filled with game," boasted the *St. Croix Union* in 1854. "Not infrequently do we hear a sportsman relate the experience of deer shooting...or what sport they had in 'bagging' a drove of prairie chickens. Deer are so plentiful...Our hunters have become so well acquainted with the habits of this animal and so adept in the use of the rifle that it is a matter of no common occurrence to find their tables well supplied with venison...We have a great many streams filled with [trout], and it is fine sport for those who are disposed to engage in it."[27]

One unusual method to hunt deer was created by a Dutch hunter named Otto Neitge. In 1853, Neitge bought land in what is now Deer Park. Within five years he built a trap to catch deer with an eleven-foot palisade of posts. Deer could jump in but they could not get back out. Once a herd of one hundred became trapped inside the park, Neitge shot and slaughtered the annual increase, which he then sold in St. Paul and to Fort Snelling. Neitge also tried to do the same with bears, but they proved too troublesome. In 1874, the North Wisconsin railroad passed through Deer Park, and many people discovered Neitge's deer hunting secret. He developed a reputation as "a low, cowardly" sportsman who "shot, from between the poles of the stockade, many of the captive deer." This prompted Neitge to abandon this form of hunting, but his park lives on as a village name.[28]

In the 1850s, between Marine and Taylors Falls was an area valley residents called in the 1850s the "bear hunting ground." The innkeeper at the Marine Mills Hotel loved to serve this local delicacy to his visitors. From time to time a "General Bear Hunt" was organized out of Prescott for a two-day excursion for "all who desire to share in the sport." An amateur poet from Hudson enticed hunters with the following:

> Come on then, ye sportsmen with high boots, rifle and blanket, and I will shortly conduct you to the forests where my forefathers, as they chased the swift elk and the huge black bear, would proudly exclaim,

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[25] *St. Croix Union* (Stillwater, Minn.) 29 August 1856.
[26] Seymour, *Sketches of Minnesota*, 205, 212, 216.
[27] *St. Croix Union* (Stillwater, Minn.) 10 November 1854.
[28] Earl Chapin, "The Strange Story of the Dutch Hunter," *Wonderful Western Wisconsin* (N.p., 1967).

No pent-up willow huts contain our powers,
But the unbounded wilderness is ours.[29]

Since winters were so cold and long, many hearty souls took to winter sports. In the winter of 1863, the Stillwater *Messenger* announced, "Members of the Skating Club and all others are invited to call and examine our stock of skates, skating caps, hoods, nubias, sontags, balmoral skirts, balmoral shoes, gloves, mitts, &c."[30] A year later the paper reported, "The warm days and cool nights we have had lately have made the skating good upon the lake, and large crowds are enjoying the sport during this pleasant weather."[31] Springtime brought out the baseball enthusiasts of the St. Croix Baseball Club.[32]

When the war was over, the St. Croix Valley returned to the national scene. Famed journalist Horace Greeley visited the St. Croix Valley in 1865. He was not only impressed by its wheat production, but also by its healthy climate, and recommended the area for those plagued by ague and chronic coughs. The Stillwater *Messenger* quickly echoed these sentiments. The paper even joined in the exaggerations that often accompanied the literature written about the health benefits of the area. "Pine emits an odor peculiarly healing and highly beneficial for invalids, hence it is no uncommon thing for small parties to take up their quarters in the wilderness, and spend the winter there with numerous gangs of lumbermen."[33] Consumption suffers, in particular could find relief in the pineries of the upper St. Croix. A poem was even written about the health-giving pine trees:

For health comes sparkling in the stream
From Namekagon stealing;
There's iron in our northern winds,
Our pines are trees of healing.[34]

Health seekers from the South and East were also enticed back to the region after the war by handbooks, such as *Tourists' and Invalids' Complete Guide and Epitome of Travel.*[35] By the end of the 1870s southerners began to come to the St. Croix again in noticeable numbers. "Capt. Jack Reaney came up on the steamer Knapp Tuesday, and has been rusticating in the upper St. Croix Valley for a few days," wrote the *Burnett County Sentinel.* He informs us that the tourists from the south are coming up in large numbers, and many of them find their way to the St. Croix river."[36]

By the 1860s, a new medium was developed that was able to portray the unique scenery of the St. Croix to a wider audience -- the stereograph. Between the 1860s and

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[29] As quoted in Dunn, *The St. Croix*, 211-2.
[30] *The Messenger* (Stillwater, Minn.) 1 December 1863.
[31] *The Messenger* (Stillwater, Minn.), 8 March 1864.
[32] *The Messenger* (Stillwater, Minn.), 31 July 1867.
[33] Dunn, *The St. Croix,* 197-203; Buck, *Steamboats on the St. Croix* , 118-20.
[34] As quoted in Dunn, *The St. Croix*, 203.
[35] *Stillwater Lumberman* (Stillwater, Minn.) 29 June 1877.
[36] *Burnett County Sentinel* (Grantsburg, Wis.), 22 August 1879.

1880s making and selling stereographs of the St. Croix became a profitable business. The most noted photographers of the St. Croix in this period were William Illingworth, Charles A. Zimmerman, William Jacoby, and Benjamin Upton, and Joel E. Whitney. Whitney was the first major commercial photographer in Minnesota. While he began his business taking daguerreotypes of people, in the 1850s he brought his camera along on a twenty-five mile hike around St. Paul and St. Anthony taking eighty landscape pictures. By the 1860s, the demand for landscape photographs became the "bread and butter" of commercial photographers, and the St. Croix Valley was included in the search for these picturesque and sublime pictures.[37]

In 1875, John P. Doremus of Patterson, New Jersey began photographing the river as part of a "floating gallery" on a boat that was "a little palace itself." "He started out from St. Anthony over a year ago," related the *Lumberman*, "with the intention of taking views along the Mississippi and its tributaries down to New Orleans." The paper expressed appreciation for his carefully considered photos. "He takes it leisurely and does his work in fine shape, the views he has of the St. Croix being the best we have ever seen." The charms of the St. Croix were now visually documented to attract more tourists looking to escape the oppressive heat, humidity, and illness of the lower Mississippi.[38] The St. Croix Valley's fame spread further when in 1885 Eastman's roll film was developed. In 1900, Kodak's Brownie camera made photography easier and cheaper for visitors to the St. Croix to share their experiences with friends back home.[39]

Railroads Promote Tourism and the Resort Industry

While the visual fame of the St. Croix Valley spread throughout the latter half of the nineteenth century, the tourist business on the St. Croix River took off in the 1870s ironically with the arrival of the railroad. Unfortunately train travel ended the "Fashionable Tour" by steamboat up the Mississippi. Taking a steamboat for other than a day trip came to be seen as "old fogyish." Steamboat day trips, however, remained the most attractive and unique tourist attraction in the St. Croix Valley. Boat owners realized early on they could enhance their profits by offering not only regular transportation for residents and newcomers, but also offer pleasure excursions. Inexpensive fares encouraged the locals to take advantage of the opportunity for a day trip into the beauty of their river valley.

With connections to St. Paul, Milwaukee, and Chicago local steamboats enjoyed a fairly steady stream of passengers. The trains brought visitors to the steamboat landings; and after a trip upriver from Hudson or Stillwater to Taylors Falls, tourists made the return trip by train when railroad connections were made in 1880. Stillwater's Cornet Band added to the gaiety of these outings. Steamboat owners also made moonlight cruises available for the more romantically inclined. Excursions provided church, social, and work groups trips with a more relaxed form of social interchange. For example, in June 1875 firemen from Red Wing, "accompanied by their ladies" boarded the steamer

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[37] Richardson, *Picturesque Landscape Assessment*, 112-5.
[38] *Stillwater Lumberman* (Stillwater, Minn.), 2 July 1875.
[39] Richardson, *Picturesque Landscape Assessment*, 112-5.

James Means for a trip up to the Dalles. Not only did they enjoy the scenery, but joined the Stillwater fire department in some social recreation. "In the evening the boat laid at the levee several hours," related the Stillwater *Lumberman*, "and allowed the firemen an opportunity to be entertained by the chief and members of the Stillwater department." [40]

Those who chose to stay in "the charmingly old-fashioned" town of Taylors Falls found comfortable accommodations at the local hotel. There they were "gladly welcomed and hospitably entertained." The president of the town council, L.K. Stannard, gave welcome addresses to St. Paul excursionists. Others found lodging in towns down river before they began their return home by rail.[41]

In 1877, the St. Louis, Minneapolis & St. Paul Short Line distributed a pamphlet entitled, *The Summer Resorts of Minnesota: Information for Invalids, Tourists and Sportsmen.* Train travel was promoted as fast and safe as well as being furnished with all the modern and luxurious conveniences. "While the summer resort business in the Northwest may be said to be yet in its incipient stage," related the railroad company, "there is but little more to be desired in railway service than is already furnished by the favorite line known as the 'ST. LOUIS, MINNEAPOLIS & ST. PAUL SHORT LINE.'" They offered reduced fares for anyone who made connections from other cities in the country at St. Louis. "There are but few people who have passed the summer months in Minnesota who will not agree with us in saying that there is no country in the world which offers so much that is pleasant and attractive to the tourist as that included within the boundaries of Minnesota." One of the chief selling points for a vacation in Minnesota was the weather. "The summer breezes that sweep across our wide prairies and through our great forests, bearing the perfume of wild flowers and aromatic pines, are laden with a magical tonic which quickens the pulse, and imparts new vigor to the enfeebled frame," wrote the promoters. "All the surroundings of our rural homes exert an influence for good, and attract the invalid to unwonted exercise in the open air, which creates an appetite for substantial food, and strengthens the digestion."[42]

The railroads also put the towns along the St. Croix on the entertainment circuit. In 1877, Stillwater businessmen persuaded P. T. Barnum to bring his circus to town. Other circuses followed such as the PA. Older's Museum, Circus, and Menagerie, and the W.W. Coles' Great New York and New Orleans Circus, Menagerie, Museum, and Congress of Living Wonders. Wealthy lumbermen also courted popular entertainers of the nineteenth century, such as Jenny Lind, Ole Bull, Adeline Patti, as well as the culturally influential Chautauqua Meetings.[43]

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[40]Blegen, "The Fashionable Tour," 398; *The Messenger* (Stillwater, Minn.) 13 June 1866; *Stillwater Lumberman* (Stillwater, Minn.), 18 June 1875.

[41] Dunn, *The St. Croix*, 203-4; William H. Dunne, *The Picturesque St. Croix and Other Northwest Sketches* (Chicago: Poole Brothers, Printers, 1881), 16; William H. Dunne, *Captain Jolly on the Picturesque St. Croix: Descriptive and Historical Narrative by a Rambler* (St. Paul: J.W. Cunningham, 1880), 67.

[42] *The Summer Resorts of Minnesota: Information for Invalids, Tourists and Sportsmen* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Dimond & Ross, 1882), 3, 7.

[43] Rosenfelt, *Washington*, 186; Dunn, *The St. Croix*, 181, 238.

New guidebooks catered to this new class of travelers. They continued to stress many of the same themes of the earlier period. "Romantic beauty, historical incidents and legendary lore contributed towards making the Valley of the St. Croix River not only very interesting to the tourist," wrote guidebook author William Dunne, "but exceedingly valuable to students of either events or nature. Here within an hour's ride of the two leading cities of Minnesota, is a miniature Hudson, excelling, in some features, that famous river of the East. Along its shores fierce Indian battles have been fought, and its fertile, picturesque valley contains attractive cascades and waterfalls that rival the renowned 'Falls of Minnehaha.'" Throughout the guide, Dunne recounted the basic history of the St. Croix Valley of Indians, explorers, missionaries, fur traders, lumbermen, and settlers to stir the imagination and conjure ghosts of yesteryear. "We traveled past battle grounds and fishing nooks, past the old home of the deer and the moose, past where Poor Lo held full sway but a generation ago and we had enjoyed the day." Interestingly, once they were pushed aside, Indians were portrayed as romantic and exotic creatures rather than threatening savages.[44]

The guidebook also contained poetic descriptions of the landscape. "The sunlight stole through the embowering trees of the glen just enough to brighten into sparkling crystals the falling waters of Osceola Creek," wrote Dunne, "...a very beautiful gem of nature." Of the Dalles he wrote, "Shadows from jutting rocks and tall trees fall upon the water in strange contrast with the sun-brightened portions where the tree-topped rock walls of the Dalles are distinctly reflected in the seemingly quiet stream, yet, of quietness, 'tis but the semblance born far below the glassy surface. Between these two walls the river flows and eddies with depth and force." His description of Devil's Chair was especially evocative, "From a height of eighty feet his Satanic Majesty could view the whole extent of the beautiful landscape. Upon the footstool of his chair he could rest his weary feet or stand and address his kindred spirits of the Northwest during his councils with them." Dunne tempted the adventurous spirit of his readers with the suggestion that there were still the possibilities of new sights to discover. "In the attractive glens and curious ravines along the sides of the St. Croix there are yet to be found cascades and other scenic beauties that will, in the near future be noticed and highly appreciated."[45]

One notable side attraction a mile and a half from Stillwater was Fairy Falls, "a quiet but pretty work of nature." In 1880, William Dunne described the descent of the falls. "The water, coursing along to the shelving ledge of rocks, dashed down, in an almost unbroken stream, to its bed below." Locals enjoyed it as a popular picnic spot.[46]

While trains brought visitors to the St. Croix, they also made it possible for tourists to venture away from the river. Many discovered the charm and beauty of the Chisago Lakes region on their return trip by train from Taylors Falls. Dunne noted, "The excursionists were pleasantly surprised to see such delightful scenery in the Chisago lake region, through which they passed."[47] The advantage of the lakes over the river was that

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[44] Dunne, *The Picturesque St. Croix* passim, 27,35.
[45] Dunne, *The Picturesque St. Croix*, 27-9; Dunne, *Captain Jolly*, 8.
[46] Dunne, *Captain Jolly*, 41.
[47] Dunne, *The Picturesque St. Croix*, 31.

they could be enjoyed throughout the summer, free from the sights and sounds of logs and crude lumbermen on the river. Although many Swedish immigrants farmed the area, the lakes themselves remained sparsely populated throughout the nineteenth century even though the banks were largely prairie. After 1868 when the St. Paul-Duluth railroad skirted the western portion of Chisago County, towns such as Center City, Lindstrom, Forest Lake in Washington County, and St. Elmo Lake, became summer meccas for vacationers from the Twin Cities. Trains made frequent stops at Forest Lake to refuel thus making it easy for visitors to attend to business in the city and return to the rejuvenating lakes region with regularity. Railroads were not just anxious to promote the resort industry. They also hoped people would decide to buy a permanent house along the route. Before there were any permanent structures, early lake visitors pitched tents. When a certain area proved its popularity, enterprising businessmen started to build resorts. Forest Lake, for instance, became a resort city complete with prominent hotels, such as the Marsh and the Euclid. Yet, tents remained popular among the less well to do. Tents also made it possible for large parties of friends, church groups, social clubs, or businessmen to enjoy the great outdoors together without the expenses incurred in resorts and hotels.[48]

Lake Elmo also emerged by the late 1870s as a premiere vacation spot. It was halfway between St. Paul and Stillwater and was promoted by the St. Paul and Sioux City railroad. Many of St. Paul's fashionable class enjoyed boating, picnicking, and dancing under the stars.[49] Dunne's guidebook described Lake Elmo as "A handsomely situated body of water, such a delightful place as we would expect to find in the undulating wooded district...Its rustic seats and shaded walks, its neat pavilions, its boating and fishing make it a popular excursion resort for societies and schools." Elmo Lodge was equipped with "every modern accommodation and in the highest sense 'cares for' its guests." Its "up to the times" comforts attracted repeat guests.[50]

White Bear Lake north of the Twin Cities and equidistant from Stillwater attracted those cities' elites. Vacationers started coming to the lake as soon as a road was built in the early 1850s from St. Paul. These seekers after refreshing summer breezes arrived by horse or carriage in just two hours. In 1857, an elegant Greek revival hotel was built to accommodate the fashionable, and less pretentious lodges housed more modest clientele. By the Civil War White Bear Lake, straddling Washington and Ramsey Counties, was a popular resort welcoming holiday and weekend pleasure-seekers and sportsmen. Once the railroad came after the war, the twenty-minute train ride turned White Bear Lake into a summer home retreat. It is "one of the brightest gems in the circle of lakes surrounding St. Paul and Minneapolis," wrote the St.L, Minn. & St.P. promotional pamphlet. "White Bear is the oldest summer resort in the State, and consequently, is far advanced in many of the conveniences required by fashionable people who do not care to indulge in the wild and sometimes inconvenient modes of life

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[48] Larson, A *Place at the Lake*, 18-9, 103.
[49] Larson, *A Place at the Lake*, 98.
[50] Dunne, *The Picturesque St. Croix*, 45.

found at our less developed watering places."[51] Even Mark Twain wrote about White Bear Lake in his *Life on the Mississippi*. "There are a dozen minor summer resorts around about St. Paul and Minneapolis," Twain related, "but White Bear Lake *is* the *resort.*"[52] It possessed " the largest fleet of sail boats and yachts to be found in Minnesota," wrote Dunne. "On the evenings of the "Regatta" and 'open air' concerts, White Bear Lake assumes the appearance of a gala night at Manhattan Beach, more than of what is generally expected at a suburban summer resort."[53] By 1885, *Northwest Magazine* enthusiastically endorsed White Bear Lake as a resort area. "White Bear has pavilions, club houses and pleasure boats galore. But it has never become noisy and Coney-Islandised," the magazine noted. "It remains today a place for rest and pleasure rather than rioting and boisterous sports. It is fashionable without being fashion-ridden; popular and populous without being crowded."[54]

In 1884, the resort industry reached Lindstrom when Ida Van Horn Elstrom opened her Lake View House on the peninsula between the two Lindstrom lakes. Trains deposited guests at the nearby train station. When Miss Elstrom married John W. Nelson, the newlyweds changed the name to the Lake View Hotel. When the hotel burned down in 1900, the couple opened the Villa Cape Horn resort on the lakefront west of their old establishment complete with a dancing pavilion. The resort thrived well into the 1920s.

After the Nelson's success, other resorts began to appear on the local lakes. Besides the usual resort businesses, the Chisago Lakes area also attracted nonprofit camps. In 1906, the Minneapolis YMCA opened Camp Icaghowan on the eastern shore of Green Lake near Chisago City. The name of the camp derived from a Chippewa expression that meant "growing in every way." It was an apt phrase for a camp dedicated to providing disadvantaged urban boys with a week or two of summer fun. The cost was a dollar a day. Charitable Minneapolis businessmen picked up the cost. Camp Icaghowan won a special place in the hearts of the boys who summered there. The original camp lasted until World War II. After the war, the men who spent their youth there, built a new Camp Icaghowan on the Wisconsin side of the St. Croix near Amery.[55]

By 1880, fishermen and campers had made the Chisago Lakes a well-established sportsmen's locale. "Camping out at the numerous lakes with which Stillwater is surrounded is a growing practice with our citizens," noted the Stillwater *Lumberman.* "The practice is a good one. It is not expensive, and as a means of promoting health none better will be found...There are no fashionable calls to make or receive, no elaborate dressing for company. Everything is free and unrestrained. The male members of the

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[51] *The Summer Resorts of Minnesota: Information for Invalids, Tourists and Sportsmen* (Minneapolis: Dimond & Ross, 1882), 35-6.
[52] As quoted in Larson, *A Place at the Lake*, 71, 73-4.
[53] Dunne, *The Picturesque St. Croix*, 49.
[54] As quoted in Larson, *A Place at the Lake*, 71.
[55] David L. Fritz, "Historic Resource Study: St. Croix National Scenic Riverway, Wisconsin/Minnesota," Unapproved draft of the United States Department of the Interior/ National Park Service, July 1989, 141.

family usually go out on the evening train or drive out...until the morning calls them back to business."[56]

The typical resort of this period in the north woods catered to the patterns of social interaction of the elite. They operated on what was called the "American Plan" in a largely self-contained world. There was a main lodge, where all meals and social activities took place. Lodges were usually constructed of local materials, such as logs, with a large field stone fireplace as a centerpiece. Guests slept in simple cottages. Maintenance buildings, barns, an icehouse, a small farm, and a boathouse supplied all the basic necessities to run the resort.[57] The single, family-owned cottage did not generally start to appear on the lakes until the turn of the century.

The well-advertised Minnesota resorts may also have siphoned off many potential long-term visitors to the St. Croix Valley. The St. Croix was advertised to Twin City residents as simply a day trip. "In the brief period of a single day," wrote a railroad advertisement, "the appreciative 'sight seer' can here enjoy a variety of scenery, perhaps unequaled in America – if the world."[58] Although praising the wonders of the St. Croix River, the St. Louis, Minneapolis, and St. Paul Short Line promotional pamphlet noted that fact that the St. Croix was a working river. In 1869, 270 steamboats plied the river between Prescott and Taylors Falls. The logging companies, especially, increased the number of boats on the river. In 1878, they employed eight steamboats for rafting and towing, in 1882 there were seventy-seven, and by 1891 that number increased to 130. "Ever present among the islands and along the low shores for several miles...are the evidences of the vast traffic in lumber that is carried on in this valley," the promoters wrote. "The thousands of logs that lie 'hung up' on the shores, at which gangs of men are laboring, tugging and rolling, to get them afloat in the river: the miles of booms, the vast number of piles that are driven to prevent the logs from stranding...the dozens of steamers for town...and the numbers of men employed, all combine to form an array of business that is not seen in the ordinary routes of travel elsewhere in the west, and probably not in the world." The pamphlet promoted the Upper St. Croix more for sportsmen where outfitters and guides were ready to assist that type of traveler rather than cater to the fashionable.[59]

The St. Croix Valley also faced competition from the growth in recreation to the south. Between 1873 and 1893, southern Wisconsin also experienced its own tourist boom that attracted residents from Chicago and other southern climes. In 1869, Colonel Richard Dunbar claimed that the Waukesha mineral spring had cured him of diabetes. Dunbar proceeded to organize the Bethesda Mineral Spring Company that promoted Waukesha as the "Saratoga of the West." The Chicago and Northwestern Railroad

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[56] Rosenfelt, *Washington*, 206; Larson, *A Place at the Lake* , 111; The *Lumberman* (Stillwater, Minn.) 24 August 1877.

[57] Timothy Bawden, "Escape to Wisconsin: The Early Resort Landscape of Northern Wisconsin, 1890-1920," *Wisconsin Preservation News*, 22(4)(July-August 1998), 2-3.

[58] As quoted in Richardson, *Picturesque Landscape Assessment*, 116.

[59] *The Summer Resorts of Minnesota* ,43-5; Raymond H. Merritt, *Creativity, Conflict and Controversy: A History of the St. Paul District U.S. Army Corps of Engineers*, (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1979), 270-4.

serviced the town and soon Waukesha had thirty hotels and dozens of boarding houses that catered to summer visitors. Spas had become so popular during this period with the middle class that nearly every spring bubbling out of a limestone substrata was being promoted as a spa, such as Madison, Beaver Dam, Sparta, Palmyra, Beloit, and Appleton.[60]

The St. Croix Valley did not sit idly by while watching Minnesota and southern Wisconsin develop into resort destinations. In 1873, in anticipation of a boom in tourism Ebenezer Moore embarked on a plan to turn Osceola into the "Saratoga of the West," and invited the public to his St. Croix Mineral Springs. The springs were located two miles south of Osceola near Buttermilk Falls. Moore hoped both tourists and health seekers would flock to its "healing" waters. Before his vision was realized, however, Moore sold his interests in the springs to a partner from Eau Claire. In the spring of 1875 the new owners laid a foundation for a "mammoth hotel" aptly named the Riverside Hotel. "Messrs. Stephens, Williams & Fletcher, the proprietors of this property, are determined to make the springs a popular resort for both invalids and pleasure seekers," wrote the *Lumberman.* "The location selected for the hotel is a delightful one, overlooking the river and affording a picturesque view of the surrounding country." The dining room seated two hundred guests, and the grounds were complete with a croquet course, a trout pound, a deer park, and a half-mile circular racetrack. A hydraulic pump brought spring water into all parts of the hotel. "It promises to become on the most attractive summer resorts in the Northwest," boasted the *Lumberman.*[61] This dream, however, never materialized. Although medical men endorsed the healthfulness of the waters, tourists never patronized the hotel. The year 1873 was also one of a financial panic. By the middle of the decade eastern and Midwest railroads experienced labor turmoil. Higher rates and strikes tied up everyone's travel plans and financial hardship reached every part of the country that relied on rail service. In 1885, the under-used hotel burned down.[62] In 1903 another entrepreneur experimented with a health elixir called "Osce-Kola, which was a concoction of spring waters, fruit juices, celery, and cola. The mineral springs, however, did not sell in this version either.[63]

Although tourists from more distant places did not venture so far north or stray from Minnesota's lakes, this did not stop residents along the river from recognizing and enjoying the pleasurable opportunities of the St. Croix. In the mid-1870s Stillwater established a boat club, as did many other towns along the St. Croix and Upper Mississippi. Stillwater's club proved to be a formidable challenger. "The character of the lumber business transacted at Stillwater naturally brings into action the full muscular force of the operatives engaged therein," boasted the *Lumberman.* "Here we have men who are continuously in the boat and at the oars...[who] are required to operate against wind, current, and all contending influences." The Stillwater club was so successful at beating local comers; they decided to challenge the Red Wing team. "The case with

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[60] Robert C. Nesbit, *The History of Wisconsin: Urbanization and Industrialization, 1873-1893*, (Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1985), 527-8.
[61] *Stillwater Lumberman*, (Stillwater, Minn.),7 May 1875.
[62] Dunn, *The St. Croix*, 203-4.
[63] Fritz, "Historic Resource Study," 142.

which they gained each successive victory emboldened them to believe that they had but to enter their shell and take the money, prize, and championship from any club that might choose to contest their skill." Many excursionists from the area made the trip by steamboat to watch the races. The Red Wing Team, however, resoundingly defeated the Stillwater club. They and their supporters took their defeat in good humor and enjoyed the return river journey home.[64]

St. Paul residents continued to patronize the St. Croix River and the Dalles during the second half of the nineteenth century because it was so close. In June 1877, a group from the Twin Cities arrived in Stillwater "on the natty little steam yacht Lulu...and were highly pleased with the romantic scenery of Lake St. Croix." On their way to the Dalles passengers enjoyed "the witty sallies elicited by the demonstrations of the river men, who lustily cheered as we passed them, waving their hats and handkerchiefs, and tossing up their pikes." The yacht also had to maneuver its way among "the great quantity of floating logs in the stream." The Lulu then remained at Taylors Falls where it picked up passengers from the St. Paul train, took them to see the Dalles, and then returned them when the evening train departed for the Twin Cities

One way to pass the time on the long, slow steamboat trips was to shoot geese from the boiler deck, which entertained both passengers and crew. Captain O.F. Knapp, of the steamer *Enterprise,* first introduced the practice in the mid-1860s. The sport caught on and by the 1870s and 1880s parties chartered steamboats for these hunting expeditions.[65] Southern tourists were especially enamored with this unique form of hunting. "Frequent notice has been made in these columns," wrote the *Stillwater Lumberman*, "of the rare sport furnished on the St. Croix by hunting geese with a steamboat. The time has now arrived for the full enjoyment of this sport and it is daily being indulged in." The paper provided a colorful description of how the sport was done. "As soon as the boat was headed down the lake a bulkhead was constructed around the forward guards of the lower deck so that the hunters could, if they choose, shoot from that place unobserved. Screens were constructed of blankets and placed around the railing in front on the boiler deck for the same purpose. All these precautions are rendered necessary as a boat cannot get within gun shot if any person's body or head is visible to them."[66]

Hunting and Fishing for Sport

Besides geese, "Duck shooting on the St. Croix above Marine [was] the fashionable amusement," wrote the *Stillwater Lumberman* in 1877.[67] And in 1879 the *Burnett County Sentinel* noted, "Hunting and fishing parties are the order of the day in this vicinity."[68] "A party of 5 passed through here from Marine enroute for the upper

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[64] *Stillwater Lumberman*, (Stillwater, Minn.), 2 July 1875.
[65] Dunn, *The St. Croix*, 212.
[66] *Stillwater Lumberman* (Stillwater, Minn.), 13 October 1875.
[67] *Stillwater Lumberman* (Stillwater, Minn.), 21 September 1877.
[68] *Burnett County Sentinel* (Grantsburg, Wis.), 31 October 1879.

Namekagon fishing and sporting," reported the *Sentinel* with interest and approval.[69] These comments, of course, imply that game was more than a daily sustenance requirement, but provided variety to the dinner table as well as enjoyment in the pursuit.

By the 1870s, popular sporting magazines, such as *American Sportsman* (1871), *Forest and Stream* (1873), *Field and Stream* (1874), and *American Angler* (1881), were published to encourage outdoor sports. The writings of their authors were certainly influenced by the Romantic Movement and its attitudes about nature, but they differed from earlier nature writers, who simply appreciated the splendor of the outdoors for its own sake. While the beauty of the scenery was certainly to be enjoyed, this new breed of outdoorsmen approached wildlife in a practical, utilitarian manner. It offered sport and prize catches. Beginning in the 1870s many railroads also organized hunting and fishing excursions. Some even owned their own resorts.[70]

Although the Wisconsin state legislature had established defined hunting seasons in order to protect, game, birds, and fish in 1851, by the 1870s over-hunting and the expansion of settlement made big game scarce in the Lower St. Croix. Conservationist ideas had not quite reached this frontier region. When a rare moose was spotted near Rush City in the fall of 1877, the pursuit was on. The following excerpt from the *Stillwater Lumberman* provides an insight into the attitudes of residents towards the sport of hunting:

> A wild moose was foolish enough to call upon Frank La Suise, at that gentleman's residence...introducing himself to Frank's family by peering through the window of their residence. Frank not liking such familiarity, seized his gun and greeted the animal with a charge of buckshot, which caused the moose to take to the water, whence Frank followed in a canoe, blazing away at the "baste" as rapidly as he could load his gun. A broadside from Adam Dopp, who appeared on the scene, blinded the creature, so that Frank was enabled soon to dispatch it with a club...It was the means of furnishing a very tender article of fresh meat for our citizen's dinner last Sunday.[71]

By the 1880s, moose had even disappeared in the Upper St. Croix Valley. A killing of one was worthy of note. "A moose was killed near Clam Lake last week," the *Burnett County Sentinel* remarked with interest. "A very rare animal in these parts."[72] An old time settler reminisced in 1880 that the early days were his "happy days. Game was everywhere." In one fall season he had killed 130 deer, 16 elk, and 3 bears.[73] Clearly such a total exceeded his personal needs and he was engaged in market hunting – an activity that was roundly condemned by "true" sportsmen.

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[69] *Burnett County Sentinel* (Grantsburg, Wis.), 23 August 1878.
[70] Rachel Franklin Weekley, *Recreation and Tourism Along the Saint Croix*, Unpublished paper (Omaha, Neb.: U.S. Department of the Interior, 199), 28.
[71] *Stillwater Lumberman* (Stillwater, Minn.), 5 October 1877.
[72] *Burnett County Sentinel* (Grantsburg, Wis.), 3 November 1882.
[73] Dunne, *Captain Jolly*, 47.

If moose and other big game were no longer plentiful in the north woods, fish, waterfowl, and deer still were. "Hunting and fishing at Bass Lake, Willow river and other noted points near at hand are leading sources of enjoyment"[74] In June of 1877, a fishing party from Hudson set out for the Clam River. They returned, "having caught seven hundred and fifty trout," recorded the *Lumberman.*[75] By the 1890s the number of fish caught was less important to true sportsmen than the size of the fish. "Last week, a Frenchman caught a sturgeon in the Namekagon river near Phipps, weighing 81 pounds," wrote the *Burnett County Sentinel* in 1891. "This is said to be the largest fish ever taken out of a stream in this locality."[76]

Unlike moose or other big game that were easily threatened by market hunters and habitat loss, fish stocks were easier to replenish. In 1866, the Wisconsin state legislature appointed a fish inspector. This eventually led to fish stocking in the state's waterways. In 1880, over a million brook trout were put into the streams of Wisconsin. In 1883, the U.S. Fish Commission deposited 250,000 white fish and lake trout eggs into Lake St. Croix. Sawdust that had been dumped in the river and the erosion of the river's banks by logs and upstream deforestation silted up the river and destroyed much of the natural habitat of fish. The federal government's initial interest in restocking rivers and streams was to preserve commercial fishing. Sport fishing was an indirect beneficiary of this program that kept the St. Croix and its tributaries teaming with fish.[77] In 1895, the *Polk County Press* bragged that, "There is no county in Wisconsin, outside of the lake Superior counties, were better, or a greater variety of fishing can be found than in Polk county. And in Polk county no better place than in the vicinity of Osceola. Within a circuit of ten miles there are fifteen lakes, and the St. Croix river, all well stocked with pickerel, bass, pike and other fish, besides three fine trout streams, well supplied with speckled and rainbow trout." The paper went on to report the size of recent catches from local fisherman.[78]

Unlike the moose, deer did not disappear from the St. Croix Valley with the retreat of the forest. Various kinds of berries flourished in the brush left in the loggers' path, which deer feasted on. Hunters in turn feasted on the deer. The importance of deer as food and sport is illustrated in the following *Burnett County Sentinel* article. "It is reported that there are some hunters camped just above Clam river who are hunting deer with dogs. This is against the law and they should be arrested and prosecuted."[79] Rules of sportsmanship were clearly of importance to the residents of the St. Croix Valley. Other animals were not considered so valuable. "The scalp of a lynx was brought in from Wood Lake Wednesday. They are worth...$3," reported the *Sentinel.* "There is a bounty of $6 on wolves, $3 on wild cats, and $2 on foxes."[80] This made hunting a lucrative sport that aided the farmer and settler in dealing with these pesky animals. Indians, too, often redeemed these animals for their reward.

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[74] Dunne, *The Picturesque St. Croix*, 14-5.
[75] *Stillwater Lumberman* (Stillwater, Minn.), 8 June 1877.
[76] *Burnett County Sentinel* (Grantsburg, Wis.), 20 March 1891.
[77] *Burnett County Sentinel* (Grantsburg, Wis.), 28 May 1880; 16 February 1883.
[78] *Polk County Pres* (Osceola, Wis.), 20 July 1995.
[79] *Burnett County Sentinel* (Grantsburg, Wis.), 5 November 1880.
[80] *Burnett County Sentinel* (Grantsburg, Wis.), 15 April 1881; 22 April 1881.

Steamboat Excursions

Besides changes in the animal population, the late 1880s brought an end to the commercial boating industry. Residents and businesses came to depend on and prefer the year-round efficiency, comfort, and dependability of railroads. Commercial steam boating, which had once been the lifeblood of the St. Croix Valley by bringing in supplies and pioneers and then taking their produce to the world, could no longer compete against the iron horse. The river, however, did not lose its allure. If anything, its mystic grew. By the 1890s, the excursion boating business revived the "Fashionable Tour" -- at least in part. Aside from logs, the only traffic on the river was pleasure-seekers on steamboats. Although the railroads supplanted the transportation and commercial role of the river, they eagerly assisted the tourist trade by coordinating their schedules with boat excursions. A friendly rivalry developed between the towns along the St. Croix over who attracted the most excursionists. The day trip excursions offered from Minneapolis to Osceola made it the leading Soo Line city along the St. Croix. "Osceola largely leads the towns on the St. Croix," boasted the *Polk County Press* in October 1887. The Soo Line sold 335 excursion tickets out of Osceola that season. St. Croix Falls followed a distant second with 191 tickets sold. Marine was next with 130, and Dresser Junction sold a mere 56 tickets.[81]

With the growth of pleasure excursions, Osceola came into its own as a tourist town. It boasted that its waterfall was "unrivaled by any waterfall in the northwest."[82] For its Fourth of July celebrations the town attracted one thousand people who enjoyed a parade, a baseball game between Osceola and St. Croix Falls clubs (which Osceola won 24 to 23), and a picnic on Eagle Point Bluff, "a beautiful place for a picnic or celebration, and one of the finest groves in the valley." Other amusements visitors and residents engaged in to pass a lazy summer day were climbing a greased pole, a potato race, tug of war, cracker race, egg race, logrolling, sack race, foot race, a wheelbarrow race, and a 100-yard backward race. In the evening dances were held under the stars.[83]

In the late summer of 1888 Osceola also hosted a picnic for the veterans of the Grand Army of the Republic and their families. The town expected a thousand visitors, but threats of rain reduced the numbers to only four hundred picnickers. The rain, however, held off long enough for the usual speeches to be made, a picnic lunch served, and a late afternoon excursion made through the Dalles. "The day was pleasant but cool, and was heartily enjoyed by all the visitors," reported the *Polk County Press*.[84]

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[81] *Polk County Press* (Osceola, Wis.), 22 October 1887.
[82] *Polk County Press* (Osceola, Wis.), 30 June 1888.
[83] *Polk County Press* (Osceola, Wis.), 7 July 1888.
[84] *Polk County Press* (Osceola, Wis.), 11 August 1888.

The next summer Osceola hosted a picnic for eight hundred Soo railroad employees. While they picnicked on Cascade Bluff, a cornet and a string band entertained them. Games and dancing followed. "A delightful day and enjoyable time was had," reported the *Polk County Press*. "Osceola is proving to be the most popular place on the river for railroad picnics."[85] These words were prophetic. By 1893, the town hosted one thousand railroad picnickers with the usual entertainment.[86] One interesting group that came to Osceola for a picnic in July 1891 was the Knights of Pythias, an African American group. Many people from Osceola joined them for dancing and baseball. Later they took a trip up river together. "As many white people as colored attended the picnic," noted the *Polk County Press*. "All danced and rode together and a real nice time was enjoyed."[87]

The Nineteenth Century Conservation Movement and Recreation

By the 1890s, many Americans were ready for more vigorous recreation than that offered by the genteel spa resorts of southern Wisconsin. And while summers by the lake continued to attract greater numbers, touring, hiking, fishing sailing, biking, and hunting, as well as the growing popularity of baseball led many tourists to seek more adventurous outdoor challenges. The continued growth of the middle class enabled many more people to reach and enjoy the outdoors. But this also brought about a changed attitude towards nature from one of simple appreciation to the growing recognition that natural treasures needed to be protected from further development and destruction. Sportsmen were the first group to join the growing conservation movement and to lobby for the first forest reservations in the western United States. The number one sportsman and conservationist in the country was Theodore Roosevelt. Like many urbanites at the end of the nineteenth century, Roosevelt looked to hunting and fishing as a retreat from the cares of the city and an opportunity to approximate the experience of the first pioneers. By the turn of the century and into the next, "roughing it" came to be seen as a critical part of individual character building as well as an opportunity to engage in a distinctive American cultural activity. Many of the great men of the era, such as Henry Ford and Thomas Edison, enjoyed trips to the wild. By the 1920s, President Calvin Coolidge put the Brule River on the sportsman's map with his widely reported fishing trips to the region. Oddly enough many men who made their fortunes exploiting nature were among the first to build sanctuaries in wilderness areas. Factory owners and railroad men, as well as the doctors and lawyers who served them, found the St. Croix one of the least permanently spoiled havens in the Upper Midwest.[88]

Through the end of the nineteenth and into the twentieth century, recreation began to spread throughout the entire north half of Wisconsin to accommodate this new type of recreation. The Wisconsin Central Railroad enticed these more hardy travelers into the

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[85] *Polk County Press* (Osceola, Wis.), 27 July 1889.
[86] *Polk County Press* (Osceola, Wis.), 8 July 1893.
[87] *Polk County Press* (Osceola, Wis.) July 1891.
[88] John F. Reiger, *American Sportsmen and the Origins of the Conservation Movement* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1973); Peter J. Schmitt, *Back to Nature: The Arcadian Myth in Urban America (New York: Oxford University Press, 1969).*

far north woods. The railroad company built its own hotel in Ashland called the Chequamegon in which it could house several trainloads of sportsmen and vacationers. In 1879, James Maitland wrote a pamphlet for the railroad called, *The Golden Northwest.* In it, he described not only the picturesque sights of northern Wisconsin, Minnesota, and the Dakota Territory, but also advertised the possibility for more active recreation. In 1885, the Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul Railway followed up on the interest in active recreation with its own pamphlet, *Gems of the Northwest.* In the brochure, outdoorsmen were depicted with the latest equipment in tents, fishing poles, and the like while "roughing it" in the great outdoors.[89] The formal attire sportsmen were photographed in interestingly demonstrated the elite nature of hunting during this time. Some hunters were decked out in three-piece suits complete with tie.[90]

New England states continued to exert influence in northern Wisconsin. Like wealthy Adirondack businessmen, executives in the logging and lumbering industry built lodges and estates along the Upper St. Croix and Namekagon Rivers. One example is that of the Velie Estate. The John Deere Company originally owned the two-thousand acres dating back to 1893. It was located in Douglas County, seven miles southwest of the Gordon Dam. In 1905, Velie built a twenty-four room lodge to serve as a fishing club for company officials. It included a playhouse, fish hatchery, and stable. Another sports club, most likely owned by the Farmers' Land and Cattle Company of St. Paul and the Saint Croix Timber Company, was located in an unidentified section north of the Upper St. Croix River.[91]

Establishing the Interstate Parks

The conservation movement arrived in the St. Croix when George Hazzard organized a movement to create a state park out of the Dalles area. In the late 1860s, St. Paul street builders experimented with crushed trap rock from the Dalles to use for macadam roads in the city. Hazzard, who fell in love with the river and the Dalles as a young boy, was appalled at the idea. He had arrived in the St. Croix Valley in 1857 on the steamship *H.S. Allen* in the evening. "Those who made the trip remember its impressions," Hazzard wrote years later. "To others it cannot be described." His love of the river and its scenic beauty grew as he served the traveling public as a general agent for railroads and steamboat lines out of St. Paul. The Dalles of the St. Croix was always high on his list of recommended visits and the grateful appreciation of tourists whom he had steered there convinced him "that in the Dalles there was great value to the States of Minnesota and Wisconsin." When the Dalles began to be dismembered for road use, Hazzard conceived the idea of creating a park to preserve it for future generations.[92] His vision interested Oscar Roos of Taylors Falls, who deeded a considerable amount of acreage to the state of Minnesota, and State Senator William S. Dedon of Taylors Falls.

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[89] Nesbit, *The History of Wisconsin*, 529-30.
[90] Peg Meier, *Too Hot, Went to Lake: Seasonal Photos from Minnesota's Past* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Neighbors Publishing, 1993), 125.
[91] From Weekley, *Recreation and Tourism*, 31
[92] George H. Hazzard, *Interstate Park: Lectures, Laws, Papers, Pictures, Pointers,* (St. Paul, Minn.: 1896), 3.

Other leading citizens from Taylors Falls, St. Croix Falls, St. Paul, and Madison, such as Harry D. Baker, worked together to get Minnesota and Wisconsin to pass the necessary legislation.

The Minnesota Interstate Park was given birth on February 25, 1895, but it would take more time and lobbying to get appropriations needed for land purchases. In March park organizers brought a delegation of Minnesota legislators and more than a hundred "distinguished" guests to the Dalles to see for themselves the value of this scenic wonder. The *Taylors Falls Journal* followed up on this visit by printing a special pictorial issue extolling the beauty that should be saved. It was sent to both the Minnesota and Wisconsin state legislatures. On April 22, 1895 Minnesota passed the park bill by an overwhelming majority, although without appropriating all of the promised money.[93]

While the Minnesota side had received enthusiastic interest in the nearby state capitol of St. Paul, the Wisconsin legislature in Madison was much more reluctant to commit funds for the venture. "Appropriations for the purchase of the necessary lands within the park limits were very difficult to obtain from Wisconsin legislators," recalled Harry D. Baker, "because so few members of the legislature at that time knew anything about this part of the state." Unlike their neighboring state, Wisconsin had no state parks at that time even though it would later become a leader in conservation. Even when members of the park committee brought photographs of the Dalles to Madison, most legislators still remained disinterested.

George Hazzard, however, was not a man to be put off easily. Even though a Minnesota resident, he lobbied in Madison, often making a complete nuisance of himself. After petitioning and finally haranguing State Senator John M. True of Baraboo for hours, Hazzard received an appropriation to purchase Dalles land. For several years Hazzard and others continued this effort, "getting only perhaps five or ten thousand dollars at each session of the legislature," recalled Harry Baker, "at some sessions nothing at all." Some of the lands also had to be condemned by court action. But by March 1899, the park promoters finally secured the support they needed in Madison and the Wisconsin side of the St. Croix was secured for posterity. Hazzard was appointed commissioner for the Minnesota Park. It is "a monument to the energy and the enthusiasm and foresight not only of George H. Hazzard," declared Baker, "but to those men who had vision enough to see the possibilities of this picturesque and scenic area as the park that it has now become."[94]

Between 1901 and 1911, Harry Baker wrote numerous letters to land owners in the area following whatever scheme or strategy he could to purchase, claim, or condemn land for Interstate Park. As National Park Service lands specialists discovered a half century later, public land acquisition was neither easy nor popular. In a letter dated April 10, 1902 to a local landowner, Baker wrote:

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[93] Ward Moberg, "The Dalles: Preserve or Develop?" *The Dalles Visitor* 13(Summer 1981), 2.

[94] Transcript of interview with Harry D. Baker of the Baker Land and Title Company, 1879-1958, by W.H. Glover, 17 January 1950; Ward Moberg, "The 1890s Fight Created Dalles Parks," *The Dalles Visitor* 14 (Summer 1982), 1, 13.

> The price you ask is at the rate of $25 per acre, which is over double what we would regard the land as worth. For any agricultural purpose it is certainly not valuable, as the natural meadows, which are a comparatively small proportion of the entire acreage comprise the only part of the land that is fit for anything but pasture. I have consulted with the other members of the commission, and we have decided to offer you $12.50 per acre for the entire tract. I doubt very much if any appraisers appointed in condemnation proceedings would value this land as high.[95]

Baker also authored entries for the Interstate Park in the 1903, 1905, and 1907 editions of the *Wisconsin Blue Book.* He most likely wrote the eloquent introductory summary for the 1901 edition as well.

> Nowhere else are evidences of this power to rend and produce more magnificently portrayed than in the Dalles of the St. Croix, in Polk county, that matchless beauty spot just becoming known as the Inter-State Park, a veritable paradise of Nature's handiwork, owned jointly be Wisconsin and Minnesota, Wisconsin's 600 acres lying east and Minnesota's 300 lying west of the St. Croix river, the villages of St. Croix Falls in Wisconsin and Taylor's Falls in Minnesota situated at the very thresholds of the park...State money appropriated for the park is only used for paying for the land and making accessible the natural beauties of the spot. Artificial beautifying is seemed quite unnecessary.[96]

Despite the State of Wisconsin's reluctance to build the park, it eventually committed more resources to the project. Only 292 acres of parklands are in Minnesota, whereas 1734 acres are in Wisconsin "It was by modern values perhaps fortunate," wrote James Taylor Dunn, "that the continued litigation between William Hungerford and Caleb Cushing kept the falls of the St. Croix from being developed as a manufacturing center."[97] As a result, much of the Dalles land was available for the Interstate Park.

The Interstate Park attracted much attention in its first years. In 1898, Warren Manning, a nationally renowned landscape architect and secretary of the American Park and Outdoor Art Association, visited the park. He heartily endorsed the park movement:

> We place upon the records of this American Park and Outdoor Art Association an expression of our appreciation of the work that has already been accomplished toward securing the Dalles of the St. Croix as forest reserve for the benefit of the citizens of Minnesota and Wisconsin, where native plants and animals that are fast being exterminated may be perpetuated and where they and the remarkably varied interesting geological conditions may be readily accessible to students.[98]

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[95] As quoted in Weekley, *Recreation and Tourism Along the Saint Croix*, 40-1.
[96] As quoted in Weekley, *Recreation and Tourism Along the Saint Croix*, 41-2.
[97] Dunn, *The St. Croix*, 98.
[98] Transcript of Interview of Harry D. Baker; as quoted in Richardson, *Picturesque Landscape Assessment*, 116-7.

Manning's enthusiasm helped make the St. Croix Valley an artists' mecca. Back in 1891, Douglas Volk, who was the Minneapolis School of Art's first director, opened a summer art colony near Osceola. Volk's father, Leonard W. Volk, the founder and president of the Chicago Academy of Design, bought a summer home on Poplar Lake northeast of the town and made his talents available to the local artists.[99] Manning's endorsements in the 1903 *Wisconsin Blue Book*, which was repeated in the 1905 and the 1907 editions, gave the park and the artists' colony a high profile among nature-loving artists and aficionados. Warren Manning reinforced a new cultural emphasis on the responsibility of government to preserve natural spaces for the enjoyment of its people.[100]

Steamboat Excursions to the Interstate Parks

The establishment of the park generated even greater interest among the public to visit the Dalles, and George Hazzard readily responded by organizing the Twin Falls Association to coordinate tourist development and helped coordinate railroad and steamboat excursions to the park. In November 1896, Captain John Kent presented an ambitious plan to the people of Osceola and Taylors Falls to build a special excursion boat. His purpose in hosting these town meetings was in part to raise money for the boat and to enlist the support of towns upriver from Stillwater to keep the St. Croix navigable. At these meetings Kent emphasized the growing demand for excursions to the new park and the potential economic boom to the towns on the river from tourism. It did not take much to convince the towns' people of the economic opportunities coming from tourist dollars. The newly formed Interstate Navigation Company raised six thousand dollars to build the *Gracie Kent* – "a neat little craft built for the State Park Business."[101]

The summer of 1897 began with great enthusiasm as the river towns saw hundreds of people pour into the valley to take the boat trip through the park. Hotels and restaurants were "crowded to their utmost to the satisfaction of all." And the railroad grossed $5,418 bringing tourists to the boats and park. By July Kent installed bigger engines in the boat to make quicker trips. By August the *Gracie Kent* averaged excursion parties of five hundred per trip. However, by September low water levels caused major problems for the excursion industry. In that month the *Gracie Kent* was supposed to have met five hundred passengers disembarking from the train at Osceola. The boat, however, ran aground on a sandbar at Cedar Bend and never reached the town. In another incident when the boat was stranded in the river, passengers had to be ferried in skiffs to the train depots for their return trip. And once passengers were forced to spend the night aboard the boat when it got hung up on a sandbar. They were less patient and understanding than their 1850s counterparts when their boat was snagged and the reputation of the Dalles cruises suffered as a result.[102]

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[99] Weekley, *Recreation and Tourism Along the Saint Croix*,32.
[100] Weekley, *Recreation and Tourism Along the Saint Croix*, 42-3.
[101] As quoted in the *Dalles Visitor* (Taylors Falls, Minn. and St. Croix Falls, Wis.) Summer 1992.
[102] The *Dalles Visitor* (Taylors Falls, Minn. and St. Croix Falls, Wis.) Summer 1992.

The changing water levels were not due to late summer seasonal droughts, but were the result of the deliberate actions of the lumber barons from Stillwater. In the seventy-five year period from 1839 to 1914 logging and lumbering interests monopolized the river. Although the St. Paul district of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers was established in 1866, its mission was essentially to promote the urban-industrial growth of the region and the country. Although the Army Corps noted the conflict of interests between the logging industry and other uses for navigating the river, it directed its operations to the support of the logging industry. In 1878, Congress appropriated funds to maintain a four-foot channel below Stillwater and 2.5 foot channel above the town. By 1882, "the Corps have removed snags, dug out sunken logs, cut overhanging trees, built revetments, closed side channels, dredged out the main sandbars, pulled out stumps, hauled away boulders, pulled up cribs, blasted rocks and constructed dikes, spur dams and wing dams."[103] The Corps of Engineers did nothing to stop the St. Croix Lumbermen's Dam and Boom Company whose boom hindered navigation from other towns on the rivers for thirty years, thus curtailing their growth and development. In 1889, the St. Croix Boom Company began work on Nevers Dam, "the capstone of logging history on the St. Croix." It was located twelve miles above Taylors Falls. Their purpose was to ensure that enough water was available to send logs through the Stillwater boom. It was among 331 logging dams that the state of Wisconsin authorized without the sanction of the Army Corps – in spite of the fact that the federal agency had jurisdiction over all navigable waterways. The dam was completed in 1890. When a log run was expected, the dam gates were closed and water was hoarded until it was needed to send the logs to the boom. The needs of towns up river and pleasure boats were of secondary concern to the loggers. At times the river dropped four inches leaving many excursionists high and dry. Since they had the railroads as an alternate form of transportation, few residents of the valley had protested the absolute power the lumber industry had over the dam and the river. Through their manipulation of water levels Stillwater lumbermen, however, had also destroyed competition from other mills on the river.[104]

When the Interstate Park opened, the tourist industry appeared to be a promising venture for upriver towns recently depressed by the collapse of their lumbering and milling operations. But when fluctuating water levels made it difficult to coordinate train schedules with boats, the railroads simply ended their excursion trains to the St. Croix. Residents in the towns upriver from Stillwater were irate. Captain Kent and the Interstate Navigation Company, however, still remained optimistic that the industry could make a go of it. He believed that the growing demand for recreation and excursions on the river would provided the leverage to file a lawsuit against the "Dam(n) Boom Company." Nothing, however, came of the lawsuit and the Interstate Navigation Company struggled to make plans for the future. In February 1898, the Navigation Company sold the *Gracie Kent* to a New Orleans interest in order to purchase the *Vernie Mac* that was bigger than the *Gracie Kent*. When the excursion season began in May, the new boat was not filled to capacity -- a bad omen for the new business. Low water levels caused by Nevers Dam gave the *Vernie Mac* the same problems the *Gracie Kent* had – sandbars and delays. For

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[103] Merritt, *Creativity, Conflict and Controversy*," 275.
[104] Ibid.; The *Dalles Visitor* (Taylors Fall, Minn. and St. Croix Falls, Wis.) Summer 1992.

the next three months no excursions made their way to the park by boat. For the riverboat men it was now time for war.[105]

Logging vs. Recreation: River Use Conflict Comes to a Head

The Navigation Company contacted the War Department regarding the problems with open navigation on the St. Croix River. It seemed to have found a sympathetic ear with Major Frederic V. Abbot who believed his job was to maintain open navigation for all parties on the river, and not simply protect the interests of the wealthy and powerful lumber syndicate. Major Abbot asked the chief of engineers permission to prosecute the loggers under the new River and Harbors Act of March 3, 1899. The Navigation Company was also promised $90,000 to make a three-foot channel below St. Croix Falls. When the logging company got wind of this, they put pressure on their representatives in Congress. The secretary of war then ordered Abbot to stop proceeding until a full investigation could be made. By the summer of 1899, Brigadier General John W. Wilson reviewed the case, and came to a rather ambiguous decision – logging was a legitimate business and Abbot should defend the rights of others to use the St. Croix. When he asked for clarification, Abbot was told the River and Harbors Act was clear enough and individual officers would have to use their own judgment. [106]

In the meantime, the Navigation Company began to collect testimony for their own lawsuit against the St. Croix Boom Company regarding their "capricious" control over the water levels of the river. But things looked dim when the appropriation bill only produced $15,000 and a lawsuit again failed to materialize. Kent and his supporters, however, forged ahead. They bought a small boat called *The Hudson* with the intention that it could run if the *Vernie Mac* could not make the trip. For some reason, however, *The Hudson* never made a trip even though the *Vernie Mac* was busy even when the water was low.[107]

The St. Croix Boom Company geared up for action. William Sauntry, one of the principal owners of the Boom Company, apparently wanted to eliminate the excursion business entirely, and proceeded to do so in a highly creative way. He purchased the steamer *Pauline* in 1899 for the sole purpose of giving the excursion business a bad name by finding every sandbar on the river with no thought or care for the comfort or convenience of those aboard. Sauntry then told the *Polk County Press* that his experiences demonstrated that the St. Croix River above Stillwater was simply not navigable.

In early August 1899, the Navigation Company seemed to be on the verge of triumph when the federal government's barges and sand pumps arrived to improve the channel. Without any explanation, however, they were quickly dispatched to the Minnesota River for the rest of the season. Popular opinion on the river was that the

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[105] The *Dalles Visitor* (Taylors Fall, Minn. and St. Croix Falls, Wis.) Summer 1992.
[106] Merritt, *Creativity, Conflict and Controversy*, 280.
[107] The *Dalles Visitor* (Taylors Fall, Minn. and St. Croix Falls, Wis.) Summer 1992.

lumber interests pressured the War Department to change its plans. The *Polk County Press* asserted, "Strenuous efforts are being made secretly by corporation capital to close this water," and the paper wondered how long the towns' people upriver from Stillwater would put up with the "insults inflicted by the company of which Sauntry is *boss lumberman.*"[108]

St. Croix residents heeded the call. In January 1900, Major Abbot held hearing in St. Paul on the issue and found himself confronted with sixty representatives from the communities affected. Frank B. Dorothy of St. Croix Falls presented a petition from one hundred residents asking for "free and unobstructed passage" of the river. The Northwest Ordinance, historian William H.C. Folsom of Taylor Falls argued, had promised all Americans free navigation on inland waterways, and he estimated that there were over 78,000 abandoned logs embedded in the bed of the river that prevented the fulfillment of this promise. One of the most eloquent speakers was William Blanding of St. Croix Falls, who complained that the logging interests of Stillwater had driven small businesses from river towns. He pointed out that sawmills had to be shut down since they could not get any logs, power resources had been hindered, and commercial and pleasure boating were ruined. Lumbering, he argued, was a transient business whose main object was to exhaust the valley's timber supplies and move on. "When like wasting pestilence they have passed over the land and the coming fire has destroyed all traces of the footsteps and the overtaxed waters of the rivers and its tributaries once more flow free to all," Blanding opined, "then perhaps this dam company ridden country may be allowed to make use of what natural resources these greedy tyrants have left in it." [109]

The commissioner of the Minnesota Interstate Park, George Hazzard also testified against the actions of the logging company. His concerns were for visitors to the park and the excursion business, but he also was a champion of small, local businesses and industry who hoped that a free, navigable channel would attract flouring mills, brick manufacturing, and stone quarrying. Steamboat captains also had their turn. They admitted that, thanks to the efficiency of the railroads, the days of commercial packets plying the water were over as only two or three now made the run between St. Louis and St. Paul. However, the tourist business opened new possibilities for the economic enhancement of river towns. Nevers Dam could aid navigation on the river, but the logging business practice of flushing, destroyed chances for unhindered passage by creating gravel bars in the channel.[110]

The railroads also expressed their vested interest in the condition of the St. Croix River. The excursion business proved to be very lucrative. In 1897, the St. Paul and Duluth Railroad grossed $5,418 running trains between Taylors Falls and Stillwater picking up and dropping off visitors to the Interstate Parks and river. Low water levels the following season reduced their income to $1,340. If this were to continue, they would have to discontinue service.[111]

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[108] As quoted in the *Dalles Visitor* (Taylors Fall, Minn. and St. Croix Falls, Wis.) Summer 1992.
[109] As quoted in Merritt, *Creativity, Conflict and Controversy*, 281-3.
[110] Merritt, *Creativity, Conflict and Controversy*, 283.
[111] *Ibid.*, 283-4.

At the hearing the St. Croix Boom Company admitted they had inhibited navigation, but their argument rested on the fact that they needed to control the river or they would be out of business. They employed a large labor force, they had a huge investment in land, transportation, machinery, and buildings and supplied the nation with much needed lumber. Downriver Mississippi towns would languish if logging were restricted. And they had every legal right under state charters to operate the boom and dam. The company also argued disingenuously that interfering with the dam would ruin smaller mills on the upper St. Croix if they could not free-float logs on the river. What the company did not want to admit was that their control over the Nevers Dam had already ruined many a small mill owner up river.[112]

Abbot tried to work out a compromise. He insisted that all parties share the river with certain days allotted solely to the excursion business, such as Decoration Day, Independence Day, and the entire month of August when the winter drives were generally over. During the rest of the season, the Dam and Boom Company had the right to conduct their business as usual. The lumber interests were not happy with this arrangement. They normally still had a lot of logs on the river throughout the summer and contracts on which to deliver. If they could not hold up water at Nevers Dam, the end of summer low waters would strand the logs making it impossible to deliver the promised timber. In May 1900, Congress stepped into the conflict. It removed from the River and Harbors Act the provision that prohibited floating loose timber and logs on inland waterways and gave the secretary of war the power to establish regulations for the logging industry's use of rivers. This ensured that the conflict continued into 1901. Abbot was then replaced as district engineer and his regulations were modified to further accommodate logging interests. The Corps of Engineers then spent $28,846 between 1898 to 1907 dredging the St. Croix between Stillwater and St. Croix Falls. Despite their efforts the Stillwater logging company's continuation of sluicing logs made it impossible to maintain navigable channels.[113]

The logging industry also left behind many problems for the new hydroelectric power plant built in 1905. Sunken logs obstructed the free flow of water required by the generating station. The St. Croix Dam and Boom Company disavowed responsibility to clear the logs because the boom company did not own them. It had only stored and sorted them, and some of the logs left in the river predated the company. The owners and administrators of the Dam and Boom Company, however, shrewdly turned this situation to their advantage when they established the St. Croix Log Lifting Company and obtained a charter from the state of Minnesota that gave it exclusive rights to remove valuable logs from the river. In 1907, the Log Lifting Company removed 1,200,000 feet of lumber. The vast majority, however, were snagged near the shoreline, and few were removed from the channel. The new district engineer for the Army Corps, Major Francis Shunk, estimated that it would take years before the company got to the sunken logs in middle of the river. The owners, however, were not in any hurry as the value of the logs increased with the growing scarcity of wood. Due to the continued sluicing and flushing of the

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[112] Merritt, *Creativity, Conflict and Controversy*, 284.
[113] *Ibid*, .286; The *Dalles Visitor* (Taylors Fall, Minn. and St. Croix Falls, Wis.) Summer 1992.

river by the lumbermen until 1914, the Corps abandoned hope to make improvements on the St. Croix in this decade. By the early 1920s, the lumbermen left the St. Croix leaving the Army Corps of Engineers with the responsibility of removing the remainder of obstructing logs. Between 1931 and 1940 the Corps snagged an additional 6,219 logs out of the river.[114]

Many steamboat excursions continued to ply the waters of the St. Croix until the 1920s, but coordinated excursions between railroads, towns, and boats never fully recovered from the conflict with the Dam and Boom Company. Other forms of transportation, such as inter-urban streetcars connected the St. Croix Valley with the Twin Cities and competed with railroads. In 1899, the Twin City Rapid Transit Company began to run cars between St. Paul and Stillwater. The streetcar made it much easier for those in the valley to go to the city for business and shopping. It also provided even easier and cheaper access for Twin City residents to enjoy a day in the St. Croix Valley. A ride from Stillwater to St. Paul cost thirty cents and took an hour and ten minutes. By 1913, cars ran every thirty minutes. In the thirty-three years the interurban serviced the valley thousands of tourists and day-trippers from the Twin Cities enjoyed the splendors of the St. Croix River. Stillwater's state prison attracted its share of tourists to view the workings of the penitentiary. Many valley residents also took the special Sunday car to Wildwood Park on White Bear Lake where they enjoyed the roller coasters, merry-go-rounds, and other amusements. However, in 1930 service was cut back to every two hours. And in the darkest days of the Great Depression the line was cut completely due to lack of money and competition with the automobile.[115]

One of the more viable recreational venues that came out of this era was rowboat concession Carl Muller and his family began operating in 1906 out of Taylors Falls. George Hazzard, then the Minnesota Interstate Park Commissioner, encouraged the Stillwater boat builder to open the business by offering a one-year lease. Muller and his family have renewed the lease ever since. The entrepreneur branched out into selling postcards with pictures of the Dalles he took himself along with other souvenirs. In 1911, he offered personalized postcards by taking pictures of tourists at the Dalles and printing them up within a few hours. Through the years Muller added to his modest fleet with modern launches that he and his wife, Katy, piloted. By 1975, after sixty-nine years in the business, Muller son Robert and his wife Ann were in charge along with their daughter and son-in-law.[116]

Logging's Demise, Recreation's Rise

When the logging era ended, the St. Croix Valley became more reliant upon tourism. In June of 1914, the last log was sent down the boom at Stillwater and by 1920, its population had dropped from twelve thousand to eight thousand residents.[117]

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[114] Merritt, *Creativity, Conflict and Controversy*, 286-8.
[115] *Free Press* (Stillwater, Minn.), 26 February 1980, 25 March 1980; Jay Walljasper, "When the Trolley was King," *Minneapolis/St. Paul* (April 1981).
[116] Fritz, *Historic Resource Study*, 144.
[117] Richardson, *Picturesque Landscape Assessment*, 118.

However, even before logging officially ended, residents of Marine Mills decided to take charge of their fates and joined with other river villages in the Improvement Club of St. Croix Falls and the Commercial Club of Taylors Falls "to restore the most beautiful, scenic river in the world to its old time steamboat navigation."[118] In July 1908, the Stillwater *Messenger* noted the growing desirability of the St. Croix River for summer enjoyment:

> Afton is becoming noted for its beautiful location as a summer resort and its next-to-nature charms is making it envied by all who see it and are influenced by 'the call of the wild,' when the grass and flowers begin to make the world beautiful in the spring time. In fact, we often wonder why any place on Lake St. Croix is not the ideal place for summer homes – notably almost any spot between Stillwater and Afton.[119]

In 1910, the Stillwater *Gazette* added to the growing enthusiasm when it predicted that, "It will be but a few years before the banks of the St. Croix are dotted with summer homes.[120] Many residents of the Twin Cities did begin building summer homes north of Stillwater. "Dedicated fishermen and small-boat owners," wrote James Taylor Dunn, "they all wanted to identify themselves with the river and become a part of its life.[121]

That same summer World War I began and inadvertently boosted tourism in the valley. "It is human nature to look for unusual things in far off places," a tourist brochure of the period noted, "hence the American has become as great a Globe trotter as his English cousins. But in these days when foreign lands are closed to him...it might be well to call to his mind that right at home he can find places full worthy of his time and attention...many thousands of people living right in this region...have never taken the trouble to visit the wonderfully scenic and historic part of this territory known as the St. Croix River Valley."[122]

Nevers Dam -- a remnant of the logging era -- was still an imposing presence on the river and inadvertently contributed to the recreational attraction of the St. Croix. Its fifteen gates created a fifteen-mile flowage. Fish and ducks readily found a home in its placid waters as did boats with fishermen and hunters who were ready to make sport of them. The dam had served as a wagon bridge across the St. Croix when it was built in 1890 by the Milwaukee Bridge & Iron Works. The only other means to cross the river in the area at that time was the Sunrise Ferry upriver from the dam site. Once tourists in their automobiles descended into the St. Croix River Valley after World War I, the dam bridge facilitated this new business until it was washed away in May 1954 and completely removed in 1955.[123]

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[118] Stillwater *Messenger*, 9 October 1909.
[119] Stillwater *Messenger*, 18 July 1904.
[120] Stillwater *Gazette*, 13 July 1910.
[121] James Taylor Dunn, *Saving the River: The Story of the St. Croix River Association, 1911-1986*, (St. Paul, Minn.: Viking Press, 1986), 2.
[122] As quoted in Richardson, *Picturesque Landscape Assessment, 117-8.*
[123] Rosemarie Vezina, *Nevers Dam...the Lumbermen's Dam*, 6, 17, 27, 33, 37.

Many of the folks in the St. Croix Valley, however, were not going to give over their favorite fishing and picnic spots to outsiders. A tradition had developed among residents from Hudson and the Willow River area that when the river opened up for fishing in the spring "every able-bodied man and boy in town would spend the night along the Willow." By the 1910s and 1920s, most of the cottages along the Willow River belonged to residents of Hudson and were built by families and their friends. The land belonged to a local farmer who was unwilling to break up his farm. To accommodate the local fishermen, he leased the land for ten dollars a year. Camping was free, and many families slept in tents, and many a Hudson boy spent his summers sleeping under the stars along the Willow River. The intimate relationship of the cottagers here is illustrated by the story of one fisherman from St. Paul. "Sandy Quosbarth, a veteran Scottish trout fisherman," headed a group of fishermen from the Minnesota city. Sandy soon bought out the other cottage owners in the fishing club, and for the next fifteen years he and his wife became beloved members of the Willow River and Hudson community.[124]

The building of summer homes on the St. Croix was the most tangible sign of the new way the river was appreciated in the wake of logging's decline. A summer hiatus from the din and noise of the cities became the norm for many Americans at the turn of the twentieth century. In his noted book, *Nature and the American*, Hans Huth documented the growing practice of ownership of country estates and summer homes for average Americans. "Most of the winter-weary townspeople, by going to a resort or to their own country homes, or even by visiting city parks and participating in some kind of summer sport," Huth writes, "could find respite from the city during the sultry months. For these summer pleasures the northern part of the country as far west as the Great Lakes was the favorite section." The St. Croix Valley became a prime destination for those seeking country delights.[125] One such place was the Albert C. Heath Summer Residence on Arcola Trail next to the Soo Line Bridge near Stillwater built in 1911. It is within the Saint Croix National Scenic Riverway, and was put on the National Register of Historic places on February 12, 1980. It was, however, destroyed by an arsonist-set fire in 1986 and lost its status as a registered site. The original grounds included a clay tennis court and three trout ponds and trout breeding tanks, which was not uncommon in an area of fishing enthusiasts. In 1922, the Croxsyde summer home was built eight miles north of Stillwater. It was placed on the National Register on June 3, 1980 both for its rustic log construction and as an example of the transition to recreation in the St. Croix River Valley. It too is within park boundaries, but is privately owned. It, too, once had two trout ponds and a stone hatchery.[126]

The First Efforts to "Save the St. Croix"

Recreationers, however, did not have the river to themselves. In the early twentieth century the growing demand for electrical power sent power generating

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[124] Mary Beth Burkholder and Susan Mary Dahlby, *The Willow River, St. Croix County, Wisconsin* (Hudson, 1963), 31-6.
[125] As quoted in Weekley, *Recreation and Tourism Along the Saint Croix*, 33.
[126] Fritz, *Historic Resource Study*, 168.

companies into the St. Croix Valley in search of locations for hydroelectric power. In 1903 the Minneapolis General Electric Company started to build a waterpower generating station at St. Croix Falls. This stopped the arbitrary maintenance of water levels by Nevers Dam. The plant was completed by 1906 and was the first electrical power generated from outside the Twin Cities for the two urban areas. The success of this project encouraged the Minneapolis Electric Company and its successor, the Northern States Power Company, to purchase more sites on the swift flowing river with the hope of lighting up the entire Twin Cities. In a few short years in the early 1900s, the power company became the largest owner of St. Croix river frontage. To people like George Hazzard and those who lived along the St. Croix, the new power dam was one more example of the use of the river for the benefit of outside interests. The Northern States Power Company was not quite as tyrannical as the lumbermen who controlled Nevers Dam, but the river served their needs first and the needs of residents and tourists second.[127]

However, times were changing and the Progressive Era, roughly the years from 1900 to 1920, and its conservation movement, with loose ties to Romanticism, Primitivism, and Transcendentalism, were changing how people thought about the environment, who should control it, and for whose benefit. Notable national conservationists, such as Wisconsin native John Muir, Frederick Law Olmstead, Robert Underwood Johnson, and others called for the protection of significant, monumental landscapes. Muir's conservation ideas were inspired by Thoreau and Emerson. In "A Voice for Wilderness," Muir wrote, "Thousands of tired, nerve-shaken, over-civilized people are beginning to find out that going to the mountains is going home; that wildness is a necessity; and that mountain parks and reservations are useful not only as fountains of timber and irrigating rivers, but as fountains of life." His efforts, and those of others, led to early designation of Yosemite, and ultimately to the formation of the National Park Service in 1916.[128]

Others in the growing conservation movement disagreed with Muir's belief that nature be preserved and untouched for future generations. The most notable leader of the "wise use" contingent was Gifford Pinchot who was appointed head of the newly created U.S. Forest Service by Theodore Roosevelt in 1905. Pinchot firmly believed that the resources of the United States should be used for the benefit of the many, rather than the few, for as long as possible. His scientific management program of logging, mining, and grazing of federal lands rankled special interests groups used to having a free reign on national resources, but provided an enduring approach to both use and preservation.

In between these two philosophies towards the nation's natural resources was the growing recreation and tourism industry, which presented a third approach to conservation. In his book, *Sportsmen and the Origins of Conservation,* John F. Reiger observed of outdoorsmen that, "While their first concern was wildlife, sportsmen quickly perceived that the effort in behalf of mammals, birds, and fish was a solution to only half the problem. It would do little good to preserve wildlife if its habitat continued to shrink,

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[127] Dunne, *The St Croix*, 97-8.
[128] As quoted in Weekley, *Recreation and Tourism Along the Saint Croix*, 35.

for eventually both would be gone." Writing generally on the growth of tourism as a conservation industry, Alexander Wilson, in his essay, "The View from the Road: Recreation and Tourism," noted the beginnings of valuing nature as a commodity:

> Nature tourism is simply the temporary migration of people to what they understand to be a different and usually more "pure" environment. It's going out to nature for its own sake, and it's all of the ways we talk about that experience. The modern history of nature tourism is a history of altered landforms and changed ideas and experiences of the non-human. Broadly speaking, it involves a shift from a pastoral approach to nature to a consumer approach. This in itself is a huge and significant transition.[129]

Artificially created parks, preserves, and resorts became valued for their "natural characteristics. When Americans took to the woods, they took along many of the comforts of home and generally expected to find modern conveniences. Throughout the country entrepreneurs began to oblige their patrons with transportation to resort areas, developed campgrounds, well-equipped housekeeping cabins, and provisions. Scenic vistas, monumental landscapes, and the experiences they evoked became commodities for sale.[130]

Mineral extraction, over-cutting of timber stores, the high incidence of wild fires ignited and spread by logging waste, and over-hunting contributed to the formation of state conservation agencies in Minnesota and Wisconsin. Strict preservationists, recreation enthusiasts, and hunters, alike, sought protection of natural and "pristine" areas through the establishment of state parks and preserves. In this regard, the people of Minnesota and Wisconsin were far ahead of residents in many others states.[131] Minnesota became a leader in the growing conservation and preservation movement when it established its first state park in Itasca in 1891 and the Pillsbury State Forest in 1899, as well as the Interstate Park.[132] "Going to the lake" became almost a secular religion. As for Wisconsin, the receding forests in the St. Croix Valley alarmed many residents. In the 1890s, J. Stannard Baker of the Baker Land and Title Company became interested in reforesting some of his own lands that had been cutover. He began to plant trees on land he owned on Deer Lake six miles east of his home in St. Croix Falls, as well as in the village. In a period of eight to ten years Baker planted thirty thousand trees. When asked why he bothered to do this when he would probably not live to see them mature, Baker said, "Some people in this world want big white monuments. I will take a green one." By 1950 many of the seedlings had grown thirty to forty feet with fourteen and sixteen inch trunks.[133]

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[129] Alexander Wilson, "The View from the Road: Recreation and Tourism," in Scott Norris, ed., *Discovered Country: Tourism and Survival in the American West* (Albuquerque: Stone Ladder Press, 1994), 5.
[130] From Weekley, *Recreation and Tourism Along the Saint Croix*, 36-8.
[131] Weekley, *Recreation and Tourism Along the Saint Croix*, 33.
[132] Blegen, *Minnesota*, 500.
[133] Transcript of Interview with Harry D. Baker, 1950.

George Hazzard, too, grew alarmed at the changes in the valley with the development of hydroelectric power on the St. Croix. His concern, however, was shaped less by the conservation movement than by the fear that power dams would obstruct navigation and curtail the economic life of the river towns. For the first two decades of the twentieth century, Hazzard tirelessly worked to promote the St. Croix River for tourism and commercial development. He willingly took support from conservationists, sportsmen, and boaters, as well as residents who wanted a greater say in how the river was used. In 1911, he helped organize the St. Croix River Improvement Association. Hazzard was, of course, its first president. Because it was composed of a variety of local interest, its goals were somewhat mixed and contradictory. Fishermen were angered by the power company's control over water levels because when the dam was closed, the water level dropped and left thousands of fish stranded in shallow pools. This action stood in the way of turning the St. Croix into "the best water for the angler that there is in the country." Small boaters feared the "deadhead" logs that were left partially submerged in the river by the lumber industry. While sportsmen got the Association to stock small mouth bass in the river, they were not interested in Hazzard's goal of improving navigation in order to revive commercial and tourist steam boating on the river.[134]

Hazzard, however, had his own ideas about the future of the river. He proposed to rebuild Nevers Dam with concrete in order to create deep, slack pools fit for excursion boats, rather than the swift flowing river favored by sportsmen. Another of his pet projects was to revive a nineteenth century proposal to dig a canal between Lake Superior and the Mississippi River via the Bois Brule River Valley and the St. Croix. Hazzard had even gone so far as to try to recruit support for the canal from the Upper Mississippi Improvement Association. However, after reviewing the facts, the Army Corp of Engineers found the canal idea "inadvisable, infeasible, impractical." Hazzard's ideas, however, had captivated the attention of Minnesota and Wisconsin governors, senators, and representatives who then created their own independent Superior and Mississippi Canal Commissions. The Army Corp, however, remained firm in their position, and Hazzard's dream died. The conservation movement had grown too strong, and by this time the power and influence of the Army Corp of Engineers had also increased. By 1917, Congress expanded the federal government's regulatory mission to include navigation management, flood control, and hydropower. Defeat and old age caused Hazzard to withdraw from public life, and the St. Croix River Improvement Association first efforts to be a force in the valley cam to a close. However, sportsmen and conservationists would continue to revive the association to deal with threats to the river.[135]

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[134] James Taylor Dunn, *Saving the River: The Story of the St. Croix River Association, 1911-1986.* (St. Paul: St. Croix River Association, 1986), 3-5. See for more complete account of the history of the St. Croix River Association.

[135]Dunn, *Saving the River*, 3-5. See for more complete account of the history of the St. Croix River Association; Raymond H. Merritt, *Creativity, Conflict & Controversy: A History of the St. Paul District U.S. Army Corps of Engineers* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1979), 289-90. See also Theodore J. Karamanski, *Saving the St. Croix: An Administrative History of the Saint Croix National Scenic River* (Omaha: Midwest Region, National Park Service, 1992), 16-27.

Early in the summer of 1923, Stillwater postman, Ira King, took Hazzard's stand. He and other residents formed the Stillwater Council No. 347, United Commercial Travelers (UCT). King served as chairman of its Committee on River Improvement. "We sincerely believe," King told the Stillwater *Gazette*, "that the St. Croix River is one of Stillwater's best bets and we are putting our best efforts forward to see what can be done to better present conditions." Their goal was to get a deeper channel dug to accommodate pleasure boaters north of the town and commercial barge traffic south of it. The organization began to flood the offices of senators and congressmen from Minnesota and Wisconsin with letters requesting $20,000 for channel improvements from Congress.[136]

The UCT's efforts bore fruit when the Army Corp of Engineers ordered surveys of the river. By 1925, the Stillwater *Gazette* optimistically reported that the "St. Croix Project" of the Corps of Engineers would be a great economic boon to the "entire Northwest." Citizens from Marine, Osceola, St. Croix Falls, and Taylors Falls also put in a request that wartime regulations that restricted flow of water over the NSP dam be lifted. Low water levels below the dam made navigation between Taylors Falls and Stillwater nearly impossible. The Northern States Power company proposed a solution of building another dam near Prescott to improve water levels south of Stillwater. However, no dam was built on the St. Croix River. Instead, in 1938, the Army Corps built one on the Mississippi River near Red Wing, Minnesota as part of the Nine-Foot Channel Navigation Project. Water levels only improved near the mouth of the St. Croix.[137]

Frustrated by their lack of influence on the Army Corps of Engineers, the UCT decided to revive Hazzard's old organization, and in the late 1920s renamed it the St. Croix River Improvement Association. Their goal changed from requesting a three-foot channel to a six-foot one. Their chief target of animosity remained the Northern States Power company. "Why a corporation is allowed to prostitute for its private gain a beautiful river like the St. Croix," reported John Dunn to the association in 1929, "I cannot conceive. I am positive from my long observation that if we had the natural flow of the river it would within two years make and keep a channel suitable for medium size boats. This opinion has been confirmed time and again by talks with men who have lived close to and on the river during and since steam boat times."[138]

While a three- or six-foot channel was not forthcoming, the St. Croix River Improvement Association did obtain funds from the Corps in the early 1930s for a snag boat and spring clean ups of the river to remove dead heads, overhanging trees on the river banks, and other debris that obstructed navigation. Another victory for the association came in the mid 1930s when commercial net fishing was ended and the line and hook method preferred by sport fishermen was introduced. By 1935, the St. Croix River Improvement Association also got the Minnesota Conservation Commissioner to stock small-mouth bass in the river. However, the association was caught completely off-guard when in 1931, the Minnesota Highway Department built a highway along the

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[136] As quoted in Dunn, *Saving the River*, 12.
[137] Dunn, *Saving the River*, 12-3.
[138] As quoted in Dunn, *Saving the River*, 15.

bluffs of the river south of Taylors Falls. In the process, the construction firm, A. Guthrie & Co., blasted tons of rock and dirt into the St. Croix River creating a large island that obstructed more than three-quarters of its channel. Despite protests and hearings with the Army Corps, the firm was never forced to clean up the debris.[139]

Tourism and recreation had set permanent roots in the Lower St. Croix Valley by the early twentieth century. It was dotted by hotels and restaurants, railroads and inter-urban cars brought in a host of visitors, whether day trippers or seasonal resort residences, from the Twin Cities, as well as southern Wisconsin and the Chicago area, steamboat excursions plied the river, and fish hatcheries and hunting preserves welcomed the new outdoorsmen. Just as occurred in other parts of the United States, industry, community development, and the growth of the recreation and tourism advanced uneasily together in the St. Croix Valley.[140]

Recreation Along the Upper St. Croix and Namekagon Rivers

As the Lower St. Croix River adjusted to the decline in logging and its replacement by recreation, the Upper St. Croix and Namekagon Rivers experienced their own growth in tourism. In 1902, the tireless promoter of Burnett County, Ed Peet, was not just interested in attracting agricultural settlers, but he also extolled the county's potential for recreation. "Burnett is a county filled with lakes...nearly all of the lakes are filled with fine fish and into many of the lakes run swift little streams in which the speckled trout is found," he wrote. "The finest lake in the county, if not the finest in the state, is Yellow Lake...It is filled with fish of all kinds... Should a railroad ever touch Yellow lake there is no reason why it would not become one of the finest summer resorts in all the west." Peet also claimed that if the railroad ever reached Trade Lake it, too, "would be well patronized as a summer resort, as it contains many conditions that would attract people seeking rest and pleasure."[141]

Most of the first resort owners in the cutover had been loggers, guides, or farmers. Many farmers struggling in the cutover got into the resort business by simply allowing travelers to pitch a tent on their property or they took in boarders who were primarily interested in hunting or fishing.[142]

Many early hunting and fishing hostels dating back as early as the 1880s and 1890s were hotels and boarding houses in towns and stopping places along the roads used by transient lumbermen and teamsters. "Private rooms were available in the urban places," wrote local historian and resident, Eldon Marple, "but bunks were the rule of the country, rudimentary lodging at best...Few were the females who braved the rigors of resorting then." Even before Ed Peet began to sing the praises of the Upper St. Croix

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[139] Dunn, *Saving the River*, 15-6. Writing in 1986, Dunn reported that the Army Corps of Engineers had not done any snagging on the river above Stillwater declaring it "maintenance free."

[140] Weekley, *Recreation and Tourism Along the Saint Croix*, 38.

[141] Ed L. Peet, *Burnett county Wisconsin* (Grantsburg, Wis.: The Journal of Burnett County, 1902), 27, 55, 66.

[142] Timothy Bawden, "Escape to Wisconsin: The Early Resort Landscape of Northern Wisconsin, 1890-1920," *Wisconsin Preservation News*, 22(4)(July-August 1998), 2-3; Marple, *Hayward Lakes Region*,

and Namekagon Rivers for recreation, a few locals began their own boosterism. In 1885, two Hayward residents advertised in the *North Wisconsin News*, proclaiming that, "Mr. J.N. Russell and Mr. Christie have for the past month been building a summer resort hotel out on Spider Lake." The resort was located east of Spider Creek near the present town hall site, which was a quarter mile from the lake. In 1894, Bill Cornick bought the hotel and called it a "Fisherman's Camp." By 1896, he built the first cottage on Spider Lake, and one on Lost Land Lake.[143] The Sawyer County plat book for 1897 ran advertisements for the Round Lake Park Place Summer Resort and Round Lake House Summer Resort, both located seven to eight miles east of Hayward. An advertisement for the Cable House, in the town of Cable, proclaimed it as a "Sportsmen's Paradise." A Hayward livery stable operator eagerly catered to the tourist trade by claiming, "I keep first class conveyances for transporting people to various Lake Resorts, such as Round Lake, Spider Lake, Lost Lake, Sand Lake, and Lac-Court Oreilles Lakes."[144]

In 1888, F.D. Stone, the county sheriff, opened his Jericho resort on Grindstone Lake, which he nicknamed the "seaport on Grindstone." Guests were entertained with a steamboat ride through the Grindstone-Court Oreilles – Whitefish chain of lakes. Although the Jericho apparently did good business, the resort burned down in 1891. However, in 1890 a ninety-room hotel was built in the town of Cable providing vacationers with another alternative, and the older Hotel Isted in town took in many excursionists. Another hotel was also completed the following year "at the old Crane Creek stopping place" by a man named Angus McPhee "Thad Thayer took in guests from the early days at Trading Post, as did Bill Hogue at his stopping place on the south end of Round Lake," related Eldon Marple. "John Berger operated the Eagles' Nest on Tyner Lake, and there were four fishing clubs on Lac Courte Oreilles: the Ashland, Hayden, Omaha and Chicago Club Houses." And in 1893, the old stopping place, Hotel Wright on Sand Lake, began taking in summer guests.[145]

Another example of the early resort beginnings is Boulder Lodge built on an old driving camp located on Ghost Creek. Jim Goodwins of Hayward started it as a fishing camp and stopping place and later turned it into a resort. It got its name from the big rock beside the road. William Cornick built cottages on Lost Lake in upper Sawyer County in May 1896. They, however, burned down in 1903. Cornick then built a lodge on Teal Lake. In 1921, the Ross family took it over and has operated it as Teal Lake Lodge.[146]

During the years of the First World War, railroads played an important role in the development of tourism in northern Wisconsin and Minnesota. In 1916, the Chicago & NorthWestern Railway distributed a brochure entitled, *Lakes and Resorts of the Northwest*. "Hundreds of delightful lakes and resorts situated in Wisconsin," it beckoned, "are in a region where one may escape from the heat and dust of the city, where the nights are cool and restful, and days full of sunshine, and where there is an evenness in climactic conditions and a purity of atmosphere that cannot be surpassed." It

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[143] Marple, *Hayward Lakes Region*, n.p.
[144] From Weekley, *Recreation and Tourism Along the Saint Croix*, 58-9.
[145] Marple, *Hayward Lakes Region*, n.p.
[146] Marple, *Hayward Lakes Region*, "A Tour Around Lost Land and Teal Lakes," n.p.

added that there were "scores of fishing and hunting resorts, hidden away in the virgin forests of northern Wisconsin...where the lover of Nature may make camp amid innumerable lakes and streams, surrounded by forests, where the soft balsam of the pines pervades the air, where speckled trout are abundant in the streams, and black bass and muskellunge in the lakes." Cedar Lodge Resort, built on the east bay of Spider Lake in 1918 by Wes Turnbull, is an example of a vacation resort of this era, and Empire Lodge, located on Upper A and Empire road in Sawyer County, began in 1923 by Cliff Brandt.[147]

A night's ride in a Pullman car was all it took to deposit vacationers in the North Woods in time for breakfast. Included in the recommended towns with resorts were Hayward and Chisago City, Minnesota. The lakes of the Hayward area were "reached by beautiful drives through the heart of the pines." Round Lake was "an entrancing body of cold, clear water, fed by numerous streams." For the fishermen there were good trout streams, and for the hunter grouse, partridge, duck, and deer during hunting season. Chisago City was described as having excellent fishing, good duck hunting, and very attractive scenery. The brochure provided a list of hotels, lodges, and boarding houses along with their rates and distance from the station.[148]

Wisconsin and Minnesota were poised to take advantage of this growth in tourism and outdoor recreation. By 1920, the two states were leaders in the establishment of state parks, each having six, and the "Wisconsin Idea" of better government, in which a well-informed electorate worked in close cooperation with government agencies, had spread the spirit of reform throughout the country. In these two Midwestern states grassroots conservationists benefited from more responsive state governments. They got an additional boost from the National Park Service. In 1920, the director of the NPS, Stephen Mather called for a meeting with key state conservationists who could assist the federal government. Gems of the National Park Service, such as Yellowstone, Yosemite, and the Grand Canyon, were becoming increasingly in danger of over use. In the era of growing demand by the public for recreational spaces, state parks could play a key role in providing additional parkland and diverting visitors from the National Parks. State parks, he believed, could protect natural areas that did not have national significance and could service local populations better. The 1921 National Conference on State Parks (NCSP) was described as "an epochal meeting." Two hundred representatives from twenty-five states met in Des Moines, Iowa, to discuss the importance of designating accessible natural and recreational areas. The NCSP was formally incorporated as a standing organization with the following mission:

> To urge upon our governments, local, county, state, and national, the acquisition of additional land and water areas suitable for recreation, for the study of natural

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[147] Marple, *Hayward Lakes Region*, "A Tour Around Lost Land and Teal Lakes," n.p.

[148] *Lakes and Resorts of the Northwest* (Chicago: Chicago & Northwest Railway, 1916), 3,8, 19. In Hayward were listed the Giblin Hotel, Cornick's Spider Lake and Teal Resorts, Grindstone of the Pines, Idelhurst Lodge, Boulder Lodge, Hubbard-Teal Lakes Resort, Clover Leaf Lodge, William's Grindstone Lake Resort, Sand Lake Resort, Round Lake Club, Berger's Resort, Sportsmen's Paradise. In Chisago City were listed the Dahl's House, Island Resort, Gleer's House, and Hotel Chisago.

> history and its scientific aspects, and the preservation of wild life [sic], as a form of the conservation of our national resources; until there shall be public parks, forests and preserves within easy access of all the citizens of every state and territory of the United States; and also to encourage the interest of non-governmental agencies and individuals in acquiring, maintaining and dedicating for public uses similar areas; and in educating the citizens of the United States in the values and uses of recreational areas.

The new organization's slogan became, "A State Park Every Hundred Miles." Between 1921 and 1927 seventeen states established state park boards or commissions with the authority to manage scenic and recreation areas that would come to include state monuments, beaches, lakeshores, parkways, waysides, and historical markers. Many partners, from state park superintendents to state departments of conservation to state comptrollers and local boosters came together in a concerted effort to preserve natural settings, market them for public consumption, and glean a bit of pride in sharing their part of the American scene.[149]

Vacationers also found the north woods more accessible in the post-war years as a network of paved roads were expanded and improved. In 1893, Congress established the Office of Road Inquiry as part of the Department of Agriculture. It was later named the Office of Public Road Inquiry (OPRI). Its mission was to improve rudimentary road design, materials, and construction techniques. By the turn of the century, OPRI's budget and staffing were increased, and more emphasis was put on improved transportation routes across the United States. In 1912, Congress established the "10% fund" that diverted ten percent of forest revenues to road construction. Four years later, the Federal Aid Road Act authorized $10 million for this purpose. A federal highway act was also passed in 1916 that required "states to establish highway departments in order that they might obtain, on a matching basis, federal subsidy for highway construction." An additional three million dollars came through the Post Office Appropriation Act of 1919, to ensure "rural free delivery" of mail to all households. By 1920, the OPRI was reorganized as a separate agency, called the Bureau of Public Roads. Its task was to provide technical assistance and direction for all future road construction. As early as 1902 the American Automobile Association (AAA) was promoting recreational auto-tourism.[150]

Roads in northern Wisconsin were also improved thanks to the growing popularity of the automobile. Between the two world wars state paved roads reached into the lower and upper St. Croix Valley. Road building was actually quite easy in the sandy soils of the cutover, and by the early 1930s the Upper St. Croix and Namekagon River area was "welded together by a road system which is very elaborate for such a little used area." The roads, however, were not well built or maintained, but this added to the rustic charm of this wilder region.[151]

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[149] As quoted in Weekley, *Recreation and Tourism Along the Saint Croix*, 45-6.
[150] Weekley, *Recreation and Tourism Along the Saint Croix*, 49-50.
[151] Raymond E. Murphy, "The Geography of the Northwestern Pine Barrens of Wisconsin," *University of Wisconsin Papers in Geography* 1(1931), 95-6.

The automobile did much to democratize recreation and tourism in America. Families with more modest incomes from Milwaukee and Chicago could now easily access the cooler breezes and refreshing lakes of northern Wisconsin. Civic boosters in both Minnesota and Wisconsin were quick to recognize the growing popularity of the automobile and the rising demand for family vacation destination and cultivated auto-tourism for its economic benefits. Both states and enterprising individuals billed their local communities as the best their respective state had to offer. In 1916, Minnesota formed the Ten Thousand Lakes Association to capitalize on its scores of lakes. The "Arrow Head Region" of Minnesota, in the northeast portion of the state, was touted as being the heart of fishing and hunting country. The Minnesota Arrowhead Association, comprised of member organizations from various local communities, established its headquarters in Duluth. Its purpose was to attract visitors, enlist new members, and to encourage preservation of the region's natural resources. The Arrowhead Country was advertised as "a wonderful unspoiled playground," and led the rest of the state in the tourism industry. During the 1920s members combined their efforts with those of local automobile clubs, the Minnesota Automobile Association, the AAA, local commercial clubs, and local chambers of commerce located throughout the state. The Minnesota Arrowhead Association and state automobile associations hosted exhibits at the annual state fair and sponsored annual "Scenic Minnesota Good Roads Tours," under the auspices of the United States Good Roads Association, Inc. to showcase the various regions of the state. In 1926, the group also attracted the attention of the Associated Press, which "spread the story of the Arrowhead Country throughout the nation."[152] By the early 1930s the state recognized how much money tourism generated and began a Tourist Bureau that later became a general department of business. In 1932, the Minnesota State Board of Health also began to distribute a booklet on *State Laws and Regulations Relating to Hotels, Restaurants, and Places of Refreshment, Lodging Houses and Boarding Houses.* This included resorts, summer camps, summer cottages, cabin camps and tourist camps. By the end of the decade Minnesota estimated it took in over a hundred million tourist dollars.[153]

Wisconsin was not to be outdone by its neighbor across the river. In 1921, in response to this new breed of vacationers, local businessmen across the North Woods organized the Northern Wisconsin Resort Association. Their goal was to entice vacationers northward with their dollars and to enhance services and improve the natural environment. Within a year two thousand businessmen from lumber companies, banks, automobile and oil companies, hotel and resort owners, and people from retail business joined in the effort to promote the "Wisconsin Land O' Lakes Association." The association, headquartered in Rhinelander, sent brochures, road maps, and travel information to cities outside the state, as well as established tourist bureaus in Milwaukee

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[152] From Weekley, *Recreation and Tourism Along the Saint Croix*, 52-3.

[153] Blegen, *Minnesota*, 532-5; Minnesota State Board of Health, *State Laws and Regulations Relating to Hotels, Restaurants, Places of Refreshment, Lodging Houses, and Boarding Houses* (St. Paul, Minn., July 1932).

and Chicago. Although no statistics are available, the Land O' Lakes Association considered their 1923 campaign a resounding success.[154]

The promotion of the north woods for vacationers did stimulate local businesses. During the 1920s real estate developers, like the Homeseekers Land Company of Hayward, advertised Wisconsin's cut-over lands to residents in the Minneapolis and Chicago metropolitan areas as, "Desirable locations for Lake Summer Homes, Fur Farming, private trout ponds, club properties, etc."[155] The Baker Land and Title Company started to sell lake front lands for summer cottages. The Bakers subdivided, platted, and sold lots to people from the Twin Cities to Chicago and more distant places.[156] By 1931, grocery stores in Danbury, Gordon, and Solon Springs were doing a booming business catering to summer visitors. "Resort people from Eau Claire Lakes to the east and Bardon Lake to the southwest flock into Gordon daily during the summer season to get the mail and to shop," wrote an observer, "and this trade is the main support of the grocery stores, and is of importance to all the other business houses of the towns as well."[157] Struggling farmers in the cutover, who had not been able to form creameries due to low production, found the summer season a prime opportunity to sell their milk and cream to resorts.[158]

One poignant example of the transition from logging to elite tourism to the era of tourism of the masses is the Taylor House in Taylors Falls. In 1856, Joshua L. Taylor built a splendid Gothic revival house in his namesake town for his new bride. Although two Greek revival houses had previously been built in the town, the building of the Taylor house was symbolic. "The first rough era of the frontier was past, and...the foundation had been laid for a stable community." The Taylors, however, never had children and two years before his death, Mr. Taylor sold the house to Smith Ellison, who proceeded to put on an addition and turn the impressive home into a summer hotel. But after the First World War and into the 1920s the automobile transformed the character of tourism and tourists. Visitors now had more freedom and independence. The era of the town-based hotel was over as vacationers preferred to find their own little cottage or resort on a lake. The Taylor house hotel lost its clientele and eventually its building material was used for a motion picture theater.[159]

During the years between the First and Second World Wars, more summer homes and humble sportsmen's lodges began to dot the lakes and river in the St. Croix Valley, including Lake St. Croix, which had been shunned by tourists during the logging era. The Brule River, along which traversed Indians and traders of another era, was now a summer haven with beautiful seasonal homes. Its denizens enjoyed the trout in its waters and the forests with its game. In the cutover regions of Burnett, Washburn, and Sawyer

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[154] Paul W. Glad, *The History of Wisconsin: War, a New Era, and Depression, 1914-1940* (Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1990), 211-4.
[155] From Weekley, *Recreation and Tourism Along the Saint Croix*, 59, based on Homeseekers Land Company Papers, Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul, Minnesota.
[156] Transcript of Interview with Harry D. Baker.
[157] Murphy, "The Geography of the Northwestern Pine Barrens of Wisconsin," 110.
[158] Murphy, "The Geography of the Pine Barrens of Wisconsin."
[159] "A Gothic House at Taylors Falls," *Minnesota History* 27(2)(June 1946), 125-6.

Counties whose poorer soil defeated many a farmer, vacationers discovered sandy-bottomed lakes with clear, sparkling water, unlike the "pea soup" waters of neighboring counties south with their richer, heavier soils. An example of a sportsman's lodge that developed in the 1920s was Kilkare Lodge located between Birch Island Lake and Fish Lake in Burnett County. The Board of Governors, composed of businessmen from Chicago, "hand-picked" its members through mutual acquaintances ensuring there were "carefully selected executives and professional men." Its pamphlet boasted that, "When you join here, your associates are 'your kind of folks,' from every standpoint!" It offered a "fully appointed Club House, our own farm, complete commissary, a chancy golf course, three lakes...swimming, boating, trail-riding, shooting and trout-fishing." By 1929, its dining room hosted two hundred patrons and was open year round.[160]

Depressed land values from failed or struggling farms only added to the enticement of the area for vacationers. "The larger lakes and many of the better small ones have summer cottages along their shores, and the summer hotel, too, has become very important in the lakes country," wrote University of Wisconsin geographer, Raymond Murphy in 1931. "Prices are considerably lower than would be the case in a better agricultural section where agriculture would compete with resorts for the land, and, moreover, summer visitors find relatively wild unsettled areas more attractive." Murphy, however, could not help but notice the contrast between the poor and abandoned farms of the cutover and the new summer homes being built. "Wooded shores of the larger lakes," he wrote, "are the sites of expensive summer homes and resorts which seem strangely out of place in this unfruitful country."[161]

The success of tourist recruitment to the north woods, however, had its down side. The area was not prepared for the large numbers of tourist who began roaming the countryside in automobiles. Travelers who had difficulty finding or affording accommodations began a practice called "gypsying." Without a railroad to funnel them into specific locales at specific times, car travelers simply took to the roads, stopping and starting as their desires struck, and they camped wherever they pleased. While the gypsy tourist reveled in the new freedom from civilization, farmers found them a downright nuisance. Picnickers and campers often left their garbage behind and relieved themselves. Bolder ones helped themselves to local produce. Since they needed the money tourists brought into the area, local authorities were reluctant to harass the "gypsies." Communities were then forced to find other ways to house and police these wanderlusts. Public parks and campgrounds proved to be one answer. Local resort owners also responded to the call by catering to this more modest income group. After 1925, tourist and cabin camps gained popularity with those tired of auto-camping. Individual cabins offered outdoor, quasi-communal settings with family privacy in comfortable accommodations, sometimes including a central dining/recreation hall, central bathhouse, and gas station. Another complaint of locals was that these new tourists were somewhat pesky with their demands that accommodations match those in the cities, and they expected local residents to fit a stereotyped image of north woods pioneers. But most residents swallowed their irritations and learned to please paying

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[160] *Here's How Kilkare Lodge Looks Today!*, Pamphlet, Burnett County Historical Society. [1929]
[161] Murphy, "The Geography of the Northwestern Pine Barrens of Wisconsin," 72, 93-5, 107.

guests.[162] Well into the 1930s and 1940s, cabin owners provided better furnishings, homey decorations, plumbing, bedding, and kitchen equipment. Travelers no longer had to carry makeshift households in their car, so travel became much easier and both tourist and host communities were much happier.[163]

The increased recreation and automobile traffic was also a boon for the ferry business. During the 1920s and 1930s the Soderbeck family ferried automobiles across the St. Croix River just north of Grantsburg. The season opened with the spring ice break-up and ended with the winter freeze. Rather than drive down to St. Croix Falls or up to Danbury to use the bridges there, travelers chose the leisurely trip across the St. Croix that cost them fifty cents. Years later Bill Soderbeck recalled many humorous tales of misadventure on the ferry, such as two preachers overshooting the ferry deck causing their car to hang precariously over the edge, as well as a group of genuine gypsies offering to pay their way across by telling fortunes. Nonetheless, the ferry passage was critical to the recreation business and the new breed of vacationers in their Model T's.[164]

Through the years, Burnett County attracted many vacationers, and summer resorts sprouted along their shores. "Many lakes and river shorelands that we would not have taken as a gift thirty years ago," wrote one old timer in 1976, "are beauty spots now and provide homes and retreats for many." One enterprising promoter was Iver Johnson. He began his career as a humble postmaster in Webb Lake, Wisconsin with a side business of running a little Indian trading store. Any travelers who ventured into the store at mealtimes were always asked to dinner. One guest who visited in the mid-1920s changed Johnson's life. He was Gus Munch, a Chicago baseball pitcher and sports writer.

Before Munch left, he asked the Johnsons to build a new cottage and promised to write an article in *Outdoor Life and Recreation.* Munch kept his promise and described Webb Lake as a "veritable paradise for the bass fisherman looking for virgin waters and as yet but little fished and less known..."Tis indeed a delightful country for the sportsman who wants to camp out in the wilderness and not be bothered by tourists. They don't get there. The roads are too bad, but the fishing! Well, go on up there, and try it yourself, you'll see!" Munch said Johnson could take care of two people interested in fishing in the area. Within a short time Johnson was receiving a dozen letters a day from sportsmen all over the region wanting to be one of the two he could accommodate. Johnson immediately began to build a cabin and rented a vacated house on Fairy Lake, pitched a tent, and added on to his store. He then proceeded to book twenty to thirty fishermen at a time charging three dollars a day for room and board. He met the sportsmen (women did not come then) at the train in Spooner and brought them over the rough country "to the land of beauty and good fishing." With his new business booming Johnson built more cottages, a tavern, and a dance hall that booked well-known traveling

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[162] Glad, *The History of Wisconsin,* 216-9.
[163] Warren James Belasco, *Americans on the Road: From Autocamp to Motel, 1910-1945* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1978), 8.
[164] *Burnett County Sentinel,* (Grantsburg, Wis.), 5,12, 19, 20, 26, 27 January 2000; 2, 9,16, 23 February 2000

bands. By 1933, Johnson bragged that he could "accommodate 50...instead of being able to care for two." In a brochure he put together, Mr. Johnson assured his guests that, "Every effort was utilized to make our cottages the best in this locality. They are all new and well screened." The resort offered both light housekeeping cottages and sleeping cabins. The light housekeeping one were "completely furnished with good clean beds, bedding including linens, dressers, stoves, dishes, tables, chairs, rockers, rugs, and in fact everything that is needed except towels and tea towels." Guests who preferred to not cook, could dine in the main building. Johnson also offered river trips, tube floats, and horseback riding. As tourism boomed, other residents catered to the overflow the Johnsons could not handle.[165]

Beginning in the 1920s the American plan, which had been the model for resorts throughout the north woods in earlier years, gave way to what was called "housekeeping" style resorts. These were more individualistic and less expensive than the earlier American plan. Housekeeping resorts were composed of a collection of small cottages where guests were expected to bring their own food and linens and fend for themselves. There was no main lodge as a focal point for social gatherings. Stays were much shorter as well. The reasons for this shift where in part due to better roads and automobiles that allowed people to check out a variety of places in a single vacation. The wealthy began to build their own summer homes, often times buying a parcel of an American plan resort. And the new travelers had less money to spend.[166]

The Great Depression of the 1930s disrupted for a time this boom era in tourism in the far north woods. Hard times found the north woods with more cottages and resorts than people to fill them. "So rapidly have summer homes and hotels sprung up along the shores of better lakes," wrote an observer, "that today the number of commercial resorts is too great in proportion to the number of visitors for the business to be profitable." Hardship once again returned to the cutover.[167]

A New Deal for the St. Croix

Oddly enough, however, the Depression and the New Deal programs of Franklin Roosevelt laid the groundwork that would help transform the north woods and the St. Croix Valley into a vacationland and marked the beginning of federal involvement in the fate of the river. With so many Americans unemployed and the private sector of the economy severely shaken, Roosevelt sought ways to employ people using the resources of the federal government. Among his most noteworthy programs were the Civilian Conservation Corp (CCC) and the Works Progress Administration (WPA). These programs helped establish the trend for greater government involvement in preserving and protecting the St. Croix River and its tributaries, its forests, and facilitating the development of recreation.

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[165] *Pioneer Tales of Burnett County*, 103-4; *Johnson's Weblake Resort*, Pamphlet in Burnett County Historical Society.
[166] Bawden, "Escape to Wisconsin," 3.
[167] Murphy, "The Geography of the Northwestern Pine Barrens of Wisconsin," 76.

In June of 1933, 198 young men of the Civilian Conservation Corp of Company #647 arrived in Burnett County from Fort Sheridan, Illinois. The company was composed of young men whose future prospects for work and careers were discouraging in depressed cities. Useful, vigorous jobs in the countryside were supposed to channel their energies into productive endeavors instead of leaving them idle in the streets. The four hundred thousand strong CCC, under the auspices of the U.S. Army, became renowned for its accomplishments in forest, soil, water, and wildlife conservation. Federal or state agencies that developed a conservation project could request a CCC company. Camps were formed in national and state forests or in soil conservation districts. Forest fires, of course, had been the most immediate and biggest problem for conservationists and residents since the last century.

Wisconsin quite early in its history had recognized problems associated with the depletion of its forests, and in 1867, the legislature formed a commission to assess the state's forest reserves. Increase A. Lapham, the commission chair, produced a study entitled, *Report of the Disastrous Effects of the Destruction of Forest Trees Now Going on So Rapidly in the State of Wisconsin.* The report provided a comprehensive view of the effects of logging and lumbering. It specifically noted that the elimination of the forest cover reduced stream flow and led to widespread flooding and erosion. Professors at the University of Wisconsin and their students contributed to the call for measures to stop the ravage of forests fires. These fires ravage the north country at the end of the nineteenth century, and in 1897 the Wisconsin legislature finally initiated a program to monitor and preserve its natural resources. Members appointed a state forestry warden, who implemented a system of town wardens and volunteer firefighters. Some watchtowers were built and two-way radios came into use. However, these efforts were not enough.[168]

In 1908, after a particularly bad season of fire damage, a citizens' committee formed to pressure the state legislature for better forest protection. Governor James O. Davidson then appointed a State Conservation Commission to study the problem of forest fires and make recommendations to the legislature. This eventually resulted in the creation of fire protection districts in 1923. In 1925, these districts were given $25,000. By the 1920s disenchantment from the indiscriminant promotion of agricultural settlement, especially in the cutover, encouraged Wisconsin conservationists to push for a constitutional amendment to allow for state-owned and managed forests. This was passed in 1924 thus overriding the Wisconsin Supreme Court's 1915 ruling. In 1927, the state passed a forest crop law that encouraged counties and private owners to put land into forest plantation by implementing a tax plan that recognized the long-term nature of forestland use. The Wisconsin Conservation Department became an independent agency and was given responsibility for the protection of all forestlands. In addition to these developments, in 1929 a new zoning law made it possible for counties to zone lands as out of bounds for agricultural settlement. "It was a final recognition that an unsuccessful

[168] Weekley, *Recreation and Tourism Along the Saint Croix*, 44-5.

farmer, settled on unsuitable land in an isolated place," wrote historian Robert C. Nesbit, "was anything but a taxable asset to the county."[169]

Minnesota had also taken action to monitor and protect its forests. The Minnesota State Forestry Association, one of the earliest forestry organizations in the country, was established in 1876. Members worked primarily on the grassroots level, through civic groups and fraternal organizations. After the disastrous Hinkley fire in September 1894, Minnesota lawmakers took more direct action in forest management and preservation. The state auditor was authorized to also act as state forest commissioner. The forest commissioner then appointed a chief fire warden, who in turn appointed deputy wardens to monitor conditions throughout the state. Christopher Columbus Andrews, a leading conservationist, served as the first chief fire warden. Under his leadership Minnesota adopted a progressive philosophy of forestry management. In addition, the state established a School of Forestry at the University of Minnesota to train professionals, establish a state nursery, state forest park preserves, and more state parks that emphasized natural resource conservation. The Conservation Commission, organized in 1925, served as an umbrella agency over forestry, fire prevention, game and fish, lands and timber, state parks, and state public campgrounds. By the mid-1920s, the state of Minnesota offered a wide-variety of well-managed recreational venues and facilities for visitors to the north woods.[170]

Wisconsin was thus poised to take full advantage of New Deal conservation programs. The CCC built twelve camps in its national forests, twelve in its state forests, and eight in its state parks. The state employed more than ninety-two thousand workers in the nine years it existed.[171]

The cutover of Wisconsin and Minnesota was sorely in need of revitalization. The state governments of Wisconsin and Minnesota cooperated with county agencies to receive several companies to help redevelop the St. Croix Valley. Most of the workers were from urban areas, especially Chicago, but many young men from local counties were also able to get work with the Corp. One of the first camps was located two miles east of Pacwawong Lake in the upper reaches of the Namekagon River in Burnett County. It was called Camp Smith Lake. Others were Clam Lake Camp, Ghost Lake Camp, Sawyer Camp, and Camp Riverside nine miles northeast of Danbury. Wisconsin's Interstate Park hosted two camps, one from 1935 to 1940 and the second from 1938 to 1940. Pine County in Minnesota hosted a CCC camp, and on the lower St. Croix River a camp was stationed in Bayport (now occupied by the Anderson Windows storage building). This camp was entirely made up of veterans, primarily sailors and ex-marines.[172]

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[169] Robert C. Nesbit, *Wisconsin: A History*, (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1973), 470-1.
[170] Weekley, *Recreation and Tourism Along the Saint Croix*, 43-4.
[171] Glad, *The History of Wisconsin*, 494; Marple, *The Hayward Lakes Region*, n.p.
[172] Marple, *Hayward Lakes Region*; *Rice Lake Chronotype* (Rice Lake, Wis.), 28 November 1979; *Work at Camp Riverside*, n.p., n.d., Burnett County Historical Society; *The St. Paul Pioneer Press*, 6 April 1941.

The main objective of CCC programs in the valley was, of course, reforestation and conservation. The young "CC boys," as they were called, built fire roads and lookout towers, which finally helped end the ravage of fires that had swept through the area in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Once the fires were brought under control, the forests had the chance to recover. The CCC then planted scores of trees from the millions of seedlings they grew in their own nurseries. Forest experts were enlisted to provide advice on location and type of soil to plant them in.[173]

An example of charred cutover land returned to verdant forests was the handiwork of Camp Riverside. Shortly before the company arrived a fire had swept through fifteen hundred acres in Burnett County. The inexperienced young CCC men had a big job ahead of them. For the next six years they cleared debris and planted nearly 2,500,000 Jack, Norway, White Pine, and Spruce trees. They built seventy-five miles of fire roads, and laid 107 miles of fireproof telephone lines to the Burnett and Washburn County fire protection districts, as well as connecting lines to forestry units elsewhere in the state. The CCC also erected two fire towers – the Sterling Tower in Polk County and the McKenzie Tower in Burnett County. Firebreaks were cut across areas that posed high fire hazards, such as in the jack pine barrens. Water table surveys were made in order to install fire-fighting wells and pumps.

The Riverside CCC also constructed a 130-foot, two-span timber bridge across the St. Croix River along the historic St. Croix Trail that marks the overland route from the Twin Cities to Bayfield, Wisconsin. This overland portage was abandoned when the railroads came to the north woods. The camp boys also built an earthen dam on Loon Creek, which enters the Yellow River just before it joins with the St. Croix River, to raise the water level of the Loon Creek chain of lakes. They added four more parks and equipped them with campsites that created increasing the recreational opportunities in Burnett County. And three thousand pheasants raised from chicks were released into the second growth forests for sportsmen.[174] As Burnett County became reclaimed by forest and farmland diminished, the county government found its tax rolls reduced. One way it found to raise money was to cater to hunters. Cabins and house trailers on government property were leased thereby enhancing recreational usage of land in the St. Croix Valley. These small, crude shelters dotted the St. Croix and Namekagon Rivers in Burnett County until they were taken over by the National Park Service in the 1970s.[175]

In addition to forestry programs, fish propagation and river and stream improvements were among the more popular programs of the CCC. One of the legacies left by the logging era was dozens of streams and rivers along the St. Croix, including the

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[173] Marple, *Hayward Lakes Region*, n.p.; Burnett County Homemakers Clubs, *Pioneer Tales of Burnett County*, 99; Carol Ahlgren, "The Civilian Conservation Corps and Wisconsin State Park Development," *Wisconsin Magazine of History*, 71(3)(Spring 1988): 184-204.

[174] *Work at Camp Riverside*, 18. Burnett County Historical Society's clipping file contains this pamphlet. It only identities the bridge as crossing the St. Croix River along the St. Croix Trail. This would seem to indicate that the bridge is at the CCC Bridge Landing site on the Park Service map. See also William Gray Purcell, *St. Croix Trail Country: Recollections of Wisconsin*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1967).

[175] Burnett County Homemakers Clubs, *Pioneer Tales of Burnett County*, 73.

St. Croix itself, were filled with silt when the forest was gone and nothing was left to hold the soil in place. The banks of rivers had also been severely eroded by increased rainwater runoff and from log drives. Many lakes had been so filled in by silt that they became more like swamps and muskegs. Alder took root where once there had been blue water. Back in the nineteenth century many hunters and trappers had reconciled themselves to the inevitability of the disappearance of game. Fishermen, however, had fully expected their sport to continue unabated after the forests had been logged over and lands turned to farms. When fish numbers began to decline in the nineteenth century throughout Wisconsin, there was an outcry to do something about it. Unfortunately, early stocking practices were not carefully considered. In 1881, carp were introduced into rivers and streams in southern Wisconsin because they were able to survive in warm and semi-stagnant water. The carp, however, bred quickly and made any future efforts in promoting more desirable species difficult. By 1935, the state began to hire men to clean out the carp and expanded native fish hatcheries. Inexperienced volunteers, however, dumped untold numbers of fry into the waters where most died. With the assistance of the CCC the Wisconsin Conservation Commission then began the practice of allowing fry to mature and released them under more careful supervision. The St. Croix Valley benefited from these efforts.[176]

The Civilian Conservation Corp along with the Wisconsin Conservation Department built a fish hatchery near Hayward on the Namekagon River. The CCC also planted a grove of conifers on the grounds of the hatchery and along the road leading up to it. Streams were cleared of debris and the Corp recruits built diversion dams where temperatures and water speeds could be carefully monitored. The lakes in Burnett County were mapped for depth and type of bottom, and "fish refuges" were built and sunk to nurture fish life.[177] The CCC also planted trees along barren riverbanks to prevent erosion and the silting of fish habitats. This provided shade and cooler waters for fish. The agency also placed V-shaped log dams in streams to create shallow spawning beds.[178]

Although fishing recovered in the valley and attracted sport fishermen, locals became concerned that visitors took more fish than they could possibly use. Fred Etcherson had lived in the St. Croix Valley nearly all his life and developed a very conservative attitude towards fishing and was irritated by the waste. "When I go there to fish, I get two...if I got someone who is going to go home with me to help eat them trout, I might take four," he related. "I want one left for tomorrow." But the visitors "catch

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[176] Workers of the Writers' Program of the Works Projects Administration in the State of Wisconsin, *Wisconsin: A Guide to the Badger State* (New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1941), 22-3; Murphy, "The Geography of the Northwestern Pine Barrens of Wisconsin,"93.

[177] Eldon M. Marple, *A History of the Wayward Lakes Region...Through the Eyes of the Visitor Who Came and Stayed* (Hayward, Wis.: Chicago Bay Grafix, 1976), 81. The researchers have not fond specific reference of the type of fish initially released at the Hayward fishery, however, given the fact that resorts in the area advertised that trout fishing was plentiful and the WPA Guidebooks stated that the St. Croix River was favored by trout fishermen, it is probably safe to assume that the CCC constructed fishery and others constsructed by the CCC primarily released trout.

[178] WPA Writers, *Wisconsin*, 23-4.

more than they can take care of, so they throw them away."[179] There was clearly some tension between the locals who saw fishing as a supplement to their diet and vacationers who often saw it as sport more than sustenance. The CCC then provided advice to the state on fishing laws regulating size, bag limit, seasons, and licenses

Among the variety of work done by the CCC was plant disease control to limit the spread of white pine blister rust, and insect control to stop the spread of grasshoppers and moths. Grasshoppers were poisoned, while slashing and burning the timber in infected areas curbed the jack pine tussock moth. Wildlife was counted and surveyed and their habitants enhanced. Roadside picnic areas and state parks were developed or enlarged. Facilities for visitors were built, such as visitor centers, and were equipped with rest room facilities. The CCC landscaped the grounds. Nearby timber stands were cleaned up, as well as springs and ponds, and nature trails and access roads were laid out.

Since it was located primarily in farm country, the main mission of the Bayport CCC Camp was soil conservation. With supervision from the Federal Soil Conservation Corps, the CCC recruited ninety-one Washington County farmers who held eleven hundred acres of land for a five-year soil conservation program. The men spent a considerable time fluming and riprapping gullies and constructing drainage ditches along roads. They planted at least 250,000 trees on farms to prevent erosion, and assisted in rebuilding fences. The Bayport Camp also helped educate its recruits for future jobs beyond the CCC. Classes were offered in radio, concrete work, forestry, wildlife conservation, agronomy, and animal husbandry. Several CCC workers were later able to find work outside the Corp with this training.[180]

In the Wisconsin Interstate Park the CCC developed, under the direction of the technical staff of the National Park Service (NPS), a survey of the park and a master plan for trails and rustic shelters. All buildings were built from stone that came from a quarry in the park following the guidelines of Albert Good, an architect noted for his rustic designs. The CC boys cleared a trail along the St. Croix River by removing rocks using a variety of methods, such as crowbars, block and tackle, and even the "Indian method" of "fire and water." Rocks were heated for several hours or even days. Once heated through, cold water was poured on top to crack and shatter them. In 1937, the first camp razed the old bathhouses in the park, brought in new sand for a beach on the river, and built a trailside shelter, and a log restroom. The second CCC camp completed a new bathhouse, a shelter along Horizon Rock trail, a park office, a picnic shelter by the beach, as well as picnicking and parking areas.[181]

The over-used Minnesota side of the Interstate Park also needed a lot of work. In 1937, it welcomed 327,496 visitors. On some Sundays ten thousand people crowded into the park. CCC workers built a variety of structures ranging from a refectory, stone

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[179] Transcript of interview of Fred Etcherson by David J. Olson, 30 July 1970, in Wisconsin State Historical Archives – River Falls.
[180] *The Saint Paul Pioneer Press*, 6 April 1941.
[181] Rachel Franklin Weekley, *Recreation and Tourism Along the Saint Croix*. Unpublished report (Omaha, Neb.: U.S. Dept. of the Interior National Parks Service), 68-9.

curbing, stone retaining walls, and a stone drinking fountain. When the CCC was disbanded, the Works Progress Administration built a twenty-two acre campground, a shelter-refectory combination building housing restrooms, laundry, kitchen, and utility facilities. The National Resister of Historic Places recognized the unique rustic designs with its designation of the "Interstate State Park CCC/WPA/Rustic Style Historic District" near Taylors Falls.[182]

The WPA also constructed overlooks along the St. Croix River. The first one it constructed sits atop a ridge located approximately one-to-two miles south of Stillwater offering a long, southward view of the St. Croix River. Workers implemented a semi-circular design, defined by a curvilinear roadway, stone sidewalks, and stone retaining walls. The site is still used as an overlook and features a plaque that discusses the geology of the St. Croix. WPA workers also constructed a wayside rest area near the nationally historic St. Croix Boom Site, located approximately three miles north of Stillwater on Minnesota State Route 95. It functions as a scenic overlook, historic site, picnic spot, and rest stop. With assistance from the National Youth Administration, the WPA constructed low, stone, retaining walls encircling the cliff bank high above the river and placed stone fire rings within the designated cooking/picnicking islands, which were also defined by low, semi-circular stone "walls." Curvilinear sidewalks meander through the site and a steep stairway leads visitors down to the banks of the St. Croix River.[183]

Besides conservation New Deal programs targeted certain areas for economic development. Water development projects for poverty-stricken or overly exploited areas offered the means to encourage regional planning and to create a multiple use of waterways for economic development as well as for recreational uses. One of the most famous New Deal sponsored projects was the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA), which created hydroelectric power and thereby provided a shot-in-the-arm for the local economy. The TVA was hailed as a model of federal leadership bringing an impoverished, backward area to life. Comparisons, of course, had been made between the poverty of Appalachia and the cutover regions of northern Wisconsin, Michigan, and Minnesota that had failed to create viable farming communities since the 1920s. The New Deal inspired federal and state planners to respond to the growing poverty of this area.

The St. Croix River counties of Washburn in Wisconsin and Pine County in Minnesota were among the areas in greatest need. Pine County led its state in tax delinquencies. This prompted the Minnesota Natural Resources Board to recommend reforestation as in the area's long-term best interest. Beginning in 1935 federal and state officials began to work together to create a forest reserve near the Kettle River on the St. Croix Valley. This tract was owned by Northern States Power Company, which leased it to the Department of the Interior. In the latter part of 1935 and into 1936 the CCC established the St. Croix Recreational Demonstration Area (RDA). It was composed of 30,000 acres, which made the St. Croix RDA the largest in the country. The vast pine, spruce, and hardwood forests near Hinckley, Minnesota, had been decimated through

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[182] Weekley, "Recreation and Tourism Along the Saint Croix," 69-70.

[183] Weekley, *Recreation and Tourism Along the Saint Croix,*

cultivation and from the disastrous fire of 1894. The large, but poor, area included scenic views along the high banks of the Kettle and St. Croix Rivers. Its potential for recreational use made the site ideal for the New Deal Program. Existing farmhouses and outbuildings were demolished to make way for five developed areas; including facilities for a park administration and visitor center, three group camps, and one public campground and day-use area. Between 1936 and 1942, the CCC and the WPA constructed buildings, structures, scenic overlooks, cut roads and trails, erected dams, installed fish rearing ponds, and landscaped portions of the RDA. The entire "St. Croix Recreational Demonstration Area" historic district, comprised of 164 contributing resources, was designated a National Historic Landmark (NHL) in September 1997 because of its landscape architecture, recreation and culture, transportation, and domestic use.[184]

With the help of CCC workers the area was planted with pine, spruce, and hardwood trees. In 1943, the federal government donated to the state of Minnesota the newly restored forest. While most newly created state and county forests aimed to serve to dual interests of commercial logging and sporting activities, the unique scenic appeal of the rugged high banks of the St. Croix at Kettle Falls led the state of Minnesota in 1943 to preserve the historic RDA as the St. Croix River State Park.[185]

Unfortunately for the St. Croix Valley, as unemployment dropped in the late 1930s from its high of twenty-five percent to approximately fourteen percent, it became more difficult to continue to get money and men for the program. When the threat of war for the United States seemed imminent in the spring of 1941, many camps were turned into non-combatant training centers. In December, after Pearl Harbor, the CCC was disbanded completely. Work left uncompleted was finished by day laborers from the WPA.

Although defunct, the CCC had a lasting influence on the St. Croix Valley in reforestation, professional management of state forests, lakes and streams, and control of soil erosion. Once these resources were preserved and used more wisely wild life and fish were able to flourish, and to this day vacationers relish the natural beauty. Another legacy of the CCC is the St. Croix State Park on the Minnesota side of the river near Hinckley. Just as in Burnett County, farmers here had tried to raise crops on the land after loggers cleared it. The sandy soil, however, was not responsive to the best efforts of these tillers and most eventually gave up. Their tax delinquent property was then taken over in 1931 with the intention of making the area a state forest. [186]

The WPA also engaged in dam building in the region. One of the most notable projects was the dam on the north fork of the Chief River in Sawyer County along the Tiger Cat Flowage and Round Lake. The area had been plagued by a drought that dried up old springs which then in turn dried up lakes, forests, and over-cultivated land. Round

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[184] From Weekley, *Recreation and Tourism Along the Saint Croix*, 71-2.
[185] Dunn, *The St. Croix*, 207-8; *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, 1 July 1945.
[186] Dunn, *State Parks of the St. Croix*, 47-9; Weekley, "Recreation and Tourism Along the Saint Croix," 70-1.

Lake, which did not have much drainage to begin with, "dropped so low that some lakeshore residents had to take a long walk to go swimming." The North Fork of the Chief River, however, had a vast drainage network, which made its water reserves more than adequate. The proposed plan was to build Tiger Cat dam higher to hold back the flows of Twin and Dead Creeks. This would raise the water levels of all the lakes in the chain. Plenty of water would still flow into the Chief River so as not to destroy its fish habitat. Surplus water was to be detoured through ditches into Placid Lake to raise that lake ten feet and the rest would flow into Round Lake to return its water level to what it had been previously.

On April 9, 1936 an application was made to the Public Service Commission and aroused much controversy. However, the mandatory public hearings in May of that year allayed many fears. On February 25, 1937 Sawyer County was granted a permit to build the dam. Although the WPA supplied the labor the dam cost $75,000. The ditches, or canals, cost an additional $10,000 to the county. The project was in some respects too successful. Residents of Round Lake complained there was too much water that was now washing away their beaches, piers, and shorelines.[187]

The Army Corps of engineers also played a role in enhancing the recreational potential of the St. Croix River. Beginning in 1927 and over the course of the following fifty years, the Corps dredged 1,711,616 yards of sediment from the river, which had been left behind by the logging industry. Most of this came from the Hudson bar, the Catfish bar, and the mouth of the Kinnickinnic River. Powerboats, water-skiers, sailboats, and yachts, in addition to the canoes of an earlier day thereafter became increasingly more common.[188]

The Works Progress Administration used more than construction techniques to promote tourism in the St. Croix Valley. While some of its workers did a variety of manual jobs, the WPA also hired artists, musicians, and writers to promote the arts and culture in America. Many writers were employed to write state guidebooks. These books essentially provided a brief history of the particular state, its resources, and unique characteristics, as well as provided descriptive guided tours of the states. *Wisconsin: A Guide to the Badger State* (1941) and *Minnesota: A State Guide* (1938) included the St. Croix Valley in its tours. In contrast to the cultivated farm land of southern Wisconsin, the Wisconsin guide book described the northern half of Wisconsin as "a forest wilderness, smelling of pine pitch and brush fires, where rivers thunder across trap-rock ledges, or flow quietly on clean sand beds. The land is pitted with swamps, hidden ponds, and uncounted lakes, and wildlife abounds in both the uplands and the lowlands." The guide reported that Wisconsin's tourism industry brought in $250 million dollars in 1938, which made it one of the state's leading industries. "Its program is of two types," noted the WPA writers, "that undertaken by local, Federal, and State agencies, and that undertaken by individual promoters, real estate men, and chambers of commerce." They

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[187] Marple, *Hayward Lakes Region*, 67-8. There is not enough information available to determine the extent of the impact of the dam on the Namekagon River. This information is supplied to provide an example of WPA work in the river valley.

[188] Merritt, *Creativity, Conflict and Controversy*, 288.

credited the Wisconsin Conservation Commission, which established a recreational publicity department in 1936, with the dramatic growth of the industry. The state added its influence to the publicity campaigns already being conducted by private and community-based associations, which specifically targeted Chicago and other large metropolitan areas in the Midwest.[189]

The WPA guidebooks offered several auto-tours that crossed the current boundaries of the Saint Croix National Scenic Riverway. Tour 16 began in the east in Norway, Michigan and then traversed Wisconsin along Route 8 through Rhineland, Prentice, Ladysmith to St. Croix Falls and ended at Taylors Falls. The Interstate Park, wrote the guide, looked "down from timbered banks to the boiling waters of the St. Croix River. Here towering columns of rock and pot holes, made by some prehistoric waterfall, lie within a wild, natural valley." It described the unique features of the Dalles, of course, and noted the network of roads and trails that traversed the park to invite the interested traveler. Tour 17 began in Green Bay and followed route 29 to Wausau and then to the Minnesota line, featuring the Lower St. Croix from River Falls to Prescott.[190]

Tour 9, began along Lake Superior and ran along U.S. Highway 63 went through Ashland, Spooner, and Hager City. "US 63 slants southwest from Lake Superior," wrote the authors, "through a country of sand and jack pine, a region of lakes, stream, and low young forests to which hundreds of sportsmen come each year to hunt and fish." This route extended through the small town of Cable, whose history was marked by forest fires, violence, and economic downturns. By 1938, however, WPA workers reported, "Rebuilt on a more modest scale, Cable had become by 1907 a center for fishermen seeking trout in near-by [sic] Namekagon River. Now there are about 45 resorts and many private cabins and cottages on the lakes near the village."[191]

Hayward was described as a well-established vacation center for the region. The town reportedly expanded five and six times its normal size during the summer months due to the influx of tourists. There were approximately, "50 resorts and innumerable private cabins and cottages scattered throughout the surrounding woods." Fishermen could rely on the well-stocked rivers and streams, supplied by two state fish hatcheries near Hayward and one near Spooner. Tour 10 also ventured southward from Lake Superior, through Solon Springs, Gordon, and Spooner by way of U.S. Highway 53. Again, subsistence farming and tourism provided the greatest economic opportunities in this northern cutover region. Travelers on Tour 13 skirted the west side of the Riverway along State Route 35, passing through Dairyland, Siren, Osceola, Somerset, and Hudson. Once in Hudson, they could find, "A small landscaped Municipal Park and Bathing Beach" at the entrance to a toll bridge extending across the Saint Croix River to Minnesota. Prospect Park, described as overlooking Hudson and the upper river, also provided free facilities, with kitchen and a public dining room.[192]

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[189] From Weekley, *Recreation and Tourism Along the Saint Croix*, 54-5.
[190] WPA Writers, *Wisconsin*, 113, 115, 471-2, 477-8.
[191] From Weekley, *Recreation and Tourism Along the Saint Croix*, 55.
[192] From Weekley, *Recreation and Tourism Along the Saint Croix River*, 55-6.

Federal writers with the WPA also discussed "Sports and Recreation" in a state history of Minnesota. They especially touted the Arrowhead District with its large national forests and abundant lakes, but also gave brief attention to leading lakes and rivers, including the St. Croix, for its fine small bass fishing. The WPA's *Minnesota: A State Guide* also featured the St. Croix on one of its designated tours. Tour 1 began in the Canadian twin cities of Port Arthur and Fort William, Ontario. From there it proceeded along Route 61 to Duluth and down to Hinckley. In Hinckley the guide encouraged travelers to visit the Monument to the Fire Victims of 1894. The St. Croix, however, received a cursory description. "The scenic ST. CROIX RECREATIONAL AREA," the guide said belonged, "to the Federal Government...in Pine County, along the west bank of the St. Croix River." It warned that all the facilities, including Pine Camp, a Girls' Camp, and a CCC camp were rustic in their accommodations. It did, however, recommend the river for canoeing enthusiasts and trout fishermen. No mention was made of the Interstate Park and its main tourist attraction for the past century – the Dalles. From there the tour continued to St. Paul and then down to Red Wing and Winona. Tour 19, however, began at St. Croix Falls where it crossed to Taylors Fall. It did mention the Minnesota Interstate Park, but used none of the picturesque language of the last century. Its geological features merely received a scientific description. The river was described as "a quiet stream, beloved by fishermen, canoeists, and summer residents, whose cabins are hidden by the trees that line its banks." The tour continued down river through Marine and Stillwater. The guide noted their quaint charm and provided historical background information, which largely focused on its logging history. In Bayport, visitors could view "a fine panorama of the mile-wide lake, with its unusually clear water and sandy beaches. Across the lake the bluffs rise precipitously. Resorts and summer homes are numerous along the shore; the finer estates have hanging gardens built on terraces." From there the tour reverted northward to the Chisago Lakes region, where its Scandinavian background received mention, but nothing was said of the beauty of the lakes and the resorts on them. WPA writers had merely called attention to what others had known since the early twentieth century. The St. Croix was a vibrant vacation spot and regional highlight, popular on the automobile tour circuit and as a hideaway for short-term and seasonal resort guests.[193]

The WPA Writers' Project also put out smaller pamphlets on recreation in each of the forty-eight states. In the Minnesota booklet the St. Croix River and Valley was given its own automobile tour up State 95 from Point Douglas to Taylors Falls – a fifty-three mile trip. None of the fifteen recommended tours received more than a cursory description, but the Interstate Park did get its deserved attention on the St. Croix tour complete with mention of camp sites and boat excursions into the Dalles.[194] The Wisconsin recreation book provided a descriptive tour of "The Northwestern Lakes Region," which included Burnett, Washburn, Sawyer, Polk, and St. Croix counties as well as the other counties that comprised Indian Head country – Barron, Rusk, Dunn,

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[193] Compiled and Written by the Federal Writers' Project of the Works Progress Administration, *Minnesota: A State Guide* (New York: Hastings House, 1938), 295, 453-9; also from Weekley, *Recreation and Tourism Along the Saint Croix*, 57.

[194] Workers of the WPA Writers' Project in the State of Minnesota, *Minnesota: Facts, Events, Places, Tours* in *The American Recreation Series* (New York: Rhode Printing-Publishing Co., 1941), 24.

Chippewa, and Eau Claire counties. "Within the area are thousands of lakes, many of them famous among fishermen for the excellent muskellunge, bass, walleyed and northern pike fishing," the guidebook explained. "The St. Croix, Totogatic, Namekagon, Clam, Yellow, Apple, Red Cedar, Chippewa, Flambeau, and Thornapple Rivers produce all kinds of game fish, and many of their feeders are fine trout streams. All kinds of wild game native to Wisconsin live in the northern part of the region. Hundreds of resorts dot the area." Hayward was described as "the leading resort center in northwestern Wisconsin...[with] some of Wisconsin's best muskellunge waters...All varieties of game fish are plentiful. Deer and small game abound in the forest regions." Spooner was singled out as a host to many resorts on the surrounding lakes. "Most of the streams near Spooner are rated highly as trout, bass, and walleyed pike waters." Canoe trips down the Namekagon started at Trego. The seven-mile rapid on the St. Croix River near Grantsburg "is one of the best smallmouthed black bass waters in the world." Danbury, Webster, Siren, Luck, Milltown and Balsam Lake "serve scores of resorts on the numerous lakes that dot this region." St. Croix Falls received special note as "a farm trading and resort community near *Interstate Park*, Wisconsin's oldest State park, at the *Dalles of the St. Croix River*."[195]

The St. Croix Valley, however, did not need to rely solely on WPA guides to promote itself to tourists. By 1936, local tourist boards, headquartered in Eau Claire, formed an organization to promote "Indian Head Country." The geographic contours of northwestern Wisconsin, in part shaped by the St. Croix River, lent itself to an artistic rendering of a profile of an Indian face. With this description, St. Croix Valley hoped to create a distinctive identity and locale for vacationers. The organization responded to requests for travel information, participated in sports shows, published annual vacation books, quarterly newsletters, and produced advertising and press releases on behalf of member communities and resort owners. A booklet, featuring the vacationing opportunities in the various counties in this area, was published annually for the next half-century or more. By 1949, Indian Head Country, Inc., served fifteen counties in "the development of the vast recreational assets of Northwestern Wisconsin, through the execution of a program of advertising, highway development, conservation and legislation." [196]

While outdoor recreation dominated the tourist business, the 1930s also witnessed a growing interest in historical attractions. Tourism associations and community chambers of commerce also called attention to historic sites along the river. In 1936, members and friends of the Minnesota Historical Society decided to host their State Historical Convention at various locations along the St. Croix River. They took a tour along the Minnesota side of the river, from Hastings to Afton, Stillwater, Marine, and as far north as Taylors Falls. At different points along the way, participants read papers

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[195] Compiled by the Workers of the WPA Writers' Project in the State of Wisconsin, *Wisconsin: Facts, Events, Places, Tours*, in the *American Recreation Series* (New York: Bacon & Wieck, Inc., 1941), 15-7.
[196] *Vacation in the Indian Head Country of Wisconsin*, 1936-1986 Anniversary Edition, in Hudson Public Library; "Constitution and By-Laws of The Wisconsin Indian Country, Inc.," Annual Update, Wisconsin Indian Head Country, 1948,in R.A. Peabody Papers, 1941-1954, State historical Society of Wisconsin, Wisconsin Area Research Center, University of Wisconsin-River Falls, River Falls, Wisconsin.

relating to the natural and cultural history of the St. Croix Valley. The event raised awareness of the impact that people had had on the area throughout its history. The WPA State Guides also contributed to this growing historical awareness by noting historical features of the area such as its logging days or Indian haunts.[197]

In 1938, the Minnesota Historical Society completed a "Statewide Archaeological and Historical Survey Project" with the assistance of the Minnesota WPA. The University of Minnesota and State Conservation and Highway Departments collaborated to research, identify, and mark historic sites, buildings, trails, cemeteries, and significant private burials. One of its stated purposes was to develop "the information into a useable form for public consumption." It constituted "an investigation of all of the various types of sites mentioned for their historical preservation" and authorized the erection of interpretive signs at those deemed significant. As a result, the tourism industry began to incorporate cultural resources into its range of attractions. No longer were nature, leisure and sport the only "draws" for visitors to the St. Croix.[198]

Towns along the lower river also tried to attract tourism dollars. Inter-urban trains and expanded use of automobiles made day trips from the Twin Cities possible. Stillwater, which had been laid low by the double disaster of the end of the logging industry and the decline of its once successful farm machinery industries, shook off the cobwebs with a series of important infrastructure improvements. Between 1913 and 1916 the city took tentative steps toward transforming its riverfront. Once the scene of lumber rafts, warehouses, and rail yards, the prime real estate was gradually reclaimed as parkland. Old frame buildings were torn down and a concrete levee was built to keep back the all too frequent spring floods. By the time of World War I a public pavilion had been erected and the area was graced with the name Lowell Park. It was not, however, until 1935 that the approaches to the park were cleared of the rail tracks and trestles that cast an industrial gloom on the riverfront.[199]

Access to Stillwater was enhanced during this period by the building of the Stillwater lift-bridge, a major public works improvement jointly funded by the states of Wisconsin and Minnesota. Since 1910 a pontoon swing bridge had provided easy passage from Stillwater to the Wisconsin shore. But by 1925, that structure was, in the words of Stillwater's mayor, "fast deteriorating" and was seen as a safety risk. By 1928, it was necessary to close the bridge to heavy traffic. In 1929, a contract was awarded to design a new bridge for the site. Two years later a vertical-lift bridge was opened in Stillwater. The rare lift mechanism was deemed necessary because of the St. Croix's status as a navigable river. In actuality river traffic in the post lumber era had dwindled to insignificance and the elaborate lift mechanisms of the bridge were rarely called into use. The towering steel truss towers of the bridge with their great concrete counter-weights

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[197] From Weekley, *Recreation and Tourism Along the Saint Croix*, 63-4.
[198] Ibid.
[199] Norene Roberts, *Historical Reconstruction of the Riverfront: Stillwater, Minnesota* (St. Paul: St. Paul District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, 1985), 40-49.

nonetheless quickly became notable landmarks.[200] The new bridge, together with Stillwater's restored riverfront enhanced the attractiveness of the city to day-trippers from St. Paul. By the end of World War II the stagnation of Stillwater's business district after 1914 became a positive asset as its marvelous array of 1880s and 1890s architecture graced the town with an historical ambiance that was attractive to tourists.

By the late 1930s, resort ownership and tourism venues expanded dramatically. Fueled by the automobile and highway construction, this was indeed the era when recreation took hold as a very profitable and popular part of modern American culture.[201] Reflecting on the meaning of recreation for people during the years of the Great Depression, historian Theodore Blegen concluded:

> Sports and recreation eased the stress of life in the 1930s, but their role is larger than their special contribution to a period of anxiety. They contributed to balanced living in the modern, industrializing state. In their diverse forms, they took advantage of increasing leisure and of the interplay of town and country in the era of modern transportation. In a broad sense sport has contributed to the poise and well being of Minnesotans from pioneer days to the present. The contribution was enlarged as population increased, as urban life with its industry and business became more marked, and as sport itself and recreation were made the object of organization and of civic and state exploitation.[202]

Resort ownership also provided a viable economic alternative for families out of work and cheap accommodations for those who could afford them. Small resorts, usually featuring cheaply constructed housekeeping cabins, provided an opportunity for many farmers and women to survive in times of economic uncertainty. The St. Croix River Valley's future as a recreational region certainly benefited from the meeting of these two needs for economic opportunity and respite from daily toils.[203]

The New Deal programs provided a tremendous infusion of capital into the region, supplementing well-established recreational resources that had originated largely through private means. The National Park Service, in collaboration with the state conservation departments of Wisconsin and Minnesota, offered a tremendous wealth of professional staff, well established planning procedures, and previously drafted master plans to the emergency conservation work undertaken by the CCC and WPA. This activity signified the introduction of a federal presence along the riverway and a turn towards aggressive, public development of large tracts of land designed specifically for recreations and leisure activities.[204]

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[200] Jeffrey A. Hess, Stillwater Bridge National Register of Historic Places Nomination, August, 1988, Section 8, p.6.
[201] Weekley, *Recreation and Tourism Along the Saint Croix*, 59.
[202] Blegen, *Minnesota*, 532-5.
[203] Weekley, *Recreation and Tourism Along the Saint Croix*, 60.
[204] Ibid., 72.

The Lost Tribe of the Chippewas

While recreation offered a large segment of the population a break from the burdensome cares of the 1930s, increased recreation was another invasion into traditional Native American life. Oddly enough, one of the features that made the North Woods so enticing to people further south was that Indians still lived, hunted, and fished in the area. Their presence added to the "local color." However, with tourists flocking to the area, Native Americans experienced another intrusion of whites disrupting what traditional lifestyle they had been able to maintain. Over fifty years before, a band of Chippewa's refused to settle on a reservation at Lac Court Oreilles with several other tribes. They wanted their own separate reservation. When this was not granted, this "Lost Tribe" simply continued to wander through the country around the headwaters of the St. Croix River to hunt and fish as they always had. As late as 1919 the tribal chiefs petitioned Governor Emanuel L. Philipp for their own reservation. The governor apparently took some interest in their plight and initiated some steps to obtain land for them. The plan, however, was never carried out. "Of late years," wrote the *Wausau Record-Herald* in 1936, "tourists and summer resorters have been buying the lake frontage and land along the St. Croix river, and 'The Lost Band' is becoming restricted to less desirable camping grounds." Unlike earlier periods, the newspaper expressed sympathy for the Indians. "Where once they were free to roam the forests and plains of all part of the territory," it wrote, "they are no longer welcome in many of the settled portions...Their hunting grounds are being usurped by peaceful tourists and summer resorts...and the Indians numbering 250 adults and their children are practically without a home...They are...unable to take up agriculture, having no permanent lands."[205]

These laments, however, did not stem the tide of tourists. With the return of prosperity during World War II, the civilian population had discretionary money. Works Progress Administration guides and the writings of the likes of Wisconsin historian Louise Phelps Kellogg lured many people northward. Kellogg, the librarian for the State Historical Society of Wisconsin, produced several books that made available to the general public the original journals and letters of the first European explorers of the Great Lakes – Upper Mississippi region. From these accounts a new appreciation was born for the culture and traditions of Wisconsin's native peoples.[206]

In 1942, Kellogg described a Wisconsin landscape that was much different from the war-like images of decimation used to describe the region in years past. "Passing from south to north Wisconsin's face changes from the smiling quiet of cultivated fields, through the lands of the cutover plains and marshes, to the Lakeland of the North," she wrote. "Here are literally hundreds of lakes, which attract visitors from all the Mississippi Valley to enjoy fishing, game hunting in the autumn, and well-kept resorts,

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[205] *Wausau Record-Herald* (Wausau, Wis.), 2 September 1936.

[206] Louis Phelps Kellogg, *The French Regime in Wisconsin and the Northwest* (Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1925), and *The British Regime in Wisconsin and the Northwest* (Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1935).

where Indian guides can be secured for canoe or land trips of many miles. This land o' lakes is the playground not only of Wisconsin, but of the Middle West."[207]

While all the reforestation, fire control efforts, and establishment of state and federal forests and park, helped restore much of the land of the St. Croix River Valley to what it was before logging and settlement, they put an end to the abundant blueberry harvests of the cutover lands much to the dismay of those who remembered gorging themselves during blueberry picking season. The treeless, brushy meadowlands of the cutover made a perfect habitant for the berries that liked warm, acid, sandy soil and full sunlight. When the trees once again began to grow and cast their shadows over the forest floor, blueberries could no longer grow. Although the trend in recent years had been to restore the natural landscape, in 1968 federal, state, and county forest departments along with the Soil Conservation Service and the University of Wisconsin Extension divisions met to discuss the loss of blueberry habitat and its effect on wildlife management, especially sharptailed grouse and prairie chickens. They agreed to look into wild blueberry management as a managed commercial crop.[208]

Extra cash gave vacationers not only the opportunity to travel, but also provided some with the possibility of owning their own cottage. By the 1940s the demand for summer cottages created a market for vacation homebuilders. How-to-books and manuals on building a vacation home had been around since the early part of the century. But by the 1930s more began to appear. In 1934, the first edition of *Popular Science Monthly, How to Build Cabins, Lodges, and Bungalows: Complete Manual of Constructing, Decorating, and Furnishing Homes for Recreation or Profit* was published. It competed with Ralph P. Dillon's very popular *Sunset Cabin Plan Book* that had reached its sixth edition in 1938.[209] The National Plan Service out of Chicago published a promotional booklet of models and floor plans of forty-eight cottages encouraging its readers to "invest in health and happiness." "Take your family away from the grind, routine, and rush of the city," they recommend, "to the beautiful lakes, the cool shaded forests, and the invigorating air of the country." Those interested could purchase a blueprint of any of the models offered, or have the National Plan Service design one. Models ranged from modest, rustic-looking one-room cottages to five room retreats, equipped with baths, eat-in nooks, and porches. Some were intended for family use, others were designed for resort operators.[210]

In the post war years the St. Croix and Namekagon River valleys secured their place among fishing enthusiasts. Its vast lakes and streams teamed with boaters, sportsmen, and fish. When Cal Johnson, an outdoor writer and Hayward booster

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[207] Louise Phelps Kellogg, "A Portrait of Wisconsin," *Wisconsin Magazine of History*, 25(3)(March 1942), 265.

[208] Marple, *Hayward Lakes Region*, n.p.

[209] Editorial staff of *Popular Science Monthly, How to Build Cabins, Lodges, and Bungalows: Complete Manual of Constructing, Decorating, and Furnishing Homes for Recreation or Profit*, (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1934 & 1946), 5; Ralph P. Dillon, *Sunset's Cabin Plan Book* (San Francisco: Lane Publishing Company, 1938); and from Weekley, *Recreation and Tourism Along the Saint Croix*, 62

[210] *Summer Camps and Cottages* (Chicago, Ill.: National Plan Service, 194?). The Minnesota Historical Society has not been able to locate the exact date of this publication.

captured a world record Musky in 1949, Hayward declared itself the "Musky Capital of the World." At a dinner honoring Johnson's prize catch, local resort operators suggested an annual festival to celebrate the town's claim to fame. Out of this came the National Musky Festival Association that worked over the winter to present the town with a three-day festival the next June. The festival was a resounding success, attracting over five thousand visitors "despite the fact that it was a miserably cold day." The popularity and challenge of Musky fishing prompted the Wisconsin state legislature to pass a joint resolution adopting the musky as the official state fish. Hayward received the distinction of hosting the dedication ceremony.[211]

Another visionary for the recreational development of the north woods was Hayward-native Anthony Wise. When stationed in the Bavarian Alps during the Second World War, Wise conceived of a project that would invigorate the depressed climate of northern Wisconsin – an alpine skiing resort. As a 1947 Harvard Business School graduate Wise was keenly aware of the fact that while tourist dollars came to the area with the warm weather, they left like departing flocks of geese for the south before winter chills set in. Alpine skiing was a bit foreign to some Wisconsinites, but Scandinavian immigrants had introduced skikjoring, or skiing, to the region in the mid-nineteenth century in Minnesota. By the 1880s, ski-jumping clubs had been organized in Minneapolis and Red Wing, Minnesota. And in 1883, the Skiing Association of the Northwest was organized. By the 1930s, Minnesotans enjoyed the "Winter Sports Week," which included a variety of activities, including hockey, skiing, skating, ice boating, curling, tobogganing, bobsled and sleighing parties, snow sculpture, and costume parades. While Wisconsinites were warming to these outdoor activities, WPA authors noted that they were a bit behind their Minnesota counterparts. "The winter scene began to change shortly before the Second World War," wrote Wisconsin historian Richard Current.[212]

These developments gave Wise confidence that the sport would take off in the Midwest. Wise proved to be not only a dreamer but also a shrewd businessman. In 1947, he wrote a report to the Hayward Chamber of Commerce completed with facts and figures of the potential of developing a ski resort in the area.

Based on his analysis of a survey conducted by the Charles W. Hoyt Company of New York in 1944 and 1945 of recreational habits and desires of residence in states north of the Ohio River and east of the Mississippi. The survey probed the current interest in winter sports vacations. He also studied winter sporting activities in New England for comparison sake. What Wise found was that the greatest interest was in skiing. Tobogganing and skating were just side attractions for most people. In order to lure winter tourists to northern Wisconsin. Wise contacted the Wisconsin Tourist Board in

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[211] Marple, *The Hayward Lakes Region*, n.p.

[212] Federal Writers' Project of the Works Progress Administration, *Minnesota*, 130-1; Writers' Program of the Works Projects Administration, *Wisconsin*, 117, Current, *Wisconsin*, 30-1. Anthony Wise to Mr. Joe Mercedes, Wisconsin Tourist Board, 3 December 1947. Anthony Wise, Report on "Winter Tourist Trade In Wisconsin," to the Hayward Chamber of Commerce. [1947].

Chicago. "The Telemark Company has just finished construction of the finest downhill ski area in the Midwest," he wrote in December 1947, "...Naturally we are very desirous of tapping the big Chicago market." Wise explained to them that he and his partner, H.B. Hewett of Minneapolis, were ex-GI's and had sunk their entire savings as well as risked loans to the tune of $10,000 to buy a 370-foot high mound of Ice Age rock and gravel with a vertical drop of 2400 feet three miles east of Cable, Wisconsin. They also built a rustic one-room day lodge at the base and had cleared a path for two downhill runs and installed a towrope. They, however, had little left for advertising, and appealed to the Tourist Board for a deal. If the Board sent vacationers to their ski resort, they would return to them a ten percent commission. Wise proved his business acumen by claiming he got fourteen hotels and summer resorts to stay open during the winter months to encourage his new venture, and he had contracted with a ski instructor from Norway to conduct a school.[213]

Within eight years, Wise's Telemark resort attracted 17,000 skiers in one season. During that time he added Ski Inn, Norway Lodge, and Ski Lark Motel. At the end of two decades Telemark attracted 100,000 Midwesterners per season, and became known as the most innovative ski resort in the Midwest. It was equipped with T-bars and ski lifts, and it boasted a certified ski instruction school. In 1961, after a particularly light season for snow, Wise introduced snowmaking machines to northern Wisconsin. Federal aid from the Small Business Association made this possible by supplementing loans from local banks. Wise was also the first to use "snow-cats." This "pioneering efforts in snow grooming, with the help of creative blacksmiths from local lumber camps, provided good skiing conditions throughout the long season in spite of the intemperate climate." Reminiscent of an era when lumbermen prowled these woods, outdoor employees were dressed in "lumberjack" uniforms with red shirts, stag pants, high leather boots and a high-crowned Scotch hat. In the spring lift ticket-holders received a free roast beef dinner at the Blue Ox Feast, and skiers enjoyed fresh maple syrup during the Maple Sugar Feast.[214]

In 1972, the four-season Telemark Lodge opened for vacationers and conventioneers. The multi-million dollar resort surrounded by nearly one million acres of state and national forests included the Telemark Recreational Community of single-family homes, townhouses, and condominiums complete with a sixty-three kilometer cross-country ski complex, a golf course, tennis courts, riding stables, trout ponds, canoe rentals, and bicycle and hiking trails. Not content to rest solely on his success in the ski resort business, Wise also proved to be a major booster of his hometown of Hayward. Beginning in 1960, Wise built upon the "Lumberjack Saturday" begun in the town during the annual muskie festival. His interest in local history encouraged him to preserve elements of the region's colorful past. By inviting lumberjacks from all over the country to compete in an annual Lumberjack World Championships, skills once needed for survival in the lumber camps and woods, were on display. Teams came from Australia, Germany, Japan, British Columbia, and from heavily forested areas in the East and West

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[213] Anthony Wise to Mr. Joe Mercedes, Wisconsin Tourist Board, 3 December 1947. Anthony Wise, Report on "Winter Tourist Trade In Wisconsin," to the Hayward Chamber of Commerce. [1947]

[214] "History of Telemark," Wise Collection. State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Madisan.

parts of the United States. For three days contestants vied to see who was best at chopping, speed climbing, tree topping, and log rolling. When the contests concluded, visitors could step back in time at Wise's Historyland – a living history village of a church, hotel, bunkhouse, blacksmith shop, and a wannigan. In addition, Historyland hosted other festivals, such as Voyageur Wild River Days and Indian Pow-wows at the Chippewa Indian Village. Looking back on what made this endeavor such a success, Tony Wise concluded that it was a $150,000 loan from the SBA. "As far as we're concerned...the United States government stepped in when nature failed."[215]

Telemark was not the only ski resort to open in the wake of the Second World War. In the fall of 1950 Lee Rogers and Walter J. Peterson opened Trollhaugen ski hill just east of Osceola on land purchased from Paul Neilsen. It, too, had a modest beginning with one towrope and three slopes. By 1956, however, Trollhaugen, provided skiers with five towropes and six slopes. A rustic chalet was on hand to warm skiers and provide some hospitality. During these early years an average of five thousand skiers traverse the slopes. Trollhaugen also suffered from light snow in the early 1960s, and not to be out done by Telemark, it too installed a snow-making system. Through out the 1960s T-bar lifts were added, a chair lift, more slopes were opened and by the end of the decade 80,000 skiers swooshed their way down the hills in one season. Trolhaugen also boasted that it had one of the best national ski patrols and ski schools in the Midwest. Other ski resorts added to the area are Wild Mountain and Afton Alps.[216]

Preserving the St. Croix River

President Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal had a profound influence on reawakening popular interest in preservation and protection of the St. Croix River. Its culmination was in many respects the passage of the Wild and Scenic River Act by Congress on October 2, 1968 that designated the St. Croix and Namekagon Rivers as National and Scenic Rivers. With so many tourists and sportsmen enjoying the St. Croix Valley issues of control over the river and its proper usage once again emerged. By the 1920s the Northern State Power Company had bought up extensive frontage on the St. Croix and Namekagon Rivers. In 1928, the Power Company applied for a permit to build a dam on the St. Croix at Kettle Rapids. Sportsmen complained that the dam would flood some of the finest small mouth bass fishing areas on the river. The dam never materialized because engineers for NSP even questioned the feasibility of a large dam on the river. Innovations in coal-generated power plants prompted the NSP to let their permit elapse. However, the company owned 29,238 acres of land on the St. Croix River. Since it was such a large landowner on the river, the Northern States Power company could not help but be a factor in determining the future of the river.[217]

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[215] "A Capsule History of the Telemark Recreational Community," Wisconsin Historical Society File; Chicago *Sun-Times*, 13 July 1969.
[216] Janice Ward, *Next Stop Dresser Junction*, (Osceola, Wis.: *The Osceola Sun*, 1976), 108-9.
[217] Karamanski, *Saving the Saint Croix*, 29-30.

Back in the 1930s the Army Corp of Engineers aimed to revitalize the towns on the lower St. Croix by reviving a plan created in the Herbert Hoover years of dredging a nine-foot channel on the Mississippi. The plan required a series of locks and dams along the entire length of the river. The Corp was permitted to use relief funds to hire workers and finance construction contracts. In 1936, a dam was built at Red Wing on the Mississippi that backed up water on the St. Croix. Although conservationists, such as the Izaak Walton League, complained that the creation of a slackwater pool would harm wildlife, the economic distress of the times caused such objections to fall on deaf ears. By 1940, the Army Corp of Engineers' feat of turning the Mississippi River into a giant canal made the federal agency appear to be critical to the economic well being of river valleys and towns. Struggling farmers in Wisconsin and Minnesota appealed to the Corp district headquarters in St. Paul to turn the St. Croix River into a "Little TVA of the North" with a dam at Kettle River.

The Kettle River project united the interests of northern farmers, who wanted more electrical power for milking machines and the like with the Army Corp of Engineers who wanted more dams to control flooding down river. In 1945, a River and Harbors Act authorized a study of the St. Croix River basin. Among the proposals was rebuilding Nevers Dam to a height of forty-five feet. Damming the river would create a thirty-mile lake between Nevers Dam and Kettle River, and would create a reservoir from there to Danbury. The proposed project would affect seventy-five miles of the St. Croix River.[218]

The Northern States Power Company, conservationists, and townspeople on the river were determined to oppose the project. The motive of conservationists was obvious – to preserve wildlife habitat and fishing streams. Public opinion in the towns on the lower river were against the dam for fear of flooding and because so much work and money had already been spent on promoting tourism and in the Interstate Park and all along the river. The Northern States Power Company, however, had other interests in the fight. In the past they had cooperated with the federal government in conservation efforts and now felt they were being edged out by the Rural Electrification Administration (REA) program, a creation of the New Deal. The REA had done much to bring remote rural areas into the twentieth century by creating the means for farmers to purchase electric power cheaply. But if the REA were behind the Kettle River dam project, the Northern State Power Company would have a new competitor – the federal government. In 1947, after a long, bitter struggle dam permits were denied.

The Army Corp and farmers had failed to create a united effort. The sole aim of farmers was to create hydroelectric power, which was somewhat at odds with the goal of their allies, the Army Corps, whose aim was flood control and improved navigation. Because the proponents of the "Little TVA of the North" did not put forth a unified and concerted effort, the St. Croix River was spared during the 1940s and 1950 -- the age of unprecedented dam building in America. Even in 1953 the Federal Power Commission refused to grant the Wisconsin Hydroelectric Company a permit to build a twenty-five-

[218] Karamanski, *Saving the St. Croix*, 32-4.

foot dam on the Namekagon. The decision was based on the "unique" recreational features of the river. "The canoeist has the illusion of being in a forest primeval, far from civilization," wrote the presiding judge. The Namekagon case was a milestone in recognizing that energy development and the deep-rooted need for unspoiled recreation should be balanced. However, despite these efforts to maintain the natural setting of the river, by 1953, there were twenty-three dams and hydroelectric plants in the St. Croix Basin. The upper Namekagon had five small dams including electric generating stations at Trego and Hayward.[219]

In 1947, revitalized by these developments, the St. Croix River Improvement Association was renamed the St. Croix River Association. While water flow and channel depths remained on their agenda, the association expanded its concerns to include sewage disposal and river pollution, parks, roads, and bridges along the river, wildlife and fish propagation, pleasure boating.[220]

Thanks to local, state, and even federal efforts, by 1950 a series of state parks and wild life refuges were created in the St. Croix River Valley. The Interstate Parks were no longer the sole preserver of the river's scenic wonders and resources. The creation of recreational forests by the CCC encouraged the private sector to add to the preservation of the St. Croix for posterity. In 1945, Alice M. O'Brien donated to the state of Minnesota the 180 riverfront acres of land her father, William O'Brien, had owned north of Marine on St. Croix. Within two years the Minnesota state legislature officially established it as a state park. In 1951, Alice O'Brien donated an additional fifteen acres, and in 1958, S. David Greenberg donated a sixty-six acre island. Over the years the William O'Brien State Park has grown through personal gifts and through the efforts of the Minnesota Parks Foundation to 1343 acres.[221]

During this same period, the state of Wisconsin began to develop the Crex Meadows Wildlife Area in Burnett County, approximately one mile north of Grantsburg. The property contains 25,000 acres of restored wetlands. It was necessary to construct miles of dikes and a series of water-control structures to recreate a thriving marsh habitat. The marsh is home to several species of birds and animals, and is used by hunters and naturalists. The William O'Brien State Park and the Crex Meadows Wildlife Area have contributed yet another dimension to the development of leisure activities, by offering bird watching, wildflower appreciation, naturalists talks, and walking tours.[222] Through the establishment of the St. Croix River State Park and the Carlos Avery Wildlife Area the state of Minnesota further expanded these opportunities.

The state of Wisconsin added to its forestland when it bought Soren Jensen Uhrenholdt's forestlands as a demonstration plot. Jensen's children donated more land as a memorial not only to Soren but to his wife and also a son and grandson who died in the armed services. On August 15, 1947, few months after his death, the Uhrenholdt

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[219] As quoted in Karamanski, *Saving the St. Croix*, 36-9.
[220] Dunn, *Saving the River*, 28.
[221] Dunn, *State Parks of the St. Croix Valley*, 34-5.
[222] From Weekley, *Recreation and Tourism Along the Saint Croix, 72-3.*

Memorial Forest was dedicated in the town of Seeley "among the lofty pines he preserved," wrote his neighbor Eldon Marple, " – a fit tribute to a man of vision who had the courage and wisdom to carry out practices he knew to be right,. The tree did grow!" On May 6, 1969 a Nature Trail was dedicated to the public in Uhrenholdt's forest.[223]

Another example of local efforts to preserve the heritage and environment of the St. Croix-Namekagon River Valley was the revival of the old Portage Trail along the Namekagon River near Hayward, once used by Indians, fur traders, and explorers, as a hiking route. In 1965, a local society under the leadership of Lyman Williamson set its goal to preserve what was left of the trail. Thanks to an 1855 government land survey and some help from old time hunters and farmers, the group was able to locate sections of the old trail. Williamson laid out the route and obtained permission from property owners to make the improvements and allow hikers to use it. On May 22, 1966 the historic trail was reopened with the help of more than two hundred Boy Scouts of the Chippewa Valley Council and their leaders cleared out the logs, brush, and debris strewn on the path. Since most of the trail is on private property, however, permission is usually needed for groups to traverse it.

Despite all these efforts at preserving areas along the St. Croix River, it was not enough to protect the unique qualities of the river. By the mid-twentieth century the St. Croix River Valley began to take on a suburban quality, in part from the dramatic growth of communities on the river and due to its close proximity to Minneapolis and St. Paul.. The commuting time and the ease of travel between the Twin Cities and the St. Croix were drastically changed thanks to the automobile. Before long towns and resorts along the St. Croix, particularly Stillwater, functioned as virtual suburbs of the metropolitan area. The presence of commuters in the valley was also noticed in many communities. "With the end of the 1940s more and more city dwellers, having first come into the valley as summer renters," wrote James Taylor Dunn, "were establishing themselves in Marine as permanent residents, commuting to their jobs in Stillwater, St. Paul, and Minneapolis." The various parks and recreation areas attracted these newcomers, but at the same time a surge in residential population threatened to drastically alter the ambience of the area.[224]

In 1957, Theodore A. Norelius, editor of the *Chisago County Press* was the first to voice the opinion that the St. Croix's scenic and recreational features deserved national attention. The Northern States Power Company still owned extensive tracts of land along the St. Croix River. For years it had graciously allowed sportsmen access to the game and fish on their land. Norelius, however, feared that in an era when nuclear power seemed to be the future of electrical energy, the utility might be tempted to sell its lands to real estate developers who would subdivide the land for cottages. "If Mr. Public has a place or places to play in the future," he asserted, "now is the time to consolidate all efforts here in the upper Midwest and ask for a gigantic St. Croix Federal Park, perhaps named the 'River of Pioneers National Park.'" Only in this way, he argued, could sportsmen avoid signs stating "Private" and "No Trespassing." "This is your land,"

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[223] Marple, *Hayward Lakes Region*, n.p.

[224] From Weekley, *Recreation and Tourism Along the Saint Croix*, 74-5; Dunn, *Marine on St.Croix*, 92

Norelius wrote, "protect it and preserve it for all posterity."[225] Through a bit of luck Norelius's editorials received the attention of the National Parks Service when U.E. Hella, director of the Minnesota State Park System passed it along to Howard Baker, director of the Omaha office. Norelius won the support of Minnesota Senator Hubert H. Humphrey, but state and federal agencies did not make the St. Croix a park proposal priority.

All this began to change, however, as public concern for environmental protection grew. In his influential books, *The Singing Wilderness* (1956) and *The Listening Point* 1958, Sigurd Olson drew attention to the threats against the environment. He argued that the unique values and beauty of the North Country were very fragile and threatened by development. Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*, published in 1962, created a national sensation by her convincing arguments about the devastating harm caused by pesticides on wildlife. As the 1960s became an activist decade the environmental movement enjoyed a revival of public interest and support not seen since the Progressive Era's conservation movement. Along with these noteworthy books was the 1959 National Park Service report, *Our Fourth Shore: Great Lakes Shoreline Recreation Area Survey*. This work helped bring the National Park Service into the Great Lakes region. While it did not specifically target the St. Croix River Valley, the river would never have received the attention it later did without it.[226]

On September 3, 1964 the U.S. Congress passed the Wilderness Act. This marked another significant shift in American attitudes towards nature and the outdoors. This act required federal agencies to identify and preserve areas as part of a national wilderness preservation system. Along with other criteria, these basically included regions unspoiled and uninhabited by humans. The aesthetic and spiritual qualities of nature were once again valued for their own sakes, but this time they were perceived as benefiting the public good. Emphasis turned from parceling natural resources as commodities to a more holistic approach based on ecological values that ultimately would benefit everyone.[227]

This modern view of environmentalism was clearly evident along the St. Croix during the 1960s. Concerns about pollution of the river, injury to its native species, and over-development of adjacent lands, led to calls for its protection. The Saint Croix River Association rose to challenge the Northern States Power Company (NSP), which proposed the construction of two new power plants near Oak Park Heights and Bayport, Minnesota, just south of Stillwater. Although only successful in stopping the building of one of the generating stations, the power plant project awakened the people of the St. Croix to a broader environmental cause – protecting the river's ecosystem.[228]

Although much time, effort, and political wrangling went into it, by September 12, 1968 the House of Representatives passed the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act with a vote

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[225] *Chisago County Press*, 5 September 1957, 3 July 1958, 28 August 1958.
[226] Karamanski, *Saving the St. Croix*, 44.
[227] From Weekley, *Recreation and Tourism Along the Saint Croix*, 79.
[228] From Weekley, *Recreation and Tourism Along the Saint Croix*, 80-1. NSP is now Xcel Energy.

of 265 to 7. On October 2 the Senate was on board with the House bill, and in the closing days of Lyndon Johnson's administration the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act was signed giving the St. Croix and Namekagon River from St. Croix Falls up to Gordon, Wisconsin national distinction as a protected area. Making the park a reality, however, also required a new approach to park management. The type of park the St. Croix would become was unprecedented. It not only faced the problems of dealing with extensive private ownership issues along its extensive banks, but the legislation that created the park did not give the National Parks Service final authority. That authority was to be shared by private, county, state, and federal agencies. The National Park Service's administration of the river was haunted by the legacy of divided authority that had long plagued the St. Croix Valley. The concept of a park the length of the upper river ran counter to deep rooted traditions, from the Anglo-American custom of using rivers as boundaries to the 1785 Land Ordnance's imposition of a grid system of property ownership along the rivers, and perhaps most strikingly, to the National Park Service's power of condemnation that flew in the face of what some owners of river lands regarded as their American right to private property. It would take several decades of conflict, court cases, and interagency cooperation before the riverway park concept could be fully realized.[229]

In 1970, the St. Croix Valley got another boost to protect it as a wild and scenic river when the St. Croix River State Forest was established. The forest was the culmination of agreements made between the Department of the Interior, Northern States Power Company, and the states of Wisconsin and Minnesota. It is a narrow stretch of land on either side of the river reaching from Nevers Dam Site in Polk County to Danbury in Burnett County. Its purpose was to create a buffer zone along the river corridor and provide more recreational options for the public. The land had belonged to the Northern States Power Company. The National Parks Service facilitated the donation of 4600 acres to the State of Minnesota. Additional contributions to the cooperative river-park concept included the opening of Wild River State Park. By 1978, Wild River State Park opened to the public, relieving the overcrowding of hikers and campers in William O'Brien State Park. In 1982 the Afton State Park joined the St. Croix parks system with "1684 acres of steep bluffs, deep wooded ravines, broad rolling fields, and some impressively sweeping views." Chester S. Wilson, who had served as Minnesota's commissioner of conservation, conceived the idea for this park. As recreation boomed and visitors flocked to the available water sites along the river, Wilson felt that the Afton area was one of the last remaining scenic spots for a state park on the Minnesota side of the St. Croix. In 1967, he asked the Minnesota Parks Foundation for assistance in obtaining the key tract of land at the mouth of Trout Brook until the Minnesota legislature could authorize a state park. Through the work of foundation members, enough money was raised from individuals, corporations, and foundations to buy the necessary land. In 1969, the Minnesota legislature passed a bill authorizing the Afton State Park, and the Minnesota Parks Foundation turned over its land to the state. The park, however, had no public facilities and did not welcome visitors for twelve years. By 1981, the Department of Natural Resources finally opened the gates to this latest addition

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[229] See for more complete account, Karamanski, *Saving the St. Croix*.

to the St. Croix River system. During the 1980s, the state of Wisconsin established Kinnickinnic State Park across the river from Afton.[230]

In July 1997, *National Geographic* commented on the changing face of the valley. "Today the St. Croix is an asset for its own sake," wrote David S. Boyer, "no longer for its wild rice or furs or timber, nor for other purposes of man's pocketbook, but now for his silence and his soul."[231]

But silence was becoming increasingly rare on the lower St. Croix River. During the late 1960s and early 1970s the sprawl of the Twin Cities metropoliatan areas began to lap against the banks of the St. Croix. Scores of new bedroom communities arose to provide a status address and a high quality of life for doctors, lawyers, airline pilots, 3M managers, and corporate executives.[232] Recreational boat traffic on the lower river exploded during the 1960s, particularly on summer weekends. The National Scenic Riverway played no role in protecting the river downstream from Taylors Falls because it had not been included in the 1968 Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. Wisconsin Senator Gaylord Nelson bitterly regretted the last minute deletion of the lower river from the original bill and in 1971 he introduced into the Senate a new bill to create a Lower St. Croix National Scenic Riverway. Concern over cost and administration made the National Park Service less than enthusiastic about the proposal. But development pressures on the lower river were desperately needed to be brought under control. At the time Nelson's bill was announced plans were underway to construct a series of high rise condominium towers at Hudson. Development along the St. Croix was moving forward so fast that many people felt a new river bill could not be passed soon enough to be of any good. Yet, in what Minnesota Governor Albert Quie accurately described as a "legislative miracle" Nelson's bill was approved by the Congress in October, 1972[233]

The Lower St. Croix National Scenic Riverway differed considerably with the legislative mandate for the management of the upper river. The lion's share of the agency's responsibility on the lower river was to cooperate with local government's to manage traffic on the river and control development along its banks. As a result the National Park Service took much less of an ownership role on the lower river. This proved to be more challenging than traditional park management. It also was very expensive as the park service devoted considerable sums to a program to purchase easements on riverfront property in an effort to freeze development at existing levels. National Park Service managers were forced to become involved with numerous local issues from zoning rules to marina construction and bridge building.[234]

The Lower St. Croix National Scenic Riverway helped to create a forum by which suburban sprawl could be checked along the river. Still it was up to each municipality along the river to embrace or reject the partnership opportunities the new park offered.

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[230] Dunn, *State Parks of the St. Croix*, 32-3, 40-1.
[231] David S. Boyer, "The St. Croix," *National Geographic* (July 1977), 37.
[232] Karamanski, *Saving the St. Croix*, 228.
[233] *Ibid*, 136-151; *Minneapolis Tribune*, 12 & 14 October 1972.
[234] Karamanski, *Saving the St. Croix*, 169-207.

Emblematic of the way many river towns responded was the experience of Stillwater. Rather than be swallowed up in the Twin Cities' commuter world, Stillwater sought to retain its historic charm and identity, as well as cater to tourists. By the mid-1970s the town began an ambitious restoration program. The buildings and homes from the era of the lumber barons and jacks were painstakingly restored and renovated into shops, restaurants, and museums. "This combination of natural and mad-made attractions, plus some carefully orchestrated festivals," wrote the *Pioneer Press*, "have created in Stillwater an increase in tourism unlike most other towns in the state." Its fifty-year old Lowell Inn continues its tradition of fine dining and accommodations. Picnickers now enjoyed the spot where the old Stillwater boom collected its logs. Its annual "Lumberjack Days" and revived steamboat excursions celebrate its yester years for residents and visitors. "The 'birth place of Minnesota' now is experiencing a robust rebirth of its own."[235]

The growth of recreation in the Upper St. Croix and Namekagon region is illustrated by a 1976 census of Yellow Lake. In that year the village reported a year-round population of only ten, but a summer census revealed hundreds of people made it their summer home. The largest resorts in the 1970s were Log Cabin Hollow, Lucky Strike Resort, Carl Peterson, Birch Grove, Al Anderson, Pursel's Resort, Atlasta Resort, Larry Hanson, Yellow Lake Lodge, Norway Slope, and Ray Pardun. Yellow Lake even had its own resort owners association. "We have wonderful summers and autumns," wrote one resident, "and tourists from all over the U.S. and Canada are with us then." In the early part of the twentieth century Burnett County was described as the poorest county in the state and that Webb Lake was the poorest town in the county. However, by the 1970s most of its lakeshore lots had been sold and new summer homes as well as year-round homes for retirees from the Twin Cities were built.[236] Winter sports enthusiasts made recreation a year round activity. Cross-country skiers, snowmobilers, sledders, and skaters joined their nineteenth century counterparts who found the weather brisk and exhilarating.

In 1993, the well-entrenched tourist industry along the upper river prompted the Department of Natural Resources in Wisconsin to begin the Northern Initiatives Project for northern Wisconsin. This project was the result of an internal review of the DNR that revealed that the agency played a greater role in the economic well being of the northern half of the state than in the south. Decisions made by the DNR relating to deer permits, fishing bag limits, and the like had a profound impact on which areas tourists chose for their vacation destination. The DNR invited the residents of northern Wisconsin to share in the decision-making of how to manage the state's natural resources. The Initiative concluded that northern Wisconsin had successfully transformed itself into:

> a unique and distinguishable regional entity...with its reputation for clean air, water, healthy forests and abundant public opportunities. It is a place where sound science shapes environmental policy, guides sustainable management and ensures expenditures that yield commensurate environmental benefits. The North

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[235] *Pioneer Press* (St. Paul, Minn.) 31 May 1981.

[236] Burnett County Homemakers Clubs, *Pioneer Tales of Burnett County*, 50, 60, 104.

> has a viable and diverse economy that is compatible with its ecological and social values. It is a place where residents and visitors can live, work and play in harmony and safety.[237]

At the dawn of another century and millennium, the recreational experience along the Saint Croix National Scenic Riverway is perhaps more structured than at any time in its history. State and federal park units have imprinted the landscape with standardized signage, trails, structures, and campgrounds. Private concession operators supplement these public resources with additional recreational facilities and tourist amenities. Developed areas have been "returned" to their "natural" states in an attempt to enhance the Riverway's "wild" and "scenic" character.[238]

The St. Croix is not a wild river, but Congress has designated it a scenic river and its scenic qualities constitute its principle economic asset. That asset is today managed with a rigor that would have been unimaginable to the American Fur Company and which would astonish even an organizational genius like Frederick Weyerhauser. But it is useful to recall that the valley has long been managed by its human population, from the family hunting zones established by the Chippewa to the 160-acre farms that sprang from federal homestead law and immigrant dreams. Our management reflects our desires and our values. Over time from furs, to lumber, to wheat, to diary, to scenery we have varied how we manage the valley based upon our economic needs. The Bible says the "Earth abides," and history teaches us that people change. The landscape of the beautiful St. Croix is a product of abiding, persistent nature and the restless, changeable human societies that have called the valley home. The St. Croix is what we have made it and it will be what we dream it to become.

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[237] Northern Initiatives Strategic Planning Workgroup, *Northern Initiatives: A Strategic Plan for the Next Decade*, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (Summer 1994),

[238] From Weekley, *Recreation and Tourism Along the Saint Croix*, 83-4.

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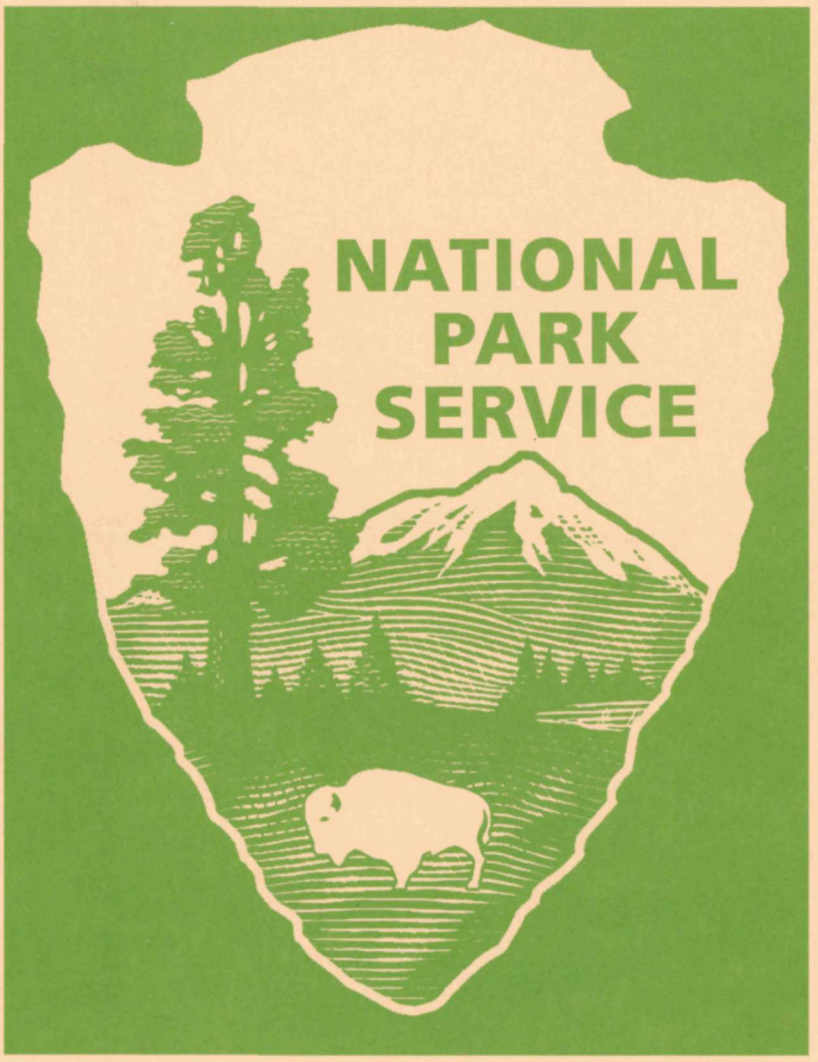
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